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Architect Nikola Dobrović—A Member of the Heroic Generation

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The modern movement in the 1920s and 1930s, called the “heroic period” of architecture, was considered a catalyst of the New World. The architectural manifest proclaimed in *Vers une architecture* by Le Corbusier (1923) asserted the techno-scientific industrial character of the age and announced social revolution as an experiment and epithet of modernism: a democracy where everything is relative, where the machine does the work, where science sets the course for society. Serbian architect Nikola Dobrović (1897-1967) was educated in Prague and Budapest, and both cities were avant-garde centers at that time. As early as June 1930, in *Hat Bouwbedrijf*, Theo van Doesburg described Dobrović as a young modernist architect with a unique, regionally derived artistic language. The aim of this paper is to present Dobrović’s works and explore their place within the wider modernistic context of the time and their significance for the architectural heritage of both Central Europe and Serbia. His master works will be discussed: the designs for the *Terazije Terrace* (1930) and the *Federal Ministry of Defense* (1963), both in Belgrade, the latter severely damaged during the NATO bombing of 1999.

At the threshold of the twentieth century, in 1899, the second edition of Otto Wagner’s book *Moderne Architektur* was published in Vienna.¹ At that time, Nikola Dobrović was a boy of two, who was born in Pécs (Hungary) to a large Serbian merchant family. Twenty years later, monumental events transpired, impacting global history, the arts, and the subject of this paper. In 1919, the First World War was over; the architectural movement, proclaiming cultural unity through the new art of building as institutionalized in the

This paper is dedicated to my professor, Miloš R. Perović, a former student and admirer of Nikola Dobrović, who spent a great deal of his professional life studying the work and life of Nikola Dobrović. My special thanks go to Professor Ljubica D. Popovich, who initiated and supported work on this paper, which was initially presented at the 33rd American Association for the Advancement of Slavic Studies national convention, held in Arlington (Crystal City), Virginia, in November 2001.

¹ Otto Wagner, *Moderne Architektur* (Vienna, 1899), translated as Otto Wagner, *Modern Architecture: A Guidebook for His Students to This Field of Art*; trans. Harry Francis Mallgrave (Santa Monica, CA: Getty Center for the History of Art and the Humanities, 1988).

Bauhaus, was founded in Weimar (Germany);² and young Dobrović returned to his study of architecture in Prague (Czech Republic) which had been interrupted by the war.³

A note referring to the period of his studies at the Department of Architecture in the Technical University in Prague reveals that young Dobrović was aware that Otto Wagner's influence on architecture was fading in Central Europe.⁴ After the fall of the powerful and conservative Austro-Hungarian empire, the political and artistic domination of Vienna was overcome with a revival of cultural identities in Pécs, Prague, Dubrovnik (Croatia), Belgrade (Serbia)... In a concerted reaction against the extreme Germanic nationalism that had prevailed during the Austro-Hungarian hegemony, the architectural elite among the Slavic peoples turned their eyes away from Vienna towards new sources for the expression of Slavic cultural identity. In Serbia this was the basis for the eclectic tendencies embodied in the so-called Serbo-Byzantine style, while, in spite of Wagner's many students and other renowned architects of the time, architectural tendencies in Prague turned towards modernism.⁵ It was purified of banal nationalistic sentiments and drew inspiration from Russian Constructivism and Parisian Purism.⁶ Both Constructivism and Purism went beyond being just polemical aesthetic precepts; indeed, these two movements matured into nothing less than general theories of civilization, with iconography that was more than just another avant-gardist line in the evolution of twentieth-century art.⁷

In 1923, Nikola Dobrović graduated with a degree in architecture and began his career in the studios of Bohumil Hübschmann and Dr. Antonin

² "Let us create a new guild of craftsmen, without the class distinctions which raise an arrogant barrier between craftsman and artist. Together let us conceive and create the new building of the future, which will embrace architecture and sculpture and painting in one unity and which will rise one day toward heaven from the hands of a million workers like the crystal symbol of a new faith." Proclamation of the Weimar Bauhaus, 1919, quoted in Kenneth Frampton, *Modern Architecture: A Critical History* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1992), 123.

³ Miloš R. Perović and Spasoje Krnić, *Nikola Dobrović: Eseji, projekti, kritike* (Belgrade: Arhitektonski fakultet Univerziteta u Beogradu i Muzej arhitekture, 1998), 23.

⁴ Perović and Krnić, *Nikola Dobrović*, 313.

