Manufacturing a Socialist Modernity: The Architecture of Industrialized Housing in Czechoslovakia, 1945–56

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ABSTRACT

Manufacturing a Socialist Modernity: The Architecture of Industrialized Housing in Czechoslovakia, 1945-56

Kimberly Elman Zarecor

Although it is difficult to see the crumbling, gray facades of the former Eastern Bloc as great testaments to the potentials of modern architecture, these buildings did reflect a dedication to technological innovation, social equality, and formal clarity unrivaled in the twentieth century. Built in an era that the West has commonly portrayed as one of rupture, isolation, and deprivation, socialist architecture in Eastern Europe was in fact connected to contemporary experiments in the West and to the specific legacies of the region’s interwar years. Focusing on the intersection of architects, housing design, and the state apparatus between 1945 and 1956, this case study seeks to understand the development and deployment of modern mass-housing types in Czechoslovakia from the avant-garde-inspired projects of the immediate postwar era to the industrialized panel buildings of the 1950s.

The dissertation also examines the organization of design practice in the aftermath of World War II and the creation of Stavoprojekt, the state-run architectural offices in 1948. The chapters show the extent to which the postwar government and its architectural leadership adopted and carried forward already established models of architectural modernity as the basis of their claims to legitimacy. Through a detailed study of the housing types and production methods employed by architects at Stavoprojekt, the dissertation expands our understanding of the early years of
communism in Czechoslovakia by emphasizing the fluid and negotiated relationships between architects and the political structure. The project questions the image of the oppressive Communist Party imposing itself on unwilling architects and shows that in the early years of communism, there was genuine support for the new system. As part of a reassessment of the timeline of transformation and change in the postwar period, the project proposes 1950, rather than 1945 or 1948, as a turning point in the history of postwar modernism.
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Introduction

The biggest victim of the Stalinization of architecture was housing. [Karel] Teige would have recoiled in horror at the endless drab rows of prefabricated boxes of mass housing proliferating around all the major cities of Czechoslovakia. Here was the exact antithesis of his utopia of collective dwelling, resembling more the housing barracks of capitalist rent exploitation and greed than the joyful housing developments of a new socialist paradise... The result was one of the most depressing collections of banality in the history of Czech architecture, one that still mars the architectural landscape of this small country and will be difficult—if not impossible—to erase from its map for decades, if not centuries.¹

- Eric Dluhosch, 2002

Few building types are as vilified as the socialist housing block. Built by the thousands in Eastern Europe in the decades after World War II, the apartment buildings of the planned economy are notorious for problems such as faulty construction methods, lack of space, non-existent landscaping, long-term maintenance lapses, and general ugliness. The traditional narrative of the construction and perceived failure of these blocks, the most iconic of which was the panel building or ‘panelák’ in Czech, places the blame with a Soviet-imposed system of building that was forced upon the unwilling countries of Eastern Europe after the communist parties came to power. This shift not only brought neo-classicism and historicism to the region, but it also ended the idealistic era of avant-garde modernism which disappeared with the arrival of fascism in many European countries, but survived in Czechoslovakia through World War II. Like many interpretations of the early decades of East European communism, this narrative

emphasizes the Soviet role in these developments and reinforces a schism between the interwar and postwar histories of the region.

In Czechoslovakia this received history has been especially alluring since interwar modern architecture is held in such high regard. There are world-class examples of cubist, constructivist and functionalist buildings across the country. In the 1920s and 1930s, Czech and Slovak architects were connected to the international avant-garde through a network of Dutch, French, German and Swiss designers, many of whom visited Prague during their travels through Central Europe. They participated in international organizations such as CIAM (Congrès International d'Architecture Moderne or International Congress of Modern Architecture) and published journals and books highlighting their prolific production. The Baťa Shoe Company also had its headquarters in Moravia where the owners built a modern factory town with a state-of-the-art movie theater, department store, hotel and skyscraper office tower. Although many architectural historians who have written on Czech and Slovak modernism

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including Jaroslav Anděl, Eric Dluhosch and Kenneth Frampton have lamented the lack of a definitive history of Czech and Slovak architecture in the interwar period, there are a number of excellent studies in Czech, Slovak, and some in English that have recently started to close this gap in the scholarship. In addition to the work of the authors just mentioned, texts by Jindřich Chatrny, Jean-Louis Cohen, Matuš Dulla and Henrieta Moravčíková, Rostislav Švácha and Jindřich Vybíral are especially valuable.

To greater and lesser degrees, all of these studies propose that the historiography of the modern movement should return Czechoslovakia to its rightful place as one of the most outstanding sites of avant-garde architecture. Texts by scholars in the Czech Republic and Slovakia typically do this implicitly by offering extensive documentation of the production of Czech and Slovak modern architects, so that any argument against the existence of the avant-garde becomes impossible. There have also been a number of exhibitions and accompanying catalogues that have made drawings and photographs of projects available, although these books tend to place more emphasis on the descriptions

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of objects and buildings and less on analytical or theoretical frameworks in which to discuss them. The studies written by émigré scholars or those written in the region for an international audience often have an overtly national tone that equates the end of communism with the restoration of the country’s standing as a modern European nation. For example, in the introduction to his translation of Karel Teige’s, *The Minimum Dwelling*, Dluhosch refers to "the liberation of Czech architecture from its Soviet imprisonment" after the "Iron Curtain was lifted by the Velvet Revolution."8

Building on the existing English-language scholarship, Kenneth Frampton summarized many of these widespread attitudes in the opening paragraph of a 1993 text on the achievements of the Czech avant-garde.

Czechoslovakia has been largely ignored by Western European historians of the modern movement. While by no means the only Central European culture to be slighted by Western cultural history (Hungary was neglected to an equal degree), Czechoslovakia was certainly one of the most significant from the standpoint of twentieth-century modernization. When one looks back over half a century to the country’s modern movement, one cannot avoid being impressed by the way in which Czech modern architecture especially, together with a modern *modus vivendi*,

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became an expression that was seemingly embraced by the entire society. It was as if the spirit of modernity sustained by this culture embodied the very essence and identity of the new republic which had been created out of the ashes of the First World War and the ruined Habsburg Empire.\footnote{Frampton, “A Modernity Worthy of the Name: Notes on the Czech Architectural Avant-Garde,” 213.}

After a summary of the work of these architects, he ended the essay with a reflection on the intervening decades,

If any nation ever possessed the cultural and technical capacity to give Socialism a human face, it was this one. When one looks back at these historically modern but, after the passage of more than fifty years, now remote people, one cannot resist thinking of them as belonging to an innocent and vital modernist movement, one that has since become jaded and lost, destroyed on every side by the depredations of war and terror, and by a consumerism that knows no bounds and has no cultural raison d’être. One looks at them across the chasm of a vast and destructive time as embodying a hope: the promise that small and relatively prosperous nations may yet still realize a mediated modernity worth of the name.\footnote{Ibid., 231.}

For cultural historians of Czechoslovakia, this idealization of the First Republic and its modern ‘essence’ will be familiar. It was a theme that shaped much of the pre-1989 literature on twentieth-century Czechoslovakia by portraying the turn towards communism as a national tragedy.\footnote{See for example Radomír Luža and Victor S. Mamatey, eds., A History of the Czechoslovak Republic 1918-1948 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973); Věra Olivová, The Doomed Democracy: Czechoslovakia in a Disrupted Europe, 1914-38 (London: Sidgwick and Jackson, 1972); Alice Teichova, The Czechoslovak Economy, 1918-1980 (London; New York: Routledge, 1988).} It is only with the recent publication of a number of new studies by scholars working in the Czech and Slovak archives that more a complex picture of the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s is beginning to emerge.\footnote{See for example Bradley F. Abrams, The Struggle For the Soul of the Nation: Czech Culture and the Rise of Communism (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2004); Chad Carl Bryant, Prague in Black: Nazi Rule and Czech Nationalism (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press,}
Within the field of architectural history, the result of this prevalent attitude has been twofold. On one hand, there remains a desire to uncover the fabled record of this 'innocent and vital modernist movement,' hence the continued call for a definitive history despite the increasing number of comprehensive and competent studies on the topic. In the opening sentence of the preface to a 2005 book, curator and art historian Jaroslav Anděl remarked that a survey of 'the modern movement in architecture in interwar Czechoslovakia... is long overdue.' As recently as September 2007 architect Eric J. Jenkins, writing in the journal, Centropa, conveyed his desire for "the still-missing, thorough history of Czechoslovak modern architecture between 1920 and 1946" that would give his research on Baťa architecture a "contextual discourse." Given the long bibliography of journal articles, catalogues and books referenced in this chapter, including many in English, this refrain seems to indicate a desire for something more than just a survey. It seems instead that they are looking for a more tangible embrace of


the Czech avant-garde by mainstream architectural historians in the 'West,' which has yet to come and may require more than just a national survey to achieve.

On the other hand, the formulation of the communist period as "a vast and destructive time" that created an insurmountable "chasms" which distanced the "remote" people of the interwar period from those living in the 1990s, has meant that the period between 1938 and 1989 has remained largely unexplored. This is even the case among Czech scholars, many of whom agree with this perspective and prefer not to engage with questions of communism. As Eric Dluhosch indicates, the general perception is that architecture of the postwar period distorted and perverted the project of interwar modernism to such an extent that these buildings became the "exact antithesis" of the "socialist paradise" promised by theorists such as Karel Teige. Journalist and architect Stephan Templ spoke even more directly to this point in a 1999 exhibition catalogue when he writes that at the end of the First Republic "a half century of darkness was to descend: This was the end of the modern era," adding that what happened from 1945-

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17 Teige, The Minimum Dwelling, xxiv.
1948 was only a "feeble afterglow." In this framework, it is easy to understand why scholars have had little interest in the "endless drab rows of prefabricated boxes" that Dluhosch calls "the most depressing collections of banality in the history of Czech architecture."\(^1^9\)

The Origins of the Project

When I began my Ph.D. work with Kenneth Frampton at Columbia University in 1999, I had already decided to pursue research on Czechoslovakia. For all of the reasons stated above, a logical dissertation topic was the interwar avant-garde. My first idea for the project was a history of the Brno modernists, who still remain less well-known than their Prague counterparts, although they were equally prolific. Then, just as I started my research, a number of books were published in English on various national avant-gardes in Eastern Europe including those in Czechoslovakia, Poland, Hungary and Romania.\(^2^0\) In each case, the texts included long lists of architects, copious illustrations of projects and buildings, and convincing arguments about the existence and importance of

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\(^{18}\) Templ, Baba: The Werkbund Housing Estate Prague, 12.

\(^{19}\) Teige, The Minimum Dwelling, xxiv-xxv.

modernism in the region, although often told from a patriotic, rather than a critical
perspective as noted previously.

With these books and the increasing accessibility and visibility of scholarship
from the region, the topic of the Czech avant-garde as an expression of the modern
'essence' of interwar Czechoslovakia started to feel outdated. The tenth anniversary of
the fall of the Berlin Wall also came and went during my first semester of Ph.D.
coursework, reinforcing the sense that Eastern, or what is now more often referred to as
Central, Europe was entering into a new phase of its post-socialist existence. I decided
that my topic should engage with the questions that were emerging during this
transition such as the legacies of communism and the place of these countries in a new
conception of Europe.

In an effort to learn more about the region, I took classes with Professor Brad
Abrams in the History Department at Columbia University who was teaching the
intellectual history of communism in Eastern Europe and researching postwar
Czechoslovakia. As I became more interested in communism, I searched for texts on
architecture and found no secondary sources with the exception of Anders Åman's book
on the Stalinist period in the Eastern Bloc which was written in Swedish in the 1980s
before being translated and published in English in 1992.21 The coursework I completed
with Professor Reinhold Martin in the Department of Architecture at Columbia
University also influenced the project with his concept of the "organizational complex."

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which offered a different way to understand the relationships between architects and institutions, in this case those of the communist government rather than corporate America.  

In this context, I formulated a new project about the longer history of modernism in Czechoslovakia. Even in my preliminary research it was clear that there were many connections between the much-lauded modernism of the interwar period and the maligned buildings of the communist era. Both were projects of the left with an explicit social agenda. In the journal, *Architektura ČSR* (Czechoslovak Architecture), I found that many Czech and Slovak modern architects active in the interwar period continued to practice through the 1950s, which meant that the 'communist' architects were not political appointees or inherently bad designers, but rather local architects who adapted to a new situation. I now understood that the models which proposed a clear break in 1938, 1945 or 1948 were obscuring many complex and important transformations in the project of modernism itself. With the added political context of a largely anti-Communist émigré population doing much of the research published in English, it seemed especially relevant to post-1989 scholarship to untangle these relationships and reconsider some of the basic assumptions about the fate of architectural modernity in Eastern Europe.

I began my research with a set of questions and little sense of what I might find. The overarching concern in the project was to consider the connections between

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interwar and postwar architecture in the decades before and after World War II.

Although authors such as Stephan Templ proposed 1948 as the "end of the modern era" in Czechoslovakia,\textsuperscript{23} I started with the assumption that modernism continued in some form into the communist period, albeit possibly transformed and virtually unrecognizable if the criteria remained only those of the interwar avant-garde. Since the output of high-quality modern buildings in the interwar period was already well-documented, what happened to these architects and their technical knowledge base after 1945? What continuities and discontinuities could be attributed to communism in particular and which ones were aspects of global change in the postwar period? What role did the Soviet Union and socialist realism play during these years? There were also many unknown aspects of architectural practice in communist countries. How did the Communist Party regulate and influence architecture? Was it necessary to be a party member to remain in the profession? How were design decisions made and why did the building industry move towards prefabrication and typification so quickly?

While writing this dissertation, I also started teaching design studio in an undergraduate architecture program. Until that point, I had been focused on the historical aspects of my research, which I shared most often with other Eastern Europeanists and architectural historians. Once I returned to the studio environment, I saw new significance in this work for contemporary debates in architectural education and the profession. The transformation of the building industry in communist countries was one of the first examples in the world of massive typification and standardization of

\textsuperscript{23} Templ, \textit{Baba: The Werkbund Housing Estate Prague}, 6.
building production. Amid the current discussions in architecture about 'mass customization,' prefabrication and building integrated modeling (BIM), what could this historical example tell us about the potential problems with the industrialization of production? In an increasingly technology-dependent society, what is the role of the architect and what is the knowledge base through which the profession can define itself?

In the twenty-first century, the old image of the architect working alone in his studio is no longer valid. A similar transformation occurred in Czechoslovakia in the late 1940s as the model of architecture as a form of art was replaced by models borrowed from industry. What can we learn from this comparison?

In framing the topic in these ways, the project took on vast dimensions. It required not only a mapping of the early postwar decades, but a better understanding of the interwar avant-garde. In order to create a manageable archive of material, I chose to limit my research to housing with the sense that this segment of architectural thought would be the most potent with respect to the social agenda of the left. Events outside of my control narrowed the project even further. Three weeks before my arrival in Prague in 2002 for a year of research, the city experienced a catastrophic flood that destroyed the depository of the National Technical Museum’s Architectural Archive, where I had planned to do most of my work. Ninety percent of the material in the archive was under water and what could be salvaged was frozen to stop decay. The archive was closed to the public and has not reopened.

Not knowing what to do, I decided to visit the National Archives (at the time, the State Central Archives) to find out if they had any information on government housing
programs. The thousands of pages of documents I found in their collections helped to
determine the scope and limits of this dissertation. After 1945, the government kept
detailed records of the activities of the ministries and their committees. Since architects
worked for the state on a number of projects between 1945 and 1948 and then became
employees of the state in 1948, the history of architectural practice from 1945 to 1989 was
meticulously recorded. Although not all of the extant material has been catalogued or
made accessible to researchers, there was enough to occupy anyone for years.²⁴ I was
first person to ask to see most of these records. As my interest in the Moravian steel and
coal-mining city of Ostrava intensified, I also spent time in the Ostrava City Archive and
the Regional Archive in Opava where early records of the postwar development of
Ostrava are located.

Methods and Assumptions

With this collection of archival documents and information gathered from sites
visits in the Czech Republic and Slovakia, the first challenge was to develop a skeletal
outline of postwar political changes, building activities and architectural practice. With
few secondary sources to reference in architecture, history or Eastern European studies,
this work was in and of itself a large project that took several years. From the start, I had
to contend with the complex relationships between architects and the Communist Party
which many historians have assumed to be an oppressive force acting from outside, but

²⁴ For example, the archive of Stavoprojekt in Prague is not catalogued, although the records are kept at the National Archive.
which played a different role based on the documents. I found that, for the most part, architects were members of the Party and those who were not participated in a state apparatus that was organized based on the principles of the planned economy and therefore they were subject to the same professional standards and expectations. With few exceptions, architects inside and outside the Party conceived of their work in a materialist framework that emphasized buildings over architectural discourse in the sense that discourse was abstract and intangible. Creativity was largely consumed by qualitative indicators and the criteria by which architects judged their own work changed accordingly. It also became clear to me in this initial phase of the research that an architectural history of this period in Czechoslovakia would have to move beyond the discipline’s traditional narratives of style and biography and find another framework in which to discuss these buildings.

Once the basis of a chronology began to emerge, I started the more subtle work of reading texts and images of the period against this organizational structure. The most important sources were contemporary books and pamphlets and the professional journal, Architektura ČSR, which was published from 1939-1942 and 1946-1990. The five chapters in the dissertation are my initial attempt to filter, edit and analyze this enormous collection of primary source material. The results are uneven at times and simplifications had to be made in order to let the argument overtake the many details. The criterion that I used to determine when I had come to a defensible set of conclusions on a particular issue was the point at which new information no longer contradicted or
undermined my hypotheses. The dissertation should, therefore, be read as one path through these sources, rather than a definitive or final interpretation.

The project is also a history of architectural practice that starts at a time when the profession of architecture was constructed as an artistic practice and follows the profession into an era when the architect became a technician and industrial producer of material goods. To many, the shift from the elegant forms of the interwar years to the crude and heavy forms of the postwar period appeared as the loss of an aesthetic sensibility or the imposition of socialist dogmatism in the realm of art. I argue, instead, that this transition must be understood as a symptom of the broader postwar reconstitution of the cultural landscape, a recalibration of the relationship between creative practices and technological determinism. After 1948, the balance between these two competing interests tipped heavily in favor of technology, even during the era of socialist realism when research on standardized types continued without interruption.

This scenario was not unique. A similar process of institutionalization in architecture and other professional disciplines occurred across the region. This case study, therefore, contributes broadly to our historical understanding of socialism and the mechanisms at work within the state to manage the new system. At the same time, however, it is important to recognize that each one of the countries was the product of a particular historical formation. Although they shared similar external pressures from the Soviet Union, common social and economic goals, and comparable systems of governance, each country moved along its path towards socialism at a different pace. Rather than focusing on the similarities within the Bloc, a strategy common among non-
specialists or those regional specialists looking for general patterns, this project looks precisely at the timeline in Czechoslovakia and draws its conclusions from the local events and decisions that shaped the country’s trajectory. From an architectural standpoint, Czechoslovakia is an excellent case study among the group because of its unique nexus of pre-existing technological capacity, minimal war damage, and surviving skilled architects.

The boundaries of the 1945 to 1956 period considered in this project are bracketed by political events, the Košice Program in 1945 and the start of the Second Five-Year Plan in 1956, which initiated a change in ministerial organization and Party leadership. The dissertation does not argue that 1945 and 1956 were the start and end of a linear trajectory, but rather offers them as points through which to engage the longer continuum of architectural modernism. The project also emphasizes 1950, rather than 1945 or 1948, as the most significant turning point for architecture in Czechoslovakia. The chapters show how this transformation occurred over time and was in no way a foregone conclusion when the Communist Party first came to power. Instead the dissertation shows that this transformation resulted from the collision of three interest groups—the older generation who were attempting to reconcile their vision of the modern project with that of the new regime; ambitious younger architects, educated after the war and eager to satisfy the whims of their superiors; and architectural bureaucrats who struggled to fulfill the ever-increasing demands for housing in the planned economy. Since architecture is always a product of larger cultural, political,

There are three primary methodological issues addressed in the dissertation. These reflect disciplinary tensions that exist within my own field, architectural history, and the preoccupations of scholars across a wide range of specialties who write about aspects of European communism. First, the project reveals the value of the vast untapped historical resources that lay dormant in what we might call the gaps between disciplinary interests. This material, both archival and bibliographic, has not been claimed because it falls outside of traditional scholarly boundaries that dictate what is and is not acceptable source material in a given discipline. In my case, this has led me beyond the typical textual resources for an architectural historian, such as journals, books, and personal papers, to government archives and the ministerial and administrative files to study architecture and the building industry. Through these sources, I examine the intricate web of ministries, administrations, committees, and institutes that defined the socialist landscape in the Eastern Bloc and which have been left virtually unexplored by scholars.
Second, it is essential to reconsider the top-down, monolithic image of the Communist Party as the single entity driving cultural production by imposing its will on the people. This simplistic dichotomy between the party on one side and the oppressed producers of culture on the other is dissolved in the dissertation through a reexamination of the multi-layered mechanisms of interaction and negotiation between these two spheres. Through this research, it has become clear that for many architects remaining or becoming a member of the Communist Party in 1945 or 1948 was an expression of long-held political beliefs about the potential of a socialist society and not just a status adopted out of fear or by force. Certainly much of this early enthusiasm was dampened in later years, but the architecture of the late 1940s and even the 1950s must be seen in the context of this initial hopefulness.

Finally, the work implicitly challenges methodologies, still common in art and architectural history, that privilege formal and aesthetic criteria over process-driven observations that seek to make connections between objects and the world. This necessarily reduces the importance of conclusions about artistic quality, or what we can crudely be characterized as judging between beauty and ugliness. Such subjective determinations are only useful in as much as they reveal something about the priorities, be they aesthetic, functional, or technological, of the society in which an object was produced and those of the critic or historian engaging in the discussion.

In establishing these methodological priorities, I left behind questions such as whether or not these buildings were formally successful—this is purposefully not a history of architectural styles—or even whether or not people liked living in them. These
are valid questions, but they would need to be answered by a different type of study which relied on other methods and assumptions. The object of study here is not the buildings as objects, but rather the buildings as constitutive of the political, organizational and professional systems within which they were produced. Czechoslovakia was a country with a strong aesthetic tradition and well-developed building industry, yet within one professional generation it underwent a total transformation as standardization and typification replaced an older model of individual commissions. This dissertation attempts to understand why and how this occurred.

Chapter Summary

The dissertation is organized into five chapters that move chronologically and thematically through the material. The first chapter, "Phoenix Rising: Housing and the Debates on Socialist Modernity (1945-1948)," begins with the liberation of Prague in May 1945. It chronicles the difficult first months and years after the end of Nazi occupation when the country was trying to regain its social, economic and political stability. During this period, modernism was still a concept rooted in the avant-garde and leaders of various professional organizations were practitioners whose reputations were established in the interwar years. The discussion reaches back to the decade before the war to consider the formulation of 'scientific functionalism' in the 1930s within artistic circles around theorist and critic Karel Teige. In this group, there were several architects who would became powerful Communists in the first state-run architectural
administration in the late 1940s. By the summer of 1945, a number of professional architecture associations, which had hastily reconstituted themselves in the final months of the occupation, joined together to create a single organization to represent the interests of architects. This was especially important as large sectors of the economy were nationalized and architects wanted an official role in the development of these investments. The group, BAPS (Block of Progressive Architectural Associations), led by members from the SSA (Union of Socialist Architects) helped to imagine what the architectural profession would look like in a socialist economy including advocating for the total nationalization of the building industry and a collective working environment for architects.

The chapter proposes that there were multiple competing models of architectural modernity after the war. The first, represented by projects such as the Solidarita housing development in Prague, was influenced by Scandinavian precedents and the brick and concrete architecture of the Baťa Company in Zlín. The second, as seen in the Collective House in Litvínov, was grounded in the principles of interwar modernism, in particular through its formal characteristics with an emphasis on unadorned surfaces and volumetric spatial configurations. The postwar coalition government supported a third alternative that was evident in the state-sponsored Model Housing Development program that began in 1946. Neighborhoods were designed for Kladno, Most and Ostrava, three industrial cities in key political areas. The housing blocks in these developments were 3- and 4-stories with masonry walls, flat roofs and comfortable family apartments overlooking green spaces. The chapter argues that the third model
became the first vision of socialist housing because its advocates were put into powerful
positions in the new administration, rather than for any particular preference among the
political elite. The chapter concludes with the events of February 1948 and the rise to
power of the Communist Party.

The second chapter, “Standardization and Typification: Stavoprojekt and the
Transformation of Architectural Practice (1948-1950),” examines the first two years of
Stavoprojekt, the state-run system of architecture offices established in the fall of 1948.
At its inception, two young adherents of Teige's model of 'scientific functionalism' were
given the top jobs in the new administration, Karel Janů and Jiří Voženílek. They
brought a technocratic worldview to the socialist design sector and organized
Stavoprojekt on the industrial and collective model that they had been advocating since
the 1930s when they were part of the leftwing collective, Architectural Working Group
(PAS). The work in these years was organized along eight principles that emphasized
production methods over formal categories. Voženílek had worked for the Baťa
Company for almost ten years before joining Stavoprojekt and this foundation proved
useful as he put forward an argument for standardization and typification that relied on
modularity, which was a hallmark of the Baťa system.

One of Stavoprojekt's primary goals in its first two years was to increase the pace
of housing construction in vital industrial areas which were booming due to increases in
investment in heavy industry. The Model Housing Developments had suffered from
slow construction schedules, budget problems and a lack of skilled laborers.
Stavoprojekt attempted to solve some of these problems with the introduction of the T-
series, a small number of standardized housing units designed for use on sites around the country. The initial plans included apartment buildings and small houses, although in practice few houses were built. The T-series apartment blocks were similar in size and scale to the Model Housing Development buildings, although they were designed with pitched roofs giving them a more conservative look. They were the basis for much of the housing production in the next decade including the early panel buildings which attempted to industrially produce units with the same floor plan and exterior appearance as the T-series buildings.

The third chapter, "National in Form, Socialist in Content: Sorela and Architectural Imagery (1948-1956)," addresses the difficult subject of socialist realism. The discussion considers the relationships between Czech and Slovak architects and their Soviet counterparts, who were asked to interact for the first time in this period. The Czechoslovak variant of socialist realism in architecture, which was nicknamed 'sorela,' lasted only four years from 1950-1954. Unlike the first two years of socialist architecture, this was a much more politically-charged time for architectural debates as the Communist Party elite looked to cultural production to prove their loyalty to Moscow. For architects this meant that their work was scrutinized for its formal qualities more than the quantitative indicators that had been priorities from 1945-1950. Artistic and literary analyses of Russian examples are referenced in this chapter in order to understand the similarities and differences between Soviet and Czechoslovak methods. Unlike the Soviet case, Czechoslovakia's engagement with socialist realism has received little attention from scholars.
The chapter argues that sorela, as expressed in built and unbuilt projects from the early 1950s, was as much about local vernacular examples as the monumental Soviet precedents that were celebrated in the architectural press. In addition to *Architektura ČSR*, the new journal *Sovětská architektura* appeared in 1951 featuring articles by Russian architects in translation, images of Soviet projects and texts by sympathetic Czech and Slovak architects. Although some historians have not considered the slogan, "national in form, socialist in content," to be a serious statement, the chapters shows that Czech architects, including regime favorite Jiří Kroha, based many of their housing designs on merging standardized housing blocks from Stavoprojekt offices with decorative schemes based on local vernacular buildings. This continued reliance on prefabrication and typification meant that despite the rhetoric about architecture once again being a form of artistic expression, the goals of industrializing housing production were furthered even as the style of buildings looked more traditional and historicist.

The primary case study in the chapter is the neighborhood of Poruba in the eastern Moravian city of Ostrava. Originally proposed as "New Ostrava" in 1951, the development was designed to house workers from mines and steelworks which were rapidly expanding in the early 1950s as the Communist Party implemented Stalinist policies of investment in heavy industry above all else. Poruba was built by architects from Stavoprojekt offices around the country and conceived as the first socialist city in Czechoslovakia. Its formal qualities including monumental street facades, neo-classical detailing and a tower modeled on a Russian precedent exemplified the Czech interpretation of a style that has been decried as a vulgar Soviet import. Today the
neighborhood remains popular with the locals because of its ample green spaces, leafy courtyards, pedestrian scale and high-quality construction.

The fourth chapter, "A Vision of Socialist Architecture: The Late Career of Jiří Kroha (1945-1956)," investigates the work of Jiří Kroha who, over the course of a fifty-year career, was a cubist, functionalist, surrealist, socialist and socialist realist architect. He was also a complicated personality who befriended leading communists, angered his employees and eventually was denounced and forced to close his practice, which had operated as the only independent design office in the Stavoprojekt system for almost eight years. After being a strong supporter of Marxism-Leninism in the interwar years and surviving a year in a concentration camp during the war, Kroha emerged as one of the most politically-powerful architects in the postwar period. In 1948, he was named a national artist and promoted to Rector at the Brno University of Technology where he had taught on and off since 1925. With the creation of Stavoprojekt, he was given his own atelier where some of his earliest projects were stage designs for prominent political events.

The chapter chronicles the evolution of the atelier from a producer of propaganda to the premier design firm in the country during the sorela era. At its peak, the office employed as many as 80 people who worked on projects around the country including many unbuilt proposals for university and public buildings, as well as

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26 This chapter was an unexpected addition to the dissertation. In the summer of 2006, I was invited to contribute to an exhibition catalogue on the architect and granted permission to do research in his uncatalogued archive at the Brno City Museum. The chapter is an expanded version of the essay I published in that volume.
workers' clubs, a medical school and many exhibition designs. His greatest successes were residential schemes that he completed for the second phase of the Model Housing Development in Ostrava and the new town of Nová Dubnica near Trenčianské Teplice in Slovakia. In Ostrava, he designed a new civic center for the neighborhood with a house of culture, a department store, a post office, health clinic, grocery store and new apartment blocks with sorela details. Nová Dubnica, which has received almost no scholarly attention, was his best project, based in part on his reading of Charles Fourier's nineteenth-century communalist phalanstère. The chapter ends with a discussion of Kroha's denunciation and the repercussions of the end of sorela for architects in the 1950s and today.

The fifth and final chapter, "The Industrialization of Housing: Zlín and the Evolution of the Panelák (1945-1956)," is the culmination of this research in as much as it answers the question of where the panelák came from and why it became so ubiquitous in Czechoslovakia. The chapter follows the development of prefabricated and standardized housing units within the Baťa Company starting in the early 1930s. Two Baťa architects, Bohumír Kula and Hynek Adamec, began the research that would lead to the structural panel building as early as 1940 when they were part of wartime research programs in Zlín. Under the leadership of Jiří Vozenílek, who take later lead Stavoprojekt, the newly-nationalized company undertook an impressive building program in 1947 and 1948 that produced a number of interesting apartment buildings, although none of them would be incorporated into the T-series. With the creation of the new Institute of Prefabricated Buildings within the Stavoprojekt system in 1950, more
intense research began to find a viable method for mass-producing housing blocks. This led Kula and Adamec to propose the first structural panel building or ‘panelák’, which they named the G house, at the Gottwaldov (formerly Zlín) branch of the institute in 1950. Although construction only started in 1953, the prototype was complete by 1954 and by 1960, these blocks accounted for a large percentage of overall housing production in the country. With the further development of the technology, paneláks would become the dominant type in the 1960s and 1970s. Today more than one-third of the Czech population still lives in these buildings.

Czechoslovakia in 1945

The architectural developments discussed in this study must be situated within a specific and unique context. Despite the tendency to describe all of the Eastern Bloc as a homogeneous region, the countries had different histories and wartime experiences, which meant that they came out of the war with distinct problems, strengths and levels of legitimacy among the public. Although the nostalgic desire for the peace of the interwar republic and the country’s relative lack of physical and economic damage during the war positioned Czechoslovakia to emerge from the occupation more quickly than destroyed neighbors such as Poland and Germany, one sees in hindsight that this fragmented and depleted environment was the perfect incubator for state socialism. The April 1945 Košice Program, drafted in Moscow under Soviet supervision, set out a new framework for postwar governance and determined much about the immediate postwar experiences of the country’s inhabitants. Representatives of four Czech and two Slovak
political parties participated in the discussions, together they became known as the National Front. The Czech parties included the Communists whose leaders had spent the war in Moscow; the weakened Social Democrats who would soon merge with the Communists; the Czech National Socialists, the party of former President Edvard Beneš; and the centrist People’s Party, which had been Catholic, but agreed promote a non-denominational stance after the Moscow negotiations. The Slovaks sent representatives of the Slovak Democratic Party and the Slovak Communist Party, but the more powerful populist and rightist Slovak parties were absent. With Communist support, Edvard Beneš was chosen as Prime Minister in the new coalition government and democratic general elections were scheduled for 1946.

The Košice Program was wide-ranging and ambitious. Economically, the immediate goals were the nationalization of large industries and the redistribution of confiscated German and Hungarian property to Czechs and Slovaks. All “rightist” political parties were banned immediately “for collaborating with the Nazi regime.”

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29 For a list of ministers and their affiliations, see Myant, Socialism and Democracy in Czechoslovakia, 1945-1948, 49-50.


This, of course, was facilitated by their lack of representation at the meeting. As a largely socialist coalition, the National Front supported “a long list of social rights, including the right to employment, vacation, medical care, and old age insurance.” Slavs were recognized as a “distinct nation,” but their request for sovereignty in a federalized state was rejected; a decision that would continue to influence Czech-Slovak relations into the 1990s. The document called for popularly-elected national committees to be formed at the local, district and regional levels “to administer public affairs;” this form of governance was described as a “people’s democracy.” From the start, these groups had disproportionately high Communist Party representation and would eventually become part of the state apparatus after 1948.

The six months following the adoption of the Košice Program came to be known as the “National Revolution.” Despite the preeminent position of the Communist Party in the initial Moscow negotiations, the political rhetoric of the National Revolution did not include outright Marxist language. Historian Bradley Abrams notes that, at the time, the Communists did not demand “the wholesale transplantation of Soviet culture onto

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32 Ibid.
34 Ibid., 393.
37 Ibid., 53-54.
Czech and Slovak consciousness.” Abrams shows, instead, that after the May 1945 liberation, Communist intellectuals formulated an argument that emphasized “patriotism, national traditions, [and] the progressive quality of the national character” as the foundations of the Communist Party’s legitimacy. The Party purposefully chose to build their base of support through local and regional initiatives in anticipation of the upcoming general elections, rather than start their campaign with aggressive language borrowed from the Soviets. These efforts were rewarded in May 1946 when the Communist Party received 40% of the popular vote in the Czech lands and 30% in Slovakia; combined this was almost 38% of the vote. It was only then that they came forward with the “political strategy” of the “Czechoslovak road to socialism,” which emphasized the basis of socialism in the progressive Czech national character. This was opposed to the fascism of the Germans and Hungarians and the perceived backwardness of the Soviets.

A "genuine coalition" government ruled in Czechoslovakia until February 1948. It oversaw an economic recovery, the massive transfers of large populations and the creation of a homogenous nation state which constructed its identity in opposition to the

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39 Ibid., 92.


free-market capitalism and multinational composition of the interwar republic. As an occupied territory safe from allied bombing until late in the war, Czechoslovakia had suffered less physical and economic damage in World War II than many European countries. Ground battles occurred away from major urban centers and disproportionately in Slovak territory, which was more rural and less industrialized.

Although specific Czech factories were bombed, including the Baťa Works in Zlín (Fig. 2.1), the Vítkovice Steel Works in Ostrava and the Škoda Works in Plzeň, the damage in the Czech lands was contained and reversible. Some economists have even claimed that the country was enriched by the war. By the end of the Two-Year Plan in December 1948, the economy had almost reached 1937 levels and exceeded those with respect to “national income, transportation and industrial production, which were

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43 Boris P. Pešek, *Gross National Product of Czechoslovakia in Monetary and Real Terms, 1946-58* (Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press, 1965), 2. This was due to the fact that Czechoslovakia was too far from Anglo-American bomber bases to be reached by warplanes.


46 To support his claims, economist Boris Pešek noted that citizens of German descent owned 20% of the wealth in Czechoslovakia before the expulsions. Combine this with the property of the Jews killed in the war, existing government holdings, and Nazi enterprises that ended up in Czechoslovak hands and he claimed that after the war the government already controlled most "productive facilities" in the country. See Pešek, *Gross National Product of Czechoslovakia in Monetary and Real Terms, 1946-58*, 2. John N. Stevens argues the same and quotes Pešek extensively, see John N. Stevens, *Czechoslovakia at the Crossroads: The Economic Dilemmas of Communism in Postwar Czechoslovakia* (Boulder, Colo.; New York: East European Monographs, Distributed by Columbia University Press, 1985), 8.
higher by 10 percent.” Notable for this study, however, the building sector was one of
the worst performers, fulfilling only 66% of its targets; agriculture reached 80%.48

Despite these circumstances, it would be incorrect to argue that the country
emerged from the war unscathed. In his assessment of the overall health of the
Czechoslovak economy in 1945, economist Jan Michal described other types of
destruction that occurred including “the reckless wartime depletion of natural resources,
the great distortion of the pattern of output, employment, and trade, and the disruption
of the monetary system, in addition to physical destruction and losses in territory and
population.”49 Food was also in short supply across the country with rations as low as
1,300 calories a day in May 1945, increasing to 1,800 calories by the end of the year, but
still remaining below the “desirable level” through the 1940s.50 The far east of the
country, Subcarpathian Ruthenia, had been ceded to the Soviet Union at the end of the
war, resulting in the loss of 850,000 inhabitants.51

In 1945 and 1946, three million citizens determined to be of German descent were
forcefully expelled from the country as a form of war retribution and for what, at the
time, was justified as a national security measure.52 The earliest and most violent

48 Ibid.
50 Myant, Socialism and Democracy in Czechoslovakia, 1945-1948, 56, 185-86.
51 Joseph B. Schechtman, "Postwar Population Transfers in Europe: A Survey," The Review of
52 Radvanovský, "The Social and Economic Consequences of Resettling Czechs into
expulsions occurred in the summer of 1945. These came to be known as the “wild transfers,” when in just a few months over 700,000 Sudeten Germans were “herded” by Czechs into Nazi-style “concentration and labor camps... where as many as 30,000 Germans died.”  

The remaining German population was transported to German territory in a more orderly fashion during 1946, but they were forced to leave with few possessions and no compensation for their property or assets. As a result, Czechoslovakia’s population shrunk dramatically from 15,900,000 in May 1945 to only 12,003,000 in December 1946. Many of the expellees had owned or managed industrial, banking and commercial operations. The large population losses, together with the reduction of the skilled labor pool and the depletion of the industrial knowledge base, contributed to extreme labor shortages that were evident after the war and would continue to plague the country for decades.

The social and cultural consequences of the war proved to be the most destructive. In 1939, 70% of the population of Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia was Czech;

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by 1950, this number had grown to 94%. As historian Nancy Wingfield has shown, the loss of the country’s long-established German community created the need to construct a “new collective memory” for the country, one that “used socially organized forgetting—exclusion, suppression, and repression—on the one hand, and socially organized remembering—the deliberate invention, emphasis, and popularization of elements of consciousness—on the other... to legitimate the new ‘purer’ postwar Czechoslovak nation-state.” Beyond the outright anti-German propaganda that was common in political rhetoric, aspects of forgetting included changing building, street and city names from German to Czech; removing monuments related to historic German figures; and forbidding the use of the term “Sudeten” after May 1945. The construction of this “new collective memory” focused largely on unifying the Czech and Slovak peoples, whose histories and wartime experiences were distinct. Within architecture, this was achieved, on one hand, by emphasizing the shared vernacular heritage of the region and, on the other, by highlighting the modernizing character of Czech and Slovak architecture in the interwar period.


59 Ibid.: 256-64.

60 The vernacular interest can be seen in the work of architects like Dušan Jurkovič, see Christopher Long, “The Works of Our People: Dušan Jurkovič and the Slovak Art Revival,” *Studies in the Decorative Arts* 12, no. 1 (Fall-Winter 2004-2005): 2-29. The histories of Czech and Slovak modernism have typically been written separately, due in part to the dominance of the Czech lands in cultural output, however there were similarities and overlaps among the main protagonists in both cases. On the Slovaks, see Dulla and Moravčíková, *20th-Century Architecture in Slovakia*; Ladislav Foltyn, *Slovenská architektúra a česká avantgarda 1918-1939*.
In addition to the loss of the German population, there was a large population transfer of Czechs and Slovaks from the interior of the country to the ‘borderlands,’ the Czech term for the Sudetenland, where they were promised property confiscated from Germans including businesses and homes. According to historian Adrian von Arburg, between 1945 and 1950, one out of every four Czechs left their homes and “tried to build a new existence in the borderlands.”\(^6^1\) As part of the Košice agreement, the Communist Party gained control of the Ministry of the Interior, which was responsible for organizing the resettlement of the borderlands. The Ministry opened what they named the Settlement Office (Osídlovací úřad) in the fall of 1945 to oversee these activities. Due in part to the association of the Communist Party with the resettlement efforts, a significant portion of the Communist Party’s support in the 1946 general elections would come from this region.\(^6^2\)

One of the most serious obstacles to the resettlement was the lack of housing. Although there were as many as 640,000 apartments and homes in the government’s possession in the region by 1946,\(^6^3\) some belonged to Czechs returning to the area, some

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were primitive even by interwar standards and others suffered war damage and needed reconstruction. Historian Zdeněk Radvanovský writes that this "catastrophic lack of housing" was "a burning problem for practically all new settlers," many of whom had to live with friends, in hotels or in makeshift accommodations. For these reasons, many of the postwar government's early housing initiatives focused on this region where the housing shortages would continue into the 1950s. The cities around Ostrava suffered similar problems since its housing stock was depleted and its coal-mining and steel industries started to expand rapidly in the late 1940s and early 1950s. Given these circumstances, architects quickly recognized the crucial role the profession could play in the future development of the country. The following chapters begin with this housing crisis and examine how the transition from capitalism to state socialism transformed architectural practice from an individual artistic pursuit into a form of modern industrial production on a massive scale.

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64 Radvanovský, "The Social and Economic Consequences of Resettling Czechs into Northwestern Bohemia, 1945-47," 244.

65 Ibid., 253.
Chapter 1:
Phoenix Rising: Housing and the Debates on Socialist Modernity
(1945-1948)

We are practically the only civilized state in the world that has yet to
devote itself to the scientific study of the housing question. This is one of
the most important elements of social politics, of the care of the physical
and moral health of the nation, and economically, it is the most significant
segment of the building industry.1 – Block of Progressive Architectural
Associations, 1945

On the night of July 17, 1945, just over two months after Czechoslovakia’s
liberation from Nazi occupation, architects gathered in the main hall of the Central
Library for the first public meeting of the newly-established Block of Progressive
Architectural Associations (Blok architektonických pokrokových spolků, henceforth BAPS).

Although the professional journal, Architektura ČSR (Czechoslovak Architecture),2 listed
the names of more than thirty architects who had lost their lives in concentration camps
or in resistance fighting,3 the close-knit professional community regrouped with most of

1 "Memorandum Bloku architektonických pokrokových spolků o nutnosti organisace práce v oboru
architektury, plánování a stavebnictví (Statement of the Block of Progressive Architectural
Organizations about the necessity of organizing work in the fields of architecture, planning and
construction)," Nov. 22, 1945, p. 5, fond 1261/2/20: Ústřední kulturně propagadní komise a
kulturně propagadní oddělení UV KSČ (Central Cultural-Propaganda Commission and the
Cultural-Propaganda Department of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of
Czechoslovakia), henceforth UKPK, carton 636, Národní archiv (National Archive, henceforth
NA), Prague, Czech Republic. All Czech to English translations are by the author unless noted.

2 Architektura ČSR was created in 1939 out of three other journals – Stavba, Stavitel and Styl. It ran
until 1990, ceasing publication only once from 1943-1945. The three had been published
separately in the 1920s and 1930s by three professional associations – the Architects’ Club, the
Architects’ Alliance and the Architects’ Society, respectively. Editor of Stavba and member of the
Architects’ Club, Oldřich Starý, became the editor of Architektura ČSR, a post he would hold on
and off into the 1960s. He was also the President of BAPS.

3 "Padlým architektům (To the Fallen Architects)," Architektura ČSR 5, no. 10 (1946): 291-322.
The most high-profile architects to die in the war included Otakar Fischel who designed one of the
houses at the Baba Estate in Prague; Miroslav Lorenc from Baťa in Zlín; and architect and set
designer František Zelenka who worked with the avant-garde “Liberated Theater” in Prague.
its leaders alive and in Czechoslovakia. Among the speakers that evening were leading left-wing architects of the interwar period such as Jaroslav Fragner, Karel Janů, Václav Hilský, Jiří Kroha and Oldřich Starý. In twelve speeches, the group announced its platform including demands for reform in the building industry, public support for the construction of housing units and the creation of a “single organization for architect-designers in Czechoslovakia.” In a statement that foretold something of the profession’s future institutionalization, they also declared the full “cooperation of architects in the construction of the state” after the “liberation of [their] homeland.”

Like the mythical Egyptian phoenix, the avant-garde movement in Czechoslovakia emerged with new vigor from war and occupation. Its members had spent years out of work, under surveillance, in hiding and in some cases, in concentration camps. To the delight of most architects, Czechoslovakia’s political and intellectual climate had moved far to the left by 1945 as a response to fascism and what Czechs and Slovaks perceived as the betrayal of their country by anti-socialist, western

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4 As expected, the war also took its toll on the health of architects who survived the war. Well-known figures in the modern movement, Josef Gočár and Kamil Roškot, died in the fall of 1945 at ages 65 and 59 respectively. Their obituaries were printed in Architektura, see Oldřich Starý, “Architekt Prof. Josef Gočár (Professor of Architecture Josef Gočár)” Architektura 5, no. 3 (1946): 66-69; “Kamil Roškot,” Architektura 5, no. 3 (1946): 51-54; F.M. Černý, “Jak jsme znali Kamila Roškota (The Kamil Roškot we knew),” Architektura 5, no. 3 (1946):54-55.


6 Ibid.: 2.
powers at Munich in 1938. They saw a future in the creation of strong institutions, not only governmental, but also social, cultural and professional. This new environment gave the leadership of BAPS and its constitutive groups, including the dominant Union of Socialist Architects (Svaz socialistických architektů, henceforth SSA), the opportunity to pursue their long sought-after goal of reorganizing the mechanisms of architectural design and construction along a collective model.

From the start, the group’s ‘progressive’ architectural vision was tied to the optimistic political rhetoric of the left and, in particular, the Communist Party. Within cultural and intellectual circles, the changing political climate opened new possibilities to secure widespread support for interwar polemics on the need for mass housing, overturning the class structure and exposing the nature of capitalist excess and exploitation. Demands for the nationalization of the building industry, which had seemed naive in the 1930s, were now met with support from the profession and the government as part of a larger nationalization program. If the war represented a

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7 Bradley F. Abrams, *The Struggle For the Soul of the Nation: Czech Culture and the Rise of Communism* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2004), 104-17. Since Slovakia was an ally of Germany, Slovak attitudes towards Munich and the war were different.

8 ‘Progressive’ had a similar connotation in this context as it does today. It meant a leftwing, but not necessarily a Marxist or communist point of view, and therefore did not indicate a particular party affiliation.


temporary obstacle to this campaign, then the rising political power of the Communist Party and the establishment of BAPS signaled that the time was finally right for this agenda to come to fruition.

Between May 1945 and September 1948, when a state-run system of architecture and engineering offices was established, the course of architectural design in Czechoslovakia was not predetermined, highly-controlled or influenced by the socialist realist method employed in the Soviet Union. In formal terms, the work of this period was modern and followed interwar preferences for unadorned surfaces, volumetric massing and industrial components.\textsuperscript{12} Experimentation and innovation were widespread, especially in the areas of new materials and the use of standardized building elements. There were also new work opportunities for architects as projects with ambitious programs and high budgets started to emerge from government initiatives. At the beginning, these focused on basic reconstruction, transportation infrastructure and industrial capacity, much of which was done by engineers rather than architects.\textsuperscript{13} With the announcement of the “Two-Year Plan” in the summer of 1946,\textsuperscript{14}


\textsuperscript{13} Letter from Vlasta Štursová and Jan Vaněk at SSA in Prague to the Sojuz sovětskikh arhitektorov – V.O.K.S. in Moscow (Union of Soviet-Czech Architects), Jan. 28, 1946, ÚKPK, carton 636, NA.

\textsuperscript{14} The Two-Year Plan was the first attempt at a planned economy in the country. It was scheduled to be implemented in January 1947. The goal was to return to or surpass 1937 output levels by 1948. Target areas included industry, agriculture, transportation, housing and the plan tried to balance the level of development in Slovakia with the Czech lands. Michal, "Postwar
which included the target of 125,000 new housing units by 1948, architects began to receive commissions for civic and residential projects. Most of the new projects came out of the Communist-led Ministries of Agriculture, Labor and Social Affairs, Education, Information and the Interior. These projects were often funded jointly with nationalized industries and public administrative bodies called national committees, creating a model of public-private partnership that would be influential in future developments.

Architects also held posts in units such as the Settlement Office (Osidlovací úřad) within the Ministry of the Interior, which was responsible for repopulating the former Sudetenland with Czechs and Slovaks as 3 million citizens of German descent were expelled following the war. Together with the far-left political stance of BAPS, these commissions—and the creative freedom they offered—generated genuine enthusiasm within the profession for the nationalization process and increased state control over the economy.

Housing was one of the most fertile areas of architectural innovation in this transitional period. Damaged cities needed emergency housing units to start reconstruction and newly-nationalized industries required more housing units to attract

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15 Ladislav Machoň, "Příprava obcí k provádění stavebního programu budovatelského plánu vlády (The Preparation of Communities for the Implementation of the Building Program of the Government's Reconstruction Plan)," Architektura ČSR 5, no. 9 (1946): 260. This number came from a July 16, 1946 government resolution. See "Zápis o poradě konané podle vládního usnesení o přípravních opatření k provádění budovatelského programu vlády (Minutes of the Meeting Called on the Government Resolution on the Preparatory Arrangements to Administer the Government Building Programs)," Aug. 1, 1946, fond 996: Ministerstvo Techniky (Ministry of Technology, henceforth MT), carton 303, NA.

new workers. BAPS focused much of its attention on promoting architects as experts who would solve the housing crisis through research, analysis and planning. During the chaotic years of the Great Depression and the war, mass housing initiatives had been local, individual and, often, privately-funded. This meant that few projects were ever completed, and those that succeeded were often at the scale of a single building.

According to BAPS, the solution to this crisis was the consolidation of professional and material resources—collective work executed to regulated standards—as well as a clearly-articulated agenda for architectural practice that established the architect as a critical and indispensable voice in the debates about a new Czechoslovak society. State support was crucial to these goals and one of the group’s earliest demands was the creation of government institutes to investigate aspects of the building industry such as housing strategies, prefabrication, the economics of construction, building standards and the relationship of people to the natural environment. Although the institutes as such would not be created before 1948, the organizational model of the research institute and the concept of scientific inquiry as the basis of architectural


18 As Rostislav Švacha shows, small-scale building continued during the war, especially outside of the cities. See Švacha, "Architektura čtyřicátých let (Architecture of the 1940s)," 31-73.

19 "Memorandum Bloku architektonických pokrokových spolků," 2. The work of Ladislav Žák in the late 1930s and 1940s was the primary catalyst for the agenda on the relationship of people to their environment, which stood out among the other agenda items. See Ladislav Žák, Obytná krajina (The Inhabited Landscape) (Prague: S. V. U. Mänes, Svoboda, 1947). Architectural historian Dita Dvořáková has edited a collection of Žák’s writings that includes an introductory essay. See Ladislav Žák and Dita Dvořáková, Byt a krajina; Texty o architektuře, sv. 3 (Dwelling and Landscape; Texts on Architecture, vol. 3) (Prague: Arbor vitae, 2006).
practice would become the foundation for later incarnations of the socialist design sector.

Through an investigation of the activities of BAPS and housing projects that represented the changes taking place from 1945 to 1948, this chapter will trace the reemergence of the profession after the war and the construction of a new model of architectural practice that emphasized expert knowledge and collective action over artistic expression and individual gain. The discussion will show that the establishment of BAPS, and the leading role of SSA in the organization, was evidence that the architectural profession had already started the transformation from capitalist to socialist practice before the communist takeover; however willing or unwilling members were to continue abiding by these changes as events progressed. In particular, the 1945 proposals put forward by BAPS illustrated the enthusiasm for socialism that was already present among many Czech and Slovak architects.

In their formulation of architecture as a scientific and quantitative pursuit, the leadership of BAPS also connected their platform with the polemics and debates of the 1930s, which were seen as part of the progressive development of Czechoslovak modernism which would lead to socialist architecture. Mapping these continuities in architectural thinking, as well as in personalities, is critical to an understanding postwar architecture in Czechoslovakia. Although historians have long characterized either 1938

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20 "Zprávy Svazu socialistických architektů (Newsletter of the Union of Socialist Architects)," Sept., 1945, p. 1, UKPK, carton 636, NA.
or 1945 as the break between high modernism and what came after, an analysis of these connections shows that, in technological and formal terms, architecture did not change much in this period. In fact, there was some solace for architects in returning to the regularity of their professional lives after the disruption of war.

Within this framework, the five years between the end of the war and the implementation of the socialist realist method appear as a time of hopeful ideological consolidation. During these years, many architects rallied behind a socialist agenda in an attempt to influence the future development of the design professions and the building industry as a whole. Through these efforts, the far-left technocratic position espoused by the most radical factions of the 1930s became mainstream and then dominant.

Unfortunately for many, the long sought-after dream of a transformative modern architecture soon became corrupted by the very political system within which it was conceived. Although the forms of the late 1940s would reappear less than a decade later during Khrushchev’s ‘thaw,’ the optimism of these early years proved much harder to recapture; these would be among the happiest years of ‘socialist’ architecture in Czechoslovakia.

The Architectural Legacy of the Interwar Period

The vision of architectural practice that emerged after the war in Czechoslovakia was influenced in large part by the debates and experiences of the avant-garde in the 1930s. In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the architect was viewed as an individual creative artist working in the cultural sphere. Starting after World War I with initiatives such as the Bauhaus in Germany and the skyscraper boom in the United States, the cultural role of the profession began to change around the developed world. The conservative model of the classically-trained beaux-arts master became old-fashioned. It was replaced by the ‘modern’ architect who was technologically adept, attuned to economic demands and in step with stylistic trends.

In the 1920s, Czech architects embraced a series of modern architectural styles from rondocubism, Corbusian-inspired poetism and rationalism to constructivism and various strands of functionalism. As detailed in a number of recent studies, Czechoslovakia’s architectural avant-garde flourished in the 1920s and 1930s as the new country searched for a cultural identity that expressed what it perceived to be its modern and industrial character.\(^{22}\) (Fig. 1.1-1.2) Although the Great Depression slowed...
Fig. 1.1: Jan Gillar, French School, Prague (1931-1934) from the collection of the Architecture Archive at the National Technical Museum

Fig. 1.2: Josef Havlíček and Karel Honzík, General Pensions Institute, Prague (1932-34) from *The Architecture of New Prague, 1895-1945* (1995)
construction, architects remained active in the 1930s through publications, competitions and some built projects including social housing.\textsuperscript{23}

Although it was not clear at the time, the line of architectural thinking from the 1930s that would have the most significant impact on postwar developments was "scientific functionalism."\textsuperscript{24} Promoted by critic and theorist Karel Teige and his supporters in the avant-garde circles of Prague and Brno, scientific functionalism originated in the 1920s. (Fig. 1.3) Its ideological basis was shared with Russian and Swiss constructivism, especially the group around the Swiss journal, ABC, where Teige first saw the work of the Swiss architect Hannes Meyer, the Dutch architect Mart Stam, and

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{karel-teige-u-sso-r-1925-from-the-collection-of-the-museum-of-czech-literature-prague}
\caption{Karel Teige in USSR (1925) from the collection of the Museum of Czech Literature, Prague}
\end{figure}


\textsuperscript{24} Švácha, Ryndová and Pokorná, eds., \textit{Forma sleduje vědu/ Form Follows Science}.
the Russian architect El Lissitzky. Teige visited the Soviet Union in 1925 and became a well-known expert on Soviet architecture, although he became disillusioned with the Soviets after the 1932 Palace of the Soviets competition. Of all his international contacts, Teige and his followers most admired Meyer, who as director of the Bauhaus invited him to deliver a series of lectures in 1930, just before Meyer was fired and emigrated to the Soviet Union.

Architectural historian Rostislav Švácha describes Teige’s scientific functionalism as a belief in “creation based on scientific foundations – architecture as a scientific discipline, architecture as science – as a positive opposite of creation based on subjectivity.” As he notes, however, Teige’s understanding of scientific functionalism depended in large part on his definition of ‘science,’ which he left intentionally vague throughout his writings. Švácha proposes a meaning that equates science with the laboratory.

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28 Meyer took over as the director of the Bauhaus in 1928 following the departure of founder Walter Gropius. He served until 1930 when he was fired for his vocal communist stance, he stayed in the Soviet Union until 1936, returning to Switzerland and later moving to Mexico. Ibid., 118.

We can read a ‘positive’ concept of science out of Teige’s writing and to some extent reconstruct it. Until the thirties, if not longer, Teige identified science with activity which is conducted in a laboratory, with laboratory work....The scientific nature of laboratory work lies not only in the fact that the work is exact, rational and methodical, but also in the fact that it is work based on experiments, on verifying theories, hypotheses, prognoses, utopias, ‘scientifically’ supported plans...However, laboratory work is also scientific in the fact that it is ‘pure’ work, independent of the often unfavorable conditions in capitalist society and of customer orders, which would corrupt and deform the pure solution of an architectural problem in all sorts of ways.30

Švácha identifies three distant phases of Teige’s scientific functionalism – the first was his interest in “economic” or “physical” science from 1922-1928; the second was his “sociological” phase which lasted from 1928-1936; and the third was his turn toward surrealism and “psychoanalytical” and “biological science” from 1936-1948, a time when he largely abandoned architecture as a subject. 31 He would briefly return to architecture in the 1940s when he wrote the introduction to Ladislav Žák’s 1947 book, Obytná krajina (The Inhabited Landscape), incorporating aspects of surrealism into his polemic.32 He also authored a short history of modern architecture in Czechoslovakia in 1947, which was commissioned by the Communist Ministry of Information and prepared for international distribution in English and French.33 Although Teige lived until 1951, his

30 Ibid., 21-22. Emphasis in the original.
32 See Švácha, "Form Follows Science, Karel Teige and Czech Scientific Functionalism, 1922-1948," 89-97; Žák, Obytná krajina; Žák and Dvořáková, Byt a krajina; Texty o architektuře, sv. 3.
criticism of the Soviet Union, his lifelong refusal to join the Communist Party and the souring of many of his personal relationships left him ostracized in the 1940s and outside of the public debates.

Among architects active after World War II, it was Teige’s work in the late 1920s and early 1930s – what Švácha terms his ‘sociological’ phase – that had the most influence. At this time, his interest in Marxism had deepened and he devoted himself to the study of social housing; producing his treatise on the subject, Nejmenší byt (The Minimum Dwelling), in 1932.\textsuperscript{34} (Fig. 1.4) His increasing radical stance became untenable for some of his early collaborators and, Devětsil, the avant-garde artists’ collective that he founded in 1920, disbanded in 1931.\textsuperscript{35} Tensions were growing within the profession.

Fig. 1.4: Karel Teige, Cover of Nejmenší byt (1932)

\textsuperscript{34} Teige, \textit{The Minimum Dwelling}.

as the effects of the Depression challenged architects to stake out positions on economic and social issues. The former members of Devětsil and other modern architects splintered into multiple factions. Teige loyalists from the Devětsil years including Jan Gillar and Oldřich Starý continued to argue for a ‘sociological’ scientific functionalist point of view. Teige himself wrote a critique of Soviet architecture in 1936 before he turned his attention to surrealism.\textsuperscript{36} Others, including Karel Honzík, Jaromír Krejcar and Evžen Linhart, promoted something they called “emotional functionalism,” which considered not only “people’s physical needs,” but also “the demands of human emotions.”\textsuperscript{37} (Fig. 1.5)

Fig. 1.5: Jaromír Krejcar, Machnáč Sanatorium on a postcard, Trenčianske Teplice, now Slovakia (1930-1932)


Throughout the 1930s, Teige’s lack of professional credentials (he was trained as an art historian), his untempered Marxist rhetoric and repudiation of middle-class values including traditional marriage and the role women as domestic caretakers, meant that he remained a provocative, but marginal character for all but the most radical architects in the 1930s. Teige found new affinities, however, among the young Marxist architects who joined leftwing groups in Prague around this time including the architectural section of the Left Front (Levá fronta), established in 1929. These architects would become his most dogmatic followers. Among the youngest of the group was Otakar Nový, who would later become deputy director of Stavoprojekt, the state-run system of architecture offices created after 1948. In a 1973 article written to celebrate the twenty-fifth anniversary of Stavoprojekt, Nový recalled a series events that he called “the start of the pursuit of a socialist form of design.” This began with the 1932 “Proclamation of the Architectural Left”, which called for the first Congress of Left

38 For a comprehensive discussion of Teige’s activities and influences, see Dluhosch and Švácha, eds., Karel Teige, 1900-1951: L’Enfant Terrible of the Czech Modernist Avant-Garde; Teige, The Minimum Dwelling; Teige, Modern Architecture in Czechoslovakia and Other Writings. Thomas Ort discusses the generational conflicts between Teige and his predecessors in chapter four of his dissertation, see Thomas Ort, "Men Without Qualities: Karel Čapek and His Generation, 1911-1938" (Ph.D. Dissertation, New York University, 2005), 219-94.

39 Stavoprojekt is the focus of chapter two.

40 Otakar Nový, "Čtvrtstoleté jubileum založení Stavoprojektu (The Twenty-Fifth Anniversary of the Establishment of Stavoprojekt)," Architektura ČSR 32 (1973): 483-90. This article was written during the period of “normalization” when the government retreated from the liberalizations that had occurred leading up to the Prague Spring in 1968 and attempted to quiet dissatisfaction with the regime by improving the quality of life and the availability of consumer goods. It is thought of as a time of significant moral compromise for those people who chose to work with the regime. Nový’s text must be considered within this context. In general, his narrative proves truthful when compared to the information that I have gathered in my research and therefore I consider this article to be an excellent resource despite its clear biases. Just before he died in 1999, he published a history of the Czech avant-garde, Otakar Nový, Česká architektonická avantgarda (The Czech Architectural Avant-Garde) (Prague: Prostor, 1998).
Architects (Sjezd levých architektů) to convene in October 1932.\textsuperscript{41} This meeting led to the creation of the Union of Socialist Architects (SSA) the following year under the leadership of Jiří Kroha, a communist and professor at the University of Technology in Brno.\textsuperscript{42}

The most ardent supporters of Teige’s ‘sociological’ scientific functionalism were, however, the members of the Architectural Working Group (Pracovní architektonická skupina, henceforth PAS), a collaboration between three Prague architects – Karel Janů, Jiří Štursa and Jiří Voženílek. Younger than Karel Teige and the Devětsil architects by more than ten years, the three were classmates at the Technical University in Prague in the late 1920s and they entered into the architectural fray in 1930 when they joined the Left Front. Their strident Marxism and vocal support for Soviet housing types such as the koldom and urban planning models such as Miliutin’s linear city put them on the far left of Prague’s leftist circles in the early 1930s. (Fig. 1.6) They wrote an architectural treatise for the 1932 Congress of Left Architects that was heavily indebted to Teige. Entitled “Vedecke metody architektonické práce (Scientific Methods of Architectural Work),” it was published in a 1933 anthology of essays edited by Teige.\textsuperscript{43} They followed

\textsuperscript{41} Nový, "Čtvrtstoleté jubileum založení Stavoprojektu (The Twenty-Fifth Anniversary of the Establishment of Stavoprojekt)," 483. The signatories of the proclamation were the architects of what Nový called the ‘Devětsil’ generation, born around 1900. They included Jan Gillar, Jaroslav Fragner, Bohuslav Fuchs, Karel Honzik, Jaromír Krejcar, Jiří Kroha, Oldřich Starý, Karel Teige and Ladislav Žák. Notably, none of the signatories died during the war and many became leaders in BAPS.

\textsuperscript{42} Kroha is the subject of chapter four.

Fig. 1.6: PAS, Regional Plan for Čakovice and Letňany, Prague (1932) from Architekt SIA, (1933)

Fig. 1.7: Examples of PAS diagrams showing the relationship between industrialization and production time from Janů's book, Socialistické budování (oč půjde ve stavebnictví a architektuře) (1946)
with a book on the principles of socialist architecture in 1933. The basis of their position lay in the belief that “the industrialization of the building industry” and “the principles of scientific methods” were the keys to making architecture “a component of scientifically governed production and the distribution of vital means.” (Fig. 1.7) In his assessment of the interwar avant-garde, Švácha is particularly critical of PAS and their relationship to Teige.

Most of the PAS texts appear to be the work of thinkers lost to technocratism, superficial mechanical materialism and vulgar sociologism, precisely the kind which asserted itself in the thirties in the Soviet humanities. The patophysical character of Janů’s, Štursa’s and Voženílek’s writings was reinforced by various diagrams, drawn charts and graphs, with which the architects wanted to reinforce the exactness and objectivity of their scientific deductions. One PAS chart from 1932, for example, illustrates ‘how every question is monitored in its development, disputes and solution;’ another tries to indicate the optimum in the intersection of economy and function; another drawing from 1936 depicts the sum of energy losses in collisions of constant and variable energy, mechanical and human energy.

He goes on to say that PAS made something “vulgar” out of Teige’s “theoretical heritage” by “caricaturing” his ideas. PAS would expand in the mid-1930s to include

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47 Ibid., 96.
Oldřich Stibor and Vlasta Štursova, the wife of Jiří Štursa, who was on the executive committee of the SSA. After 1936, however, they were less active as a collective, pursuing outside commissions for houses and apartment buildings individually or in pairs. This was due in large part to the departure of Jiří Voženílek, who left Prague in 1937 to take a job in the architectural offices of the Baťa Corporation in Zlín; the same year that Vladimír Karfík completed his famous Baťa skyscraper.  

For these reasons, no one would have foreseen in the late 1930s that the three founding members of PAS would be among the most powerful architects in the first postwar decade. Janů would lead the Czechoslovak Building Works, the corporation created after the nationalization of the building industry in 1948. After its dissolution in 1951, he researched housing prototypes in a Stavoprojekt institute until becoming Deputy Minister of Building in 1956. Voženílek would become the first director of Stavoprojekt from 1948-1951 and then he led a research institute on architecture and urbanism before being appointed Deputy Minister of the State Committee for

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48 Oldřich Stibor, like other PAS members, would take a role in the shaping the postwar agenda. He was the architectural representative at the State Planning Office (Státní úřad plánovací), which was responsible for writing the Five-Year Plan and ensuring its fulfillment. See letters written by Stibor to the Czechoslovak Building Works and the Ministry of Technology in Carton 429, MT, NA.

49 Examples of their late projects include the Volman Villa in Čelákovic by Janů and Štursa from 1937-38 and an apartment house in Prague-Holešovice by Janů from 1938-1939.

50 See chapter five.

51 The files on the Ministry of Building (Ministerstvo stavebnictví) are at the National Archive in Prague, but they are uncatalogued and inaccessible.
Construction in 1956, Jiří Štursa stayed closer to design work as the author of two of the early standardized housing developments while working at the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs from 1946-48, and, with his wife, as the designer of the site plan and architectural foundations for Otakar Švec’s winning entry to the Stalin Monument competition in 1950. He was also on the faculty at the Czech Technical University in Prague, where he served as Dean of the Architecture Department from 1952-1954. These prestigious appointments resulted from the activities of the former PAS members from 1944-1948, when they formally aligned themselves with the Communist Party and took leadership positions in the government and in public design projects. Given Teige’s problematic relationship with the regime after the war and his outspoken dislike for the hierarchical structure of the Communist Party, there is a sad irony, and indeed something ‘vulgar,’ about the elevation of his most dedicated supporters to these high positions after 1948.

BAPS and the Reconstitution of the Architectural Profession

The reconstitution of the architectural profession, its alliance with the National Front government and its desire to work with the state must be framed within this broad

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52 Otakar Nový, "In memoriam profesora Jiřího Voženíleka (In Memory of Professor Jiří Voženílek)," Architektura ČSR 46, no. 4 (1987): 346-47. For more on his ministerial work, see fond 976: Státní výbor pro výstavbu (State Committee for Construction), NA.

53 Karel Plát, "Výstavba vzorných sídlišť a jejich poslání (The Construction of the Model Housing Developments and Their Mission)," Architektura ČSR 7, no. 6-7 (1948): 201-06.

54 The context of the competition is discussed in chapter three. Oldřich Starý, "Pomník J.V. Stalina v Praze (Monument of J.V. Stalin in Prague)," Architektura ČSR 9, no. 3-4 (1950): 63-69.

political, economic, social and cultural context. From the end of the war until the Communist takeover in February 1948, the country was growing rapidly. Its economy was regaining its footing, although largely through government intervention and a massive nationalization program. Socialism was popular and the state was perceived as a stabilizing and benevolent entity. As discussed in the introduction, after the loss of Subcarpathian Ruthenia and the expulsion of the Germans, the country’s population was reduced from almost 16,000,000 in 1945 to just over 12,000,00 at the start of 1947 and at least twenty-five percent of those who remained moved, at least temporarily, to the borderlands looking for new opportunities. This mobile population, which was still coping with the effects of the war, proved to be open to radical political change. The Communist Party gained strength exponentially, while opposition forces had little to offer in return.

Like Communist Party representatives in the National Front government who used their wartime activities to gain legitimacy, those architects who had been loyal to the socialist cause during the war emerged as the leading voices of the professional community in May 1945. Already in 1944, while the country was still occupied, the former members of PAS reunited and joined with Otakar Nový to serve as the building commission of the clandestine Central Council of Trade Unions (Ústřední rady odborů).

