

# On what and how Architectural Magazines in the School Library (1945-1989)

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## Argument

The history of Romanian architecture in the communist period is still far from having reached comprehensive conclusions, given that in the depths of the bowels of that period the profession still seems to conceal plenty of "blank spaces".

One such blank that has hitherto lain outside any in-depth examination is that relating to the sources of information and means of research available to architectural professionals in that period. Their sources of knowledge and, ultimately, inspiration are therefore still little known today.

What were the materials that architects used in order to study their profession in the second half of the twentieth century? What were their bibliographical resources? What and where did they read? These are some of the primary questions that might provide unexpected answers and, to a large extent, relevant to painting a picture of the times.

With the aim of shedding some of these penumbral areas, I have undertaken extensive research into the architectural periodicals of the communist period, i.e. between 1945 and 1989, held in the Library of the School of Architecture in Bucharest.<sup>1</sup>

The decision to analyse periodicals above other publications arose from the simple observation that in the last hundred years new ideas have first begun to circulate in newspapers and magazines and only later have they become coherent theories and systems contained within books. From the very beginning, therefore, periodicals have meant bombshells, novelties, discoveries, change, transformation. This is why, especially during the period we are dealing with, they were in great demand, and the content and quality of the information they held has thereby left an undeniable mark on researchers in the field.

Given this is the case, an analysis of architectural periodicals published during the period under study might bring to light the specific channels through which the concepts, principles and theses that marked the period were placed in circulation: those that appeared in the free world, in parallel with those which, with all their good and bad points, were produced within the false and invasive construct of communism.

<sup>1</sup> The Bucharest institute of higher architectural education – up until 1990 the only one in the country that was able to award architectural diplomas – went by different names during the period under analysis. For the sake of simplicity, in the present work it is called the "Bucharest School of Architecture." For further details, see: Grigore Ionescu, *75 de ani de învățământ superior de arhitectură* [75 Years of Higher Architectural Education] (Bucharest: Ed. IAIM, 1973), monograph.

Restriction of the area of research to the collections of the Library of the School of Architecture is based on at least two arguments: on the one hand, it brings to light the periodicals that were the sources of information on which architects' training was based, and, on the other, it measures the breadth of the School as a focus of information in the field. Moreover, a comprehensive picture of the range of periodicals in the School's Library might contribute to clarifying the sources of influence for the various stylistic and functional movements and directions that existed during the period and developed in Romania.

In our research, the periodicals have been analysed in a nuanced way, depending on a number of criteria, such as the place and language of the publication, the subjects it covered, the specific condition of the Library entries, their physical condition, their actual circulation. Besides a series of precise elements, drawn from the library records, some conclusions have been based on general historical data and logical deduction, and others on the observations and commentaries of librarians and readers from the time whom I have been able to contact.<sup>2</sup>

### **Historical overview of the Library of the School of Architecture in Bucharest and its collections**

Founded in 1912, having as its first collection a number of publications donated by the School's teaching staff, the Library was housed in a space specially designed for it on the third floor of the central corpus of the building constructed between 1912 and 1926 to plans by architect Grigore Cerchez. The library had a large reading room for students and a recess with solid oak bookshelves, separated by glass doors, where the School's professors, as well as architects from outside, studied.

The massive increase in holdings in general and the number of magazines in particular that took place in the 1960s – a period in which the number of places offered by the School steadily rose – led to the extension of the Library. In the second part of the decade, also in the old corpus, exactly above the existing reading room, which was to be dedicated only to books, a very pleasant reading room for periodicals was created, with a small storeroom and other spaces annexed to it. The library continued to operate in this form up until the earthquake in the summer of 1977, when, in order to meet the new standards for calculating structural resistance to seismic tremors, it was moved to the mezzanine and a single reading was opened in the former ornamental design studio in the old building. But in 1987, in order to dedicate the space solely to the reading of books, a second room for periodicals was created on the first floor of Corpus A. This organisational format has been preserved to the present day.

Besides an impressive number of rare and precious books from the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the collections of the Library of the School of Architecture have over the years amassed a large number of publications covering a very wide range of subject areas in the field, from strictly specialist literature to books and magazines on art, history, philosophy, sociology, social psychology, statistics, collections of norms and standards, doctoral theses by architects from Romania, patents, teaching courses, photocopies of student diploma works, albums of photographs and drawings, and other non-book materials.

In figures, in January 1945, i.e. at the beginning of the period under research, the catalogue of the School's Library contained 3,495 publications, including both books and periodicals. Of this

2 We should like to take this opportunity to thank professors Aurelian Trişcu, Zoltán Takács and Ion Lucăcel, as well as librarians Rodica Curta and Lavinia Nicolescu for the useful information they provided us with on this topic. Likewise, my own experience as a student and later, from 1986, as director of the School Library, were also relevant in this respect.

total, 944 were periodicals. As of 30 December 1989, i.e. at the end of the period, there were 189,144 entries in the library, of which 44,525 were periodicals. Therefore, over the course of the forty-five years we are looking at, the Library catalogue recorded 185,649 new entries – a not at all insignificant figure – of which 43,581 were periodicals, which gives an arithmetic mean of almost one thousand volumes per annum.