⁵ Jan Kotera, known as "the father of modern Czech architecture," Wagner's disciple and professor of architecture at the Secondary Arts and Crafts School in Prague at the time, clarified the social climate, rooted well before the World War I: "Open the windows toward Europe," and "Catch up with and surpass Europe" (Perović and Krnić, *Nikola Dobrović*, 40).

⁶ Perović, "Nikola Dobrović: The Sources of His Artistic Language," *Ekistics* 65, nos. 391–93 (1998): 239–53.

⁷ On Russian Constructivism and Parisian Purism, see Frampton, *Modern Architecture*, 167–77, 149–60.

Engel,⁸ both of whom were Otto Wagner's students. However, the Prague of Dobrović's time was deeply anti-Wagnerian.⁹ In the same year, Le Corbusier-Saunier published the book *Vers une architecture*.¹⁰ This book, which proved to be one of the most influential architectural studies of the twentieth century, reconsidered and transformed some basic notions about architecture that were discussed by Vitruvius almost eighteen centuries ago. In Vitruvius's *Ten Books on Architecture*, the subject of architecture includes buildings, machines, and timepieces.¹¹ A coda to the short history of modernism is captured by the slogan of Le Corbusier: "A machine for living in." The architectural manifest in *Vers une architecture* originated from Purist aesthetic theory, which averred the techno-scientific industrial character of the age and transferred the concept of Darwinian evolution to the field of machine-made forms. From the Purist concepts it extended backward to the Greek architectural world, with five orders, classical symmetry, richness of materials, and precision of execution, and forward towards the imminent industrialized future.¹² Moreover, the book announced for the first time the fundamental dialectical split between engineering and architecture and their integration at the programmatic level. It is interesting today to look at the illustrations of machines in *Vers une architecture*: the palace-like ships and the stage-coach-like cars, changing year by year, and gradually becoming the technological elements of the new industrial age (Fig. 1 on p. 90). The lyrical tone fades, however, with the penultimate and final sections of the book: *Maisons en série* ("Mass Production Houses") and *Architecture ou révolution* ("Architecture or Revolution").¹³ If the chapter on mass production refers only to the rationalization of building production, particularly to low-cost building, proclaiming the industrial revolution as already achieved through the mass production of transportation means, the last chapter goes much further. *Architecture ou révolution* intended social revolution, announcing an *experiment* as an epithet of modernism: a democracy where everything is relative, where the machine does the work, where science sets the course for a better society.

⁸ Perović and Krnić, *Nikola Dobrović*, 82.

⁹ Perović and Krnić, *Nikola Dobrović*, 39–40 ff.

¹⁰ Le Corbusier, *Vers une architecture* (Paris: Les Editions G. Crès, 1923).

¹¹ Vitruvius Pollio, *Ten Books on Architecture*, trans. Ingrid D. Rowland (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), passim.

¹² Kenneth Frampton, *Le Corbusier* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2001), 27–29.

¹³ Le Corbusier [pseud.], *Towards a New Architecture*, trans. (New York: Payson & Clarke, 1927), 228–89.

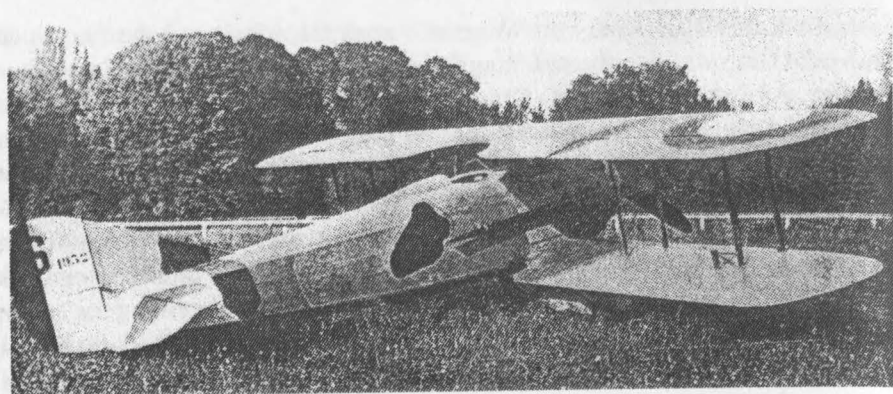


Fig. 1. SPAD XIII BLERIOT (Designed by Becneau).