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56 There were approximately 50,000 members of the Communist Party in May 1945, one year later there were more than 1,000,000. Martin R. Myant, *Socialism and Democracy in Czechoslovakia, 1945-1948* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 106.

57 The failure of the opposition parties to offer viable alternatives is discussed in Abrams, *The Struggle For the Soul of the Nation: Czech Culture and the Rise of Communism.*

58 See introduction.
henceforth ÚRO). The Communist-led ÚRO was the national leadership group of the Revolutionary Trade Union Movement (Revoluční odborové hnutí, or ROH), which had developed illegally as a resistance group within the official Nazi trade unions and quickly became the voice of organized labor after the war. According to Nový, it was this building commission who first “prepared the general plan for the nationalization of the building industry, the creation of socialist design organizations and for research.”

During the Prague Uprising in early May 1945, the building commission of the ÚRO met with the architectural committee of the Communist Party—Václav Hilský, František Jech and Josef Kittrich—at Jiří Štursa’s atelier in Prague. Here they agreed upon “a unified approach (jednotný postup) in liberated Czechoslovakia.” This was the start of what would become a broad coalition of leftwing architects.

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59 Nový, “Čtvrtstoleté jubileum založení Stavoprojektu (The Twenty-Fifth Anniversary of the Establishment of Stavoprojekt),” 483. The commission included Nový, Janů, Voženílek, Stibor and the Štursas. He also stated that “the most famous theoreticians of the SSA” collaborated directly with this group—Karel Honzík, Ladislav Žák, Oldřich Starý and Jiří Kroha. In this context, Nový described being part of the “‘passed over’ generation (mezigenerace ‘pasistů’),” the last generation to attend the architecture schools before the Nazis shut them down. He describes a lineage of leftist architects that began with the ‘Devětsil’ architects; PAS was the next generation; and then the ‘pasisti.’ Each generation was taught by the one before, so according to Nový, PAS were the mentors to the ‘pasisti.’ Their friendships lasted a long time, Nový wrote Voženílek’s obituary in 1987; see Nový, “In memoriam profesora Jiřího Voženíleka (In Memory of Professor Jiří Voženílek),” 346-47.

60 The first elected leader of the ÚRO was Antonín Zápotocký, one of the co-founders of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia and a future Prime Minister and President. See Karel Kovanda, “Work Councils in Czechoslovakia, 1945-47,” Soviet Studies 29, no. 2 (1977): 255-69.

61 Nový, “Čtvrtstoleté jubileum založení Stavoprojektu (The Twenty-Fifth Anniversary of the Establishment of Stavoprojekt),” 483.

62 Ibid.

63 Ibid.
Because of these wartime activities, the SSA was able to regroup quickly; they held their first postwar meeting was held on May 12, 1945. Although the SSA used the more general term “socialist,” the majority of the groups’ members already belonged to the Communist Party in 1945. Members of the ÚRO’s building commission and the Communist Party’s architectural commission were among the leaders of the reconstituted SSA. They included President Jiří Kroha, who reclaimed the position he had held in the 1930s, Executive President Jan Vaněk, Vice-President Karel Janů, Secretary Vlasta Štursová, Treasurer Oldřich Stibor and executive committee members including František Jech, Václav Hilský, Jan Gillar, Josef Kittrich and Jiří Štursa.

Working from Moravia during the war, Jiří Vozenílek had led a Zlín branch of the ÚRO

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64 “Zprávy Svazu socialistických architektů, č.2 (Newsletter of the Union of Socialist Architects, no. 2),” Jan. 1946, p. 4, ÚKPK, carton 636, NA. The group met every other week at a local social club.

65 Letter from SSA to Ústřední komunistické strany čsl. (Headquarters of the Communist Party of Czechoslovak), Oct. 15, 1945, ÚKPK, carton 636, NA. There is no Communist Party membership list included with the letter, but it said only that the SSA was “comprised mainly of architects who are members of the Communist Party.”

66 Since Kroha was in Brno most of the time, Jan Vaněk ran the everyday operations of SSA with Vlasta Štursová. Vaněk (1891-1962) was trained as a cabinet-maker and became a specialist in the design of small residences in the interwar period. He published the journal, Býtová kultura, in the 1920s and collaborated for a short time with Adolf Loos. After 1948, he became the head of the Czechoslovak Woodworking Enterprise, likely a division of the Czechoslovak Building Works led by Janů, and designed standardized furniture for apartments. See Michal Kohout, Stephan Tempi and Pavel Zatloukal, eds., Česká architektura - architektura XX.století. Díl I. Morava a Slezsko (Czech Republic - 20th-Century Architecture, Part 1. Moravia and Silesia) (Prague: Zlatý řez, 2005), 326.

67 “Zprávy Svazu socialistických architektů,” Sept. 1945, p.1. This structure did have some problems, at one point Kroha became angry that Vaněk was signing letters as “President” of SSA. He wrote to Štursová to say that he was “very surprised” when he received an SSA bulletin that Vaněk signed as President. She responded to Kroha saying that it was just an “oversight” and that “you are the only president.” Letter to SSA/Vlasta Štursová from Jiří Kroha, Feb. 13, 1946, ÚKPK, carton 636, NA; Letter from SSA to Jiří Kroha, Feb. 25, 1946.
building commission in cooperation with the Prague group. With the formation of BAPS, he remained active at the national level and led the interest committee on research institutes. Of note, Vozenilek was unusual among the PAS and SSA architects because he waited to join the Communist Party until 1945.

The SSA's first bulletin included "ideological directives (ideové směrnice)," which stated that it was founded on "the principles of dialectical materialism and their application towards the technical, creative and sociological problems of architecture." They vowed to carry forward their work from the 1930s and, in recognizable Marxist-Leninist phrasing, "to create the concrete preconditions for the elaboration of rational scientific working methods and the collectivization of architectural work." One of these 'preconditions' was the consolidation and nationalization of the building industry and BAPS was initiated by the SSA to further this ideological objective.

The nature of dialectical materialism in the 1940s should be noted here. Although the phrase was not used by Marx or Engels, writers including Z.A. Jordan have traced

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68 Affidavit from SSA on Jiří Vozenilek’s activities during the occupation, Dec. 17, 1947, ÚKPK, carton 636, NA.

69 "Memorandum Bloku architektonických pokrokových spolků," 2.

70 See "Kandidátka vyboru Svazu architektů (Candidate for the board of the Architects' Union)," March 22, 1953, Vozenilek, ÚKPK, carton 637, NA. It is possible that his choice was influenced by the Baťa Corporation which was anti-union and anti-communist.

71 Ibid.

72 Ibid. The term Marxism-Leninism is used to distinguish the Soviet vision of Marxism, as put forward by Lenin and later Stalin, from that of Marx and Engels. Scholars such as Z.A. Jordan generally agree that Marxism-Leninism should be understood as a distinct worldview from classic Marxism since it was formulated to address the specific nature of the Soviet Union in the early 20th century and the requirement that the economic system be introduced in a single, unindustrialized country.

73 "Zprávy Svazu socialistických architektů," Sept. 1945, 1.
the underlying concept to Engels and the term itself to Lenin from his 1909 text, *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism.* As Raymond Williams wrote, “in its earliest phases it has a comparative simplicity of definition, since it rests on a rejection of presumptive hypotheses of non-material or metaphysical prime causes, and defines its own categories in terms of demonstrable physical investigations.” In his work on the north Bohemian borderlands, Eagle Glassheim defines the materialist point of view in postwar Czechoslovakia as “a complex of attitudes that objectify and economize value... [this] includes the Marxist economic theory that underlies socialist thought, but it also encompasses the common understanding of materialism in which worldly possessions are privileged over noneconomic values.”

Stalin’s own presentation of “dialectical and historical materialism” became part of the “short course,” the standard text on Marxism adapted from *History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union* and translated into multiple languages for worldwide distribution. Although it would not be printed in large numbers until after


1945, the first Czech translation of the short course appeared in 1939. Among the concepts elaborated upon in this and other classic Marxist-Leninist texts was the relationship between modes of material and social production. Human relations were represented in dialectical tension with materialist concerns. The “short course” argued that,

The instruments of production wherewith material values [food, clothing, footwear, shelter, fuel, etc.] are produced, the people who operate the instruments of production and carry on the production of material values thanks to a certain production experience and labour skill – all these elements jointly constitute the productive forces of society. But the productive forces are only one aspect of production...Another aspect of production, another aspect of the mode of production, is the relation of men to each other in the process of production, men’s relations of production. Men carry on a struggle against nature and utilize nature for the production of material values not in isolation from each other, not as separate individuals, but in common, in groups, in societies...Consequently, production, the mode of production, embraces both the productive forces of society and men’s relations of production, and is thus the embodiment of their unity in the process of production of material values.

These two fundamental concepts—determining the productive forces of material values and recognizing the need for collective struggle as part of this production—had direct implications for architecture.

This logic was applied straightforwardly in the SSA ideological directives which claimed that the integration of “the mental and aesthetic requirements of the broad strata of the people” with “the functional concept of building” created “a dialectical

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contradiction, which through its solution, brings about a new, higher concept of socialist architecture.” Since dialectical materialism stressed the “concrete conditions of the material life of society” over the “abstract ‘principles of human reason’,” the physical nature of architecture was placed above its conceptual content. This did not mean a lack of concern for aesthetics or comfort, but rather an emphasis on finding solutions to these problems in the material and physical world rather than in discourse or ‘reason.’ The unbuilt and unrealizable projects that were a staple among the avant-garde, what architect Stanislav Semrád called “fantastical and paper planning” in 1945, were cited as an example of how architecture had veered in the wrong direction in the interwar period. The social nature of this search was expressed in the desire for the collectivization of architectural practice and the interest in satisfying the needs of the people through design.

As the initiator of BAPS, the SSA determined much about the organization’s self-presentation and intentions in the following three years. Structurally the organization was a direct outgrowth of the ÚRO’s building commission. In his speech at the July meeting, Janů stated that BAPS was created, in part, to provide further representation for architects on the ÚRO’s new Commission for the Building Industry (Komise pro stavebnictví), which also included building contractors, civil engineers, transportation

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specialists, industry representatives and members of local political committees. Since the ÚRO represented the trade unions, this was a clear statement from SSA that they hoped to shift the emphasis in the profession from the historic understanding of architecture as a form of art or craft to something more akin to technical production. As will be discussed in later chapters, this was an important transition with far-reaching implications.

It was notable that the only non-architect to speak at the July event was František Jungmann from the Presidium of the ÚRO. Jungmann praised BAPS, because “architects were the first ones who took up this path of unity, the first of the mass elements of intellectual workers who entered into a partnership with the unified trade union movement.” He recalled the progressive reputation of architects in the interwar period and said that “the working people are expecting from architects in particular that they can help expand production to such an extent that every working man in the nation would be guaranteed, as soon as possible, a satisfactory share in all the necessities of life.” Housing was integral to these expectations.

It appears to us that the housing of the working people is not only unsatisfactory, but it is a direct blemish (skvrna) in the whole organization of the lives of working people. So far we do not give our laborers, our private employees or our working intelligentsia, well thought-out or organized apartments. We do not give them apartments which would offer sufficient living spaces for the families of working men, which

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83 Karel Janů, "4 - Organisace stavebnictví (Speech 4 - The Organization of the Building Industry)," Architektura ČSR 5, no. 1 (1946): 7.

84 František Jungmann, "10 - Co očekávaji odbory od práce architekta (Speech 10 - What the Trade Unions Are Expecting from Architects)," Architektura ČSR 5, no. 1 (1946): 16.

85 Ibid.
would make our family lives more practical, rid them of the backward idiocy of the period of women's domestic enslavement, give them air, sunshine and greenery, hygiene and a real housing culture.\textsuperscript{86}

It was through housing, at the intersection of political necessity and material values, that architects found their first true base of power in the postwar period.

In creating BAPS, the SSA was careful to create the appearance of a broad coalition. Just as the Communists had supported Beneš for Prime Minister in the Košice Program,\textsuperscript{87} the architects of the SSA supported a consensus candidate from outside their group to run BAPS – Oldřich Starý, President of the Architects' Club and editor of \textit{Architektura ČSR}.\textsuperscript{88} (Fig. 1.8) He was assisted in this role by Vice-President Jan Vaněk from the SSA.\textsuperscript{89} In this case, Starý was sympathetic to the SSA and many SSA members were also in the Architects' Club including Janů and Štursa, so he not so much an outside candidate, but someone with a more mainstream 'progressive' reputation.\textsuperscript{90} The strategy worked as all seven of the other existing professional architectural associations

\textsuperscript{86} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{87} See introduction.

\textsuperscript{88} There is some evidence that Starý, as the editor of a journal produced for three association (Architects' Club, Architects' Alliance, Architects' Society), was seen as a consensus builder. In a letter from the Architects' Society to BAPS in November 1947 \textit{Architektura ČSR} was cited as a good example of cooperation between various ideological groups. See Letter to BAPS from the Architects' Society (Špolecnost architektů), Nov. 30, 1947, UKPK, carton 636, NA. A subsequent letter on the same topic complained that the supposed “federal organization” of BAPS was a sham, Letter to BAPS from the Architects' Society (Špolecnost architektů), Dec. 8, 1947, UKPK, carton 636, NA.

\textsuperscript{89} See “Blok architektonicích pokrokových spolků u Presidenta Republiky (BAPS at the Office of the President of the Republic),” \textit{Architektura ČSR} 5, no. 5 (1946): 156.

\textsuperscript{90} The affiliation of various BAPS members appears on a membership list of the “Housing Commission” in a bulletin from Jan. 24, 1946. Those with membership in both SSA and the Architects' Club, who were also on this 32-person commission, included Ferdinand Balcárek, Karel Honzik (who also belonged to Mánes), Karel Janů, Erich Kohn and Jiří Štursa. All but Honzik (Mánes) and Kohn (Club) had the SSA as their primary affiliation. Some like Vlasta Štursova listed only the SSA and others including František Jech, Karel Storch, Miloslav Tryzna
joined with the SSA to form BAPS in July 1945. They were the Architectural Group of S.V.Ú. Máněs (Skupina architektů při S.V.Ú Máněs), the Architectural Group of the Association of Czech Architects and Engineers (Skupina architektů při Spolek českých inženýrů a architektů, SIA), the Architects’ Alliance (Sdružení architektů), the Architects’ Club (Klub architektů), the Architects’ Federation (Federace architektů), the Architects’ Society (Společnost architektů), and the Association of Academic Architects (Asociace akademických architektů). The members were mainly Czechs from Bohemia, although

and Oldřich Starý listed only the Club. Together these two associations accounted for 19 of the 32 members of the committee. See Bulletin to Spolkům BAPS, (BAPS Associations), Jan. 24, 1946, ÚKPK, carton 636, NA.

91 “Charakteristika spolku českých architektů (Characteristics of the Associations of Czech Architects).” As characterized in this postwar document, which describes the associations’
BAPS welcomed Slovaks and members of the Headquarters of Moravian-Silesian Architects (Ústředí moravskoslezských architektů). There was a discussion in 1947 about bringing the Moravian group into BAPS as a constituent organization, however they objected on the basis on their “professional,” rather than “ideological” orientation.

The architect, as envisioned in the BAPS platform presented at the July 1945 meeting, could offer expertise not only in building or infrastructure design, but in the formulation of a new society. As described by historian Martin Myant, this was similar to the agenda of the Communist Party itself at the time,

profiles in the interwar period, each one had a particular set of interests. For example, the Architects’ Federation protected the interests of the “progressive or socialist” graduates of the special ateliers at Uměleckoprůmyslová škola (UMPRUM). The Architects’ Club had a technocratic point of view and was sympathetic to the Soviet Union; they published Stavba. The architectural wing of SIA had been a conservative organization in the interwar period, but “influenced by its younger members” after the war, it reorganized and joined BAPS; they published Architekt until 1944. With the exception of Starý and Vaněk, there is no record of other BAPS officers. It appears that each association nominated its own representatives to attend BAPS meetings. For example, twelve BAPS representatives met with President Beneš in July 1946, they were Starý from the Architects’ Club, Vaněk from SSA, President of the Slovak Association of Architects Emil Belluš, Vílem Kuba and Václav Roštílapil from the Architects’ Headquarters in Moravia, President of the Association of Academic Architects Josef Grus, President of the Architects’ Federation Jan Zazvorka, President of the Architects’ Alliance Václav Kopecký, President of the Architects’ Wing of S.V.U. Márnes Jaroslav Fragner, President of the Architects’ Wing of the SIA Jaroslav Pokorný, President of the Architects’ Society Ladislav Machoň and Pavel Janák as a representative for President Beneš. See “Blok architektonických pokrokových spolku u Presidenta Republiky (BAPS at the Office of the President of the Republic),” 156.

92 “Memorandum Bloku architektonických pokrokových spolku,” 1. The total number of architects in Bohemia was 550, with about 450 of those in Prague. I have not found numbers for Moravia or information about how many of the 550 Czechs belonged to organizations in BAPS. See Letter from Společnost architektů (Architects’ Society) to BAPS, Nov. 30, 1947, UKPK, carton 636, NA. There were only about 80 architects active in Slovakia in 1946, 59 of them belonged to the Slovak organization, Spolek architektov Slovenska (The Association of Slovak Architects). See Štátny plánovací a statistický úrad, Bratislava (State Planning and Statistical Office, Bratislava), “Dvojročný plán – Upravovacie plány obcí na Slovensku (The Two-Year Plan – Reconstruction Plans for the Districts of Slovakia),” Sept. 4, 1946, p. 6, MT, carton 303, NA.

93 This indicated that there were architects who did not belong to a BAPS association, since the letter mentioned architects with “conceptual differences” who could not be “autonomous” as part of BAPS. See Letter from Ústředí moravskoslezských architektů – odbočka Zlín (Headquarters of Moravian-Silesian Architects – Zlín branch) to Ústředí moravskoslezských architektů v Brně (Headquarters of Moravian-Silesian Architects in Brno), Jan. 23, 1946, ÚKPK, carton 636, NA.
[The large size of the party in 1946] reflected the extremely broad role the Communist Party hoped to play: it was to be much more than just a vote-catchng machine or the representative of a particular section of society. It intended, within its conception of national revolution, to lead in the building of a new social order. This meant that no field of social life was felt to be outside its sphere of competence.⁹⁴

The architect’s particular ability to contribute to this ‘new social order’ resided in the production of “material values,” first and foremost factories and houses – each dependent on the other to utilize productive labor to its fullest. The fundamental emphasis in Marxism-Leninism on producing what were called the “means of life necessary for human existence,” a category that included “shelter,”⁹⁵ explained the primary position of housing as a topic for investigation and engagement among these architects. In general, factory design became the domain of engineers. It also explains the willingness of some of the architects who did not actively support the regime to continue working in housing design.⁹⁶ An extension of this logic also included hospitals, schools and recreational facilities, all of which were frequent subjects of study in the 1940s.

Architects achieved this special status through the duality of their own profession, on one hand technical and on the other formal. There was no other kind of cultural production that could claim to contribute ‘material value’ to the society in the

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⁹⁶ Examples include Josef Havlíček and Karel Honzík, who as partners in the 1920s and 1930s, were celebrated members of the interwar avant-garde.
same way. In his speech at the BAPS meeting, architect Stanislav Semrád addressed the way that the “architect’s mission” was changing.

From now on, creativity in architecture will remain a synthesizing activity that fulfills the requirements of purpose, technology, economics, psychology and aesthetics. Our work as architects is to expend all of our energy on building a joyful living environment for all working people. Of course it is necessary to state that today the elements of functionality, technology and economy in architectural production rise to the fore to a great extent. Architecture is still invariably the only field of technical work in which industrial production has only been used minimally for the benefit of the public. One of our main objectives is to prepare the industrial foundation for architecture.

This emphasis on ‘technical work’ placed architects in a politically powerful position as producers of indispensable objects, the ‘means of life.’ The foundation of socialist design practice would be built on this presumption until the end of the Communist period.

Despite the choice of Starý and the appearance of an inclusive structure for BAPS, the Communists in the SSA were eager to capture some of this political capital. Already in the fall of 1945, they wanted to take a more aggressive position than the Party leadership would allow. In a letter to the central offices of the Communist Party in October, the group stated,

The SSA, comprised mainly of architects who are members of the Communist Party, established BAPS and, with the help of its factions

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97 As will be discussed in chapter three, historians have also left architecture out of most discussions of “cultural politics” in this period, another indication of architecture’s unique status. See for example, Jiří Doležal, Česká kultura za protektorátem (Czech Culture in the Protectorate) (Prague: Národní filmový archiv, 1996); Jiří Knapfek, Únor a kultura: sovětizace české kultury 1948-1950 (February and Culture: The Sovietization of Czech Culture, 1948-50) (Prague: Libri, 2004); Alexej Kusák, Kultura a politika v Československu 1945-1956 (Prague: Torst, 1998).

98 Semrád, “6 - Poslání architekta a organizace jeho práce (Speech 6 - The Mission of the Architect and the Organization of His Work),” 8-12.

99 Ibid.: 11.
(frakce), influences all of the associations who are part of BAPS. All current questions of a public or specialist nature, so questions concerning BAPS and the economic state of architects, are handled by the SSA through its faction created for this purpose and for the purpose of a good alliance between architects and the party.  

The letter goes on to say that SSA was concerned about the presence of architects without party connections “in important specialist positions... like for example in planning departments.” They wanted the Party to take a more active role in seeking representation for SSA members on all departmental and factory councils that were concerned with construction issues. They also proposed creating a registration list for engineers and architects that would be organized according to professional expertise and would be used to assess the potential for such widespread representation. There is no evidence that such a list was ever put together, yet the letter is notable because, as will be discussed at the end of the chapter, this proposal was similar to what would happen in 1948 when the unions and universities were purged by “action committees,” set up to rid organizations of their untrustworthy members. Since this clearly shows the conspiratorial intentions of SSA to use BAPS to further its own political agenda, it also proves correct the concerns voiced by some of the member associations in 1946 and 1947.

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100 Letter from SSA to Ústřední komunistické strany čsl., Oct. 15, 1945, ÚKPK, carton 636, NA.

101 Ibid.

102 Ibid.

1947 about the disproportionate influence of the SSA in BAPS and the “undemocratic” nature of their dominance.104

Architecture during the Two-Year Plan

With its organizational structure in place and the SSA program firmly imbedded within its directives, BAPS went about coordinating and managing architectural practice, as well as the relations between its constituent groups. Its frequent mimeographed bulletins (obězníky) to members indicated something of the group’s function within the community. Architects could find job listings,105 hear about events such as the visit to Prague of noted British architect F.R.S. Yorke in February 1946,106 or volunteer to serve on various committees such as the Committee for Culture and Economic Relations with the Soviet Union, which was looking for members of BAPS to join their architectural section.107 BAPS also created a 32-member “housing commission (bytová komise)” in January 1946 with members from the various associations including

104 Letter from Společnost architektů (Architects’ Society) to BAPS, Nov. 30, 1947, ÚKPK, carton 636, NA. See also, Letter from Ústředí moravskoslezských architektů – odbočka Zlín (Moravian-Silesian Architects’ Headquarters – Zlín branch) to Ústředí moravskoslezských architektů v Brně (Moravian-Silesian Architects’ Headquarters in Brno), Jan. 23, 1946, UKPK, carton 636, NA.

105 For example, in a Oct. 1946 bulletin, the city of Domažlice advertised for a “young architect to be head of the city building department,” BAPS provided the name and contact information of three young architects who had been looking for a long time for work as draftsmen, and an accountant was advertising tax services and property assessment. Bulletin to Spolkům BAPS, (BAPS Associations), Oct. 10, 1946, UKPK, carton 636, NA.

106 Bulletin to Spolkům BAPS, (BAPS Associations), Feb. 19, 1946, ÚKPK, carton 636, NA. The announcement indicated that each association could invite 5-10 members to a dinner after the lecture, but they had to request such participation directly with BAPS; wives were allowed as well.

107 Bulletin to Spolkům BAPS, (BAPS Associations), Sept. 27, 1946, UKPK, carton 636, NA.
nineteen from the SSA and the Architects’ Club including Honzík, Janů, Štary, Štursa and Štursová.\textsuperscript{108}

The most important work that BAPS undertook in these years was to organize the relationship between architects and the industries and government ministries that needed their services. Most of the country’s industrial concerns “were taken into public ownership” after President Beneš’s October 1945 Nationalization Decree.\textsuperscript{109} By the spring of 1947, 80% of the workforce and over two-thirds of the country’s industrial capacity had been nationalized.\textsuperscript{110} BAPS proposed taking control of architectural work at these national enterprises.

Today’s practice (praxe)... suffers from bad organization and mainly irresponsible distribution of the commissioned work, the few bits of work are accumulating in the hands of a few. In the meantime, the majority of architects are forced to stand idle. We seek to be able to rectify this. The distribution of work among architects can do this – if it is financed through public means and subject to public democratic control. BAPS, as the organization that unifies all architects, seeks the right to such control and its organization.\textsuperscript{111}

This was an early proposal for the rational distribution of work, a concept that would become a staple of the planned economy in the following years. The flaw in this plan is

\textsuperscript{108} Bulletin to Spolkům BAPS, (BAPS Associations), Jan. 24, 1946, ČKPK, carton 636, NA. For a longer list of members, see footnote 90.

\textsuperscript{109} Beneš signed the Nationalization Decree on Oct. 24, 1945. According to Alice Teichova, all “mining, electricity supply, iron and steel, armaments, the chemical and pharmaceutical industry, cellulose production, cement works, sugar refineries and distilleries, as well as all banks and insurance companies” were “taken into public ownership.” In other industries, businesses with over 500 employees were taken. For industries “in the national interest,” this number could be as low as 150 employees. Teichova, The Czechoslovak Economy, 1918-1980, 102.

\textsuperscript{110} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{111} “Memorandum Bloku architektonických pokrokových spolků,” 3.
obvious – not all architects are equally capable or suited to particular types of projects.\textsuperscript{112} As discussed in chapter two, however, this desire to make architects interchangeable was one of the rationales for the standardization of building types that would occur after 1949.

This structural ‘control’ of the distribution of work did not extend to include the formal and material qualities of architecture; an area in which BAPS did not intervene.

As Rostislav Švácha has shown, with this freedom multiple architectural styles and ways of thinking emerged and reemerged in these years; he identifies late functionalism, monumentalism, surrealism, naturalism and technocratism.\textsuperscript{113} Some notable projects that illustrate this variety included the vernacular village-style reconstruction of the town of Lidice by Václav Hilský, Richard Podzemný and Antonín Tenzer;\textsuperscript{114} the eclectic entries into the 1946 competition to replace the Town Hall on Old Town Square in Prague, which was destroyed by a bomb;\textsuperscript{115} the modernist collective house in Litvínov by Václav BAPS recognized this problem as well. In December 1947, they approached the Ministry of Technology for funding to create a photographic “archive of the work of its members.” The photographs would be used to advertise their work nationally and internationally, as well as assist the Ministry in deciding which architects might be suitable for particular projects. See Letter from BAPS to Ministerstvo techniky (Ministry of Technology), Dec. 15, 1947, ÚKPK, carton 636, NA. The response from the Ministry does not survive, although the timing suggests that the events of Feb. 1948 would have interrupted the effort.

\textsuperscript{112} Švácha, “Architektura čtyřicátých let (Architecture of the 1940s),” 31-73.

\textsuperscript{113} Svacha, “Architektura ctyřicatých let (Architecture of the 1940s),” 31-73.

\textsuperscript{114} Lidice became an international symbol of Nazi brutality in 1942 when the town was destroyed and its people murdered or sent to concentration camps to set an example in the wake of the assassination of the German administrator of the Protectorate. In June 1945, the government announced the first postwar public architectural competition to rebuild Lidice on a site near the original settlement. See Architektura ČSR 5, no. 4 (1946): 81-116. Archival documents related to the competition and rebuilding can be found in MT, carton 304, NA.

\textsuperscript{115} Despite the numerous entries, none of the designs was awarded first prize and nothing was built. See Oldřich Starý, “Veřejná soutěž na staroměstskou radnici (The Public Competition for the Town Hall on Old Town Square),” Architektura ČSR 6, no. 2 (1947): 37-50; Max Urban, “Úprava staroměstského náměstí v radniční soutěži 1946 (The Layout of Old Town Square in the Town Hall Competition 1946),” Architektura ČSR 6, no. 2 (1947): 51-53.
Hilský and Evžen Linhart; and Ladislav Žák’s book, *Obytné krajina* (The Inhabited Landscape), which considered the relationship between people and the natural environment.\(^{117}\) (Fig. 1.9-1.11) The BAPS agenda allowed for all of these approaches, although for the reasons already discussed, the technocratic agenda was the strongest from the start.

BAPS, however, had a problem. There was virtually no new architectural work commissioned in 1945 or 1946; the situation was only marginally better in 1947. Despite all of the planning and reorganization within the profession, architects were still

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\(^{117}\) Žák, *Obytná krajina.*
beholden to the economic realities of the country and there was little demand for new buildings. Basic reconstruction was underway, but this offered few opportunities for architects. Although BAPS was actively meeting and determining its agenda throughout
the summer and fall of 1945, the main media outlet for its members, *Architektura ČSR*,
did not publish that year.\(^{118}\) When it returned in 1946, its first issue was dedicated to the
speeches that had been given more than six months earlier at the July 1945 BAPS
event.\(^{119}\)

In subsequent issues in 1946 and the first half of 1947, the pages of *Architektura ČSR*
were filled with war commemorations; designs by architects in other countries,
especially Scandinavia; proposals for new building types; and a recounting of buildings
that had been built during the war and never published. (Fig. 1.12-1.13) Yet there were
no new projects. The first new Czechoslovak buildings to appear in *Architektura ČSR*
were twelve masonry brick 24-unit, 3-story apartment buildings in Zlín, called the Fučík
Quarter, designed by the former Baťa architect Vladimír Karfík.\(^{120}\) The occasion of the
buildings' opening was so momentous that BAPS sent architect F.M. Černý to address
the assembled crowd on its behalf; the text of his short congratulatory speech and
photographs of the building were then published in *Architektura ČSR* in the summer of
1947 with the title, "Zlín – The First Completed Apartments of the Two-Year Plan."\(^{121}\)
(Fig. 1.14-1.15)

\(^{118}\) As far as I have found, the only other architectural publication at the time was *Stavebnictví* (The Building Industry), edited by Jiří Štursa from 1945-52 and available in limited circulation.


\(^{120}\) See chapter five for more on these buildings.

\(^{121}\) Vlasta Štursova, "Zlín - prvni dokončené byty 2LP (Zlín – The First Completed Apartments of the Two-Year Plan)," *Architektura ČSR* 6, no. 6 (1947): 193.
Fig. 1.12: Ludvík Hilgert, Winebar, Bookshop and Hotel, Valašské Hloubky (1943) from Architektura ČSR (1946)

Fig. 1.13: HSB Cooperative, Fredhäll Housing Development, Stockholm, Sweden from Architektura ČSR (1947)
Despite this lack of work, Karel Janů and Jiří Voženílek found other opportunities to establish reputations for themselves among the powerful political elite. Janů accepted a position at the Settlement Office where he worked on housing policy from 1946 to 1948 until he became head of the nationalized building industry. While
there, he worked with top Communist Party officials to regulate the housing market in the borderlands and to supervise the renovation, construction and assignment of new units. He also published two short books on strategies for repopulating the area including \textit{Nájemné z bytů v pohraničí} (Rent from Apartments in the Borderlands) and \textit{Stavíme byty} (We Are Building Apartments).\footnote{Karel Janů, \textit{Ndjemne z bytu v pohranici} (Rent from Apartments in the Borderlands) (Prague: Svoboda, 1946); Karel Janů, \textit{Stavíme byty} (We Are Building Apartments) (Prague: Knihovna lidové správy, 1947).} In the texts, he offered strategies for setting rental prices and determining values for existing buildings; a framework for state financing of rebuilding and construction; and guidelines for the design of new apartments including the limit of 70 square meters for a fully-equipped two-bedroom unit.

At the same time, he published his influential 1946 book, \textit{Socialistické budování (oč půjde ve stavebnictví a architektuře)} (Socialist Building (what's at stake in construction and architecture)), in which he expanded upon arguments that he had made in the late 1930s for the nationalization and industrialization of architecture along scientific and technocratic lines.\footnote{Karel Janů, \textit{Socialistické budování (oč půjde ve stavebnictví a architektuře)} (The Building of Socialism (What's at Stake in Construction and Architecture)) (Prague: Ed. Grégr a syn, 1946).} It was also in this text that he first purposed the “living core (bytové jadro),” a combination kitchen, WC and bathroom that could be prefabricated and dropped into place with a crane. (Fig. 1.17) Janů’s role at the Settlement Office and the political credibility that it brought him proved crucial to his future success.

Fig. 1.16: Cover of Socialistické budování (oč půjde ve stavebnictví a architektuře) by Karel Janů (1946)

Fig. 1.17: “Living Core” from Socialistické budování (oč půjde ve stavebnictví a architektuře) by Karel Janů (1946)
Voženílek, on the other hand, continued working at Baťa and joined the Communist Party in 1945. After Vladimír Karfík, the most prominent of the Baťa architects, left Zlín for Bratislava in 1946, Voženílek was promoted to the top position in the office. He became, therefore, the first director of a state-controlled architectural atelier; experience that would be important in 1948. In these years, he was the regional leader for BAPS, active in local politics and he increasingly made a name for himself among the political leadership in Prague with the projects such as a regional plan for the area between Zlín and neighboring Otrokovice; a design once again based on Miliutin’s linear city model. (Fig. 1.18) He also designed a factory building to replace one bombed in the war and a project for a collective house. This regional plan was noticed at the highest levels of the Communist Party, an undated photograph shows him personally explaining the project to Party Head Klement Gottwald. (Fig. 1.19) The importance of Zlín and the legacy of the Baťa Corporation in the development of postwar prefabrication technologies will be discussed in later chapters.

As funding for new projects became available during the Two-Year Plan, architects were faced with the question of what postwar modernism might look like.

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127 The photo accompanies Voženílek obituary, see Nový, “In memoriam profesora Jiřího Voženíleka (In Memory of Professor Jiří Voženílek),” 346.
Fig. 1.18: Vladimír Kubečka and Jiří Voženílek, Three units of the regional plan for Zlín-Otrokovice from Architektura ČSR (1946)

Fig. 1.19: Voženílek explaining the Zlín-Otrokovice project to Party Head Klement Gottwald (undated) from Architektura ČSR (1987)
Unlike Germany or the Soviet Union, where authoritarian politics had Czechoslovakia had continued to support high modernism through the end of the war. It was not only a style for many architects, but a social sensibility that positioned architecture as a medium for the improvement of everyday life. Even during the years of the Protectorate (1939-45), professional groups held exhibitions celebrating the interwar avant-garde and *Architektura ČSR*, established as a joint venture of several existing journals in 1939, published through 1942.\(^{128}\) Its pages were filled with extensive coverage of recent and contemporary modern buildings with only rare indications of the difficulties of the occupation and war.

By 1946, the question of architectural form was not as clear. There was a growing sense that the universal qualities of high modernism that had once been attractive to leftwing architects might not be suited to the postwar desire for a more rooted architectural identity that was brought about by the massive destruction and displacement of the war. Architecture in Germany, France, Switzerland and Austria had been a popular source of inspiration for Czech and Slovak architects before the war. It was Scandinavia and Great Britain that dominated the pages of *Architektura ČSR* in 1946 and 1947. Jaromír Krejcar wrote articles on England, where he had gone to install an exhibition on Czechoslovak modernism and attend an international architecture

\(^{128}\) For example, there was extensive coverage on the exhibition, "Za novou architekturu (Beyond New Architecture)" throughout the 1939 and 1940 volumes of *Architektura ČSR*, the exhibition was sponsored by the journal and sought to chronicle the development of 'new' architecture from 1918-1940, see *Architektura ČSR* 2 (1939), *Architektura ČSR* 3 (1940).
conference; he would emigrated to London in 1948. Interest in Scandinavia increased during the war when Swedish, Finnish and Danish architecture magazines had been “the only foreign specialist literature available” in Czechoslovakia. This led to greater communication between the countries and, in the summer of 1946, an official delegation of Czech and Slovak architects visited Stockholm, Helsinki and Copenhagen, a journey that received extensive coverage in the Czech press and influenced housing design for several years.

While most architects still favored the dynamic cubic volumes and unadorned surfaces of interwar modernism, a British- and Scandinavian-inspired palette developed that was softer and more varied with brick, tile, wood and stone surfaces. In Czechoslovakia, the new popularity of these materials was due in part to shortages of materials such as reinforced concrete and steel, but it also reflected an effort to reconnect architecture to its surroundings through color, texture and scale. In response to the natural settings of many of the Scandinavian projects, architects also became more interested in responding to the landscape, so rather than conceiving of their projects on

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130 Ivan Šula, "Ze skandinavský cesty (From the Scandinavian Journey)," *Architektura ČSR* 6, no. 10 (1947): 308.

flattened, empty sites as had been typical in the 1930s, they started to work with the existing conditions in more sensitive and thoughtful ways.

Yet this vision of postwar architecture still relied on a model of individual commissions completed by a single architect working as a creative artist. With the growing influence of the Communist Party and a general move to the left within the profession, another critique emerged of the interwar avant-garde, inspired by the arguments against ‘bourgeois’ constructivism in the Soviet Union in the 1930s. This group of architects disparaged the perceived weak political stance of many self-proclaimed leftists in the interwar years; many of whom spoke about their social consciousness while designing upscale single-family houses, restaurants and retail stores.\footnote{See for example, Semrůd, “6 - Poslání architekta a organisace jeho práce (Speech 6 - The Mission of the Architect and the Organization of His Work).”} For some, including the architects in SSA, the political situation after 1945 finally made it possible to conceive of a new type of socialist architecture that was less concerned with unique forms, however contextualized, and more attentive to the social and economic implications of architecture. This placed emphasis on program and function over aesthetics, particularly with respect to higher density housing types. This tension would remain within the architectural culture of Czechoslovakia throughout the communist period.
The Collective House in Litvínov

It was not clear which point of view would be the most influential immediately after the war. In some instances, such as the architecture of Zlín during the Two-Year Plan, these were not mutually-exclusive positions, although this city’s specific history made it an exception. The first nationwide test of postwar socialist principles were two high profile competitions held in 1946 – one for the new Town Hall in Prague and the second for a “Collective House” in the hills near the critical borderlands’ city of Most. The Town Hall competition failed to produce a winning entry or a built solution. Most of the designs were awkward mixes of geometric volumes and monumental facades, indicating something of the confusion within the profession about where architecture was heading. The Collective House competition, on the other hand, succeeded, although the buildings would not be completed until 1958. The skilled winning project by Václav Hilský and Evžen Linhart was formally evocative of the functionalist architecture of the early 1930s, while showing a great sensitivity to the local climate and terrain. (Fig. 1.20) The building provided an image of postwar socialist architecture that was widely hailed as an example of how modern forms could be used to achieve a social agenda, although its success and beauty would eventually undermine the project as critics...

133 See chapter five.


complained that such a “luxurious” project was not “socialist” enough in its intentions.\footnote{136}

The Stalin Works in the village of Zaluží sponsored the competition for the Collective House with assistance from BAPS, who “readily offer[ed] suggestions and cooperation to attain the correct ideological scope of the housing actions and elaborate on the program and the working approach to the wider social and professional aspects.”\footnote{137} Zaluží, which has since been overtaken by the factory, was situated in the Bílina valley in the brown-coal basin of the northwest Bohemian borderlands and was the site of the German synthetic fuel plant, Maltheuren, built during the war\footnote{Sudetenländische Treibstoffwerke AG Maltheuren}. Almost 30,000 workers were employed.

![Image of the Collective House model](image)

\textit{Fig. 1.20: Václav Hilský and Evžen Linhart, Model of the Collective House, Litvínov, from \textit{Architektura ČSR} (1946)}

\footnote{136} Antonín Ambler, “Ministerstvo techniky Odd. III/B - Projekt koldomu Stalinových závodů v Horní Litvínově (Ministry of Technology Dept. III/B – The Project of the Stalin Works for a Koldom in Horní Litvínov),” Apr. 10, 1947, p. 4, MT, carton 299, NA.

\footnote{137} Oldřich Starý, “Soutěž Stalinových závodů (The Stalin Works’ Competition),” \textit{Architektura ČSR} 5, no. 6 (1946): 193.
there by 1943,\textsuperscript{138} including Ostarbeiters, who were workers conscripted by the Nazis in their eastern territories (mainly Russia and Poland) and prisoners of war.\textsuperscript{139} Seventy percent of the factory was destroyed by the Allies in 1944 and the remaining operations came under Soviet control in May 1945.\textsuperscript{140} The complex was then handed over to the Czechoslovak government in early 1946; at which point, they renamed it the Stalin Works (\textit{Stalinový závod}).\textsuperscript{141}

The housing crisis was particularly acute in this area of the borderlands with its hilly terrain and sparsely populated towns. Before the end of the war, the German enterprise had built a small settlement called “Osada (The Colony)” with 318 \textit{heimatstil} row houses near Horní Litvínov at the base of Ore Mountains (\textit{Krušné Hory}) above the Bílána basin.\textsuperscript{142} The Nazis also prepared road, sewer and utilities infrastructure for the continuation of the settlement to the east along the base of the mountains.\textsuperscript{143} The initial postwar plans for the site called for a massive housing development of 180,000 people in

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{140} “Historie podniku (History of the Enterprise),” Chemopetrol Corporation.
\item \textsuperscript{141} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{142} Ambler, “Ministerstvo techniky Odd. III/B - Projekt koldomu Stalinových závodů v Horní Litvínově,” 4.
\item \textsuperscript{143} Okresní národní výbor v Mostě (Local National Committee in Most), “Výměr (Assessment),” May 8, 1947, p.2, MT, carton 299, NA.
\end{itemize}
35 collective houses with 400 apartment units in each building. Employees from the Stalin Works and neighboring enterprises were to be housed in the new settlement.

As noted in the Architektura ČSR introduction to the competition entries, the collective house type had its origins in the Soviet Union in the work of the architects N.A. Miliutin and Moisei Ginzburg. The Russians abandoned the type in the 1930s, but it remained popular among the leftwing avant-garde in Europe into the 1940s. In a collective house, individuals, or in some cases families, live in modest units without full kitchens. Essential services, including dining and daycare, are provided communally in the building’s common areas and there are shared amenities, so residents can fulfill all of their everyday needs in the building. The choice of the collective house type for the Stalin Works project shows the influence of BAPS and its housing commission, formed in 1946. Members included a predominant number of architects from the SSA and the Architects’ Club; many of whom had proposed similar ‘minimum dwelling’ or collective house projects in the early 1930s, as discussed in Karel Teige’s book Nejmenší byt (The Minimum Dwelling) and on the pages of the 1930s journals such as Stavba and Stavitel.

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145 Ibid.


The proposal for the large development was based on the assumption that the Stalin Works would be rebuilt to its full wartime capacity, however the Ministry of Industry decided to rehabilitate only 33% of the plant and before any architectural proposals were solicited the housing proposal was scaled back.\(^{149}\) A 1947 report by the Local National Committee in Most described the situation:

The Stalin Works – National Enterprise, was constructed in a time of unfreedom. The enterprise was built with the purely militaristic point of view of the war leadership. In particular, it was an effort to construct, in the shortest amount of time, their own plant and to achieve the shortest path to synthetic fuel. The question of housing was put entirely to the side and at that time the administration only provided accommodation to a small percentage of the employees at the plant—the technical and administration staff, specialists, etc.—for whom today’s Osada was built in close proximity to Horní Litvínov. The main cadre of workers were prisoners of war and interned persons, living in the most primitive way in workers’ barracks. This was the state of the enterprise and its residential buildings when it was taken over after liberation. For these stated reasons, it is the highest priority to provide the workers of the Stalin Works suitable and healthy housing so that this provisional situation—the housing of a majority of workers in camps or at remote sites, meaning a constant burden on the enterprise to import workers and lose working hours—can be changed to a more permanent situation.\(^{150}\)

Therefore, the Stalin Works decided to “invite prominent Czech architects to participate in a competition for the design of ... the incomplete building site including the completion (dostavení) of Osada and proposals for residential and public buildings.”\(^{151}\)

Unlike the initial plan for 35 collective houses, the competition asked for only one


\(^{150}\) Okresní národní výbor v Mostě (Local National Committee in Most), “Výměr (Assessment),” 2.

\(^{151}\) Ibid.
collective house that could accommodate 800 workers in studio, two-room and three-
room apartments with public amenities and more family houses in Osada.

In an unexpected decision, given the conditions of the building industry at the time, the brief proposed two thirteen-story towers as the primary residential structures; architects could choose how to accommodate the single-family homes and the public buildings. According to the Ministry of Technology, which oversaw the nationalized building industry during the Two-Year Plan, the tower configuration was chosen for three primary reasons. First, due to the terrain, there was little buildable space to the east of the existing town where land had already been acquired and infrastructure prepared. Therefore, a taller buildings with smaller footprints made sense. Second, despite the objections of the Stalin Works representatives who thought that such a concentration of people might make emergency evacuations unsafe in the event of an industrial accident, the Ministry argued that a dense settlement meant that it would be cheaper to outfit the buildings with “simple fire alarms.”

The third and most architecturally sophisticated justification for the two towers related to the surrounding landscape and the climate. The local authorities determined that a 15-kilometer-long zone at the top of the Bílina basin was often “obscured by dense fog, rising in part as a waste product of the industrial activities, and in part because of the peculiar specificities of the microclimate. The boundary of this fog and smoke

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probably reaches to the height of 320 meters [1,050 feet] above sea level.” In order to escape this bad air, a minimum height of 350 meters [1,150 feet] about sea level was set for the new development. At this elevation, there was a concern that a “monoblock,” or a series of them as first proposed, would trap the bad air in the valley below; two separate towers would allow more air movement through the site. Visually, the two tall towers were also preferred, because they were “absolutely scaled to the proportion of this space” and the broad vertical facades of the buildings would be well-illuminated against the Ore Mountains behind them.

The site’s topography and geology did pose some significant challenges to the tower concept. The surrounding areas were densely forested and the ground was rocky, so there was concern that the building foundations might be unstable. A steel skeleton with deep footings was determined to be the best structural option, although this was a rare recommendation at the time because material shortages made steel extremely expensive. The reliance on steel would become a major obstacle to the completion of the

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153 Ibid., 4-5. For a discussion of the environmental impact of industry in this area, see Glassheim, "Ethnic Cleansing, Communism, and Environmental Devastation in Czechoslovakia’s Borderlands, 1945-1989."

154 Semrád, "Kolektivní dům Stalinových závodů (The Collective House of the Stalin Works)," 194. Not surprisingly, this was also the location of Osada and Horní Litvínov.


156 Ibid.

157 Ibid., 6.
Collective House as the project moved forward and one of the towers would eventually be built with a reinforced concrete skeleton.\textsuperscript{158}

Nineteen individual or group projects were submitted to the competition in 1946. Five groups were invited by BAPS and the remaining fourteen answered an open call.\textsuperscript{159} Participants included Jiří Štursa, Josef Kittrich and Emanuela Kittrichová, Jaromír Krejcar and Bohumil Holý, a team led by Josef Havlíček, and another from the Baťa Design Office in Zlín led by Jiří Voženílek. The projects largely followed the competition requirements, although several of them proposed either one or two “monoblocks” that were parallel to the slope of the hill, creating the blocking condition that was feared from the start. (Fig. 1.21) The benefit of this arrangement was the views towards the valley to the southwest. Other projects located the Collective House in the center of Osada, rather than on the suggested site to the east of town where there was existing infrastructure, but no development.\textsuperscript{160}

The winning entry was submitted by an unlikely pair, Václav Hilský and Evžen Linhart.\textsuperscript{161} Linhart was ten years older than Hilský and he died in 1949 before the first phase of the project was completed. A member of the “Purist Four” in the early 1920s,

\textsuperscript{158} Because the design called for steel, the Ministry of Finance tried to block the project in 1947. Letter to Ministerstvo techniky (Ministry of Technology) to Ministerstvo Financi (Ministry of Finance), Mar. 28, 1947, MT, carton 299, NA.

\textsuperscript{159} Semrád, “Kolektivní dům Stalinových závodů (The Collective House of the Stalin Works),” 194.

\textsuperscript{160} Twelve of the entries were published in Architektura ČSR in 1946, see Ibid.: 194-224.

\textsuperscript{161} There is no information on how the two joined together or record of any previous or subsequent projects together.
Fig. 1.21: Bohumír Holý and Jaromír Krejcar, Project for the Collective House, Litvínov from Architektura ČSR (1946)
Linhart’s work had long been inspired by Le Corbusier, whose Unite d’Habitation was designed in 1945 and with which the Collective House shared some formal and spatial similarities. Hilský, on the other hand, had built social housing in the late 1930s and was a member of the ÚRO’s building commission and the Communist Party’s architectural commission during the war. Along with his more frequent collaborators, Richard Podzemný and Antonín Tenzer, he won the competition for the rebuilding of Lidice in 1945. As a head designer at Stavoprojekt in Prague after 1948, he was a prolific architect into the normalization period of the 1970s. The two may have become friends after the war when Linhart worked for the Ministry of Information and Culture, led by Communist Minister Václav Kopecký, a childhood friend of Linhart’s. The contrast between the two architects allowed them to design a building that was both formally inventive and pragmatic in its approach to the site and the program.

Hilsky’s and Linhart’s entry featured two symmetrical thirteen-story residential towers with a seven-story central connector, located on a site to the east of town. (Fig. 1.22-1.23) Each tower, the mirror image of the other, had two wings—one set at a 30° angle to the other creating a strong diagonal composition. Their design for the

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162 Kohout, Templ and Zatloukal, eds., Česká architektura - architektura XX.století. Díl I. Morava a Slezsko, 199.


164 Kopecký became a strong and vocal advocate for Soviet socialist realism and he known as one of the more conservative and Sovietophile ministers of the time. He spearheaded the competition for the Stalin Monument in 1950. Although the two did not share the same radical politics, Kopecký gave an emotional speech at Linhart’s burial that referred to their personal friendship, see Václav Kopecký, “Evžen Linhart: Projev na pohřbu (Evžen Linhart: Speech at the Burial),” Architektura ČSR 9, no. 1-2 (1950): 46-47.
completion of Osada, which was not built, proposed modest three-story, two-bedroom row houses constructed out of standardized parts. The units had living spaces on the main two floors including an enclosed sun porch and a balcony, plus a basement and individual garage on the ground floor. There were four units in each row and they would have been built in groups of four, six, eight or twelve buildings as desired. Their suggested site plan shows dozens of the buildings to the north of the existing Osada settlement in stacked rows parallel to the base of the mountain. \(^{165}\) Although Hilský and Linhart won the competition, a team led by Josef Havlíček was hired to design twenty-

\(^{165}\) Václav Hilský and Evžen (Eugen) Linhart, "Průvodní zprávy autorů (The Accompanying Statement of the Authors)," *Architektura ČSR* 5, no. 7 (1946): 199. The site plan can be found on page 195.
Fig. 1.23: Litvínov, view towards the Ore Mountains (after 1958) from Václav Hilský: architektonické dílo (1981)

Fig. 1.24: Josef Havlíček, Litvínov-Stalinovky (Little Houses of the Stalin Works), Litvínov (1946-1947) from Návrhy a stavby (1964)
two six-unit rowhouses for Osada, which was later named Litvínov-Stalinovky (The Little Houses of the Stalin Works). These were built in the area between the existing Osada rowhouses and the Collective House. Their unit design included a kitchen, pantry, living room, winter garden and stone-paved terrace on the first floor with three bedrooms and a bathroom upstairs. By 1959, the neighborhood had more than 8,000 residents.\(^{166}\) (Fig. 1.24)

As stipulated in the competition, there was a total of 292 units proposed for the two towers – 100 three-room apartments, 160 two-room apartments and 32 studio apartments.\(^{167}\) (Fig. 1.25-1.26) In the basement of the residential wings, there were also individual garages planned for residents’ “vehicles, bikes, motorcycles and strollers.”\(^{168}\)

Between the towers, there was a perpendicular seven-story connector building with a dormitory and the public programs, as well as a separate two-story school building along the central axis that did not make it into the final project. The towers each had a total of thirteen stories, including a sub-basement and basement, which, because of the steeply sloping site, were above ground on the south side of the building in the courtyard. (Fig. 1.27) The 160-bed dormitory, which is now a hotel, was located in the top three floors of the center building; the middle two floors were occupied by the

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\(^{167}\) The final total was 352 apartments, 100 three-room units, 172 two-room units and 80 one-room units. In 1959, there were 1,400 residents. Hilský, “Stavba kolektivního domu v Litvínově (The Construction of the Collective House in Litvínov),” 26.

dining room, social club, ceremonial hall, library, study areas, convenience store, repair shop, barber shop and storage room. (Fig. 1.28-1.29) The two lower floors contained the service kitchen, laundry facilities, an exercise room, a small casino room, health clinic
Fig. 1.26: Václav Hilský and Evžen Linhart, Section looking west at the Collective House, Litvínov from Architektura ČSR (1959)

Fig. 1.27: Collective House under renovation in Litvínov (author’s photo, 2003)
Fig. 1.28: Entrance to the Collective House in Litvinov (author’s photo, 2003)

Fig. 1.29: Central building with a store, restaurant and hotel at the Collective House in Litvinov (author’s photo, 2003)
Fig. 1.30: Children on the school patio at the Collective House in Litvínov from the collection of the Regional Museum in Most (after 1958)

and the boiler room, which supplied central heating to all the apartments.\textsuperscript{169} In the final project, the school and nursery were also in the basement and sub-basement, although they were fully above ground in the courtyard and included a patio and balcony for the children to play on. (Fig. 1.30) There were also office spaces (ateliery) provided on the top floor of the front wings and a covered roof terrace.\textsuperscript{170}

Hilsky and Linhart took a deliberate approach to the distribution of the units—the three-room apartments are contained in the two angled front wings of the towers and those with one or two rooms are in the parallel back wings. (Fig. 1.31) The three-room apartments are all two stories with internal staircases; they are accessed through windowed hallways along the north side of the building on every other floor. (Fig. 1.32)

\textsuperscript{169} Ibid. The final floor plans of the completed buildings were published in 1959. See Hilský, "Stavba kolektivního domu v Litvínově (The Construction of the Collective House in Litvínov)," 21-23.

\textsuperscript{170} Ibid.: 20.
They have a small kitchen and WC near the first floor entrance and then the remainder of the floor is a single large living area with a small balcony and winter garden looking southwest or southeast towards the valley. The stair is in the center of the apartment and leads to two equally-sized bedrooms and a bathing room upstairs. They can be best described as stacked rowhouses.

Among architectural historians, the two-story apartment section is best known from Le Corbusier’s 1945 design for the Unité d’Habitation,¹⁷¹ however, the common

Fig. 1.31: Václav Hilský and Evžen Linhart, Two-room plan (left) and three-room two-story plan (right) at the Collective House in Litvínov from Architektura ČSR (1959)

¹⁷¹ The Unité d’Habitation was first published in Architektura ČSR in 1947, so it is difficult to know whether or not Hilský and Linhart were aware of the project. Linhart’s long association with Le Corbusier’s work would suggest, however, that he was aware of the project through the international press. In his 1981 essay on Hilský, architectural historian Josef Pechar calls the Unité and the Collective House in the Litvínov, “the first realizations of their type in postwar Europe.” This implies an equality between the two, rather than the Unité as the source for the Collective House. See Pechar, Václav Hilský: architektonické dílo unpaged.
source was the work of Russian architect Moisei Ginzburg such as his Narkomfin Collective House in Moscow from 1929, referenced in Architektura ČSR.\textsuperscript{172} There are two significant differences, however, between the Litvínov units and those in Marseilles or Moscow. (Fig. 1.33-1.34) First, there are no double-height living spaces in these units, so despite the two-story section, the rooms themselves are traditional in scale. Second, the units do not interlock, each one is entered on the first floor, although the floor plans are

mirrored in neighboring units; in this sense, they are closer to the Moscow example. In
Marseilles, the apartments have two layouts – one in which the entrance leads into the
ekitchen and the living room beyond with the bedrooms and bathroom upstairs, and the
second in which the entrance leads into the kitchen on a second-story mezzanine and the
living spaces including the bedrooms and bathroom are downstairs (what Kenneth
Frampton calls up-going and down-going units, respectively). A windowless central
hallway on ever other floor serves both units in Marseilles.

The one- and two-room apartments designed for the parallel back wings in
Litvinov are much more like the ‘minimum dwellings’ of the early 1930s – single-floor

Fig. 1.33: Moisei Ginzburg, Narkomfin F-unit plans in Moscow, USSR from Stroikom
(1930)

173 Frampton, Le Corbusier, 160.
units, one structural bay deep, entered from a double-loaded central corridor, so that the units face either east-southeast or west-southwest. As first proposed, there would have been a mixture of studio and two-room apartments on each floor. In the final project, however, all of the studio apartments are located on the basement- or first-floors of the residential wings in the spaces originally designated for the garages, which were moved for safety reasons.\textsuperscript{174} Floors three through eleven contain all of the two-room apartments, each with its own balcony off the bedroom. They have kitchens, WC, bathrooms and storage spaces to the left and right of the front entrance, which leaves the rest of the space open. Unlike the facades of the angled wings, which emphasis their horizontality with continuous lines of windows and balconies, the back wings are volumetrically more interesting with cubic proportions and an interplay between solid and void created by an alternating checkerboard pattern of windows and balconies. (Fig. 1.35)

\textsuperscript{174} Letter to Ministerstvo finacní from Ministerstvo techniky, May 9, 1947, MT, carton 299, NA.
At the elbow joint of the two wings are elevator cores and stairs separated by large communal landings and enclosed in glass block from both sides.

In his comments on the project in *Architektura ČSR*, Stanislav Semrád argued that the program for this project was unique in the world, because it did not propose that all residents live in “more or less one single residential cell,” but recognized instead that different family configurations required different apartments.\(^1\) It also allowed women to maintain their family role without having to suffer the traditional drudgery of domestic work. Karel Honzík and Josef Kittrich later suggested renaming the building, “The House for Collective Living” to reflect this distinction.\(^2\) Unlike some of the earlier collective house projects from the 1920s and 1930s, the project in Litvínov also started

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\(^{1}\) Semrád, "Kolektivní dům Stalinových závodů (The Collective House of the Stalin Works)," 194.

with the presumption that the family unit should be supported, rather than broken apart, as proposed, but not executed, in Ginzburg’s Narkomfin or in the earlier designs of Karel Teige and his followers. As discussed in chapter two, this emphasis on the socialist family would become a defining characteristic of the post-1948 housing programs. Unlike in the Soviet Union where communal apartments forced several families to occupy a single unit with one kitchen and bathroom, Czechs and Slovaks would always be provided with private, although often small, apartments.177

Throughout the approval process within the Ministries of Technology, Finance, Agriculture and Labor and Social Affairs, all of which had to sign off on the project since it was at a national enterprise, the “sociological aspect” of the design was also questioned. Concerns were raised about issues such as the safety and comfort of pregnant women in the two-story units where the stairs may be uneven and unsafe; the choice to place the school in between the tall towers, which would leave the children in the shade for much of the day; and the location of the restaurant terrace on the third floor of the central building, just below the dormitory windows and within earshot of the rest of the apartments in the summer months when people wanted “quiet.”178 In his critical comments about the competition entries, architect Miroslav Tryzna voiced his concern that the projects were, in fact, too extravagant for the time. He objected to housing families above the third floor and opposed space being given to winter gardens.

177 There was a problem in the supply of apartments until the 1970s, so often unmarried adults had to live with their parents until they were married and assigned an apartment of their own. Bigger apartments were also given to couples with children.

and garages when so many people lacked basic housing. He was especially concerned about the emphasis on more single-family row houses in Osada when collective living should be supported in all cases. He suggested that such a project could “discredit as unrealizable” the entire housing program, since clearly the tower scheme was not the most economical solution to the housing shortage.\textsuperscript{179}

The government was also concerned that such a project would set a bad example and reduce the possibility that the plan numbers could be met. Before moving ahead with construction, the Building Department (III/B) of the Ministry of Technology was asked to provide a detailed report to the Ministry leadership, analyzing the circumstances of the competition and the concerns they had with the winning entry.\textsuperscript{180}

The most objectionable aspect of the project was its cost. Hilský and Linhart’s project exceeded the budget limits set for the Two-Year Plan by 150%. The units, together with their fraction of the collective spaces, would each cost around 450,000 Czech crowns, the Ministry of Finance had planned for only 180,000 Czech crowns per unit, although it was understood that this would be a difficult number to match.\textsuperscript{181}

Ideologically this was a problem for the Building Department, which argued that the project was “an ‘unsocialist’ enterprise in the first degree,” because “our system of socialized democracy accepted as its economic credo the utilitarian principle of the

\textsuperscript{179} Tryzna, “Poznámky k soutěži Stalinových závodů (Comments on the Stalin Works Competition),” 204.

\textsuperscript{180} Ambler, “Ministerstvo techniky Odd. III/B - Projekt koldomu Stalinových závodů v Horní Litvínově,” 1-11.

\textsuperscript{181} Ibid., 9.
greatest success for the greatest number of people...the construction of this building
does not mean a contribution to the fulfillment of the good of the greatest number of
people, but to a very small number of people to the detriment of all of the others.”\textsuperscript{182} The
report went on to say that the use of “quota-controlled materials” for such “luxuriously
appointed” apartments was “diametrically in opposition to such directives.”\textsuperscript{183} Yet the
Housing Department was unwilling to stop the project due to the “political background
of the whole affair.”\textsuperscript{184} They determined that the decision was best left to the assessment
of the appropriate regional national committee.\textsuperscript{185} In May 1947, the Building Department
wrote to the Ministry of Finance to say that some concessions had been agreed upon
between the Stalin Works and the Minister of Technology including making all the
apartments one-story, establishing a ratio of studios to family apartments of 4:1 and
removing all of the garages from the main building; however, with the exception of the
garage location, these changes did not appear in the final project.\textsuperscript{186} One can speculate
that the events of 1948 changed the group of people upon whose opinion the project
depended and these concessions were no longer necessary.

In a 1959 article written by Hilský to celebrate the completion of the second wing
of the Collective House, twelve years after it was first proposed, he recounted the
complexities of bringing the project to completion including being forced to reengineer

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{182} Ibid., 9. \\
\textsuperscript{183} Ibid., 10. \\
\textsuperscript{184} Ibid., 11. Ambler wrote this sentence by hand on the copy of the report in the archive. \\
\textsuperscript{185} Ibid. \\
\textsuperscript{186} Letter to Ministerstvo finacní from Ministerstvo techniky, May 9, 1947.
\end{flushright}
the second wing in reinforced concrete when steel “became unrealistic” in 1950.\textsuperscript{187} First and foremost, he credited the head of the Stalin Works for his “support and courage” in not allowing the project to fail. He also thanked the Union of Czechoslovak Youth (\v{C}eskoslovenský svaz mládeže) for fighting from the beginning against “reactionary circles” who wanted to defeat the project.\textsuperscript{188} The intervening twelve years had been tumultuous with the political changes of 1948, the imposition of socialist realist methods in the state architecture offices in 1950, the show trials and the start of the Khrushchev-era ‘thaw’ in 1955. Despite all this, he praised the “joyous results of [their] collective efforts” and lamented the fact that Linhart was not alive to share in the success of the completed project. Although Jiří Vozenílek would design another Collective House in Zlín in 1947, within the collective consciousness of Czech and Slovak architects, the Litvínov project remained the singular expression of a true interwar modern spirit in the immediate postwar period. For some, this meant that the building was a reminder of how this vision of socialist modernity had failed to transcend the political changes of 1948; for others, it was the best example of the excesses of high modernism and a reminder of why postwar architecture had taken a different path.

The Model Housing Developments

At the same time as the Collective House competition was being held, the state was formulating its own approach to housing design, one grounded in a belief that


\textsuperscript{188} Ibid.: 27.
architecture was fundamentally a social and economic endeavor and not a creative act. Potential investors in state housing projects, namely ministries, national committees and nationalized enterprises, had vowed to provide as much new housing to their constituencies as possible and simple, inexpensive units were essential to that goal. Given the scale of the housing problem, the shortage of building materials and the lack of available skilled labor, new strategies had to be found. Not surprisingly, this led back to the PAS agenda from the 1930s and a call for more standardization and ‘typification,’ the use of a limited number of building designs according to programmatic types. This was in clear contrast to the model of the Collective House in Litvínov, which was designed to meet site-specific conditions and conceived as a one-off project. Although the profession would not embrace typification at a national scale until after 1948, the experimental “Model Housing Development (vzorné sídliště)” program, proposed in July 1946, indicated something of what was to come for Czech and Slovak architects.

The government’s formal involvement in planning for new housing construction started as early as October 1945 when a letter was sent by the Ministry of Transportation’s Public Technical Committee (Ministerstvo dopravy-veřejná správa technická) soliciting information from other ministries on the status of their employees’ housing.\textsuperscript{189} As part of the reconstruction efforts, the Ministry of Transportation assessed the conditions of roads, bridges and settlement infrastructure, which soon included housing. In January 1946, an interministerial committee, the Advisory Board for

\textsuperscript{189} The letter was referred to in a response from the Postal Ministry, see Letter to Ministerstvo dopravy-veřejná správa technická (Ministry of Transportation- Public Technical Committee) from Ministerstvo pošt (Postal Ministry), Nov. 14, 1945, MT, carton 267, NA.
Housing Construction (Poradního sboru pro bytovou výstavbu), was set up by the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs. In addition to members of “political parties and professional organizations and institutions,” representatives from the Ministries of Finance, Justice, the Interior and the Ministry of Transportation’s Public Technical Committee were also asked to join the meetings. The Advisory Board set up five commissions—housing, land, technical, organizational and financial—to address various aspects of the housing crisis. The technical committee, which was working to set standards for apartments units and building practices, soon split into two subcommittees directed by representatives of the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, one for “building construction and materials” led by Karel Pilát who would later administrate the Model Housing Development program and the other for “sociological and statistical research” led by Jiří Štursa, who in this official role brought the PAS agenda of “scientific functionalism” directly into these discussions.

The institutional framework for this program changed in early July 1946 when the ministries were reshuffled. The Public Technical Committee broke away from the

\[190\] For example, the “land” committee included representatives from over two dozen civic organizations, political parties, building associations, and government agencies including BAPS, see “Záznam o 2. schůzi II. komise /stavební pozemky/ Poradního sboru pro bytovou výstavbu, konané dne 24. ledna 1946 (Record of the 2nd meeting of Commission #2 /land/ of the Advisory Board for Housing Construction on Jan. 24, 1946),” Jan. 24, 1946, p. 1-4, MT, carton 267, NA.

\[191\] Ibid.

\[192\] Meeting minutes for the five committees can be found in MT, cartons 267, 302, NA. Despite state efforts, in January 1947 there were still 23,108 government employees in Bohemia, Moravia, Silesia and Slovakia without permanent housing and another 14,393 with substandard housing. See Ministerstvo techniky, “Potřeba bytů pro státní zaměstnance,” Oct. 25, 1947, MT, carton 267, NA.

\[193\] “Záznam o II. plenární schůzi Poradního sboru pro bytovou výstavbu konané 7. května 1946 (Record of the 2nd Plenary Meeting of the Advisory Board for Housing Construction on May 7, 1946),” May 7, 1946, p. 5-7, MT, carton 302, NA.
Ministry of Transportation to become a separate entity, the Ministry of Technology
(*Ministerstvo techniky*). When the government issued a decree on July 16 declaring that
125,000 new apartment units would be built during the Two-Year Plan, representatives
of the new Ministry of Technology presided over discussions of how best to fulfill this
target. Of the total number of requested, 70,000 units were to be rehabilitated after
suffering damage in the war; 30,000 would be totally rebuilt as part of the reconstruction
efforts; and 25,000 new units would be provided specifically for industry and building
cooperatives. One-third of the units would be in single-family houses and the rest in
apartment buildings.\(^\text{195}\)

For the next six months, Jiří Štursa’s subcommittee worked on standardized
apartment and single-family house designs that would come to be known as ‘Two-Year
Plan Apartments.’ The plans were prepared just in time for the implementation of the
Two-Year Plan on January 1, 1947.\(^\text{196}\) In this first iteration, the 65-square-meter furnished
“family units” for four to six people had two bedrooms with a generous living room,
WC, bathroom, pantry and a small kitchen; these could be built as apartments, row
houses or single-family houses.\(^\text{197}\) (Fig. 1.36) The furnished “bachelor” apartments were

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\(^{194}\) Department III/B of the new ministry was responsible for building projects.

\(^{195}\) “Zápis o poradě konané podle vládního usnesení o přípravních opatřeních k provádění
budovatelského programu vlády (Minutes of the Meeting on the Preparatory Arrangements to
Implement the Government’s Building Program),” Aug. 1, 1946, p. 1, MT, carton 303, NA.

\(^{196}\) Plans signed by Jiří Štursa on Dec. 23, 1946 can be found in MT, carton 302, NA.

\(^{197}\) “Směrnice pro stavbu bytů v rámci bytové stavební obnovy a výstavby dvouletého plánu
(Directives for the Construction of Apartments in the Framework of Building Rehabilitation and
Construction during the Two-Year Plan),” Dec. 31, 1946, MT, carton 302, NA.
limited to 25 square meters and contained a single large living space, WC, bathroom and small kitchen.\footnote{198}

The plans were very similar to those described by architect Karel Storch when he wrote about the “international agreement (shora) in the housing standard” after visiting Stockholm, Helsinki and Copenhagen as part of an official 1946 delegation.\footnote{199} He argued that “worldwide postwar housing construction is confronted by similar tasks. This similarity is not coincidental, but arises from the same requirements.”\footnote{200} After years disconnected from this international building culture, Czechs and Slovaks needed to

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{Fig_1.36.png}
\caption{Jiří Štursa, Two-Year Plan apartment (1946) from the Ministry of Technology files at the National Archive, Prague (author’s photo, 2003)}
\end{figure}

\begin{flushleft}
\footnote{198} Ibid.
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\footnote{199} Karel Storch, "Mezinárodní shoda v bytovém standardu (The International Consensus in the Housing Standard)," \textit{Architektura ČSR} 6, no. 5 (1947): 140-41.
\end{flushleft}

\begin{flushleft}
\footnote{200} Ibid.: 140.
\end{flushleft}
bring up their housing standard to that of the more advanced northern Europeans. The German concept of the “minimum dwelling” was a result of “vacuous economic liberalism.” For him, “the symbol of housing culture is the demarcation of function in each room, in every room – not only those in which the functional uses are given by their fixtures or other building systems.” The result was what he termed the “differentiated apartment” with a large living room; small, ventilated kitchen; a pantry, a separate WC and bathroom; and segregated sleeping rooms for parents and children. (Fig. 1.37) These specification matched those of the Two-Year Plan units and would influence the design of the first standardized units after 1948, the T-series.

