

Figures 7.32a and b). Fifty thousand dwelling units were demolished to make way for it. Many historic buildings were destroyed in the process. The old city is now dwarfed by all the new construction.

The programme for the buildings lining the avenue was never clearly articulated. They were built to give the street its frame. They are of uniform height being about 10 stories high and neo-classical in appearance. At the head of the street is the Casa Republicii, or House of the People, reputedly the second largest building in the world in term of space (the Pentagon in Washington being the largest), the tallest in Bucharest (86 metres and, reputedly, the same below the ground), and 276 metres long. Designed to be the government centre (and as a Palace for Ceausescu), it now houses the Romanian Parliament. The building is now called the Palatul Parlamentului (Palace of Parliament). It has 700 offices, meeting rooms, restaurants, libraries and assembly halls for 1200 people (the 66-metre by 30-metre Romanian Hall, the 55-metre by 42-metre Banquet Hall and the 64-metre in diameter cylindrical domed Congress Hall (Cavalcanti, 1997: 98). The architect of record for the Casa Republicii is indeed Anca Petrescu. She designed a simple modern building for the site but it was superseded by Ceausescu's own 'New Romanian Architecture'. He inspected its construction on a weekly basis and made many on-site design decisions. Models were made for him so he could understand proposals. Unlike Hitler and Mussolini, he could not read drawings.

In front of the building is a semicircular plaza, the Piata Semicirculara capable of holding a crowd of 500,000 people.

Monumental buildings frame it. The centre of the boulevard is lined with fountains, commemorative arches and columns, and sculptures. They stand in an 8-metre wide green strip that they share with a variety of tree species. Designed to be a celebration of socialism, the buildings lining the boulevard now house international capitalist organizations – banks and insurance companies. The western end is largely deserted and dilapidated; the fountains have not played for a decade.

The project required so great a capital investment that it bankrupted the state (although the actual total cost is unknown). The boulevard remains a major axis with lengthy vistas. It celebrates its developer, President Ceausescu. He had the political and financial control to develop his idea, hire architects, and supervise the construction of the project. Professionals followed his directives. Unlike Paris or the work of Mussolini in Rome, the only consideration in the design of the Avenue of the Victory of Socialism was Ceausescu's own aesthetic ideal. Little attention was paid to the non-symbolic functions of the built environment.

### Major references

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