Towards a new architecture, by Le Corbusier [pseud.], translated from the 13th French ed., with an introduction by Frederick Etchells (New York: Payson & Clarke, [1927])

At the very beginning of the pioneering period of modernism there was still confusion in Central Europe about the identity of Le Corbusier-Saunier (pseudonyms of Charles Edouard Jeanneret and Amédée Ozenfant).¹⁴ This was not the case in Prague, which was at the time the cultural center of Central Europe and was especially strong between 1919 and 1934, when Dobrović was studying and working there. Both Le Corbusier and Amédée Ozenfant, along with J. J. Pieter Oud, Walter Gropius, and Adolf Loos, visited Prague and gave lectures on the “new” architecture, as it was called at the time.¹⁵ There is no reason to believe that young Dobrović missed those lectures.

It is hard to document Dobrović’s personal contacts with the giants of modernism such as Gropius, Rietveld, and Loos, the exception being one postcard from 1935 addressed to Oud and signed by Nikola Dobrović and his brother Petar, who was a well-known painter at the time.¹⁶ There is, however, strong evidence that Dobrović was in contact with architectural syntax coming from another secondary center of avant-gardism—Budapest. The Hungarian activist architectural movement espoused vital architectural theory and intellectual attempts equal to Russian Constructivism, German Expressionism, or Dutch Neoplasticism, which were, in a way, later institu-

¹⁴ Perović and Krunić, *Nikola Dobrović*, 313.

¹⁵ Perović and Krunić, *Nikola Dobrović*, 41.

¹⁶ Perović and Krunić, *Nikola Dobrović*, 59.

tionalized and internationalized in the Bauhaus.¹⁷ Being a part of the Czech architectural milieu by education, and of the Hungarian intellectual environment by personal and professional contacts, Dobrović’s architectural and intellectual opus is enriched by a unique, regionally derived, artistic language. This characterization holds, though it is contrary to the expectation that Dobrović belongs to a particular tradition. As early as June 1930, Theo van Doesburg, in his essay “Yugoslavia: Rivaling Influences: Nikola Dobrović and the Serbian Tradition,” noticed that Nikola Dobrović’s architecture is “liberated from confining bonds of Yugoslavian tradition, aligned with the general innovation in architecture and the arts in Central and Western Europe,”¹⁸ but closely attached to regional landscape, soil, and nature.¹⁹ Van Doesburg emphasized Dobrović’s ability to use beautiful local stone as the dominant building material, benefiting from its natural plastic capability in the design of rhythmically disrupted masses, integrated sometimes in the half-circular volumes so apparent in the Serbian landscape. Dobrović’s world of architectural forms is, in his own words, “space set in motion” with powerful horizontals and huge cantilevers, “orchestrated” with rough-textured blocks of stone.²⁰ It is modeled space in which non-built volumes also acquire plastic treatment, connecting built and unbuilt elements in time and space, introducing the experiment of dynamism in architecture, which, in turn, can grow, interact, and change.

Having those notions in mind, it is not surprising that it was the architect Nikola Dobrović who, in 1930, manifested the first big success of architectural modernism in Serbia with his project for the Terazije Terrace in Belgrade (Fig. 2 on p. 92).²¹ Dobrović won the international competition for the Terazije Terrace with an extremely radical design for the period. Following the prerequisites set by the competition, Dobrović suggested a

¹⁷ For more on the Hungarian Activist movement, influenced by Bauhaus through Bauhaus students Farkas Molnar and Alfred Forbat, not to mention Laszlo Moholy-Nagy, who was a professor at the Bauhaus between 1923 and 1928, see Perović and Krunić, *Nikola Dobrović*, 40–54 ff.

¹⁸ Theo van Doesburg, *On European Architecture. Complete Essays from Hat Bouwbedrijf 1924–1931*, trans. Charlotte I. Loeb and Arthur L. Loeb (Basel, Boston, and Berlin: Birkhauser, 1990), 294.

¹⁹ Van Doesburg, *On European Architecture*, 289–95.

²⁰ Perović and Krunić, *Nikola Dobrović*, 54–55.

²¹ Three years before, in 1927, Le Corbusier and Pierre Janneret proposed their modernistic design for the League of Nations (Palais de la Société des Nations) in Geneva. The project was taken into consideration for the first prize, which was the first time ever that modernistic design was so close to win among the eclectic solutions.