### **Statistical data on the periodicals added to the Library of the School of Architecture in the communist period**

The first step in our investigation was to discover and list the titles of the periodicals added to the School's Library during the period.<sup>3</sup> The table we drew up lists along the vertical axis the titles of the periodicals given in the catalogue in alphabetical order together with the city and language of publication, and along the horizontal axis the new issues each title added to the library between 1945 and 1989.<sup>4</sup>

The table includes **606 newspaper and periodical titles added to the collections of the Library of the School of Architecture over shorter or longer periods and with greater or lesser regularity. Of the 606 titles, 575 are Romanian and foreign periodicals, the remaining 31 being newspapers, of which 22 are Romanian and nine are foreign**, with a pro-communist ideological or cultural orientation.<sup>5</sup>

In accordance with the library's records, **the number of titles received by subscription was 333, the remaining 242 being acquired by the Library sporadically or through donations.** As the library never carried on inter-library exchanges, other sources of acquisition for the periodicals in its collections must be discarded. Of the total number of titles (excluding newspapers, as we have already mentioned), **219 (i.e. 38%) were Romanian periodicals and 356 foreign periodicals.**

Given the nature of the period, which as is well known was for Romania more ideologically enclosed and restrictive than in other countries in the communist bloc, it is astonishing to observe that **of the foreign periodicals, 271 (i.e. 76.1%) are from the West. These make up more than 47.1% of the total of periodicals.**

The high number of Western periodicals, which stand out also in their proportion to the other periodicals, is not only one of the enigmas of the Library's acquisitions practices, but also one of the paradoxes of the period. The real motivations of a regime whose strategies of rule developed in an obfuscatory manner in general, particularly when it came to culture, are hard to fathom. For this reason, various hypotheses may be put forward in regard to the phenomenon, but exhaustive explanations cannot be made.

3 I drew up this table with the competent assistance of my erstwhile colleagues Cosmina Georgescu and Maria Gigă (who were briefly joined by Roxana Plăiașu and Claudia Popescu), whom I should here like to thank for the serious-mindedness and dedication with which they participated in the highly laborious undertaking I proposed to them. In drawing up the table, the inventory ledgers of the Library were verified. The separation of those titles that were acquired regularly, through subscriptions or other sources, from those that were sporadic or occasional was achieved by examination of the annual record slips and periodicals collections slips, as it is known that the beneficiaries of such records were only magazines with a definite source of origin: subscriptions, declared donations, and donations making up coherent entities.

4 The table, which is too large to be appended to the present work, can be found listed in the catalogue of the Library of the "Ion Mincu" University of Architecture and Urbanism and may be consulted on request.

5 The newspapers in question are only those that were regarded at the time as being highly important and as a result were kept for more than a year in the Library's collection. On this occasion they benefitted from annual record slips. As they were not specialist publications, they shall be taken into consideration in this research only as part of the total number of titles catalogued in the Library.

Thus, we may proceed from the premise that, at least in the beginning, in the fifteen years after the War, the architectural interest in functionalist modernism and architects' experiments in this area ran parallel with the interests of the new regime, which as a result was to accept documentation in support of this direction, as long as it consolidated the regime's position. The tap was visibly turned off in the 1980s, when the nationalist theme in architecture became predominant and imposed new stylistic forms and standards.

We might also suppose that by accepting an influx of specialist information from the free world, the communist regime in Bucharest was aiming to achieve native scientific and technical quality at a level close to that of the countries on the other side of the Iron Curtain, but in doing so we would be pushing the limits of coherence, logic and even subtlety of a totalitarian regime that generally demonstrated precisely the opposite.

It is clear, however, that the large number of issues that might have arisen in complex areas such as architecture, in the context of massive access to specialist information, did not present difficulties to the system, in any event also because it could be kept under control through ideological pressure and dirigisme, as well as political intimidation if need be.

Otherwise, the figures are still highly interesting: **compared with 271 titles from the West, only 85 titles were from East-European countries**, of which 46 (i.e. 54.1%) were published in the USSR.

### **Acquisition methods and the rate at which periodicals were added to the Library**

From our research, it results that the drawing up of acquisitions lists<sup>6</sup> was carried out by the librarians (who after a given point specialised according to the foreign languages they spoke) and also, naturally, depending on the allocated funds. The School's teaching staff was consulted when such lists were drawn up. Thanks to the memory of Library staff, albeit no one who worked there before the 1960s, we were surprised to discover that within the purview of generally unbending rules, there was a certain degree of choice free from constraints: first of all, Romanian architectural periodicals and those of a general propagandistic content, which were compulsory, were acquired,<sup>7</sup> then periodicals from the communist bloc, those from the USSR being the first choice, and any work that was anti-communist in nature, should it turn up either through donations or from second-hand book shops, was carefully rejected. But apart from these limits, the lists seem to have been open to the demands of the teaching process, as interpreted by the School's management and teachers and, as we have already mentioned, within the limits of the pre-established budget. Given these circumstances, we may further suppose that the personality and skill of the architects high up in the teaching hierarchy when it came to taking advantage of their connexions within the system to the advantage of the Library were also influential in liberalising the acquisitions process. But the clinching arguments in regard to the partial absence of censorship in the acquisitions process are, as we have argued above, based on political decisions that cannot be proven using documents, however.

6 Acquisition of periodicals was via the Bucharest Press Dispatch Department, founded in 1952 and later restructured and renamed Rodipet. Orders were made using separate order dockets, based on press catalogues for the different countries of origin: Romania, communist bloc countries, and the West. Therefore, the first filter was applied by the press supplier. As we have already seen, it was nonetheless unusually permissive.

7 These include the magazine *Lupta de clasă* [Class Struggle], to which the Library subscribed from 1948 to 1972, when it ceased publication. Thereafter, the baton of doctrine was taken up by *Era Socialistă* [The Socialist Era] magazine, subtitled *Theoretical and Socio-political review of the Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party*, which along with *Scinteia* [The Spark], the press organ of the RCP, was the main vector for the mass propagation of the ideology of the communist regime. The Library also subscribed to the latter publication.

A close look at the table reveals that between 1945 and 1989 the number of titles of periodicals added to the Library, from internal sources and from East and West, varies from one year to the next and sometimes alters highly visibly from one period to the next. Juxtaposing this situation with the various political-ideological and economic events and directives that marked the period, it readily becomes plain that the political sphere exerted an influence and effect on the specific part of the profession that we are looking at.