Fig. 1.37: A.W. Nygaard, Apartment in the Halden housing development in Norway, shown to illustrate the concept of a “differentiated apartment” in Architektura ČSR (1947)

201 Ibid.
202 Ibid.
The most ambitious and important housing initiative of the Two-Year Plan was the Model Housing Development program. With start-up funds from the United National Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA), the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs set out to “build two or three housing developments, which would be tested and worked through in practical terms as examples for further building projects around the country.” Three Czech cities were chosen as the pilot sites: Most in the borderlands; Kladno, a mining city about 40 miles from Prague where the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia had been founded; and Ostrava, a mining and steel-producing city in northeast Moravia. To administer the three sites, local building associations (spolky) were established under the supervision of the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs and their project manager, Karel Pilát.

In each case, the association members included representatives from the Ministry, local industrial concerns such as mines, chemical plants and steelworks and local and regional national committees. Some of the various members were architects working for a local enterprises or a national committee, although they were not hired to do any of the design work. The associations were responsible for developing the program, writing budgets and choosing architects to design the master plan and

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203 Pilát, “Výstavba vzorných sídlišť a jejich poslání (The Construction of the Model Housing Developments and Their Mission),” 204.

204 Ibid. Extensive archival documentation survives about the Ostrava Model Housing Development.” See fonds: MT, cartons 348-51, NA; Spolek pro výstavbu vzorného sídliště v Ostravě-Zábřeh (Association for the Building of the Model Housing Development in Ostrava-Zábřeh, henceforth Spolek), Archiv města Ostravy (Ostrava City Archive, henceforth AMO), Ostrava, Czech Republic; Vládní komise pro výstavbu Ostravska (Government Commission for the Building of Ostrava, henceforth VKVO), Zemský archiv v Opavě (Regional Archive in Opava, henceforth ZA), Opava, Czech Republic.
standardized building types with the intention that they could be replicated at other sites. The financial support provided to the projects by local interest groups meant that a specified number of the housing units would be reserved for their employees. In the case of the Ostrava development, Vítkovice Ironworks was entitled to 20%; the Ostrava-Karvina Regional Coal Mines and the Ostrava Chemical Enterprise each had 15%; and the regional, state and local national committees claimed the remaining 50%. In Kladno and Most, the local mining collectives were the primary beneficiaries.\footnote{Pilát, "Výstavba vzorných sídlišť a jejich poslání (The Construction of the Model Housing Developments and Their Mission)," 205.}

Fig. 1.38: Josef Havlíček, Plan of Model Housing Development in Kladno (1947) from Návrhy a stavby (1964)
In each city, the association hired four or five architects to work on the master plan and individual buildings for their development. (Fig. 1.38-1.40) Although BAPS played no official role in the development of the projects, some of the architects involved were prominent members. In Kladno, the design group included Josef Havlíček and Václav Hilský.207 Jiří Štursa worked on the teams in Most and Ostrava; Vladimír

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207 Ibid.: 204-05. The Kladno team also included Miroslav Koněřza and Emil Kovařík; Most – Karel Kuthan, Jiří Novotný and Ferdinand Fend; Ostrava – Anna Friedlová, Otakar Slabý and Jaroslav Turek.
Fig. 1.40: Anna Friedlová, Vladimír Meduna, Otto Slabý, Jiří Štursa and Jaroslav Turek, Plan of Model Housing Development in Ostrava from Architektura ČSR (1947)

Meduna, who would later design Ostrava-Poruba was also on the Ostrava team. The building sites, chosen for their proximity to local industries and the potential to connect to existing city infrastructure, consisted of land already in the possession of the state, supplemented by the purchase of individual tracts. The Ostrava site was the largest

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208 Jíří Štursa, "Sociálně organisační předpoklady pro plánování vzorného sídliště v Ostravě a Mostě (The Socially Organized Conditions for the Planning of a Model Housing Development in Ostrava and Most)," Architektura ČSR 7, no. 6-7 (1948): 207-09. See chapter three for more on Meduna.

209 For example, the records of the land purchase in Ostrava can be found in MT, carton 348, NA and the meeting minutes of the association in Spolek, carton 1-20, AMO.
with a plan to build a housing development for 7,500 residents in 1,800 units.\textsuperscript{210} Kladno and Most were planned for 5,000 people in 1,200 units.\textsuperscript{211}

Karel Pilát wrote that the work was inspired by three important precedents—Ebenezer Howard’s Garden City from 1898, Tony Garnier’s Industrial City from 1917 and Le Corbusier’s City for Three Million Inhabitants of 1922.\textsuperscript{212} Like these precedents, each of the project proposals included housing, schools, shopping areas, community centers, health clinics, parks and open green spaces, garages, fire stations and mass transportation to local industries and urban centers. In Ostrava, there was also a hotel, dormitory and youth center in the main square. Housing was provided in a mix of single-family homes, rowhouses and two- to five-story apartment buildings with a few taller buildings—eight-story housing blocks built in parallel rows in Ostrava and eleven-story towers in Kladno.\textsuperscript{213} (Fig. 1.41-1.42)

In Most and Ostrava, Jiří Štursa produced diagrams of the master plans, what he called “analyses of the gravitational circles” of the site, which illustrated the hierarchical relationships between the different programs and their distances from the housing

\textsuperscript{210} Pilát, “Výstavba vzorných sídlišť a jejich poslání (The Construction of the Model Housing Developments and Their Mission),” 205.

\textsuperscript{211} Havlíček, Návrhy a stavby, 70-77; Jiří Štursa, “Vzorné sídliště v Mostě (The Model Housing Development in Most),” Architektura ČSR 7, no. 6-7 (1948): 210-13. Havlíček would continue working on various projects at the Kladno site, which was called Kladno-Rozdělov, until 1959.

\textsuperscript{212} Pilát, “Výstavba vzorných sídlišť a jejich poslání (The Construction of the Model Housing Developments and Their Mission),” 201-02.

VZORNE SÍDLIŠTĚ PRO HORNÍKY A HUTNÍKY KLAIDNO.

Velké sídliště vzniklo v klidnějším krají vedle Horníků a došlo k výstavbě kvůli pro její rozvoji. Bylo vedeno ve spolupraze s vedením připraveného v oblasti stavby obvodů těžby způsobujících obyvatelství na severním okraji města. Projekt byl spjat s potřebou pro jeho realizaci koncem 30. let 20.století s klidnějším krajem a provozním plánováním tak, aby výstavba dobyla připravená. Na počátku vzniku byla zastavena jižní část počátečního projektu pro těžbu a zvětšení sítě pro vytvoření přístupu k oblasti těžby způsobující obyvatelství obvodů těžby.

Josef Havlíček, Václav Hilský, Miroslav Koněrza and Emil Kovařík, Model Housing Development in Kladno from Architektura ČSR (1947)
clusters. These diagrams were descendants of the charts and diagrams of the PAS publications in the 1930s and those found in Janů’s 1946 book, Socialistické budování (oč půjde ve stavebnictví a architektuře). For example, each sector in Most had two locations for services such as tailors, butchers and hairstylists and one grocery store; at the center of the development was a department store. (Fig. 1.43) The schools followed the same pattern with at least three schools in each sector, one day-care center, one elementary

![Apartment buildings for the Model Housing Development in Ostrava from Architektura ČSR (1947)](image)

Fig. 1.42: Jiří Štursa, Apartment buildings for the Model Housing Development in Ostrava from Architektura ČSR (1947)

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214 See figures 1.7, 1.16-1.17.
school, one middle school and a single high-school in the center. Ostrava followed a similar distribution pattern, although the planned settlement was more dense, so there were fewer day-care centers and elementary schools proposed, although one assumes they were larger, and more services were planned. There was also a conscious effort to make the apartments equidistant from other amenities; for example, as planned residents would walk no more than ten minutes from their apartment to a tram stop.

In addition to the master plans prepared by the four- and five-member teams, each architect submitted plans for individual buildings to a limited competition, the results of which were decided by the association. Stylistically the apartment buildings

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215 Štursa, "Vzorné sídliště v Mostě (The Model Housing Development in Most)," 210.

216 Pilát, "Výstavba vzorných sídlišť a jejich poslání (The Construction of the Model Housing Developments and Their Mission)," 203.

217 Ibid.

218 For discussions of the projects and their early construction phases, see MT, cartons 347-351, NA. For Ostrava, see Spolek, AMO.
proposed for each housing development were similar and consistent with the modernist tendencies of the period. They were simple, unadorned masonry and stucco buildings with flat roofs and strong horizontal facade compositions punctuated by winter gardens and small balconies. (Fig. 1.44-1.45) Some resembled Czech social housing projects of the

Fig. 1.44: Anna Friedlová, Apartment building for the Model Housing Development in Ostrava from Architektura ČSR (1947)

219 Jiří Štursa reflected back on this period in 1959 when he wrote a short genealogy of the development of Czechoslovak housing types including a collective house by PAS, see Štursa, "Naše architektura bojující (Our Architecture Fighting)," 195-202.
1930s and others looked more like contemporary Scandinavian projects, which were copiously illustrated in *Architektura ČSR* that year. (Fig. 1.46) The apartments were typically two-bedroom units that followed Štursa’s ‘Two-Year Plan’ proposals and Storch’s ideas about “differentiated apartments,” although in most cases the units were larger with eat-in-kitchens or separate dining rooms. Some one-room bachelor apartments were also proposed; in Ostrava, they were located on the penthouse floor of the five- and eight-story buildings, although they were not built in the final projects. The most distinctive development was Kladno with a combination of modest three-story blocks punctuated by three-wing apartment towers on pilotis designed by Josef

Fig. 1.45: Model Housing Development units under reconstruction, Most (author’s photo, 2003), although originally designed with flat roofs, the Most buildings were built with pitched roofs similar to the later T-series
Havliček, who was about to leave for New York to represent Czechoslovakia on the United Nations design team.\textsuperscript{220} (Fig. 1.47-1.49)

Despite these auspicious beginnings, the model housing development program was not a success by any measure. Material and labor shortages, general disorganization and a lack of urgency meant that little was accomplished at these sites in 1947 and 1948. Twenty of the three-story 15-unit apartment blocks designed by Josef Havlíček and Václav Hilský were started in Kladno in 1947, but according to Havlíček, “construction then stagnated” until after the communist takeover in February 1948.\textsuperscript{221} He made

\textsuperscript{220} Havlíček, \textit{Návrhy a stavby}, 74. In plan his original project for the United Nations competition, a three-winged conical tower, was very similar to the Kladno project, see Havlíček, \textit{Návrhy a stavby}, 97.

\textsuperscript{221} Havlíček, \textit{Návrhy a stavby}, 70.
Fig. 1.47: Josef Havlíček, Tower for Model Housing Development in Kladno (1947) from Návrhy a stavby (1964)

Fig. 1.48: Josef Havlíček, Plan of tower for Model Housing Development in Kladno (1947) from Návrhy a stavby (1964)
changes to the master plan in 1951 and again in 1956; the six tower blocks that line the main avenue of the development were completed in 1959.\textsuperscript{222} (Fig. 1.50-1.51) In Ostrava, only 15 of the 70 buildings planned for the first phase were started by 1948. Jiří Štursa’s proposal for parallel rows of eight-story blocks lining the main north-south boulevard was abandoned.\textsuperscript{223}

\textsuperscript{222} Ibid., 72.

Fig. 1.50: Josef Havlíček, Towers at the Model Housing Development in Kladno from *Návrhy a stavby* (1964)

Fig. 1.51: Towers in Kladno (author's photo, 2003)
Instead local architects Anna Friedlova and Jaroslav Turek, members of the master plan committee, were chosen by the association in September 1947 to build 11 and 4 apartment blocks, respectively. Today these are situated along the northeast boundary of the neighborhood, facing north-south, but following the curve of the street along the edge of the settlement. Friedlova’s four-story blocks included 112 two-room apartments in seven buildings and 116 one-room bachelor apartments in four buildings. (Fig. 1.52-1.53) At almost 90-square meters, her two-room units were similar, but larger

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224 “Zápis o schůzi spolku pro výstavbu vzorného sídliště v Ostravě, konané dne 30.září 1947 (Minutes of the Meeting of the Association for the Construction of the Model Housing Development in Ostrava, Sept. 30, 1947)” Sept. 30, 1947, MT, carton 348, NA. Friedlová and Turek were present at the meeting to discuss their projects.
than Štursa’s Two-Year Plan units, with either a separate dining room or work space and more storage. Turek’s four buildings were smaller, only three-stories, and less elegant with large open balconies on the entrance side and smaller balconies at the rear. (Fig. 1.54) No community buildings, schools or commercial businesses were started during this time, leaving the residents of the few completed units far from the everyday services that they had expected until another construction phase in the mid-1950s. (Fig. 1.55)

As will be discussed in further chapters, these neighborhoods, which would become Kladno-Rozdělov, Most-Podžatecká and Ostrava-Bělský Les (Stalingrad),

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225 Pilát, “Výstavba vzorných sídlišť a jejich poslání (The Construction of the Model Housing Developments and Their Mission),” 204.
Fig. 1.54: Apartment building by Jaroslav Turek for Model Housing Development in Ostrava (author’s photo, 2006)

Fig. 1.55: Ostrava Model Housing Development under construction from the Ostrava City Archive (c.1954), the 15 Two-Year Plan buildings are on the right, with the Friedlova buildings running parallel along the road and the Turek buildings perpendicular to them in the upper right corner, the newer buildings are standardized apartments built from 1950-1954
remained under construction throughout the 1950s; in Ostrava, Bělský Les was never finished. In the end, each was built to a different master plan than first proposed, although Josef Havlíček would continue his work in Kladno and Jiří Štursa remained with the Most project and rejoined the Ostrava team in early 1950s. In all three cases, the majority of the developments were completed with standardized buildings developed in post-1948 research institutes, indicating something of the shift from individual commissions to mass production.

Despite these problems, there were many things to learn from the model housing developments. It was already apparent during the Two-Year Plan that labor and materials needed to be carefully considered and aggressively sought out. The coordination of multiple investors, contractors and architects meant that there were complicated bureaucratic and decision-making processes that would hold up the pace of construction. Early indicators of the problems associated with individual authorship were also evident. In the search to find a strategy that could be repeated around the country, standardized and typified buildings were much more attractive than hiring individual architects to produce site specific designs. Although some of the challenges were clear, the post-1948 government embraced planning on this scale and encouraged neighborhood-centered projects that sought to provide shared services to large numbers.

226 Updates on the model housing developments can be found in 1958 and 1959 articles on housing in Czechoslovakia, see Ferdinand Balcárek and Karel Storch, "Deset let typisaze v Československu (Ten Years of Typification in Czechoslovakia)," Architektura ČSR 17, no. 7 (1958): 293-308; Josef Havlíček, "Z dostavby sídliště Vítězného února v Kladně (On the Completion of the Housing Development on Victory of February Street in Kladno)," Architektura ČSR 18, no. 4 (1959): 210-14; Hruža, "Sídliště na Mostecku (The Housing Developments of the Most Region)," 62-63.

227 See chapter two.
of residents in low-rise, high-density developments. The high-rise, high-density, high-style Litvínov Collective House would be written off as too expensive in favor of the more dispersed Model Housing Development examples. The execution of such projects would, nevertheless, prove challenging throughout the communist period as labor and material shortages disrupted schedules, encouraged shoddy craftsmanship and made it almost impossible to deliver as many buildings as promised.

February 1948 and the Action Committees

In the summer of 1947, with only a few projects under construction and the ideology of the SSA dominating BAPS, other constitutive groups within the organization became convinced that something new was needed. In July, a group of architects representing practitioners in Bohemia, Moravia-Silesia and Slovakia, announced the formation of the Union of Czechoslovak Architects (Unie architektů ČSR, henceforth UA), a politically-unaffiliated organization that would have a professional, rather than an ideological point of view. Unlike the Prague-focused BAPS, the UA would include architects from all three regions and conduct its business in Czech and Slovak. A critic of BAPS, Jaroslav Pokorny, President of the Architectural Group of the Association of Czech Architects and Engineers, would head the new organization. In its by-laws, the

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228 The use of both languages would become standard for all official business after 1948, but it was a conciliatory move for the UA. See "Návrh stanov Unie architektů ČSR/ U.A. (Proposal for the By-Laws of the Union of Czechoslovak Architects/ U.A.)," undated, UKPK, carton 636, NA; "Sjednocení architektů - ustavení Unie architektů ČSR (The Unification of Architects - The Establishment of the Union of Czechoslovak Architects)," Architektura ČSR 6, no. 8 (1947): 242.

229 In an undated letter to BAPS that included minutes from an SIA meeting, Pokorny was critical of everything about the organization from its handling of the Town Hall competition to its unfair
group promised to “pursue aggressive ideological activities to improve the level of Czechoslovak architecture, urbanism and building culture” and “create conditions for planning and economic design activities of intense artistic and professional quality.”

The group claimed the right to represent Bohemian, Moravian-Silesian and Slovak architects at international events, in competitions and at conferences; to create an executive board with members from all three regions; hold general assembly meetings and elect board members; and act as the official regulating body for the architectural profession.

With the support of the Architects’ Collective, the Architects’ Club, the Association of Academic Architects and the Moravian Headquarters of Architects, the UA overtook BAPS as the representative body for the profession by early 1948. The nascent Union of International Architects (*Union Internationale des Architectes*), which was planning a June 1948 conference in Switzerland, contacted the UA, rather than elections and its inability to handle the management of professional activities. See Letter from Správní výbor architektů SIA (Steering Committee of the SIA architects) to BAPS, undated, UKPK, carton 636, NA.

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231 Ibid., 1-8.

232 See “Zápis o 5. schůzi presidia Unie architektů ČSR konané dne 10. února 1948 (Minutes of the 5th meeting of the Presidium of the UA, Feb. 10, 1948),” Feb. 10, 1948, UKPK, carton 636, NA. Board members of UA included Pokorny, Oldřich Starý of the Architects Club, F.M. Černý of the Association of Academic Architects, Václav Roštlapil from the Moravian Headquarters of Architects and Stanislav Semrád, who may have been a member of the Architects’ Collective, which was already critical of BAPS in 1946. See Letter from Společnost architektů (Architects’ Society) to BAPS, Nov. 30, 1947, UKPK, carton 636, NA. Jiří Štursa was listed as absent at the Feb. 10, 1948 meeting, although it appears that he represented SSA at the UA meetings. Sometime in 1948, the *Unie architektů* was renamed the *Svaz architektů*, both are rendered most closely in English as the Union of Architects. Svaz has a Slavic root and was the term used for the other professional unions in Czechoslovakia.
BAPS, in January to send representatives to Lausanne for the plenary meeting.\footnote{Ibid. The International Union of Architects or UIA was a postwar attempt to create a United Nations-style international body of architects. The USSR and Poland were founding members of the group along with the USA, France and Great Britain. According to Rostislav Švácha, plans emerged for the UIA at the 1946 London/Hastings meeting in England, attended by BAPS delegate Jaromír Krejcar, who was elected to the new group’s executive committee and would later emigrate to England. See Švácha, \textit{Jaromír Krejcar, 1895-1949}, 155. Two Czech delegates attended the first UIA congress in Lausanne, Switzerland in June 1948 and with a few exceptions, Czechoslovakia remained active in UIA throughout the Communist period, hosting a Congress in 1967. See \textit{L’UIA 1948-1998}, ed. by Pierre Vago (Paris: Editions de l’Epure, 1998).} Even the SSA resigned itself to the change, and along with the other constituent groups of BAPS, began transferring its full membership list to the UA in mid-February.\footnote{According to a February 1948 letter, it was necessary to be a full member of one of the BAPS groups to receive automatic admission into the UA; there was also an application process detailed in the by-laws. See Letter to Ferdinand Mazel from BAPS, Feb. 15, 1948, UKPK, carton 636, NA.}

This transfer was interrupted by the watershed events of February 25, 1948 when the Communist Party took control of the Czechoslovak government. Although this dissertation argues that there are other more critical turning points in the long trajectory of Czechoslovak modern architecture, the importance of February 1948 to the personal experiences and collective consciousness of Czech and Slovak architects should not be underestimated or diminished. Immediately following the takeover, “action committees” were formed inside of all professional and educational organizations to purge them of politically undesirable members during the transition to Communist Party rule. In his book on higher education, historian John Connelly describes the chaos that followed when many popular professors were forced out of Czech universities by
“revolutionary” students and professors on the Action Committee of Higher Education within days of February 25th.\textsuperscript{235}

The first decrees related to architecture came with the creation on February 27 of a new department “S” at the Ministry of Technology responsible for the administration of the nationalized building industry, a step that was formally announced at a Communist Party conference on February 29.\textsuperscript{236} The fact that the UA was already in the process of consolidating the various associations within BAPS into a single group seemed to ease the situation for architects. It was not until March 15 that the UA announced the formation of the Central Action Committee for Czechoslovak Architects (Ústředního akčního výboru architektů ČSR), led by Jaroslav Pokorný and F.M. Černý, President and General Secretary of the UA.\textsuperscript{237} The editorial board and circulation of the magazine \textit{Architektura ČSR} was taken over immediately, although Oldřich Starý remained editor.\textsuperscript{238}

In its instructions one week later to the associations, the Central Action Committee wrote that since the formation of the UA was not yet finished, each association had to form its own action committee and then choose one to three


\textsuperscript{236} Nový, “Čtvrtstoleté jubileum založení Stavoprojektu (The Twenty-Fifth Anniversary of the Establishment of Stavoprojekt),” 484.

\textsuperscript{237} “Prohlášení ústředního akčního výboru architektů ČSR (Declaration of the Central Action Committee of Czechoslovak Architects),” \textit{Architektura 7}, no.1 (1948): 42.

\textsuperscript{238} Ibid.
“liquidators” to appoint to the Central Action Committee to act on their behalf.\textsuperscript{239} All activities of the member associations had to cease by March 31; a stipulation that already may have been in place with the transition from BAPS to UA.\textsuperscript{240} There were certainly architects who suffered during this process, although the term “purge,” which is often associated with the action committees, does not seem appropriate in the case of the architects, since most of them were sympathetic to the Communist cause or decided to leave the country soon after February 1948.\textsuperscript{241} The most notable architect to leave was Jaromír Krejcar, one of the stars of the Devětsil generation and the architect of the highly-acclaimed Czechoslovak Pavilion at the 1937 Paris World’s Fair. In May 1948, he abandoned his teaching position at the Brno University of Technology and emigrated to England where he died in 1949.\textsuperscript{242}

\textsuperscript{239} \textquotedblleft Akčním výborům spolků architektů! (To the Action Committees of the Associations of Architects!),” Mar. 22, 1948, UKPK, carton 636, NA. In addition to Pokorný and Černý, the other members of the Central Action Committee included in alphabetical order: Adolf Benš, Kamil Gross, Václav Hilský, Bohumil Holý, Miroslav Kouříl, Vilém Kuba, František Kubelka, Martin Kusý, R.F. Podzemny, Václav Roštlapil, Jan Rott, Stanislav Semrád, Oldřich Starý, Jiří Štursa and Jan Vaněk. Many of these men represented their associations on the UA board.

\textsuperscript{240} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{241} I have seen no references to specific names of “purged” architects in 1948, although there were certainly some. Ladislav Machoň, a supporter of Beneš, was not allowed to work as an architect in the early 1950s, but this was after the imposition of Stalinist socialist realism. Karel Teige is often mentioned in this context since he was ostracized by the regime and it was dangerous to associate with him after 1948. Since Teige was not eligible to join the UA or any other professional architectural association, his situation is more akin to artists, writers, musicians and filmmakers who found themselves unwelcome after 1948. See Knapík, \textit{Únor a kultura: sovětizace české kultury 1948-1950}.

\textsuperscript{242} Švácha, \textit{Jaromír Krejcar, 1895-1949}, 149-56. Švácha writes that Krejcar’s position did not seem threatened at the time, although he had been a critic of Stalinism in the 1930s. He had some personal problems that may have contributed to his decision including an offer to teach in London that came through his UIA contacts, a pending lawsuit over unpaid child support and his Jewish wife’s fear for her safety that led her to spend most of her time in Israel before he emigrated.
Once the list of members and an agenda for the unified group was prepared, the Central Action Committee set out to completely reformulate architectural practice. By April 7, they were actively pursuing nationalized offices that would “give the possibility of employment for all architects and for the full development of the creative power of each individual according to his abilities and personal experiences.” The proposal was announced at the Congress of National Culture that month. Questions about the nature and meaning of these changes began immediately from within the UA, since architects were already concerned about losing control of their professional decisions in this environment. In a draft report about the future organization of the ateliers, written in the summer of 1948 to convince architects of the positive aspects of the changes, the benefits to them within the new system were summarized in this way.

This method of organizing architectural work frees the architect from all of the adverse associated phenomena that until now have made his task more difficult and stopped him from dedicating himself fully to his creative mission. In these working collectives, everyone will be provided with the conditions to perfectly manage all work on the project, whose final form will be a manufacturing (vyrobní) plan of a building. In this, the indivisibility of work, full respect for authorship and enhanced personal responsibility of the designer will be preserved. This new form of architectural work should not damage the position of architects, either ideologically or economically.

This statement implied a compromise between the pursuit of an active discourse on form and aesthetics and the desire to move fully towards industry. Here the “creative


244 “Situacní zpráva o organisaci Architektonických atelierů (Working Report on the Organization of the Architectural Ateliers),” undated, p. 4, MT, carton 431, NA. The text suggests that it was written in the summer of 1948, see p. 10 for reference to activities that will happen in Fall 1948.
mission" of the architect becomes that of an industrial designer, working to design
buildings that can be produced as industrial objects, hence the goal of a manufacturing
plan rather than a finished building.

Although there was an implicit acknowledgement that this new system would
change the relationship of the architect to his work (and in rare cases her work), the
author attempted to assuage concerns about the mechanization of the process by
emphasizing the continuing autonomy of the architect in terms of authorship and the
ability to follow a project from start to finish. One can also read in this statement
something of the dialectical tension between aesthetics and function that was
fundamental to the discourse on socialist architecture throughout the 1940s. As will be
discussed in chapter two, even with these efforts and discussions, architects were not
prepared for depths of transformation that would occur with the establishment of
Stavoprojekt in September 1948.

In the intervening months, the organization of architectural practice changed
little for a majority of architects as the transition to the new system proceeded slowly.
Architects in private practice continued with existing commissions and those who had
been a part of the housing projects of the Two-Year Plan carried on with their projects,
since much of the work was still behind schedule. There was, however, a serious
disruption in the availability of new projects as architectural commissions came to a halt
with the restructuring of the nationalized building industry. Stavoprojekt, and the
consistent employment that it would offer architects, was a welcome opportunity for
many practitioners who had not been able to find steady work since before 1938.
Conclusion

Those in attendance at the first BAPS meeting in July 1945 could not have foreseen the difficult, contentious, and ultimately disastrous course that socialism would take in their country. In establishing BAPS, and then the UA, architects took a critical step towards the development of architectural practice under socialism since they willingly brought themselves together in a single, centralized body that was easily and even logically adopted as the foundation of the subsequent state-run architecture offices two years later. Despite the complaints that arose about its efficiency and fairness, BAPS was an organization created from within the architectural community, which responded to its interests and needs. As a nationwide professional organization with no overt political agenda, the creation of the UA only intensified the sense that the group represented the interests of all architects.

Through projects such as the Model Housing Development program, public-private partnerships were instituted within the ministerial system that became models for future projects. Yet despite all of the efforts made by architects between 1945 and 1948, little substantial progress was made towards alleviating the postwar housing shortage or implementing the systematic process for delivering new housing units that had been promised. Even with the organizational benefits of the Two-Year Plan in 1947, problems such as lack of funds, insufficient distribution of building materials and long construction schedules made it virtually impossible to start and finish a project within these two years. As noted earlier in the chapter, this led to a poor performance in the overall building sector during the Two-Year Plan when only 66% of its targets were
officially fulfilled; given the unreliability of statistic in this period, the actual number was probably lower.

Multiple visions of postwar socialist modernity also emerged during these years from the individual commissions and state-sponsored housing programs of the Two-Year Plan. Even before the events of 1948, the SSA and the communist architects in BAPS had positioned themselves close to the political hierarchy, ensuring access to the highest levels of power after February 1948. Along with this proximity came the ability for the architectural leadership to push their agenda for standardization, typification and nationalization at the expense of individual commissions. Yet it remained unclear as to how such architecture would develop stylistically, since there was still an optimism about modern forms and the possibility that socialist architecture might be a synthesis of avant-garde style and a family-oriented social agenda. The failure of the Litvínov project to inspire similar projects was one of the first indications that an artistic model of architectural production was unlikely to survive the political transition. On the other hand, the comfortable, ‘differentiated’ apartments of the Model Housing Developments, as well as the architecture of Zlín that will be discussed in chapter five, provided a strong foundation for the development of building types that would resist the austerity of the minimum-dwelling units of the interwar period and embrace a more middle-class vision of socialist life.
Chapter 2:
Standardization and Typification: Stavoprojekt and the Transformation of Architectural Practice (1948-1950)

The plan calls for...raising the workers’ living standard and [alleviating] the housing shortage in individual industrial centers. The lack of living space near the new industrial enterprises is bringing political pressure to build more housing units. In order to relieve this pressure as quickly as possible, quick and cheap construction of new living space is necessary. This is possible with the industrialization or mechanization of building practice.¹ – Memo from the Czechoslovak Building Works to the Ministry of Technology, 1949

In June 1948, Czechoslovakia’s independent and highly diversified building industry was reborn as a massive national enterprise – the Czechoslovak Building Works (Československý stavební závod). Although many large corporations and enterprises in key sectors such as mining and insurance had been nationalized as early as 1946, the building industry had remained largely in private hands.² This changed with a government degree in April 1948 that was retroactive to January 1, 1948, ordering all businesses with more than fifty employees to be handed over to the state; at this time, building concerns were consolidated into the Czechoslovak Building Works. From June to December of that year, the organization worked to bring the more than 2,000 remaining private small businesses under its control, in order to “take over and

¹ “Opirajíc se o usnesení hosp. rady KSC z 23.3.1949 (Based on the decree from the economic committee of the Czechoslovak Communist Party)”, date listed as Monday after the decree, assumed to be March 28, 1949, fond 996: Ministerstvo techniky (Ministry of Technology, henceforth MT), carton 429, Národní archiv (National Archive, henceforth NA), Prague, Czech Republic. All Czech to English translations are by the author unless noted.

² “Úvod (Introduction)”, p. 4, footnote 5, fond: Ministerstvo stavebnictví - ústřední likvidační správa (Ministry of Building – Central Liquidation Committee, henceforth MS-ÚLS), finding aid (pomůcka), NA. The first wave of nationalization affected only three large building concerns – Konstruktiva, a construction company in Prague; Obnova, a building restoration firm in Slovakia; and the Bat’a Company in Zlín, which in addition to its shoe-making business, manufactured building materials and ran an in-house architecture and engineering office.
centralize a large number of private firms of a predominantly workshop character, to undertake their consolidation, to integrate them organizationally and financially and to transition them to large-scale building production."

Architects and building engineers, who often worked for themselves or in small offices, were acutely affected by these changes. With the assistance of the Central Action Committee of Czechoslovak Architects (Ústředního akčního výboru architektů ČSR) and the Union of Czechoslovak Architects (Unie architektů ČSR, henceforth UA), private firms were liquidated and those architects who wanted to continue practicing were assigned after September 1948 to the Czechoslovak Building Works’ newly-created design wing, Stavoprojekt; named after the combination of the roots of the Czech words “to build (stavět)” and “to design (projektovat).” Within a tri-partite hierarchy of regional architecture ateliers, regional engineering offices and research centers headquartered in Prague, the organization had 1,233 employees by January 1949 in capacities ranging

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3 Ibid.

4 The origin of the name Stavoprojekt is unclear. Otakar Nový, Deputy Director of Stavoprojekt and Head of the Architecture Ateliers, takes credit for coming up with the name in an article that he wrote in 1973 to celebrate the 25th anniversary of Stavoprojekt. He wrote, “The new organization had obtained a central governing body [in the summer of 1948], but for a long time it lacked a name. In August 1948, I thought up a name for it in telegraph shorthand (telegrafní zkratka). Eventually the organization was christened as Stavoprojekt. This survived for 25 years and in the end became the model for analogous labels for a whole succession of similar organizations in other socialist countries.” See Otakar Nový, “Čtvrtstoleté jubileum založení Stavoprojektu (The Twenty-Fifth Anniversary of the Establishment of Stavoprojekt),” Architektura ČSR 32 (1973): 486. Nový does not mention, however, that names of this sort were common in the Soviet Union in the 1930s. For example, the Moscow Administration for Civil Housing Projects and Communal Construction within the Main Architectural-Planning Administration took the name “Mosproekt” in 1933. See Patricia Kennedy Grimsted, ed., Archives of Russia, vol. 1 (Armonk, NY; London: M.E. Sharpe, 2000), 388. Other municipal architecture offices used similar names, such as Lenproekt in Leningrad and Kievproekt in Kiev.

5 See Figure 8 based on the “Organizační schema závodu: Stavoprojekt PA-100 (Organizational Scheme of the Company: Stavoprojekt PA-100),” MT, carton 431, NA. There were also architects employed by some of the large enterprises that had been nationalized in 1946 such as the
from architects and building engineers to draftsmen, accountants, statisticians, and secretaries. By mid-year, more than 4,500 people were employed at Stavoprojekt and four years later the number was more than 11,000. Deputy Director Otakar Nový proudly proclaimed in January 1949 that with its creation, “[Stavoprojekt] became the largest design firm in Europe and probably the world.” The Czechoslovak Building Works would be a short-lived experiment, it was disbanded in October 1951; however, Stavoprojekt, as an architectural infrastructure, would exist in various administrative forms and under an assortment of names until the early 1990s.

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6 “Zápis I. celostátní porady vedoucích všech oddělení Stavoprojektu (Minutes of the First Nationwide Conference of the Heads of All Stavoprojekt Departments),” Speech by Otakar Nový, Jan. 7-8, 1949, p.24, MT, carton 431, NA.

7 Nový, “Ctvrtstoleté jubileum založení Stavoprojektu (The Twenty-Fifth Anniversary of the Establishment of Stavoprojekt),” 488.


9 The name Stavoprojekt was used until Jan. 1, 1954. At this time, the architectural ateliers were renamed “state design institutes (státní projektové ústavy)” and a head office for the institutes was established within the Ministry of Community Enterprise (Ministerstvo místního hospodářství, MMH). On January 1, 1956, a new organization called the Central Administration for Residential and Civic Building (Ústřední správa pro bytovou a občanskou výstavbu, ÚSBOV) was created and all architectural administration was housed within it, the offices remained “state design institutes.” The Central Administration was disbanded in March 1958 and the institutes were then placed under the control of the State Committee for Construction (Státní výbor pro výstavbu, SVV), itself dissolved in late 1960. At an undetermined point between 1963 and 1968, the administrative body of the state design institutes took back the name Stavoprojekt, while remaining under the control of the Ministry of Building and the offices became Stavoprojekt Prague, Stavoprojekt Brno, and so forth. See “Úvod (Introduction),” fond 1185: Ústřední správa pro bytovou a občanskou výstavbu (Central Administration for Residential and Civic Building, henceforth ÚSBOV), finding aid - inventory no. 1223, NA and Nový, “Ctvrtstoleté jubileum založení Stavoprojektu (The Twenty-Fifth Anniversary of the Establishment of Stavoprojekt).”
This chapter will consider the national, regional and municipal evolution of housing design and its administration from the establishment of Stavoprojekt in September 1948 through late 1950 when the doctrine of Socialist Realism changed the tone and direction of architectural practice. The discussion will be based on analyses of the tensions between the social and stylistic agendas carried forward from the interwar years, the stringent economic demands of the planned economy with its emphasis on heavy industry, and the changing role of the architect and the design professions after 1948. The chapter will show that earlier interest in the industrialization of the building industry played an important role in this period; a continuity reflected in both personnel and organizational strategies. It will also emphasize that in the first few years of the new system, the leadership’s immediate concern was to find a better system to deliver projects on-time and within budget. Aesthetics and appropriate ‘socialist’ forms were not institutional priorities until 1950. Importantly, the chapter illustrates the many ways in which the transition from capitalism to socialism was a process, rather than a change that occurred instantaneously with the handover of political power in February 1948.

The Stavoprojekt system as set out in these first years formed the basis of the socialist design sector for more than 40 years.\textsuperscript{10} With the exception of the years 1950-1955, when the administration was most concerned with establishing the aesthetic presence of socialist realism, architectural design functioned until 1990 within the

\textsuperscript{10} Many aspects of Stavoprojekt’s operations remain unclear because little documentation from the Stavoprojekt offices is available at local or national archives. There is a fond for Stavoprojekt-Prague at the National Archive in Prague (the collection includes 116 running meters of materials and covers 1948-53). Unfortunately, this collection is not catalogued or organized and will remain inaccessible for the indefinite future.
parameters of standardization, typification and industrialization as defined by this first Stavoprojekt administration. This institutional foundation developed incrementally out of existing Czech and Slovak models from the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s. At the same time, profound changes occurred in the role of architecture within the new economic, political and social context of state socialism and the profession was forced to make difficult and ultimately unpopular concessions to the demands of the new system.

Although the model of the Soviet Union was becoming increasingly present in the day-to-day administration of the state, the first iteration of the socialist design sector owed more to the legacy of Czechoslovakia’s own industrial and architectural history than that of its new allies in Moscow. As discussed in chapter one, the UA, and BAPS before that, were the organizational bases for Stavoprojekt. The projects of the Two-Year Plan, and the Model Housing Developments in particular, set architectural precedents for the construction of standardized units in neighborhood configurations funded by public-private partnerships. As will be elaborated upon in chapter five, remnants of the business model of the Baťa Shoe Company in Zlín were also found in the structure of Stavoprojekt and the Czechoslovak Building Works.

There is little understanding in academic literature about the overlaps and intersections in Czechoslovak culture before and after 1948. Cultural and intellectual historians have largely focused on the discontinuities brought by the Second World War and the communist takeovers across the region from 1945-1949.¹¹ Existing accounts of

¹¹ For a chronology of this period in the Eastern Bloc, see Joseph Rothschild, *Return To Diversity: A Political History of East Central Europe Since World War Two* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 76-123. For an example of the emphasis on discontinuity, see Jiří Knapík, *Únor a*
the first decade of communist rule are generally pre-occupied with high politics and foreign policy—the authoritarian nature of the new regime, the imposition of Soviet Stalinism, the trials and imprisonment of party ‘enemies’ and, to a lesser extent, the loss of cultural and intellectual freedom. Newly-available archival collections have now made this previously opaque period more accessible and subject to reconsideration. The picture that is now emerging in the case of the former Czechoslovakia calls into question the classic image of a monolithic, all-powerful Communist Party that changed little from its rise to power in 1948 until Khrushchev succeeded in forcing its ‘de-Stalinization’ in 1961. Instead, the material shows an unmistakable series of paradigm shifts occurring throughout the 1950s as the regime experimented with the forms and practices of its state apparatus.

Within the realm of architecture, an analysis of work done during what the dissertation proposes as transitional years, 1948 to 1950, shows that building industry policies were in constant flux as the state struggled to define its socialist design sector, while continuing to provide new housing and community services in key industrial zones. The Ministry of Technology (Ministerstvo techniky) responded to the political and

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public pressure for quick results with the creation of the Czechoslovak Building Works and its design wing, Stavoprojekt.\textsuperscript{13} Both inside and outside of the profession, the restructuring of architecture practice and the process of design work was seen as the first step towards achieving a truly ‘socialist’ architecture, one that was in the spirit of collective work, not only in its social aspirations, but in its economic formation as well.

**Stavoprojekt and the Czechoslovak Building Works**

Much like today’s multi-national conglomerates, the Czechoslovak Building Works functioned as the umbrella organization for more than 100 state-owned, but individually managed, “national enterprises (národní podniky).”\textsuperscript{14} These included construction companies, product manufacturers, engineering firms and Stavoprojekt.\textsuperscript{15} Among this group, 70\% were in the Czech lands and 30\% in Slovakia, reflecting the historical strength of industry in the Czech lands and the more rural character of Slovakia.\textsuperscript{16} Day-to-day business between the subsidiaries was conducted as before with proprietary budgets, management structures, bidding and contracting procedures. In

\textsuperscript{13} When the Ministry of Technology was disbanded on Dec. 12, 1950, administration of Stavoprojekt was transferred to the new the Ministry of Building (Ministerstvo stavebního průmyslu, literally meaning the Ministry of Building Industry, but more accurately rendered in English as the Ministry of Building). This ministry existed from Dec. 12, 1950 to Jan. 31, 1953. Its name was then changed to the Ministerstvo stavebnictví (MSf), which survived until July 10, 1960 and also rendered best in English as the Ministry of Building. Despite these various names and changes in administrative structures that accompanied them, all of these organizations were run by the same minister, Emanuel Šlechta, until June 15, 1956.

\textsuperscript{14} *Stavebnictví včera, dnes a zitra* (The Building Industry, Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow) (Prague: Stavební informační středisko, 1973), 18.

\textsuperscript{15} “Introduction,” pp. 6-7, MS-ÚLS, finding aid, NA.

\textsuperscript{16} “Introduction,” p.8, MS-ÚLS, finding aid, NA.
effect, the Czechoslovak Building Works simulated competitive market conditions.

Multiple entities offered the same products and services, such as cement, prefabricated building materials or the installation of heating systems.\textsuperscript{17} Choices were then made for each project based on criteria such as cost and quality. The objectives of the companies were significantly different, however, as they no longer sought to make money, but rather to meet their planning quotas. As Hungarian economist Janos Kornai has shown, this economic distinction would have long-term negative consequences for the health of communist economies.\textsuperscript{18}

With the exception of state employment, increases in public financing and limitations on building types, there were few outright changes in the process of bringing a project from the design phase to completion in these early years. The three central actors in a project—the client, the designer and the building contractor—remained distinct entities within the new system. Design and construction tasks were administered through the Czechoslovak Building Works; all design work was handled by Stavoprojekt and construction jobs were assigned to the various regional construction companies in the system including Konstruktiva and Pragostav in Prague, Pozemní

\textsuperscript{17} For example, in Ostrava they sought out a Slovak company called "Drevina" that could provide prefabricated wooden houses for dormitory use. See correspondence about Drevina, Jan.-June 1950, fond: \textit{Vládní komise pro výstavbu Ostravska} (Government Commission for the Construction of the Ostrava Region, henceforth VKVO), carton 7, folder 70, \textit{Zemský archiv v Opavě}, (Regional Archive in Opava, henceforth ZA), Opava, Czech Republic. The Ministry of Technology looked to a company in Prague called "Delta" to design small wooden houses for workers in Kladno. See correspondence with Delta, Dec. 1948- Oct. 1949, MT, carton 430, NA. In both Ostrava and Kladno, the projects were never built because of the introduction of Stavoprojekt's standardized housing types in May 1949. Additional examples of independent companies with building products to sell are found in MT, carton 430, NA.

stavby with branches in Brno, Opava and Gottwaldov, and Obnova in Bratislava.\textsuperscript{19}

Much like the projects of the Two-Year Plan, national committees, national enterprises and ministries acted as clients and investors. The national committees, at the state, regional and local levels, sent requests to the Czechoslovak Building Works for projects such as new housing units, civic buildings, roads, and schools. Ministries such as the Ministry of Technology, the Ministry of Fuel and Energy (\textit{Ministerstvo paliv a energetiky}), and the Ministry of Mining Industries and Mineralogy (\textit{Ministerstvo hutního průmyslu a rudných dolů}) required industrial infrastructure including factories, warehouses and administrative offices, as well as housing for their workers. Enterprises under their control including mining cooperatives, machine factories, chemical and fuel plants, ironworks and steel mills worked at the national and local levels to secure housing and infrastructure. Therefore, although the number and variety of potential clients was greatly reduced, architectural design still occurred within the traditional boundaries of the architect-client relationship.

In the case of Ostrava, many of the housing units constructed between 1946 and 1951 were financed by local mining and steel enterprises that had been nationalized in 1945 and 1946. Once completed, units were designated for the managers and employees of the sponsoring enterprises. For example, 1,000 standardized duplexes were scheduled to be built by 1950 under the sponsorship of the Regional National Committee in Ostrava and the Ostrava-based consortium of mining-related enterprises called Ostrava-

\textsuperscript{19} "Introduction," p. 4, footnote 5, MS-ULS, finding aid, NA.
Karvina Regional Coal Mines (Ostravsko-karvinské kamenouhelné doly). According to a directive from the State Planning Office to the Ministry of Technology in February 1950, “to the largest degree possible, the [unit] quota will be used to fulfill the requests of the mines, ironworks, and heavy industry. We emphasize in particular that the construction of houses for the ironworks should enable the recruitment of workers and therefore it is necessary to support their requests as much as possible.” In the end, only 493 units were completed by 1951 and, as requested, they were allocated to heavy industry: 300 for the Ostrava-Karvina Regional Coal Mines; 74 for the Klement Gottwald Ironworks in Vitkovice; 29 for the Czechoslovak Building Works; 26 for the Třinec Ironworks; 24 for the Stalingrad Ironworks; 10 for chemical plants; 8 for the power company; and 22 to smaller enterprises in the region. This illustrated how quickly architecture, and housing in particular, became an industrial product used to bolster heavy industry, rather than a practice that focused on creativity or expression. It also demonstrates the relationship between the regime’s materialist thinking and the role of architects in delivering what Marxism-Leninism described as the “material values” of society.

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20 OKD or the Ostrava-Karvina Regional Coal Mines (Ostravsko-karvinské kamenouhelné doly) was a consortium of 32 mines, 9 coking plants, 10 mining power stations, 2 steel plants and other small related enterprises.

21 “Prováděcí plan stavebních investic pro stavby bytové na rok 1950 (The building investors’ execution plan for residential building in 1950),” Feb. 16, 1950, VKVO, carton 7, folder 107.2, ZA.

22 “Záznam o poradě, konané na plánovacím referátě KNV dne 1.března 1950 ve věci bytové výstavby na rok 1950 (Record of the executive meeting at the planning office of the Regional National Committee on March 1, 1950 concerning residential building in 1950),” Mar. 1, 1950, VKVO, carton 7, folder 107.2, ZA.

23 Dialectical materialism in this context is discussed in chapter one. See also, TSK KPSS, History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolsheviks): Short Course (New York: International Publishers, 1939), 119-20.
Transforming the Profession

This conceptual shift required sympathetic leadership for the building industry.

In the months after the Communist Party took control of the government in February 1948, the changing character and composition of the administration began to emerge. As discussed in chapter one, members of the SSA, and then BAPS, had long been enthusiastic about the prospects for the profession within a nationalized system. With the transition to the UA, there was still widespread support for state-sponsored architectural work, although the focus shifted to the achieving high professional standards. Like other creative professionals, such as artists, writers and musicians, a nationalized system offered architects something they had never experienced—the opportunity for consistent full-time employment and secure funding for their projects.24 Otakar Nový, Deputy Director of Stavoprojekt and Head of the Architecture Ateliers in this period, recalled that many architects saw the creation of the national ateliers as the fulfillment of the program of the interwar years.

Socialist design institutes were not forced on anyone through legislation, but originated with the principled, well thought out ideas of the international avant-gardes—the Soviet Constructivists, our Union of Socialist Architects, the Bauhaus and CIAM—about the new communal mission of architecture, the necessity of industrializing the building industry, typification and standardization. Herein lies the contribution of the Czechoslovak architectural avant-garde, the power of their authentic socialist pathos and international example.25

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24 The desire for stability among cultural producers in the first years of Communism was common in the region. In her work on Bulgaria, Irina Gigova argues that writers supported the new regime partly for an opportunity to receive guaranteed salaries for their work. See Irina Dimitrova Gigova, “Writers of the Nation: Intellectual Identity in Bulgaria, 1939-1953,” Ph.D. Dissertation, Univ. of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 2004, p. 142.

25 Nový, “Čtvrtstoleté jubileum založení Stavoprojektu (The Twenty-Fifth Anniversary of the Establishment of Stavoprojekt),” 488. When Nový wrote that the design institutes were “not forced
This explains, in part, why the concept of national ateliers was widely embraced by architects in the late 1940s. Yet intentionally or not, Nový’s explanation overlooked the contentious discussions that accompanied this change.

Despite the positive messages communicated through the Communist Party, from the leadership of Stavoprojekt and on the pages of Architektura ČSR, the transition to a nationalized system of design proved difficult and ultimately disappointing for many. As architect and architectural historian Marie Benešová reflected, “Things were not as simple [as represented in the journals]. Just as with the question of the organization of design work, many surprises still awaited our architects in the domain of creative ideology.”

Although it was impossible at such an early moment to understand the full implications of these institutional changes, especially in light of the emphasis being given to the role of designers in ‘building socialism,’ many architects intuitively sensed that their control over the profession might be at risk under the new regime. Early participants in the discussions about nationalizing architectural practice were wary from the start of the potential consequences of placing design within the sphere of state control.

An April 1948 proposal by the Central Action Committee had envisioned a
system of national ateliers that embodied the socialist ideal of collective artistic work.\footnote{27} An oversight group called the Architectural Council of Stavoprojekt was created during
the initial phase of discussions to combat the complaints of UA members who feared
that Stavoprojekt might “only mechanically put forward the concepts of functional
building methods,” rather than “valuing their work as something creative.”\footnote{28} The
Council existed until 1951 under the leadership of Jiří Kroha.\footnote{29} It did not, however,
develop into the counterbalance that some architects had hoped to muster against the
push towards production and standardization, which increasingly seemed an inevitable
result of state socialism. Instead, under Kroha’s direction, it was mobilized in late 1949
to apply pressure on Stavoprojekt to adopt socialist realist methods.\footnote{30}

With respect to the building industry, the first critical task for the Communist
government in the summer of 1948 was to appoint directors to the Czechoslovak
Building Works and Stavoprojekt. They needed strong and loyal allies to head these
organizations since the success of their economic programs depended on improving the

\footnote{27} See chapter one.
\footnote{28} “Návrh veřejného prohlášení (Proposal for a Public Proclamation),” undated, 1948, p.2, fond 1261/2/20: Ústřední kulturně propagáční komise a kulturně propagáční oddělení UV KSČ (Central Cultural-Propaganda Commission and the Cultural-Propaganda Department of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, henceforth ÚKPK), carton 636, NA.
\footnote{29} Kroha is the focus of chapter four.
\footnote{30} The fate of the Architectural Council is unclear. According to Jiří Kroha’s biographic
information, he remained head until 1951 when Stavoprojekt was reorganized, the lack of
additional references to it suggest that the new executive board of Stavoprojekt replaced the
Council as an advisory body. See “Stručná životopisná data (Brief biographical data),” after 1972,
fond: Jiří Kroha, loose papers, Muzeum města Brna (Brno City Museum), Brno, Czech Republic.
country’s industrial infrastructure. The problems remained the same as during the Two-Year Plan, although with total control of the economy, radical solutions were easier to implement. The country needed more heavy industry, expanded public transportation systems, and solutions to alleviate the critical shortage of housing for workers in key industrial areas. Responsibility for these projects fell to the architects and engineers at Stavoprojekt. Despite the large number of well-established and experienced interwar modernists who remained in Czechoslovakia after February 1948, it was Karel Janů and Jiří Voženílek, former members of PAS, who were appointed to the organization’s top jobs; Janů as director of the Czechoslovak Building Works and Voženílek as director of Stavoprojekt.

Although BAPS and its SSA-centered leadership had temporarily stepped aside in early 1948 in favor of the UA model of a politically-unaffiliated professional organization, the events of February 1948 recalibrated the distribution of power once again. Given their immediate postwar activities, Communist Party activism and technocratic worldview, it was not surprising that Karel Janů, Jiří Voženílek and Otakar Nový, were called upon to lead the new architectural administration, rather than the architects of the Devětsil generation. For more than fifteen years, the former members of PAS and their adherents had espoused nationalization, industrialization and standardization as the solution to the housing crisis. During the era of the Czechoslovak Building Works, their position was characterized by a strong emphasis on numeric indicators, plan fulfillment statistics, scientific experimentation and a general disregard for decorative aesthetics. While the aging avant-garde initially focused optimistically on
their dream to provide quality modern housing for all, they quickly became disillusioned with the everyday reality of working six-day weeks in state offices under the strict creative guidelines of the administration’s unyielding technocrats. The situation became even more bleak in 1950 with the imposition of Soviet socialist realism. A welcome reprieve followed five years later in the wake of Khrushchev’s reforms in the Soviet Union, but enthusiasm had already waned for the socialist vision of architecture formulated after the war in projects such as the Litvínov Collective House.

The appointment of Janú to head the Czechoslovak Building Works and his subsequent choice of Voženílek to head Stavoprojekt revealed much about the motives and concerns of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia in the chaotic first months of the new regime. Maria Benešová, who began her career in the late 1940s, recalled in a 2002 lecture that the architectural community saw Janú and Voženílek as instruments of the Communist Party, brought in to “translate” the wishes of the Central Committee, the Party’s most elite leadership body. As discussed in chapter one, Janú’s appointment to head the Czechoslovak Building Works, at only thirty-nine years old, must also be seen as a reward for his loyal service to the Communist Party at the Settlement Office and his long-standing public commitment to the industrialization of architecture and the

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31 “Stavoprojekt, směrnice č. 1: Organisace projekční služby ČSSZ (Stavoprojekt, By-Laws, no. 1: The Organization of the Design Sector of the Czechoslovak Building Works)”, Sept 1948, p. 9, MT, carton 431, NA. Work weeks were designated as 48 hours and Saturday was considered a work day.

32 “Stavoprojekt, směrnice č. 1”, Sept. 1948, p. 2, MT, carton 431, NA. The by-laws state that the Head Office of the Czechoslovak Building Works had the power to name the Director of Stavoprojekt.

33 Benešová, "Socialistický realismus v architektuře padesátých let (Socialist Realism in the Architecture of the 1950s)," 38.
nationalization of the building industry. Jiří Voženílek, on the other hand, brought different life experiences and professional expertise to his job as the head of Stavoprojekt. According to an official summary of Voženílek’s early career, he had been brought to Prague in 1948 to “organize the socialist design sector” on the Zlín model; the implications of which will be discussed later in the chapter. This professional experience and his political credentials, combined with a long friendship with Janů, made Voženílek the obvious choice to oversee the long-awaited establishment of a national design sector.

As the heads of the Czechoslovak Building Works and Stavoprojekt, Janů and Voženílek were faced with an immense and politically-charged task. The government was proclaiming an “emergency” in the building industry in 1949 and the new organizations were expected to quickly find efficient and cost-effective solutions to the crisis, particularly in housing. The importance of housing was reinforced with the announcement of the first Five-Year Plan (Pětiletý plán), set to begin on January 1, 1949, in which 22% of the total building budget was allocated for housing units, almost as much as for industry (25%), and for bridges, roads, and water supply (23%).

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34 “Kandidátky výboru Svazu architektů - Voženílek (Candidate for the board of the Architects’ Union - Voženílek), Mar. 22, 1953, UKPK, carton 637, NA.

35 References to a “housing emergency” were frequent in the early years, especially with respect to housing around Ostrava, where the government’s planned industrial expansion was being held up by a severe lack of housing for workers, both single journeymen and those workers who wanted to bring their families. See, for example, “Zřizování malých domků pro zminění bytové nouze (Setting up small houses to mitigate the housing emergency)” Mar. 8, 1949, MT, carton 429, NA.

36 Základy první československé pětiletky (The Fundamentals of the First Czechoslovak Five-Year Plan) (Prague: Ministerstvo informaci a osvěty, 1948), 121. The total building budget was 176.9 billion crowns, with 39.3 billion for housing units.
failures of the building program to produce the projected number of housing units during the 1947-1948 Two-Year Plan were of critical importance in setting an agenda for the post-1948 reorganization. Although the building industry as a whole claimed to meet 66% of its Two-Year Plan targets, the housing sector had not come close to meeting their numbers for completed units by March 1948. According to State Planning Office figures, only 20% of the 61,000 anticipated units had been completed; another 69% were still under construction and 11% had not be started. This poor record was attributed primarily to an inadequate supply of building materials, a shortage of skilled labor and a lack of streamlined practices in architecture offices.

Stavoprojekt’s Objectives

Stavoprojekt and its tri-partite organizational framework of architecture, engineering and research was established to remedy these problems as quickly as possible through the standardization of working methods and documentation, the centralization of resources and information and the creation of a strong institutional hierarchy, as illustrated in its organizational scheme from late 1948. In its first

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38 “Býtová 2LP k 1.březnu 1948: Tabulky (Two-Year Plan Housing to March 1, 1948: Tables),” March 2, 1948, p.1, MT, carton 347, NA. According to these tables from the State Planning Office, the total number of new and reconstructed housing units to that point should have been 61,000 (roughly half of the 125,000 that had been announced in July 1946). Only 12,000 were completed, 7,900 of them in Slovakia where building materials were more available, most likely wood for small rural cottages. Another 42,100 were in the process of being built, but were not yet habitable.

39 For a copy of the original organizational chart in Czech, see “Organizační schema závodu: Stavoprojekt PA-100 (Organizational Scheme of the Company),” MT, carton 431, NA.
configuration, thirteen architecture ateliers and thirteen corresponding engineering offices were established in major regional centers. Specialized engineering offices for services such as surveying, cost estimation and terrain improvement, as well as for specific construction types such as steel buildings, bridges, roads, and water infrastructure, were created under the engineering administration. At the center of the new organization were the research centers, including ten divisions for investigation into methods and practices such as documentation, statics, new materials research and master planning, and the high-priority Typification and Standardization Institute (Typisační a normalisační ústav) with its thirteen departments. The Institute’s departments were dedicated to specific sectors including industry, agriculture, education, recreation, transportation and housing. No division in the system was, however, responsible for the creative aspects of design; for example, there was no department for the theory and history of design, the integration of the fine arts or aesthetics, all topics that would become important in 1950. Research centers had been central to the BAPS platform in 1945, although they did not succeed in establishing them at that time. Notably, Jiří Vozenílek led the group’s committee on this topic while still in Zlín and would head one of the institutes after 1951.40

Stavoprojekt’s official inauguration was celebrated in Prague on January 7-8, 1949. The meeting provided an opportunity for the new leadership to present their

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40 “Memorandum Bloku architektonických pokrokových spolků o nutnosti organisace práce v oboru architektury, plánování a stavebnictví (Statement of the Block of Progressive Architectural Organizations about the necessity of organizing work in the fields of architecture, planning and construction),” Nov. 22, 1945, ÚKPK, carton 636, NA.
Fig. 2.1: Organizational scheme for Stavoprojekt (1948)
architectural agenda to an enthusiastic, but cautious audience of design professionals.

At the meeting, Director Janů proclaimed,

> It is known what kind of obstacles stood in the way of fulfilling the Two-Year Plan and what kind of difficulties had to be overcome. Most of all it has been shown that since the building industry was in private hands, it wasn’t possible to plan. The industry was far more affected by this than was accounted for in the Two-Year Plan. February brought a pay-off. The building industry was delivered into the hands of the people, it was possible to proceed to direct planning.\(^{41}\)

Janů announced emergency measures that had been taken by the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia in September including an increase in the production budget, an evaluation of the availability and distribution of building materials, and the development of a new operating plan for the building industry.\(^{42}\) For the architects and engineers of Stavoprojekt, these changes meant that their proposals were more likely to result in finished buildings, delivered on time and to their specifications.

In addition to the promise of more abundant material resources, Janů appealed to the architects’ egos by emphasizing their central position in the new system.

> It is most important for us in Stavoprojekt, that you no longer exist as just some specialists on the periphery of economic life, but that with this event you are moving into the mainstream and you hold the key to the success of the Five-Year Plan. It never used to happen that the government discussed normalization and typification of buildings or that the central planning commission was concerned with design activities, or designing at all, or that buildings in the Five-Year Plan could be provided

\(^{41}\) “Zápis l. celostátní porady vedoucích všech oddělení Stavoprojektu (Minutes of the First Nationwide Conference of the Heads of All Stavoprojekt Departments),” speech by Karel Janů, Jan. 7-8, 1949, p.1, MT, carton 431, NA. The speakers included Janů, Kroha, Nový, and Voženílek, as well as Director of the Stavoprojekt Research Centers Erich Kohn, Deputy Secretary for Building from the Central Committee of the Czechoslovak Communist Party [Comrade] Panek, Minister of Technology Emil Slechta and Director of the Institute for Standardization and Typification Karel Storch.

\(^{42}\) Ibid.
through regular planning. This means something to us. It is now our job to draw the most important conclusions from this. In this way, designers become today’s fighters and the questions of design are put into a completely new light, into a new situation that didn’t exist this way before.⁴³

Through the image of architects as “fighters” on the frontlines of the struggle to fulfill the Five-Year Plan, Janů reinforced the notion that architecture and architects would play an essential role in ‘building socialism.’⁴⁴ This appears as a calculated strategy to gain support or at least cooperation from his less enthusiastic colleagues, since even those who were unhappy with the choice of leadership and the structure of Stavoprojekt must have felt some optimism about the central role being given to “design activities.”

One of the strategies employed to smooth this transition from a studio-based architectural culture to one focused on production was to foster closer contact between architects and engineers. This strategy was implemented most clearly in the Typification and Standardization Institute, which was not only at the center of the Stavoprojekt organizational chart in representational terms, but in the nature of its mission to bring together design and industrial production. At the inauguration, Deputy Director of Stavoprojekt and Head of the Architecture Ateliers,⁴⁵ Otakar Nový stated,

Stavoprojekt must avoid one risk, that is becoming a cult of designers with a fixed orientation. In the projects that await us we will be able to

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⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ This phrase, with its architectural connotation, was one of the party’s favorite slogans. As noted in chapter three, Katerina Clark attributed this to the fundamentals of the base-superstructure model with the party literally ‘building socialism’ on the economic base. See Katerina Clark, "Socialist Realism and the Sacralizing of Space," in The Landscape of Stalinism: The Art and Ideology of Soviet Space, eds., E. A. Dobrenko and Eric Naiman (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2003), 4.

⁴⁵ “Stavoprojekt, směrnice č. 1”, Sept. 1948, p. 2, MT, carton 431, NA.
express all of our technological capacity and creative powers that we have not otherwise mastered...We must compensate for the imbalance between architectural projects and engineering projects. Engineering offices are just as important as the architectural ateliers and [engineers] should feel just as at home within Stavoprojekt as architects.46

The ideal of architecture as the marriage of creative architects and practical engineers had the potential to enhance the overall quality of design work by creating lines of communication between these disciplines. As discussed in chapter one, this goal was not far from the interwar ideals of Czech “scientific functionalism” or the Bauhaus under the leadership of Hannes Meyer. The concept of dialectical materialism was also at play again in the relationship between “technological capacity” and “creative powers.”

The themes of rationalization, standardization and factory production were emphasized in many of the speeches. Stavoprojekt Director Jiří Voženílek stated,

The achievement of the building industry depends first and foremost on how quickly it succeeds in reorganizing the scattered debris of handicraft businesses into enterprises governed by planning and the method of industrial production.47

Nový added,

In order to transition the building industry from handicraft to production, we must transform our building sites into factories...The productivity of industry above all guarantees the organization of work and preparation for production. Stavoprojekt is entrusted with the preparation for building production from the basic concept all the way to the last detail.”48

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46 “Zázpis 1. celostátní porady vedoucích všech oddělení Stavoprojektu (Minutes of the First Nationwide Conference of the Heads of All Stavoprojekt Departments),” p.27, speech by Otakar Nový, MT, carton 431, NA.

47 Ibid., p.18, speech by Jiří Voženílek.

48 Ibid., p.25, speech by Otakar Nový.
Not only were architects being praised and encouraged from within the profession, but by representatives from the ministries and the Communist Party, who reinforced the state’s commitment to the building industry. Comrade Pánek, the Deputy Secretary for Building from the Central Committee, reminded the attendees of their importance.

Because the building work is so considerable, it is necessary in the Five-Year Plan to find new methods of production and work. As it has already been said, successful fulfillment of the Five-Year Plan depends on production. That is why much attention is also turned towards the building industry. That is why during the last meeting of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, General Secretary Slánský said that we must devote an exceptional amount of attention to the building industry.⁴⁹

For the architects and engineers of the nascent Stavoprojekt system, most of whom were already Communist Party members, a sense of purpose could be found in this rhetoric about being at the center of the socialist struggle. As the language suggests, however, from the perspective of the Communist Party, the building industry was the object of reform, not architecture, design or the figure of the architect per se.

Architektura ČSR was the most public venue for promoting and reinforcing this agenda within the ranks of Stavoprojekt’s architecture departments. The 1949 volume of the journal can be described as a Stavoprojekt primer for architects, reiterating and expanding upon the ideas put forward at the inauguration. The first double-issue focused on the proposals of the Typification and Standardization Institute’s Department for Housing with a few examples from the Department for Industry; subsequent issues in 1949 were dedicated to education (no. 3-4), exhibition design and competitions (no. 5-

⁴⁹ Ibid., p.7, speech by Comrade Pánek. This the same Slánský who as General Secretary of the Communist Party would be tried, convicted and executed for treason in 1952.
In the issues on culture and healthcare, prominent sections were devoted to competition projects submitted by teams working at regional architecture ateliers.

The architectural competition, a long-standing practice in the profession dating back to the early modern period in Europe, became a favorite tool of the administration as part of their campaign to transition architecture from an individual to a collective endeavor. The Two-Year Plan competitions for Lidice, Litvínov and Prague, showed that architects were still committed to the format. After 1948, teams of architects under the banner of their regional Stavoprojekt ateliers, would participate in nationwide design competitions for projects such as hospitals and administrative buildings. (Fig. 2.4) The journal became the primary vehicle for sharing these competition entries, since in each case only one project would be selected as the winner, and in many cases the buildings were never built. Emphasizing the competition format was also part of a larger effort to institute worker competitions in Czechoslovakia on the Soviet model of the Stakhanovite (šúderník in Czech, shockworker in English); a movement to identify and reward workers who could substantially exceed their target productivity levels in a given task, including the design and production of buildings.\(^{51}\) Like their counterparts in

\(^{50}\) Architektura ČSR 8, no. 3-4 (1949): 65-128; Architektura ČSR 8, no. 5-6 (1949): 129-184; Architektura ČSR 8, no. 7-8 (1949): 185-240; Architektura ČSR 8, no. 9-11 (1949): 241-324; Architektura ČSR 8, no. 12 (1949): 325-358.

\(^{51}\) Stakhanovism was named for a Soviet miner named Stakhanov who was said to have out-produced his compatriots in the mines by five times in one day. Starting in the early 1950s, competitions, often staged or falsified, showcased the impossible feats of workers as their production levels far exceeded their professional norms. These workers, usually well-connected to local party bosses who would help rig the competitions, were rewarded with perks such as preferential housing assignments, large bonuses and access to restricted goods. We know that architects participated in these competitions from the projects illustrated in Architektura ČSR and
industry who would be rewarded for laying more bricks or digging out more coal, architects would be given a short, fixed period of time to produce a project and judges would award prizes to the best entries.

Fig. 2.2: First page of theme issue on social welfare from Architektura ČSR (1949)

Fig. 2.3: Illustration from theme issue on agriculture from Architektura ČSR (1949)

from statements like that of a Brno architect, who reported at an executive meeting that “the atelier already put up three shockworkers in socialist competitions.” See “Stručný záznam diskuse porady dne 7.1.1949 (Brief Summary of the Discussion at the Executive Meeting on Jan. 7, 1949)”, p. 31, MT, carton 431, NA.
The Eight Principles

The first issue of *Architektura ČSR* in 1949 included a dedication page. (Fig. 2.5)

Under the heading of “Czechoslovak Building Works, National Enterprise – Stavoprojekt,” a large photograph showed a room full of smiling men in workers’ clothing, many with their hands raised in overwhelming support of a vote in progress. The caption under the photograph read, “our builder (*náš stavebník*),” a word in the singular that evoked a collective ideal in this context. A short dedication followed,

This issue is dedicated to the new objectives of architects in the Five-Year Plan and the work of the Czechoslovak Building Works, National Enterprise – Stavoprojekt. It was put together with the cooperation of all of the employees of Stavoprojekt and expresses the ideas, aspirations, working methods and results up to this point of those architects, engineers, structural engineers and technicians, who have found in Stavoprojekt the necessary instrument for the fulfillment of the Five-Year Plan.\(^5^2\)

\(^{52}\) *Architektura ČSR* 8, no.1-2 (1949): 3.
In a series of articles by the central figures from Stavoprojekt, including Janů, Voženílek, Kroha and representatives of the research centers, the production goals, operating principles and research methods of this far-reaching new organization were articulated.\textsuperscript{53} Housing was foregrounded in the examples, indicating the central role of this sector in the administration’s mission. The centerpiece of the issue was a 35-page

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{dedication_page}
\caption{Dedication page of first issue of vol. 8 from \textit{Architektura ČSR} (1949)}
\end{figure}

article by Erich Kohn, Director of the Typification and Standardization Institute; Karel Storch, Director of the Research Centers; and Miloslav Wimmer of the Institute’s Department of Housing, which outlined what they called the “productive and technical means” to achieve architecture’s “new objectives.” In well-illustrated short essays, eight guiding principles for the new building industry were proposed: “typification;” “modularization;” “industrialization;” “prefabrication;” “a production plan for building;” “an interdependence of design and implementation;” “research;” and “documentation.”