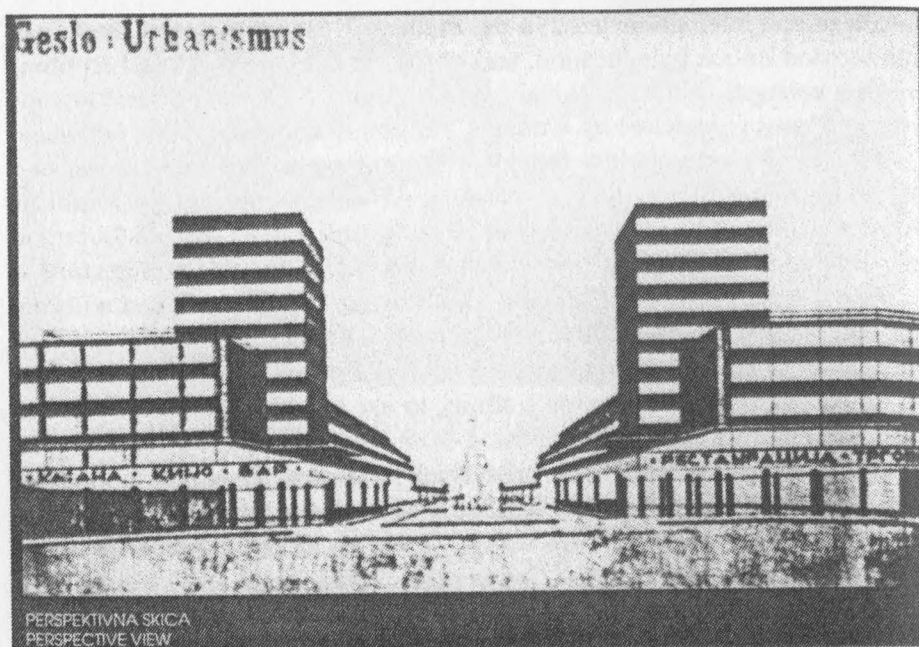


Fig. 2. Nikola Dobrović, Design for the Terazije Terrace, Belgrade, 1930.

Miloš R. Perović i Spasoje Krunić, *Nikola Dobrović. Eseji, projekti, kritike* (Belgrade: Arhitektonski fakultet Univerziteta u Beogradu i Muzej arhitekture, 1998).

polyfunctional commercial and residential complex, which opened to a tranquil view of the rivers Sava and Danube. His architectural and urbanistic solution consisted of two towers symmetrically positioned like the gate, thus defining the public space of the very center of Belgrade and its opening towards the Sava river. Starting from these two office and residential towers, a series of terraces with fountains and water spaces cascaded towards the Sava river, while at the bottom a series of attractive spaces was planned which included movie theaters, restaurants, and shops. The architectural program for the Terazije Terrace is similar to the Rockefeller Center in New York. Initially focused on a “city beautiful” plaza laid out before the opera house, and built chiefly between 1932–39 by the Reinhard & Hofmeister, Corbett, Harrison & Macmurray, and Hood & Fouloux firms, the Rockefeller Center today is architecturally and ideologically interpreted as a Radio City—

“within a city.”²² The Center is a hybrid facility for entertainment with Radio City Music Hall and the Center Theater, and shops in the sunken plaza boast roof gardens, which flank a fountain walk. Since the design for the Terazije Terrace (1930) predates the Rockefeller Center (1932–39) by couple of years, it was not epigonic to the well-known American plan. The proposed materialization for Dobrović’s project was based on the incorporation of purely transparent stereometric forms that can be compared to the 1920s expressionistic “skin-and bones” architecture by Mies van der Rohe and his projects for an office building in *Friedrichstrasse* in Berlin 1919–21.²³ The importance of this Belgrade architectural event is further heightened considering the fact that it postdated, by only about fifty years, the first regulation plan for transforming Belgrade from an Ottoman town into a European urban city as originally laid out by Emilijan Josimović. In other words, Belgrade in the 1880s was literally still a medieval settlement made of wood and *čerpč* (sun-dried mud bricks), with an irregular street network. The project for the Terazije Terrace proposed by Dobrović meant turning wholeheartedly towards modernism at its finest, embracing the experimental, monumental, and heroic elements therein. Unfortunately, the monumental design for the Terazije Terrace was never realized.