Attempting to decode the dynamic whereby periodicals were added to the collections of the Library of the School of Architecture under communism – a dynamic that is rather strange in itself, as we shall see below and as results from the graph of acquisitions by title<sup>8</sup> – we proceeded to take as our reference point the situation in 1939, the last year of normality before the Second World War. Of the total of twenty periodicals and newspapers<sup>9</sup> catalogued in that year, five are Romanian periodicals, of which three are specialist publications,<sup>10</sup> and fifteen are well-known European architectural periodicals based in Berlin, Liège, Munich, Paris and Stuttgart. Five of the titles were German. In 1940, after the outbreak of the War, the number of titles acquired by the Library increased to twenty-eight – this is seemingly odd, but perfectly explainable given that subscriptions were made a year in advance – only to decrease in the years that followed to eighteen, then twelve, then six by 1944, of which three were German, two Italian and one Romanian.

The number of titles acquired in 1945, the year the War ended, a time of turmoil and uncertainty, was five: this time there were four Romanian titles and one Soviet title, *Temps Nouveaux*, published in French in Moscow. As yet discreetly, at least when it came to architectural publications, the great ideological offensive from the East had commenced.

Although periodicals were still scanty, in the late 1940s there were nonetheless signs that things were starting to move once more, albeit in a different direction than before. In 1949, despite the dramatic events that marked the period from the end of the War up to that point – the change in direction brought about by communism and the series of political, economic and social measures that came with it – the list of periodicals acquired by the Library seems, at first sight, not to reveal any significant differences when compared with the reference year of 1939: in the catalogues and record slips there can be found twenty-two titles, of which seven are Romanian. But German periodicals, rather predictably, vanish completely from the list. On the other hand, encouragingly, six Western titles (two American, one British, one Italian and two French) appear. But counterbalancing these, at the opposite end of the spectrum there are no fewer than eight Soviet titles. The Cold War was already in full gear and strongly ideological publications were to become an extremely effective weapon.

At this point we should take note of another phenomenon: throughout the period between 1939 and 1949, most periodicals arrive at irregular intervals, with no more than one or two issues a year, and in a number of titles there are unbridgeable gaps. What might have been explained during the war and immediately afterwards is inexplicable when it comes to the period before that: were the librarians of the School of Architecture incapable of following and filling in the gaps in the periodicals they subscribed to? We have not yet discovered any means of answering this question.

In the years that followed, the situation improved in every category of periodical, but the number of titles evolved at different paces depending on their sources.

8 A graph of acquisitions of periodicals by origin can be found in Appendix 3.

9 In fact there is only one newspaper in question, namely *Universul* [The Universe].

10 Namely, *Arhitectura*, *Buletinul Comisiunii Monumentelor Istorice* [The Bulletin of the Historical Monuments Commission] and *Urbanismul* [Urban Planning] magazines.

The statistics show that the number of Romanian periodicals increased from seven in 1949 to 36 in 1957, from a total of 73 acquisitions, and by 1968 the number had grown steadily to 50, from a total of 139. The year 1969 was an exception, revealing a sharp decrease in the total number of acquisitions, which was recouped rather encouragingly in 1970. But the year 1971 also showed signs of easing off. It was at this time that a period of dramatic decline set in, also the case for all the other types of periodicals. It lasted until 1976, when a minimum of twelve Romanian titles from 59 acquisitions was reached. Thenceforth and until 1989, the number of Romanian periodicals recorded in the Library's catalogue hovered around an average of fourteen titles. The period from 1983 to 1988 saw a small increase to nineteen Romanian titles by 1988.<sup>11</sup> Between 1976 and 1989 the total acquisitions were on average around 58 titles, with an unexplainable peak of 70 in 1987.

In the period in question Western periodicals followed quite a different pattern than Romanian periodicals, although in the main the curve is quite similar. Thus, for example, whereas in 1945 there were no foreign periodicals, at the beginning of the 1950s, although acquisitions are generally extremely sparse, there were nonetheless one or two Western titles a year and an increasingly larger number of East-European titles (reaching a local peak of 23 in 1952). As this period was marked by uncertainty, terror and ultimately general chaos, to which the School of Architecture was of course not immune, the Library made tentative, prudent acquisitions, based on pre-War contacts, such as they had remained, and, of course in accordance with those laid down by the new regime.

But the times were changing. In the period after the war, there was an urgent need for architecture to consolidate a convincing image of the new order. Architects had a lot of work, and after a given point the School had to increase its number of places, meaning that its documentary resources also had to be brought up to date and improved. After times of great wariness and circumspection, things willy-nilly began to follow the direction laid down by the political leadership. We should remember that this was going on during a period in which the process of de-Sovietisation<sup>12</sup> also became clearly detectable in architecture, especially after 1956, when the Soviet commissar in charge of supervising the field lost influence, before leaving Romania for good in 1957. The event, which must have brought a breath of new life to the profession, will certainly have been felt in the metabolism of every sector of the profession. And so, it may be supposed that this too made the year 1956 mark a quite spectacular shift in acquisitions from the West, which began to increase steadily, rising from twelve at the time, to nineteen in the following year, and thirty-three in 1959. In confirmation of the above, communist periodicals, which up until 1957 had been more numerous than their Western counterparts, were to reach an exact balance in the same year, at nineteen titles, and by 1975 had fallen below the number of Western titles.

The period of relative cultural thaw in the 1960s also manifested itself in architecture, and the School's Library took advantage of the benefits, acquiring increasing numbers of periodicals. For example, in 1962, of a total of 107 titles, 50 were from the West. Their number increased and decreased, hovering around an average of 45, and by 1970 had reached 56, from a total of 144 titles. We should note the above-mentioned dip that came in 1969: Western periodicals decreased to 44 titles, communist titles to 24, and Romanian titles to 45. This dip seems more than a local

<sup>11</sup> We have opted to exclude from the statistics the situation in 1989, which remains ambiguous, given that against the backdrop of the events that occurred in December a series of magazines from Romania and the USSR satellite countries ceased publication and others, from the West, either failed to reach the country or were lost at some point on their way to the Library.