Typification was the establishment of types to reduce the variety and cost of buildings while improving the overall quality of the projects. Modularization, defined as the adoption of a standard building module for elements such as “bricks, masonry blocks, reinforced concrete columns and beams, formwork, sheathing, [and] fixtures,” which would provide significant economic and time-saving benefits. Industrialization should “economize building, make it faster and more precise in its production, eliminate seasonal building work, better utilize the labor force, equipment and machinery.”

Prefabrication, the mechanization of work that had previously been done by craftsmen, could improve the quality of building materials, reduce waste, allow for more economic

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54 He had been a member of the delegation to Scandinavia the previous year, see chapter one.
56 Ibid.
58 Ibid.: 14.
transportation of materials to building sites, and most importantly, allow for work to continue under all weather conditions.\textsuperscript{60} A production plan for building, because “we have two very important factors working against us: the need for apartments and places to work and the need for raw materials for building from the domestic or foreign market.”\textsuperscript{61} Through planning, the available financial and material resources could be utilized to their fullest potential.

The authors stressed the need for the interdependence of design and implementation. This required designers “to be familiar with the constant variability of the situation with materials, production and labor and not to allow their designs to exceed the given limits and conditions.”\textsuperscript{62} In statements reminiscent of Teige and PAS in the 1930s, research was posited as one of the fundamental “theses” of Stavoprojekt and its research centers were dedicated to “a new conception of technical work, that will not be based on tradition, on the inertia of accepted knowledge, nor will it be uncritically enthralled by constructivist playthings, but it will be supported by the given reality.”\textsuperscript{63}

The final principle was improving the clarity and availability of documentation. This had two parts, professional documentation such as “plans, details and working programs” and architectural literature, “domestic and foreign technical literature and journals… available in original form, in translation, photocopies, and for literature that is not available, on microfilm;” every architecture atelier would have their own

\textsuperscript{60} Ibid.: 22-25.

\textsuperscript{61} Ibid.: 26-27.

\textsuperscript{62} Ibid.: 28.

\textsuperscript{63} Ibid.: 29.
specialists’ library and microfilm viewer. The last fifteen pages of the article illustrated new projects from the Department of Housing at the Standardization and Typification Institute, including electrical wiring diagrams, kitchen and bathroom designs, a variation on Karel Janů’s prefabricated “living core,” and a genealogy of some of the earliest housing prototypes, which will be discussed later in the chapter.

These eight principles reinforced Stavoprojekt’s overarching agenda by expressing conceptual guidelines in a precise language that connected the ideals of the regime with the everyday practices of architects in the atelier. For example, the topic of typification opened with a critical reference to the interwar ‘machine-aesthetic’, defining a new boundary for discussions of art and beauty.

If we speak about standardization, normalization, typification and modularization, we do not want to be concerned only with the technical side of building and to create from these processes art for art’s sake. We are not looking for the beauty of these processes, the beauty of the machine, because beauty is in their utilization.

Like Karel Janů, who tried to deflect criticism about the loss of artistic freedom and individual responsibility that would come with the Stavoprojekt system, these authors

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64 Ibid.: 30-31.

65 Interest in machines came in many architectural forms from the steel constructions of the Russian Constructivists, to the ‘moderne’ of American Art-Deco and the famous Le Corbusier statement that “a house is a machine for living in.” As discussed in chapter one, Czech Functionalists were part of an international network of local avant-garde groups working in a style derived partly from the Russians and influenced substantially by the work of Le Corbusier in France. In the postwar period, a critique of the perceived interwar interest in style over function was one of the underpinnings of the Marxist-Leninist attacks on ‘bourgeois’ interwar architecture. For more information on Czech functionalism, see Rostislav Svácha, Sona Ryndová and Pavla Pokorná, eds., Forma sleduje vědu/ Form Follows Science (Prague: Jaroslav Fragner Gallery, 2000); Karel Teige, Modern Architecture in Czechoslovakia and Other Writings (Los Angeles, CA: Getty Research Institute, 2000). Jean-Louis Cohen’s introduction in the Teige book is particularly useful.

66 Kohn, Storch and Wimmer, "Výrobní a technické prostředky (Productive and Technical Means),” 12.
argued in strong terms that architects must accept the reduction in choice and variety that would accompany the “transition from handicraft to production” in order to improve overall architectural quality.

In the building industry, we want to increase the quantity of products and reduce their cost, so that they can be more available everywhere and useful to everyone. Higher quantities, cost reduction and cheaper goods are possible by selecting more progressive stages of production than come with work done by hand, thus through industrialization. Industrialization necessitates a restriction in the kinds of things manufactured and their variety. Following from this, mass production and an improvement in the quality of goods is possible.\(^67\)

According to them, three “social factors” would determine how people accepted these changes: “the society as a whole,” “the individual consumer” and the potentials of “production.”\(^68\)

They maintained that disappointing previous experiences with large-scale production, such as the industrial workers’ settlement that was used as an illustration in the article, did not indicate the value of typification in the socialist system. (Fig. 2.6) This would be the first time that the “society as a whole” and the “consumer” would influence the “typification process,”\(^69\) rather than the “corporations” that had the upper-hand under capitalism.\(^70\) Using the example of clustered cottages in the Czech and Slovak countryside as a historical model for what they called “natural typification,” (Fig. 2.7) the authors sought to accelerate the process by “artificial” means.

\(^{67}\) Ibid.

\(^{68}\) Ibid.

\(^{69}\) Ibid.: 13.

\(^{70}\) Ibid.: 12.
Fig. 2.6: Industrial workers' settlement under capitalism from *Architektura ČSR* (1949)

Fig. 2.7: Clustered cottages in the Slovak countryside from *Architektura ČSR* (1949)
We are initiating an artificial typification process. We do not know the capacity of any type to form the relations of a socialist society. We do not even know the typical methods of production that could be suited for the given material preconditions. We were brought up and we were used to working with the technical circumstances and materials that were required by the relations of a private builder to the working methods of private enterprise. We want and we must find that method of production which could correspond to the new circumstances in the building industry, the new labor force and the new methods of production.\footnote{Ibid.: 13.}

In section two on modularization, illustrated with examples from Sweden, the United States, Japan and the Soviet Union, the authors put forward two potential scales of modularization, the module of the plan and the module of construction. (Fig. 2.8) Based on the requirements of program and the rationality of the drawing scale, the module of the plan was determined by the “economy of work or the economy of materials or the economy of spatial arrangements or the variability of the floor plan,”\footnote{Ibid.} in each case, the result was a different ideal scale. In order to restrict these multiple possibilities, the module of construction was proposed as a better option.

Unlike the module of the plan which was based on numeric abstraction and functional assumptions, the module of construction was smaller, more flexible and more precise. It was determined by the demands of the materials and the necessities of production.

If one considers the module as a specific scale, which sets the degree of choice, it brings one to a certain understood and restricted sequence that has its own regularity. This follows from the fundamental principle of every construction, from the economy of production, materials,
construction and work, from the economy of every building, from the smallest construction scale – from the module of construction.\textsuperscript{73}

This approach to the question was not novel. Czechoslovakia had been a part of an international discussion about the benefits of modularization as early as the 1920s; in fact, the Bafa Corporation had been one of the pioneers in the field.\textsuperscript{74} Like their international colleagues, the authors proposed a module of 10cm for Stavoprojekt.

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.8\textwidth]{figure.png}
\caption{Japanese module of the floor mat from \textit{Architektura ČSR} (1949)}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{73} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{74} See chapter five for more on the role of Bafa in the history of modularization and prefabrication.
This was determined by a fraction of the most common building element, the 30cm brick, and similar studies undertaken during war in the USSR, Sweden, France and America, where independent of each other they came to the same construction module, 10cm."

This is the only section of the article accompanied by a dissenting opinion. In a text inserted into the article entitled “Comments on the Question of Modularization,” Stavoprojekt director Jiří Voženílek argued that the purpose of modularization was to “make it possible to put up buildings in the largest number of variations with minimal acquisition and transportation costs.” For him, concerns about restrictions on function or a desire to express “architectural rules,” had no influence on the determination of the module. He objected to what he saw as Kohn, Storch and Wimmer’s supposition that there was a “basic contradiction between the construction and the plan module.” He argued, instead, that adherence to a well-chosen dimension expanded the opportunity for variation and the ability of the system to adapt to specific programmatic needs.

The dimensions of the fundamental module do not restrict the dimensions of the space in so far as they could substantially influence the course of ordinary functional processes, because a larger number of variants are possible. If we have to decide, for example, on the width of the wall panels for the construction of a prefabricated house, it is not possible to think only about the construction particularities of those panels, but one must also consider the spatial arrangement that results from the specific dimension.

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75 Kohn, Storch and Wimmer, "Vyrobni a technické prostředky (Productive and Technical Means)," 15.
76 Voženílek, "Poznámkynky k otázce modulace (Comments on the Question of Modularization)," 16.
77 Ibid.
78 Ibid.
Voženílek agreed that as the basic element of construction, at the time, the 30cm brick should remain an important determinant. Starting with a module between 10cm and 15cm to account for the size of standard elements such as tiles, he argued that “it is, however, a mistake to consider 30cm as the basic module. Such a number is only the smallest shared multiple of the basic modules of 10 and 15cm. Without needing to elaborate further, the dimensions of brick construction show that the smallest increment for using all of the bricks is 15cm.” With this statement, Voženílek compressed a significant philosophical disagreement about the nature of architectural industrialization into a discussion about centimeters and bricks, bringing the argument from the realm of political idealism to the necessities of architectural practice in a language that was understandable to his audience.

In addition to the implications of this strategy to appeal to architects on their own terms, this exchange was significant for other reasons. First, based on the rejection by Voženílek and the three authors of any notion of decorative style, architects’ fears that Stavoprojekt would “only mechanically put forward the concepts of functional building methods,” rather than “valuing their work as something creative,” had already become reality in 1949. This disagreement about the function of the module, in which the three authors suggested that the module was best understood as a construction

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79 Ibid. To insure strong walls, brick courses are staggered. Each brick overlaps with one-half of the two bricks in the course below. This places the mortar seam in the center of the brick and makes the half-brick or 15cm, the natural dimension. Voženílek pointed out that with a module of 10cm, it would be possible to waste large amounts of brick if 1/3 or 2/3 of a brick were needed to finish corners or at window openings.

80 “Navrh veřejného prohlášení (Proposal for a Public Proclamation),” April 7, 1948, p.2, ÚKPK, carton 636, NA.
dimension and Voženílek countered that it was a space-making tool that facilitated construction, proved that the discourse among the leadership had moved beyond any possible engagement with questions of style or form. The only realm left for “creativity” was in the imaginative use of the module; a design restriction that must have felt “mechanical” to many of Stavoprojekt’s architects.

Second, this was a clear indication that there were disagreements within the leadership circles of Stavoprojekt. Rather than printing Voženílek’s essay in place of the section written by Kohn, Storch and Wimmer, the editors allowed for substantive dialogue on the journal’s pages by juxtaposing the texts. This was one of many examples where the top-down image of architecture being controlled by directives from the Communist Party or by disconnected leaders who answered to the political elite, does not fit. Third, there was a surprisingly willingness to think independently from the Soviet Union in these comments. In arguing against the logic of his colleagues and the “similar studies” in countries that supported the 10cm module, Voženílek was indicating that the Soviet Union had adopted a flawed building module and that Czechoslovakia should not follow its lead.

As will be discussed in later chapters, this autonomy would not last; by 1950, the relationship to the Soviet Union would change and Czech and Slovak architects would be expected to follow the Soviet “model.” It is important, however, to recognize that the foundation of Stavoprojekt occurred at a time when Czechoslovakia was looking to international standards of practice in capitalist and socialist countries, as well as its own history of innovation in the building industry, to determine what its socialist design
sector should look like. The Czechoslovak Building Works and Stavoprojekt were, therefore, not institutional copies of a Soviet model as historians have assumed.

The Bat'a Legacy

The fourth and most far-reaching aspect of this exchange centers on the legacy of the Bat'a Corporation in the formation of the postwar building industry. As discussed in chapter one, Jiří Voženílek assumed the directorship of Stavoprojekt after leaving his position as Director of the Building Department at the nationalized Bat'a Corporation in Zlín. The connection to Bat'a was essential in understanding Voženílek's vision for the new architecture and the root of the Czechoslovak Building Works and Stavoprojekt institutional models. His experiences in Zlín and familiarity with the 'Bat'a system,' informed many of the viewpoints that he promoted as Director, including his vigorous defense of the module as the basic space-making element for building.

Zlín had a long history of innovative, high-quality design that was possible through the resources of the Bat'a Corporation. The city was built almost entirely by the corporation using a style derived from the industrial aesthetic of its large factory complex.81 Tomáš Baťa was a strong supporter of modern architecture. For example, Jan Kotěra, one of the great early Czech modern architects, built a villa for the family in 1911 and completed a master plan for the town in 1918, although only a small residential

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neighborhood was built. In the 1920s and 1930s, the Baťa corporation recruited a group of talented young architects to work in the company’s Building Department. František Gahura, a native of Zlín and student of Kotěra and Jože Plečník in Prague, joined the office in 1923 after Gahura’s university thesis project was chosen for the new town hall built the same year. Vladimír Karfík, who had worked for Le Corbusier, Holabird & Root, and Frank Lloyd Wright, arrived in 1930.

Taking the lead from his American counterparts in shoe-manufacturing towns such as Endicott and Johnson City in New York State, where Baťa saw new reinforced concrete factory buildings during a visit in 1919, Zlín’s post-1920 buildings were designed on a standard industrial construction module; in this case, approximately 20 x 20 feet. Buildings on this module included new factories, office buildings, schools, a department store, hotel, cinema, a memorial to Tomáš Baťa and a skyscraper headquarters by Karfík. (Fig. 2.9-2.10) This practice survived beyond the Second World War; Jiří Voženílek’s own Collective House in Zlín, built between 1947 and 1951, was based on the 20 x 20 module. František Gahura, spoke about the importance of this “standard”:

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84 See chapter five.

85 See [Zarecor], "Garden Cities and Company Towns: Tomáš Baťa and the Formation of Zlín, Czechoslovakia," 33.
The main influence of Zlín’s appearance has been the factory building itself. It is the ‘leitmotif’ of Zlín’s architecture. It is repeated in numerous variations in all structures, serving public purposes, schools, dormitories, a community house, a social welfare institute, etc. The architect’s imagination had to develop all layouts starting from this structural, industrial standard.\textsuperscript{86}

So in reading Kohn, Storch and Wimmer’s assessment of the dual nature of modularization, Voženílek drew on his experiences from Zlín, where the module was embraced for its economy and flexibility and seen as an integral part of design at every scale.\textsuperscript{87}

The second legacy of Baťa was a corporate business model that would be appropriated in this new context. The Baťa Corporation was of the world’s largest shoe companies in the 1930s with offices in Europe, Asia and North America by 1935. The company’s colorful founder, Tomáš Baťa, who was killed flying his own private plane, derived many of his business practices from his extensive knowledge of the American shoe business. His contribution to business history was the ‘Baťa system,’ which can be described as the simulation of market conditions inside a single corporation.\textsuperscript{88} In the Baťa case, 250 autonomous departments interacted with each other as separate units; buying and selling materials from each other at competitive prices; issuing invoices; and opening bidding to outside firms if they wanted to try and underbid the in-house

\textsuperscript{86} Šlapeta, \textit{Baťa: architektura a urbanismus, 1910-1950}, 105.

\textsuperscript{87} For more on Voženílek and Baťa, see chapter five.

Fig. 2.9: Commercial zone in Zlín with Gahura’s Department Store in the center (1929) from the collection of the State District Archive in Zlín

Fig. 2.10: Collective House in Zlín (author’s photo, 2004)
department. Employees were compensated for both their own work and the collective work of the unit, creating an incentive program and community atmosphere that proved successful in increasing productivity. The building office, led by Gahura from 1923-34, Karfik from 1934-46 and Voženílek from 1946-48, was one of these units, as were manufacturers of building materials such as concrete and bricks.\(^9\) (Fig. 2.11)

Although not articulated in this way at the time, the Baťa organization resembled the hierarchy established between the Czechoslovak Building Works and its 100 constituent enterprises, including Stavoprojekt. When Voženílek was brought to Prague to “organize the socialist design sector” on the Zlín model, this was a twofold mandate.\(^9\)

First, as the head of the only design office nationalized before 1948, he had the knowledge to integrate the individual culture of the atelier with the collective work ideal of the socialist system. Second, the institutional relationship between the Baťa architecture office and the larger corporation needed to be replicated in the context of Stavoprojekt and the Czechoslovak Building Works. Voženílek was uniquely qualified to understand the multiple levels of integration between the architectural ateliers, the research centers and the building industry as a whole.\(^9\)

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\(^9\) “Kandidátka – Voženílek,” carton 637, ÚKPK, NA. Despite this background, Voženílek wanted to move beyond the Baťa model of an umbrella organization with autonomous units. According to Voženílek’s 1953 profile, by this time he “strongly defended the position that this organization should be, as it was stipulated during its founding, freed from its union with the Czechoslovak Building Works.”
This link from Baťa to Stavoprojekt was not only in the skills or ideas that Voženílek brought to the job, but there were real continuities in the institutions. In an agreement between the Czechoslovak Buildings Works and the Baťa Corporation drafted on March 23, 1948, the Department for Typification and Standardization of Industrial and Residential Buildings (*Oddělení pro typisaci a normalisaci průmyslových a bytových staveb*) in the Czechoslovak Building Works was established in Prague under the direction of the Baťa design office in Zlín, headed at that time by Jiří Voženílek. As Otakar Nový would later argue, this joint venture, which would last for six months, was the kernel of Stavoprojekt itself. There were also building research institutes within Baťa that would later be transferred to Stavoprojekt. This illustrates the local roots of the

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92 "Dopis: 20.5.48 od Baťa, Zlín do Ministerstvo Techniky (Letter: May 20, 1948 from Baťa, Zlín to the Ministry of Technology)," MT, carton 429, NA.

93 Nový, "Čtvrtstoleté jubileum založení Stavoprojektu (The Twenty-Fifth Anniversary of the Establishment of Stavoprojekt)," 486. Nový wrote that the office opened on April 5, 1948.
organization and its dependence on knowledge, personnel and infrastructure inherited from Baťa and its unique form of capitalism.

**Typification and Standardization**

With an experienced administration, a working agenda and defined strategies to successfully fulfill the goals of the first Five-Year Plan, Stavoprojekt to begin its work in earnest in early 1949. The final part of this chapter will consider how the system functioned in these first few years and examine the buildings types, namely the T-series, that were developed by the Typification and Standardization Institute’s Department of Housing in response to the building ‘emergency.’ The problems were significant enough that the state administration itself suffered from a lack of available housing for its employees, who included members of the regional, county and municipal governments.

For example, a 1948 report from the Ministry of Technology to the Regional National Committee in Bohemia, the most populous of the three regions in Czechoslovakia, established that 11,630 apartments were needed for state employees and their families and that an additional 13,370 families lived in unsuitable accommodations. In an attempt to “gradually alleviate,” but not eliminate the problem, the state commissioned 6,500 units to be distributed among the region’s 132 cities and towns.4 In most cases, the locality was allocated 55-60% of the units they had requested, although even fewer

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4. “Zpráva o bytové výstavbě pro státní zaměstnance v Čechách dle 5LP (Report on housing for state employees in Bohemia during the Five-Year Plan),” [1948], undated, p. 1-2, MT, carton 267, NA. The units were scheduled to be built over the course of Five-Year Plan; 16% in 1949, 17% in 1950; 19% in 1951; 23% in 1952; 25% in 1953. This did not necessarily mean that any housing was actually built, only that money was allocated in the budget for the construction.
would have actually being built by 1953 given the problems that persisted in the
building industry.\textsuperscript{95} The need for housing, therefore, affected all facets of the economy.

Stavoprojekt’s architecture ateliers and research centers were charged with
developing a series of housing types that could alleviate this shortage as quickly and
cheaply as possible, while retaining an acceptable level of architectural quality and
modern conveniences. When it was established, Stavoprojekt inherited the management
of the still incomplete Model Housing Developments in Kladno, Most and Ostrava. One
of its earliest tasks was to complete the units already under construction at those sites
and to reconsider the plans for further stages of construction. The Model Housing
Development in Ostrava had been planned as a large development with apartment
houses, schools and a town square with a department store, house of culture, health
clinic, post office, butcher and grocery store. By 1948, only 15 apartment blocks out of
more than 70 that had been included in the original master plan were under
construction and none of the civic buildings.\textsuperscript{96} Each association faced a similar problem
and the early phases of all three Model Housing Developments would be under
construction for at least a decade.\textsuperscript{97}

\textsuperscript{95} Ibid., p. 3-7. For example, Prague had requested 4,130 units and was allocated 2,450; Liberec
200/108; Most 120/66; Kladno 50/30; Dobruška 20/12. Given the changes in the administrative
structure and reporting methods, it is impossible to know how many of the 6,500 units were ever
built. After 1948, numbers were reported by region rather than by individual towns and cities.

\textsuperscript{96} Karel Pilá\v{r}, "Výstavba vzorných sídlišť a jejich poslání (The Construction of the Model Housing
Developments and Their Mission)," \textit{Architektura ČSR} 7, no. 6-7 (1948): 202. In 1951, Jiří Kroha
was brought in to redesign the master plan and the town center. Many of the remaining housing
units were then built in a Czech socialist realist style, for more on Kroha’s work, see chapter four.

\textsuperscript{97} See chapters one and four for more on these developments. In Kladno, twenty 15-unit buildings
were started during the Two-Year Plan, the neighborhood was finished in the 1960s. The number
of buildings started in Most is not clear, but construction continued through the 1950s. See Josef
Havlíček, \textit{Návrhy a stavby} (Projects and Buildings) (Prague: Státní nakladatelství technické
Although the system for delivering and financing the projects had to adjust to the new system, the fundamental mandate of the three associations – to build modest, comfortable housing units for workers in key industries – did not change. This created a conflict between the associations and the Czechoslovak Building Works. Since the Model Housing Development units were designed during the Two-Year Plan to individual specifications and budgets, they did not fall within the guidelines being set for new standardized housing construction; instead, they were grouped under the label of ‘atypical’ by the Standardization and Typification Institute. Compounding the problem were budget over-runs. When the program failed to deliver the promised units by 1948, budget forecasts to complete the project went up and additional materials were hard to come by for projects that had not been anticipated in the first Five-Year Plan.

This frustration was evident in the discussions at association gatherings in each city. For example, at a committee meeting of the Association for the Construction of the Model Housing Development in Kladno on December 22, 1949, tempers flared as representatives from the Czechoslovak Building Works, local enterprises and the ministries argued over where to place blame for the failure to produce more units. It came out during the meeting that the Czechoslovak Building Works had published newspaper articles claiming that the 110% of plan for the housing settlement had been fulfilled, even though the Association knew that the correct number was 53% – 126 units as of December 22. A local engineer working on the project expressed his disgust that

literatury, 1964), 70-77; Jiří Hruža, "Sidliště na Mostecku (The Housing Developments of the Most Region),“ Architektura ČSR 17, no. 2 (1958): 62-63. In Ostrava, the civic center was never completed. In the 1980s, a smaller restaurant and office building was built in place of the hotel originally planned for the site.
representatives of the Czechoslovak Building Works had even been invited to the meeting. He remarked:

Based on the quality of the employees, how things progressed over at the housing development, it is understandable that the Czechoslovak Building Works’ plan was not fulfilled, but why was the public informed so incorrectly, when it is easy to see if the plan was fulfilled. The Czechoslovak Building Works sent us a letter in which they pointed out that if we didn’t sign a binding agreement with them, we wouldn’t have the legal or moral legitimacy to challenge them on their obligations.\footnote{\textit{Zápis 13.schuze výboru Spolku pro výstavbu vzorného sídliště, konané dne 22.prosince 1949 v domě oddechu SO v Kladně (Minutes of the 13th committee meeting of the Association for the Construction of the Model Housing Settlement, Dec. 22, 1949 at the SO Recreational Center in Kladno)}, p. 1, MT, carton 350, NA.}

There were complaints that costs would have been lower if local craftsman had been employed to do the work. A representative of the Czechoslovak Building Works replied that the association in Kladno “did not have a positive view of national enterprises, they didn’t even pay their invoices properly.”\footnote{Ibid., 2} The same engineer replied that “the national enterprise used deceptive tricks to steal money.”\footnote{\textit{Zápis 13.schuze...}, 2.} The discussion eventually returned to the question of the housing units. An engineer from the Czechoslovak Building Works reminded his colleagues that the demands for fulfilling the plan would increase in 1950, “in Ostrava, they should have built 6,000 homes by 1950 – how should they do this if at this point they can’t even finish 300?”\footnote{Ibid., 3.}
Similar concerns were voiced at meeting of the association in Ostrava, where the political pressure to deliver units was even more intense. Common complaints cited a lack of building materials and a shortage of labor. The association sent repeated requests to the Czechoslovak Building Works for assistance, however, the projects remained behind schedule and over budget. By 1950, the level of frustration with the poor management hit a fever pitch. Three years into the project, many housing blocks lacked basic necessities like central heating, proper attic insulation or lighting.

According to one resident,

The electrical work is very negligent. It is not only that many already-occupied apartments don’t have enough fixtures, it’s that the occupants cannot get light in all of the shared spaces, mainly there are no fixtures in any of the stairways or basement. Practically the whole housing development, with the exception of the apartments, is completely unlit in the evening and at night. This is a very uncomfortable situation for the occupants if we consider that employees of the Czechoslovak Building Works live in the housing development with Roma, who wander around and harass the residents, particularly in the evening hours around the public areas of the settlement and houses, especially the basements. In any case, this awakens a certain fear among the residents of the development.

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102 See for example, “Výstavba vzorného sídliště – informace o provádění nátěrů (The construction of the model housing settlement – information on painting),” May 19, 1948, carton 351, MT, NA. In this letter, representatives from the Association wrote to the Ministry of Technology to say that they could only get white paint, which was not proposed for the residential interiors. They angrily stated with that the name “model” for these settlements was inappropriate.

103 See for example, “Výstavby vzorného sídliště – provádění jeho výstavby (The construction of the model housing settlements – executing the construction),” August 31, 1949, carton 351, MT, NA.

104 “Zápis o schůzi představenstva Spolku pro výstavbu vzorného sídliště v Ostravě konané dne 23. srpna 1950 v úřadovně předsedy KNV v Ostravě s. Arnoštů Matyška (Minutes of the Meeting of the Board of Directors of the Association for the Construction of the Model Housing Settlement in Ostrava, Aug. 23, 1950 in the Office of the President of the Regional National Committee in Ostrava, comrade Arnošt Matyšek),” MT, carton 351, NA.
Under these less-than-ideal conditions, the Model Housing Developments were a constant reminder of the failure of the Two-Year Plan and the challenge to make improvements as quickly as possible in order to keep up with the planning targets.

The T-series

In establishing Stavoprojekt with its tri-partite hierarchy, eight “productive and technical means” and as an integrated unit of the Czechoslovak Building Works with its materials distribution system, the architectural leadership hoped to avoid the pitfalls that had derailed the Model Housing Development program. During the first two years of Stavoprojekt, the primary agenda of the Standardization and Typification Institute and its Department of Housing was the restriction of potential designs to a limited number of types. The product of these initial investigations was the T-series, six housing types for use in all projects across the country; the number would increase to eight in 1951. With all of these problems, this was the logical next step in the process of industrialization if the building sector wanted to fulfill its planning quotas. As Kohn, Storch and Wimmer illustrated, the consensus among the technocrats in the administration was that only the reduction of choice would lead to success in this regard; creative concerns had to be sacrificed to this larger goal.

Czechoslovakia’s confidence in typification was unrivaled in Europe. A chart published in Architektura ČSR in 1950 showed that within a group that included Poland, Hungary, the Soviet Union, Denmark, Sweden, Norway and Switzerland, Czechoslovakia was working with the fewest number of housing types for both family
houses and apartment buildings. (Fig. 2.12) For example, Sweden had six commonly-used apartment building footprints, Poland three and Czechoslovakia only one.

Although many architects within Stavoprojekt would soon see this as a negative aspect of their work, it was promoted within the public building culture at the time as a sign of progress and the success of Czechoslovakia’s transformation “from handicraft to production.”

In July 1948, the Ministry of Technology convened a working committee to decide what the square footage of the new standard housing units should be. They
began with the “basic Two-Year Plan apartment,” defined in this case as a unit with 90 square meters (970 square feet) of living space. This included a living room, two bedrooms, a “working” kitchen, pantry, bathroom and WC.105 (Fig. 2.13) The units were similar to those in Anna Friedlová’s buildings in the Ostrava Model Housing Development and the Scandinavian ‘differentiated apartments’ promoted by Karel Storch, now Director of the Stavoprojekt research institutes, although these units had no outdoor space.106 Given the immediate need for new units and the continuing shortage of building materials and skilled labor, the Ministry of Social Affairs instructed the

![Fig. 2.13: Jiří Štursa (left) and Otto Slaby (right), Plans of Two-Year-Plan apartments](image)

from *Architektura ČSR*, the caption referred to these as examples of “disregard to the principles of arrangement and to the construction economics and liberal reference terms of the Ministry of Technology,” which led to the failure to fulfill the Two-Year Plan for housing (1949)

105 “Záznam o pracovní poradě ve věci možnosti redukce stavebního programu bytů (Record of the Working Committee Considering the Possibility of Reducing the Construction Program for Housing Units),” July 21, 1948, p.1, MT, carton 431, NA. A “working kitchen (pracovní kuchyně)” was a smaller, but fully-equipped kitchen without a seating area. It is distinguished from an “eat-in-kitchen (obytně kuchyně)” and a “kitchen nook (kuchynský kout),” similar to a kitchenette.

committee to work with the initial assumption that in order to keep up with their quotas, the standard unit would need to be reduced by 40% to 53 square meters (580 square feet). The committee set some parameters for their proposals. First, the per-square-foot cost of the new living area should remain the same as the “basic Two-Year Plan apartment.” Second, any reduction in costs would have to result from an equal reduction in space and amenities. Neither a large apartment with few amenities nor a small apartment with more amenities was desirable. They vowed, instead, to find an acceptable compromise between the two.

Their suggestions included consolidating one of the bedrooms with the living room and enlarging the working kitchen to include a dining area; combining the living room with the working kitchen and keeping the two private bedrooms; using the space allotted for an entry hall as the dining room; and creating a new apartment type called the double-studio, with two larger private bedrooms and a small shared kitchen nook, bathroom and WC. This last suggestion was intended for two couples without children, two retired couples, or two single parents with one child each. The optimal size for the building was envisioned to be six units per floor accessed by three entry stairs, two apartments per landing. Despite the budget problems, the goals of the Two-Year Plan units would remain: separate sleeping spaces for parents and children; adequate

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107 Ibid.

sunshine and fresh air; and the simplification of women’s domestic duties. The design of the T-series units would incorporate many of these initial recommendations.\footnote{109} Work on standardized units was already in progress during the summer of 1948 at one of the organizations which would become part of Stavoprojekt, the joint venture between Bata and the Czechoslovak Building Works called the Department for Typification and Standardization of Industrial and Residential Buildings.\footnote{110} The decision was made at this early stage in the typification process to pursue both standardized units in apartment buildings and single-family houses; although, a preference was already emerging for the apartment types. An advisory committee on population growth at the Office of the Prime Minister (Úřad předsednictva vlády) examined this issue in detail in a report entitled “Collective Living or the Single-Family House?,” submitted for review in September 1948.\footnote{111}

According to the author, V. Dorazil, collective living offered one primary benefit, a lower per-unit cost—an equivalent amount of space and amenities could be achieved in apartment units at only 65% of the cost of a single-family house. However, with

\footnote{109}Ibid., 1-3.

\footnote{110}“Stav prací na projektech typ. obytných domů k 30.6.48 (The Status of Work on Projects for Typification of Dwelling Units up to June 30, 1948),” June 30, 1948, MT, carton 431, NA. The list shows four apartment building types and two family houses under consideration at the Bata office in Prague. There was also research on prefabricated family houses being done at a Bata Department in Zlin, see chapter five.

\footnote{111}Dorazil, V, “Kolektivní bydlení či rodinný domek? (Collective Living or the Single-Family House),” undated, sent to the Ministries on Sept. 10, 1948, pp. 1-21, MT, carton 431, NA. The report was written by the “population group” within the Commission for the National Budget and the Needs of the General Secretariat of Economic Councils at the Office of the Prime Minister (Populační skupina při komisi pro národní rozpočet a spotřebu generální sekretariát hospodářské rady při úřadu předsednictva vlády). It was submitted to the Ministry of Social Affairs’s Working Group for Residential Building and the Ministry of Technology.
reference to the example of the Netherlands, which had a high-concentration of urban homes, living in a single-family house was determined to be preferable to collective living in every other category. The house offered better hygienic conditions, a stronger defense against military attacks, space for children “to move about unsupervised ... unthreatened by the motion on city streets,” more quality family time together and rent-free living after retirement.\textsuperscript{112} The single-family house also allowed “builders to participate in the building work on their own homes,” because an important part of the program would be to allow workers to construct the houses “on their own time,” thereby providing enough units to free up as much as 20% of the construction workforce for other projects.\textsuperscript{113}

As part of the committee’s work on the issue of population growth, family size was also addressed in the report. Large families were promoted based on the conclusion that “for population growth in the country, it is necessary for each family to raise more than three children.”\textsuperscript{114} The report argued that if women were to be expected to have four or more children, it was “foolishness” to expect them to raise such a large family in an apartment, while holding down a full-time job outside of the home and saving up enough money for the needs of their new family. According to Dorazil, women who were surveyed for the report agreed that if they were to have large families and jobs, it

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{112} Ibid., 2-4, 8, 10, 17.
\item \textsuperscript{113} Ibid., 8-9.
\item \textsuperscript{114} Ibid., 17.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
was imperative that they live in a single-family house. He stated, however, that for this to happen,

...a family has to reach the point financially that a woman could have the desired number of children immediately after getting married and if the family has to struggle through a miscarriage, another such pause would not be an obstacle to further financial development. It is necessary to offer women some possibility, if need be, to contribute with her own activities to the economic well-being of her family and in these terms, her continued presence at the family hearth. And this possibility is only provided to women on a large scale through a properly-equipped single-family house. The possibility to have this house is ensured by getting married. Only a house can usher a woman back again to the duty that she has been assigned as the pivot around which the economic well-being of her family turns and a gleeful flock of rosy-cheeked children dances.115

Taking all of the arguments together, the author concluded that “we can, therefore, only reasonably solve our housing problem with the consistent and all-around preference for the well-furnished single-family house.”116

In a letter that showed the extent to which pure economics determined the architectural agenda at the time, the Ministry of Technology responded to the report with skepticism. Agreeing that “it is well-known that there is an appetite among a certain number of residents for their own single-family house, there are however, contrary to this, irrefutable benefits with collective living, mainly in so far as concerns community amenities, the relatively low cost of operation and construction.”117 Existing housing developments that contained both single-family houses and apartment blocks

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115 Ibid., 18.
116 Ibid., 20.
117 Letter from Ministerstvo techniky to Generální secretariát hospodářské rady (General Secretariat of the Economic Council),” Sept. 17, 1948, MT, carton 431, NA.
were cited as a model for future development, rather than the “all-around preference” for the single-family house. The letter cited a number of economic arguments for collective living not addressed in the report; for example, a reduction in the costs of transporting workers to outlying work sites; a decrease in lost time, tiredness and poor productivity associated with long daily commutes to work and cheaper costs for infrastructure such as water mains.\textsuperscript{118} The response also called into question some of the report’s social conclusions,

> It seems that the positives for population growth from living in single-family houses are more likely due to how the people live in the houses, that is their moral competencies (\textit{mravni zp\'usobilosti}) and appetite for family and not the house at all.\textsuperscript{119}

In the end, the recommendation was based solely on economic constraints and the question of whether or not the single-family house was better for the population was of no consequence.

Therefore, according to the imminent demands and the wishes of the builders, which average about 2:1 [in favor of apartments], it is necessary to plan for the same quota of units in apartment buildings and single-family homes that was put forward in our first proposal for units during the Five-Year Plan. Unfortunately, the well-known material situation—the need to conserve building materials and increase the number of units and the reshuffling in the wake of the economic rebuilding of the state—is temporarily forcing the requested quota of units in single-family houses to be kept down to an average of probably 3:1.\textsuperscript{120}

\textsuperscript{118} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{119} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{120} Ibid.
These “temporary” circumstances would continue to cause similar problems and, by 1951, the single-family house was only recommended “when settlements are scattered or when for technical reasons, it is not possible to design higher buildings.”

After the decision was made to pursue apartments buildings and single-family homes in a ratio of three-to-one, progress continued on defining a limited number of housing types. Within the article by Kohn, Storch and Wimmer in early 1949, the “T-series” plans first appeared, including five apartment types T1, T5 and T32, a fourplex. Each of the three- to four-story brick apartment buildings conformed to a similar rectangular footprint with a single, repeated apartment layout mirrored around three sets of entry stairs. This created three identical and six total units on each floor; just as suggested by the working committee at the Ministry of Technology the previous summer and similar to the apartments building at the Model Housing Developments in Kladno, Most and Ostrava. In addition to three or four rooms, each floor-through unit had a separate kitchen, pantry, bathroom and WC. The severe reduction in floor area that the Ministry of Technology had requested was not evident in these early types,

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121 “Zpráva o některých otázkách bytové výstavby v r. 1951 (Report on some questions about residential building in 1951)” Nov. 27, 1950, p. 7, MT, carton 429, NA.

122 Letter from Stavoprojekt to Ministerstvo techniky, Dec. 17, 1948, MT, carton 429, NA. The types, which were the final step before the proposal of the T-series, were called no. 1, no. 5, and no. 30, two apartment buildings and a fourplex house. The apartments buildings were much smaller in scale, just 6 units each as opposed to the 18-24 units in the T-series buildings, but the unit square footage was approximately the same size as what would be proposed for the T-series; 750 sq. ft for no. 1, 830 sq. ft. for no. 5; and 560 sq. ft. for the units in the duplex house, no. 30.

123 As a fourplex, a type that did not make it into the codified T-series, the T32 appears to be a further iteration of the no. 30. Plans did not survive with the letter to illustrate the no. 1, no. 5 and no. 30, so it is not possible to ascertain the connections between the two sets of floor plans beyond the square footage, see note above. Given that the prototypes built in Prague-Prosek were T1 and T5, it is possible, that no. 1 and no. 5 were the same designs, see figs. 2.16-2.18.
which had floor areas ranging from the largest T4 at 100 square meters (1,080 square feet) to the smallest T5 with only 78 square meters (840 square feet); the average among the five was in line with the Two-Year Plan type at around 90 square meters (970 square feet). Interior layouts were varied for each type, but stayed within a basic square footprint. (Fig. 2.14-2.16)
As recommended by the working committee, adjustments were made to each type in the kitchen and dining areas to achieve some spatial and programmatic variation; for example, the T1 and T3 units had small, boxy 'working' kitchens, while the T3 had a larger galley kitchen, the T4 had a 'working' kitchen with a separate dining room and the T5 had an eat-in-kitchen. In each case, the apartments had an entry hall, a space defined as the living room, a private bedroom for the parents, a separate sleeping space for the kids, a pantry and numerous closets. The basic unit of each type was adapted for varied family sizes with built-in and convertible furniture. Once again, the principles of the Scandinavian 'differentiated' apartment were evident. The apartments

Fig. 2.15: Plans for the T-series, T3/T4, graphic representations of adults and children accompany each floor plan from Architektura ČSR (1949)
Fig. 2.16: Plans for the T-series, T5/T32, graphic representations of adults and children accompany each floor plan from *Architektura ČSR* (1949)
were laid out for the larger families desired by the government; in this case, as small as three, but averaging around six people and up to very unusual family of eleven (the family size can be seen in the graphic illustration of adults and children on the plans). Therefore, the overall living space was cramped, with all of the rooms and sofas being converted to sleeping spaces at night and although the apartments followed perceived international standards, the expected density of people in the Czechoslovak units exceeded those in northern and western European countries. With the exception of one group of T1 and T5 blocks built in the Prosek neighborhood of Prague in 1948-1949, these first proposals remained on paper. Research continued, however, at the Stavoprojekt research centers. (Fig. 2.17-2.19)

The Department of Housing at the Typification and Standardization Institute took the lead in these investigations and by May 1949, they presented a codified T-series to the Ministry of Technology for implementation in 1950. Three apartment types and three single-family houses were proposed for use in all residential projects; by the end of 1950, two additional types would be added, a variation on one of the houses and a building with 2-room studio or “bachelor” apartments. The house types included the T40D and T40E, small single-family houses; T42, a duplex family-house; and T51, a row house. They were modest accommodations, ranging in size from the 47-square-meter

Fig. 2.17: T1 in Prosek from *Architektura ČSR* (1949)

Fig. 2.18: T5, as proposed on the left, (1948) as built in Prosek on the right, from *Architektura ČSR* (1949)
(510-square-foot) T40 house to the 67-square-meter (720-square-foot) T42 duplex units and the 88-square-meter (950-square-foot) T51 two-story row houses. (Fig. 2.20)

The T40’s were particularly problematic and unpopular because of their small size, lack of privacy and few amenities; unlike the other types, these small houses used stove-heating and dry toilets.125 Initially the type was designed to allow for the construction of additional living space in the attic, potentially almost doubling the floor area. In the absence of available building materials, however, this proved impossible. Due to these concerns, no T40’s were even built in Slovakia in 1951, where they had accounted for half of all new housing units in 1950.126

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126 “Zpráva o některých nedostatkách typisačních prací pro bytové stavby a návrh na opatření (Report on Some of the Deficiencies of the Work on Typification for Residential Buildings and a Proposal for Remedies),” Nov. 2, 1950, p. 1, MT, carton 429, NA. Of 5,124 units built according to the new types in Slovakia in 1950, 2,443 (48%) were T40 houses, the remaining units were 1,730 T12 apartments and 952 T42 duplex units.
Fig. 2.20: Plans for the T40 (top), T42 (middle), T51 (bottom) from Architektura ČSR (1949)
The T-series apartment buildings were simple and unadorned with traditional pitched roofs, stucco facades and boxy proportions. They lacked many of the elegant details of the projects from the era of the Two-Year Plan, such as the winter gardens in Anna Friedlová's Ostrava buildings or in the apartments at the Collective House in Litvínov. There were also few formal details such as the stepped siting of Vladimír Karfík’s brick buildings in Zlín or the bold entry portico and lobby in Litvínov.

The utilitarian T-series types included the T11 and T12, three- or four-story rectangular blocks with three front entry stairs; the T20, a rectangular block with studio apartments, double-loaded corridors and entry stairs at each end and the T60, a tower with five- to seven-stories. (Fig. 2.21) Unlike the first iteration of the T-series in the T1-T5 blocks, these apartments were significantly smaller than the 90-square-meter Two-Year Plan units, reflecting the reality of the “material situation” and the problems procuring of building materials and labor, both of which had been anticipated by the ministries the year before. Despite the obstacles, all of the T-series apartments had their own bathrooms, WC and kitchens; hot water; local or central heating; and windows on two facades to encourage good air circulation and provide enough sunlight. Each building had storage space in the basement and rooms for washing and drying clothes. The possibility of the “double-studio” apartment that appeared in early discussions was never incorporated into the final designs.

The reduction in square meters did mean that the units were less comfortable with fewer rooms and amenities; for example, instead of ‘working’ kitchens, each of the
final designs had only a kitchen nook combined with a dining area and no pantry. The largest of the three apartment designs, the T11, included the kitchen and dining area, two bedrooms, a living room and a bathroom for a total of 86 square meters (930 square feet). Up to six people would be expected to live in this apartment, however, so it was

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still not ideal or even comfortable; only a few dozen were built.\textsuperscript{128} The more common T12 units, for families up to five people,\textsuperscript{129} were even smaller with a combined kitchen and dining area, a living room with convertible couches for children to sleep on, one bedroom and a bathroom in 65 square meters (700 square feet).\textsuperscript{130} In order to reduce costs and simplify the construction process, the T11 and T12 types conformed to a two-bay construction system, creating boxy rooms and almost square floor plans.\textsuperscript{131} It was also recommended by the Ministry of Technology that the apartment buildings be built in ensembles. Although this contributed to a neighborhood atmosphere and created the possibility for green space in between, the primary reasoning behind this was to “concentrate [building activity] at a minimal number of construction sites,” thereby reducing costs.\textsuperscript{132}

Still the T-series apartments represented progress, especially in industrial areas such as Ostrava, where the new apartments provided many residents with a substantial improvement in their standard of living and quality of life. For example, mining families in the region had often lived in dire circumstances in temporary workers' colonies

\textsuperscript{128} “Zpráva o některých nedostatkách typisačních prací pro bytové stavby a návrh na opatření (Report on Some of the Deficiencies of the Work on Typification for Residential Buildings and a Proposal for Remedies),” 1.

\textsuperscript{129} Ibid.


\textsuperscript{131} “Služební oznámení: Typové plány staveb bytových pro rok 1950 (Official Announcement: Type Plans for Residential Buildings for 1950),” 6, 8. Each bay (trakt) was 13.78 feet or 4.2 meters.

\textsuperscript{132} “Po jednání s odborem 8. Věc: bytová výstavba (From the meeting with department 8 concerning residential building),” Sept. 6, 1949, MT, carton 429, NA.
without indoor plumbing or modern heating. (Fig. 2.22) Starting in 1950, T-series housing units were being built across the country; by the end of year almost 17,000 units were under construction – 6,500 were apartment units and the remainder were in small cottages usually built in mining colonies.\(^\text{133}\) This output represented over 90% of all residential construction; only 8% of new units were classified as ‘atypical’ in 1950.\(^\text{134}\)

Housing was the most successful sector in this regard, only 8% of all buildings were

Fig. 2.22: Conditions for miners’ families from Architektura ČSR (1949)

\(^{133}\)“Zpráva o některých nedostatkách typisačních prací pro bytové stavby a návrh na opatření (Report on Some of the Deficiencies of the Work on Typification for Housing Production and a Proposal for Remedies),” Nov. 2, 1950, p. 6, MT, carton 429, NA. Based on the number of total new units, the types were used as follows. Apartments: T11 = 3 rooms + kitchen + bath (.3%), T12 = 2 rooms + kitchen + bath (27.3%), T20 = 1 room + kitchen + bath (9.6%), T60 = units in 7-story tower, 2 rooms + kitchen + bath (0%). Houses: T42 = 2 room + kitchen + bath (6.3%), T40 = 1 room + kitchen + bath (48.5%), T51 = row house, 3 room + kitchen + bath (0%).

\(^{134}\)Architects did not always comply with the demand to use only the prescribed types, hence the need for the category of ‘atypical.’ The problem was widespread enough that the State Planning Office had to send memos to the Ministry of Technology in late 1949 reminding them that the law required all new construction to be done using types. See for example, “Připomínky k návrhu vyhlášky o typech bytových staveb (Remarks on the Proposed Notice about Types of Residential Buildings),” Sept. 9, 1949, MT, carton 429, NA.
typified in 1950 with a goal of 25% by 1953.\textsuperscript{135} However this can be compared favorably to the Soviet Union where Nikita Khrushchev claimed that from 1951 to 1953, only 1% of all construction in the country was done according to standardized types.\textsuperscript{136}

In 1951, the Typification and Standardization Institute began publishing a series of technical manuals called \textit{Typisační sborníky} (Typification Guides) for new building types in housing, as well as agriculture, industry and engineering. They were distributed to all Stavoprojekt offices to ensure that the new guidelines and standards were being followed nationwide.\textsuperscript{137} As a sign of the acceptance of the T-series, the guide for housing was awarded second-prize in the 1951 rankings of the best architecture and construction projects by the editorial board of \textit{Architektura ČSR}.\textsuperscript{138} The success of the T-series was in its innovative and all-encompassing approach to the standardization process itself, from construction documentation to the fabrication of materials and the on-site assembly. (Fig. 2.23-2.25) The progression from design to construction was completed through a series of coordinated steps that relied on a standard building

\textsuperscript{135} See Jiří Voženílek, "Typisace a stavitelství (Typification and the Building Industry) " \textit{Architektura ČSR} 11, no. 7-9 (1952): 270.


\textsuperscript{137} The only copy of any of these guides that survived in a library or archive is the 12-volume 1952 guide for industrial buildings at the National Library in Prague. \textit{Typisační sborník} 1952 (Typification Guide 1952), 12 vols. (Prague: Průmyslové vydavatelství, 1951-1952).

\textsuperscript{138} "Státní ceny za architekturu a stavebnictví (State Prizes for Architecture and Construction)," \textit{Architektura ČSR} 10, no. 2 (1951): 65. Since all projects were state-sanctioned at this time, it is fair to assume that the \textit{Typisační sborník} was awarded the prize based on its merits, although it is also naive to ignore the political importance of the project and the propagandistic quality of such an award.
module and mass-produced products such as bricks, reinforced concrete columns, window assemblies and interchangeable fixtures and appliances. In comparing the floor plans of a Two-Year Plan unit to the T11, the simplification of the layout was clear in the two-bay system, the centralization of all wet wall needs, and the use of built-in furniture to economize the use of space. Although these apartments were modest for large
families, they offered basic conveniences to a population faced with a severe shortage of housing. As chapters three and five will show, this utilitarian approach to design was threatened, but not erased, with the imposition of Soviet socialist realism. The first Stavoprojekt vision of socialist design would remain at the heart of the building industry for decades.

Fig. 2.24: T-series under construction in Ostrava-Poruba from the Ostrava City Archive (1954)
Fig. 2.25: Model Housing Development in Ostrava (now Ostrava-Zábřeh), T11 block from 1950-1953 after renovation, this is the front of the same building shown in the bottom photograph in fig. 2.23 (author’s photo, 2006)

Conclusion

Architectural practice started a long process of transformation when the Communist Party took control of the Czechoslovak government in 1948. The changes occurred incrementally beginning with the closure of private offices and the creation of a state-run system of architecture offices. Soon the traditional role of client was taken over by state agencies, national enterprises and local governments and the types and varieties of commissioned projects were significantly reduced. This shift has been interpreted by historians as a breaking point—the disengagement of architectural practice in Czechoslovakia, and the Eastern Bloc more generally, from its interwar avant-garde and modernist roots. This chapter argues against the model of discontinuity and proposes, instead, that socialist architecture in Czechoslovakia from 1948 to 1950 was an extension
of the agenda set by left-wing architects in the 1930s and 1940s. Although the profession was radically reshaped by the economic, social and political context of state socialism and Communist Party rule, architects generally supported many of the most extreme policies of the new administration, including the nationalization of the building industry and the consolidation of private offices into Stavoprojekt.

Despite this support, many architects and designers were profoundly disappointed by their inability to influence creative decisions within the new system. Many within Stavoprojekt’s ranks had been a part of an architectural culture as diverse, imaginative and innovative as any in Europe in the 1930s. Concerns they voiced about mechanization overtaking their “creative work” proved prescient. Typification, such as the reduction of their working vocabulary to only six or eight possible housing types, was tantamount to the destruction of the profession for those who remained committed to architecture as a form of independent artistic expression.

This was not the case for the architects put in charge of the new socialist design sector, who were committed to standardization and typification as a means to achieve their social goals, including housing for all. Janů, in particular, had argued for more than a decade that these goals could only be achieved with the nationalization of the building industry and state control of the building process from start to finish. As the head of the Czechoslovak Building Works, he implemented a working system that had been conceived long before state socialism was a political reality. This reinforces the conclusion that 1948 represented a continuation of an existing agenda, rather than a rupture with the past. Chapter three chronicles the imposition of Soviet socialist realism
from its earliest manifestations in 1948, to its full implementation in 1950 and its demise by 1955. Within the proposed reperiodization of postwar architectural history in Czechoslovakia, this turn towards the Soviet Union and a strict interpretation of socialist realist methods represented a much more significant realignment of the profession than anything that had happened up to that point.

Finally, contrary to the image of institutional inflexibility that is often associated with socialist states, this research shows that Czech and Slovak architects were consistently searching for new and better methods to improve the quality and quantity of their housing stock. Even in 1948, 1949 and 1950, multiple approaches were taken to the housing question. When the T-series was determined to be the most promising alternative to the current disorganized condition of the building industry, the administration did not become complacent, they continued to seek more productive solutions. As chapter five will show, when the T-series failed to deliver on the promise to alleviate the housing crisis by 1951, further industrialization of the building process was mandated. This led to experimentation with the large prefabricated building components such as reinforced concrete skeletons and structural panels which would decrease the number of steps needed to bring a building from design to construction and reduce the potential for problems along the way. This unexpected variability in practices and policies would continue into the 1950s.
Chapter 3:
National in Form, Socialist in Content: Sorela and Architectural Imagery (1948-1956)

Through five years of war and the years of stagnation and crisis that followed, it was huddled up and metamorphisizing inside a cocoon from which emerged the colorful butterfly of a new art. Do we want to give it a name? Well—it’s socialist realism, and it’s Czechoslovak.1

– Karel Honzik on the Slavic Agricultural Exhibition, 1948

Czech and Slovak architects were slow to accept the changing cultural climate of the late 1940s. The first years of Communist rule had brought designers into a state-run system of architecture and engineering offices with a mandate to standardize the design and delivery of buildings through the widespread implementation of industrial methods. The architectural leadership remained committed to modern forms and used their political credentials to protect the profession from the encroachment of Soviet socialist realism. By early 1950, however, the political elite was getting restless as the Soviets were putting pressure on the Czechoslovak leadership to conform more closely to its expectations. Strict adherence to the ‘Soviet model’ of cultural production soon became a necessity and organizational changes were needed at Stavoprojekt. Janů and Voženílek were removed from their posts and discussions of socialist realist methods began to dominate the architectural press, the universities and the Stavoprojekt regional offices. With this transition, the optimism of the first two years of Communist rule began to fade and architects reluctantly entered into the second phase of socialist architecture.

1 Karel Honzik, “Škola socialistického realismu (The School of Socialist Realism),” Architektura ČSR 7, no. 9 (1948): 298. The article first appeared in Kulturní politika (Cultural Politics) 3, no. 35 (May 21, 1948). All Czech to English translations are by the author unless noted.
“Sorela,” as the architectural variant of socialist realism would pejoratively come to be known in Czechoslovakia,² had a brief and divisive history in the country. Unlike in the Soviet Union where socialist realism dominated the architectural culture for more than twenty years, sorela had a short shelf life among Czech and Slovak architects.³ Its main protagonists were architects seeking personal success in the new system; some were recent university graduates looking to put their academic training to use and others were safeguarding their professional positions in an increasingly fraught political environment. For a few architects the support was expressed in idealistic terms, although historians have argued that even those architects committed to the socialist cause acted with the same self-preservationist motives and questionable moral intentions as their more pragmatic counterparts.⁴

The artificiality of the community’s support was evident when many Czechs and Slovaks abandoned sorela at the first signs of reform in the Soviet Union in late 1954. Those who chose to continue working in the style quickly fell out of favor. Within a few months, Stavoprojekt’s founding agenda of industrialization and standardization


³ Sorela will be used in this chapter to reference the architectural variant of Czechoslovak socialist realism. The term socialist realism will be used to indicate the Soviet style or to refer to the theoretical underpinnings of the method as transmitted from the Soviet Union to Czechoslovakia.

⁴ In his 1992 book, architectural historian Anders Åman wrote that Jiří Kroha underwent an “about-face... too fantastic, too demonstrative ... to take seriously.” [emphasis in original] See Anders Åman, *Architecture and Ideology in Eastern Europe during the Stalin Era* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1992), 169. Pavel Halík writes about how some members of the former avant-garde were forced to confess to the sins of the interwar period, but he suggests that these architects allowed themselves to be manipulated by the regime. See Pavel Halík, “Ideologická architektura (Ideological Architecture),” *Umění* 44 (1996): 438-60.
resurfaced as the primary component of a post-Stalin socialist vision of architecture. As chapter five will show, this immediate reversal was possible in Czechoslovakia, because the technocratic vision at the heart of Stavoprojekt’s first years was never undermined within the professional ranks. Research and experimentation continued unabated, especially within Stavoprojekt’s new research institutes, organized in late 1951 with the help out outgoing director Jiří Voženílek and supported, albeit secretly at first, by the highest levels of government. More importantly, the memory of interwar practice and the commitment to a scientific understanding of architecture was never completely lost in Czechoslovakia.

This chapter will follow the emergence of a local architectural discourse on socialist realism and its Czechoslovak variant, sorela, from 1948 until its disappearance in early 1955. The chapter considers the initial failure of the method to appeal to most local architects and the tactics that were needed to gain reluctant support for it by 1950. The analysis examines how the profession was affected by closer scrutiny from the increasingly dogmatic regime and how the growing presence of Marxist rhetoric in architectural discourse reflected a shifting political climate. During these years, a

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5 See “Kandidátky výboru Svazu architektů (Candidate for the board of the Architects' Union),” March 22, 1953, Voženílek, fond 1261/2/20: Ústřední kulturně propagační komise a kulturně propagační oddělení UV KSČ (Central Cultural-Propaganda Commission and the Cultural-Propaganda Department of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia), henceforth UKPK, carton 637, Národní archiv (National Archive, henceforth NA), Prague, Czech Republic. In 1953, a secret committee was established by the Central Committee of the Communist Party to address issues related to the building industry and its failure to meet its target outputs and budgets. Called the “Government Committee for Construction (Vládní výbor pro výstavbu),” this committee became the official “State Committee on Construction (Státní výbor pro výstavbu)” in 1956. See fond 315: Úřad předsednictva vlády - vládní výbor pro výstavbu (Office of the Prime Minister - Government Committee for Construction, henceforth VVV), NA; fond 976: Státní výbor pro výstavbu, henceforth SVV, NA. The membership of the committee is not clear from the archival documentation, although Voženílek’s name appears in notes on the minutes from the 8th meeting in Dec. 1953.
virulent campaign was underway to purge ‘class enemies’ from the party, leading to mass arrests, the establishment of forced labor camps and infamous show trials in the early 1950s. In this uneasy environment, Stavoprojekt and its design architects began to produce high-profile projects in the sorela style intended to please the regime and bring Czechoslovakia’s public image more in line with the vision of socialist culture promoted in the Soviet Union. Housing, in particular, was at the center of the socialist realist debate, due to the continuing housing crisis in industrial areas and the need to pacify an increasingly wary public whose support for the Communist Party was fading.

The final part of the chapter will consider the 1951 design for the town of New Ostrava (Nová Ostrava) in the steel- and mining-city of Ostrava in northeast Moravia. The master plan of the project, by a team from the city’s Stavoprojekt office, proposed housing and services for 150,000 residents on land 8km from the historic city center. The new urban settlement was imagined as a productive landscape, one half of a dialectical relationship between work and leisure. This extended the rhetoric of the workers’ revolution and the ‘overturning’ of the bourgeois class into the everyday spaces of domesticity and relaxation, which now looked, at least on the surface, more like the ‘palaces’ of the aristocracy than the mining settlements of the capitalist era. As built, New Ostrava, which became the neighborhood of Poruba, represented the best

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7 Ostrava is the Czech Republic’s third largest city with a current population of more than 300,000 inhabitants.

Czechoslovak response to the Soviet doctrine with its wide boulevards, abundant green spaces and monumental, yet humane, building scale.

The Historiography of Socialist Realism

As a case study, the example of Czechoslovakia provides an opportunity to examine broader questions about socialist realism as an architectural expression in Europe and the mechanisms of cultural transfer between the Soviet Union and its satellites. Multiple interpretations of the method have surfaced during its reevaluation in the last twenty years. Many accounts characterize socialist realism as an outside force imposed on countries in the Eastern Bloc by heavy-handed Soviet functionaries who were determined to erase all traces of interwar modernism in the region, thereby severing connections to the West and the pre-socialist past. As argued in this chapter, further examination proves that this simplistic and monolithic image of the style as a Soviet import, uncritically replicated in the Eastern Bloc, is not sufficient for understanding the complexity of this interaction.

In her 1994 exhibition and catalogue, Sorela: česká architektura padesátých let (Sorela: Czech Architecture of the 1950s), Czech architectural historian Radomíra Sedláková argued against the canonical interpretation of socialist realism as a purely Soviet import, taking a distinctly apolitical and ahistorical position to propose that

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sorela was the continuation of a classicizing trend in modern architecture that began in the 1920s in Czechoslovakia and internationally.\textsuperscript{10} She posited an alternate history of modernism that put classicism in dialectical opposition to functionalism, arguing that each style became dominant at various times “arising from the desire of the community ... and always arising from the satisfaction of concrete, utilitarian needs.”\textsuperscript{11}

Sedláková traced these classicizing tendencies through projects from the 1920s by Czech architects such as Antonín Engel and Jaroslav Fragner, linking their work to Russian and American examples including Ivan Zoltovsky’s Moscow State Bank from 1925 and Raymond Hood’s skyscrapers from the mid-1920s. The standardized housing units of the early Stavoprojekt years and the panel-buildings that became omnipresent in the 1970s and 1980s are contrasted with the apartment blocks of the sorela period, which she described as a time when “the typification guide was comprehensive, architects could compose housing types relatively freely from it and work with them creatively on projects for new residential ensembles.”\textsuperscript{12} However Sedláková’s attempt to disengage sorela from its political, social and economic context at the apex of Stalinist control in Czechoslovakia was a reductive argument that took away the power of local actors to shape their own experiences.\textsuperscript{13}

\textsuperscript{10} Sedláková, Sorela: česká architektura padesátých let.

\textsuperscript{11} Ibid., 6.

\textsuperscript{12} Ibid., 12.

\textsuperscript{13} Sedláková does succeed in undoing some of the entrenched myths of the Sorela period, such as the conflation of socialist forms with a priori bad architecture. As she notes on page 12, the neighborhood of Poruba in Ostrava, was one of the best examples of Sorela and remains a pleasant and livable environment.
Two historians of Soviet culture have put forward the most useful reinterpretations of socialist realism, both dependent on examinations of the Marxist-Leninist underpinnings of the method. In his 1988 book, Gesamtkunstwerk Stalin (The Total Art of Stalinism), 14 German literary scholar Boris Groys argued convincingly that for many who participated in cultural life at the time, 1930s socialist realism was actually a highly-intellectualized extension of the “internal logic of the avant-garde method itself.” 15 He came to the polemical conclusion that “under Stalin the dream of the avant-garde was in fact fulfilled and the life of society was organized in monolithic artistic forms, though of course not those that the avant-garde itself favored.” 16

Groys wrote specifically about architecture in a 2003 essay entitled “The Art of Totality,” 17 in which he elaborated on the importance of Marxist-Leninist dialectical materialism as the basis of socialist realist architecture in the Soviet Union. He stated that, in the architectural vocabulary of the period, these buildings expressed a sense of “internal contradiction,” as opposed to what Soviet architects of the 1930s saw as the ‘bourgeois’, and hence avant-garde, tendency to seek “a logical consistency that [was] one-sided, purely formal, and internally ‘dead’.” 18 In Groys’ framework, this can be

15 Groys, The Total Art of Stalinism: Avant-Garde, Aesthetic Dictatorship, and Beyond, 9.
16 Ibid.
18 Ibid., 112.
understood as part of the forward-looking ethos of socialist realism. These buildings, as well as the paintings, sculptures, novels and musical scores being produced by artists in other realms, were participating in a collective imagining of what the future would be.

The ‘contradiction’ was that the ideal future could never be attained, it would always be something to which one aspired and struggled towards. This was not as a solitary struggle, but a collective one. In Groys’ words, therefore, a Soviet architect was judged not by his formal skills, but “whether [he] strove for totality in his work, whether he was willing to relativize his own position and make himself a medium for the unity of opposites.”

He writes that this meant,

Stalinist architecture is simultaneously monotonous and fascinating. It constantly offers the image of the same collective effort, the same social ecstasy, the same internal paradox – and the same failure of the individual. Two things form the inner tension of this architecture: the hope for the saving unity of opposites, in which the architect wishes to be contained, and the danger of standing out as different from this unity by fault of one’s own.

The results were “obsessive repetitions” that were “visible even to the outside observer.”

Throughout his body of work, Groys reinforces his thesis that socialist realism was not a formal exercise in historicism, but rather a set of artistic practices that fit into Stalin’s absolute vision for the new society. This framework foregrounds his understanding of the move from constructivism to socialist realism in the USSR during

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19 Ibid., 116.
20 Ibid., 117.
21 Ibid.
the 1930s and, again, in the context of the Eastern Bloc, provides a method for separating the stylistic character of sorela from the underlying modernist principles that determined its conceptual, technological and material development. Groys illustrates that in the Soviet Union there was a consistency in the fundamental desire by the leading regime architects to project a totalizing vision of a proper ‘socialist’ architecture, no matter what the formal character of the style might be – constructivist or socialist realist.

Architectural historian Catherine Cooke, who was best known as a historian of Russian constructivism, built upon Groys’s thesis in her 1997 article, “Beauty as a Route to ‘the Radiant Future’: Responses of Soviet Architecture.”22 In attempting to undo some of the received history of socialist realism, Cooke was highly critical of cultural historians such as Matthew Cullerne Bown, Hugh Hudson and Timothy Colton for their “superficial and dismissive judgments” against the architects of the period.23 She linked their conceptual difficulties to an insufficient understanding of architecture and its disciplinary history. Like Groys, Cooke’s discussion of socialist realism is framed by the recognition of the complexity and depth of socialist thinking in the 1930s. She also admired the professionalism with which architects approached their tasks. She noted that too often “the design of buildings, as of other everyday artifacts, is deemed

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unproblematic because its products are physically familiar… indeed, few [cultural historians] recognize that there are any theories or discourses here.” She proposed that,

…this failure to see material culture as part of the social holism leads to a fatal structural misrepresentation. When the political philosophy governing all decision-making about state production was materialist, neither the form of objects of material culture nor the means of their production was to be determined casually. Day-to-day reality was chaos, but theoretically nothing should be designed without reference to materialist conceptions of how the object helped shape economic and political relations and the individual social consciousness, and vice versa.

In this way, the materialist worldview at the heart of socialism strengthened Cooke’s assertion that a thoughtful and serious discussion of socialist realism was central to any understanding of Soviet and Eastern European history, cultural or otherwise.

As Groys and Cooke have argued, it is possible to deconstruct the socialist realist argument into a series of logical propositions and even admire the depths to which architects actualized Marxist-Leninist concepts in their architecture and art. Yet a study of the architectural output in Czechoslovakia during this period shows that, with their own particular history and predisposition towards modern forms, few Czech and Slovak architects accepted or understood the methods of Soviet socialist realism in this way after World War II. When the rhetoric about the Soviet model and the benefits of socialist realism became more pronounced in 1949, many architects perceived the monumental, and often neo-classical, visions of the socialist future as anachronistic Soviet kitsch that did not resonate with their perception of their country as a modern

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25 Ibid.
industrial nation with architectural forms and a building industry to match. They also
ignored, with a few notable exceptions, the Marxist-Leninist roots of the method in the
Soviet Union. The majority focused instead on formal strategies to give the appearance
of acceptance without losing all sense of their own architectural beliefs, leading to a
reliance on decorative schemes that borrowed from Czech and Slovak historical and
vernacular examples. This compromise was necessary because, given the political
context, total rejection of socialist realism was not possible without risking one’s career
and freedom, since actions against the state were punishable with sentences of hard
labor or prison.

Interwar modernist Josef Havlíček summarized the widespread feeling about the
hollowness of socialist realist architecture in Czechoslovakia when, as the head of the
Stavoprojekt office in Prague, he informally nicknamed the style, “sorela.”

He may have coined this term as a play on the name of a brand of pomade and shoe polish
popular in the interwar years or as the shortened combination of SOciálistický –
REalismus – LAkomý, in reference to Zdeněk Lakomý, a regime-loyal architectural
theorist who published a number of texts in support of sorela in Architektura ČSR.

26 Havlíček was appointed head of the Prague office of Stavoprojekt at its inception in 1948, see
(Prague: Odeon, 1979), 21, footnote 70.

27 Jindřich Vybíral suggests the pomade and shoe polish source in Vybíral, “The Beacons of
Revolutionary Ideas: Sorela as Historicism and Rhetoric,” 95. For a reference to Lakomý, see
Matuš Dulla and Henrieta Moravčíková, Architektúra Slovenska v 20. storotí (20th-Century
Architecture in Slovakia) (Bratislava: Slovart, 2002). Also, Martin Strakoš’s epilogue in Jindřich
Vybíral, Zrození velkoměsta: architektura v obraze Moravské Ostravy 1890-1938 (The Birth of a
Great City: Architecture in Pictures, Moravian Ostrava 1890-1938), 3rd ed. (Slapanice; Ostrava:
ERA; Národní památkový ústav, územní odborné pracoviště v Ostravě, 2003), 196. Lakomý’s
texts can be found in Architektura ČSR from 1950-1953.
Although not uttered publicly at the time, this name is still used by historians and architects who practiced in the 1950s to refer to their work. The name itself and its continuing popularity indicate the degree to which the interwar generation of Czech and Slovak architects perceived this architectural style as something to mock, rather than as an intellectual pursuit.