More than thirty years later, in 1963, one of Dobrović’s other designs was finally executed in Belgrade (Fig. 3a/3b on p. 94). The design for the Federal Ministry of Defense building in Belgrade was based on the architect’s mature ideas and the laudable notions of “intellectual, modernistic architecture” combined with Dobrović’s unique vocabulary of powerful horizontals and rough stone texture. The monumental form of the building was underscored by a neo-Classical symmetry with an axis in a void, an effect that Dobrović used when submitting the project for the Terazije Terrace competition. For Dobrović, the use of negative, unbuilt volume integrated into built space is more than a compositional effect, but an essential element for the integrity of dynamic space, where architecture is perceived in time and space, in movement and existence, in spatial relations of geometric volumes—both built and unbuilt.²⁴

²² Frampton, *Modern Architecture*, 220–22.

²³ Perović, *Serbian Architecture: From Historicism to the Second Modernism* (Belgrade: Faculty of Architecture, University of Belgrade, forthcoming 2002). I thank Professor Perović for allowing me to present these parts of his own study before his new book is officially released from print.

²⁴ Perović and Krunić, *Nikola Dobrović*, 115–34.



Fig. 3a. Nikola Dobrović, Federal Ministry of Defense, Belgrade, 1963.

Miloš R. Perović i Spasoje Krunić, *Nikola Dobrović. Eseji, projekti, kritike* (Belgrade: Arhitektonski fakultet Univerziteta u Beogradu i Muzej arhitekture, 1998).

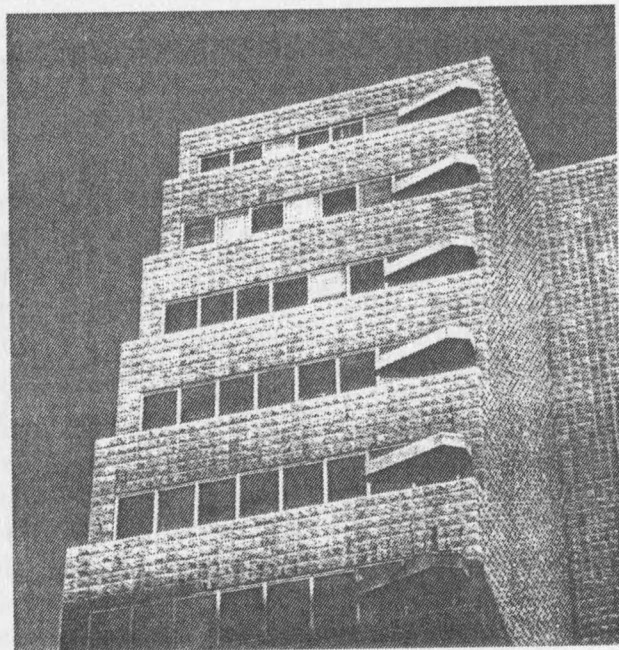


Fig. 3b. Nikola Dobrović, Federal Ministry of Defense, Belgrade, 1963, detail.

Miloš R. Perović i Spasoje Krunić, *Nikola Dobrović. Eseji, projekti, kritike* (Belgrade: Arhitektonski fakultet Univerziteta u Beogradu i Muzej arhitekture, 1998).

Therefore, adopting Bergson's dialectic and materialistic philosophy of "dynamic schemes,"²⁵ Dobrović built the experiment in "cinematographic cognition." He created architecture of dynamic interactions that changes as the beholder moves, observes, and uses it—architecture which is open to development in all directions without losing anything of its visual unity. Dobrović's architecture appeared as an opposition to the perfectionism of Neoplasticism and Le Corbusier's *Five Points of Architecture* (the *pilotis*—free-standing columns, the *toit-jardin*—the roof garden, the *plan libre*—free interior, the *fenêtre en longueur*—horizontal windows, and the *façade libre*—free façade), which were crucial for the organization of the canonical building of the 1930s "Modern Architecture" main-stream. In Dobrović's building of the Federal Ministry of Defense in Belgrade there is no lightness and transparency of the vertical surfaces as postulated by Le Corbusier. Dobrović's structure is opaque, tough, and corporeal, completely opposed to the cool abstractions of the International Style. Dobrović was aware that fear of cool space tones made many architects ornament their buildings,²⁶ as such was often the case with the misuse and misinterpretation of the building tradition during the period of neo-Serbo-Byzantine Style. He believed that new architecture could absorb regional characteristics from the geo-physical and social conditions of the moment; the honest expression of the mentality and identity of those who build and use such enriched architecture would prevail, putting the regional identity above the mechanical and technical problems of building.²⁷

Stone, a dense, solid material, is traditionally used in the Mediterranean region to support loads. However, besides being regional materials, stone and tile are presented at the Federal Ministry of Defense in such a way that their respective load-bearing and surfacing qualities, while obviously functional, are actually reversed. Their real substance is suppressed for their value of *metaphorical* substance. The façade surfaces are modeled in such a way that blocks of red stone are on load-bearing walls and white tiles are on the vertical planes, following the basic postulates of the Modern Movement and