<sup>12</sup> The process was begun by Gheorghiu Gheorghiu-Dej (the leader of the RCP from 1947 until his death in 1965) as early as 1952, when he purged from the Party's leadership the Muscovite faction led by Ana Pauker and continued, in 1954, when the Sov-Rom joint state enterprises were disbanded.

fluke. It could have been a press reflection of the Prague Spring<sup>13</sup> and its aftermath in August 1968, when Warsaw Pact troops, with the notable exception of Romania, invaded Czechoslovakia. This extremely serious political event and its unpredictable outcome made a strong mark on the moment and probably disrupted a number of interconnected activities between the states of Europe. Thus, it seems highly likely that the Library's subscriptions for 1969, taken out at the end of 1968, may also have been disrupted by the political and military situation.

In any event, as we have already stated, during this interval, periodicals from the communist countries lagged far behind in terms of the number of titles and were to remain in second place up until 1975, when they once again reached an almost equal footing: 27 from the West and 28 from the East. But nothing good lasts for long: *The July Theses*<sup>14</sup> were once again to close Romania's windows on the world in the most drastic way. The process of neo-Stalinist isolation that was aggressively set underway, widespread poverty, censorship, and increasingly severe and active control of every field of the arts also led to a decline in sources of information. Even immediately after 1971, the total number of periodicals subscribed to by the School's Library began to decrease. From 135 acquisitions that year, of which 42 were from the West, the number fell to 125 in 1972, of which 37 were from the West, and by 1979 the number had fallen to a total of 62, of which just 20 were from the free world, and 27 from the satellite countries. The East/West ratio decreased continuously until 1984, when the tide began to turn and Western once more began to outweigh Eastern periodicals. The year 1984 sets a record of 23:7, and by 1989, although it fluctuated, the ratio was not to be reversed. It is true that the number of titles from the West was not to exceed 23, apart from once, in 1987, when it inexplicably rose to 35.

### Romanian periodicals

The 219 titles of Romanian periodicals taken by the School's Library during the period under study, having been mapped according to their content (accepting the limits due to the relativity of the categorisation of some of these<sup>15</sup>), bring to light the following structure:<sup>16</sup>

- Specialist and related periodicals – 43 titles
- Periodicals on construction engineering, plumbing and building materials, workplace safety – 14 titles
- Periodicals with an ideological-political or propagandistic content, philosophical and sociological periodicals – 34 titles
- Periodicals on education, research, training, bibliography, laws and standards, statistics – 26 titles

13 There was a brief period of political freedom in the Socialist Republic of Czechoslovakia, lasting from the spring of 1968 to August of the same year, when the Soviet Union and its Warsaw Pact allies (with the exception of Romania) invaded the country to "redress" the situation.

14 *The July 1971 Theses* is the name by which a speech by Nicolae Ceaușescu is known, which was decisive for the Party's ideological line and which was delivered in front of the Executive Committee of the Romanian Communist Party. The full title is: *Proposals for measures to improve politico-ideological activity and Marxist-Leninist education of Party members and all working people*. The result of the dictator's visit to China and North Korea that year, the *July Theses* marked the beginning of a strong neo-Stalinist offensive, with disastrous results for the whole of Romanian culture, the economy, and everyday life in general.

15 In each of the thematic categories we have defined, there are undeniably specific titles, while others lie at the boundary of the definition of the group in question. For example, magazines such as *Buletinul de Studii și Cercetări Științifice în Construcții, Materiale de Construcții, Arhitectură și Sistemizare* [Bulletin of Scientific Studies and Research in Construction, Building Materials, Architecture and Systematisation] may definitely be included in the category of specialist periodicals and related publications, but it is not necessarily as certain whether *Buletinul Ministerul Construcțiilor* [Bulletin of the Ministry of Construction] should be included.

16 The table of these periodicals and the categories under which they fall can be found in Appendix 1.



- General interest scientific periodicals – 8 titles
- General culture and entertainment periodicals – 21 titles
- Periodicals from fields unconnected to architecture – 73 titles

On the one hand, this structure reflects certain political pressures of the time: the number of periodicals with a political/ideological or propagandistic content is particularly large because their acquisition, broadly managed by the Party leadership of Bucharest Central University, was compulsory. On the other hand, it reveals the way in which the librarians viewed the research activity specific to architecture. From this viewpoint, the attention devoted to adding Romanian periodicals proves exaggerated, resulting, at the extreme, in subscription to and acquisition of titles from other fields far from the architectural sphere of interest and sometimes absolutely irrelevant to it. This is baffling, but can be explained in certain cases by the fact that the Library acquired research periodicals published by research institutions, periodicals which, within the framework of the same subscription, included series dedicated to different fields.

A linguistic observation should be made at this point, namely that seven of the total titles were translations from the Russian of Russian periodicals (only one of which was in the architectural field) published in Moscow, and twelve were Romanian periodicals published in Bucharest, but in other languages or in bilingual format (ten in French, one in German, one in Czech). These conveyed falsified information from and about the communist bloc. There was one exception to this rule, however: *Canadian Builder*, which, for a short time, was published in Romanian in Bucharest.

From the Library's records it results that the architectural and related (civil construction, urbanism systematisation, design etc.) periodicals were sought after and acquired in a rigorous way, enjoying meticulously detailed record slips. Periodicals regarded as essential were even subscribed to in multiple copies.<sup>17</sup>

The number of titles in this category is quite large and reveals the interest of the political class in this field with a large impact in terms of image. The short lifespan of many of the periodicals in question points to fluctuations in this interest and even its real inconsistency, however.

Besides unequivocal titles, in the category of political/ideological and propagandistic periodicals we have also included, for reasons that are obvious, philosophical, sociological, and management periodicals. Immediately after the events of 1989, the mass of ideological periodicals, which remained almost entirely unresearched, was disposed of by special order of the Education Ministry.

An important category in times of normality, but largely useless during the period under study, given it was ideologically compromised, is that of periodicals on education, training and research. We have included herein a series of periodicals containing reference materials: bibliographies, laws and standards, statistics. Although many of the titles in question were of no interest to architects, it is certain that some of them, such as *The Collection of Laws, Decree and Decisions*; *The Demographic Bulletin of the People's Republic of Romania* and the *Bibliographical Bulletin of the People's Republic of Romania*, were nonetheless sought after, given the nature of the information they provided.