This was due in part to historical circumstances. When the method was brought to the region through Soviet intervention, the social, economic and cultural situation on the ground in Czechoslovakia was quantifiably and qualitatively different from that of the Soviet Union. The country’s mature industrial economy and high-standard of living meant that Czechoslovakia entered its socialist phase at a higher level of development than the Soviet Union or its regional neighbors. In the Soviet case, the difference was not only noticeable when comparing Czechoslovakia in 1948 to the Soviet Union in 1933, but also relevant to the situation after World War II when the war-damaged country was still lagging behind most of its central European satellites in every economic and social category. One large gap was the sophistication and technological capacity of the building industry. In the 1920s and 1930s, Czechoslovakia, like Germany, France and Holland, had highly-developed building sector. At the same time, Soviet industry as a whole lacked skilled laborers, quality materials, technical knowledge and strong professional organizations. This inequality became more noticeable as cooperation

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between the two countries and its architects increased in the early 1950s.\textsuperscript{29}

The lack of engagement with the theoretical and philosophical underpinnings of socialist realism and the widespread sense that Soviet rhetoric about progress did not apply to the already-modern Czechoslovakia meant that many of the changes to architectural design in the early 1950s were superficial—literally and figuratively. Most Sorela buildings were adapted from standardized plans provided by Stavoprojekt and then decorated with surface embellishments by architects in the regional offices.\textsuperscript{30} More substantial changes happened with urban planning as the beaux-arts ideal of the ‘ensemble’ replaced modernist zeilenbau, or parallel-row, designs that were common in the interwar period, although this transformation was also underway in capitalist parts of Europe in the 1940s.\textsuperscript{31} Once architects turned away from socialist realism after Khrushchev’s reforms, what remained were the same standardized buildings without the decorative flourishes or sensitive urban planning schemes. Radomíra Sedláková described the late 1950s as the return of an interwar “industrial” aesthetic.\textsuperscript{32} Yet the architects of these Khrushchev-era buildings operated within the same confined political

\textsuperscript{29} As will be discussed in chapter five, Czech architects were surprised to find that the Soviet building industry still lacked centralized mechanisms for standardization and typification in the early 1950s. At the National Archive in Prague, there are over 300 pages of detailed documentation about a 1-month visit to the Soviet Union in 1954 by 11 Czech and Slovak architects, who were there to interview Soviet architects about the organization of their architectural administration. Jiří Voženílek was head of the delegation. See VVV, carton 38, NA.

\textsuperscript{30} See chapter five.

\textsuperscript{31} Examples included English new town planning, regional housing types in the United States, such as Richard Neutra’s and William Wurster’s projects in California and work by Scandinavian architects including Alvar Aalto, Arne Jacobsen and Jorn Utzon. The urban planning examples more closely followed Sedláková’s thesis from Sorela: česká architektura padesátých let.

space and tense working conditions that had supported sorela. In these circumstances, modernism itself was largely reduced to a stylistic overlay in the late 1950s, as standardized buildings were decorated with a new set of architectural details much the same way as those that sorela had developed a few years earlier.

The ‘Czechoslovak Road’ to Stalinism

Although long associated with the hardliners in Moscow, the leadership of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia pursued a distinctly ‘national’ vision of socialism after the May 1946 general elections and gaining full control of the government in February 1948. Under the slogan ‘the Czechoslovak road to socialism,’ they implemented a series of independent economic policies that reflected the country’s existing high level of industrialization and standard of living. Agricultural collectivization remained voluntary, some small business owners maintained rights to private ownership and resources were still devoted to providing consumer goods. Architects, artists, musicians, writers and filmmakers engaged in debates over the

33 Klement Gottwald and other high-ranking Communists stayed in Moscow during the war with the support of Stalin. For more on their relationship, see Joseph Rothschild, Return To Diversity: A Political History of East Central Europe Since World War Two (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 25-75.


proper forms of socialist cultural expression, although at this early stage few who remained in the country questioned the legitimacy of the new system itself. For example, architect Jiří Kroha’s polemics in support of socialist realism and Soviet methods in *Architektura* in 1948 and 1949 were in opposition to the dominant technocratic stance of architects like Karel Janů and Jiří Voženílek, yet all three were devoted Communists who supported the new regime.

By late 1949, the relative independence from Moscow that had defined the first year of Communist rule in Czechoslovakia was already coming to an end. In the aftermath of the Tito-Stalin split of 1948, the creation of Comecon in early 1949 and the escalation of tensions in Korea in the summer of 1949, Stalin began exerting more

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36 Jiří Kroha is the focus of chapter four.

37 The extent to which Moscow determined, directed or simply influenced the decisions of Gottwald’s regime in 1948 and 1949 is subject to debate. Emigre historians writing before 1989 generally argued that the country they knew did not exist after February 1948. Current reassessments of the 1948 events suggest that the local Communists were capable politicians with a solid platform and some local support. See Abrams, *The Struggle For the Soul of the Nation: Czech Culture and the Rise of Communism.*

38 For analysis of the Tito-Stalin split, see Rothschild, *Return To Diversity: A Political History of East Central Europe Since World War Two,* 125-46. He writes that in the “wake” of Tito’s “defiance”, Stalin “needed[ed] to demonstrate Soviet power and Stalinist infallibility,” resulting in a series of Communist Party purges that led to the ‘show trials’ in the 1950s, page 132. In Czechoslovakia, the purges to rid the Party of ‘Titoists’ started in 1949, page 135.

39 Comecon, the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance, was established in January 1949 to economically link together Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland, Romania and the Soviet Union. Members were expected to pool resources and specialize in a set of products that could be made available across the organization. Hans Renner writes “Czechoslovakia was to fulfill the function of heavy industry workshop within the Comecon... and to concentrate entirely on the production of heavy machinery and other raw material-consuming capital goods,” see Hans Renner, *A History of Czechoslovakia Since 1945* (London ; New York: Routledge, 1989), 21.

pressure on the Eastern Bloc countries to prove their loyalty to the Soviet Union. The Communist Party of Czechoslovakia and its regional counterparts responded with policy changes that brought their regimes more in line with the goals of Soviet Stalinism, namely investment in heavy industry and military infrastructure at the expense of consumer goods, as well as the loss of many personal freedoms. One of the most violent results of these changes was a series of ‘show trials’ that started in late 1949, in which high-ranking members of Communist Parties in Bulgaria, Hungary, Romania, and Czechoslovakia were arrested, tortured and forced in open court to confess to high treason based on scripted testimony; many received death sentences. The most infamous of the trials was the Slánský trial in Czechoslovakia, which netted fourteen high-ranking party members including General Secretary of the Party, Rudolf Slánský, who was put to death in December 1952. Although scholars have generally paid little attention to the incremental policy changes during the period of the First Five-Year Plan (1949-1953), large and small indicators of economic, social and cultural change suggest that it was at the start of 1950, rather than in February 1948, that the country experienced its most dramatic changes since the end of World War II. Historian Josef Taborsky’s detailed account of the period


42 Unlike most aspects of 1950s history in Czechoslovakia, there is a large amount of material available on the show trials. Thirteen of the fourteen defendants in the Slánský trial were Jewish, leading some to characterize this as an anti-semitic purge. Others have focused on the importance of the Tito-Stalin split in creating an atmosphere of obedience among the satellite countries. For a current assessment, see Igor Lukes, "The Rudolph Slansky Affair: New Evidence," *Slavic Review* 58, no. 1 (Spring 1999): 160-87.
referred to 1950 policies that expanded agricultural collectivization,\textsuperscript{43} banned most Western films,\textsuperscript{44} initiated the mass-production of books by Marx, Stalin and Gottwald,\textsuperscript{45} and sharply raised the targets for capital goods production leading to what he described as a “back-breaking pace” for industrial growth “in the 1950-1953 era.”\textsuperscript{46} There was also a change in the rhetoric of the Communist Party during 1949 as ‘the national road to socialism’ was abandoned in favor of the ‘Soviet model.’ Jewish Holocaust survivor and former Communist Heda Margolius Kovály wrote a memoir about this period in her life.\textsuperscript{47} She was the widow of Rudolf Margolius who was sentenced to death in the Slanský trial. In the text, she recalled how the shift in 1950 surprised many of the early supporters of the regime who still believed that the situation in Czechoslovakia would not follow the same patterns as in the Soviet Union.

I hated the hysterical adulation of Stalin, the bombastic phrases of political oratory as well as the tinkle of medals and military decorations that covered the pot bellies of Soviet officers. But, I told myself, these were all unimportant details, quite suitable, after all, for the unsophisticated Russians with their history of czarist pomp. In Czechoslovakia, it would all be different. We would not be building socialism in a backward society under conditions of imperialist intervention and inner turmoil, but at peace, in an industrially advanced country, with an intelligent, well-educated population.\textsuperscript{48}

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{43}Taborsky, \textit{Communism in Czechoslovakia}, 1948-1960, 401.
  \item \textsuperscript{44}Ibid., 485.
  \item \textsuperscript{45}Ibid., 565.
  \item \textsuperscript{46}Ibid., 363.
  \item \textsuperscript{47}Kovály, \textit{Under a Cruel Star: A Life in Prague}, 1941-1968.
  \item \textsuperscript{48}Ibid., 67. Rudolf Margolius served as Deputy Minister of Foreign Trade from 1949-1951. He was one of eleven sentenced to death in the Slanský trial. In the 1960s, he was posthumously rehabilitated and cleared of all charges.
\end{itemize}
She goes on to describe how this early commitment to the Communist cause turned to despair by 1951 as severe food rationing continued, the housing shortage grew worse and national enterprises started to go bankrupt.49

**The Emergence of Socialist Realism in Czechoslovakia**

Cultural life underwent a similar transformation from 1948 to the end of 1950. After the war, the modernist trends of the interwar period reemerged and Soviet socialist realism as defined in the early 1930s was largely ignored by Czechs and Slovaks in fields such as literature, music, film, arts and architecture.50 With the events of 1948 and the reorganization of the cultural unions by action committees, debates began over what form ‘socialist’ culture should take. In 1948 and 1949, the conversation was still dominated largely by interwar leftists who saw no contradiction in their support for state socialism and high modernism. Architectural historian Pavel Halík wrote that at the Congress of National Culture in May 1948, “socialist realism was already being mentioned as a program for artistic production, but at that time it was perceived as the possible symbiosis of modernity and revolutionary content.”51 By 1950, however, the upper echelons of the regime succumbed to pressure from the Soviet Union to extend its

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49 Ibid., 96-97.

50 The events of 1945-1948 are discussed in chapter one. According to Tereza Petišková, artists were already debating the question of ‘socialist’ art in 1946-1947, however they rarely looked to the Soviet Union for answers. They preferred to look at the international socialist movement for guidance. See Tereza Petišková, “Oficiální umění padesátých let (Official Art of the 1950s),” in *Dějiny českého výtvarného umění V. (1939-1958)* (Histories of Czech Creative Arts, Vol. 5 (1939-1958)), eds., Rostislav Švácha and Marie Platovská (Prague: Academia, 2005).

51 Halík, "Padesátá léta (The 1950s)," 284.
embrace of the ‘Soviet model’ to the cultural sphere and socialist realism as practiced in
the Soviet Union became the official style of the state-run cultural apparatus.\(^52\)

As scholars of Soviet culture have argued, the exact nature and boundaries of
socialist realist doctrine remained unclear from the start, even in the Soviet Union.\(^53\) In
general, the Soviet variant of the style can be best defined across all forms of cultural
production as having multiple formal, material and linguistic expressions that share
common traits such as the belief in the absolute power of the Communist Party and its
basis in Marxism-Leninism, an unfailing optimism about the future and a preference for
decorative and historicist aesthetics. Catherine Cooke also pointed to the socialist realist
artist’s role in providing “new images”\(^54\) of the “radiant future.”\(^55\)

[In the Soviet Union], socialist realism was not about regurgitation. It was
crucially about the constant invention of new obrazy, new ‘images’ to
embody and transmit messages and myths to audiences who were
themselves always ‘moving forward’ as their political consciousness and
aesthetic sensibilities developed. The role of the artist as vedyshchyni, as
literally ‘leading forward’ this mass consciousness, derives directly from
this vision of art as ‘active’ in this ideological advance. Such a role was
sharply contrasted to the avant-gardist’s pursuit of personal whims.\(^56\)

\(^{52}\) Ibid., 285. The architectural administration itself recognized mid-1950 as the time when
Stavoproekt adopted “the widespread study of socialist realism and Soviet working methods.”
See Chart 19 – “Organisace Stavoprojektu (The Organization of Stavoproekt),” 1953, UKPK,
carton 640, NA.

\(^{53}\) For current research on the Russian case, see Evgeny Dobrenko and Eric Naiman, eds., *The
Landscape of Stalinism: The Art and Ideology of Soviet Space* (Seattle; London: University of

\(^{54}\) Cooke, “Beauty as a Route to ‘the Radiant Future’: Responses of Soviet Architecture,” 143.

\(^{55}\) Ibid.: 147.

\(^{56}\) Ibid.: 143.
She added that “according to the Marxist-Leninist principle of cultural continuity,” these images “served as the crucial bridge between [the people’s] own cultural heritage and the radiant Soviet future.” This ‘bridge’ created the sense of striving for something better that characterized the lean years of the 1930s in the Soviet Union.

By the time that socialist realism was introduced to Czech and Slovak architects in the late 1940s, it was transmitted as a series of stilted texts and incongruent images of monumental, historicist buildings. The aspirational tone of the Soviet method was lost on a population that lived in relative comfort in a country perceived as modern and already progressive. The oft-repeated slogan, “national in form, socialist in content” was politically useful, but offered few clues for how the style could be implemented in its new context. In the following two years, this led many fearful and ambitious Czechs and Slovaks to copy slavishly from Soviet examples with little regard for ‘national’ forms that the style encouraged or the dialectical-materialist worldview within which socialist realism was conceived in the Soviet Union. Those who tried to work against the new methodology found it nearly impossible, as the state had taken ownership of all publishing houses, art galleries, museums, architecture firms, film studios and media outlets by the end of 1948. This left few venues for any form of public opposition.\(^58\)

Just as the changes to economic and social polices occurred incrementally, there were differences in the pace and degree to which various artistic practices fell under the
purview of the general socialist realist doctrine in 1949 and 1950. Historians John Connelly and Jiří Knapík have characterized this process as the “sovietization” of Czechoslovakia’s cultural and institutional landscape. Representational and narrative genres such as painting, sculpture and literature were quickly co-opted for propagandistic purposes since their relationship to socialist realist themes and forms was often direct. At the March 1949 Congress of Czechoslovak Writers, the main speakers were politicians rather than writers. A letter was read from President Gottwald in which he “reminded [writers] of the social responsibility of their art, and the damage they could cause by ‘incorrect, unhealthy’ views.” The size of the Writers’ Union was reduced from 1,711 to only 220 members as those writers whose work did not conform to the new program were pushed out.

At the Ninth Communist Party Congress two months later, Minister of Information and Culture, Václav Kopecký, laid out an ambitious program for Czechoslovak socialist realism in all forms of cultural production. Borrowing heavily from the rhetoric of Soviet ideologue Andrei Zhdanov, Kopecký described socialist

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60 Alfred French, Czech Writers and Politics, 1945-1969 (Boulder; New York: East European monographs; Distributed by Columbia University Press, 1982), 56.


62 Petišková, "Oficiální umění padesátých let (Official Art of the 1950s)," 342.
realism as a method “to realistically, artistically create in the spirit of socialism.” Fine artists soon found their subject matter limited to acceptable themes such as portraits, busts and sculptures of Communist leaders, scenes from the everyday lives of workers, heroic national battles, political demonstrations and rural landscapes. (Fig. 3.1) To speed the transition from ‘capitalist’ to ‘socialist’ art, the Union of Czechoslovak Creative Artists founded the journal, Výtvarné umění (The Creative Arts) at the end of 1950. Its purpose was didactic as it primarily published images and translated texts

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63 Halík, "Padesáta léta (The 1950s)," 284.

64 For an overview of Socialist realist art in Czechoslovakia, see Petišková, Československý socialistický realismus 1948-1958.; Petišková, "Oficiální umění padesátých let (Official Art of the 1950s)."

65 The journal was published monthly until 1970, although its Socialist realist phase ended in the mid-1950s.
by Soviet artists, along with examples of work by sympathetic Czechs and Slovaks, many of whom were recent graduates of the state-run art schools.

Architecture and Socialist Realism

The transition to socialist realism within architecture did not follow the same pattern as other forms of cultural production. Since the discipline inherently possesses two frames of reference, one which is stylistic and one defined by technological capacity, architecture was able to hold off its co-optation by the regime for almost a year by emphasizing its functional and instrumental character, rather than its aesthetic and visual components.66 The regime’s immediate need to address the escalating housing shortage in key industrial areas and the impeccable Communist Party credentials of Czechoslovak Building Works Director Karel Janů and Stavoprojekt Director Jiří Voženílek also provided protection for architects.67 As chapter four argues, Jiří Kroha continued to promote socialist realism in Architektura in 1948 and 1949, but with the exception of his designs for official exhibitions and political events, his projects remained unbuilt and few architects followed his lead.

66 In the small body of literature on cultural politics in the 1940s and 1950s, architecture has received almost no attention compared with discussions of literature, film, music and theater. For example, architects rarely appear in Jiří Doležal, Česká kultura za protektorátu (Czech Culture in the Protectorate) (Prague: Národní filmový archiv, 1996); Knaplík, Únor a kultura: sovětizace české kultury 1948-1950; Kusák, Kultura a politika v Československu 1945-1956; Taborsky, Communism in Czechoslovakia, 1948-1960. The consistent absence of architects from these discussions reinforces the notion that architecture was fundamentally different as a cultural practice than other forms of artistic production in this period.

67 See chapter two for information on the Stavoprojekt leadership.
In early 1949, the regime's interest in dictating style began to emerge more clearly with the opening of an exhibition in Prague entitled “Architektura národů SSSR z dávné minulosti k výstavbě socialistického dneška (The Architecture of the Nations of the Soviet Union from the Distant Past to the Building of the Socialist Present).” The show was sponsored by the Artists’ Group of the Artistic Forum (Umelecká beseda), a cultural organization with a long-standing nationalist agenda that was founded in 1863. The exhibition consisted of more than 300 photographs arranged in 137 categories, highlighting some of the most important examples of historical and contemporary Russian and Soviet architecture. Among them were medieval Russian Orthodox churches; the monuments of imperial St. Petersburg; dams, bridges and canals; Soviet-era houses of culture; the Moscow metro stations; and seventeen portraits of award-winning architects including Boris Iofan, architect of the Palace of the Soviets and the Soviet Pavilion for 1937 Paris World Exposition. Buildings from Central Asia figured prominently including the national pavilions for the 1939 All-Union Agricultural Exhibition in Moscow and the medieval mausoleums that inspired them. These examples illustrated the diversity of local and regional architecture in the ‘nations’ of the Soviet Union.  


The accompanying catalogue included 54 photographs from the exhibition and two introductory essays in Czech by Russian architectural historian, M.I. Rzjanin.⁷⁰ (Fig. 3.2-3.3) In the texts, he stressed the importance of each “nation’s own history,” although “in the large family of fraternal nations of the Soviet Union, the place of the oldest brother belongs to the great Russian nation.”⁷¹ He argued that a shared respect for the history of the Russian people was the basis for a transnational concept of “Soviet architecture.”

For monuments of architecture are chronicles of the Russian nation, reminders of the grand and illustrious events of its history, of which it is proud. For monuments of architecture and historic art are one of the sources of creative inspiration for contemporary architects, whose desire to create a ‘Soviet architecture’, an architecture of social realism, has become the inheritance of the great history of our clever, heroic and talented people.⁷²

In his essay on the last thirty years, Rzjanin offered a brief history of the early Soviet era and “the reorganization of architectural design” in 1933 with the declaration of socialist realism.⁷³ He stressed the classical training of the great masters of the late 19th century who became the first generation of socialist architects and the “negative moment”⁷⁴ of constructivism.

⁷⁰ M.I. Rzjanin, “Historická architektura národů SSSR (The Historical Architecture of the Nations of the Soviet Union),” “30 let sovětské architektury (30 Years of Soviet Architecture)” in Ibid., 5-6, 7-18.
⁷² Ibid., 6.
⁷³ “30 let sovětské architektury” in Architektura národů SSSR z dávné minulosti k výstavbě socialistického dneška, 10.
⁷⁴ Ibid., 15.
In an article about the exhibition for *Architektura ČSR*, journal editor Oldřich Starý praised the show as “among the most illuminating and most interesting of those the inhabitants of Prague have ever seen.” He chose to include twelve photographs from the exhibition with his text, all of which showed either medieval structures with regional details such as mosaic tiles and onion domes or nineteenth-century monumental buildings in Leningrad. (Fig. 3.4) Only one contemporary project was shown, the winning master plan for the reconstruction of Stalingrad by Karo Alabian, which, because of its massive scale, gave little indication of what contemporary architecture looked like. (Fig. 3.5) In contrast, the text focused largely on the Soviet period, praising the pace and scale of development across the entire Soviet Union, while criticizing the “formalist tendencies” of the interwar period. A second article in the same issue, written by the deputy chair of the Committee on Architecture for the Soviet Ministries, continued the narrative into the present with nine illustrations of new buildings including Alexandr Ginzburg’s colossal 1,500-seat State Opera and Ballet in the Siberian city of Novosibirsk from 1940. (Fig. 3.6) As a pair, the two texts and multiple illustrations suggested that socialist realism in the Soviet Union was grounded in the reappropriation of the forms and materials of the Russian imperial and colonial past.


76 Ibid.: 72.

77 V. Kusakov, "Stavitelství stalinské doby (Building in the Stalinist Era)," *Architektura ČSR* 8, no. 3-4 (1949): 73-75.
Fig. 3.2: Illustrations from *Architektura národů SSSR z dávné minulosti k výstavbě socialistického dneška* (1951)—clockwise from left: Cathedral of Great Novgorod (1045-1052), Church Spas-Neredica in Novgorod (1198), Church Pokrova near Vladimir (1165-1166), and Dmitrovsky House in Vladimir (1194-1197)

Fig. 3.3: K.I. Rossi, General Staff Arch on Palace Square in St. Petersburg (1819-1829) from *Architektura národů SSSR z dávné minulosti k výstavbě socialistického dneška*, (1951)
Fig. 3.4: View of central Leningrad from the Neva River from *Architektura ČSR* (1949)

Fig. 3.5: Karo Alabian, Project for the reconstruction of Stalingrad, USSR (1944) from *Architektura ČSR* (1949)

Fig. 3.6: Alexandr Ginzburg, State Opera and Ballet, Novosibirsk, USSR (1940) from *Architektura ČSR* (1949)
The question remained as to how this new style would be implemented in Czechoslovakia. Together with the rhetoric of the ‘national road to socialism’ and the Communist adaptation of Czech and Slovak national symbols in its own propaganda, the exhibition and its related texts indicated that socialist realism required an embrace of the country’s national histories and the celebration of local, vernacular (lidová) forms. As synthesized in the Soviet slogan ‘national in form, socialist in content,’ this suggested a return to the great ‘national’ moments in Czech and Slovak history. Yet given the region’s long and tumultuous history of sublimation and occupation, these were less defined and more complex than that of the Russian Empire. Like their predecessors in the period of the Czech national revival in the nineteenth century, Stalinist architects who chose to follow this nationalist argument looked not only to the vernacular architecture of Czech and Slovak villages, but also to the Bohemian renaissance in the sixteenth century when the Habsburg Emperor, Rudolf II, chose Prague as his capital. With these historical styles to choose from, architects had a broad palette, although many of the exemplars suggested that the architectural scale of Czechoslovak socialist realism would be much smaller and more humane than in the

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78 For example, the Ninth Party Congress included performances by folk singers in traditional costumes and speeches by farmers with their animals. The Congress was held at the Prague Exhibition Grounds, the site of the 1893 Jubilee Exhibition, remembered as the first fully ‘national’ expression of Czech culture during the nineteenth century. This was also the site of the Slavic Agricultural Exhibition in May 1948, which is discussed in more detail in chapter four. For visual documentation on the Ninth Party Congress, see IX.sjezd Komunistické strany Československa ve fotografii (Ninth Congress of the Czechoslovak Communist Party in Photographs) (Prague: Vyd. kulturní a propagacní oddělení sekr. ÚV KSČ, 1949).

Soviet Union where the monumentality of eighteenth-century St. Petersburg was the ultimate model.

Despite this encouragement to follow official interest in socialist realism, the architects at Stavoprojekt resisted in 1949. For them, the ‘national’ heritage of Czechoslovak architecture was not found in distant history or rural villages, but in the industrial, universalist forms of modern architecture. This point of view remained dominant at Stavoprojekt where in late 1949, the Institute for Typification and Standardization debuted the plain, boxy residential T-series apartment blocks and mandated use of standardized types for all buildings by the start of 1950. The regime was in an uncomfortable situation as Moscow became more paranoid and paternalistic as the year wore on. Given the Communist Party’s success in forcefully reorienting other forms of cultural production, namely literature, art, film and music, it was becoming an embarrassment to the politicians that architecture remained unreformed. By the fall of 1949, the architectural administration was being pressured to publicly adopt a more positive view of socialist realist architecture.

One method of applying pressure was through the Architectural Council of Stavoprojekt. As discussed in chapter two, the group had been created to protect the artistic aspects of architecture against what the Architects’ Union feared would be a “mechanical” approach to design at the state-run organization. Regime-loyalist Jiří Kroha was appointed as the head of the Council from the beginning of Stavoprojekt and

80 The chronology is detailed in chapter two.
81 “Návrh veřejného prohlášení (Proposal for a Public Proclamation),” undated, 1948, p.2, ÚKPK, carton 636, NA.
as he became more intimate with the party elites, they used him to communicate with the Stavoprojekt leadership. In a September 1949 letter to Stavoprojekt director Jiří Voženílek, Kroha warned that “in various situations the architectural quality of projects worked on at Stavoprojekt have been spoken of critically.” He recommended that the organization “increase the number of lectures and discussions about socialist realism in architectural production in close consultation with the Union of Creative Artists and the Architects’ Union.” He also lamented the effects of the “quick postwar education” that left many young architects “without the fundamental groundwork for architectural practice.” The solution, according to Kroha, was to look “far more than before” at “Soviet experiences in architectural work,” in order to give “a large number of our architectural workers... the necessary clarity in this direction.”

As comparative literature scholar Katerina Clark has argued, architecture, in particular, was fundamental to the totalizing vision of socialist realism in the Soviet Union and by extension one can argue, therefore, that it was of primary concern to Moscow in judging the loyalty of the satellites. In her 2003 article, “Socialist Realism and the Sacralizing of Space,” she pointed to the “spatial myths” that are “at the heart of many canonical works of socialist realism” and linked the interest in architecture to

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82 Jiří Kroha to Jiří Voženílek, Sept. 26, 1949, fond: Jiří Kroha, henceforth JK, folder: Dopisy odeslané (Sent letters), Brno City Museum (Muzeum města Brna), henceforth MMB, Brno, Czech Republic.

Marxist-Leninist fundamentals and the extension of the base-and-superstructure model into physical space.

Architecture, as spatial architectonics, could be seen as the quintessential genre of socialist realism...[its] central role in Stalinist culture has its own logic in that building and spatial organization lie at the heart of Marx’s account of society: the base-and-superstructure model. This potential was picked up in Bolshevik Party rhetoric about ‘building communism.’ Building also assumed tremendous importance in Stalinist culture because of the utopian aspects in the notion of living ‘in Communism,’ the perfected society.84

Despite political pressure, the Marxist-Leninist rhetoric was unappealing to most architects. The notable exception was Jiří Kroha, who promoted the base-and-superstructure model and the dialectic as the foundations of his arguments for ‘socialist’ architecture. In this context, it is logical that he quickly rose to prominence as the regime’s most visible socialist realist designer.

Redefining the Architect

The regime’s desire for socialist realist buildings and master plans renewed interest in architecture’s formal and material qualities. Although the economics of the plan still determined much about investment in architectural projects, a building’s appropriate appearance and its symbolic presence also began to mean something to the regime. In this environment, Stavoprojekt’s early internationalist and anti-aesthetic agenda quickly became problematic. The architectural leadership in place since late 1948, including Janů and Vozenílek, found themselves at odds with the new rhetoric and

84 Ibid., 4.
the insistence that Czechoslovakia follow the ‘Soviet model’ by 1950. Surviving letters show that Kroha tried to counsel Voženílek on how to bring socialist realism into Stavoprojekt, but the director was unable or unwilling to firmly establish the new method within the organization. Official institutional change finally came in September 1951, when the Czechoslovak Building Works was dissolved after three years under Janů’s direction. The national enterprises that had been part of the Building Works were consolidated and transferred to the new Ministry of Building Industry.

Rather than being brought under ministerial control, Stavoprojekt was set up as an independent national enterprise in the Ministry of Building Industry, supervised by an executive board in Prague. The Architectural Council was disbanded. This signaled the start of Stavoprojekt’s second socialist phase as the government’s relatively hands-off approach of the previous two years gave way to a concerted effort to force architects to comply with socialist realist methods. In this new configuration, the organization was more susceptible to political pressure and direct party intervention. Voženílek was forced out of his primary leadership role and on January 1, 1952, he became head the new Institute of Architecture and Town Planning (Ústav architektury a

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86 See chapter five.

87 Jiří Kroha to Ferdinand Balcárek, Jan. 15, 1951, JK, folder: Dopisy odeslané (Sent letters), MMB. Architect Ferdinand Balcárek took over as deputy director at Stavoprojekt after Voženílek’s departure in 1951. Born in 1907, Balcárek was a young member of the Prague avant-garde in the 1930s, but his activities from 1938-1950 are largely unknown. Correspondence between Jiří Kroha and Balcárek in 1951 and 1952 suggests that Balcárek was head of the executive board at Stavoprojekt, although the relevant Stavoprojekt files remain uncatalogued at the National Archive and in the Kroha archive in Brno.

88 “Stručná životopisná data (Brief biographical data),” after 1972, JK, loose papers, MMB.
where he served as director until the end of 1954. Jíří Kroha, who ran the only independent atelier within Stavoprojekt, began to answer directly to the executive board, rather than to one of the regional offices. Radomíra Sedláková wrote that speculation about the new course for architecture was “put to an end in 1950.”

A political directive came through: we will be a new, socially equitable society after the model of the Soviet Union, therefore our architecture also must adhere to its example... To push this directive through and properly apply the desired Soviet model, a first wave of young architects – educated after the war, inclined towards revolution, and not afraid of the authorities – was already on hand. The new direction for the development of Czech architecture had been decided.

With the increased centralization of design decisions through the board of directors and the distribution of standardized construction documents to local Stavoprojekt offices, architects began to fully comprehend the degree to which their professional status had been compromised.

As noted by Kroha and Sedláková, 1950 was also a time of generational conflict within the architectural community as recent graduates of politicized postwar architecture programs began to appear in the Stavoprojekt offices. Universities were efficient conduits for promoting the new ‘socialist’ methods. Teaching positions were sought after by architects and used to obvious political ends. For example, Jiří Kroha’s ties to the government elite in these years suggests that the board was set up to implement and direct the government’s program for Soviet socialist realism in the Stavoprojekt offices.

had been a professor at the Brno University of Technology since 1925. In 1946, he was promoted to Chair of the Architecture Department\textsuperscript{93} and then served from 1948-1950 as Rector of the School of Architecture and Construction.\textsuperscript{94} During this period, curricula rooted in the classical Western canon replaced the modern, functionalist point of view that had dominated much of Czech architectural education in the interwar years and immediately after the war.\textsuperscript{95} As Polish architect and historian Wojciech Lesnikowski wrote of his own experience in Poland in the 1950s,

Stalinist architectural education represented a sophisticated combination of the beaux arts, on the one hand, and polytechnic intellectual ideas and methods of training, on the other hand. Sophisticated history, theory, painting, and sculpture courses were taught on a systematic basis in combination with mathematics, descriptive geometry, and engineering. City planning was the motivating force behind the totality of architectural training, which was in perfect harmony with communist beliefs that object making should have no role in a truly socially motivated society. In design classes Renaissance and Enlightenment theories were applied... editions of Palladio and Vignola were printed all over Eastern Europe in large quantities...the education curriculum was constructed as a sort of a ‘purifier’ of Western classical traditions, with the goal of bringing them back to life after decades of modernist assault on history.\textsuperscript{96}

\textsuperscript{93} "Stručná životopisná data (Brief biographical data)," after 1972, JK, loose papers, MMB.

\textsuperscript{94} Milan Moráň, Šedesát let české školy architektury v Brně, 1919-1979. (Sixty Years of the Czech School of Architecture in Brno, 1919-1979) (Brno: Blok, 1980), 13, 16.

\textsuperscript{95} Schools of architecture were located in Prague and Brno before the war. A new school was opened in Bratislava in 1946. Architectural historian Christopher Long has written about the teaching of architectural history in the region, see Christopher Long, "East Central Europe: National Identity and International Perspective," \textit{JSAH} 61, no. 4 (2002): 519-29.

The stress on the classical tradition helped to impart a sense of difference between younger architects and their older counterparts, many of whom had been trained by Czech pupils of Otto Wagner such as Jan Kotěra, Antonín Engel and Pavel Janák.  

In the early 1950s, these younger architects arrived at Stavoprojekt schooled in orthodox Marxist doctrine, free of the memories of interwar practice and freshly educated about contemporary Soviet design practices. Working in the sorela style offered them the opportunity for early success and valuable professional experience. Despite their young age, many of the new graduates were offered positions as design architects in the regional Stavoprojekt offices. One example was a former apprentice to Jiří Kroha, thirty-year-old architect František Zounek, who left his post at Stavoprojekt in Brno to become the head design architect on a high-profile new town project in the organization’s Košice office in eastern Slovakia in March 1951. Not surprisingly, after Khrushchev’s December 1954 speech denouncing socialist realist

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98 Halík, "Ideologická architektura (Ideological Architecture)," 449. Sedláková, Sorela: česká architektura padesátých let, 10.

99 His design for the new town of Šaca, on the outskirts of Košice and adjacent to a new steel plant, used standardized types (T13, T20) that were individualized with sorela embellishments on balconies, facades and doorways. The project was featured in issue 3-4 of Architektura ČSR in 1952, which also included articles on Kroha’s project for a campus in Pardubice and housing designs for Nová Ostrava. Images from the constructed town were published in Architektura ČSR in 1956. See Jiří Hruža, "Nové město Šaca u Košic (The New City of Šaca near Košice)," Architektura ČSR 15, no. 1-2 (1956): 20-21; František Zounek, Růžena Svobodová and Zdeněk Chlup, "Otázka architektury nového města Šacy (The question of architecture in the new city of Šaca)," Architektura ČSR 11, no. 3-4 (1952): 87-101.
Fig. 3.7: František Zounek and team, Main Street in Šaca, now Slovakia (1951) from *Architektura ČSR* (1952)

Fig. 3.8: František Zounek and team, T20 blocks in Šaca, now Slovakia (1951) from *Architektura ČSR* (1952)
excesses and what he called “useless things in architecture,”¹⁰⁰ most of these young architects were able to put the episode behind them quickly and continue with successful careers.¹⁰¹

Architects from the interwar generation responded in various ways to this turn of events. Some retreated into less prominent roles in historic preservation, urban planning, landscape architecture and education.¹⁰² Others put aside personal or ethical objections to the direction of the politic rhetoric and focused on housing and the long-standing goal of improving the general living standard. The culmination of this shift away from the older generation came at the July 1953 First Statewide Conference of Czechoslovak Architects (I. celostátní konference delegátů československých architektů). The meeting was called when the Union of Czechoslovak Applied Artists split into two


¹⁰¹ For example, Jiří Hruža, Stefan Svetko, Viktor Rudiš and František Zounek all entered the profession in this period and went on to successful careers. Rudiš and Zounek collaborated on the elegant Letná housing development in Brno in the early 1960s. Rudiš still practices with his son Martin in Brno. Hruža remains a prolific writer and urban designer. Svetko built dozens of buildings around Bratislava and is still active in the Bratislava professional organizations.

sections, one for art and one for architecture. Meeting delegates, including Janů, Voženílek, Kroha, and Havlíček, were asked to publicly denounce their “cosmopolitan past” in front of an audience of their peers. As discussed in chapter four, Kroha would face an even more difficult attack on his character after being denounced by an employee and eventually forced out of his design office in 1956.

The Architectural Press

The architectural press played a leading role in defining this new agenda. Books by Soviet architects in Czech translation began to appear in 1951 on topics such as urban planning, socialist realist theory and the history of Soviet architecture. Architektura ČSR devoted increasingly more space to discussions of socialist realism, Soviet architecture and Czechoslovakia’s “architectural heritage” which would soon be mobilized in the effort to decorate buildings with appropriate “national” forms.

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103 Information on this organizational split is located in cartons 637, ÚKPK, NA.
104 Halík, "Ideologická architektura (Ideological Architecture)," 453-54. The full texts of the individual speeches can be found in cartons 639-640, ÚKPK, NA.
105 For example, see Navrhování dělnických sídlišť (The Design of Workers' Housing Developments), Knihnice stavebního průmyslu, sv. 3 (Prague: Průmyslové vydavatelství, 1951).
106 The term “architektonický dědictví (architectural heritage)” became an important slogan in the context of Socialist realism in Czechoslovakia. As a style that was meant to be “national in form, socialist in content,” the country had to establish a “national” vocabulary that was derived from its local or vernacular examples. See for example, Jiří Hruša and Pavel Svojtka, "O významu
The final piece of this media blitz was the new journal, Sovětská architektura (Soviet Architecture), which debuted in the spring of 1951 and was published for less than four years.\textsuperscript{107} Sponsored by the Czechoslovak-Soviet Institute, the journal’s purpose was to publish images of Soviet projects, show the breadth of architectural experimentation underway in the Soviet Union, explain new technologies and offer texts by Soviet architects in Czech translation. The journal was necessary, in part, because so few people in Czechoslovakia could read Russian in the early 1950s.

As the established Czechoslovak architecture journal and the communication mechanism for the Architects’ Union, Architektura ČSR, offered the most complete and complex response to socialist realism. The journal never published a specific list of defined architectural criteria for sorela, although it was full of declarations of its appropriateness for socialist Czechoslovakia and examples of acceptable projects by Czech and Slovak architects. In addition to long articles and dozens of illustrations of work by Kroha, Architektura ČSR featured essays on rural vernacular architecture, national building traditions in Czechoslovakia, the Soviet Union and other countries in the Eastern Bloc, prefabrication techniques and historic Czech and Slovak towns. (Fig. 3.9-3.10) The increasingly decorative work of regional Stavoprojekt offices figured prominently in the journal during these years, as did student projects from the architektonického dědictví (On the Meaning of Architectural Heritage),” Architektura ČSR 11, no. 3-4 (1952): 74-76.

\textsuperscript{107} “Sovětská architektura – převod vydavatelského oprávnění (Sovětská architektura – transfer of publishing license),” Jan. 8, 1955, fond 867: Ministerstvo kultury (Ministry of Culture), carton 165, NA.
Fig. 3.9: Schwarzenberg Palace in the Castle District, Prague (1560s) from Architektura ČSR (1952)

Fig. 3.10: Prefabricated elements to embellish T-series buildings from Architektura ČSR (1952)
universities, which were featured as the sole content of the longest issue of *Architektura ČSR* in 1953, indicating a lack of built projects to illustrate.\(^{108}\) (Fig. 3.11)

The most intense period of sorela design at the Stavoprojekt offices started in 1951 and ended with Khrushchev’s speech on the excesses of Stalinist design at the end of 1954. One characteristic of design and construction in this period, and socialist architecture in general, was long construction delays due to problems with the supply and delivery of materials, a lack of skilled laborers in the critical industrial regions and difficulties managing planned budgets. So although the style was already out of fashion, *Architektura ČSR* continued to illustrate projects in the sorela style until 1957 when the last of the 1954 projects were completed. Sorela, therefore, lasted longer on the pages of the journal than in the architecture offices themselves.\(^{109}\) This was in contrast to the three-year run of *Sovětská architektura*, which roughly paralleled the existence of socialist realism as a design method, reinforcing the didactic and propagandistic nature of the publication.

\(^{108}\) There were more than 80 pages of student projects the issue. Volume 15 was also the journal’s shortest volume in its forty-year history, only 252 pages. This can be compared to 364 pages in 1952 and 318 pages in 1954, by 1956 it was up to 593 pages. See Zdeněk Lakomy, “*Za nové socialistické vysoké školství v oboru architektury* (On Behalf of the New Socialist Institutions of Higher Education in the Field of Architecture),” *Architektura ČSR* 12, no. 8-10 (1953): 169-181; Oldřich Stary, “*Výchovou architektů k hodnotné architektuře (minulost a dnešek)* (Via the Training of Architects in Valuable Architecture (Past and Present),” *Architektura ČSR* 12, no. 8-10 (1953): 181-220; Emil Bellus, “*Slovenská fakulta architektúry pri vysokej škole technickej v Bratislave* (The Slovak Architecture Faculty at the Technical College in Bratislava),” *Architektura ČSR* 12, no. 8-10 (1953): 221-240; Jiří Jenšátek, “*Fakulty architektury a pozemního stavitelství v Brně* (The Faculty of Architecture and Construction in Brno),” *Architektura ČSR* 12, no. 8-10 (1953): 241-250.

\(^{109}\) For example, Zounek’s designs for Šaca first appeared in *Architektura ČSR* in 1952, yet the finished project was not published until early 1956, more than one year after Khrushchev’s speech. See Hruza, “*Nové město Šaca u Košic* (The New City of Šaca near Košice),” 20-21; Zounek, Svobodová and Chlup, “*Otázka architektury nového města Šacy* (The question of architecture in the new city of Šaca),” 87-101.
Two distinct modes of architectural form-making emerged from architects’ attempts to define an indigenous form of Socialist realism. The first was the application of the style as a perfunctory exercise in architectural decoration and in its extreme form, literal copying from Soviet examples. The second was an attempt to create an
indigenous socialist style inspired by the Soviet example, but with distinctly Czech and Slovak characteristics. Czech art historian Tereza Petišková has linked these two paths in the visual arts to particular Czech politicians; this dichotomy was seen in architecture as well.\footnote{Petišková, "Oficialní umění padesátých let (Official Art of the 1950s)," 342-44.} On one side, Minister of Information Václav Kopecký, who supported the imitation of Soviet examples; a position he developed based on the hard-line stance of Soviet cultural minister Andrei Zhdanov.\footnote{Andrei Zhdanov (1896-1948), was an ally of Stalin and member of the politburo. After the war he was responsible for the country’s cultural policies and for setting up Cominform (Communist Information Bureau) in 1947 when he would have worked directly with Kopecký, Minister of Information since April 1945.} Kopecký was also the most ardent political supporter of the Stalin Monument in Prague. This massive sculptural ensemble of Stalin with eight supporting figures sat upon a prominent site in Letná Park overlooking Prague from 1955 until 1962 when it was demolished.\footnote{For a chronology of the design, construction and demolition of the monument, see Aman, \textit{Architecture and Ideology in Eastern Europe during the Stalin Era}, 197-205; Zdeněk Hojda and Jiří Pokorny, \textit{Pomníky a zapomnění} (Monuments and Forgetting) (Prague: Paseka, 1996), 205-17. Former PAS members Jin’ Stursa and Vlasta Štursová worked with the sculptor, Otakar Švec, to design the platform and site improvements for the statue. See Oldřich Starý, "Pomník J.V. Stalina v Praze (Monument of J.V. Stalin in Prague)," \textit{Architektura ČSR} 9, no. 3-4 (1950): 63-68.} On the other side was Minister of Education and Culture, Zdeněk Nejedlý, who argued that socialist realist art should derive from the national, vernacular traditions of the region.\footnote{Zdeněk Nejedlý (1878-1962) was a respected musicologist and the first President of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences from 1952 until his death. In his book, historian Edward Taborsky discussed Nejedlý’s surprising efforts in transforming the educational system after 1948. He pointed out that despite being a “die-hard Communist,” Nejedlý implemented an American-style educational system that “ignored the Soviet experience” and looked instead to “national traditions” and “ideals of humanity.” See Taborsky, \textit{Communism in Czechoslovakia, 1948-1960}, 508-13. As the basis of his argument for socialist realism, Nejedlý was especially invested in the Hussite era and the nineteenth-century National Revival. Oldřich Starý, the editor of \textit{Architektura ČSR}, wrote an essay to honor his 75th birthday in issue no. 7-9 of the journal in 1952, indicating the position of the editorial board. See Oldřich Starý, “Zdeněk Nejedlý – příklad}
Ministry of Education and Culture under Nejedlý, which had implications that will be discussed later in the chapter.

The unbuilt, and widely publicized, initial project for New Ostrava by Vladimír Meduna was a clear example of this first tendency, although as built the project was firmly rooted in the Czechoslovak tradition. Another prominent example of Soviet-inspired architecture was the Hotel Internacionál in the Prague neighborhood of Dejvice. Designed in 1950 by Army architect František Jeřábek, the building was originally planned to house Warsaw Pact soldiers and eventually became a luxury hotel to host foreign guests. Its stepped tower, monumental entrance plaza and extravagant interior finishes, including tapestries, ornamental ceilings, marble floors and fresco paintings,

Fig. 3.12: Otakar Švec (sculpture), Jiří Štursa and Vlasta Štursová (base and site), Stalin Monument, Prague from Architektura ČSR (1950)

114 Meduna, "Nová Ostrava (New Ostrava)," 259-63.
represented the most literal application of socialist realist principles in a built project anywhere in the country.\footnote{115} (Fig. 3.13) A similar, unbuilt project for an Army headquarters was also planned in the center of Dejvice in 1954, but the project was abandoned with the change in architectural direction after Khrushchev’s reforms.\footnote{116} (Fig. 3.14)

As discussed in chapter four, Kroha’s projects at ANU, including the new town of Nová Dubnica and the civic center for Stalingrad-Bělský Les in Ostrava, exemplified the Nejedly position in their attempts to create an indigenous socialist realist vocabulary.\footnote{117} The many standardized housing units that were completed in a sorela style in the early 1950s also derived their architectural details from regional examples, although these were more about appropriate decoration than the definition of a new

\footnote{115} Little is written about the building despite its prominent public profile. Since it was designed by an architect working for the Army, rather than at Stavoprojekt, Architektura and Sovětská architektura did not write about the project. See Karel Ksandr, “Význam socialistického realismu v dějinách architektury na příkladu hotelu Internacionál v Praze 6-Dejvicích (The Meaning of Socialist Realism in the History of Architecture Through the Example of the Hotel Internacionál in Prague 6-Dejvice),” in Poválečná totalitní architektura a otázky její památkové ochrany: Sborník příspěvků (Postwar Totalitarian Architecture and Questions of Its Preservation: Conference Proceedings) (Ostrava: Státní památkový ústav v Ostravě, 2002), 15-18.

\footnote{116} František Fiala, "Kritické poznámky k soutěži na ústřední dům armády v Praze (Critical Remarks on the Competition for the Army Headquarters in Prague)," Architektura ČSR 13, no. 5 (1954): 97-114; Jiří Novotný, "K soutěži na ústřední dům armády v Dejvicích (On the Competition for the Army Headquarters in Dejvice)," Architektura ČSR 13, no. 5 (1954): 114-21. There was a page numbering error in Vol. 13 starting with issue no. 5 and continuing until issue no. 7, when it as corrected. The page numbers were listed in the yearly index properly and should have been Fiala, 129-145 and Novotný, 146-153.

\footnote{117} These projects are discussed in chapter four. Kroha and Nejedly worked together in the Union of Czechoslovak-Soviet Friendship (Svaz československo sovětského přátelství). Nejedly was President and Kroha was an active member. For example, Kroha gave 7 lectures in 5 cities for the organization from October to December 1951; November was officially Czechoslovak-Soviet Friendship month. See Jiří Kroha to Svaz československo sovětského přátelství – ústřední sekretariát (Union of Czechoslovak-Soviet Friendship-Central Administration), Dec. 5, 1951, JK, folder: Hlavní architekt atelieru (Head Architect of the Atelier), MMB.
national style. In practice, Nejedlý’s argument was much more powerful in the context of Czechoslovakia than Kopecký’s. This can be attributed to deep-seated feelings of national pride and a sense of regional exceptionalism that remained in Czechoslovakia throughout the socialist period.

New working methods were also implemented at Stavoprojekt in 1951. Following on the theme of ‘collective work’ embedded in socialist rhetoric, competitions were staged for high-profile civic projects across the country and the results received extensive coverage in Architektura ČSR. Typically the entries by teams from the regional Stavoprojekt offices, were not, however, socialist realist enough for the new Stavoprojekt executive board and most were not built. These included a new administrative office tower for the Slovak Planning Office in Bratislava, which was described by two architects writing in Architektura ČSR as second only to the Stalin Monument in Prague

Fig. 3.13: František Jeřábek and team, Hotel Internacionál, Prague (1950-1957) from Dejiny českého výtvarného umění V (2005)
Fig. 3.14: Pavel Bareš, Jaroslav Kadeřábek, Jaroslav Kádrl and Karel Prager, Project for an Army Headquarters in Prague from Architektura ČSR (1954)

as “the most important architectural project being designed in Czechoslovakia.” The winning project by Josef Havlíček’s team from Stavoprojekt in Prague was a bold skyscraper with two intersecting rectangular volumes. (Fig. 3.15-3.16) With its flat roofs and cubic form, it was similar in scale and proportion to American skyscrapers of the time. Although the Bratislava project was not built, Havlíček did succeed in building the group of six skyscraper apartment towers in Kladno-Rozdělov that he had proposed in 1946, although they were not completed until 1959.119

Several other competitions ended without winners and the projects were abandoned. Just as the political pressure to design more sorela buildings became more intense, the Regional National Committee in Gottwaldov (formerly Zlín) held a competition to design their headquarters in 1951.120 (Fig. 3.17-3.18) The building had to

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120 Eduard Staša, "Kritické poznámky k soutěži KNV v Gottwaldově (Critical Remarks on the Competition of the Regional National Committee in Gottwaldov)," Architektura ČSR 10, no. 10-12
Fig. 3.15: Josef Havlíček and team from Stavoprojekt, Prague, Competition project for the Slovak Planning Office in Bratislava, now Slovakia, from Architektura ČSR (1951)

Fig. 3.16: Josef Havlíček and team from Stavoprojekt, Prague, Ground-floor plan for the Slovak Planning Office in Bratislava, now Slovakia, from Architektura ČSR (1951)

compete with the city’s famous seventeen-story Bat’a skyscraper, designed in 1937 by Vladimír Karfík, and one of the country’s most well-known symbols of Czechoslovakia’s capitalist success. For obvious reasons, the new Communist Party building could not be less prominent in the skyline than the Bafa tower and each entry

included an image of the new skyline showing the relationship of the two buildings. In every case shown in Architektura ČSR, the buildings were equal in height. Given the context and the need for a tall building, there was an expectation within the Stavoprojekt administration that, for this project, architects would eagerly embrace Soviet examples of embellished, wedding-cake-styled skyscrapers, such as the ‘seven sisters’ under construction in Moscow at the same time.  

This proved false as entries rooted in high modernism and the Bat'a style of modular brick and glass dominated. No winner was declared. Two groups of architects were, however, asked to resubmit projects more “in the spirit of socialist realism.” In the end, nothing was built and Gottwaldov remained a thoroughly Bat'a city. An eclectic, and ultimately unsatisfying, group of projects were also submitted to a 1952 competition for a Monument to the Slovak National Uprising in Banská Bystrice. (Fig. 3.19-3.20) Once again no winner was selected, because “none of the competition projects... had, on their own, the desired unity of form and content, they were also not fully thought-through, comprehensive or clear enough that they could be built as designed without changes.”

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122 Voženílek, "K soutěži na budova KNV Gottwaldově (On the Competition for the Regional National Committee Building in Gottwaldov)," 333.

123 Josef Grus, "Na okraj soutěže památníku slovenského národního povstání (From the Sideline of the Competition for a Monument to the Slovak National Uprising)," Architektura ČSR 11, no. 5-6 (1952): 151-61. The project would not be built until the early 1960s and in a different style.

124 Ibid.: 160.
Fig. 3.17: A. Zikmund, E. Staša and F. Rozhon from Stavosvit, Gottwaldov (Stavoprojekt equivalent), Competition project for Regional National Committee Headquarters in Gottwaldov from *Architektura ČSR* (1951)

Fig. 3.18: F. Bartoš, V. Kubečka, Z. Plesník and O. Stach from Stavosvit, Gottwaldov (Stavoprojekt equivalent), Competition project for Regional National Committee Headquarters in Gottwaldov from *Architektura ČSR* (1951)
The most famous project of the era that resulted from a competition was the House of Culture in Ostrava by Jaroslav Fragner, a celebrated interwar modernist and professor at the Academy of Fine Arts in Prague. The limited competition was sponsored by the Ministry of Education and the Council of Trade Unions and originally included two separate buildings, one for a House of Culture and the other for a House of
Pioneers for the Communist youth movement. Three teams competed, each based at a university—Fragner at the Academy of Fine Arts, Antonín Černý from the Technical University in Prague and Bohuslav Fuchs and Miroslav Kopřiva from the Brno University of Technology. The new complex was purposefully sited halfway between the historic center of Ostrava and the proposed new development in New Ostrava; only the House of Culture was completed. Fragner’s austere building, clad in

125 Hana Stašková, "Urbanisticke a komposici otázky v soutěžních projektech na kulturni a pionýrský dům v Ostravě (Urban and Compositional Questions about the Competitions Projects for the House of Culture and House of Pioneers in Ostrava)" Architektura ČSR 13, no. 8 (1954): 235-44. The House of Pioneers, the Communist youth group, was never built.

Fig. 3.21: Jaroslav Fragner, Competition project for the House of Culture and the House of Pioneers, Ostrava from *Architektura ČSR* (1954)

travertine and ceramic tile, had oversized square columns topped with figural sculptures at the main entrance and a sprawling plan that connected movie and puppet theaters on the building’s west side with a large auditorium on the east side. Multiple revisions of the facade design occurred in the following years as the slow pace of construction pushed the completion date back and the original proposal was no longer as desirable. (Fig. 3.22) Martin Strakoš has described the style of the final project, not completed until 1961, as “intense modern classicism,” rather than sorela.127 Due to its size and position on a primary transportation route from the city center to the industrial neighborhoods on the city’s west side, the building remains an imposing presence in Ostrava even today.

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The most provocative and influential addition to the architectural press in the early 1950s was consistent coverage of Soviet architectural practice. Starting in the fall of 1950, Architektura ČSR noticeably increased the number of articles devoted to Soviet topics. Before the establishment of Sovětská architektura in late 1951, the trend accelerated and Architektura ČSR became the primary conduit for Soviet texts in translation, articles on the history of Russian architecture and contemporary polemics on socialist realism. Each of the first three issues in 1951, numbers 1-2, 3-4 and 5-6, alternated articles by leading Soviet architects with updates on projects from the regional Stavoprojekt offices. In most cases, the Russian texts were accompanied by illustrations of built work and the
Czech and Slovak articles showed unbuilt proposals that were under consideration, including several of the failed competitions. This set up a hierarchical relationship between established Russian socialist realist architects and novice Czechs and Slovaks whose tentative forays into socialist realist design methods were still untested and, judging by the competition results, not yet socialist enough.

With the change of leadership at Stavoprojekt, the political elite and new architectural administration wanted to quickly increase exposure to Soviet examples in the media. In the summer of 1951, there was an announcement from the editorial board at the back of an issue *Architektura ČSR*, proclaiming the creation of *Sovětská architektura*.

Our new journal... will make it possible to inquire still more intensely and more deeply into Soviet architecture and urbanism, to follow the overwhelming progress attained in the creation of architecture through the method of socialist realism, to follow the technical progress of the building industry and to follow magazines, books, exhibitions, symposia, discussions and events in the world of architecture.

According to the notice, an agreement had been reached between the journals that *Sovětská architektura* would focus on “illuminating and stimulating” topics to create

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128 For example, volume 10 opened with a long article by the editor, Oldřich Starý, that detailed the history of Russian architecture from the middle ages to the present, see Oldřich Starý, "Sovětská architektura (Soviet Architecture)," *Architektura ČSR* 10, no. 1-2 (1951): 3-23. It was followed by updates on Stavoprojekt proposals and continued with a translation of an essay by A.G. Mordvinov, President of the Architecture Academy in Moscow, see A.G. Mordvinov, "Architektura mnohopatrových obytných domů, část 1 (Architecture of Multi-story Residential Buildings, Part 1)," *Architektura ČSR* 10, no. 1-2 (1951): 46-53. This pattern continued in the journal for several issues. The second part of the Mordvinov essay appeared in number 3-4, see A.G. Mordvinov, "Architektura mnohopatrových obytných domů, část 2 (Architecture of Multi-story Residential Buildings, Part 2)," *Architektura ČSR* 10, no. 3-4 (1951): 112-15. As indicated, the articles were copiously illustrated with contemporary examples of completed projects.

129 "Naš nový časopis 'Sovětská architektura' (Our New Journal 'Soviet Architecture')," *Architektura ČSR* 10, no. 5-6 (1951): 196.
Fig. 3.23: A.G. Mordvinov, Russian apartments houses on Gorky Street in Moscow (1940), juxtaposed with unbuilt Czechoslovak projects in *Architektura ČSR* (1951)

Fig. 3.24: V. Vychodil and D. Kolář from Stavoprojekt Olomouc, Prostějov branch, Competition project for the Regional National Committee Building, Olomouc (1951), juxtaposed with completed Russian projects in *Architektura ČSR* (1951)
"widespread interest" in Soviet architecture among "all of the professional circles." \(^{130}\)

From this point forward, *Architektura ČSR* would "only publish basic essays on the results of Soviet architecture and urbanism... otherwise we relinquish the detailed information about Soviet architecture to the new magazine." \(^{131}\)

During its short run, the articles in *Sovětská architektura* covered a wide variety of topics ranging from "theory, criticism and the history of architecture," to "architectural design," "region planning and the construction of cities," and "typification, prefabrication, industrialization." \(^{132}\) (Fig. 3.25-3.27) Although the goal of the journal was to instruct architects on how to design in an appropriate style, the articles focused on

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\(^{130}\) Ibid.

\(^{131}\) Ibid.

\(^{132}\) Each year of the journal (1951, 1952, 1953 and 1954) was indexed at the end of year and arranged into these categories, although individual issues did not demarcate such headings.
Fig. 3.26: Apartment building on Uprising Square, Moscow, USSR from Sovětská architektura (1954)

Fig. 3.27: Castle in Litomyšl (1567-1581) from Sovětská architektura (1954)
how the methodology of socialist realism was applied in a given circumstance to produce a satisfying result. Many articles discussed technical aspects of socialist realism including the mass production of ornamentation for facades and time-saving construction techniques.\textsuperscript{133} As a result of this extensive coverage of “detailed information” in 
\textit{Sovětská architektura}, \textit{Architektura ČSR}, did not have to engage with the most excessive examples of Soviet socialist realism. It focused, instead, on the national expression of socialist architecture as promoted by Kroha and others.

In hindsight, this dichotomy had other consequences as well. The split created one journal to show Czechs and Slovaks what socialist realism was in the Soviet Union and another journal to illustrate the attempts by Czechs and Slovaks to meet this standard. Since 
\textit{Sovětská architektura} was published by the Ministry of Education and Culture, led by Zdeněk Nejedlý, who publicly supported a nationalist approach to socialist realism, the projects and polemics in the journal became something associated with the other in architectural discourse. In Cooke’s terms, the journal was a window into ‘images’ of Soviet culture that could not and should not be replicated in Czechoslovakia where a different context required uniquely Czechoslovak visions of the socialist future.\textsuperscript{134} For example, the introduction to a 1953 essay by V. Koreňkov on typification methods included this statement.


\textsuperscript{134} Cooke, "Beauty as a Route to ‘the Radiant Future’: Responses of Soviet Architecture," 143-47.
The working methods of designing typified projects in the Soviet Union are known altogether only very superficially among us to this point. We have concerned ourselves most often with material that supports practical results in construction according to typified projects without really trying to understand the working system of typified design. Nevertheless it is indisputable that from these working methods, we can be best instructed how to solve analogous problems in our distinct circumstances.135

This separation, therefore, strongly reinforced the concept of socialist realism as a method, rather than a style, and one that needed visionaries to conceive and implement it in these “distinct circumstances.”

During this time, the Soviet Union did not totally disappear from Architektura ČSR. More than an entire issue was devoted to the first visit by Czech and Slovak architects to the Soviet Union in October and November 1952, when a delegation of five traveled there for almost one month.136 (Fig. 3.28) They included Jaroslav Fragner; Oldřich Starý, the editor of Architektura ČSR; Jozef Lacko, an architecture professor from Bratislava; Vladimír Chamrál, an architect who was deputy mayor of Prague; and František Zouněk from Stavoprojekt in Košice.137 Upon their return, each architect recounted his experiences in an article for the issue of Architektura ČSR. The texts were accompanied by many photographs of contemporary buildings and group portraits

135 V. Koreňkov, “Potřebujeme jednotnou methodiku typového projektování (We Need a Uniform Method of Typified Design),” Sovětská architektura 3, no. 1 (1953): 12-17.

136 Entire issue, Architektura ČSR 11, no. 10-12, (1952): 279-364 and Jaroslav Fragner, “Záznam ze sovětské cesty (Recounting of a Soviet Journey),” Architektura ČSR 12, no. 1-2 (1953): 4-9. In his article, Chamrád noted that their group was the last from the Eastern Bloc to visit and he blamed this on the bad influence of Rudolf Slanský, who had been arrested the previous year and whose trial began only weeks after the group returned. It is likely that the article was drafted during the trial itself. See Vladimír Chamrád, “Ze zajezdu Československých architektů do SSSR (From the Tour of Czechoslovak Architects to the USSR),” Architektura ČSR 11, no. 10-12 (1952): 280.

showing the delegation in locations around the country taking notes and looking appropriately impressed. The trip was also discussed in a shorter article by Vladimír Chamrád in the first issue of *Sovětská architektura* in 1953.\(^{138}\)

Given the timing of the trip and the effusive descriptions of amenities in Soviet cities, the accounts reflected more about the tense political climate in Czechoslovakia than the conditions in the Soviet Union.\(^{139}\) The pictures of multiple skyscrapers,

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the interiors of the Moscow metro, stadiums and elegant apartment buildings would, however, have made an impression on the journals' readers at a time when few new buildings were being completed in their country. (Fig. 3.29-3.30) In his travelogue, Jaroslav Fragner described conversations with Soviet architects about the "crisis" in Czechoslovak architecture and the legacy of the interwar years.

Seriously and with tact they spoke about the contemporary crisis in Czechoslovak architecture. They referred to the reverberations of critical internal and external sources of cataclysmic political changes that Czech and Slovak architects are working out with difficulty in their own production, so that – just as before – they can once again find the path to profound sincerity. In such a tradition, and in the wonderful tradition of Czech and Slovak architecture, which they whole-heartedly admire, they see the reliable assurance of the future of Czechoslovak architectural production.¹⁴⁰

Fig. 3.29: Delegation in Stalin Square in Stalingrad, USSR from Architektura ČSR (1952)

His response to the trip stood out from the others, since he reflected on personal encounters with the Soviets and the everyday operations of the profession. His laments on the current situation in Czechoslovakia were neutralized to some degree in the observations he made about the importance of architects to the socialist project in the Soviet Union. Reflecting an underlying optimism that, as bad as it was in 1952, the situation would get better. Given his experiences with the House of Culture project in Ostrava, Fragner remained in practice long enough to see these changes occur.

For the next year, Architektura ČSR promoted a similarly hopeful vision of socialist architecture, despite few positive results. Unbuilt projects from the regional
Stavoprojekt offices and universities filled most pages of the journal in 1953. By early the next year, photographs of the first completed sorela projects were ready to be published. Many of these projects were housing developments composed of modified standardized buildings on the rural edges of booming industrial towns. One such example was the housing development Šumbark-Bludovice near Ostrava, which would be expanded and established as the town of Havířov in 1955.\(^{141}\) (Fig. 3.31)

Just one month after Khrushchev’s speech and only three years after the journal had been created to spread “illuminating and stimulating” images,\(^{142}\) Sovětská architektura folded after the last issue in 1954.\(^{143}\) Despite this, the pace of completed sorela projects continued to increase. The output reached its peak in 1956 when Architektura ČSR needed almost six hundred pages to illustrate newly completed projects and articles on innovative building technologies and construction methods. These illustrations were the residue of sorela in Czechoslovakia rather than an expression of a still-vital design methodology. By 1955, Khrushchev’s statements had transformed the profession again and returned it to its modernist roots, albeit without the creative or social freedoms once associated with the avant-garde.

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\(^{142}\) “Náš nový časopis ‘Sovětská architektura’ (Our New Journal ‘Soviet Architecture’),” 196.

\(^{143}\) According to records at the Ministry of Culture, the funds and the paper rations that had been used to publish Sovětská architektura were transferred to the direct control of the Architects' Union in 1955 for the production of a publication of their choice, see MK, carton 165, NA. The result was Československý architekt, a bi-weekly publication in a newspaper format with event listings, articles about current projects and spirited commentary on contemporary practice. Its first issue appeared in December 1955 and it continued until 1990.
New Ostrava

The complexities of sorela’s emergence and decline in Czechoslovakia can be best understood through an examination of a single project such as New Ostrava. By 1951, the regime needed a high-profile architectural project to prove to Moscow that it was finally abandoning the ‘Czechoslovak road’ and moving towards the ‘Soviet model.’ Not only were politicians anxious to see changes, but average Czechs and Slovaks were also waiting for signs that the Communist Party would follow through on its late 1940s rhetoric about providing a better future through socialism. The regime
chose to focus on the design and construction of a new city near Ostrava, which they first called New Ostrava (*Nová Ostrava*) and later named Poruba. The project had an architectural, as well as an economic, role to play in the transformation of socialist Czechoslovakia as heavy industry started to dominate the planned economy and industrial cities like Ostrava needed to build more housing and services as quickly as possible.

As an indicator of the relationship between the project and the development of industry, the plans for New Ostrava were first announced by Czechoslovak Minister of Heavy Industry Gustav Kliment at a plenary meeting of local national committee delegates in Ostrava on Saturday, August 10, 1951. In his speech, Kliment described the government’s plan to make the coal-mining and steel-producing city of Ostrava into the country’s “first socialist city,”\textsuperscript{144} what one newspaper affectionately called the “steel heart” of Czechoslovakia.\textsuperscript{145} With typical Communist pomp, an impressive crowd had been assembled to hear the announcement including Vice-President of the National Front Antonín Fiala, local leaders from the Czechoslovak Communist Party, the army and the Committee for National Security, as well as decorated shockworkers and renowned local poet Petr Bezruč. A Russian film crew even turned up for the event with diplomat Boris Petrovič Čirkov, a Soviet national artist and member of the Supreme Soviet.\textsuperscript{146}

\textsuperscript{144} *Prace*, Aug. 12, 1951, p. 1.

\textsuperscript{145} *Lidová demokracie*, Aug. 12, 1951, p. 3.

\textsuperscript{146} Ibid.
Kliment announced a program that included building a new, larger steelworks in the Kunčice district on the outskirts of Ostrava, which would be called the New Steelworks of Klement Gottwald (Nová hut' Klementa Gottwalda) in honor of the Czechoslovak President and long-time party head. There were also plans to expand mining operations in the region and to increase production capacity at the 125-year old Vitkovice Iron and Steel Works, also recently renamed the Vitkovice Iron and Steel Works of Klement Gottwald. The final item on the list, which seems to have attracted the most attention in the local and national press, was the announcement of plans to build a new settlement on land adjacent to the old city of Ostrava. The settlement, New Ostrava, was proposed as a civic and administrative center with housing for 150,000 residents, increasing Ostrava's total population by 75% within 15 years.\(^{147}\) (Fig. 3.32) The announcement of the new city was necessary in order to recruit and retain workers for the expanding mines and ironworks. Yet as Catherine Cooke suggested, the design of the city itself was also an opportunity to showcase Communist principles. As she noted, "when the political philosophy governing all decision-making about state production was materialist, neither the form of objects of material culture nor the means of their production was to be determined casually."\(^{148}\) This was certainly the case for the young Russophile architect, Vladimír Meduna, who was given the opportunity to design New Ostrava with his team from Stavoprojekt in Ostrava. Like many socialist master plans, however, his proposed landscape did not materialize as first imagined.

\(^{147}\) Meduna, "Nová Ostrava (New Ostrava)," 262.

\(^{148}\) Cooke, "Beauty as a Route to 'the Radiant Future': Responses of Soviet Architecture," 141.
From the start there was a clash between ambition and capacity. Chronic shortages of materials, skilled laborers and workers' accommodations, along with political turmoil and changes in stylistic preferences meant that New Ostrava emerged in a truncated form and with the new, less ambitious name of Poruba after the village and small stream on the site.\footnote{The stream was called the Little Poruba (Porubka). Strakoš, "Nová Ostrava a její satelity - část 2 (New Ostrava and Its Satellites, Part 2)," 60.} As built, the neighborhood retained a sense of socialist realist grandeur with a monumental entrance gate, wide boulevards, classical detailing and shady parks, yet progress was so slow that only the first 20% of the project was built before the style fell out of favor around 1956. Some of the remaining phases were built
over the next thirty years according to adapted master plans that reflected architectural styles popular at various times; other parts of the site remain undeveloped even today. Yet on that summer day in 1951, the future was still full of optimism as the country “embarked on a journey to build a new, happy, and socialist Ostrava.”

Due in part to the volume and depth of modern design in Czechoslovakia during the interwar period, architectural historians have long lamented what Rostislav Švácha called “the end of the avant-garde” after 1948. Sorela was perceived as running counter to the country’s strong modernist traditions and the “iron curtain” represented the closing off of Eastern Europe to the West and its legacies. Boris Groys’s concept of “totality” is useful here in providing a counterpoint to this interpretation of architecture as primarily stylistic practice with an underlying logic and method that relies on formal principles. Groys argues that socialist realism, like the avant-garde movement before it, was a product of an all-encompassing modern vision of society that offered no way to operate outside of its boundaries. Since dialectical materialism created “internal contradiction” and “paradox,” struggle was inherent to the socialist condition and style was not “logical, consistent or uncontradictory.”