²⁵ See for example: Henri Bergson, *Matière et mémoire: Essai sur la relation du corps à l'esprit* (Paris: F. Alcan, 1896); idem, *La perception du changement: Conférences faites à l'Université d'Oxford les 26 et 27 mai 1911* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1911); idem, *Matière et mémoire: Essai sur la relation du corps à l'esprit* (Paris: F. Alcan, 1912); idem, *L'énergie spirituelle: essais et conférences* (Paris: F. Alcan, 1919); idem, *La pensée et le mouvant: essais et conférences* (Paris: F. Alcan, 1934); idem, *L'évolution créatrice* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1948).

²⁶ Perović and Krunić, *Nikola Dobrović*, 115–34. See also Nikola Dobrović, "Topli i hladni prostorni tonovi u savremenoj arhitekturi," *Čovjek i prostor* 4: 61 (1957): 1.

²⁷ Perović and Krunić, *Nikola Dobrović*, 115–34.

Le Corbusier's "white elevations."²⁸ Moreover, Dobrović challenged the idea of a modernistic volumetric box supported by a flexible system of reinforced concrete framing, as in the Dom-ino system. Dating from 1915, Le Corbusier's Dom-ino system was his first endeavor to address the rationalization and mechanization of building production, based on various systems of prefabricated concrete constructions, which embodied the flat-slab, and cantilevered principle of the free plan.²⁹ Dobrović's building is neither a dematerialized object in the cubist sense, nor a static multivolumetric construct in the constructivist sense. By employing a strong rectangular grid pattern of layers of stone blocks and tiles, only sporadically pierced by horizontal windows in the same plane as solid walls, Dobrović integrated non-built space between the two main wings of the building into the volumetric development of the whole. Therefore, he introduced the concept of the abstract plane as opposed to literal volumes. Strong horizontals and cantilevered planes of stone, functionally load-bearing, are, on one hand, juxtaposed with Le Corbusian white planes that only partially "cover" the constructive walls. In that respect, we have the ambivalent reading of "bones and skin," heavy and light, load-bearing and free surfaces. On the other hand, the vertical datum of the modernistic structure previously reserved for the white surfaces and solids is assigned to the completely abstract volume of a void. Thus we can read simultaneously literal void and conceptual solid.

Dobrović produced a potential regional form-giving process that had not been manifested nor realized before; the building of the Federal Ministry of Defense and Dobrović's other projects, which share the same artistic language, preserved from the 1930s onward, are particularly poignant examples of this. Influenced by the "abstract" vocabulary of the Modern Movement, his "greatest contribution is the transformation of the 'ideological forms' of 'pure intellectual architecture' into the real world of space made of stone, glass, steel and concrete"³⁰ that reaffirms experimentation within and continuity of the formal vocabulary of modern architecture.

It is interesting to remark that when European architects trained in the post-Second World War era were bewildered by the lack of rhetorical power in the 1950s, they were like Dobrović twenty years before them, perplexed by

²⁸ More in: Frampton, *Le Corbusier*, passim.

²⁹ The Domino system is a flexible system of concrete framing that could be filled in with traditional masonry. The name of the system derived from contracting and combining the words *domicile* and *innovation*, while it also resembles a domino, providing the assumption that system could be hypothetically capable of being assembled like dominoes are during a game. See Frampton, *Le Corbusier*, 21–23.

³⁰ Perović and Krunić, *Nikola Dobrović*, 72.

the two incompatible fantasies of Modernism: architecture allied to mechanization and architecture as an agent of social welfare. James Stirling and James Gowan completed their Leicester University Engineering Building in 1963, the very same year that, in an unrelated achievement, Dobrović finished the Federal Ministry of Defense; the architects were all on the same path to resolving the aforementioned ambiguity (Fig. 4 below). In addition to the visual appearance of the Federal Ministry of Defense, which closely resembled the Leicester building, it seems that both structures partook similar intellectual and spiritual efforts on the part of their builders. James Stirling and James Gowan, like Nikola Dobrović, also borrowed the functionalism of the 1930s "heroic period," exploited it, and collaged it into "red-brick" architecture as a social and intellectual protest and experiment.³¹ Their project for the Leicester University building is also a dynamic design that challenged modernistic postulates, deconstructed the received forms, reversed load-