Another series of Romanian periodicals whose presence in the Library – if not their existence in itself – might be questioned is what we have called the general scientific interest periodicals. Covering too broad a spectrum of interest, many of them could have been left off the shelves without any loss in terms of research. The following examples might be given: *Science and*

<sup>17</sup> For example, the subscription for *Arhitectura* – the review of the Union of Romanian Architects, which was acquired by the Library for forty years, beginning in 1950 – came in five to ten copies, depending on the Library's available funds, but also depending on the interest it could be seen to create among readers.



*Development; Bulletin of Scientific Information; The Institute of Technical Research: Novelty in Technics, and The Progress of Science.*

In addition to these there is a large group of highly specialised periodicals (73 titles!) from fields without any connexion to architecture, which obviously had no business being in the School's Library. The following are examples: *Accountancy Records; Finance and Credit; Hydro-technics; Informatics and Mathematical Models; Polygraphy; Economic Issues; Review of Statistics; Review of Abstracts and Papers; The Theory and History of Literature and Art; Studies and Research into Economic Calculus and Economic Cybernetics.* The reasons for the inclusion of such periodicals in the Library are utterly unclear.

The category of general culture and entertainment periodicals is also well represented. If magazines such as *Twentieth Century; Manuscriptum* and *Photography – Selective Cahier* are titles whose purpose in an architectural library can be explained by the fact that they foster a wider cultural grounding, others such as *Woman* or *The Nettle*, whose content was aimed more at social strata with a middling education, are somewhat ridiculous.

As is perfectly explainable to anybody who examines the thematic mapping given above, of all the host of titles the readers were particularly interested in periodicals dedicated to the field of architecture, whose unrivalled leading light was *Arhitectura* magazine, the publication of the Union of Romanian Architects. The magazine's content also explored issues in the theory of architecture, an area utterly lacking in the Romanian architectural literature.

### Periodicals from other communist countries

Based on unwritten guidelines, the Library was required to subscribe to the periodicals of other countries from the communist bloc, foremost among which was naturally the Soviet Union. Represented by forty-six periodicals, through its publications "the great neighbour and friend" shared with us not only its experience in architecture, urbanism and construction, but by eight titles of pure ideological propaganda, also the process of constructing a brave new world, upon which it had embarked in 1917. Of the forty-six titles, four, translated into French, were intended for worldwide distribution, spreading "the light from the East", in other words Soviet propaganda.<sup>18</sup> A further six are translations or bilingual editions of American, French and German periodicals.

On the list the other Eastern Bloc countries are represented more modestly: periodicals punctually arrived from the German Democratic Republic (nine titles), the Socialist Republic of Czechoslovakia (nine titles) the Socialist Republic of Poland (six titles), the Hungarian People's Republic (six titles), the Bulgarian People's Republic (six titles), the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (two titles), the People's Republic of Albania (one title) and the Republic of Cuba (one title).<sup>19</sup>

The great majority of these periodicals – the one obvious exception being the eight Soviet propaganda titles – were on subjects that related specifically to the field of architecture, urbanism and construction. The exceptions are few: the German Democratic Republic provided magazines

<sup>18</sup> The propaganda was not lacking in impact if we think of the great architects who credited it, who included Frank Lloyd Wright and Le Corbusier.

<sup>19</sup> It is to be borne in mind that this statistical analysis takes into account the total number of titles acquired during the period under analysis, without recording changes in the title of the same periodical over the course of its existence, and so the statement of acquisition might appear slightly distorted in comparison with the reality.

on landscape gardening, art and the decorative arts, furniture and even hydro-technical structures, while Prague also sent a photography periodical.

For reasons that probably related to the idiosyncrasies of the politically infested discourses and stylistic movements current within the whole of the communist bloc, the periodicals from these countries, with the exception of some of those from the German Democratic Republic, which were sober and technical, were very rarely in demand, if at all, in the reading rooms. Their monochrome graphics, false and conformist principles, and poor-quality paper will also have contributed to their being rejected.

### Western periodicals

If we examine the category of the 271 Western periodicals more closely, it is interesting to note that they were extremely various in their places of publication. Not only West-European countries with long cultural traditions are represented – Great Britain, France, Germany (the Federal Republic), Italy, Switzerland, Belgium and Spain – but also Denmark, Finland, Norway, Sweden, Portugal, Greece and Turkey,<sup>20</sup> as well as states on other continents: Japan, the United States, Canada, Brazil.<sup>21</sup>

Many periodicals from the West reached the Library thanks to specific contexts and occurrences, without succeeding in creating coherent collections, which caused them not to be highlighted by the librarians and thereby not to be of significance for the typical reader. There are, however, a number of titles that are remarkable for the unbeaten rate at which they were acquired. To mark the ultimately paradoxical fact of the continuity of these Western research materials, which accumulated on the Library's shelves at a steady rate, it ought further to be said that **nineteen of these periodicals had an uninterrupted run of more than fifteen years**<sup>22</sup> during the period under study and that some titles achieved real records of longevity.<sup>23</sup>

With regard to the Western periodicals we must likewise note that their subject matter differs very widely, minutely scanning the whole of the architectural field. Apart from the periodicals on the general subjects of architecture, urbanism and systematisation, the list also includes others on the subjects of architectural history, historical monuments, restoration, landscape gardening, rural architecture, prefabricated structures, wood, concrete and metal structures, building materials, construction details, building site management, design, furniture and interior design, ergonomics, architectural research, architectural competitions, new trends in architecture, archaeology, art, graphics, sociology and futurology.