150 Prace, Aug. 11, 1951, p.1.
152 In 1945, Joseph Goebbels was the first European to use the term “iron curtain” with its current connotations. A few months later, Winston Churchill made the “iron curtain” famous in a telegram to U.S. President Harry Truman. See Ignace Feuerlicht, “A New Look at the Iron Curtain,” American Speech 30, no. 3 (Oct. 1955): 186-89.
Although many Czech and Slovak architects did not accept the Marxist-Leninist rhetoric, the social, economic and political conditions of the early 1950s meant that their architecture was part of this ‘totality’ in absolute terms. Stavoprojekt served the interests of the state, and therefore the party and the people. Any objections about the formal qualities of sorela were perceived as secondary to the ability of these buildings to make an “emotional connection [with the people]…to look monumental but at the same time seem intimate, human, cozy.”¹⁵⁴ In these terms, Poruba was an exemplary socialist realist housing development that succeeded in creating ‘images’ of the socialist future that were unlike anything the local people had seen before. Many of the neighborhood’s new residents arrived to their apartments from dilapidated miners’ cottages. For them, these large, elegant buildings were nothing short of the physical embodiment of progress. Not only did the buildings look like palaces, but they offered indoor plumbing, hot water and reliable heat, tangible signs that the socialist future would be better than the capitalist past they were leaving behind.

The roots of Ostrava’s housing problems lead back to the 1820s when the Habsburg Archduke Rudolf Jan, Archbishop of Olomouc, opened the Ironworks of Rudolf (Rudolfova hut) on church land in the Ostrava neighborhood of Vitkovice.¹⁵⁵ Soon this former imperial outpost was transformed into a regional trading hub with a strong industrial base, a prosperous upper middle class and a steady flow of new workers.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., 111.

leaving the rural areas for economic opportunities in the city. The immigration was so rapid in the nineteenth century that Ostrava’s population doubled every twenty years.\footnote{Meduna, "Nová Ostrava (New Ostrava)," 259.} In the 1860s, under the ownership of the prosperous Viennese Rothschild family, the operation was expanded and renamed the Vitkovice Iron and Steel Works.\footnote{Machotková, "The History of Vitkovice Heavy Machinery a.s."} In the late nineteenth century, the wealthy built speculative apartment houses and art nouveau villas near the city center, while new neighborhoods of primitive workers’ cottages and temporary barracks continued to spring up in the area around Vitkovice a few miles away. By the early twentieth century, the downtown included a large commercial square, churches, synagogues, cafes, schools, upscale apartment houses and several department stores. Although Ostrava remained provincial in relation to Prague and Brno, the city experienced a similar building boom in the prosperous interwar years following the creation of Czechoslovakia in 1918. Notable buildings from the era include the Anglo-Czechoslovak Bank by Prague architect Josef Gočár from 1923, the Bachner Department Store by German architect Erich Mendelsohn from 1930 and the ultramodern Pešat Department Store by Brno architect Bohuslav Fuchs from 1932.\footnote{Kohout, Tempi and Zatloukal, eds., Česká architektura - architektura XX.století. Dil I. Morava a Slezsko, 141-54.}

(Fig. 3.33)

This prosperity contributed to housing shortages as more workers arrived and living conditions continued to deteriorate with many mining families living without
indoor plumbing or running water as late as the 1950s.\textsuperscript{159} It was already common in the 1930s to chop up single-family houses into smaller apartments to accommodate more workers.\textsuperscript{160} The growing working class population in Ostrava also proved to be a natural base of support for the Communist Party, which was legal in Czechoslovakia from its inception in 1921. The Red Army liberated Ostrava in 1945 and its presence was felt much more intensely here than in other parts of the Czech lands. For example, unlike many other Czech cities that showed an ambivalence towards the Soviet Union and communism at the end of the war, Ostrava erected a large bronze and marble

![Ostrava city center (1930s) — the Pešat Department store by Bohuslav Fuchs is the narrow building to the left of the Bat’a Store by architects František Stalmach and Jan Svoboda — from Ostrava 1880-1939 (2000)](image)

\textsuperscript{159} A detailed report about the current state of the Ostrava region was prepared by the Ministry of the Interior for the Central Committee of the Czechoslovak Communist Party in 1950. See “Zpráva o stavu lidové správy v Ostravském kraji (Report on the State of the People’s Administration in the Ostrava Region)”, 1950 (month unknown), p. 1-112, esp. 22-24, carton 128, ÚKPK.

\textsuperscript{160} Interview with Martin Strakoš, Sept. 2002, Ostrava, Czech Republic.
monument commemorating the arrival of the Red Army in a city park in 1946. The
Communist leadership used these local conditions to their advantage, blaming the
housing shortage and the poor living conditions in Ostrava on capitalist excess and the
abuse of the working class. The Soviets and communism were portrayed as a better
alternative. This argument found strong support among the inhabitants of Ostrava who
voted 40.6% for the Communists in the 1946 democratic elections.161

World War II and the events of 1948 set the stage for Ostrava’s most dramatic
transition— from provincial industrial city to socialist showpiece. During the war, more
than 30% of the housing stock in the northern part of the Ostrava region was destroyed
or damaged.162 Although the city itself suffered little damage, the displaced residents of
nearby cities and towns such as Opava and Fulnek put even more pressure on the tight
housing market in the area. Combined with the shortages from the 1930s, the housing
situation in the Ostrava region after 1945 was dire. A 1950 report stated that Ostrava was
one of the most densely populated cities in the country with more than 340 residents per
square kilometer.163 Although this density does not compare to overcrowding in today’s

161 For all elections results, see Jiří Sláma and Karel Kaplan, Die Parlamentswahlen in der
Tschechoslowakei 1935 - 1946 - 1948: eine statistische Analyse (The Parliamentary Elections in
Ostrava’s support for the Communists was among the highest in Moravia, only the mining and
textile cities in the Jeseník mountains voted over 50% for the Communists. The numbers do not,
however, compare to towns in the borderlands in northern Bohemia where communist support
was often over 60%.

162 Vilem Plaček, "K bytové a občanské výstavbě na Ostravsku, 1949-1960 (On the Residential
and Civic Building in the Ostrava Region, 1949-1960)," Časopis slezského muzea Serie B 36

163 "Zpráva o stavu lidové správy v Ostravském kraji," p. 3.
developing countries, many inhabitants of Ostrava at this time lived in one- or two-story buildings without running water or electricity.

As discussed in chapters one and two, the first major initiative on the part of the national government to build workers' housing in industrial areas was the Model Housing Development program started in 1946, two years before the Communist Party came to power. The program continued with minor changes through 1950, but in the end few units were completed according to the original designs. Documents from the Ostrava site at Bělský Les showed repeated complaints about shortages of building materials and skilled construction workers, as well as general disorganization and a lack of urgency among the project managers. By 1950, it was also becoming clear that the modest functionality of the T-series could not satisfy the propagandistic needs of the party leadership. The August 1951 announcement of the plan for New Ostrava marked a turning point for architecture in Czechoslovakia.

The design team was led by Vladimír Meduna, an ambitious, young, Stalinist architect from the Ostrava branch of Stavoprojekt. In an article for the journal, Architektura ČSR, Meduna systematically laid out the argument for New Ostrava with exaggerated Marxist rhetoric and absolute praise for the Soviet Union. He began with a short history of the housing problem in the city and described the image of Ostrava in

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164 In addition to letters between the construction managers, the architects and the ministries about the lack of materials, the workers themselves were complaining about not being able to complete their work. In a newsletter from the enterprise, Pozemní stavby in Karviná, employees wrote articles such as “Why are we waiting for materials?” complaining that “today the bricklayers were either waiting for mortar or for bricks or again for concrete.” See fond: Vládní komise pro výstavbu Ostravská (Government commission for building the Ostrava region), carton 24, folder 65, Zemský archiv v Opavě (Regional Archive in Opava), Opava, Czech Republic.

165 Meduna, "Nová Ostrava (New Ostrava)," 259-64.
1951 as “a tangle of factories, railway cars and workers’ colonies heaped up in a mess, smothered by clouds of smoke and dust without a trace of greenery or freshness.” This was what “capitalism did to Ostrava” and now “through the building of socialism [the city] is the focal point of the whole republic.” Meduna stressed that New Ostrava was not only an economic endeavor, but “a creative plan, a plan of beauty, of a serene environment for the working man living in the city.” The site had been selected based on its proximity to industries such as the Vitkovice Ironworks and the ground had been tested to make sure that there were no valuable coal deposits underneath the proposed area; nearby towns had suffered serious damage from underground mining that caused buildings and roads to sink into the ground.

Designed to last for “many centuries and thousands of years,” the project attempted to create a European capital out of a tabula rasa. The landscape was imagined in grandiose terms. The site would be terraced to rise 20 meters above the Oder River Valley to the west and then the city would sit along the banks of a new canal built to

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166 Ibid.: 262.

167 Ibid.

168 Ibid.: 263.

169 An extensive set of maps detailing the existing city, the regional transportation systems and the geological conditions of the area was prepared in 1953. See “Mapy: General revíru ostravsko-karvinských dolů (Maps: General Mining Area of the Ostrava-Karvinna Mines),” Mar. 10, 1953, VVV, carton 593, NA. Another example of urban planning in a mining area is the case of the city of Most in the brown-coal region of northern Bohemia. In the 1960s the government decided to abandoned its city center when valuable coal deposits were discovered underneath it. The historic church was moved and a new city was built on land adjacent to the old center, but the severe architecture and inhuman scale of the new city doomed the project from the start. Today it is largely a slum. See Eagle Glassheim, "Ethnic Cleansing, Communism, and Environmental Devastation in Czechoslovakia's Borderlands, 1945-1989," Journal of Modern History 78, no. 1 (2006): 65-92.

170 Meduna, "Nová Ostrava (New Ostrava)," 262.
connect the Oder to a tributary of the Danube River 100 kilometers away. (Fig. 3.34) Meduna described how the 40-meter wide canal would widen to 120 meters in the center of the city, where the silhouette of the monumental buildings would reflect off of the surface like a "mirror in the water."\textsuperscript{171} The project for the Oder-Danube Canal was first proposed by Habsburg nobles in the seventeenth century; the idea was resurrected by Hitler during the war; and then again at the start of the Communist era when the government was looking for ways to quickly move goods around the region.\textsuperscript{172} No more than a few miles of the canal were ever built, so Ostrava’s riverfront failed to materialized. Although the street along the southwestern edge of the neighborhood was still named "the embankment," showing something about the optimistic character of the period.\textsuperscript{173}

\textsuperscript{171} Ibid.: 263. The rendering from 1952 does not show the proposed widening of the canal.

\textsuperscript{172} There is a technical report on the project contained within a 1946 Ministry of Technology analysis. See “Přípravná opatření k provádění budovatelského programu třetí vlady (The Preparatory arrangements of the Building Program of the Third Government),” 1946, pp. 14-21, MT, carton 303, NA.

\textsuperscript{173} There is an interesting twist to this aspect of the design. In 2003, the Council of Europe returned to the idea of a Danube-Oder-Elbe Canal and several feasibility studies were conducted.
The first designs for New Ostrava, published with Meduna’s essay in *Architektura ČSR*, showed a monumental project at the inhuman scale characteristic of the worst Soviet projects. (Fig. 3.35) At the center of the expansive master plan an administrative building designed to look like the socialist realist towers in Moscow sat at the end of long street axis, 80-meters wide and flanked by palace-like apartment buildings. In comparison, Meduna noted that Wenceslas Square in Prague was only 66

meters wide. Throughout the text, he stressed the benefits of the development’s large size and careful planning. Infrastructure such as public transportation to and from local industrial enterprises would be more cost-effective and efficient in a large development like New Ostrava rather than in multiple smaller settlements which had been the preferred model in the interwar period. In addition to the monumental central axis in the central district, the site would have three additional residential neighborhoods separated from each other by green zones and wide avenues. Most of the apartment blocks in each of the four neighborhoods were organized around courtyards with shared open spaces. (Fig. 3.36) As the project developed, its size was scaled down and only two of the four neighborhoods were pursued, although it remained larger in scope than all other housing projects in Czechoslovakia at the time. More than 400 designers were involved in the initial phases of the project including teams from Stavoprojekt offices in Ostrava, Prague and Brno, as well as an architectural committee with representatives from the Union of Creative Artists and the universities.

Construction began with the first district (obvod), the location in the original design of the large administration building and the central waterfront. One obstacle to the fulfillment of the master plan was the pre-existing condition of the site. A Baroque manor house (zámeck), church and small village had been on the land since the late eighteenth century. (Fig. 3.37) In 1948, a group of miners’ cottages were built nearby

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174 Meduna, “Nová Ostrava (New Ostrava),” 263.

Fig. 3.36: Poruba’s first and second districts from the collection of the Ostrava City Archive (c. 1960)

Fig. 3.37: St. Mikuláš church. Poruba (1788-1791), a church had been on the land as early as the 15th century (author’s photo, 2004)
after a new tram line began service in the area. Then in 1949, forty-five T12 buildings were designed to house additional workers on the site; they were completed sometime in the early 1950s. (Fig. 3.38-3.40) Like other T-series buildings discussed in chapter two, almost all of these apartment blocks were organized in a series of parallel rows with group in the northeast quadrant of the development took on the courtyard configuration of the later New Ostrava master plan, indicating Stavoprojekt’s changing urban planning preferences. The rows stepped up the face of the hillside to take advantage of the natural slope of the site and gain more light and air for the apartments. (Fig. 3.41)

Fig. 3.38: Poruba’s T-series and first district buildings—the relationship between the oblouk and the existing T-series buildings can be seen in the foreground—from the collective of the Ostrava City Archive (c. 1960)

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178 Correspondence with Martin Strakoš, Feb. 24, 2007.
Fig. 3.39: Poruba Street on moving day with the oblouk under construction in the background from the collective of the Ostrava City Archive (c.1955)

Fig. 3.40: T12 blocks in Poruba (1950-1953) (author’s photo, 2006)
Meduna and his team decided to wrap the first district around this existing development of T12 blocks and along the edge of the land occupied by the cottages, church and manor house. As an organizing strategy, Meduna created several new spatial nodes and a hierarchy of wide and narrow streets to deemphasize the existing buildings. The new master plan was laid out on a grid running at a forty-five degree angle to the rows of T-series buildings and counter to the curve of the main village street. Conceptually, Meduna began with the “oblouk,” a large curved apartment block, half-circle in plan, with a tall tower at its western end and two large archways cut into its facade to allow traffic to pass under and through the building along the existing roads. (Fig. 3.42-3.44) The oblouk, which means arch in Czech, functioned as a monumental gateway while masking the rows of T-series buildings and the village
behind it. In plan, it also rationalized the relationship of the 45-degree angle of the existing street with the new edge of the Poruba master plan. (Fig. 3.45) This was achieved in part by using small connector buildings that were added to the standardized blocks to attach the eastern end of the half-circle to the facade of the southernmost T-block and to connect the new row of apartment blocks along the “embankment” to the backside of the oblouk just to the north of the tower. (Fig. 3.46-4.47)

As an object, the oblouk strongly expressed a change in architectural method from the T-series of the early Stavoprojekt years. It was many times larger than any of the standardized projects from 1950 and adorned with arches, sgraffito panels and a

Fig. 3.42: Evžen Steflíček and Miroslav Matiovský, Oblouk in Poruba (1951-1956) from Dějiny českého výtvarného umění V (2005)
Fig. 3.43: View through the oblouk looking up the hill (author’s photo, 2006)

Fig. 3.44: Poruba Street and the oblouk from the Poruba Street residential tower from the collection of the Ostrava City Archive (c. 1955)
Fig. 3.45: Vladimír Meduna, Rudolf Spáčil and Miroslav Čtvrtíček, Plan of Poruba’s first and second districts (1951)—district 1 dashed (bottom); district 2 dotted (top)—base map from Dejiny českého výtvarného umění V (2005)
Fig. 3.46: View from the oblouk tower looking up Poruba Street, the connection between the buildings on “embankment” street can be seen in the shadowed section of the image, from the collection of the Ostrava City Archive (c. 1955)

Fig. 3.47: Connection between the southernmost T12 block and the eastern corner of the oblouk, view from the north side (author’s photo, 2006)
series of pilasters from the third to fourth floors and again between the cornice and roof. Over the central archway was a sculptural group in the classical tradition of pediment ornamentation, although these figures were miners with their families complete with representations of work clothes, a bicycle, a dog and a wreath with a union symbol. (Fig. 3.48) The scene was not far from everyday life for the locals in the 1950s as seen in a snapshot of a crew with their bicycles in front of the Dukla Mine in the same era. (Fig. 3.49) The tower also replaced the church as the highest spire in the area, although the church itself remained intact.

Martin Strakoš has noted that Meduna did not create this form on his own, instead he copied the design from a Russian example, the nineteenth-century General Staff Arch on Palace Square in St. Petersburg by K.I. Rossi.¹⁷⁷ (Fig. 3.50) Like Meduna’s project, the Russian example was referred to in Czech as an “oblouk.”¹⁷⁸ Although Meduna had not traveled to the Soviet Union, the project was shown in the 1949 exhibition “The Architecture of the Nations of the Soviet Union from the Distant Past to the Building of the Socialist Present” and illustrated in the accompanying exhibition catalogue of the same name.¹⁷⁹ (Fig. 3.3) Meduna borrowed not only the shape of the building, but the scale and placement of the sculptural reliefs over the central opening and the coffer detail within the archway, which was repeated throughout the neighborhood. A Russian example may also have been the model for the unusual

¹⁷⁸ Architektura národů SSSR z dávné minulosti k výstavbě socialistického dneška, Item 22.1 on inventory, unpaged.
¹⁷⁹ Ibid., Illustration 22.
Fig. 3.48: Pediment sculpture on the oblouk (author’s photo, 2006)

Fig. 3.49: Crew with their bicycles at the Dukla Mine from Ostravsko včera a dnes (1954)
asymmetrical tower, which was similar in scale and urban presence to St. Petersburg spires such as the Admiralty and St. Peter’s and Paul’s Cathedral. The choice of location for the tower, at the extreme east end of the half-circle also served another purpose – to hide the nearby church spire from view when entering into the settlement as illustrated in a photograph of the building site. (Fig. 3.51)

The second organizing feature of the site was the central boulevard, called Lenin Street and now Main Street, which was the monumental axis in Meduna’s master plan. In order to bring people from the oblouk to the center of the neighborhood, they passed under the oblouk through the central opening on Poruba Street, which followed the diagonal of the T12 rows to the intersection with the new street grid at the top of the hill. This change in direction was marked by another distinctive residential tower by
Ukrainian-born architect Boris Jelčaninov. This tall boxy design was modeled on a renaissance-era precedent from Prague’s Castle District.\textsuperscript{180} (Fig. 3.52-3.53, Fig. 3.8) The overpowering visual connection from the oblouk to the apartment tower deemphasized the presence of the T12 blocks, which visually and experientially disappear into the space between these two nodes. (Fig. 3.54) Beyond the tower was the center of Poruba where Lenin Street and Poruba Street crossed at a large traffic circle. Lenin Street was lined on both sides with monumental apartment buildings decorated with multi-story columns, ornamental balconies and giant archways leading into the small residential

\textsuperscript{180} Strakoš, "Nová Ostrava a její satelity - část 2 (New Ostrava and Its Satellites, Part 2)," 61.
Fig. 3.52: Boris Jelčaninov, Tower on Poruba Street—silhouette detail taken from Schwarzenberg Palace in Prague (Fig. 3.8)—from the collection of the Ostrava City Archive (c. 1956)

Fig. 3.53: Poruba Street (author’s photo, 2006)
streets and courtyards beyond. (Fig. 3.55-3.56) To the southwest of Lenin Street was the first district and to the northeast was the second district, only partially completed according to the original master plan. The scale and style of the space attempted to evoke the classical ambience of boulevards in the great European capitals such as the Champs d’Elysees in Paris. (Fig. 3.57) Although, unlike its Soviet precedents, Poruba was tailored to the pedestrian with shops and restaurants lining the ground floors of Buildings along Lenin Street and buildings all along the primary axes. (Fig. 3.58) There were walking paths nestled among the buildings and openings through the ground floors of residential buildings leading from the large streets into park-like interior courtyards. The buildings’ details included folksy floral and animal patterns, images of
smiling workers, happy children and babies.\textsuperscript{181} (Fig. 3.59) Sculptures were commissioned for the public spaces in the neighborhood and rather than classical nude figures, the series featured miners and other industrial workers dressed in their professional clothing and holding the tools of their trade. (Fig. 3.60)

Fig. 3.55: Archway on Main Street, formerly Lenin Street, beyond the opening is a residential courtyard (author’s photo, 2006)

\textsuperscript{181} The scenes were sometimes askew. On the Poruba Street tower, there are sgraffito images of nude children that look like cherubs above the cornice. In one case, a male child is shown urinating and others are doing activities that seem out of place such as playing with a hockey stick. The juxtaposition of the nudity and the everyday activities make the images seem perverted rather than intellectual.
Fig. 3.56: Detail of building at the corner of Main Street and Poruba Street (author’s photo, 2006)

Fig. 3.57: View looking up Lenin Street in the 1960s from *Ostrava socialistická* (1971)
Fig. 3.58: Main Street in Poruba (author’s photo, 2006)

Fig. 3.59: Artisan working on sgraffito panel in Poruba from the collection of the Ostrava City Archive (c. 1955)
Like many socialist neighborhoods across the region, the buildings were arranged in “ensembles” around courtyards. Each of the buildings was designed by a different group of architects, although all worked from the standardized types in the Stavoprojekt guides. Entrances to the stairwells leading to individual apartments were often placed on the courtyard side of the building rather than on the street side to create a sense of privacy and community within each ‘ensemble.’ Today children still play in these courtyards, which have grown into lush green spaces with playgrounds, seating areas and in many cases, impromptu parking spaces around the edges to accommodate the growing number of automobiles. (Fig. 3.61-3.63)
Fig. 3.61: Courtyard in the first district (author’s photo, 2006)

Fig. 3.62: Courtyard and pathway in the first district (author’s photo, 2006)
Fig. 3.63: Wide streets in the first district overtaken by cars (author’s photo, 2006)

Fig. 3.64: Aerial view of Poruba from the collection of the Ostrava City Archive (c. 1960)
The ‘ensemble’ was a feature of socialist architecture that developed from the European classical tradition and in the Soviet case, directly from the nineteenth-century architecture of St. Petersburg. Groys described this feature of socialist urbanism as an attempt to create “a constructed totality,” that emphasized each building’s inability to be a totality in and of itself and only through the “ensemble” could this be achieved.\(^\text{182}\)

Cooke also wrote about the experiential qualities of the ensemble.

The Soviet city was a ‘radiant’ experience for the ordinary proletarian inhabitant because it provided the elevating and confidence-building experience of moving as ‘owner’ through a continuous planned hierarchy of ever-larger ensembles. They started from the harmoniously composed building in which he or she lived and extended out into the city and conceptually to the whole socialist world.\(^\text{183}\)

In Ostrava, this logic extended only to the boundaries of Poruba by the mid-1950s, but it was a new conception of urban space that distinguished socialist architecture from the haphazard development of the old city. (Fig. 3.64)

The ‘radiance’ of the city was not only a theoretical concept, but part and parcel of the political message of the Stalinist period. Minister of Heavy Industry Gustav Kliment described New Ostrava as the counterbalance to the extreme work environments around the city. At a time when most workers still lived in dire circumstances, the new city promised a reward for the people’s hard work. In a 1951 speech about building socialist cities, he said,

Black should remain underneath Ostrava, in the mines, chemical plants and machine shops—the places of work in Ostrava, however the


\(^{183}\) Cooke, "Beauty as a Route to 'the Radiant Future': Responses of Soviet Architecture," 149.
apartments of Ostrava’s workers and their children should not have to be black in the future....Don’t you want miners, who spend all day digging out coal without a ray of sunshine, to at least have enough sunlight in the hours that they have for a little bit of rest?\(^{184}\)

In this way, the landscape and experience of Poruba were actively engaged with a dialectical worldview that required an opposition between work and home, between the darkness of the mine and the brightness of the city. As a form of cultural production in a communist society, architecture could not be freed from this struggle. The socialist industrial city was the location of the economic base of Marxism-Leninism and its residential and civic architecture was part of its superstructure. It was an instrument through which the project of heavy industry was supported and promoted by keeping the workers content at home and productive in the factory. It was also physical evidence, in its ability to project the ‘image’ of the socialist future, of the success of the socialist system in improving the living standard of those workers who performed well enough to gain access to the new landscape of socialism. Therefore, the method of socialist realism, which produced sorela in Czechoslovakia, was dependent and constitutive of the industrial project of Stalinism.

**Conclusion**

Sorela was only tentatively accepted by many architects. The desire to provide basic needs to the society, such as shelter, became a justification for the continuation of work even though sorela itself represented a difficult, but ultimately unavoidable,

\(^{184}\) As quoted in Strakoš, "Nová Ostrava a její satelity - část 2 (New Ostrava and Its Satellites, Part 2)," 62.
compromise for most. Those who were able to use the situation to their advantage found early success. Others simply went through the motions in fear of what might happen otherwise. The tension of the sorela period would come to an abrupt end. In December 1954 Nikita Khrushchev delivered his speech, “On Useless Things in Architecture,” at the Conference of Soviet Builders in Moscow.\textsuperscript{185} Translated and published in Czech just one month later by the Research Institute of Construction and Architecture (Výzkumný ústav výstavby a architektury), he explicitly denounced the exaggerated style of Soviet socialist realism and demanded that architects stop building with the ostentatious and costly materials that defined the style in the Soviet Union.\textsuperscript{186} The comments were not only prescriptive, but designed to place blame with particular individuals, including the head architect in Moscow and professors at the university who were named among the worst offenders. The content of the speech reverberated throughout the Eastern Bloc.

The significance of this reversal in Czechoslovakia cannot be overstated. Architects who practiced at the time continue to speak of architecture in this period as “before Khrushchev” and “after Khrushchev”; specifically in reference to the speech and not to his tenure as party leader.\textsuperscript{187} In 1955, architects who had struggled to find an

\textsuperscript{185} For an English translation of the speech, see Whitney, ed., Khrushchev Speaks: Selected Speeches, Articles, and Press Conferences, 1949-1961, 153-92.

\textsuperscript{186} At the time of the Czech translation, Jiří Voženílek was head of the Research Institute of Construction and Architecture, although he left that position to become a Deputy Minister just as the publication appeared. See Sborník: Diskuse o otázkách soudobé výstavby a architektury v SSR (Anthology: Discussions Of Questions of Contemporary Building and Architecture in the Soviet Union) (Prague: Výzkumný ústav výstavby a architektury, 1955).

\textsuperscript{187} For example, architect Milan Brzák was one of the interior designers of the Hotel Internacionál in Prague. He spoke at the Club for Old Prague on March 17, 2003 about his experiences on the project and described a complete change in atmosphere “before” and “after” Khrushchev.
acceptable socialist realist vocabulary for Czechoslovakia found themselves relieved of the burden. They were, however, still left to confront the aftermath of the ordeal. Because of the long delivery schedule for buildings, made even longer by the constant failures of the planned economy, sorela projects were under construction until 1957.

As chapter five discusses, the reversal in Czechoslovakia was quick and total. The research into industrial housing methods that had continued through the sorela period could finally be brought out into the open and championed as further evidence of the strength of the concept of socialist architecture and its potential to solve the housing problem. Khrushchev’s 1954 speech did not start the reaction against sorela in Czechoslovakia, it only made it possible for the technocrats who had remained inside of Stavoprojekt to reemerge in the public discussion about architecture. It was permission for Czechoslovakia’s architects to return to the project of postwar modernity that they had first envisioned in 1945 and held onto in 1948.

This was not possible, however, given the new political, social and economic reality of the 1950s. Despite the stylistic affinity between projects of the mid-1950s such as the Czechoslovak Pavilion for the 1958 Brussels Expo and the period of high modernism, the underlying conception of architecture as an artistic or creative act, which had been put forward in the period from 1945-50, was irretrievable as a systematic approach. The industrialization of the building process itself and the interest in typification that was the basis of Stavoprojekt and its Design Institutes required the architectural professional to become subsumed in a collective building culture that valued repetition and economy over all other categories. This was also a dimension of
the end of sorela. As the Stalinist ‘cult of personality’ was attacked, so to was the image of the individual architect. As Jiří Kroha’s experiences in the 1950s demonstrate, there were no opportunities left in the post-Stalin era for architects who remained dedicated to their artistic identity.
Chapter 4: 
A Vision of Socialist Architecture: The Late Career of Jiří Kroha (1945-1956)

I believe that it is clear to every architect today that as a consequence of the changes occurring at this moment in economic, cultural and political life, architectural production will demand not only a new formulation, but also a new direction. — Jiří Kroha, 1945

Jiří Kroha is primarily remembered by historians of Czech architecture as a leftwing interwar functionalist whose buildings can be found in Mladá Boleslav and the villa districts around Brno. Many do not know that the most active period of Kroha’s career was after 1948 when he was a prominent Communist and head of the only independent atelier within Stavoprojekt, the state-run system of architecture offices.

From September 1948 to August 1954, it was the Atelier of National Artist Jiří Kroha (Atelier národního umělce Jiřího Krohy, henceforth ANU) and from August 1954 to July 1956, the Master Atelier of National Artist Jiří Kroha (Mistrovský atelier národního umělce Jiřího Krohy, henceforth MANU). In his role as Czechoslovakia’s premier socialist

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1 Jiří Kroha, “Manifestační projev (Statement of a Manifesto),” *Architektura ČSR* 5, no. 1 (1946): 22. The original statement was delivered at the first meeting of the Block of Progressive Architectural Associations on July 17, 1945. For texts of all the speeches, see “Spolupráce architektů na výstavbě státu: První veřejný projev Blok architektonických pokrokových spolků (BAPS) dne 17. července 1945 (The Collaboration of Architects in the Construction of the State: The First Public Event of the Block of Progressive Architectural Associations on July 17, 1945),” *Architektura ČSR* 5, no. 1 (1946): 2-24. All Czech to English translations are by the author unless noted.

2 For a chronological narrative of the development of ANU and MANU in Prague, see “Informace o organisačním vývoji Mistrovského ateliéru nár. Umělce Jiřího Krohy v Praze (Information on the Organizational Development of the Master Atelier of National Artist Jiří Kroha in Prague),” May 25, 1956, fond 1185: Ústřední správa pro bytovou a občanskou výstavbu (Central Administration
designer, Kroha and his staff completed diverse projects including workers’ clubs, university buildings, the renovation of Strahov stadium for the 1955 Spartakiada, and several large housing developments. The residential projects included the new town of Nová Dubnica in Slovakia from 1951 and the second phase of the Model Housing Development in Ostrava from 1952. The Atelier’s design methods developed out of Kroha’s desire to adapt Soviet socialist realism and Marxist-Leninist cultural models to the Czechoslovak context. As a body of work, the production of ANU and MANU represented the most consistent and comprehensive engagement with socialist realist architecture in Czechoslovakia.

An analysis of Jiří Kroha’s professional life and the work of the atelier in the 1940s and 1950s offers a rare opportunity for an in-depth study of the implementation of socialist realism in Czechoslovakia and the region. Unlike most of his contemporaries, Kroha was a life-long Marxist and devoted party member who saw the rise of the Communist Party as no less than the precursor to the development of a truly socialist

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3 First held in 1921, the Spartakiada was a Communist exercise festival that was revived in 1955 and held every five years until 1990. See Petr Roubal, “Politics of Gymnastics. Mass Gymnastic Displays Under Communism in Central and Eastern Europe,” *Body and Society* 9, no. 2 (2003): 1-25.


5 The post-1938 materials in the Jiří Kroha collection at the *Muzeum města Brna* (Brno City Museum) were uncatalogued and inaccessible until 2006. In preparation for a traveling exhibition and monograph about the architect in the summer of 2007, the museum began to sort the materials and opened the uncatalogued portion to a group of scholars, including the author.
society. From 1948 until the end of his atelier in 1956, he was one of the most spirited
defenders of the new method in Czechoslovakia, but his idiosyncratic interpretation of
the slogan ‘national in form, socialist in content’ led him to design buildings that defied
easy stylistic categorization. While most of his interwar counterparts held onto their
preferences for modernist forms into the socialist period, Kroha transitioned smoothly
from functionalism to a style that can be described as abstract classicism. He succeeded
in balancing tensions between the regime’s desire to “sovietize” local culture and the
more subtle project of defining a unique socialist architecture for Czechoslovakia; one
that built on and, in some respects transcended, the modernist tradition while promising
a brighter socialist future. As this chapter and the previous one show, Kroha’s
architectural output is best understood within new conceptual frameworks, developed
by scholars of Soviet socialist realism such as Boris Groys and Catherine Cooke, which
look to Marxism-Leninism as propagated in the 1930s as a tool to evaluate such
production.

Kroha attained a high status after 1948 because of his long-time affiliation with
the Communist Party and his fervent public support for Soviet architecture as a model
for Czechoslovakia. Starting as early as the summer of 1945, Kroha gave speeches at
professional gatherings and published essays and projects in Architektura ČSR on
socialist architecture and the need to find an architectural expression to match the “new

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6 As discussed in chapter three, the term “sovietization” has been used by historians such as
John Connelly and Jiří Knapik to describe cultural and institutional transformations in Czech
society after 1948.

7 One important figure in his life was the Brno party secretary, Otto Šling, a defendant in the 1952
Slansky trial. Šling was arrested in 1950 and received a death sentence in 1952.
social reality." Kroha’s papers and office documents show his connections in the late 1940s and early 1950s to the leadership of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, including Minister of Education and Culture Zdeněk Nejedly, future Minister of Culture Ladislav Štoll, Prime Minister Antonín Zapotocký and Deputy Prime Minister Zdeněk Fierlinger, who personally visited the atelier in June 1952. As discussed in chapter three, Nejedly was especially influential in making the case for socialist realism as a national expression. For several years, Kroha was part of the country’s intellectual and cultural elite with commissions for high-profile design projects, an apartment in Prague, a house in Brno and a personal car with a full-time chauffeur. Kroha maintained his privileged lifestyle through the early 1950s even as some of his political allies were facing show trials and forced labor. He did not, however, survive the 1950s with his reputation intact.

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8 Kroha, "Manifestační projev (Statement of a Manifesto)," 22-24.

9 Jiří Kroha to Antonín Zapotocký, Feb. 15, 1949, fond: Jiří Kroha, (henceforth JK), folder: Dopisy odeslané A.B.C. (Sent Letters, A.B.C., henceforth DO - A.B.C), Muzeum města Brna (Brno City Museum, henceforth MMB), Brno, Czech Republic. The letter was sent with an issue of Architektura, no. 9, 1948, which featured Kroha’s work at the 1948 Slavic Agricultural Exhibition in Prague. In JK, folder: Hlavní architekt ateliéru (Head Architect of the Atelier, henceforth HAA), MMB, there are copies of a series of letters from Jiří Kroha, dated Feb. 14, 1952, addressed to politicians including Minister of Defense Alexej Čepicka, Zdeněk Fierlinger, Minister of Industry Gustav Kliment, Zdeněk Nejedly, Ladislav Štoll and Antonín Zapotocký. The letters were each sent with an issue of Architektura ČSR, no. 7-9, 1951, which featured more than 40 pages of Kroha’s projects and writings, as well as an article dedicated to the construction of Nová Ostrava (New Ostrava). See also Jiří Kroha to Zdeněk Fierlinger, June 24, 1952, JK, folder: Výstavba nového socialistického města Nová Dubnica (Construction of the new socialist city Nová Dubnica, henceforth VNSM-ND), MMB.

10 Jiří Kroha to the Local Communist Party Organization, Prague district 69 (Místní organizace KŠC 69, Praha 10), Dec. 15, 1949, JK, folder: Dopisy odeslané (Sent Letters, henceforth DO), MMB. The letter asks the local organization to excuse Kroha’s chauffeur from meetings and other events because he is required to be at work for fifteen hours a day, seven days a week including holidays. As discussed later in the chapter, a 1955 denunciation letter by Ivan Ciporanov mentioned Kroha’s objectionable treatment of his chauffeur as evidence of his misdeeds. See Ivan Ciporanov to Minister Josef Kyselý, Jan. 11, 1955, p.7, ÚSBOV, carton 130, NA.
Like other prominent long-time Communists, Kroha was eventually discredited and removed from his position when a denunciation letter from a disgruntled former employee initiated a year-long investigation into his professional conduct. MANU was closed in July 1956 and Kroha was forced to retire from practice. Two years later, he was appointed as a consultant on preservation projects for the Ministry of Education and Culture. One year before his death in 1974, he published a history of the Soviet avant-garde in which he argued for a reevaluation of constructivism, functionalism and socialist realism based on their levels of engagement with the social and material needs of all classes. In this framework, style was not an important category, but the failure of constructivism and functionalism to raise the living standard of the entire population was seen as a problem that only socialist realism could have corrected. The heavily-illustrated book also gave Kroha and his collaborator, Jiří Hrůza, the opportunity to publish hundreds of images and primary texts on Soviet architecture in the guise of a critique. Most importantly, the book was a thinly-veiled explanation for Kroha’s own professional choices as he progressed from functionalism to socialist realism.

In assessing the trajectory of Jiří Kroha’s career, the late 1940s and early 1950s represented the fulfillment of his desire for a socialist society and the opportunity to lead the profession towards a new era of architecture. With the support of the leadership

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11 Minister Kahuda at the Ministry of Education and Culture to the State Institute for Monuments’ Preservation and Care of the Countryside (Státní ústav památkové péče a ochrany přírody), July 15, 1958, JK, loose papers, MMB.

of the Communist Party and a staff that grew to almost eighty employees by 1955. Kroha was the country’s most publicized and powerful individual architect in the socialist realist period. Despite this, Kroha was increasingly disillusioned with the direction of architecture after Stalin’s death in 1953. Documentation from the 1955-56 investigation into the practices at the atelier revealed Kroha’s arrogance in the face of questions about his professional conduct and mounting anger towards his critics.

The closure of MANU and Kroha’s disappearance from the pages of Architektura ČSR were not, however, only about his design choices or personal behavior. In 1956, a conceptual and organizational transformation was taking place within the ministries and Stavoprojekt as technocrats in the government regained some of the power they had lost during the most dogmatic years of Stalinist appeasement. Khrushchev’s February 1956 ‘Secret Speech’ criticized the ‘cult of personality’ around Stalin and encouraged the leadership to refocus their attention on the collective good of the Party. Although the Czechoslovak response to Khrushchev’s change of course has been judged as relatively weak in comparison to the uprisings in Poland and Hungary, an examination of institutional alignments and central planning priorities show that the Prague regime was reforming itself from within through ministerial realignments and the changing


15 Documentation from the investigation can be found in ÚSBOV, carton 130, NA.

16 For example, see Joseph Rothschild, Return To Diversity: A Political History of East Central Europe Since World War Two (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 166-68.
relationship between official discourse and cultural production. In this context, MANU and Kroha represented the old order—remnants of the Stalinist penchant for personality cults and proof to those around him of the danger of elevating an individual above the collective.

Kroha before 1948

Kroha’s career as a socialist designer started long before the Communist takeover in 1948. Born in Prague in 1893, Kroha enrolled at the Technical University in Prague in 1911 where he studied through the start of the war, finally graduating in 1918. Like other young architects of his era, Kroha was first drawn to Czech Cubism, a movement

Fig. 4.1: Jiří Kroha, Project for a Crematorium, Pardubice (1919-1920) from the collection of the Brno City Museum

unique to the Czech lands in the 1910s that drew from and expanded on the ideas of French Cubism. In the early 1920s, his style was influenced by German expressionism as seen in his most well-known building, the Technical School in Mladá Boleslav, designed in 1923. In 1925, he was appointed professor at the Brno University of Technology in the country's second largest city, which was experiencing an economic and cultural boom in the mid-1920s. As the plasticity of Cubism and Expressionism gave way to Western European- and Soviet-inspired functionalism in Czech architecture, Kroha transitioned to a more stripped-down Corbusian modernist style for projects such as his family's home in Brno from 1928.

![Image of the Technical School, Mladá Boleslav](image-url)
he was part of an exceptional flowering of modern architecture in the city that paralleled its overall growth—Brno is the site of Mies van der Rohe’s 1929 Tugendhat House and numerous other modernist projects of exceptional quality by Czech architects including Kroha, Bohuslav Fuchs, Bedřich Rozehnal and Arnošt Wiesner.¹⁹ (Fig. 4.4)

Fig. 4.3: Jiří Kroha, Architect’s Family Home, Brno (1928-1929) from O nové Brno (2000)

After some early interest in socialist activities in Prague, such as directing and staging the play *Nová Orestia* (New Orestia) in 1923, Kroha became increasingly active in the Communist Party and a devotee of orthodox Marxism. Influenced by the effects of the worldwide depression and his interactions with leftist circles in Brno, he traveled to the Soviet Union in 1930. The same year, Kroha joined the Brno section of the “Left Front” and then co-founded the Czechoslovak Union of Socialist Architects (*Svaz socialistických architektů*) in 1933. One of his primary interests at the time was housing.

In his 1930-32 series entitled *Sociologicky fragment bydleni* (A Sociological Slice of Life),

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Kroha took aim at the capitalist class structure, comparing the struggle of lower classes with the living conditions of the bourgeoisie through a montage of graphics, photos, and text. Kroha also brought these pursuits to his students and local industrial workers.

During the 1930s, he taught popular university seminars on Marxism and architecture; and between 1930 and 1933, he gave over 200 public lectures on the topic. By this time, he already had a reputation for his knowledge of Marx, Engels and Marxist-Leninism.

In 1934, in an event that foreshadowed Kroha’s later political troubles, he was denounced by a man who had attended one of his public lectures on the successes of the Soviet system. He was fined and sentenced to three months of hard labor for “propagating the Soviet Union.” As a result, he was removed from his position at the University of Technology for almost three years and was only allowed to return to his post after local and international pressure from other modern architects. In the school’s 60th anniversary commemorative book, his ordeal was described as follows,

[Kroha’s] culturally political activities and namely his lectures on the advantages of a socialist state for the development of community, as well as architecture and urbanism, brought him denouncement, prosecution, condemnation, and deprival of his professorship. After protests from the

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24 “Stručná životopisná data (Brief Biographical Data),” after 1972, JK, loose papers, MMB.

25 Svřek, Národní umělec Jiří Kroha, 31-35.


27 Svřek, Národní umělec Jiří Kroha, 33.
cultural and progressive publics here and abroad, he was later given amnesty and he could return to the school.\textsuperscript{28}

During this period away from the university, he published a book about Soviet housing called \textit{Bytová otázka v SSSR: typický obraz vzrůstajícího socialistického města} (The Housing Question in the USSR: The Typical Picture of a Growing Socialist City).\textsuperscript{29} At the start of the Nazi occupation in 1939, Kroha’s public support for Marxism and the Soviet Union brought him further negative attention and he was imprisoned in concentration camps for political prisoners from 1939 to 1940.\textsuperscript{30}

Like many architects who suffered during the war, Kroha emerged even more dedicated to the socialist cause and the Communist Party. His path from university professor in Brno to the regime’s favored architect followed the patterns of Communist control and institutional reorganization in the late 1940s. Immediately after the war, Kroha resumed his position as President of the Union of Socialist Architects. As discussed in chapter one, he also played a significant role in the creation of the Block of Progressive Architectural Associations (\textit{Blok architektonických pokrokových spolků}), a consortium of architectural organizations that had operated independently of each other in the interwar years and decided to consolidate in July 1945.\textsuperscript{31}

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{28} Milan Morafi, \textit{Šedesát let české školy architektury v Brně, 1919-1979.} (Sixty Years of the Czech School of Architecture in Brno, 1919-1979) (Brno: Blok, 1980), 78.
\item \textsuperscript{29} Jiří Kroha, \textit{Býtová otázka v SSSR: typický obraz vzrůstajícího socialistického města} (The Housing Question in the Soviet Union: The Typical Picture of a Growing Socialist City) (Prague: 1935).
\item \textsuperscript{30} Svrček, \textit{Národní umělec Jiří Kroha}, 34. "Stručná životopisná data," JK, loose papers, MMB.
\item \textsuperscript{31} "Memorandum Bloku architektonických pokrokových spolků o nutnosti organisace práce v oboru architektury, plánování a stavebnictví (Memorandum of BAPS on the Need to Organize Work in the Field of Architecture, Planning and Construction)," Nov. 22, 1945, fond 1261/2/20: Ústřední
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
In these years, Kroha remained on the faculty at the Brno University of Technology and served as Chair of the Department of Architecture from 1946-1948. He also completed a few projects such as a group of rental apartment buildings in Brno, commissioned by the city and designed by Kroha, Vílém Kuba and Josef Polášek in 1946, and a Community Center in Mnich near Kamenice nad Lipou that shared some details and spatial configurations with his school in Mladá Boleslav. (Fig. 4.5) Kroha

Fig. 4.5: Jiří Kroha, Vílém Kuba and Josef Polášek, Apartment buildings for the City of Brno (author’s photo, 2006)

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**kulturálně propagativní komise a kulturálně propagativní oddělení UV KSČ** (Central Cultural-Propaganda Commission and the Cultural-Propaganda Department of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, henceforth ÚKPK), carton 636, NA. For a full list, see "Charakteristika spolků českých architektů (Characterization of the Associations of Czech Architects)," undated, ÚKPK, carton 636, NA.

32 "Stručná životopisná data," JK, loose papers, MMB.

33 Jiří Kroha, Vílém Kuba and Josef Polášek, "Nájemné domy zemského hlavního města Brna (Rental Apartment Buildings for the Municipality of the City of Brno)," Architektura ČSR 9, no. 6-7 (1948): 216-18.

continued to build his reputation around Brno as a supporter of the Soviet system and
an authority on socialist design methods through university lectures, articles in
newspapers such as the local daily, Rovnost (Equality) and radio addresses for Český
rozhlas (Czech Radio). Kroha remained President of the Union of Socialist Architects,
although from his home in Brno he was not actively involved in the day-to-day
discussions in Prague. His national profile among architects seemed to diminish,
however, and he did not publish any articles or projects in Architektura ČSR from early
1946 until 1948.

The turning point in Kroha’s career was the November 1947 commission for the
Slavic Agricultural Exhibition from the Communist Minister of Agriculture, Július
Ďuriš. Almost twenty years earlier, Kroha had designed two pavilions at the 1928
Exhibition of Contemporary Culture in Brno, a national celebration of the country’s first
ten years. His return to exhibition design coincided with the Communist Party’s
promotion of a ‘national road to Socialism’ and its attempt to connect with symbols of
the country’s past including the nineteenth-century Prague Exhibition Grounds
(výstaviště), the site of the 1891 Jubilee Celebration, and the location for the 1948 event.

35 Jiří Kroha to Vlasta Štursova, Feb. 19, 1946, UKPK, carton 636, NA; Jiří Kroha, “Bydlení
pracujícího člověka (Housing the Working Man),” Rovnost, Mar. 30, 1947, no. 76, pp. 1-2; Jiří
Kroha, “Budeme stavět laciněji? (Will We Build More
Cheaply?),” Rovnost, Apr. 6, 1947, page unknown; Jiří Kroha, “Světové výročí – 30 let SSSR
of newspaper articles in JK, loose papers, MMB.


37 For an analysis of Communist rhetoric between 1945-1948, see Bradley F. Abrams, The
Just as the 1928 exhibition had introduced modern architecture to a mass audience,\textsuperscript{38} the 1948 Slavic Agricultural Exhibition in Prague was the first opportunity for Czechs and Slovaks to see the artistic method known in the Soviet Union as socialist realism, although Kroha’s interpretation had a decidedly Czech flavor that was quite different from its Soviet equivalent at this point. Kroha, head project architect Čeněk Vorel, who would later work on the project for New Ostrava, and a team of more than one hundred apprentice architects, painters, sculptors and university students worked together to transform the venue’s historic art nouveau pavilions into showcases for the agricultural sector with exhibits on themes such as farming, forestry, livestock production, fishing and a “pantheon” of great agriculturalists.\textsuperscript{39} (Fig. 4.6-4.10) Executed in a flamboyant and optimistic style, the exhibition evoked not only the figural qualities of Soviet socialist realism with its romanticization of workers’ muscular bodies and quaint peasant garb, but the fluid lines, bright colors and amorphous shapes of interwar Expressionism and Kroha’s own early work. After six months of planning, the exhibition opened just over two months after the Communist Party took control of the government. The fortuitous timing of the event solidified Kroha’s reputation as the country’s first socialist realist designer and gave him an instant national profile after years of working in Brno and other smaller cities.


\textsuperscript{39} Jiří Kroha, “Slovanska zemedělská výstava v Praze 1948 (The 1948 Slavic Agricultural Exhibition in Prague),” \textit{Architektura ČSR} 7, no. 9 (1948): 273-95. A list of project participants can be found on pp. 292, 294.
Fig. 4.6: Jiří Kroha and ANU, Painters working on a mural in the Pantheon of Great Agriculturalists at the Slavic Agricultural Exhibition, Prague (1948) from the Jiří Kroha Archive at the Brno City Museum (author’s photo, 2006)

Fig. 4.7: Jiří Kroha and ANU, Design for the Hall of Industry, Slavic Agricultural Exhibition, Prague (1948) from the Jiří Kroha Archive at the Brno City Museum (author’s photo, 2006)

40 The Brno City Museum allowed the author to use a digital camera to document materials in the archive for research purposes. Higher quality images in color are available from the Museum.
Fig. 4.8: Jiří Kroha and ANU, Design for the Hall of Agriculture, Slavic Agricultural Exhibition, Prague (1948) from the Jiří Kroha Archive at the Brno City Museum (author’s photo, 2006)

Fig. 4.9: Jiří Kroha and ANU, Exhibition of Country Women, Slavic Agricultural Exhibition, Prague (1948) from the Jiří Kroha Archive at the Brno City Museum (author’s photo, 2006)
The Atelier of National Artist Jiří Kroha

With this success, Kroha quickly became the most vocal supporter of the ‘Soviet model’ of architecture in Czechoslovakia. A series of honors and rewards followed. In August 1948, he was bestowed the official title of “National Artist,”\textsuperscript{41} an honor held by no other living architect.\textsuperscript{42} Soon after he was promoted to Rector at the Brno University.

\textsuperscript{41} Jiří Kroha to Svaz socialistických architektů, Aug. 21, 1948, ÚKPK, carton 636, NA.

\textsuperscript{42} The first architect with the title was Dušan Jurkovič who was named in 1946 and died in 1947. See Christopher Long, "The Works of Our People:' Dušan Jurkovič and the Slovak Art Revival," \textit{Studies in the Decorative Arts} 12, no. 1 (Fall-Winter 2004-2005): 2-29.
of Technology, a post he held through the 1950 school year. When Stavoprojekt was formed as an enterprise within the Czechoslovak Building Works in September 1948, Kroha was granted special status to run his own office in Prague and ANU was created. He was also appointed to head the Architectural Council of Stavoprojekt, a group established by the Architects’ Union to protect the profession’s interests as it transitioned to “collective work.” In October 1948, Kroha was nominated by the Architects’ Union to be one of five delegates on a trip to the Soviet Union sponsored by the Union for Czechoslovak-Soviet Friendship, the Architects’ Union and

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43 Moráň, Šedesát let české školy architektury v Brně, 1919-1979., 13, 16.

44 “Architektonická rada Stavoprojektu (The Architectural Council of Stavoprojekt),” Architektura ČSR 7 (1948): unpaged addition following the yearly index; “Stručná životopisná data, Čast II (Brief Biographical Data, part 2),” after 1972, JK, loose papers, MMB.

45 M. Kouřil in the Department of Culture and Propaganda at the Secretariat of the Communist Party to B. Geminder at the Central Secretariat, Oct. 4, 1948, ÚKPK, carton 636, NA. Kroha’s longtime Brno colleague and future deputy at MANU, Václav Roštílapil, was another one of the proposed delegates.
the Department of Culture and Propaganda at the Secretariat of the Communist Party.\footnote{108x712}{108x712}46

In November 1948, Stavoprojekt agreed to open a Brno branch of ANU to accommodate Kroha, who still spent most of his time in Brno. A letter to Kroha about the new office described the work of ANU in Prague and Brno as having “nationwide meaning.”\footnote{144x504}{144x504}47 The luxury of two offices was short-lived, however, and the Brno branch of ANU closed in June 1949,\footnote{108x623}{108x623}48 although some employees stayed on to help Kroha in Brno through the summer of 1950.\footnote{108x623}{108x623}49

One of Kroha’s first activities as the head of ANU was to help promote the construction of a monumental new public square for Prague in the area around the Masaryk train station. The project, called “Square of the Builders (Náměstí budovatelů),” had first been proposed in 1947 by sculptor and architect Zdeněk Pešánek,\footnote{108x445}{108x445}50 who worked with Kroha on the Slavic Agricultural Exhibition later that year.\footnote{108x475}{108x475}51 (Fig. 4.12)

\footnote{108x712}{108x712}46 Tichá in the Department of Culture and Propaganda at the Secretariat of the Communist Party to the Central Secretariat, Oct. 9, 1948, UKPK, carton 636, NA. Because no record of the trip was published or found in Kroha’s files, it appears that it did not take place.

\footnote{144x504}{144x504}47 Director of Stavoprojekt to ANU, Nov. 11, 1948, JK, folder: Dopisy doslé (Letters received, henceforth DD), MMB.

\footnote{108x623}{108x623}48 “Převed zaměstnanců z ANU Brno (Transfer of Employees from ANU Brno),” June 28, 1949, JK, DD, MMB.

\footnote{108x623}{108x623}49 Jiří Kroha to Jiří Voženílek at Stavoprojekt, Dec. 30, 1949, JK, DO, MMB.


\footnote{108x475}{108x475}51 Oldřich Stárý, “Národní umělec – architekt Jiří Kroha (National Artist – Architect Jiří Kroha),” Architektura ČSR 7, no. 9 (1948): 303. A fountain illustrated in the article was designed by Pešánek.
Pešánek was criticized by the editors of Architektura ČSR in early 1948 for attempting a project at an urban scale without enough assistance from Prague’s “professional architectural circles.” In October 1948, Kroha and a group of other powerful architects, including new Stavoprojekt director Jiří Voženílek and deputy director Otakar Nový, attended a meeting about the project at the offices of the Central Committee of the Communist Party. There they agreed to create twenty-person “ideological commission” (ideové komise) for the project, headed by Kroha and Pešánek. ANU took over official responsibilities for the design and control of the office space in the Smetana Museum where Pešánek and his team had worked on the project. After submitting a budget to

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52 “Náměstí budovatelů (Square of the Builders),” Architektura ČSR 7, no. 1 (1948): 37.
53 “Zápis o poradě (Minutes of meeting),” Oct. 18, 1948, JK, DD, MMB.
54 “Náměstí budovatelů (Square of the Builders),” 37. Pešánek used the space in the Smetana Museum to put up an exhibition about the proposal.
the Ministry of Technology in November 1948 the project was put on hold and never built.55 Pešánek, however, was hired by Kroha to be his deputy at ANU and according to a December 1949 letter, he was still working on the project under the direct supervision of Kroha and Voženílek.56 He left ANU sometime between February and December 1950.57

Kroha’s participation in the Square of the Builders project and his many awards indicated how quickly the Central Committee and the leadership of Stavoprojekt accepted Kroha as the primary proponent of the regime’s architectural propaganda. He gave the keynote address at the First Nationwide Meeting of the Heads of the Stavoprojekt Ateliers in January 1949 where he proclaimed that Stavoprojekt meant “the beginning of Czechoslovak socialist architecture.”58 Alongside similar polemics by other members of the editorial board of Architektura ČSR, Kroha began to regularly publish essays in the journal in which he systematically and repetitively formulated his program for ‘socialist’ architecture. By 1956, he had over a dozen feature articles to his credit.

At the core of Kroha’s argument was the Marxist-Leninist base-superstructure model. Set out in the preface to Marx’s A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy

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55 Jiří Kroha to the Ministry of Technology, Nov. 19, 1948, JK, DO - A.B.C., MMB.

56 Jiří Kroha to Voženílek at Stavoprojekt, Dec. 30, 1949, JK, DO, MMB.


from 1859, the concept has since become one of the most well-known and contentious Marxist ideas. Although Marxist scholars continue to dispute the meaning of this passage, this was a central concept for Kroha, therefore it is important to return directly to the text by Marx.

The sum total of these [definite] relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society—the real foundation, on which rises a legal and political superstructure and to which correspond particular forms of social consciousness... With the change of the economic foundation, the entire immense superstructure is more or less rapidly transformed.\(^{59}\)

Leszek Kolakowski, author of the classic volumes *Main Currents in Marxism*, described the superstructure in the following way,

[The superstructure] includes all political institutions, especially the state, all organized religion, political associations, laws and customs, and finally human consciousness expressed in ideas about the world, religious beliefs, forms of artistic creation, and the doctrines of law, politics, philosophy, and morality. The principal tenet of historical materialism is that a particular technological level calls for particular relations of production and causes them to come about historically in the course of time. They in turn bring about a particular kind of superstructure.\(^{60}\)

Following from this, Kroha proposed that with the transition from capitalism to a planned economy in Czechoslovakia, there must be an associated transformation in the expression of the cultural superstructure.

He argued that the socialist system could not adopt the forms of avant-garde modern architecture, because these forms belong to the superstructure of capitalism. In a 1949 article, he wrote,


\(^{60}\) Ibid., 338.
Today our Marxist-Leninist teaching shows us directly in the field of the artistic creation, that art, as the cultural superstructure, is the superstructure over reality and that for cultural representation and the enabling of this reality, it is necessary at the very least to truly know this reality. Given that so many idealistic, intellectualized and artistic paths ending in vague abstractions wanted simultaneously to be the expression of free artistic creation, it follows that these were not always the truth of reality. Marxism-Leninism teaches us, that socialist art must be the true cultural superstructure over the socialist reality.\footnote{Jiří Kroha, "Architektura socialistické budování (The Architecture of Socialist Building)," \textit{Architektura ČSR} 8 (1949): 131.}

The dialectic also framed many of his discussions about what this new expression might be, since he believed that ‘socialist’ architecture could only be achieved through a struggle against cosmopolitanism and the “vulgar economic understanding” of architecture that was still prevalent in the late 1940s.\footnote{Jiří Kroha, "Architektura zájmem a majetkem pracujícího lidu (Architecture in the Interest and for the Enrichment of the Working People)," \textit{Architektura ČSR} 10, no. 7-9 (1951): 234.}

Political acceptance and a platform from which to publish did not translate, however, into professional respect and Kroha’s rhetoric on socialist realism and the need for a new superstructure was largely ignored by architects at Stavoprojekt as late as 1950. One reason may have been that Kroha’s writings in the 1940s and 1950s were repetitive and convoluted. Architectural historian Pavel Halík went as far as to say,

\begin{quote}
It is hard to imagine that anyone read all the way through these half-crazy Kroha texts, it is enough to consult a few passages to get a picture of what they mean. It is not even possible to quote from them, because in every phrase one gets wrapped up with terrible adjectives and superlatives. The sentences break down under their own weight and often they lose their meaning.\footnote{Pavel Halík, "Ideologická architektura (Ideological Architecture)," \textit{Umění} 44 (1996): 448.}
\end{quote}
Halík goes on to point out that Kroha often put drawings and pictures of his unbuilt projects and finished buildings alongside texts that did not refer to the images at all.\textsuperscript{64} This left the impression that the texts were vague exercises in political rhetoric that had little to do with architecture.

Without building projects or respect from the professional community, ANU focused primarily on political commissions in its first year. These included official exhibitions, monuments and Communist Party events including the Ninth Party Congress (IX. sjezd) in May 1949,\textsuperscript{65} the pavilion for the Ministry of Agriculture at the 1949 Exhibition, “100 Years of Czech National Life” in Kroměříž (100 let českého národního života),\textsuperscript{66} the 1949 Prague exhibition, “The Soviet Union Our Teacher – Our Brother” (Sovětský svaz náš učitel – náš bratr),\textsuperscript{67} the design of the June 1950 “Exhibition of Southern Bohemia” in Soběslav (Výstava jižních Čech) and a 1950 entry to the competition for the Stalin Monument in Prague.\textsuperscript{68}(Fig. 4.13) Each of the exhibition designs built on his work at the Slavic Agricultural Exhibition with nationally-themed murals of workers and

\textsuperscript{64} Ibid.: 449.

\textsuperscript{65} Jiří Kroha, “Architektura socialistické budování (The Architecture of Socialist Building),” 129-38.

\textsuperscript{66} Jiří Kroha, “Pavilon ministerstva zemědělství na výstavě ‘100 let českého národního života’ v Kroměříži (Pavilion for the Ministry of Agriculture at the Exhibition ‘100 Years of Czech National Life’ in Kroměříž),” Architektura ČSR 8, no. 5-6 (1949): 152-55.


\textsuperscript{68} Oldřich Starý, “Pomník J.V. Stalina v Praze (Monument of J.V. Stalin in Prague),” Architektura ČSR 9, no. 3-4 (1950): 63-69. He worked together with sculptor Karel Pokorný, who created the statue and Zdeněk Pešánek from ANU on the base and terrain. The project won third prize.
farmers, portraits of Party leaders, slogans, sculptures, and large public spaces with vaulted roofs. Kroha became such a specialist in “socialist exhibition design” that he wrote an article on the subject for *Architektura ČSR* in 1950. In the text, which used his project in Soběslav as its primary example, Kroha argued that exhibitions were one of the primary venues to educate the working class in the new ways of socialist living.

Through this work, Kroha remained intimately involved in the inner circles of the Communist Party. Minister of Agriculture Řuriš commissioned the pavilion in

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Kroměříž and the exhibition in Soběslav, where he was an honored guest at the opening along with Deputy Prime Minister Fierlinger. In a May 1949 letter to colleagues who had worked with him on the renovation of the Palace of Industry at the Prague Fairgrounds for the Ninth Party Congress, Kroha relayed congratulations for their good work “from the mouths of our leading comrades (Comrade President Gottwald, Comrade Ministers, and almost all of the members of the Central Committee).” During this period, the size of the office grew, reaching more than 30

Fig. 4.14: Opening of the “Exhibition of Southern Bohemia” in Soběslav in June 1950—Kroha is on the left in the front row, also shown Deputy Prime Minister Zdeněk Fierlinger, Minister of Agriculture Julius Ďuriš, Minister of the Post Office Alois Neuman, Head of the Exhibition František Picha, members of the local and regional national committees and the exhibition committee—from Architektura ČSR (1950)

70 Lodr, “Výstava jižních Čech v Soběslavi (Exhibition of Southern Bohemia in Sobeslav),” 319.

71 Jiří Kroha to Vladimir Holík, May 28, 1949, JK, DO - A.B.C., MMB.
employees by the end of 1949. Kroha began using the privileges that came with his position to write letters on behalf of friends and colleagues to help them save their jobs, vouch for their political loyalties, increase their salaries and in one case, to keep an employee out of a labor camp.

In late 1949, he also proposed a new building for the Departments of Architecture and Construction Engineering at the Brno University of Technology, where he was Rector. The unbuilt project showed Kroha straddling the tenets of high Modernism and the classicism of the Soviet Union. (Fig. 4.15-4.16) The H-shaped plan featured two bar buildings connected by a perpendicular centerpiece that housed the building’s auditorium. The squared ends of the bar buildings were decorated with geometric window designs that highlighted a modernist play on ornament and structure. On the central axis of the front facade, two three-story high columns are set into a boxy frame that supported a classical sculptural ensemble at the attic story. The building was featured in the first issue of Architektura ČSR in 1950 in an article titled, “O socialistický realismus v naší architektuře (On Socialist Realism in Our Architecture).”

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72 Jiří Kroha to Jiří Voženílek at Stavoprojekt, Dec. 30, 1949, JK, DO, MMB.
73 Jiří Kroha to Dr. Prof. Valouch, Sept. 29, 1949, JK, DO, MMB.
75 Jiří Kroha to Ředitelství Stavoprojektu (Stavoprojekt Administration), Apr. 4, 1950, JK, DO, MMB; Jiří Kroha to Ferdinand Balcárek, June 29, 1951, JK, HAA, MMB.
76 Jiří Kroha to the Krajské komisi čls. 13 (Regional Commission no. 13) on behalf of Oden Drbal, Nov. 3, 1949, JK, DO, MMB.
Fig. 4.15: Jiří Kroha and ANU, Project for the Departments of Architecture and Construction Engineering at the Brno University of Technology (1949) from *Architektura ČSR* (1950)

Fig. 4.16: Jiří Kroha and ANU, Courtyard of a new building for the Departments of Architecture and Construction Engineering at the Brno University of Technology (1949) from *Architektura ČSR* (1950)
It was the first building design that Kroha published in the journal after February 1948, signaling his increasing presence as an architect rather than just an exhibition designer. This was also the time when cultural policies were becoming more stringent as the Soviets pressured the Czechoslovak regime to more openly adopt Soviet socialist realism in all sectors of artistic production.⁷⁸

The publication of the Brno project occurred at the same time that ANU’s relationship to Stavoprojekt was changing. In its original configuration, ANU was “connected to the Czechoslovak Building Works in a special way” and Kroha’s employees worked directly for the atelier.⁷⁹ At the personal request of the Minister of Technology, Emanuel Šlechta, ANU was reorganized as of January 1, 1950 and required to “join the socialist sector,” transfer its employees to the Stavoprojekt payroll, and no longer act as “a private enterprise.”⁸¹ During 1950, the office lost employees as they were transferred to other Stavoprojekt ateliers when their ANU exhibition projects ended.⁸² Although the origins of the organizational change at ANU remain unclear, it is likely that Minister Šlechta

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⁷⁸ These developments are discussed in chapter three. For additional material on all artistic fields, see Rostislav Švácha and Marie Platovská, eds., Dějiny českého výtvarného umění V. (1939-1958) (Histories of Czech Creative Arts, Vol. 5 (1939-1958)) (Prague: Academia, 2005).

⁷⁹ Jiří Kroha to Otto Žáček, Dec. 21, 1948, JK, DO - A.B.C., MMB.

⁸⁰ Jiří Kroha to Jindřich Vozenil, Dec. 30, 1949, JK, DO, MMB. The transfers were scheduled starting on Jan. 1, 1950, however fewer employees left than were originally scheduled based on an employee list from Jan. 10, 1951. See Jiří Kroha to Obvodní národní výbor v Praze 3 (District national committee in Prague 3), Jan. 10, 1951, JK, DO, MMB.
wanted the atelier to be incorporated into the ‘socialist sector’ so that it could be directly assigned building projects from within the Stavoprojekt hierarchy.

A few months after this change, ANU received its first commission for a large public building, the Morphology Pavilion at the Medical College of Palacký University in Olomouc (*Morfologický pavilión lekarské fakulty*), completed in 1961. The new commission allowed Kroha to retain some of the staff scheduled to leave ANU and by the summer of 1951, he was writing to his local national committee and the Stavoprojekt administration hoping to hire more employees. The primary floor plan for the Olomouc project was similar to the Brno design with two parallel wings and a central perpendicular connector housing the auditorium. This time the connector continued beyond the second wing to create a second smaller entrance at the back. The ends of the main wing met cubic volumes that contained office suites on each side. These protruded into the front courtyard to frame the entrance with a typically beaux-arts sense of symmetry and hierarchy. The primary difference between the projects was the massing of the exterior elevations. Unlike the simple, modern expression in Brno with long, low lines, the Olomouc design was stacked so that only the central volume of

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84 Jiří Kroha to Obvodní národní výbor v Praze 5 (District national committee in Prague 5), June 8, 1951, JK, DO, MMB. Copy of a letter to the Stavoprojekt administration requesting additional renderers, June 19, 1951.
the back wing rose a full six stories from the plaza. The front wing was only four stories high with a double-height entryway and the connector, which could only be perceived from the side of the building, was only three stories.

The design showed a level of abstraction that set Kroha’s style apart from those of his more dogmatic and conservative Russian counterparts of the early 1950s. The front facade was divided in the center by a single decorative column. The back and side facades were interrupted by expanses of glass and at the end of each of the narrow building wings was a geometric relief pattern on the second story. The central volume on the front facade was capped by spires at each corner and a large floral ornament at the roof level over the main doorway. In total, the hierarchical volumes, rusticated base and classical detailing indicated Kroha’s transition from a hybrid modernism in Brno to what can be called abstract neo-classicism in this project. The Morphology Pavilion was Kroha’s first definitive built statement of his interpretation of socialist realism in the Czechoslovak context.
In early 1951, ANU was commissioned to design three workers’ clubs for factories in Horní Suché, Petřvald and Hrušov, all small villages in the industrial areas in and around Ostrava. Each of these ‘Houses of Culture’ contained a theater,
restaurant, bar, library and meeting rooms. These more modest projects illustrated a further development in Kroha’s socialist realist sensibility. The small clubs were variations on a standard plan that included a two-story rectangular volume and an L-shaped one-story arcade open to front plaza and closed along the backside. (Fig. 4.19-4.21) The arcade symmetrically framed the entrance and then turned at one end to shield the plaza from the street and parking areas. The buildings had simple windows, pitched roofs running from front to back, engaged pilasters and a spire on the roof over the entrance. Renderings published in Architektura ČSR showed the largely masonry volumes enlivened with red and yellow paint, landscaped plazas, decorative details

Fig. 4.19: Jiří Kroha and ANU, House of Culture for Progress Mine (Důl pokrok), Petřvald from Architektura ČSR (1951)
Fig. 4.20: Jiří Kroha and ANU, House of Culture for Klement Gottwald Mine, Horní Suché from Architektura ČSR (1951)

Fig. 4.21: Jiří Kroha and ANU, elevations and perspective for the House of Culture for J.V. Stalin Mine, Hrušov from Architektura ČSR (1951)
such as star patterns, and large Czech flags flying from the spires on the roofs.\textsuperscript{86} The overall impression was institutional in character, but at a pleasant, human scale that reflected the small town location and educational purpose.