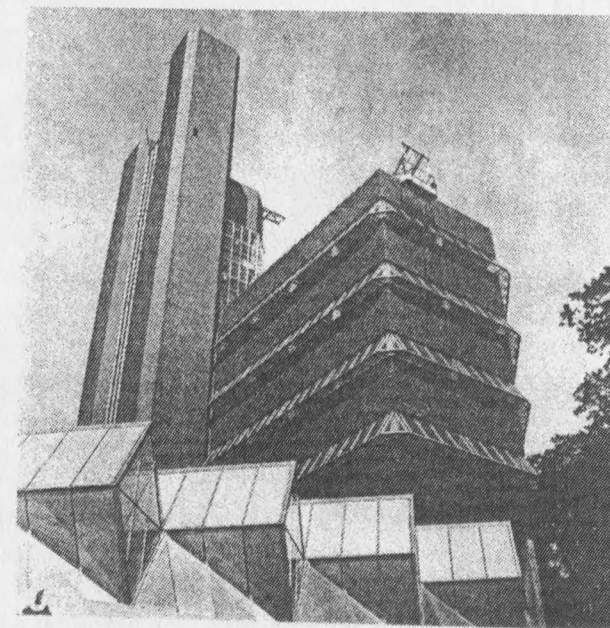


Fig. 4. James Stirling and James Gowan, Leicester University Engineering Building, Leicester, 1963, detail.

Miloš R. Perović i Spasoje Krunić, *Nikola Dobrović. Eseji, projekti, kritike* (Belgrade: Arhitektonski fakultet Univerziteta u Beogradu i Muzej arhitekture, 1998).

³¹ John McKean "James Stirling and James Gowan. Leicester University Building, Leicester 1959–1963," in *Pioneering British "High-Tech,"* Architecture 33 (London: Phaidon, 1999).

bearing and the surface usage of brick, tiles, and glass, disregarded the smooth intellectualism of the International Style, and turned towards the best of local building tradition. Stirling and Gowan opened a new chapter in architectural history known as New Brutalism.³² The building of the Federal Ministry of Defense in Belgrade, located in isolated Serbia and thus outside of mainstream architectural innovations and experiments, remained almost unnoticed by architectural historians outside Serbia.

In 1967, Nikola Dobrović died in Belgrade, two years after Le Corbusier. Thirty-two years later the building of the Federal Ministry of Defense was severely damaged during the NATO bombing of Belgrade (on 30 April and 8 May 1999 respectively). The intellectual elite and architectural historians throughout the world did not react. Among the 1,951 objects that were destroyed and the 1,399 that were damaged,³³ Dobrović's masterpiece was treated only as "collateral damage" (Fig. 5 opposite). On 11 September 2001, another catastrophe befell a well-known architectural landmark: the two towers of the World Trade Center in New York City, built between 1966 and 1977, were completely destroyed by a terrorist attack. Here are some reflections of Minoru Yamasaki, an architect of the World Trade Center:

I feel this way about it. World trade means world peace and consequently the World Trade Center buildings in New York ... had a bigger purpose than just to provide room for tenants. The World Trade Center is a living symbol of man's dedication to world peace ... beyond the compelling need to make this a monument to world peace, the World Trade Center should, because of its importance, become a representation of man's belief in humanity, his need for individual dignity, his beliefs in the cooperation of men, and through cooperation, his ability to find greatness.³⁴

Le Corbusier himself declared that thirty years is a must for the developing of ideas, and fifty years are required for their embodiment and testing. Many arguments and anxieties that stimulated the architects eighty years ago have regained particular relevance today, especially the relation between architecture and politics. Looking back, this trend also included the

³² Frampton, *Modern Architecture*, 262–68.

³³ Information according to a newspaper article by Dragana Matović, "Šta će biti sa zgradom Generalštaba," *Reporter*, April 2000.

³⁴ Paul Heyer, *Architects on Architecture: New Directions in America* (New York: Walker, c. 1978), 194–95.