But as results from a series of discussions with librarians and readers from between 1960 and 1990, out of this extraordinarily wide range of reading matter, what the Library's users consulted most of all were the few major international architectural periodicals mentioned above, which,

20 The least familiar include *Arhitektoniki* magazine (published in Greek), from Athens, which was acquired by the Library with minimal interruptions for nineteen years, *Ekistics* (published in English), also from Athens, which was acquired for twelve years, and *Arkkitehti Arhitekten* (published in Finnish), from Helsinki, acquired for fourteen years.

21 The Library acquired 83 Western titles in French, 75 in English, 63 in German, 37 in Italian, five in Spanish, two in Portuguese, two in Swedish, and one each in Norwegian, Finnish, Danish, Turkish and Greek.

22 In Appendix 2 there is a table of the titles of the Western periodicals that were acquired by the Library continuously over periods of more than fifteen years.

23 These include *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui*, acquired by the School's Library for 38 years, 34 of which were without interruption, *l'Urbanisme* – 32 years, *The Architectural Review* – 28 years, *Deutsche Bauzeitschrift* – 29 years, *Technique et Architecture* – 27 years, *Der Baumeister* – 27 years, *Domus* – 27 years, *The Japan Architect* – 24 years, *Bauen und Wohnen* – 23 years, *L'Architettura Cronache e Storia* – 20 years, and the list could go on; in other words, the most important architectural periodicals in the world during the period under study.

given the high standard of their discourse and the unbroken regularity of their acquisition, provided the quality and continuity of information readers prized.

In addition, their attractive look – thick, glossy paper, high-quality photographs and, not least, the ideas they placed in circulation – made this category of periodical central to the library visits of many generations of students over the decades. For this reason, in the period, this complex body of research materials made an important contribution to making the School's Library an essential source of information when it came to the topicality, diversity and richness of specialist materials in the period under study.

### **The contribution of the Library of the School of Architecture to the dissemination of specialist information**

Even without more thoroughgoing research it is obvious that architectural students in Bucharest and their professors read in the School's Library to a very great extent. And it was natural that this be the case given that, as we have already said, since its foundation at the beginning of the twentieth century, throughout the period under study, and to the present day, it has remained the largest and most comprehensive architectural library in Romania.

Despite this fact, only quite a small number of the graduate architects employed at the various design institutes used the Library for research, perhaps also because during the years under discussion it was also possible to access literature from the field, especially the new literature, in other libraries, such as the INID,<sup>24</sup> CDCAS,<sup>25</sup> the Union of Architects, embassy libraries, and so on, as well as in the small libraries set up within the said institutes. This was despite the fact that access to the School's Library was not hindered by complicated formalities when it came to obtaining a permit (which could be issued, on request, the same day) and nor was there a risked of surveillance by the secret police, as was the case with regularly frequenting embassy libraries.

In addition, architectural information also circulated at a secondary level within closed circles of professionals via the sharing of books and periodicals purchased from the West by architects, either directly or through intermediaries. This practice was current particularly among architects outside Bucharest, whose sources of information were severely limited.

On the other hand, reading periodicals in the School's Library was not quite so simple, given that while Romanian periodicals could be acquired in multiple copies, those from Western countries were subscribed to in single copies, which, according to the rules in force, were not for loan. And when one copy of a magazine was sought after by more than 1,300 potential readers, the number of the students at the School in the 1970s for example, then it in effect became as elusive as a ghost. Moreover, although consultation of this type of publication ought to have taken place within the closed circuit of the reading room, in reality matters unfolded according to hidden channels: professors high up in the School's hierarchy borrowed the magazines for their own personal offices. In this way, the "good" magazines could be absent from the shelves for long periods of time.

To such circumstances may also be added the lack of research as an end in itself, in the context of a regime fossilised in the dirigiste dogmatism imposed by the Soviets.

<sup>24</sup> The National Institute for Information and Documentation in Bucharest, a bibliographical research institute in the field of science and technology, came into being as a result of the transformation and restructuring of the Technical Documentation Institute. Its library, well known in the communist period for the very up-to-date periodicals to which it subscribed, was not as rich in general architectural information as the School's Library, however.

<sup>25</sup> The Centre for Documentation in Construction, Architecture and Systematisation, founded in 1954, also had a very well-organised library, but it did not have a reading room to match the research materials to be found on its shelves.

If only in theory, the School otherwise remained pre-eminently a place of research. The School's Library represented to the largest extent a space through which news of the theories and concrete achievements of architecture in the free world was able to reach Romania, be understood, and, above all, be assimilated by trainee architects.

### Conclusions

From an examination of the bibliographical sources for the periodicals acquired by the Library of the School of Architecture in Bucharest in the communist period, it is possible to make a number of principal observations that are conclusive in nature.

It therefore results that during the period under research the Library had the benefit of a significant collection of specialist periodicals, much broader than might have been expected even by an informed reader. The collection was well structured and kept up to date as far as this was possible. The variety, quality and continuity of the periodicals, as reflected in the Library's records for the period under study, created a good reputation for the Library, making its reading room a leading source for research in the field. That it was without doubt underused by professionals and researchers, instead being frequented by students and some of the School's teaching staff, is certainly connected with the futility of research as an end itself during a period in which architecture, the same as every other aspect of life, was regimented within strict dogmas and political directives.

Otherwise, in the rich and diverse world of the periodicals subscribed to by the Library, readers' demand was mainly focussed on a number of theoretical rather than technical Romanian magazines and the best-known Western magazines, which were not only particularly abundant in information of the highest quality, but also extremely elegant and coherent in their continuity.

By reading these periodicals, professionals in the field gained access to the post-1940s development of the modernist paradigm all over the world, with its formal typologies, its compositional and volumetric innovations, and also the new systems of construction that came in its wake. In parallel they were introduced to the ideological and dogmatic repertoire imposed by the communist model, based on ignorant, bombastic and abusive directives, all in discontinuous and incongruent texts and images, crashing down on the architectural world with the force of a torrent, against which architects struggled for better or worse, depending on the situation.