Kroha reached the pinnacle of his architectural power in the fall of 1951 with the publication of his longest polemic to date, the 45-page article, \textquote{Architektura zajmem a majetkem pracujícího lidu (Architecture in the Interest and for the Enrichment of the Working People)}.\textsuperscript{87} Illustrations of seven of his projects accompanied the text including the pavilion in Olomouc, the three workers’ clubs, an unbuilt project for a university library in Brno, an unbuilt project for a government building in Český Brod and a proposal for an administrative building and entrance gate for an unnamed factory. (Fig. 4.22) In the text, Kroha offered a harsh critique of the current Czechoslovak situation by comparing it to the recent history of Soviet architecture. He argued that the Soviet Union rid itself of functionalist tendencies many years earlier and embraced the \textquote{the artistic aspect} of architecture and \textquote{the humanist character of realistic architectural forms and orders}.\textsuperscript{88} He pointed to the development of classical architecture in Greece and Rome as an analogous process, whereby architects \textquote{made use of historical knowledge and tradition to highlight the new progressive political ideal of the time}.\textsuperscript{89} In order to bring

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{86} Kroha, \textquote{Architektura zajmem a majetkem pracujícího lidu (Architecture in the Interest and for the Enrichment of the Working People)}, 214-23. The source of red and yellow as the color palette is unclear. It is possible that it is a reference to the colors of the Moravian flag, although the Hrušov project is in Silesia, not Moravia. Martin Strakoš has suggested that the colors may be trying to mimic the red color of the local brick.
\item \textsuperscript{87} Ibid.: 205-50.
\item \textsuperscript{88} Ibid.: 216.
\item \textsuperscript{89} Ibid.
\end{itemize}
about the same “disengagement from cosmopolitanism”\textsuperscript{90} that the Soviets had achieved, Czechoslovak architects had to look towards “the fertile roots in [their] national tradition to stir up the creative juices and imagination needed for artistic architectural production.”\textsuperscript{91}

Kroha presented his argument from a position of political and professional strength, since the publication coincided with the dismantling of the Czechoslovakia Building Works and the reorganization of Stavoprojekt in October 1951. This was a clear indication that his vision of the architectural future had finally overtaken that of Janů and Voženílek, who found themselves marginalized as their technocratic agenda of architecture as industrial production was fatally undermined by the political elite’s desire to see more evidence of socialist realism in architecture. Not only were there conceptual problems with their leadership, but the government was being pressured by

\textsuperscript{90} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{91} Ibid.: 232.
Moscow to undertake economics reforms that would bring the economy more inline with Soviet expectations. Because of continuing problems with late and over-budget projects, Stavoprojekt, as part of the Czechoslovak Building Works, was not meeting its plan targets and the organization was reconfigured with an emphasis on efficient project delivery. With the changes, ANU remained “an independent design center,” only now it was “directly subordinated to the executive board of Stavoprojekt” in Prague, comprised of political appointees whose views were more in line with those of Kroha.

One month later, Kroha received a commission for the most significant project of his career. In the midst of a revised Five-Year Plan that increased targets for industrial output, capacity at the weapons and machine factories around Dubnica nad Váhom in northwest Slovakia were expanded substantially and a new locomotive factory was built in 1950. The enterprise needed to recruit workers, but there were few housing options in the area. In November 1951, plans were put forward by the regional national committee in Žilina and the K.J. Vorosilov Locomotive Factory in Dubnica nad Váhom to build a new town for 15,000-20,000 residents on agricultural land between Trenčianske Teplá and Dubnica nad Váhom. ANU was hired as the design office and they partnered with

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95 “Poznámky z jednání týkajícího se projektu Nová Dubnica (Notes from the Discussion Concerning the Project for Nová Dubnica),” Nov. 12, 1951, JK, VNSM-ND, MMB.
the regional Stavoprojekt office in Žilina and specialty departments at Stavoprojekt Prague. This was the first new town design that Kroha had attempted and he needed assistance with the infrastructure and site planning aspects of the project.

By the time Kroha and project designer Ivan Ciporanov published the design in Architektura ČSR in the spring of 1952, the projected population of “Nova Dubnica” was 20,000-25,000 people in 5,710 apartment units on 115 hectares of land. Early

96 “Zpráva o jednání na KNV v Žilině (Report from the Discussion at the Regional National Committe in Žilina),” Dec. 3, 1951, JK, VNSM-ND, MMB.

97 Jiří Kroha and Ivan Ciporanov, “Návrh nového socialistického městečka na Slovensku (Project for a New Socialist Town in Slovakia),” Architektura ČSR 11, no. 1-2 (1952): 35-45. An earlier copy of the text is also at the Brno archive, it has a few additional passages such as the one about the problems finding a fresh water source that were not published in Architektura ČSR, see page 14. See JK, folder: Směrný územní plán nového socialistického městečka “D”: průvodní zpráva (General City Plan of the New Socialist Town “D”: Accompanying Report), undated, pp. 1-22, MMB.
renderings of the project showed a modestly-sized town set in the countryside amidst lush greenery and distant hills. The center of the settlement was a public square with a monumental administrative building at its far end, nestled between perimeter blocks with interior public courtyards. The accompanying text described small single-family houses on the southern edge of town “for worthy shockworkers, innovators, artists, scientists and so forth.”98 The quality of life of the inhabitants was also well-considered with a shopping street, schools, indoor and outdoor theaters, a dance pavilion, sports fields, a hospital, swimming pool and an area for public demonstrations.99 The project was modeled in part on the nineteenth-century utopian socialist projects of Robert Owen’s factory town at New Lanark, Scotland and Charles Fourier’s proposal for a phalanstère in rural France.100 (Fig. 4.24) The town center included a series of mixed-

98 Ibid.: 40. The archive copy lists the occupations in a different order: artists, scientists, worthy shockworkers, innovators and the like. This probably reflected Kroha’s bias towards intellectual pursuits such as art and science.

99 Ibid.

100 The Kroha archive includes reproductions of the nineteenth-century projects among the presentation boards for Nová Dubnica. See Branislav Cvacho, Jíří Kroha a Nová Dubnica (Jíří Kroha and Nová Dubnica) (Nová Dubnica: City of Nová Dubnica, 2006), 20-21. The first is labeled “Overall view of the factory village of Robert Owen New Lanark, Copper Plate from 1823” and the second, “View of the phalanstère designed according to the socialist ideas of Fourier. Such an institution should contain living, working and communal spaces for 400 families.” Strangely, the town pictured on the Owen board is not New Lanark or another recognizable project by Owen, although it looks like a nineteenth-century image. The source of the confusion is unknown, although Kroha’s ensemble designs for the blocks are closer to this rendering than the town of New Lanark with its configuration of mill and residential buildings along a riverbank. One can assume that Kroha was familiar with Owen’s ideas and his importance to nineteenth-century socialists even if he was mistaken as to the formal organization of his towns. For information on Owen, see Ian Donnachie, Robert Owen: Owen of New Lanark and New Harmony (East Linton, UK: Tuckwell Press, 2000). Historian Jonathan Beecher provides the best description of the phalanstère in his biography of Fourier, see Jonathan Beecher, Charles Fourier: The Visionary and His World (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), 241-58.
Fig. 4.24: Presentation board with image of Fourier’s Phalanstère (c.1952)—the caption reads “A view of the Phalanstère designed according to the socialist ideas of Fourier. Such an institution should hold living, working and communal spaces for 400 families”—from the Jiří Kroha Archive at the Brno City Museum (author’s photo, 2006)

use buildings linked by covered arcades, similar to those described by Fourier. (Fig. 4.25-4.27) Similarly to these projects, there was an expectation that Nová Dubnica would be a free-standing model town—self-sufficient, community-oriented and a pleasant place to live and work. The references illustrated the hopefulness and utopian sensibility with which Kroha approached the project.

Construction was planned to occur in stages, but the first phase was developed quickly to alleviate the immediate housing shortage. At the request of the management of the new factory, most of the first three hundred units were small standardized two-room bachelor apartments “to house the largest possible number of unmarried
Fig. 4.25: Jiří Kroha and ANU, T20 building from shopping arcade, Nová Dubnica (c. 1952) from the Jiří Kroha Archive at the Brno City Museum (author's photo, 2006)

Fig. 4.26: Jiří Kroha and ANU, Square from a shopping arcade, Nová Dubnica (c.1960) from the Jiří Kroha Archive at the Brno City Museum (author's photo, 2006)
Fig. 4.27: Shopping arcade in Nová Dubnica (author's photo, 2004)

Fig. 4.28: Jiří Kroha and ANU, Elevation of T20 building, Nová Dubnica (c.1952) from the Jiří Kroha Archive at the Brno City Museum (author's photo, 2006)
employees" by the end of 1952.\textsuperscript{101} These units were contained within two massive apartment buildings that dominated the site and the landscape around it. (Fig. 4.28-4.29) The designs were variations on Stavoprojekt's standard T20 block for 1952.\textsuperscript{102} The central volume of each building was six-stories high and stepped back to five stories at the sides to create roof decks on the top floor. (Fig. 4.30) The entrances were decorated with intricate and colorful floral mosaics. Above the entrance at the sixth story was another decorative flourish, in one case three round windows and in another articulated pilaster capitals. (Fig. 4.31-4.32)

The most striking detail of each one, however, was single-story tower capped by a large spire at the center point of each roof. The spires were similar to the ones on the Olomouc pavilion and the workers' club, but the size and vertical height of these examples made them exceptional. In January 1953, planning started on phase two which included three- and four-story buildings with larger apartments for families to enclose the space around the T20 blocks. (Fig. 4.33-4.34) This created the courtyards and the arcaded shopping streets and public square proposed in the original design. Playgrounds, a nursery and school buildings completed the interior layout of the courtyards. (Fig. 4.35)

\textsuperscript{101} "Zpráva o jednání na KNV v Žilině (Report from the Discussion at the Regional National Committee in Žilina)," Dec. 3, 1951, JK, VNSM-ND, MMB.

\textsuperscript{102} Stavoprojekt studijní a typisační ustav (Study and Typification Institute) to Jiří Kroha, Sept. 24, 1952, JK, VNSM-ND, MMB.
Fig. 4.29: Nová Dubnica under construction (1955) from a private collection (author’s photo, 2006)\textsuperscript{103}

Fig. 4.30: Roof deck of T20 building, Nová Dubnica (1955) from a private collection (author’s photo, 2006)

\textsuperscript{103} Materials from this private collection were made available to the author for research purposes and documented with a digital camera.
Fig. 4.31: T20 building in Nová Dubnica (author's photo, 2004)

Fig. 4.32: T20 building in Nová Dubnica (author's photo, 2004)
Fig. 4.33: Jiří Kroha and ANU, Site plan for ensemble in Nová Dubnica (1951) from *Architektura ČSR* (1952)

Fig. 4.34: Jiří Kroha and ANU, Perspective of T20 and courtyard with school, Nová Dubnica (c.1952) from the Jiří Kroha Archive at the Brno City Museum (author's photo, 2006)
The design of Nová Dubnica gave Kroha an opportunity to put forward a comprehensive architectural argument for socialist realism; a method he had largely defended in his writings and unbuilt projects to this point. One of his primary objectives was to find a specific Czechoslovak vocabulary for his buildings. He argued against copying from Russia, because that country’s heritage was distinct from their own. In their joint statement in *Architektura ČSR*, Kroha and Ciporanov claimed that ANU would "build a socialist town whose color scheme, lyricism and architectural concept would be
linked in the best way to the healthy tradition of vernacular building in Slovakia.”

Although specific documentation about research in the local area for the first and second phase of the Nová Dubnica design has not yet been found, the type of work that may have been done by atelier employees can be inferred from a series of research photographs and sketches associated with a related 1954 project in the neighboring town of Dubnica nad Váhom. In the photographs, men are seen standing in front of local houses with a meter stick to indicate the scale of the buildings. (Fig. 4.36) There are sketches measuring the distances between the houses and noting their architectural elements. (Fig. 4.37) An accompanying report stated that orthogonal drawings had been

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104 Kroha and Ciporanov, "Návrh nového socialistického městečka na Slovensku (Project for a New Socialist Town in Slovakia)," 38.

105 ANU was hired to complete a design for a new House of Culture and some duplexes. The research can be tied directly to the design of the houses which borrowed details from local examples. See JK, folder: Průzkum Dubnice nad Váhom (Research for Dubnica nad Váhom) and reproductions of Dubnice nad Váhom houses in the collection, MMB.
made of the fronts of all houses in the town by employees from the Trenčianske Teplice branch of ANU, which opened around this time to assist with the work in Nová Dubnica and Dubnica nad Váhom.¹⁰⁶ (Fig. 4.38)

There was also interest in the local monuments, such as the church and a seventeenth-century mansion (kaštiel), built in 1670 and in disrepair by the 1950s.¹⁰⁷ The report described the process of gathering information and noted that,

Interesting groupings of some of the objects were recorded in perspective sketches according to the wishes of the national artist and his particular


¹⁰⁷ Pictures of the area from the 1950s are with the project documentation in the archive.
view on the historic core, that is the local church and its surroundings and
the specified mansion (kaštieľ), from which to adapt requisite floor plans
and important details such as details of cornices, windows, doors and all
the remarkable examples of decorative embellishments of the facades.¹⁰⁸

In this same way, the baroque mansion and church in Dubnica may have been the
inspiration for Kroha’s unique embellishments on the T20 facades. Both of the old
buildings have punched circular openings and wavy geometric patterns on their towers.
(Fig. 4.39-4.40) Using a similar palette to the watercolor drawings from Dubnica nad
Váhom, the color scheme at Nová Dubnica included earth-tone beige and browns for
the main facades with reddish stone at the ground floor and orange roof tiles. (Fig. 4.41)
Decorative plaster reliefs in dark red and golden brown flanked the entrances to the
blocks and red sgraffito decoration added color and texture along the cornice on the tall
blocks. Combined these details suggested an earnest attempt to bring together the old
and the new to find a ‘socialist’ architectural style.

Like most housing projects in the early 1950s, the work was completed behind
schedule and over budget. The T20 blocks opened almost one year late in September
1953.¹⁰⁹ Some of the delay was due to the lack of a proper fresh water sources for the
settlement, a problem that would not be solved until after 1955.¹¹⁰ There were also
difficulties with securing enough workers for the building site and obtaining the
necessary materials. Construction on phases two and three would continue until the end

¹⁰⁸ JK, Research for Dubnica nad Váhom, “Průvodní zpráva (Accompanying report),” Feb. 18,
1954, p. 1, MMB.

¹⁰⁹ Jiří Kroha to Pozemní stavby, n.p. Trenčín, June 5, 1953, JK, VNSM-ND, MMB.

“Potrzení, ZVAK Žilina (Receipt),” June 14, 1955, JK, VNSM-ND, MMB.
Fig. 4.38: Research sketch showing site measurements from Dubnica nad Váhom (1954) from the Jiří Kroha Archive at the Brno City Museum (author's photo, 2006)

Fig. 4.39: Research photograph from Dubnica nad Váhom (1954) from the Jiří Kroha Archive at the Brno City Museum (author's photo, 2006)
Fig. 4.40: Baroque mansion after renovation, Dubnica nad Váhom, now Slovakia (1670) from the photo gallery at www.dubnica.sk

Fig. 4.41: Decorative panel on T13 block, Nová Dubnica (author's photo, 2004)
of the atelier in 1956 and beyond as some of the MANU employees were sent to the Ostrava office of Stavoprojekt where they continued working on projects in Nová Dubnica and Dubnica nád Vahom for several years. In the end, the full extent of the first master plan was never built. Only four of the original ensembles and the main square, without the monumental administration building, were completed according to Kroha's designs. In the 1960s and 1970s, the settlement expanded, but the new buildings did not reflect the socialist realist style of the older part of the town. (Fig. 4.42)

Fig. 4.42: Aerial photograph of the north side of Nová Dubnica (2005), two ensembles with T20 buildings in the center are highlighted, original photo from the gallery at www.dubnica.sk

111 "Likvidace býv. ateliéru MANU J. Krohy (Liquidation of J. Krohy’s Former Atelier MANU),” Nov. 14, 1956, ÚSBOV, carton 130, NA.

112 Residents are still fond of the work that Kroha did in Nová Dubnica. They held a celebration in his honor in 2006 and published a pamphlet about the history of the town’s design. See Cvacho, Jiří Kroha a Nová Dubnica.
After the commission for Nová Dubnica and the delays associated with the first phase, the office once again found itself without enough work and Kroha appealed to Stavoprojekt for more assignments.\textsuperscript{113} To his dismay, several ANU projects had been abandoned around this time. These included a 1951 design for a Campus for the College of Chemistry in Pardubice, a project in which he continued to perfect his idiosyncratic interpretation of socialist realism.\textsuperscript{114} The proposed group of buildings included offices, classrooms, laboratories and an auditorium, plus dormitories and residential facilities for the students. (Fig. 4.43-4.44) The symmetrical columned facade, oversized entrance portico with two-story high columns and diamond-patterned facade decorations on the main building were all intensifications of earlier decorative schemes. The most exaggerated feature was Kroha's now signature spire, which punctuated the silhouettes of all of the buildings on the campus, including a colossal spire over the entrance that almost doubled the height of the four-story building.

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\textsuperscript{113} Jiří Kroha to Stavoprojekt Prague. Mar. 20, 1952, JK, HAA, MMB.

In what appeared to be a response to Kroha’s request for more work, another large project came into the office in the summer of 1952 when Kroha was asked to complete phase two of the Ostrava Model Housing Development. In 1950, the neighborhood, which had been called Bělský Les, was renamed Stalingrad. Unlike in Nová Dubnica, Kroha had to work within an existing master plan for this project, completed in 1947 by Anna Friedlová, Vladimír Meduna, Oldřich Slabý, Jiří Štursa and

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Jaroslav Turek.\textsuperscript{116} (Fig. 1.40) During the first phase of construction, fifteen three- and four-story apartment buildings had been constructed along one edge of the site before the implementation of the standardized T-series in 1950. (Fig. 1.52-1.55) Over the next two years, several dozen standardized buildings were constructed on the site based on the original master plan. These included four-story T11 blocks with three-room apartments and six-story T20 blocks with two-room apartments (the same standardized type that Kroha had used at Nová Dubnica). (Fig. 4.45-4.46)

\textsuperscript{116} Karel Pilát, "Výstavba vzorných sídlišť a jejich poslání (The Construction of the Model Housing Developments and Their Mission)," \textit{Architektura ČSR} 7, no. 6-7 (1948): 201-05. See also chapter one.
In phase two, Kroha was commissioned to design a civic center for the neighborhood and create a formal gateway at the northern end of the site with larger, more decorative residential buildings lining the main street from the entrance to the main square. (Fig. 4.47-4.51) The civic buildings included a health clinic, a post office, a culture house, a children's nursery, schools, grocery stores and a department store.\(^{117}\) Stylistically they were similar to those in Nová Dubnica with arcades connecting the health clinic and post office to the main commercial street and a classically-inspired decorative scheme that included stucco relief work, statuary and column-pilaster combinations. (Fig. 4.52-4.54) Kroha did not include spires in this design, although

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\(^{117}\) Jíří Kroha, "K základním otázkám první konference architektů v ČSR (On the Fundamental Questions of the First Conference of Architects in Czechoslovakia)," *Architektura ČSR* 11, no. 5-6 (1952): 139-50.
Fig. 4.47: Jiří Kroha and ANU, Project for the square at the Model Housing Development in Ostrava (1952) from the Jiří Kroha Archive at the Brno City Museum (author’s photo, 2006)

Fig. 4.48: View looking north from the square at the Model Housing Development in Ostrava, the buildings, with stores on the ground floor and apartments above, are shown facing each other on the north side of the square in Fig. 4.47 (author’s photo, 2006)
Fig. 4.49: Apartment buildings by ANU create a gate at the north entrance to the Model Housing Development in Ostrava (author's photo, 2006)

Fig. 4.50: T15 apartment building with decorative embellishments by ANU, located facing the main street between the north entrance and the main square at the Model Housing Development in Ostrava (author's photo, 2006)
Fig. 4.51: House of Culture at the Model Housing Development in Ostrava, the building is shown on the south side of the square in Fig. 4.47 (author's photo, 2006)

Fig. 4.52: Arcade at the Model Housing Development in Ostrava, connecting the post office to the commercial and residential building on the left in Fig. 4.48, shown in Fig. 4.47 at the northwest corner of the square (author's photo, 2004)
each building had a tall antenna on the roof. The lack of his characteristic spires may be one piece of evidence to back up later claims by Ivan Ciporanov that Kroha personally did little of the design work for this project.  

From 1952 to early 1955, the work at ANU was focused almost exclusively on the projects at Nová Dubnica and Ostrava-Stalingrad, both of which suffered chronic delays, budget overruns, material shortages and infrastructure problems. When another

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118 According to Ciporanov, the buildings were designed by Augusta Müllerová-Machoňová, one of the only female architects active in the early 1950s. Letter from architect Ivan Ciporanov to Minister Josef Kyselý, Jan. 11, 1955, p. 9, USBOV, carton 130, NA. She was the wife and collaborator of Ladislav Machoň, an interwar modernist and contemporary of Kroha who was part of the wartime Nazi resistance, a political ally of Edward Beneš and the President of the Association of Architects (Společnost architektů), a center-left professional organization that was part of BAPS. For information on the Association, see UKPK, carton 636, NA. Machoň was persecuted in the 1950s because of his affiliation with the masons and could not work as an architect until his rehabilitation in the 1960s. See J. Kubíček, "Ladislav Machoň," *Architektura ČSR* 27, no. 7 (1968): 35.
The reorganization of Stavoprojekt dismantled the executive board and moved the organization into the Ministry of Community Enterprise (Ministerstwo místního hospodářství) in late 1954, ANU was renamed MANU and attached to Stavoprojekt’s State Design Institute for Regional Planning in Prague (Státní projektový ústav pro rayonové plánování v Praze). This added an additional layer of oversight to the project management at MANU, but little about the everyday operations of the office changed.\textsuperscript{119}

The End of the Atelier

\footnotesize\textsuperscript{119} “Informace o organizačním vývoji Mistrovského atelieru národního umění Jiřího Krohy v Praze,” 1-2.
Kroha’s trouble began when a denunciation letter was sent by architect Ivan Ciporanov, the former project architect for Nová Dubnica, to Minister Josef Kyselý of the Ministry of Community Enterprise on January 11, 1955. After working at ANU for three years, the Bulgarian-born Ciporanov had been fired in June 1954 for insubordination and failure to follow the orders of his superiors.\footnote{ANU to Ivan Ciporanov, June 4, 1954, JK, DO - A.B.C., MMB.} In an eight-page letter to the Minister, Ciporanov described Kroha as “a dictatorial man, without social feelings, typically bourgeois in his deeds and ways of conduct, decidedly oriented towards capitalism, superficial in his political sense. For him, progressive ideas about socialism and communism primarily represent a means to achieve personal success.”\footnote{Ivan Ciporanov to Minister Josef Kyselý, Jan. 11, 1955, p.7, ÚSBOV, carton 130, NA.} He accused Kroha of a variety of more intimate crimes such as mistreating his chauffeur, putting his name on other people’s projects, and overemphasizing his friendships with famous politicians and government figures.\footnote{Ibid., 5-6.} Kroha was also attacked on the basis of his performance as an architect. He was criticized for his “noticeable lack of technical knowledge and his unoriginal and inconsistent way of thinking,”\footnote{Ibid., 1.} for “terrorizing and threatening the workers at MANU and [for] upholding a climate of persistent tension and nervousness.”\footnote{Ibid., 5.} Ciporanov concluded his comments by stating generally that “the
function of this national artist in our cultural and public life and his influence on the
development of our socialist architecture is negative.”

Within the volatile political climate of 1955, it is not surprising that such a
damning letter initiated a clandestine inquiry into the day-to-day practices of Kroha’s
office. In February, Kroha hired his long-time friend Václav Roštlapil, who was working
at Stavoprojekt in České Budějovice, to become his deputy at MANU. In April, an
internal audit was conducted at the request of a small committee convened to
investigate Ciporanov’s complaints. The committee members included Karel Neumann
and Josef Pokorný from the Central Administration of the State Design Institutes (the
name of Stavoprojekt when it was part of the Ministry of Community Enterprise) and
Oldřich Starý, Václav Hilský and Jaroslav Pokorný from the Architects’ Union (Svaz
architektů). Few people were aware of the situation. According to the brief minutes that
survive from the committee’s two meetings, Ciporanov’s original letter was “safely
deposited” at the offices of the Central Administration and only a few copies were made
to distribute. Despite the serious nature of the complaints, they did not consider his
claims to be grounds for immediate dismissal. The committee was even curious about
Ciporanov himself and requested that his confidential personnel file be made available.

125 Ibid., 7.

126 Jiří Kroha to Ředitelství Státního ústavu pro rajonové plánování se sídlem v Praze
(Administration of the State Institute for Regional Planning, Prague Office), Feb. 17, 1955, JK,
HAA, MMB.

127 “Zápis o jednání komise jmenované Svazem architektů a ředitelem HSPÚ-MMH (Minutes of
the first meeting of the negotiating committee named by the Union of Architects and the director
of the central administration of the design institutes [Stavoprojekt] of the Ministry of Communal
Enterprise),” Mar. 19, 1955, p.1, ÚSBOV, carton 130, NA.
to them in order to assess his “character.” During the second meeting, the committee
“decided to put off the conversation with [Kroha] until the next week”, because he was
busy finishing the stadium reconstruction for the 1955 Spartakiada; a project being
overseen by MANU. (Fig. 4. 55) The next meeting was to be decided upon “in
agreement” with Kroha and “according to the scheduling possibilities of the members of
the commission.”

These men, most of whom had been colleagues of Kroha’s for more than thirty
years, were not acting with great urgency to remove him from his position. At a meeting
with MANU employees near the end of the investigation, Karel Neumann, director

![Fig. 4.55: Strahov Stadium during the 1955 Spartakiada, renovated for the event by Jiří Kroha and MANU, from Umění (2004)](image)

128 “2. Zápis o jednání komise jmenované Svazem architektů a ředitelem HSPÚ-MMH (Minutes of the second meeting of the negotiating committee),” Mar. 31, 1955, p. 1, ÚSBOV, carton 130, NA.
of the Central Administration of State Design Institutes, admitted that in the beginning
mistakes had been made in handling complaints raised by current and former
employees.

At the Central Administration, we knew about the complaints of your
comrades, but your comrades in the union and party organizations (ROH
and KSČ) declared that they would solve all of these problems on their
own as soon as possible. I personally handled a few of the complaints
with Kroha and Roštlapil. Comrade Kroha called the accusations into
question and I made the presumption that it was not such a burning
matter. We didn’t have any inkling about the real situation... This is not
an apology, it is only an explanation... I tried to resolve the matter with
Kroha with greater discretion than with other directors, because I
respected the national artist. I criticized him, because the atelier was not
integrated and was not capable of working as a group (komplexně) on
even one project. Kroha objected that I was disrupting him and his work
with such things.130

Rather than pursuing a more serious intervention, a compromise decision was reached
whereby MANU would become a subsidiary office of the State Design Institute in
Prague (Státní projektový ústav v Praze) as of July 1955.

A set of rules, the “theses”, were drafted to make explicit the nature of the new
relationship. Under the new guidelines Kroha retained his central position as the public
face and creative force of MANU, although virtually all other management functions
were delegated among eight new interoffice administrative bodies. These included the
Office of the Director, which was responsible for matters related to the fulfillment of the

129 Roštlapil was the head architect in the office. At the final employee meeting before the closure,
attended by Roštlapil and not Kroha, Roštlapil was angrily portrayed as an equally demonic
character in the office. See “Zápis ze společné schůze KSC a ROH MANU (Minutes of the
collective meeting of the Communist Party and Revolutionary Trade Unions of MANU),” May 14,
1956, ÚSBOV, carton 130, NA.

130 Ibid., 3.
plan, economic use of resources, and communication with the Central Administration.

This placed Kroha in the peculiar position of having a division within his own office specifically to monitor his activities, while the remaining management functions were being overseen by other employees. The situation was described as follows.

The specificity of MANU is that the national artist as director of the office is currently the main architect of all the projects on which MANU works. The national artist is thus directly participating in all of the work of his master atelier and the activities of the atelier are inseparably connected with the character of the national artist. The national artist may, according to his own reasoning, assign associates or his deputy to act as the main architect of projects (accountable to the designer). With consideration for the creative side of the operation, the director of the office may transfer the responsibility for the management duties of the administrative bodies to the office’s main engineer.131

The softness of the language, particularly the use of “may” (může), only thinly disguised the intention to remove Kroha from his managerial duties. This significant demotion, from the head of an independent atelier to the director of a branch office of the State Design Institute in Prague, was the first indicator that Kroha’s position was in serious jeopardy.

At the same time that the denunciation was submitted, a shift in architectural culture began in the aftermath of a speech delivered by Nikita Khrushchev at the All-Union Conference of Builders, Architects, and Building Industry Workers in Moscow on December 7, 1954. Translated and published in Czech soon after by the Research Institute of Building and Architecture (Výzkumný ústav výstavby a architektury), the speech explicitly denounced the exaggerated style of Soviet Socialist Realism and

demanded that architects stop building with the ostentatious and costly materials that defined the style in the Soviet Union. Like Khrushchev’s later and more famous ‘Secret Speech’ of 1956, the comments were not only prescriptive, but designed to place blame with particular individuals, including the head architect in Moscow and professors at the Academy of Architecture who were named among the worst offenders. The speech marked the beginning of a new era in architectural design. The decorative and symbolic potential of architecture that had been manipulated to great effect in the Soviet Union and with more limited success in the Eastern Bloc was being shunned in the face of new building strategies that placed economic concerns at the fore.

Kroha was vulnerable from this point forward since he had been both the country’s leading exponent of Soviet models since 1948 and a supporter of the Soviet Union more generally since his first visit in 1930. Kroha’s relationship to the Soviet system and the doctrine of Socialist Realism was, however, more complex than his past suggested. He saw a unique path to socialism in Czechoslovakia, although the Soviet Union was the model (vzor). In 1952, for example, Kroha stressed the need for Czech and Slovak architects to enhance their knowledge of the Soviet Union and bring this information to bear on their own original work.

Incomplete knowledge of the history, of the gradual development of the individual stages of Soviet architecture... elicited in us – and mainly among architects – a necessarily simplistic, schematic idea not only about

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Soviet architecture, but also about its fundamental meaning for our work. In striving for a new orientation, we spoke broadly about disengaging from cosmopolitanism, about taking up the progressive national tradition, about the necessity of staying faithful to the principles of architectural work, but for the most part without any kind of concrete application in current commissions, without any kind of fruitful response in real products in the workplace.\(^\text{133}\)

Therefore he encouraged the creation of an exemplary body of work in Czechoslovak to serve as the national model.

Socialists and Communists as the heirs to the national traditions, as creative developers of the progressive values of the working people building socialism, and as an inspiration for socialist architecture – let this be the root of the political, ideological, and moral unity of Czechoslovak architects, of those entrusted to give the country new, well-known signs, strengthening in us everything for a more responsible, and with that, more beautiful life.\(^\text{134}\)

First and foremost, Kroha saw himself as a Czech artist contributing to the creation of the new socialist society in his country, which could serve as a model for the working classes in other countries. This position served him well in the earliest years of the regime, but proved problematic as Czech and Slovak architects began to move away from the formal and conceptual restraints imposed by socialist realism.

Although we may speculate about the relationship of the events of January 1955, for example whether or not Ciporanov was aware of Khrushchev’s speech when he wrote his letter to the ministry, it is clear that the combination of the denunciation, the ensuing investigation into the practices at MANU and the shift of architectural priorities in the wake of Khrushchev’s remarks proved devastating to Kroha’s high position. It is

\(^\text{133}\) Kroha, "K základním otázkám první konference architektů v ČSR (On the Fundamental Questions of the First Conference of Architects in Czechoslovakia)," 139.

\(^\text{134}\) Ibid.: 150.
tempting to attribute Kroha’s fall to the whimsy and political maneuvering of the state administration and the party elite, especially in light of the show trials. However surviving archival documents tell a more complex story and reveal a clash of creative impulses that was related to both generational differences and conflicting personal beliefs about architecture.

Based on the information available, it appears that Jiří Kroha finally lost his office because of egregious professional practices at MANU. The investigation into Ciporanov’s accusations revealed three primary problems – Kroha’s disrespectful and at times abusive behavior towards his employees and colleagues; poor business practices and frequent budget overruns on projects; and finally, his attachment to the idea of architecture as art. All three of these problems were addressed in Ciporanov’s letter, although as Karel Neumann noted in his 1956 comments, Kroha’s status as a national artist made the administration suspicious of all the claims at first. More than likely none of these problems on their own would have caused such swift action, however in combination, they provided a sound basis for removing Kroha.

When the audit committee was convened in April 1955, their first request was a list of all the projects currently under development at MANU that would require funds not already allocated in the yearly plan, in other words projects that were over budget.\textsuperscript{135} The list contained twenty-three distinct project items, most concerned Nová Dubnica. At the time, there was still a separate investment structure for funding projects, so the

\textsuperscript{135} “Kapacita MANU potřebná mimo plánované akce (Potential needs at MANU outside of planned actions),” Apr. 28, 1955, USBOV, carton 130, NA.
investors (i.e. national committees, municipalities, national enterprises, ministries) were not being provided with the finished architectural projects that they had commissioned through MANU for the agreed budget. One main objective of the reorganization of the office in July 1955 was to streamline project delivery.

Employees complained that there was little continuity in the office as projects were bounced from person to person. For example, an architect named Jakubec reported that one of his colleagues, Rudolf Oplt, had been removed improperly from his role in part of the Nová Dubnica project even though he was most familiar with the budget situation. His colleague, Vladimír Černíčky added,

[Oplt] was removed from his position as head of the project two days before the delivery of the general plan. Nonetheless we wanted to show a position towards the work that was different from the chairman, we finished the project and submitted it a day early. Three days later, I was offered more work, without a retraction of the removal of the project leadership. I don’t accept this proposal.

A September 1955 audit conducted by Stavoprojekt employees from Brno and Pardubice, suggested that the problem was so severe that incomplete records of projects were kept. They reported that “because of non-existent archiving in the office it was not possible to locate the majority of the needed documents for an objective examination of particular points and in most cases it was necessary to depend on the testimony of individual members of the office [for our information].”

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137 Ibid.

138 „Zpráva o výsledku průzkumu provedeného v MANU (Report on the results of the investigation undertaken at MANU),” Aug. 11, 1955, p. 5. USBOV, carton 130, NA.
In addition to procedural and budgetary problems, Kroha’s personal behavior was the focus of much discussion in the course of the investigation. He was portrayed as an abusive manager who did not reward hard work and often publicly insulted his subordinates. Architect Jan Filsak recalled this remark,

"The national artist expressed the opinion: My employees are pumps, who spew out crap and I’m standing in it up to my waist."\textsuperscript{139}

Josef Konvalina, who left the office between July 1955 and April 1956 stated,

"We labored like mules for the Spartakiada, but the managers of MANU never came by during the work to take a look. Comrade Kroha took in a large honorarium for this project, but many employees were never paid for their overtime hours."\textsuperscript{140}

The working conditions were so objectionable that Neumann reported difficulty attracting employees to the office.\textsuperscript{141} According to a July 1955 employee list, 27% of the funded positions in the office remained unfilled. By April of 1956, the roster had filled out, however, the working conditions showed little improvement based on the opinions expressed at the employees’ meeting.

The final struggle that Kroha faced within the post-1955 administration was defending the role of architecture as an artistic endeavor. As discussed previously, Kroha saw architecture as contributing to the building of socialism within the culture superstructure. As priorities shifted away from the representational qualities of architecture and towards a more instrumental use of architecture to build up the

\textsuperscript{139} "Zápis ze společné schůze KSC a ROH MANU," 2.

\textsuperscript{140} Ibid., 1.

\textsuperscript{141} Ibid., 3.
industrial base, Kroha found himself increasingly ignored by ambitious technocrats, who treated him as a relic of an earlier time. An example of this conflict was Kroha’s objection to the structural panel, which was under development in Bratislava as early as 1952 and in limited production in Gottwaldov from 1954.

According to Kroha, the structural panel was indicative of the increasing influence of a technocratic worldview penetrating into Czechoslovak society from the Soviet Union. Just weeks before his office would be officially closed, Kroha attended the inaugural directors’ meeting of the reorganized State Design Institutes within the new Central Administration for Housing and Civic Building (Ústřední správa pro bytovou a občanskou výstavbu), the first and only meeting of the group that he would attend. In a series of defiant exchanges with other directors, he promoted artistic approaches over economic and technical solutions. Kroha’s distinct position stood out among the more conservative voices calling for plans such as the use of “good and model projects for repetition” in up to 80% of all housing projects. He warned the other directors about placing too much value on the Soviet experience.

We should remember one thing that could damage the work of our architects in a serious way and that is, that what’s going on in the Soviet Union isn’t going on in Czechoslovakia. In this country, as far as concerns standardization, the State Institute of Standardization protects it and in the Soviet Union they are just establishing such an institution for the first time now. Today it is possible to say that our standardization specialists deserve a huge amount of credit for this, that they approved our high standard and that apartments in the USSR are not equipped like ours.

142 "Zápis z porady ředitelů Státních projektových ústavů (Minutes of the meeting of the directors of the State Design Institutes)," Feb. 10, 1956, p. 2b, USBOV, carton 124, NA.
143 Ibid., 7a.
He was explicit in his dislike for buildings constructed completely out of structural panels.

I also want to say... [that] looking ahead, this is not standardization, making panels into apartments, this is surely not right. We know that with time things are moving towards horizontal standardization, this will not only be towards the production of panels, but mainly towards the assembly of skeletons.\textsuperscript{144}

These positions, voiced just two months before the closure of MANU, highlighted how out of step Kroha was with the prevailing trends in Czech and Slovak design. At the time, most architects in the state administration voiced little concern about the stylistic or moral questions surrounding the panel building and saw them, instead, as the ultimate solution to consistently fulfilling their plan requirements for new construction.

Kroha and Socialist Realism

Architectural historians have written little about this era of Kroha’s career and, with a few exceptions, they remain obscure even to specialists.\textsuperscript{145} Many have dismissed the whole socialist realist period as a blemish on Czechoslovak architecture and refuse to engage questions of its stylistic or material condition without passing moral or ethical

\textsuperscript{144} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{145} No information on the project in Slovakia has been published except a few photographs in Matúš Dulla and Henrieta Moravčíková, \textit{Architektúra Slovenska v 20. storočí} (20th-Century Architecture in Slovakia) (Bratislava: Slovart, 2002), 183-84, 415; Platzer and Spechtenhauser, eds., \textit{Jiří Kroha: Kubist, Expressionist, Funktionalist, Realist}, 97. Martin Strakoš has focused some attention on the work in Ostrava, see Strakoš, "Nová Ostrava a její satelity - část 1 (New Ostrava and Its Satellites, Part 1)."; Strakoš, "Nová Ostrava a její satelity - část 2 (New Ostrava and Its Satellites, Part 2)." A new guide to modern architecture in Moravia and Silesia also lists the Ostrava project, see Kohout, Templ and Zatloukal, eds., \textit{Česká architektura - architektura XX.století. Díl I. Morava a Slezsko}, 162. Entry by Martin Strakoš.
judgment on the context in which it was produced. The structural engineer Josef Šanda, a professor at the Academy of Arts, Architecture and Design in Prague, exemplified this opinion in December 2002 when he wrote an angry letter to the professional journal, Architekt, after participating in a public seminar on “Socialist Architecture,” held at the school in conjunction with an exhibition on socialist realism at a nearby museum. The letter prompted the journal to solicit additional comments from other seminar attendees and publish the full exchange in February 2003 under the heading, “In the Shadow of Sorela: Art and Morality.”

Šanda complained bitterly that speakers at the seminar paid little attention to the traumatic individual narratives of architects who were ostracized from their profession and in some cases imprisoned. For him, the only appropriate discussion would focus on the crimes of the regime and not on the architecture, because the buildings were inextricably linked with unforgivable behavior among complicit architects and members of the party. He wrote,


147 A catalogue was produced for the exhibition, although nothing was published from the public seminars. See Petísková, Československý socialistický realismus 1948-1958.

148 Josef Šanda, “Zlo zůstalo bez povšimnutí (Evil Remained Unnoticed),” Architekt, no. 2 (2003): 62. All of the responses were published together under the title “Ve stinu sorely: umění a morálka (In the Shadow of Sorela: Art and Morality),” Architekt, no. 2: 62-66. The author, in attendance at both conferences, was one of the people asked to respond. See Kimberly Elman [Zarecor], 65.
It is alarming that the declaration of so-called leftist views, or enthusiasm for building or possibly only a conviction about the appropriateness of the new means of expression can be presented as an explanation for active participation in a system of oppression and repression, for being responsible for the imprisonment or persecution of colleagues, for supporting others' loss of freedom. In communities like ours that do not show the slightest signs of an appetite for reflection on our past, it may never have occurred to anyone that ideology and decency (or in the end criminal behavior) are in no way connected.\textsuperscript{149}

Many of the other commentators recognized the need for such a public re-examination and the value of high-quality, informed scholarship on the controversial topic.\textsuperscript{150}

Yet in the months that followed, Šanda and other sympathetic older faculty members at the Academy of Arts, Architecture and Design in Prague, successfully campaigned to oust one of the seminar organizers, noted architectural historian Jindřich Výbiral, from his position as Vice Rector of the school. Another professor, Martin Kubelík, resigned from his teaching position at the school the same month, claiming that the seminar “glorified a dark era in the history of my country” and exposed the “immoral and opportunistic position” of the organizers.\textsuperscript{151} Šanda’s comments and the events that followed are especially relevant to the reception of Kroha’s work, since he was the architect most entangled with the regime and susceptible to the criticism that he used “a conviction about the appropriateness of the new means of expression ... as an explanation for active participation in a system of oppression and repression.”\textsuperscript{152}

\textsuperscript{149} Šanda, “Zlo zůstalo bez povšimnutí (Evil Remained Unnoticed),” 62.

\textsuperscript{150} “Ve stínu sorely: umění a morálka (In the Shadow of Sorela: Art and Morality),” 62-66.

\textsuperscript{151} Martin Kubelík, “Totalní myšlení (Totalitarian Thinking),” Architekt, no. 2 (2003): 62.

\textsuperscript{152} Šanda, “Zlo zůstalo bez povšimnutí (Evil Remained Unnoticed),” 62.
In her work on socialist realism in the Soviet Union, Catherine Cooke confronted this type of criticism with vigor. In her article, “Beauty as a Route to ‘the Radiant Future’: Responses of Soviet Architecture,” she argued that the aversion among many scholars and architects to participate in any serious study of socialist realism is a refusal of the architectural objects themselves and shows an inability to recognize the “sheer talent on which the [architecture] profession’s collective status ultimately depended.”

She described Stalinist architects as innovative and committed artists who actively participated in the creation of beautiful or ‘radiant’ architecture, which was “upward-sweeping, monumental, well proportioned in its parts, open to the sun, accessible to the ordinary people – building[s] celebratory of joyfulness, and clear.” Professionals in this environment received comprehensive academic training in “design precedent, aesthetic criticism, and the history of world architecture.” They understood the “design process itself” as a “multi-variate task, part technical, part social, and very importantly, aesthetic, which Architecture with a capital ‘A’ has historically always been.”

In contrast to the common criticism of socialist realism as unsophisticated copying from historical sources, Cooke positioned artists as leaders who helped the


154 Ibid.: 147. Cooke is quoting from a contemporary book, see N. Atarov, Dvorets Sovetov (Moscow: Moskovskii rabochii, 1940), p. 42.

155 Ibid.: 138.

156 Ibid.
people envision the future reality. She emphasized the tension between the past and the future in each work and argued that it was context that mattered above all else.

In this catalytic vision of art’s role, each work must be contextual: it is designed to have a certain effect in the particular cultural and ideological context into which it will be dropped. This was why Socialist Realism was ‘a method not a style.’ It was also the reason why true originality was valued so highly, whether as formal innovation with a national language or as the spiritual originality of samobytnost’: of a thing ‘being itself.’ Those who produced this richer innovation on the drawing board were not necessarily those with Party-political power. Hence ‘power’ in the profession was an equilibrium between these two factors. This accounts for the positions which such former leading Modernists as Ilia Golosov or Andrei Burov occupied in the Stalinist profession. Their sheer fecundity and originality, in the new aesthetic as in the old, assured them leading positions in the new hierarchy of official design studios.157

Ultimately for Cooke, these architects were professionals whose high-quality work, even in the most despotic years of Stalinism, exemplified their belief in the value of architecture and the potential for the profession to contribute to the building of socialism.

It is in within this frame that Kroha’s idiosyncratic architectural production comes into sharp focus. More than any of his contemporaries, he consistently spoke about architecture’s potential to lead the way towards a better socialist future. In his 1952 essay, “Socialist Architecture – Architecture of Peace,” Kroha wrote about his buildings in an outward-looking, optimistic and confident tone that embodied the ‘radiant’ vision he shared with his Soviet counterparts.

The ethos of socialist work, of creative socialist people, is reflected in the socialist order and in socialist architecture. Therefore the buildings are becoming connected with the building of socialism and communism.

157 Ibid.: 143-44.
symbols and prefigurations of the new world. They appear today as indelible impressions on the people’s consciousness, not only in the Soviet nations and the people’s democracies, but on all of the working strata and classes of other nations, who are becoming the hopeful beacons of their own liberation. Socialist architecture thereby acquires a new and cataclysmically revolutionary meaning in world development... It is the architecture of the Marxist-Leninist realization of the world, socialist love and world tranquility; an architecture of global significance and conviction.\(^\text{158}\)

Kroha’s formal vocabulary – giant spires, oversized floral and geometric motifs, classical sculptures and brightly colored facades – provided new ‘images’ of what the socialist future would look like. These were rooted in the local tradition, as shown in the research for Slovakia, and at the same time, appeared unlike any buildings in Czechoslovakia before or after. Kroha’s expressionist tendencies from the 1920s reemerged in the 1950s in his exuberant embrace of the method and its rhetoric.

There were, however, differences between Czechoslovakia and the Soviet Union in this regard. Cooke described architects in the Soviet Union as being rewarded for their “sheer fecundity and originality,” noting that a lack of “Party-political power” could be overcome within the profession through demonstrated talent.\(^\text{159}\) This type of meritocracy developed over several professional generations as the architects trained just before the revolution in the Russian Beaux Arts tradition reached professional maturity in the 1930s and assumed important roles in the architectural administration.

Czech and Slovak architects’ introduction to Stalinism was compressed into just two years as the first socialist vision of architecture, represented by Janů and Vozenilek, was


\(^{159}\) Cooke, “Beauty as a Route to ‘the Radiant Future’: Responses of Soviet Architecture,” 144.
superseded by socialist realism by the end of 1950. At that time, the collective
architectural consciousness of Czechs and Slovaks was rooted in interwar functionalism
and the experience of the immediate postwar era, rather than the architecture of the
Habsburg nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, which would have been a better fit
with the Soviet example. With few options and an urgent need for change, the
Czechoslovak regime cultivated architects who possessed both ‘party-political’ and
professional credentials. The risk of a true meritocracy was obvious given the tenuous
and violent nature of Communist rule in the early 1950s. So although Kroha was
genuinely talented and arguably the most creative interpreter of socialist realism in
Czechoslovakia, his rise to prominence after the war was more related to his Party
connections than may have been the case for architects in the Soviet Union. As the
events of 1955 and 1956 later illustrated, this reliance on his Party connections left Kroha
vulnerable to political attacks and changes in the regime’s priorities, despite the
underlying expectation on his part that his architectural abilities and proper socialist
point of view would guarantee his position.

In a moment of self-reflection in the midst of the official inquiry that would close
his office two months later, Kroha told the committee set to investigate him that,

I am an artist, you are architects, but in my opinion, if I’m right no one
can refute me. Or if perhaps I’m wrong about something today, but in
time I’m shown to be right, then that would give me satisfaction.160

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160 “Zapis z porady ředitelů Státních projektových ústavů (Minutes of the meeting of the directors
of the State Design Institutes),” Feb. 10, 1956, p. 2b, USBOV, carton 124, NA.
It is useful here to return to Catherine Cooke’s description of the socialist realist architect as an ‘artist’ who leads the way towards the ‘radiant future.’ Kroha’s comments throughout the investigation revealed a man deeply invested in an image of himself as an artist that few others accepted at the time.

As Stavoproekt returned to its agenda of standardization and industrialization, Kroha saw nothing in the organization’s rhetoric that addressed the aesthetic and visionary dimensions at the heart of his conception of socialist architecture. Although disappointed, Kroha did not relent, standing by his convictions about the transformative potential of socialist architecture until the end. In her assessment of the Soviet situation, Cooke came to a similar conclusion as Kroha. She described the Khrushchev years in the Soviet Union as obliterating Stalinist design methods and “a period of brutally enforced rejection of [Stalinist] architectural culture and of architecture’s subtleties as a language.”  

For most Czech and Slovak architects, however, Khrushchev’s reforms liberated them from what they perceived to be the decorative and wasteful practices of the Stalinist period. Their short socialist realist interlude only interrupted, but did not stop, their natural return to interwar avant-garde methods and forms.

Conclusion

The drab and poorly-constructed panel buildings that proliferated in later years proved that Kroha’s concerns were well-founded, yet historians of architecture have not been kind to his postwar legacy. Most have chosen not to speak about this period of his

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The few who have commented have disparaged his political and professional choices. Pavel Halík wrote that Kroha’s “eruptive energy, which he poured into his cubo-futurist-expressionist projects after the First World War, was invested in his Stalinist rants during these years, which, despite echoing the latter at times, had no parallel in his field.” In his book on Stalinist architecture in Eastern Europe, Anders Åman commented that “many people changed their opinions in postwar Czechoslovakia, but Kroha’s about-face was too fantastic, too demonstrative. It was hard to take seriously, and those colleagues of Kroha’s who changed their standpoints with a little more discretion were probably more useful to the regime.” In her recent essay on Kroha’s theoretical work, Dita Dvořáková wrote that after 1948 his positions "started to dissolve into vague Stalinist rhetoric."

In looking back at the full history of ANU and MANU, a conflicted picture emerges. Kroha was dedicated to the Communist cause not only when it was fashionable, but throughout his life, and for this he suffered personal and professional hardships. He attempted, more than any of his contemporaries, to find an architectural

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162 In a 1998 exhibition catalogue, the editors devote only two pages out of more than 100 to his postwar career and do not mention ANU or MANU. See Platzer and Spechtenhauser, eds., *Jiří Kroha: Kubist, Expressionist, Funktionalist, Realist*. Neither Jaroslav Svrček nor Josef Císařovský, the authors of the only postwar monographs on the architect, mention the end of MANU in their texts of 1960 and 1967 respectively. See Josef Císařovský, *Jiří Kroha a meziválečná avantgarda* (Jiří Kroha and the Interwar Avant-Garde) (Prague: NČSVU, 1967); Svrček, *Národní umělec Jiří Kroha*.

163 Halík, “Ideologická architektura (Ideological Architecture),” 449.


language that would embody his optimistic vision of the socialist future. He fought to integrate art with architecture and protected the aesthetic principles of his profession even as the technocratic point of view became more dominant in the mid-1950s. As a result, the residential projects he completed in the 1950s remain pleasant and functional neighborhoods amidst the panel buildings of the industrial suburbs.

On the other hand, Kroha was swept up in the fervor surrounding the events of February 1948 and found professional success during the darkest times of communism in Czechoslovakia. He took advantage of his professional position for personal gain and often treated his employees and colleagues with disrespect. His relationships with the political elite and attempts to please the regime indicate his complicity with their authoritarian and violent methods. This period of his career may still overshadow the outstanding work he did in the interwar period and cause some historians to pass harsh judgment on Kroha. As more time passes, however, one can imagine that, in the longer narrative of Czechoslovakia's architectural history, the experiences of the beloved buildings and the towns he built in the 1950s will supplant the political and moral questions about this part of his life.
Chapter 5:  
The Industrialization of Housing: Zlín and the Evolution of the Panelák (1945-1956)

Architects must support and promote typification wholeheartedly. They must fight against the backward, harmful idea that typification is antithetical to artistic aspirations. It is really thanks to typification that uniquely beautiful, integrated spaces succeed in being created in the world; for example, the celebrated Greek temple was in fact a type. Our architects, with the awareness that they have moved from the private atelier to a collective workplace, must in the interest of the development of socialism and all of the productive power in our country give preference to mass building production before individual commissions, however more enticing.¹ - Oldřich Starý, 1955

At the same time that Socialist Realism was the public face of Czechoslovakia’s cultural sphere, there was a second, less-visible trajectory that moved forward within Stavoprojekt—experimentation with new industrial building technologies and housing prototypes. With the end of the Czechoslovak Building Works in September 1951 and the establishment of Stavoprojekt as an independent national enterprise within the new Ministry of Building Industry (Ministerstvo stavebního průmyslu), the loci of these investigations remained in the Stavoprojekt research institutes which multiplied in the early 1950s to include theoretical, technical and operational aspects of architecture. Their work included additional designs for standardized housing blocks and small single-family homes, innovations in new building materials such as lightweight concrete mixtures and synthetic flooring, as well as the testing of new construction methods such

¹ Oldřich Starý, "Velké úkoly architektů v bojovém nástupu ke zprůmyslnění stavebnictví (The Grand Tasks of Architects at the Advent of the Fight to Industrialize the Building Industry)," Architektura ČSR 14, no. 9-10 (1955): 327. Translation by the author and Osamu Okamura. All Czech to English translations are by the author unless noted.
as the use of mobile gantry cranes and prefabricated building elements, assembly-line production, and year-round construction schedules.

The most intense research and experimentation was in the area of prefabricated (montovaný) building panels—non-load-bearing and structural—for use in mass housing projects. In the early 1950s, much of the research on panel construction for residential apartments blocks was conducted at the new Institute of Prefabricated Buildings (Ústav montovaných staveb), headquarterd in Prague with branches in Brno and Gottwaldov (formerly Zlín).² It was at the Institute’s Gottwaldov branch in 1950 that the first mass-deployed structural panel building, what is called in Czech ‘panelový dům’ or ‘panelák’ for short, was designed by two former Baťa architects, Bohumír Kula and Hynek Adamec.³ Within five years, the panelák was the basis of a nationwide building strategy that would attempt to alleviate, once and for all, the decades-old housing shortage in the country.⁴ In the 1960s and 1970s, the scale of development moved from the

² Zlín was renamed Gottwaldov by the Communist-led city government in 1949 to honor President Klement Gottwald; it was changed back to Zlín in 1990. The company name was also changed from Baťa to Svit in 1949. The surviving family had successfully moved the headquarters to Canada in the late 1930s in anticipation of the Nazi invasion and were able to retain the Baťa name through legal action in international courts. See Tomas Bata and Sonja Sinclair, *Bata: Shoemaker to the World* (Toronto: Stoddart, 1990).


⁴ For a general overview of developments in this period, see Eva Pychová, “Česká bytová výstavba v období 1945-1964 (Czech Residential Building, 1945-1964),” *Umění* 54, no. 5 (2006): 420-32. The article was developed out of Pychová’s Master’s Thesis of the same title in the Department of Art History at Palacký University in Olomouc, 2005.
neighborhood to the district and soon paneláks were associated with the bleak industrial suburbs of Czechoslovakia’s cities and towns.

Amidst this massive production of substandard housing, the experiments and modest successes of the 1950s panel building prototypes have been lost. As first envisioned by the research teams, panel technology would not have determined the formal or even spatial qualities of a building, but rather made their design and construction quicker and more cost effective than traditional building methods. In fact, the first experiments with this construction method produced five-story apartment buildings that were similar in material, scale and layout to the T-series buildings of the same era. They were often near established city neighborhoods and built in small groups that conformed to the existing street grid and transportation routes. In purely economic or planning terms, the transformation from traditional to industrial methods succeeded as more housing units were built for less money. Yet in the 1950s, few architects anticipated the speed with which the technology and its requirements would overtake discussions of the implications of such methods for the experiential, spatial and social qualities of residential life.

As soon as the first prototypes debuted in 1954, questions were raised within the profession about the relationship between the technical and formal qualities of the

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5 In one example, a T-series duplex (T42a/52) was built with prefabricated pieces showing the desire to exchange old technology for new technology with no spatial or formal consequences. See František Jech, "Pokusný celomontovaný dvojdomek v Brandyse nad Labem (Experimental Fully-Prefabricated Duplex in Brandýs nad Labem)," Architektura ČSR 13, no. 5 (1954): 123.

results. Although most of the buildings attempted to use ornamentation to soften the harsh geometry of the panels, the scale of the prefabricated structural elements was still evident on the facades, eliciting concerns that the buildings were needlessly ugly. These comments on style were due in part to the emphasis on aesthetics in socialist realist discourse at the time, but it also represented some of the anxiety about typification and standardization that remained from the 1940s. As Marie Benešová, Oldřich Starý and Julius Šif noted in a pointed 1954 commentary on behalf of the Union of Czechoslovak Architects’ Commission for Theory and Criticism, the technical issues involved with the construction of paneláks may have been solved, but this was only one part of the problem, the urgent artistic and formal challenges of producing high-quality panelized architecture still remained.⁷

This chapter will follow the research and development of structural panel technology from its beginnings during the war, through the era of the Czechoslovak Building Works and to the creation of the first centralized architectural administration at start of the second Five-Year Plan in 1956. Although the early 1950s are best remembered as the era of socialist realism, the regime’s commitment to industrialize building production intensified in these years as economic constraints required the delivery of buildings more cheaply and efficiently than ever before. Since architects were officially beholden to socialist realism and its preoccupations with architectural imagery,

⁷ Marie Benešová, Oldřich Starý and Julius Šif, “K diskusi v komisi pro theorii a kritiku Svazu čs. architektů (On the Discussion of the Commission for Theory and Criticism of the Union of Czechoslovak Architects),” Architektura ČSR 13, no. 2 (1954): 54-59. Šif was editor of Sovětská architektura from 1951-1955.
The earliest research on prefabrication and panel technology was undertaken largely out of the public’s eye and with little acknowledgement in the professional press, although the work was not done in secret. Architects in the Soviet Union followed a similar path in the early 1950s, exploring large block and panel construction in research institutes, although they had yet to perfect the structural panel by 1956.8 The well-developed building industry in Czechoslovakia, which operated on a much smaller scale than in the Soviet Union, proved more capable of responding to the technical challenges and production needs of the new technology. In the late 1950s, architects from the Soviet Union and other Eastern Bloc countries looked to Czechoslovakia for guidance in this area, sending delegations to tour research facilities, panel factories and panelák construction sites.9

The cohort of architects and engineers who set out to find viable solutions to this problem were often those whose interest in the topic originated in the 1930s and early 1940s when architects around the world were investigating the potential of prefabricated

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8 For more on the state of Soviet research, see Vladimír Červenka and Stanislav Sůva, Průmyslová výroba stavebních konstrukcí (The Industrial Production of Built Structures) (Prague: Ústav architektury a územního plánování, 1953); Vladimír Červenka and Jaromír Vašíček, Industrialisace bytové výstavby: Technické studie (The Industrialization of Housing: A Technical Study) (Prague: Ústav pro technické a ekonomické informace, 1958); K. Žukov, "O architektuře budov z velkých panelů (On the Architecture of Buildings Made from Large Panels)," Sovětská architektura 3, no. 1 (1953): 28-36.

9 For example, a delegation of 33 East German architects visited Prague in November 1955 as part of an exchange that sent 33 Czech and Slovak architects to Berlin. According to correspondence about the trip, the Germans asked specifically to learn more about production of panels and how they were used in construction. Their itinerary included stops at research institutes and the building site where the first paneláks in Prague were under construction at the time. Similar exchanges happened with Hungarian and Polish architects in 1954 and there were plans to visit Bulgaria the following year. For documents related to the exchanges, see fond 867: Ministerstvo kultury (Ministry of Culture, henceforth MK), carton 311, Národní archiv (National Archive, henceforth NA), Prague, Czech Republic. Additional documentation of research trips in 1957-1958 can be found in fond 976: Státní výbor pro výstavbu (State Committee for Construction, henceforth SVV), cartons 138-139, NA.
housing. Their counterparts included German architects Walter Gropius, Konrad Wachsmann and Ernst May, as well as the French architect Marcel Lods and American outfits such as the Lustron Corporation.\textsuperscript{10} Czech and Slovak architects working at the Baťa Corporation’s Building Department in Zlín in the 1930s were particularly engaged with the methodology of prefabrication as part of the company’s campaign to expand Zlín and build Baťa cities around the world.\textsuperscript{11} During the war, research by Baťa architects led to the first large panel constructions in Czechoslovakia. Within a few years, these same architects, now working for the Institute of Prefabricated Buildings, succeeded in developing a panelák prototype that would become the standard in Czechoslovakia.

The chapter will show that there were two sets of concerns that propelled paneláks to become the dominant housing type in Czechoslovakia. The first were influences from outside the profession: larger structural issues about the nature of state


socialism and its capacity for planning, the desire for rapid social change, and the possible limitations and appropriate form for a state administration to manage construction. Second, there were those discussions generated internally among architects themselves: the changing role of the profession, the direction of technological progress, the scientific nature of architectural research and the need to retain some control over design decisions. The resolution of these disparate, yet related, concerns resulted in the widespread adoption of structural panel technology; much to the chagrin of design architects in the Stavoprojekt offices and to the pleasure of the technocrats in the architectural administration responsible for fulfilling plan quotas.

The move towards panel construction was, therefore, a compromise position—one accepted by architects and the state because it was seen as the only practical solution to meet the demands of the planned economy given the available resources and political goals. The evidence suggests that it was recognized as such by those involved, although some architects questioned the criteria that were used to determine its viability.\(^\text{12}\)

Coming to terms with the panelák as an architectural, rather than a technical proposition, was a complex process. The transition from individual commissions to standardized prefabricated building types was neither a decision made by the political elite and imposed on architects, nor the result of untalented or malicious architectural

\(^{12}\) Jiří Kroha’s objections are discussed in chapter four. See also, Benešová, Starý and Šif, “K diskusi v komisi pro teorie a kritiku Svazu čs. architektů (On the Discussion of the Commission for Theory and Criticism of the Union of Czechoslovak Architects),” 54-59; Václav Havránek, “K architektonické problematice montovaných staveb (On the Architectural Problems of Prefabricated Buildings),” *Architektura ČSR* 13, no. 2 (1954): 42-52; Karel Janů, “K otázce montovaných bytových staveb (On the Question of Prefabricated Housing),” *Architektura ČSR* 13, no. 2 (1954): 35-41. These articles were published together in *Architektura ČSR* when the Institute of Prefabricated Buildings published prototypes for the first time in early 1954.
practitioners who could offer no alternatives. Instead the materialist philosophy of the
government meant that, by the mid-1950s, the production of housing units was by far
the most important work that architects could undertake. The means and methods by
which this occurred were left up to them. As the discussion will show, the response was
not uniform and a variety of construction systems, materials and planning patterns were
considered during the 1950s. In the end, the panelák offered the quickest and most
economical solution to the housing crisis, although architects would continue to seek out
other answers until the end of state socialism in Czechoslovakia.

Bat’a and Prefabrication

Architects across Europe already saw prefabrication as integral to the future of
mass housing by the mid-1920s. In Germany, Walter Gropius used a system of
reinforced concrete panels and cinder blocks in his 1926-1928 project for Törten-
Dessau. This development of 316 two-story row houses was laid out according to the
reach of the crane used to hoist the panels into place. Ernst May used a similar system
for the 1,400 units at Praunheim in Frankfurt, built from 1926-30, and designed to
accommodate the compact, factory-made ‘Frankfurt kitchen.’ At the same
time, Dutch and French companies were also at work on new concrete systems. For
example, the Dutch Bron system, used in the 1926 project at Friedrichsfelde in Berlin,

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14 Ibid., 48-49.
"involved the casting of large story-height wall panels, complete with their windows and doors and all other components such as beams and slabs on the site, and then transporting them by a large overhead crane moving on tracks that straddled the line of buildings under construction."\textsuperscript{15} (Fig. 5.2) Frenchmen Eugène Beaudouin and Marcel Lods designed the Cité de la Muette at Drancy near Paris in 1930. The ill-fated development, which was completed in 1934, but never inhabited as social housing, included a combination of high-rise and low-rise apartment blocks constructed with lightweight prefabricated concrete panels mounted on steel skeletons.\textsuperscript{16} (Fig. 5.3)

Despite these auspicious beginnings, experiments with prefabricated panel construction never entered the mainstream of European building culture. All of these

\textsuperscript{15} Ibid., 48.

\textsuperscript{16} The buildings ended up being used for various purposes including as a prison, a transfer station for French Jews during World War II and army barracks, all but one building was demolished in 1976. See Weddle, "Housing and Technological Reform in Interwar France: The Case of the Cité de la Muette," 167-75.
Fig. 5.2: Bron System, Berlin, Germany from *Deutsche Bauzeitung* (1926)

Fig. 5.3 Eugène Beaudouin and Marcel Lods, Tower at La Muette, Drancy, France from *Art et décoration* (1936)
examples required the panels to be fabricated on site, which negated some of the benefit of prefabrication, especially in the cold and wet climates of northern Europe. By the early 1930s, the economics of the Great Depression also meant that the municipalities which had funded these projects no longer had tax revenue to spend on housing.\textsuperscript{17} Then with the rise of fascism in Germany and the widespread retreat from the hyper-rational logic of industrialization that many blamed for the economic depression, the concept of urban mass-housing itself was undermined.\textsuperscript{18} In its place, the ideal of the single-family house and village life appeared.\textsuperscript{19} Only after World War II, when rebuilding was the immediate priority, would the countries return to high-density social housing, albeit with a preference for the more flexible system of slab construction.

Like many other countries where high modernism flourished in the interwar period, Czechoslovak architecture was renowned for its elegant forms in the 1920s, although construction methods remained traditional with buildings made of masonry, brick and stucco. Reinforced concrete, plate glass and steel structural systems came into wide use for all building types in the late 1920s thanks to the availability of these materials from local producers.\textsuperscript{20} Czechs were particularly skilled in their use of reinforced concrete and glass as evidenced in internationally-recognized projects such as

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{17} Herbert, \textit{The Dream of the Factory-Made House: Walter Gropius and Konrad Wachsmann}, 49.
  \item \textsuperscript{18} Weddle, "Housing and Technological Reform in Interwar France: The Case of the Cité de la Muette," 173-74.
  \item \textsuperscript{19} Herbert, \textit{The Dream of the Factory-Made House: Walter Gropius and Konrad Wachsmann}, 49-51. According to Herbert, this was not only due to Nazi ideology, but to the sustained interest among modern architects in the house.
  \item \textsuperscript{20} Historically glass production was a specialty in northern Bohemia and steel was manufactured in Ostrava.
\end{itemize}
the Trade Fair Palace, the General Pension Institute and the Baba Housing Estate in Prague, as well as the Exhibition Grounds in Brno and numerous villas and apartment buildings around the country.\(^21\) (Fig. 5.4-5.6) The architects working in Zlín became masters of brick construction. Yet unlike in Germany, France or Holland, there was little experimentation with large-scale prefabrication or panel construction among Czech interwar modernists. There was, however, one important exception—the Building Department at the Baťa Corporation in Zlín.

Postwar developments in prefabrication, standardization and typification in Czechoslovakia can be traced back directly to the activities of Baťa architects in the 1930s. As discussed in chapter two, the company had a long history of architectural innovation. Before the 1932 death of founder Tomáš Baťa, its Building Department designed some of the earliest examples of mass-produced prefabricated and standardized buildings in the world. In addition to new models of industrial architecture, the search for ideal housing types was one of the highest priorities in the Baťa organization. Before World War II, these efforts focused on family houses, with an emphasis on apartment buildings developing after 1945.\(^22\) Zlín’s first residential building


Fig. 5.4: Josef Fuchs and Oldřich Tyl, Trade Fair Palace, Prague (1925-1928) from the collection of the National Gallery in Prague

Fig. 5.5.: Hana Kučerová-Zaveská, Balling House at the Baba Estate, Prague (1936) from *Baba: The Werkbund Housing Estate Prague* (1999)
boom began after unrest among the workers in 1924 made Tomáš Baťa fearful of the formation of a labor union. He decided to follow the example of American corporations and build a full-service factory town modeled the system of welfare capitalism in the United States where he had traveled in 1919-1920.²³

Under the leadership of head architect František Gahura, the Baťa Corporation initiated the construction of its company town, which was adjacent to, and would eventually surround, the existing historic center. Starting in 1924, several neighborhoods

²³ [Zarecor], “Garden Cities and Company Towns: Tomáš Baťa and the Formation of Zlín, Czechoslovakia,” 25-35. The Endicott-Johnson Shoe Company’s towns of Endicott and Johnson City in upstate New York were especially influential.
of brick, single-family, duplex and fourplex houses were executed according to a limited number of standardized plans produced by architects in the company’s Building Department. Families rented the small houses directly from the company for a modest sum; the favorable conditions meant that demand far outpaced supply for many years. Starting in 1926, unmarried employees could find accommodation in dormitories that intentionally resembled the factory buildings. (Fig. 5.9) Services were concentrated in a commercial zone across from the industrial complex and included a movie theater, a large department store, a modern high-rise hotel, restaurants, churches and schools. (Fig. 5.10) All of buildings in the town were built using a variation of the same construction system—a reinforced concrete structure infilled with brick and glass—reducing construction time, costs and waste. As part of its working philosophy to control as much of the supply chain as possible, the company also built production facilities for its own building materials such as bricks, cement, mortar and construction equipment. (Fig. 5.11)

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24 Zlín - město v zahradách/ Zlín - City in Gardens (Zlín: Statutární město Zlín, 2005), illustrations 59-68.

25 The rent covered only the capital costs with interest and maintenance, so the company was not making money on the housing. See Paul Devinat, “Working Conditions in a Rationlised Undertaking, Part II,” International Labour Review 21, no. 2 (February 1930): 180-81.

26 Pokluda, Ze Zlína do světa - příběh Tomáše Bati/ From Zlín into the World - The Story of Thomas Bat’a (Zlín: Thomas Bata Foundation; Státní okresní archiv Zlín, 2004), 20-21.