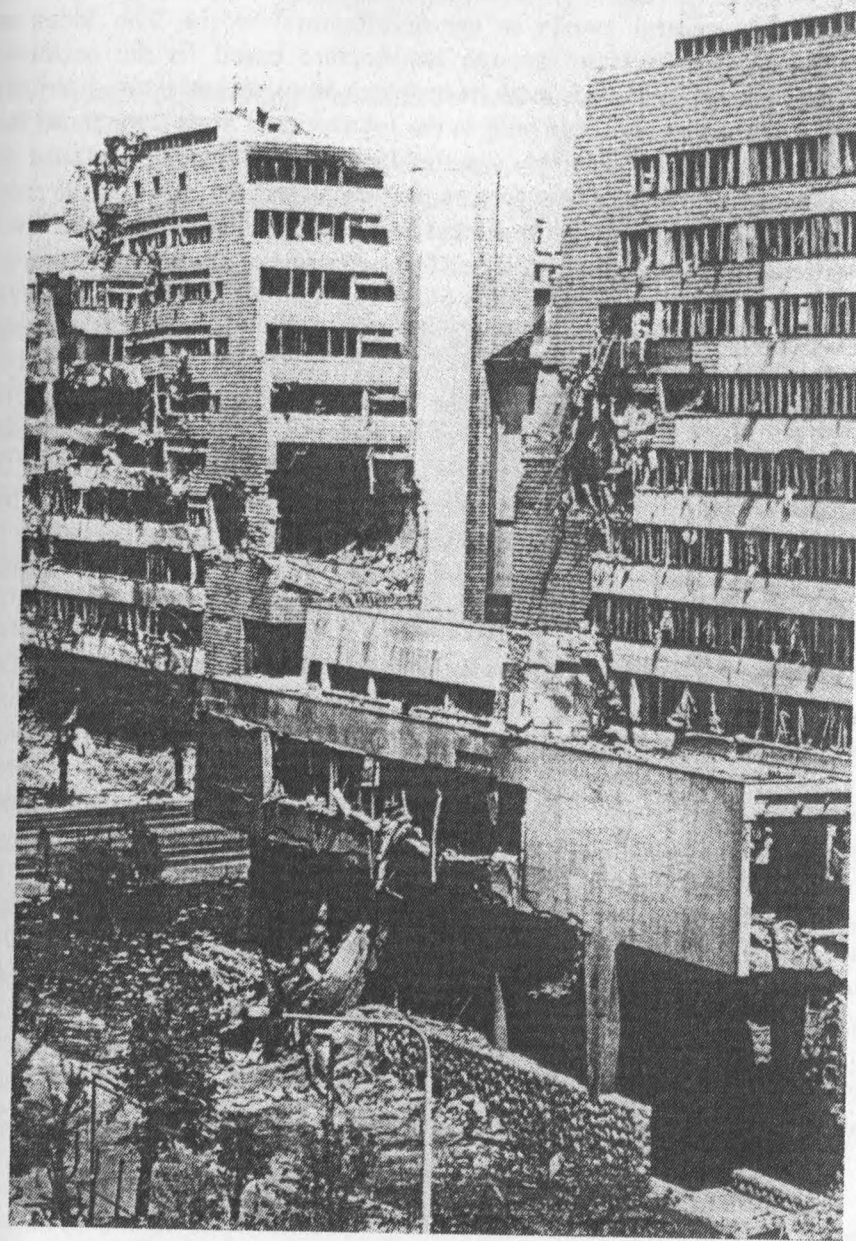


Fig. 5. Nikola Dobrović, Federal Ministry of Defense, Belgrade, 1963, contemporary view from 2000.

Miloš R. Perović i Spasoje Krunić, *Nikola Dobrović. Eseji, projekti, kritike* (Belgrade: Arhitektonski fakultet Univerziteta u Beogradu i Muzej arhitekture, 1998).

solitary example of Nikola Dobrović in the Serbian milieu, himself so far removed from central events in the architectural world. The ideas of proclaiming social welfare through architecture based on the aesthetic principles and theories of modern western civilization were partially embodied in seminal buildings built in the International Style throughout the world. Among these buildings are the Federal Ministry of Defense in Belgrade and the World Trade Center in New York City; each, in its own way, was a hallmark, not only on a local level, but far beyond it, on the level of intellectual efforts of its own time. They clearly ran against nationalistic sentiments and manifested the beliefs of the generation of the 1930s to 1960s in the globalization while preserving the necessary minimum of regional characteristics. Unfortunately, these two buildings did not survive the end of the twentieth and the beginning of the twenty-first century. Following the pattern of Le Corbusier's *Vers une architecture*, the ultimate question would be: Is it possible to meet the challenge posed to architecture as a symbol of the Modern Movement, the very same movement that gave voice to the "heroic period" of the new world in the 1920s and 1930s? Is it possible to pass the test in a democracy, where everything is relative, where the machine does the work, where science sets the course for society?