The number of periodical titles arriving from the West, which reached 271, i.e. 47.1% of the total 606 titles – rather unexpectedly, given the general opaqueness of state structures to the values of the Western world – leads to the paradoxical conclusion that the Library subscribed to such periodicals (almost) without restriction, depending on the budget available. In the 1950s and 60s the decreases in this category, caused by various events and changes in the regime's political orientation, never led to the number of titles from the West falling below eighteen, but this predictably happened in the grim ideological period that followed 1971. In any event, during the period we have been looking at, the overall graph of acquisitions of periodicals titles by the School's Library, which is obviously influenced by their place of origin, be it local, Eastern or Western, literally reflects the dominant political directives of the period.

The reasons why the Bucharest regime left open a window for the foreign press may be intuited rather than demonstrated using definite documents: Western progress was sometimes convenient, and modernism (*Horribile dictu!* This term among others like functionalism or international style were prohibited inside the School of Architecture and almost unknown outside.) could be taken

advantage of and adapted, provided that it did not endanger the “new order”. But against such a danger the secret police worked with unusual effectiveness, being highly organised and infiltrated in every field, libraries being no exception.

Although access to the periodicals in the Library was free, a series of censorship filters were in place when it came to teaching activity and design, and these were doctrinally channelled in the directions laid down by the Party. The directives of the Party congresses and conferences established the criteria and conditions for architectural design, as well as the specific ideological orientation of the field.

Undeniably, the precise way in which the research materials made available through the Library were utilised in the School and the profession depended on a host of factors, which might be debated at length. However, a serious and applied examination of these is not the object of the present work.

Appendix 1. List of the titles of Western architectural periodicals acquired by the School's Library between 1945 and 1989, for uninterrupted periods of more than fifteen years

Appendix 2. Table of Romanian architectural and related periodicals acquired by the Library of the School of Architecture between 1945 and 1989

Appendix 3. Graph of the titles of periodicals acquired by the Library of the School of Architecture between 1945 and 1989, by categories of origin

Appendix 1. List of the titles of Western architectural periodicals acquired by the School's Library between 1945 and 1989, for uninterrupted periods of more than fifteen years

	Title	Place of publication	Language of publication	Duration of acquisition
1	Architectural Digest	New York	English	32y, 26y continuously 1964-1989
2	Architectural Design	London	English	21y, 18y continuously 1957-1974
3	Werk, Bauen und Wohnen	Zurich	German	24y, 16y continuously 1959-1975
4	Cahiers de l'Institut d'Amenagement et d'Urbanisme de la Region Parisienne	Paris	French	25y continuously 1964-1988
5	Cahiers du centre scientifique et technique du batiment	Paris	French	25y, 17y continuously 1968-1984
6	Camera	Lucerne	German	15y continuously 1958-1972
7	Der Baumeister	Munich	German	21y, 26y 1956-1981
8	DBZ Deutsche Bauzeitschrift	Gutersloh	German	29y, 23y continuously 1959-1981
9	DB Deutsche Bauzeitung	Stuttgart / Hanover	German	22y, 18y continuously 1959-1976
10	Domus	Milano	Italian	28y, 25y continuously 1957-1981
11	L'Architecture d'aujourd'hui	Paris	French	38y, 34y continuously 1956-1989
12	L'architecture francaise	Paris	French	19y, 17y continuously 1961-1977
13	Moebel interior design	Stuttgart	German	17y, 16y continuously 1961-1976
14	Technique et architecture	Paris	French	28y, 18y continuously 1956-1973
15	The Architectural Review	London	English	28y, 25y continuously 1957-1981
16	Urbanisme	Paris	French	32y, 31y continuously 1957-1987
17	Vitrum - Lastre di vetro e cristallo	Milano	Italian	17y continuously 1951-1967
18	Zentralblatt fur Industriebau	Hanover	German	16y continuously 1959-1974

Appendix 2. Table of Romanian architectural and related periodicals acquired by the Library of the School of Architecture between 1945 and 1989

	Title	Place of publication	Language of publication	Years of acquisition
1	AGIR – Revistele tehnice. Arhitectură-Construcții / <i>AGIR– The Technical Magazines. Architecture - Constructions</i>	Bucharest	Romanian	1950 for 1948
2	Arhitectură. Construcții AGIR (Editura AGIR) / <i>Architecture. Constructions (AGIR Publishing House)</i>	Bucharest	Romanian	1946; 1948; 1949
3	Arhitectură și urbanism și gospodărie orașenească. Caiet selectiv / <i>Architecture and Urban Planning and the Public Utilities Management. Selected notes</i>	Bucharest	Romanian	1951; 1959-1968
4	Arhitectura RPR / <i>Architecture RPR</i>	Bucharest	Romanian	1950-1989
5	Arhitectura URSS / <i>Architecture USSR – translation</i>	Bucharest (Moscow)	Romanian - translation	1954-1956; 1971
6	Arta plastică / <i>Arta / Fine Art / Art</i>	Bucharest	Romanian	1954-1989
7	Buletin documentar materiale de construcții (INCERC) / <i>Building Materials Bulletin</i>	Bucharest	Romanian	1957
8	Buletinul Comisiunii Monumentelor Istorice / Buletinul Monumentelor Istorice (Comisiunea Monumentelor Istorice) / <i>Historical Monuments Bulletin (the Commission on Historical Monuments)</i>	Bucharest	Romanian	1945
9	Buletinul CSCAS / <i>The CSCAS Bulletin</i>	Bucharest	Romanian	1955, for 1953; 1954-1957
10	Buletinul de studii și cercetări științifice în construcții, materiale de construcții, arhitectură și sistematizare (CSCAS și INCERC-ISCAS) / <i>The Scientific Studies and Research in Construction, Building Materials, Architecture and Systematisation Bulletin</i>	Bucharest	Romanian	1960; 1965-1966; 1968-1970
11	Buletinul Ministerului Construcțiilor și Materialelor de Construcții / <i>The Bulletin of the Ministry of Construction and Building Materials</i>	Bucharest	Romanian	1957
12	Buletinul CSAC pentru uz intern / <i>CSAC Bulletin for Internal Use</i>	Bucharest	Romanian	1973
13	Buletin documentar arhitectură și urbanism (CDCAS) / <i>Architecture and Urban Planning Bulletin</i>	Bucharest	Romanian	1957
14	Buletinul INCERC-ISCAS. Buletinul construcțiilor / <i>INCERC-ISCAS Bulletin. Construction Bulletin</i>	Bucharest	Romanian	1960-1961; 1964-1970; 1973-1974; 1976-1989
15	Buletinul Ministerului Construcțiilor / <i>The Bulletin of the Ministry of Construction</i>	Bucharest	Romanian	1949-1952
16	Buletin documentar construcții / <i>Constructions Bulletin</i>	Bucharest	Romanian	1955-1957
17	Caiet de documentare selectivă. Ergonomie (ICDT) / <i>Selected Notes. Ergonomics</i>	Bucharest	Romanian	1958-1961; 1973
18	Caiet de documentare selectivă. Estetica industrială (ICDT) / <i>Selected notes. Industrial Aesthetics</i>	Bucharest	Romanian	1971-1973;
19	Canadian builder	Bucharest	Romanian	1968 for 1961

20	Construcții (CDCAS) / <i>Constructions</i>	Bucharest	Romanian	1973-1975; 1977-1989
21	Construcții civile, industriale și agricole. Caiet selectiv / <i>Civil, Industrial and Farm Buildings. Selected notes</i>	Bucharest	Romanian	1966-1967
22	Construcții și mecanizare în construcții; construcții civile / <i>Constructions and Building Mechanisation: Civil Engineering</i>	Bucharest	Romanian	1959-1966
23	Constructorul sătesc (trad.) / <i>The Village Builder</i>	Bucharest	Romanian - Russian	1956
24	Creativitatea / <i>Creativity</i>	Bucharest	Romanian	1973
25	Culegere de probleme de arhitectură și construcții / <i>Collection of Architecture and Construction Problems</i>	Bucharest	Romanian	1955-1957
26	Design. Caiete selective ale Centrului Român de Design / <i>Design. Selected Notes of the Romanian Design Centre</i>	Bucharest	Romanian	
27	Documentare CDCAS / <i>Documentation</i>	Bucharest	Romanian	1958; 1960-1965
28	Documentare Tehnică (Construcții și materiale de construcții) / <i>Technical Documentation (Construction and Building Materials)</i>	Bucharest	Romanian	1960-1965
29	D.S. - Estetica tehnică / <i>D.S. - Technical Aesthetics</i>	Bucharest	Romanian	1970
30	Ergonomie / <i>Ergonomics</i>	Bucharest	Romanian	1972; 1973
31	Foaie pentru minte, inima și arhitectură. Revistă editată de studenții I. A. / <i>Leaflets for the Mind, Heart and Architecture. Magazine edited by the I.A. Students</i>	Bucharest	Romanian	
32	Inform. Revista revistelor (I.A.) / <i>Shapeless. The Magazines' Magazine</i>	Bucharest	Romanian	1979
33	Materiale de construcții. Caiet selectiv / <i>Building Materials. Selected Notes</i>	Bucharest	Romanian	1959-1967; 1978
34	Modă - Mobilă / <i>Fashion - Furniture</i>	Bucharest	Romanian	1964-1968; 1979-1983; 1988-1989
35	Progrese în construcții. Progrese în tehnică. Construcții civile, industriale și agricole / <i>Progress in Construction. Technical Progress. Civil, Industrial and Farm Buildings</i>	Bucharest	Romanian	1959-1967
36	Progrese și direcții. Tendințe în estetica industrială / <i>Progress and Perspectives. Trends in Industrial Aesthetics</i>	Bucharest	Romanian	1971-1972
37	Progrese și direcții. Tendințe în urbanism / <i>Progress and Perspectives. Trends in Urban Planning</i>	Bucharest	Romanian	1971-1973
38	Revista construcțiilor și materialelor de construcții / <i>Magazine of Construction and Building Materials</i> alelor de construcții s in Urban Planningil engineering,s, architecture and systematisaton	Bucharest	Romanian	1951-1953
39	Revista muzeelor și monumentelor. Monumente istorice și de artă / <i>Magazine of Museums and Monuments. Historical and Art Monuments</i>	Bucharest	Romanian	1966-1989
40	Simetria / <i>Symmetry</i>	Bucharest	Romanian	1946
41	Sistematizarea și organizarea teritoriului. Măsurători terestre. Caiet selectiv / <i>Systematisation and Territorial Management. Terrestrial Measurements</i>	Bucharest	Romanian	1968
42	Șantierul de construcții. CDCAS / <i>The Construction Site</i>	Bucharest	Romanian	1973
43	Urbanizarea / <i>Urbanisation</i>	Bucharest	Romanian	1973



## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AGIR = Asociația Generală a Inginerilor din România / *The General Association of Engineers of Romania*

CDCAS = Centrul de Documentare pentru Construcții, Arhitectură și Urbanism / *Centre of Documentation for Construction, Architecture and Urban Planning*

CSCAS = Comitetul de Stat pentru Construcții, Arhitectură și Sistemizare / *The State Committee for Construction, Architecture and Systematisation*

CSEAL = Comitetul de Stat pentru Economia și Administrația Locală / *The State Committee for Local Economy and Administration*

IA = Institutul de Arhitectură / *Institute of Architecture*

ICDT = Institutul Central de Documentare Tehnică / *Central Institute of Technical Documentation*

INCERC = Institutului Național de Cercetare-Dezvoltare în Construcții și Economia Construcțiilor / *National Institute for Building Research*

ISART = Institutul de Studii și Proiectare pentru Sistemizare, Arhitectură și Tipizare / *Institute of Studies and Design for Systematisation, Architecture and Type Projects*

RPR = Republica Populară Română / *Popular Republic of Romania*

Appendix 3. Graph of the titles of periodicals acquired by the Library of the School of Architecture between 1945 and 1989, by categories of origin