27 Images of the mortar production facility and concrete facility were published in Architektura ČSR, see Alois Kubiček, “Nové zahradní čtvrti ve Zlíně (The New Garden District in Zlín),” Architektura ČSR 2, no. [10?] (1940): 286.
In 1930, Vladimir Karfík was recruited to join the Baťa Building Department. He had just returned from the United States, where he worked for Holabird and Root, a large Chicago office that was known for its skyscraper designs and for Frank Lloyd Wright.
Fig. 5.9: František Gahura, Bat’a dormitory in Zlín (author’s photo, 2006)

Fig. 5.10: František Gahura, Community House Hotel, now Hotel Moskva, Zlín (author’s photo, 2006)
Wright at Taliesin East and West.\textsuperscript{28} Karfík had originally become well-known among Czech architects when he worked for Le Corbusier in 1925-1926 on projects such as the Plan Voison.\textsuperscript{29} In his memoirs, Karfík recalled that Tomáš Baťa was looking in particular for an architect with international experience. He sent his half-brother, Jan Baťa, to the Chicago office of the Czechoslovak professional organization, the Association of Engineers and Architects (SIA) to personally to recruit experienced Czechs and Slovaks to work in Zlín.\textsuperscript{30} Karfík would later put this knowledge to use in several projects including the sixteen-story skyscraper for the company’s headquarters that remains Zlín’s most recognizable building.

Tomáš Baťa’s aggressive entrepreneurship led to the expansion of the company into American and Western European markets in the early 1930s. When Tomáš’s half-brother, Jan Baťa, took over the company after his death in 1932, he accelerated its

\textsuperscript{28} Vladimir Karfík, \textit{Architekt si spomína} (An Architect Remembers) (Bratislava: Spolok architektov Slovenska, 1993), 44-89. He was with Holabird & Root in 1927-1928 and Wright in 1929.

\textsuperscript{29} Ibid., 25-32.

\textsuperscript{30} Ibid., 92-93. This was the same organization that was active in Prague and joined BAPS in 1945.
international expansion into markets in North Africa and Asia.\textsuperscript{31} In addition to their work in Zlín, Gahura and Karfík oversaw the construction of Baťa settlements in locations all over the world including in England, France, Switzerland, Poland, the Netherlands, Croatia, Malaya (later Malaysia) and India.\textsuperscript{32} (Fig. 5.12) For each new site, they would send a “colony package” that included “building and town plans, construction supervisors, formwork and manufacturing machinery, a cadre of instructors and their families, as well as the Baťa management and social programs officers.”\textsuperscript{33} As Jean-Louis Cohen notes, “the Baťa system created a real network of towns which applied all over the world the solutions worked out in Czechoslovakia. It was only the town planning of these industrial centers that varied according to topography, hydrography and infrastructure.”\textsuperscript{34}

Jan Baťa also continued his brother’s engagement with international modern architecture. In 1935, he sponsored an open competition to generate new ideas for standardized single-family houses and duplexes. With Karfík’s help, he brought Le

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{31} Jan Baťa was flamboyant and arrogant. He also helped save the lives of his Jewish employees during the war by transferring them to Baťa factories outside of Europe before he himself fled to the United States in 1939 and later to Brazil in 1941. In 1947, the Czechoslovak government convicted him in absentia of collaborating with the Nazis. In June 2007, the verdict was officially overturned, in part because the family showed that he had been a significant and anonymous benefactor of the Czechoslovak government in exile in London, see Rob Cameron, “Prague Court Overturns 1947 Verdict Against ‘Shoe King’ Jan Antonin Bata,” June 26, 2007, Český rozhlas (Czech Radio) International Section Archive, http://www.radio.cz/en/article/92786, accessed August 26, 2007. On the family, see Bata and Sinclair, \textit{Bata: Shoemaker to the World}, 140-66.


\item \textsuperscript{33} Jenkins, “Utopia, Inc.: Czech Culture and Bata Shoe Company Architecture and Garden Cities,” 64.

\item \textsuperscript{34} Cohen, “Zlín: An Industrial Republic,” 44.
\end{itemize}
Corbusier to Zlín to serve on the jury along with Czech architects Bohuslav Fuchs, Pavel Janák, František Gahura and A. Schön.\(^35\) The competition brief requested a prototype for a worker’s house with at least 80 square meters of living space, although duplex units could be smaller. The living room and kitchen were to be placed on the ground floor with two or three bedrooms upstairs.\(^36\) A basement was also required and three of the four winning entries also provided a garage. With the publicity generated by Le Corbusier’s participation, 289 entries from ten countries were submitted; four were given prizes.\(^37\)

\(^35\) Kohout, Templ and Zatloukal, eds., Česká architektura - architektura XX. století. Díl I. Morava a Slezsko, 187. A. Schön may have worked for the Baťa Building Department.

\(^36\) Kubíček, "Nové zahradní čtvrti ve Zlíně (The New Garden District in Zlín)," 278.

\(^37\) Kohout, Templ and Zatloukal, eds., Česká architektura - architektura XX. století. Díl I. Morava a Slezsko, 187.
The first prize went to Swedish architect Erick Swedlund. His two-bedroom, one-bathroom, 85-square-meter brick house was praised for its large ground floor living area that opened onto a patio and garden; a fireplace in the center of the house with a diagonal opening; and windows with low sills on the ground floor. (Fig. 5.13-5.14)

Second prize went to the Prague team of Adolf Benš, a Corbusian modernist who would be a member of the Central Action Committee in 1948, and František Jech, a young architect who would later be active in SSA, the Communist Party and BAPS. They submitted a duplex design in which each of the two-bedroom, one-and-a-half bathroom units contained 50 square meters of living space and a half basement; unlike the other winners no garages were provided. In their proposal, a central structural wall divided the two units and allowed the staircase to be located in the center of the plan to bring more light into the living spaces. Its layout was very similar to earlier Baťa duplex types, although the innovation here was the use of rough “thermoconcrete” cladding, its surface embellished with the residual imprints of the horizontal formwork. (Fig. 5.15-5.16)

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38 Little is known about Swedlund, who is incorrectly referred to in the Baťa literature as Svedlund. A Swedish journalist found out that he never visited Zlín or told his colleagues in Sweden that he had won the competition. He worked for another architect through his whole career and died in Stockholm in 1985. See Lars Schmidt, "Utopia," *Forum: Quarterly Review of Nordic Architecture and Design* 1 (Spring 2006): 100-11.


40 See chapter one.

41 Kohout, Templ and Zatloukal, eds., *Česká architektura - architektura XX.století. Díl I. Morava a Slezsko*, 188; Kubíček, "Nové zahradní čtvrti ve Zlíně (The New Garden District in Zlín)," 284. The experimental finish does not survive. Jech would continue to pursue new construction technologies for housing in the postwar period with projects such as the neighborhood of
Fig. 5.13: Erick Swedlund, Single-family house for Bafa competition, first prize, Zlín (1935) from *Architektura ČSR* (1940)

Fig. 5.14: Swedlund House (author's photo, 2006)

Solidarita in Prague from 1946 and his designs for an unbuilt experimental prefabricated ten-story apartment building from 1950.
Fig. 5.15: Adolf Benš and František Jech, Duplex for Baťa competition, second prize, Zlín (1935) from Architektura ČSR (1940)

Fig. 5.16: Benš-Jech duplex (author’s photo, 2006)
The other two prizes went to local architects, Vladimír Karfík and Antonín Vítek, in third and fourth places respectively. Both of their designs were larger and more like middle-class homes than those of the other winning entries. Vítek’s project for a brick duplex included two 65-square meter units entered through verandas on each side of the house. In addition to a living room and kitchen on the ground floor and two large bedrooms and a private bathroom upstairs, the units unexpectedly had a maid’s room and WC on the ground floor, plus a full basement and a private garage.\(^42\) (Fig. 5.17-5.18) The maid’s room was a clear reminder of the capitalist nature of Zlín. Karfík’s design was a large brick home with more than 100 square meters of living space for a single family. The split-level house was designed for a sloped site so that the main living areas, on one story, would be entered above street level, while the bedrooms were up a short flight of stairs and the garage and cellar were down one flight with the driveway at street level.\(^43\) A covered south-facing patio looked towards the woods behind the house and featured a large “American-style” sliding window.\(^44\) (Fig. 5.19-5.20) The main guest entrance was also off of the patio, even though it meant that visitors had to walk around to the back of the house to enter. More than any of the other Zlín houses of the 1930s, the Karfík competition entry pushed the limits of the Baťa system by embedding the house

\(^{42}\) Kohout, Templ and Zatloukal, eds., Česká architektura - architektura XX.století. Díl I. Morava a Slezsko, 189. It is likely that the extra bedroom on the ground floor would have been rented out for extra income or used as a child’s room for families who did not have a maid.

\(^{43}\) Kubiček, "Nové zahradní čtvrti ve Zlíně (The New Garden District in Zlín)," 285.

\(^{44}\) Kohout, Templ and Zatloukal, eds., Česká architektura - architektura XX.století. Díl I. Morava a Slezsko, 189.
Fig. 5.17: Antonín Vitek, Duplex for Baťa competition, fourth prize, Zlín (1935)
from Architektura ČSR (1940)

Fig. 5.18: Vitek Duplex (author’s photo, 2006)
Fig. 5.19: Vladimír Karfík, Single-family house for Baří competition, third prize, Zlín (1935) from Architektura ČSR (1940)

Fig. 5.20: Karfík House from the street side (author’s photo, 2006)
in its site and breaking apart the rigid cubic volumes that had been the Baťa trademark up to that point.

In 1935, one prototype of each of the winning competition entries, called Type Swedlund, Type Benš-Jech, Type Karfík and Type Vítek, was built along a street in the hills above the commercial district. Despite the success of the competition and the completion of the four houses, no more examples of these ‘types’ were ever built. The local architects did build several other similar houses along the same street, carrying forward the general shape, scale and materials of the winning entries. Karfík also completed a number of other villas for individual Zlín residents and he built a modified version of his competition entry, Type Karfík I, in 1938. Once again it was a larger home with integrated outdoor spaces, a spacious plan and a split section that created a roof deck off the upstairs children’s bedroom. (Fig. 5.21) Karfík himself lived with his family in his winning competition house, Type Karfík, for ten years until he left Zlín for Bratislava in 1946.

In addition to judging the house competition, Le Corbusier also worked on a new master plan for Zlín during his stay. He spent six weeks on the project in the summer of 1935, however Jan Baťa rejected Le Corbusier’s proposal, since it required

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45 Other Building Department prototypes were built on the same street including a 140-square foot three-bedroom house by Karfík from 1935 that was not part of the competition. See Ibid., 187-89; Kubíček, “Nové zahradní čtvrti ve Zlíně (The New Garden District in Zlín),” 277-88.

46 For a complete list, see Petr Všetečka, “In the Steps of Zlín Architecture: Baťa Villas and Family Houses in Zlín.”

47 Ibid.
that the company tear down its existing neighborhoods and stop building houses and small apartment buildings. In their place, Le Corbusier wanted to construct a series of residential towers on the hills that lined the valley from Otrokovice to the existing town.\textsuperscript{48} (Fig. 5.22) Jan Baťa was too committed to his brother’s ideal of the family house to agree to this radical solution. Le Corbusier also worked on designs for Baťa retail stores, a production center in France and a Baťa pavilion for the 1937 World Exposition in Paris, yet despite two years of further negotiations, none of Le Corbusier’s projects for Baťa were ever built.\textsuperscript{49} (Fig. 5.23)

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{48} Le Corbusier, \textit{Oeuvre complète, 1934-1938} (The Complete Works) (Zurich: Dr. H. Girsberger, 1939), 38-39, 117-21, 70-71.
  \item \textsuperscript{49} Cohen, “Zlín: An Industrial Republic,” 43.
\end{itemize}
Fig. 5.22: Le Corbusier, Master plan for the Zlín to Otrokovice corridor (1935) from Le Corbusier, *Oeuvre complète 1934-1938*

Fig. 5.23: Le Corbusier, Designs for Bařa retail stores (1936) from Le Corbusier, *Oeuvre complète 1934-1938*
In the years after the competition and the failed master plan exercise, the Bata Building Department continued to produce variations on their standardized house year that Karfík’s skyscraper was completed, Jiří Vozenílek was hired by the company. His background in scientific design methods, his professional ambition and his technocratic outlook made him a strong candidate for Bafa. In addition, the prosperous company may have offered more job security for him and his family than his association with the Architectural Working Group in Prague, which despite its success in offering a critique of current trends, never earned its members many architectural commissions.\(^{50}\)

One year later, the Germans invaded and the Bata Corporation secretly began to liquidate its industrial manufacturing equipment to its new headquarters in Canada.\(^{51}\)

Throughout the war and under the watchful eyes of German observers, the company continued its operations making shoes, conducting product research and building houses, although resources such as rubber, cement and steel were scarce and factory and construction output was reduced, especially after 1941.\(^{52}\) Only 600 housing units, including temporary accommodations, were built between 1939 and 1945, equivalent to

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\(^{50}\) The size of his family by 1937 is unknown, but in 1953, he had four children and was 44 years old. See “Kandidátka výboru Svazu architektů (Candidate for the board of the Architects’ Union),” March 22, 1953, Vozenílek, fond 1261/2/20: Ústřední kulturně propagáční komise a kulturně propagáční oddělení UV KSC (Central Cultural-Propaganda Commission and the Cultural-Propaganda Department of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, henceforth UKPK), carton 637, NA.

\(^{51}\) Bata and Sinclair, *Bata: Shoemaker to the World*, 49-73. Tomáš Bat’a’s widow returned to Czechoslovakia from Canada in 1939 so that the family could keep the business out of the hands of the Nazis, although German overseers were added to the Board of Directors.

\(^{52}\) Thomas J. Bata claims that no weapons were manufactured in Zlín during the war, but the company was certainly contributing something to the war effort. See Ibid.
one good year in the previous decade, and 140 were destroyed when the factory and
town was bombed by the United States in November 1944.\footnote{Jiří Vozenilek, "Nová výstavba Zlína (The New Construction of Zlín)," \textit{Architektura ČSR} 6, no. 3 (1947): 69. It is not clear if the 140 were recently built or in older neighborhoods.} (Fig. 5.24)

It was during this time that the first organized research on mass-produced prefabricated houses began.\footnote{Zlín research institutes were safe havens for many academics after the Czech universities were closed by the Nazis in November 1939. For example, Otto Wichterle, a chemist who had been teaching at the Czech Technical University in Prague, led a research team in Zlín that did pioneering research on polymers and synthetic fibers in early 1940s; independently inventing something similar to nylon. He kept this research secret until after the war even though he was arrested and imprisoned by the Gestapo for several months in 1942. He also led classes that trained younger chemists who had no other educational options at the time. He is best-known as the inventor of contact lenses in 1961. See Josef Tomes, \textit{Český biografický slovník XX. století}, 3 vols., vol. 3 (Prague: Paseka, 1999), 528. The Faculty of Management and Economics at the Tomáš Baťa University in Zlín claims that the closing of the universities was "a boon to illegal research and to university-level teaching, bearing its fruit in the post-war industrial development and build up of research capacity," especially in the rubber, plastic and leather-working industries in Zlín. See "Faculty: History and Relationship with the Zlín Region," Faculty of Management and Economics, Tomáš Baťa University in Zlín, \url{http://web.fame.utb.cz/?id=0_0&lang=en&type=0}, accessed August 29, 2007.} In 1940, the Department for Cast and Prefabricated Buildings (\textit{Oddělení pro lité a montované domky}) was established.\footnote{Ibid.: 15.} As an indication of the lack of resources during the war, its first assignment was to research the construction of cast concrete houses using mixes lightened with waste materials such as slag (\textit{škvárobeton}), pumice (\textit{lindbeton}) and sawdust (\textit{pilinobeton}).\footnote{Ibid.} The following year, two duplexes were constructed with prefabricated hollow blocks.\footnote{Ibid.} These experimental houses were built near each other in the residential quarter called the Forest District (\textit{Lesní čtvrť}), east of the factory. With their compact floor plans and cubic appearance,
they resembled other Baťa houses of the 1930s including the Benš-Jech winning competition entry from 1935, itself a take on the standard Baťa duplex from the 1920s.\textsuperscript{58} (Fig. 5.25)

In 1942, architect Miroslav Drofa, who had worked on residential projects in the Building Department since 1928, was called back from a Baťa building project in Slovakia to coordinate the construction of more housing in Zlín, a position he would keep for more than twenty years.\textsuperscript{59} Under his direction, housing research was directed towards prefabrication and higher-density projects. In 1943, the first experimental

\textsuperscript{58} I have not found plans or sections for the houses and can only judge only on the exterior configuration.

panelized prefabricated building, the Type A (Typ A), was designed by Baťa architects Hynek Adamec and Bohumír Kula from the Department for Cast and Prefabricated Buildings—the “A” referred to Adamec. Between 1943 and 1945, three Type A duplexes were built using panels made at the building site and mounted onto a structural frame; the joints were closed with mortar. A movable crane that ran on a track along the street was used to position the panels. (Fig. 5.26-5.28) This was similar to the methods used in Germany and France before the war. Once again, just as with the Benš-Jech house from 1935, the duplex typology remained the same and only the method of production changed.

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61 Ibid; Vozenilek, "Nová výstavba Zlína (The New Construction of Zlín)," 84.
Fig. 5.26: Hynek Adamec and Bohumír Kula, Type A duplex, Zlín (1943-1945) from Architektura ČSR (1947)
Fig. 5.27: Hynek Adamec and Bohumír Kula, Type A duplex, ground floor (bottom) and second floor (top), Zlín (1943-1945) from Architektura ČSR (1947)
The Two-Year Plan in Zlín

After the war, the situation in Zlín was never the same. With Beneš’s October 1945 Nationalization Decree, what was left of the Czechoslovak company was nationalized. The Department for Cast and Prefabricated Buildings became the Department of Prefabricated Buildings in the new national enterprise, indicating a shift in emphasis.62 Despite the loss of the Baťa family’s leadership, the Building Department continued its work and its first priority was reimagining the war-damaged city on a regional and national scale. In a 1947 article, Jiří Voženílek claimed that Zlín had suffered more than other any Czech city in the war, not only from the bombings, but through the loss of productivity and housing construction that would have occurred if the war had never happened.63

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63 Voženílek, "Nová výstavba Zlina (The New Construction of Zlín)," 69.
A team that included Vladimír Karfík, František Gahura, Antonín Vítek and Jiří Voženílek quickly went to work on a new master plan for the city, although Karfík and Gahura left Zlín in 1946 before the work was complete.\(^\text{64}\) (Fig. 5.29) Voženílek, who would take over as the Director of the Building Department in 1946, had proposed urban plans based Miliutin’s linear city concept as early as 1932 and his influence can be seen in this project which emphasized Zlín’s regional importance and its connections to other cities in the valley such as Otrokovice, 10 km to the west, which was on the national rail line and the site of another Baťa factory settlement.\(^\text{65}\) Among the group’s proposals were the creation of a Moravian industrial belt and a regional transportation network with highways, canals and rail lines that would connect Ostrava, Zlín and Brno to Bohemia and Prague to the west.\(^\text{66}\) (Fig. 5.30) Designs were also completed for the extension of the commercial district to include more cultural buildings and public services, as well as an elevated pedestrian walkway over the main thoroughfare to connect the residential districts with the factory.\(^\text{67}\) Most importantly for this study, they proposed a change in emphasis for housing production that would encourage more


\(^{65}\) Voženílek, "Nová výstavba Zlína (The New Construction of Zlín)."

\(^{66}\) Ibid.: 69-72.

\(^{67}\) Ibid.: 73-78.
Fig. 5.29: Vladimír Karfík, František Gahura, Antonín Vítěk and Jiří Voženílek, Master Plan for Zlín (1946) from Architektura ČSR (1947)

Fig. 5.30: Plan to connect Zlín to the rest of the country through a new transportation network, arrows and city names added by the author for clarity, from Architektura ČSR (1947)
vertical construction near the city center east of the factory and limit family house
construction to “multi-unit prefabricated buildings.” 68

Due to the aggressive urban plan and the resources made available by the
national enterprise, Zlín was the site of many of the first housing projects to be
completed in Czechoslovakia after the war. From Karfík’s new home in Bratislava,
where he was a founding member of the new Department of Architecture at the Slovak
University of Technology in Bratislava, he commuted back and forth to Zlín over the
next year to supervise the construction of twelve 3-story apartment buildings that he
designed as part of the city’s planned eastward expansion. 69 The Scandinavian-inspired
buildings were designed in four to seven segments with six apartments in each, accessed
by a single stair. 70 The units were oriented east-west on a site with a north-south slope.
To accommodate the landscape, each of the segments stepped down the incline of the
site and was then offset about one meter west to emphasize the western light. (Fig. 5.31-
5.32) The three-room units contained 68-square-meters of living space with two
bedrooms, a living room, a galley kitchen, bathroom and a west-facing balcony large
enough to park a stroller. 71 The balcony could be accessed through the living room,

68 Ibid.: 74.

69 Karfík, Architekt si spomína, 140-41; Vlasta Štursova, “Zlín - první dokončené byty 2LP (Zlín -
The First Completed Apartments of the Two-Year Plan),” Architektura ČSR 6, no. 6 (1947): 193;

70 Kohout, Tempi and Zatloukal, eds., Česká architektura - architektura XX.století. Díl I. Morava a
Slezsko, 192.

71 Voženílek, "Nová výstavba Zlína (The New Construction of Zlín)," 81.
Fig. 5.31: Vladimír Karfík, Fučík Quarter under construction from Architektura ČSR (1947)

Fig. 5.32: Fučík Quarter building stepping down the slope with shifting segments (author’s photo, 2006)
as well as seen through the kitchen window to make it more useful for parents.⁷² (Fig. 5.33) A few larger apartments with a work space and an extra large living room anchored the northern end of the buildings to accommodate families with more than three children or someone who worked at home. Another detail were relief panels above each entrance with images of “flowers, animals, historical reminiscences and the like;” made by students at the Academy of Fine Arts in Prague.⁷³ (Fig. 5.34) According to Karfik, this gave the project a “folksy” touch.⁷⁴ The relief panels also appear on his 1955 project for a panelák in Bratislava and over the doorways of the G houses built in Prague the same year. According to Martin Strakoš, this practice recalled the medieval Czech tradition of using images, rather than words or numbers, as commercial signposts.⁷⁵


⁷³ Karfik, Architekt si spomina, 140.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Interview with Martin Strakoš, Ostrava, Czech Republic, June 2006.
Fig. 5.34: Relief panel over the doorway in the Fučík Quarter, the canopy is not original and the door has been replaced (author’s photo, 2006)

Fig. 5.35: New vertical district east of downtown, two 8-story Morýs buildings on lower left, five tower buildings on the upper right, from *Architektura ČSR* (1947)
Working with the master plan, which indicated the need for more vertical
collection, Miroslav Drofa designed the city’s first high-rise residential buildings on a
piece of land just to the east of downtown. (Fig. 5.35) Traditional Bat’a construction
methods including reinforced concrete, brick and glass were used. The first group wereive identical, eight-story “tower blocks (věžové domy),” built on a main thoroughfare
across the street from Karfík’s project. (Fig. 5.36) The buildings were square in plan with
four spacious one-bedroom, 68-square meter apartments arranged around a central stair
and elevator core. Each identical living room had a balcony, although they were placed
asymmetrically in plan with one balcony facing east, one west and two south. This was
achieved by moving the balconies that would have been on the north wall to the east
and west facades for better light. The buildings sat in a green space, set back from the
busy street in front, providing a serene and peaceful environment that once again
recalled Scandinavian architecture of the same period. (Fig. 5.37)

Simultaneously, Drofa also designed the two ‘Morýs’ buildings, the most
dramatic additions to the Zlín skyline after the war. Located on high ground and visible
from many of the existing residential neighborhoods, “the apartment houses
(apartementový domy)” were finished in 1947 and then renamed in honor of Zlín’s
Communist mayor Vilem Morýs, who was killed in a car crash in December 1948. Each
of the nine-story, double-loaded corridor buildings had 97 apartments facing east or

76 Kohout, Templ and Zatloukal, eds., Česká architektura - architektura XX.století. Dl I. Morava a Slezsko, 191.
77 Ibid.
Fig. 5.36: Miroslav Drofa, Tower Blocks, Zlín (1946-1947) from *Architektura ČSR* (1947)
west—60 two-room units and 30 three-room units with eat-in-kitchens and pantries, as well as 7 two-room units with smaller kitchens and larger living rooms for families without children. (Fig. 5.38-5.40) Services, including a restaurant, a day care center and a game room, were located on the ground floor. Most of the units also featured the same balcony style as the Karfik buildings, although in this case, the corner units were the largest with a living room that opened onto a deck that could be seen through a side window from the adjacent kitchen. As local architectural historian Petr Všetečka writes,

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78 Voženílek, "Nová výstavba Zlína (The New Construction of Zlín)," 80.
Fig. 5.38: Miroslav Drofa, Morýs buildings, Zlín (1946-1947) from *Architektura ČSR* (1947)

Fig. 5.39: Miroslav Drofa, Plans for the Morýs buildings, Zlín (1946-1947), unit plan (top), ground floor plan (middle) and typical floor (bottom), from *Architektura ČSR* (1947)
the Morýs buildings continued “the Bata building tradition in the changed circumstances of the postwar era. The idea of the garden city was transformed into a new scale and living in tall buildings introduced into Zlín’s space an urban gradation, contrast and ‘big-city’ spirit.”

The last large project of this period was Jiří Voženílek’s “Collective House,” from 1947-51, which was similar to the Morýs buildings in scale and proportion. As was typical with the collective house type, the units in the building had no kitchen, only a small sink and stove, although similarly to Litvínov, the apartments themselves were organized for family living with one or two private bedrooms. Community amenities

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included a roof deck, a full-service dining room, bar and laundry on the ground floor, as well as an elementary school and nursery in an adjoining building. Stylistically, Voženílek more self-consciously attempted to mimic the factory architecture of Zlín in this projects with its thick reinforced concrete exposed frame, high-contrast brick infill and horizontal bands of windows across the primary facade interspersed with alternating balconies. (Fig. 5.41-5.42) The central staircase was also enclosed in glass block, an awkward choice for an already busy facade. In comparison to the more subtle projects of Karfík and Drofa, Voženílek’s building, which would be his last individual commission, lacked the elegant proportions and sensitivities of the other Two-Year Plan buildings in Zlín.

In addition to these large projects, architect Hynek Adamec from the Department of Prefabricated Buildings continued his work on duplexes constructed out of large panels during these years. Fifteen more buildings were completed in 1947 and 1948. They were constructed with lightweight, hollow panels that had to be held together with wire and temporary scaffolding until roof panels could be secured to stabilize the structure. (Fig. 5.43) According to Voženílek, “this working method hindered the...
Fig. 5.41: Jiří Vozenilek, Collective House, Zlín (1947-1951) from Architektura ČSR (1947)

Fig. 5.42: Collective House after renovation (author’s photo, 2004)
assembly and raised the total cost of the building.” Adamec’s colleague, Bohumír Kula, made an important technological advance in 1947 when he designed two duplexes made out of ribbed panels that were bolted together from the inside and then an interior finish surface applied; this system became known as the Type K, for Kula. The key to this method was starting the assembly at the corners using designated corner pieces with anchors embedded in them for the bolts to attach onto; additional panels would then bolt together where the ribs met. (Fig. 5.44-5.45) Stability was still a concern since the ribs and bolts carried most of the building load. Although it would take another five years, and they would be forced to weather many political, economic and professional changes along the way, Kula and Adamec continued their work on prefabricated

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83 Koželuha and Dufková, “Chronologický vývoj panelových domů od roku 1940 do roku 1960 v práci Výzkumného ústavu pozemních staveb Gottwaldov (The Chronological Development of Panel Buildings from 1940 to 1960 in the Work of the Research Institute for Buildings in Gottwaldov),” 15; Voženilek, “Nová výstavba Zlína (The New Construction of Zlín),” 84. The magazine incorrectly refers to him as Kukla, but other sources confirm that his name was Kula.
housing at the research institute in Zlín (later Gottwaldov) until they succeeded in constructing the first panelák in 1953. They named it the “G-building (G-dům)” in reference to Gottwaldov. It would, however, take the restructuring of the architectural administration, changes in the distribution of building materials, and a shift in attitude among architects for this technology to penetrate into the building culture of Stavoprojekt on a national scale.

Fig. 5.44: Bohumír Kula, Type K bolting detail from Architektura ČSR (1947)

Fig. 5.45: Bohumír Kula, Type K (1947) from Stavební listy (1999)
Stavoprojekt and Industrialization

Just as in other cities, the building boom of the Two-Year Plan in Zlín ended with the events of 1948 and the restructuring of the building industry. Jiří Voženílek left for Prague in the fall to begin his new position as Director of Stavoprojekt. During the three years he held this position, he focused on embedding the ideas of standardization and typification within the design culture of the new state-run system. Issues of production, and prefabrication in particular, were secondary to the immediate goals of establishing a building module, a series of building types and a system for assessing labor and material needs.

The decision to focus on standardization and typification first can be understood in relation to his own professional experiences. When Voženílek left Zlín for Prague, he brought with him a very particular understanding of the development of housing types and technologies, one shaped largely by the Baťa Building Department. As discussed in chapter three, Voženílek considered standardization and typification as design methodologies that opened possibilities through their universality. Interchangeable parts could be used to various and creative ends as space-making tools. This was a conceptual approach to design that he developed from working with Gahura, Karfík and Drofa, who, between them, had spent more than fifty years exploring the many possibilities of the Baťa building system, which relied on modules. He also valued the use of building types and had seen successful neighborhoods built with repeated, identical buildings including the Karfík and Drofa projects of 1946-1947. So when

84 See chapters one and two.
Voženílek was brought to Prague in 1948 to “organize the socialist design sector” on the Zlín model, the implications of this directive were multiple, complex and far-reaching.⁸⁵ Not only did he bring expertise in the operations of a state-owned design office, but he also had formed strong ideas about the nature and potential of typification and standardization, not as threats to architecture, but as tools that could transform architectural practice on a nationwide scale.

With the introduction of the Typification Guides for all building types in 1950, Janů and Voženílek succeeded in their goal to reorient the building sector away from individual commissions and towards industry and mass production. The changing political and economic climate, however, soon shifted the attention of the architectural administration towards the Soviet Union and socialist realism. As part of this transition, Janů and Voženílek were forced out of their positions in 1951 and they went to work in research and development; both would return to administration after socialist realism had been abandoned. As architects working in the sorela style gained prominence, it appeared that their technocratic worldview and the commitment to standardization and typification would be abandoned. Yet there were other mechanisms at work, away from the public eye, that continued to sustain these approaches including a restructuring of the profession that would strengthen the organizational support for typification and standardization within the larger building sector.

⁸⁵ “Kandidátky výboru Svazu architektů - Voženílek (Candidate for the board of the Architects’ Union - Voženílek), Mar. 22, 1953, UKPK, carton 637, NA.”
One of the first aspects to be addressed was the process of bringing a project from design to completion. Until the end of the Czechoslovak Building Works, the traditional roles of the architect, contractor, client and investor had remained intact. Stavoprojekt architects worked with clients such as the ministries, national committees, municipalities and national enterprises. Funding came through a combination of public institutions and nationalized corporations. Multiple construction companies and specialty building concerns were in operation, allowing projects to be bid out competitively.\textsuperscript{86}

Over the course of four years, the organizations responsible for investment, design and construction slowly consolidated. Continuing problems around Ostrava were the catalyst for changing the system of investment that had failed to yield significant results by 1952. It was clear that the piecemeal regional and corporate funding structures already in place would not be sufficient for the scale of the 1951 master plan for New Ostrava (Nova Ostrava).\textsuperscript{87} In May of 1952, the Department of Central Investment (Odbor hlavniho investora) was established in the Ministry of the Interior (Ministerstvo vnitra), primarily to oversee construction around Ostrava including industrial infrastructure, roads, and housing. The department would expand to include nationwide projects and remained in the Ministry of the Interior until the fall of 1953.\textsuperscript{88}

\textsuperscript{86} See chapter two.

\textsuperscript{87} See chapter three.

\textsuperscript{88} See “Úvod (Introduction),” unpaged, ÚSBOV, finding aid, NA. Within the creation of the Central Administration for Housing and Civic Building in 1956, its parent organization, the State Committee for Construction, established a department for General Investment in Housing
Building enterprises and Stavoprojekt followed another path after the Czechoslovak Building Works was disbanded. They were consolidated and placed under the control of the new Ministry of Building Industry (*Ministerstvo stavebního průmyslu*); one of the successor ministries to the Ministry of Technology.\(^89\) Like architects, other building industry professionals including building contractors, were placed within a single organization and the competition that had existed previously virtually disappeared. In January 1953, the Ministry of Building Materials (*Ministerstvo stavebního hmot*) was also established, although it would only exist for nine months.

Stavoprojekt was set up as an independent national enterprise under the supervision of a new executive board in Prague.\(^90\) Given the failures of the first Stavoprojekt administration, including its slow acceptance of socialist realism and the continued problems in the housing sector, there was an urgency to such changes.

By the spring of 1953, however, the situation had not improved. The government identified “inadequate cooperation” between the various sectors of the building

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\(^89\) The Ministry of Technology (*Ministerstvo techniky*) was disbanded on December 20, 1950. It become four ministries—Ministry of Heavy Industry (*Ministerstvo těžkého průmyslu*), Ministry of Light Industry (*Ministerstvo lehkého průmyslu*), Ministry of Food Industry (*Ministerstvo potravinářského průmyslu*), and Ministry of Building Industry (*Ministerstvo stavebního průmyslu*). The former Minister of Technology, Emanuel Šlechta, became of the Minister of Building Industry in this new configuration, where he served until 1956 when he became the head of the State Committee for Construction (*Státní výbor pro výstavbu*). He was a specialist on American mass production and had lived in the U.S. in the 1920s. He committed suicide alongside his wife in 1960. See Tomeš, *Český biografický slovník XX. století*, 277.

\(^90\) The membership of this Board of Directors is unknown. See “Úvod (Introduction),” unpaged, USBOV, finding aid, NA; Otakar Nový, “Čtvrtstoleté jubileum založení Stavoprojektu (The Twenty-Fifth Anniversary of the Establishment of Stavoprojekt),” *Architektura ČSR* 32 (1973): 488.
industry as the primary problem contributing to widespread failures in delivering buildings on time and within budget.\(^91\) In May, plans were made to form a committee to find a structural solution to these problems. Given that this was just two months after the deaths of Stalin and Gottwaldov and political tensions were high, publicly exposing the deficiencies in the building sector could have had dire consequences and these plans were kept confidential.\(^92\) In June 1953, Prime Minister Viliam Široký personally presided over the first meeting of what was named the Government Committee for Construction in Office of the Prime Minister (Úřad předsednictva vlády- Vládní výbor pro výstavbu).\(^93\) Deputy Prime Minister Oldřich Beran, who would become Minister of State Controls later that year and then Minister of Building in 1956, oversaw the committee’s work for the next two years.\(^94\) One of their most important tasks was to implement a December 1952 government decree to lower the cost of housing units by 20%.\(^95\)

\(^{91}\) “Materiál pro schůzi Vládního výboru pro výstavbu: Opatření pro zlepšení spolupráce mezi projektovými organisacemi (Material for the Meeting of the Government Committee for Construction: Provisions for Improvement in the Cooperation Between Design Organizations),” May 28, 1953, fond 315: Úřad předsednictva vlády - vládní výbor pro výstavbu (Office of the Prime Minister - Government Committee for Construction, henceforth VVV), carton 1, NA. The report specifies state design offices, construction departments of manufacturing enterprises and representatives of construction equipment and machine fabricators as targets for this initiative.

\(^{92}\) See “Zápis z I. schůze vládního výboru pro výstavbu konané dne 29.VI.1953 (Minutes from the 1st meeting of the Government Committee for Construction on June 29, 1953),” June 29, 1953, carton 1, VVV, NA. Although secrecy was requested at the first meeting, the nature and extent of this confidentiality is unclear. The committee does not appear on the ministry lists from this period and it is not mentioned in Architektura ČSR. Its successor, the State Committee for Construction (Státní výbor pro výstavbu), was led by a Minister-President (Minister-předseda) and appeared on the ministry list after 1956 when its activities were more publicized.

\(^{93}\) The committee was created by a decree in July 1952, but the first planning meeting was not held until May the following year and the first meeting was not until June.

\(^{94}\) “Zápis z I. schůze vládního výboru pro výstavbu konané dne 29.VI.1953 (Minutes from the 1st meeting of the Government Committee for Construction on June 29, 1953).”

\(^{95}\) Ibid.
The meeting also coincided with the end of rationing, which had persisted since 1945, and a major currency reform in June 1953 that attempted to stabilize prices on consumer goods by taking money out of circulation. Despite political rhetoric about the reform being a signal of output growth in the economy, it ended up wiping out the savings accounts of many industrial and agricultural workers who had saved money because there were so few consumer goods available. This led to strikes at more than 100 factories and mass arrests in Plzeň.96 Martin Myant called this “a serious warning to the Czechoslovak authorities...Up to that time they had treated the level of [industrial] investment and arms production as the priority. Consumption had become a residual. From mid-1953 onwards the need to ensure stability and at least a small increase in living standards always set a limit to the level of investment.”97

The Government Committee for Construction soon made recommendations that resulted in another round of reorganization for all enterprises involved with building production. Stavoprojekt Deputy Director Otakar Nový described this as an unsettled time for designers when “the successor organizations [to the Czechoslovak Building Works] overcame questions of the central administration of their work often with great difficulty, namely in housing and civic architecture.”98 He referred to a “conveyor belt” of successive administrations as Stavoprojekt was moved between three ministries in

97 Ibid.
98 Nový, "Ctvrtstoleté jubileum založení Stavoprojektu (The Twenty-Fifth Anniversary of the Establishment of Stavoprojekt)," 488.
just six months. In June 1953, Stavoprojekt was transferred from the Ministry of Building Industry to the Ministry of the Interior. Then in October 1953, together with the Department of Central Investment, it was moved again to the new Ministry of Local Enterprise (Ministerstvo místního hospodářství).

This third shift coincided with an October 1953 government decree to devote more attention to the “care of man;” one of its provisions was to “increase investment in housing production.” This can also been seen as a residual effect of the June currency reform. With these changes, architects, investors and researchers were placed within an organization responsible for regional development, which was consistent with the original model of the Model Housing Developments and local responsibility for housing. This was also the start of the practice of using a revolving set of names for committees and ministries that were under the control of the same men and doing the same work as their successors. This renaming process allowed responsibility and blame to be left behind and was a common tactic in all Communist administrations.

99 Ibid.

100 Ibid. See also, “Úvod (Introduction),” unpaged, ÚSBOV, finding aid, NA

101 Ibid. Minister Josef Kyselý would lead the Ministry of Local Enterprise until 1958. For nine months in 1953, he was head of the short-lived Ministry of Building Materials (Ministerstvo stavebních hmot).

102 Janů, “K otázce montovaných bytových staveb (On the Question of Prefabricated Housing),” 35.

Throughout this period of instability, research progressed on the technological aspects of industrial building production. Work continued at the Stavoprojekt research institutes, including the State Typification Institute, which published the yearly *Typification Guides* as discussed in chapter three. T-series apartment buildings were an increasingly larger portion of the housing production after 1950. As soreda penetrated the design culture of the local Stavoprojekt offices, decorative elements with classical and natural motifs such as pilasters, relief plaques and ornamental cornices were added to the facades of these standardized buildings to enhance their socialist realist appeal, yet the underlying concept was still the repetition of types.

Due to the labor shortage, artisans were not available for this work on a massive scale and industries started producing prefabricated elements that were made to attach onto the T-series buildings. The ornamental pieces were typically made of gypsum, sheet metal and wrought iron; stoneware vases were also produced as outdoor sculpture. (Fig. 5.46) One exception was the revival of the traditional technique of *sgraffito*—applying layers of colored plaster to a surface and scraping it away to create a design by revealing the color of the surface below. (Fig. 5.47) Members of work brigades

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104 As discussed in chapter two, housing was the first construction sector to widely adopt typification, more than 90% of new housing units in 1950 were in T-series buildings although almost half were small workers cottages. In the same year, only 8% of all buildings were built according to types. According to Jiří Voženílek, the goal was 25% by 1953. See Jiří Voženílek, "Typisace a stavitelství (Typification and the Building Industry)" *Architektura ČSR* 11, no. 7-9 (1952): 270.

105 J. Ledvina, "Prefabrikované architektonické prvky na stavbě (Prefabricated Architectural Elements for Buildings)," *Architektura ČSR* 11, no. 7-9 (1952): 265-66. The pieces were attached to the buildings with metal fasteners that used holes cast into the pieces at the factory.

106 Ibid.: 265.
Fig. 5.46: Prefabricated stoneware vase from *Architektura ČSR* (1952)

Fig. 5.47: Sgraffito being applied to a building in Poruba (c. 1955) from the collection of the Ostrava City Archive
were trained in the technique, which was used for murals, ceiling panels and ornamentation on the blank facades of the apartment buildings. As with other sorela expressions of national identity, the sgraffito motifs and prefabricated facade elements often recalled late Renaissance buildings associated with pre-Habsburg Czech national culture such as the mansions in Litomyšl, the Hussite Fortress Tower in Tábor and the Castle District in Prague.\footnote{See chapters three and four for more on sorela.} (Fig. 5.48-5.49)

At the same time that prefabrication was being used to further the goals of sorela, new construction methods, unconnected to a particular style, were also being explored. Experiments began with “flow construction (proudová stavění),” in which workers would be assigned a specific task to repeat rather than being responsible for construction of a single building from start to finish.\footnote{Stary, "Veliké úkoly architektů v bojovém nástupu ke zprůmyslnění stavebnictví (The Grand Tasks of Architects at the Advent of the Fight to Industrialize the Building Industry),” 327-30.} According to Karel Janů, this was “the transfer of the state-of-the-art form of the assembly-line with its organizational strategies and distribution of labor to the building industry.”\footnote{Stavebnictví včera, dnes a zítra (The Building Industry, Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow) (Prague: Stavební informační středisko, 1973), 13.} Beyond the general interest in such methods among modern architects, the concept of flow construction in the Czechoslovak case may have originated directly with the Minister of Building Industry, Emanuel Šlechta, who had lived in the United States in the 1920s and was a specialist on American mass production.\footnote{Tomeš, Český biografický slovník XX. století, 277. He was trained as a mechanical engineer and taught at the Czech Technical University in Prague from 1935-39 and 1945-48. He wrote a number of books on American industrial practices including Emanuel Šlechta, Americký...} Although applied at the scale of a large
apartment building rather than rowhouses or single-family houses, this was similar to
the construction method employed by Gropius at Törten-Dessau and later American
builders such as Levitt & Sons in their Levittown projects. When writing about the first
ten years of socialist housing production, Jiří Voženílek noted that flow construction was
first used in Ostrava in 1950, then it “stagnated” in 1951 and 1952, until interest was
revived in 1953.

A year later, it was utilized as the primary construction method for

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Fig. 5.48: Fortress Tower in Tábor from Architektura ČSR (1951)

111 Herbert, The Dream of the Factory-Made House: Walter Gropius and Konrad Wachsmann, 44;
Barbara M. Kelly, Expanding the American Dream: Building and Rebuilding Levittown (Albany:

112 Jiří Voženílek, "Deset let výstavby (Ten Years of Construction)," Architektura ČSR 14, no. 5
the housing and infrastructure of Dukla, a new neighborhood in Pardubice, an industrial city 60 miles east of Prague.\textsuperscript{113} From that point forward, flow construction was the basis for the further development of mechanized building production.\textsuperscript{114}

Throughout this transitional period, the architects in the Department of Prefabricated Buildings continued their research in Zlín. In 1949, Kula and Adamec built a prototype of a fourplex using the prefabricated ribbed panels.\textsuperscript{115} The following year,

\textsuperscript{113} See Starý, "Veliké úkoly architektů v bojovém nástupu ke zprůmyslnění stavebnictví (The Grand Tasks of Architects at the Advent of the Fight to Industrialize the Building Industry)," 328; Vozenílek, "Deset let výstavby (Ten Years of Construction)," 184-85.

\textsuperscript{114} Stavebnictví včera, dnes a zítřa, 18.

\textsuperscript{115} Koželuha and Dufkova, "Chronologický vývoj panelových domů od roku 1940 do roku 1960 v práci Výzkumného ústavu pozemních staveb Gottwaldov (The Chronological Development of Panel Buildings from 1940 to 1960 in the Work of the Research Institute for Buildings in Gottwaldov)," 16.
they completed work on a single, three-story, 18-unit apartment building using the same
technology. At this larger scale, straps were added around the horizontal joints for
lateral stability. (Fig. 5.50) There were also balconies on the back facade that were built
as self-supporting open boxes, presumably because the bolted panels could not
withstand the additional weight. (Fig. 5.51) However the cost of the building was
determined to be too high, so this was the last building constructed with this method.

In 1950, the administration of the Department of Prefabricated Buildings was taken out
of the Svit Corporation (formerly Bat'a) and it became part of the Czechoslovak Building
Works; offices were then added in Prague and Brno. Once Stavoprojekt became an
independent national enterprise, it became a stand-alone organization, the Institute of
Prefabricated Buildings (Ústav montovaných staveb), in January 1952.

Jiří Voženílek did not lose sight of this research during his years in Prague. When
his tenure as the head of the Stavoprojekt administration ended in late 1951, he became
director of the new Institute of Architecture and Town Planning (Ústav architektury a
územního plánování), which would become the Research Institute for Construction and

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116 Ibid.
117 Červenka and Sůva, Průmyslová výroba stavebních konstrukcí, 65.
118 Koželuh and Dufková, "Chronologický vývoj panelových domů od roku 1940 do roku 1960 v
práci Výzkumného ústavu pozemních staveb Gottwaldov (The Chronological Development of
Panel Buildings from 1940 to 1960 in the Work of the Research Institute for Buildings in
Gottwaldov)," 17. It would continue under various monikers until it was privatized in 1992. Today
the company is known as Centrum stavebního inženýrství – CSI, (The Center for Building
Engineering) and remains in Prague with a branch in Zlín. One of their specialties is consulting on
the renovation and rehabilitation of panel buildings. See http://www.csias.cz/, accessed August 5,
2007.
Architecture (Výzkumní ústav výstavba a architektury) in 1954.\(^{119}\) This institute was known for its work on theoretical and historical aspects of architecture and planning.\(^{120}\) Starting in 1952, it organized "theoretical groups" at all of the Stavoprojekt offices and in conjunction with the ideological campaigns of Architektura ČSR and Sovětská architektura, promoted the historical study of local architecture as a primary component of sorela.\(^{121}\) This was an aspect of design that had been purposefully underplayed in the first Stavoprojekt administration, but which could no longer be ignored.

\(^{119}\) See Otakar Nový, "In memoriam profesora Jiřího Voženíleka (In Memory of Professor Jiří Voženílek)," *Architektura ČSR* 46, no. 4 (1987): 346; Josef Pechar, *Československá architektura, 1945-1977* (Czechoslovak Architecture, 1945-1977) (Prague: Odeon, 1979), 25. Documentation on the work of the institute has not surfaced, although it is likely that it is contained within the inaccessible files of Stavoprojekt at the National Archive in Prague.

\(^{120}\) Nový, "In memoriam profesora Jiřího Voženíleka (In Memory of Professor Jiří Voženílek)," 346. It remained powerful through the 1980s and in his obituary for Voženílek, Nový cites his leadership of the institute in its first years as one of his accomplishments.

A less heralded aspect of the work at the Institute for Architecture and Town Planning was technical research on building methods. In 1952, in the midst of the most vigorous push towards socialist realism, Voženílek, as the first director, was still putting forward his agenda of typification and standardization. In an article in *Architektura ČSR*, accompanied by illustrations of prefabricated sorela facade ornaments, he continued to push for a more thorough theorization of the nature of these technologies.\(^\text{122}\) Much like his commentary on the standardization of brick sizes discussed in chapter three, Voženílek challenged architects to define the terms of their use of prefabrication, asking

\(^{122}\) Voženílek, "Typisace a stavitelství (Typification and the Building Industry) ": 267-70. The illustrations are curious, because the article does not refer to them and they appear to be extra images from the article by J. Ledvina that proceeds Voženílek's, to the extent that Ledvina is listed as the author of the objects shown in the pictures, see Ledvina, "Prefabrikovány architektonické prvky na stavbě (Prefabricated Architectural Elements for Buildings)," 265-66. One possibility was that the editors were attempting to underplay the content of his article for the political censors.
what was “driving” this transformation.\textsuperscript{123} He proposed that there were “two paths to the industrialization of building.” The first would be to use factory-made prefabricated elements to construct buildings on site. The second was the “full-scale mechanization of building work,” so that only a finished product was transported to the site.\textsuperscript{124}

Voženílek argued that although the second method was appropriate for bridges, road infrastructure and simple buildings, the success of typification depended on the application of the first method. He proposed the use of a limited number of universal building elements—“the maximum number of structural variations from the minimum number of industrially-produced construction components and parts.”\textsuperscript{125} This logic extended to the development of panel technology. He advocated for the use of non-structural panels, since they were cheaper to produce, lighter, easier to transport and allowed more flexibility in design than structural panels.\textsuperscript{126} Voženílek referred to the example of the Soviet Union where investment in large factories and an increase in the availability of labor had led to advances in the design of tall buildings; he was likely referring to the Moscow ‘seven sisters.’

\begin{flushleft}
\textbf{In the Czech case, he argued that the proper course was “the coordination of the volume of typification with the typification of components and parts, so that the same}\textsuperscript{127} \end{flushleft} 

\textsuperscript{123} Voženílek, “Typisace a stavitelství (Typification and the Building Industry) ”: 268.
\textsuperscript{124} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{125} Ibid.: 269.
\textsuperscript{126} Ibid.: 268.
component could be used for all sorts of different kinds of buildings.”¹²⁷ This would increase “the possibilities of architectural interpretation of typified buildings.”¹²⁸ So just as in the earlier debates, Voženílek brought an architectural point of view to a discussion that would soon become entrenched in issues of efficiency and economy. Frustration with the situation led him to administration and away from design, although he remained active in urban planning and taught at the Technical University in Prague for many years.¹²⁹

When he became the Director of the Institute for Architecture and Town Planning in 1952, Voženílek returned to his earlier interest in architecture as a scientific pursuit and the quantitative methods of the Architectural Working Group. As part of its technical research, the organization collected data and performed analysis on the various methods being proposed for new construction. The institute’s Typification Group in Prague (*Skupina typisace Praha*) published a manual entitled *Průmyslová výroba stavebních konstrukcí* (The Industrial Production of Built Structures) in late 1953.¹³⁰ Co-authored by Stanislav Sůva and Vladimír Červenka, the future head of the Central Administration for Housing and Civic Building, the text offered a comprehensive evaluation of the current research on all types of prefabricated buildings in

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¹²⁷ Ibid.: 270.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ Nový, "In memoriam profesora Jiřího Voženíleká (In Memory of Professor Jiří Voženílek)," 346-47. He also served as the Deputy Minister of the State Committee for Construction from 1956 to 1960 and then became the Head Architect of the City of Prague. Along with Jiří Novotný and Jiří Hrůza, he worked on the first Prague Master Plan in 1967. He died in 1986.

¹³⁰ Červenka and Sůva, *Průmyslová výroba stavebních konstrukcí*.
Czechoslovakia and compared this to examples in the Soviet Union. It is the best and most thorough surviving account of experiments in prefabricated construction in Stalinist Czechoslovakia.\textsuperscript{131}

Panel Technology

Interest in panel technology after the war was not unique to Czechoslovakia. Architects across Eastern and Western Europe saw the technology as a possible method to provide decent and affordable housing for large numbers of people. In capitalist countries, however, it was only one of many architectural ideas being explored; innovations were also being made in the design of single-family houses, low-rise high-density housing and upscale urban apartments. This was in marked contrast to the Soviet Union and its satellites where panel construction was the primary and often only acceptable option. For the most part, panel technology in Western Europe was used for publicly-financed social housing. Non-structural panel technologies, such as reinforced concrete skeletons with mounted facade panels, were the most common, although the French aggressively pursued multiple methods. French building engineer Raymond Camus patented the world’s first multi-unit structural panel building in 1948.\textsuperscript{132} By 1956,
his company was building eight housing units a day around Paris. The buildings bear
a striking resemblance to Czechoslovak examples, although there is no evidence to
suggest that Czech or Slovak architects were aware of the Camus system until 1958
when information was published in a Czech book on the international trends in the
industrialization of housing. In that text, the buildings are referred to as “similar to
our G-buildings,” the type designed by Kula and Adamec in Gottwaldov.

Architectural historians and the general public have long assumed that Soviet
architects forced panel technology on helpless architects in the Eastern Bloc after they
had mastered it at home, as this chapter shows, the situation was much more complex.

Since the 1930s, the Soviets had been trying to develop fully-prefabricated multi-story
apartments buildings using large block and panel construction. They built several
prominent Moscow apartment buildings with large blocks in the early 1940s and then
succeeded at a small scale with one-, two- and three-story structural panel buildings in

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134 Both the Camus and Coignet systems are discussed, see Červenka and Vašíček, *Industrialisace bytové výstavby: Technické studie*, 245-55.

135 Ibid., 245. Another French system was shown in *Architektura ČSR* in 1956, but this may have been shown in an effort to compare the Czechoslovak systems with those in other countries rather than as an initial source for a design. See “Francouzsky montovaný panelový obytný dům (French residential building from prefabricated panels),” *Architektura ČSR* 16 (1956): 167.

136 For example, these authors claim incorrectly that the Soviets exported French panel technology to the Eastern Bloc in the 1960s, see Dumont and Fromonot, “Le Logement (Housing),” 86.
Magnitogorsk in 1949. A number of experimental skeleton-frame panel constructions were then built in cities such as Moscow and Kiev. Yet by 1953, the Soviet architects had not found a viable technical solution to taller structures that could replace their typical masonry apartment buildings on a nationwide scale. Curiously, although the Camus system did not become a French standard, the Soviets commissioned the company to build 380 panel factories for them in 1959, rather than use technology from one of the satellite countries such as Czechoslovakia. Thirty million housing units were eventually built in the Soviet Union using this French technology.

Because of the research in Zlín and the extent of typification and standardization achieved by the first Stavoprojekt administration, the evolution of panel technology in Czechoslovakia followed a unique path. The work in the two countries was not done in isolation, however, and the interest in panel technology in the Soviet Union certainly contributed to its proliferation in Czechoslovakia. In the area of housing construction, research on panel technologies being conducted at several sites in the early 1950s including the Institute of Building Materials and Construction in Bratislava (Ústav stavebních hmot a konstrukcí) and the Communal Public Works Corporation of the City of


138 Červenka and Vašíček, Industrialisace bytové výstavby: Technické studie, 243-44; Žukov, "O architektuře budov z velkých panelů (On the Architecture of Buildings Made from Large Panels)," 28-36.

139 Dumont and Fromonot, "Le Logement (Housing)," 86.
Prague (Komunální podnik hlavního město Prahy).\footnote{Červenka and Sůva, Průmyslová výroba stavebních konstrukcí, 10.} In both these cases, there was a Baťa connection.

Although it was the “G-buildings” that would become the standard, the first multi-story panelák in Czechoslovakia was built by Vladimír Karfík and a research team from the institute in Bratislava as a temporary exhibit at the 1952 Architects’ Congress in Prague.\footnote{Besides Karfík’s recollection of the project, there is no documentation of the building and it is not mentioned in the Červenka and Sůva book, presumably because it was a temporary construction. See Karfík, Architekt si spomína, 145.} According to Karfík’s memoir, the building “awakened great interest, because at the time no panel-buildings existed in our country.”\footnote{Ibid.} He recalled that he was inspired to return to the problem of the panel building after a meeting in Moscow with a Soviet architect, Michailov, who was pursuing similar research to what Karfík had done in Zlín during the war.\footnote{Ibid.} Presumably, he was referring to his role as the Director of the Building Department, which oversaw Kula and Adamec’s work. After the Congress, he returned to Bratislava and along with another architect and two engineers from the university, he continued to work on the project for several years. In 1955, they built a permanent panelák on a site near the center of Bratislava. Called the “BA” building, it was notable for its use of pre-stressed, lightweight concrete exterior panels and a framing system on the interior that allowed some of the partition walls parallel to the exterior facade to be non-structural. (Fig. 5.52-5.53) This created more flexibility in the
plan than the systems in which all of the walls were structural.\textsuperscript{144} There were also relief panels over the doorways like Karfík’s Two-Year Plan buildings in Zlín. (Fig. 5.54) Although the project won an award as the best housing design of 1955, the specific construction method was never used again. It was likely more expensive than other panelák prototypes for an equivalent amount of living space.

In 1949, František Jech, who with Adolf Benš had won second prize in the 1935 Baťa house competition, went to work for the Building Enterprise of the Communal Public Works Corporation of the City of Prague.\textsuperscript{145} Jech was one of the most active designers of prefabricated buildings in the 1940s. From 1947-1949, he was the head of an architects’ collective that worked on the Solidarita project, a 1,200 unit housing complex in Prague built by a group of housing cooperatives and national enterprises.\textsuperscript{146} (Fig. 5.55-5.57) Karel Storch, who had traveled to Scandinavia the previous year was also a member of the design team and the influence was clear in this project.\textsuperscript{147} (Fig. 5.58)

\textsuperscript{144} "Přehlídka nejlepších projektů výstavby 1955 (Review of the Best Projects of 1955)," \textit{Architektura ČSR} 15, no. 1 (1956): 43.

\textsuperscript{145} M. Vostrosablin, "Úkoly a organisace stavebního podniku hl. m. Prahy, kom. podnik (The Work and Organization of the Building Enterprise of the City of Prague Public Works)," \textit{Architektura ČSR} 9, no. 7-8 (1950): 207-08.

\textsuperscript{146} "Nové sídliště 'Solidarita' v Praze-Strašnicích (The New Housing Development 'Solidarita' in Prague-Strašnice)," \textit{Architektura ČSR} 6, no. 10 (1947): 312. The other architects were Hanuš Majer and Karel Storch.

\textsuperscript{147} Karel Storch, "Bytové stavebnictví v Dánsku a Švédsku (Housing Production in Denmark and Sweden)," \textit{Architektura ČSR} 6, no. 1 (1947): 26-27; Karel Storch, "Mezinárodní shoda v bytovém standardu (The International Consensus in the Housing Standard)," \textit{Architektura ČSR} 6, no. 5 (1947): 140-41. See chapter one for more on the influence of Scandinavia.
Fig. 5.52: V. Karfík, G. Turzunov, J. Harvančík, K. Šafránek and team, BA system, Bratislava (1955) from Architektura ČSR (1956)
Fig. 5.53: BA building in Bratislava, note that the image published in 1956 did not show the top floors of the building and the sorela details (author's photo, 2003)

Fig. 5.54: Relief panel over the door of BA building (author's photo, 2003)
Fig. 5.55: František Jech, Karel Storch and Hanuš Majer, Solidarita neighborhood, Prague (1946-1948) from Architektura ČSR (1947)

Fig. 5.56: View down the pedestrian corridor with renovated townhouses (author's photo, 2006)
Solidarita was notable for its mix of uses with rowhouses, apartments and a small shopping center on the plot of land, as well as the use of wood and concrete prefabricated elements for ceilings and facade walls. This was the first time in Czechoslovakia that prefabricated elements had been used for a housing project of this scale.\textsuperscript{148} Half of the units were in the compact single-family rowhouses with a living room, small kitchen and WC on the first floor and two bedrooms, a bathroom and a terrace upstairs. They were built in long, elegant rows perpendicular and sloping away from the major traffic thoroughfare. This created long pedestrian walkways that gently sloped downhill as they passed between the front and back yards of the houses, both of which were maintained as gardens and have grown into beautiful and lush spaces in the past sixty years. The other units were in nearby apartment buildings with two- and three-room apartments typical of the Two-Year Plan with small kitchens and two terraces. Because the pace of construction took the project into the 1950s, many of the apartment buildings were built as T-series buildings, rather than the intended designs which would have included a series of pleasant courtyards and community spaces that are clearly lacking in the denser part of the development today.\textsuperscript{149}

In 1949, Jech began work on an experimental tall building clad in panels that he hoped the City of Prague would adopt as a standard housing type. He published two


\textsuperscript{149} "Nové sídliště 'Solidarita' v Praze-Strašnicích (The New Housing Development 'Solidarita' in Prague-Strašnice)," 310-13.
Fig. 5.57: Solidarita rowhouses with front gardens, unrenovated on the left, renovated on the far right (author’s photo, 2006)

Fig. 5.58: Cooperative Housing Association Project, Praestehaven, Denmark from Architektura ČSR (1947), the caption at the top says that the housing section of the journal issue was prepared by the BAPS housing commission
articles in Architektura ČSR in 1950 and 1951 explaining his proposal, one of which was more than thirty pages long, indicating something of the interest among the editorial board in the project.\footnote{František Jech, "Nájemný dům ve vysoké stavbě (Rental Apartments in Tall Buildings),” Architektura ČSR, no. 7-8 (1950): 171-306.} Although the buildings look like the later paneláků, because each of the plain cladding panels was the size of a single room, they were designed to be constructed with poured concrete structural ‘cross-walls’ and light concrete cladding. He remarked on the shortage of steel for residential construction in explaining the structural system. The building could be built six- to fourteen-stories high and either situated individually on a site or in groups of two or three. (Fig. 5.59)

The benefits of the Jech proposal over later panel buildings was the flexibility of the plan. Since only the interior walls were structural, there was much greater freedom to alter the massing and floor plates in these buildings. (Fig. 5.60) Jech used that to great advantage in proposing multi-wing buildings that pinwheel with wings around a central core, as well as more straightforward bar buildings. Although prototypes were built in the Solidarita neighborhood and in the Michle neighborhood in Prague, Jech’s proposals were not pursued. One could argue that it was the flexibility itself, the possibility that in each application the building might take on a different shape, that made it an inferior alternative to the later paneláků since the system as a whole was moving towards typification rather than modularity. Embedded in the dozens of potential configurations for the project was the sense of the architect as an individual designer, although one who favored an industrial aesthetic over sorela decorative
Konstrukce stavby: Nájemných domů v Praze-Michlí

![Diagram nájemných domů v Praze-Michlí](image)

Fig. 5.59: František Jech, Experimental high-rise building for Prague from Architektura ČSR (1950)
schemes. According to the 1953 manual, the Public Works Corporation in Prague was testing panels for a five- to ten-story prototype of a tall building made of a prefabricated skeleton and panel system. They were having trouble finding a suitable panel. There is no evidence that anything ever came out of this later research.\textsuperscript{151}

In addition to these projects, the most intensive and systematic investigations of housing prototypes were underway at the Institute for Prefabricated Buildings’ three work sites.\textsuperscript{152} Karel Janů later wrote that the activities of this institute defined “a new period of technical progress” in the industrialization of the building industry.\textsuperscript{153} With a ‘scientific’ methodology that was rooted in the first Stavoprojekt administration’s technocratic point of view, the institute decided to test the four available prefabricated construction technologies and perform a comparative analysis to determine which one

\textsuperscript{151} Červenka and Sůva, \textit{Průmyslová výroba stavebních konstrukcí}, 65.
\textsuperscript{152} Ibid., 10.
\textsuperscript{153} \textit{Stavebnictví včera, dnes a zítra}, 13.
would result in the cheaper, faster and more efficient construction of new housing units. None of the indices measured any aspect of the living environment or its spatial qualities. One reason for this omission was that the initial investigations took the T-series apartment buildings as their starting point. These tests were concerned with the construction method, but the resulting buildings were expected to be similar in material, scale and layout to existing types.154 It is notable that this was the same strategy that the Baťa Corporation had used when first experimenting with prefabricated construction in the early 1940s.

The manual presented a developmental model of prefabricated technologies with four systems that represented increasing levels of industrialization.155 (Fig. 5.61) The first was large block construction, which used factory-produced large blocks for the interior and exterior walls with prefabricated reinforced concrete floor panels and stairways. The second was a hybrid system with the same large-block exterior walls, floor panels and stairways, but in this case they were combined with a reinforced prefabricated concrete skeleton system which allowed the interior walls to be partitions. The third system was completely prefabricated with a reinforced concrete skeleton, floor panels and stairways clad on the exterior with lightweight concrete panels. The fourth system, which was the most coveted technology at the time, used structural panels for the exterior and interior

154 Another example was a T-series duplex (T42a) that was built by František Jech in 1954 with prefabricated pieces, but to the same specifications as the traditionally built type. See Jech, "Pokusný celomontovaný dvojdomek v Brandýse nad Labem (Experimental Fully-Prefabricated Duplex in Brandýs nad Labem)," 123.

155 Červenka and Sůva, Průmyslová výroba stavebních konstrukcí, 53-55.
walls and required no skeleton. There was a clear narrative about progressing forward through these systems to reach complete prefabrication, although the inherent problems with the system were already noted. For example, the authors commented that “the prefabrication system from large panels with a skeleton, which is economically the most...
advantageous, has the disadvantage that the interior walls are structural and therefore it is not possible to use this kind of building where open floor plans are needed, or for buildings that are frequently altered.”

Each system was assigned to a branch of the Institute of Prefabricated Buildings. Brno tested the large-block system. During this period Karel Janů worked for the Prague office of the institute, and along with Karel Prágr who would later built the first curtain wall building in Czechoslovakia, they tested system two at a site in Otrokovice near Gottwaldov where the project was based on the T16 apartment building. Another team at the Prague office, led by Miloslav Wimmer, began work on system three, their first prototype was a three-story apartment building with twelve units accessed by a single stair. The institute named this the “S” house. Karel Honzík worked with Wimmer on the prototype and his sketches for possible facade treatments were published in Architektura ČSR in 1954. The designs show the extent to which the panels themselves created some anxiety among architects who felt that their scale and proportion should be underplayed by adding additional horizontal emphasis, decorative doorway details and patterning on the surface of the panels.

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156 Ibid., 72.

157 The Molecular Biology Building for the Technical University in Prague, 1959.

158 Janů, “K otázce montovanych bytových staveb (On the Question of Prefabricated Housing),” 40-41. This is sometimes referred to as the Janů type, see Pýchová, “Česká bytová výstavba v období 1945-1964 (Czech Residential Building, 1945-1964),” 420-32.

159 Červenka and Sůva, Průmyslová výroba stavebních konstrukcí, 55-64.

160 The sketches are on pages 53 and 55 of Architektura ČSR 13, 1954.
Fig. 5.62: T16 under construction in Otrokovice using Janů system (system two) from *Architektura ČSR* (1954)

Fig. 5.63: Karel Prágr and Karel Janů, T16 prototype model from *Architektura ČSR* (1954)
Fig. 5.64: Karel Honzik, Sketches for Wimmer system buildings (system three) from *Architektura ČSR* (1954)
The Gottwaldov branch of the Institute of Prefabricated Buildings was the site of testing for system four, which they named the “G” house. Given the long history of this research in Zlín, it was logical that the most sophisticated prefabrication system would be tested at the former Bafa facility. Bohumír Kula and Hynek Adamec, who had been progressing towards the goal of a structural panel building since the early 1940s, succeeded in developing a workable prototype for a panelák by 1953, although the planning for the building had started as early as 1950.161 Their prototype, which become the G40 because it contained 40 apartments, was five-stories high with two access stairs and eight apartments per floor. (Fig. 5.65-5.67) Construction was finished in 1954. The units were evenly divided between two- and three-room configurations and in plan they resembled the Two-Year Plan apartments that were the basis for the T-series.

For the first time, Karel Janů’s concept of the “living core” was put into use for a building intended to be produced through mass production. (Fig. 5.68) Although all the walls were structural, the layout used a three-bay system that placed the windowless bathrooms, WC’s and kitchen wet wall in the center bay of the building with the kitchens occupying the space between the wet wall and windows to the outside. All of the doors were placed on the walls parallel to the exterior facade, presumably for structural integrity. The only exception were doors around the staircase which were

moved to the side walls. This created the spatial sense of entering into a series of small boxes and the apartments lacked the natural flow of units without such restrictions.\textsuperscript{162}

The real innovation in the paneláč designed by Kula and Adamec was the solution they found for the joints. Working from their experience with the ribbed, bolted panels, they devised an ingenious stabilization system for their prototype.\textsuperscript{163} The reinforced concrete panels were cast with two upside-down V-shaped hangars embedded in them, not at the corners where the joints would be weak, but within the

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{fig565.png}
\caption{Bohumír Kula and Hynek Adamec, Model of G house prototype (system four), Zlín from \textit{Architektura ČSR} (1954)}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{162} In the 1990s, Václav Havel famously referred to paneláčs as "undignified rabbit hutches", indicating something of this spatial condition. See Matt Reynolds, "Still Standing," \textit{The Prague Post}, March 10, 2005.

\textsuperscript{163} A set of drawings showing the construction method for the G57, the prototype that followed the G40 in 1955, can be found in VVV, cartons 212-214, NA.
Fig. 5.66: Bohumír Kula and Hynek Adamec, Plan of G40, Zlín from Architektura ČSR (1954)

Fig. 5.67: G40 after renovation, Zlín (author's photo, 2006)
Fig. 5.68: Living core for G57 (1956) from the files of the Government Committee for Construction (author's photo, 2003)

interior of the panels with the joint of the 'V' hitting the top edge of the panel. It was designed to be cut-away at that point to reveal a small hook at the base of the V. (Fig. 5.69-5.71) These were then fastened with metal staples to the two panels intersecting the joint perpendicularly from above. Mortar was poured into the space of the joint and then it was sealed with a PVC gasket. Since the joints occurred away from the corners, the weight of the panels rested fully on the panel below and the hook and staples added lateral stability. Just as they did with their original bolted panels, there was also a special corner piece that acted as an anchor for the exposed end joint. (Fig. 5.72) All of the corner joints were also sealed with mortar and gaskets, which gave the facades of the early panel buildings their distinctive grid pattern.

\footnote{The National Archive gave the author permission to document materials from their collections with a digital camera for research purposes.}
Fig. 5.69: Hook and staple system for the G57 (1956) from the files of the Government Committee for Construction (author's photo, 2003)

Fig. 5.70: G57 interior door panel (1956) from the files of the Government Committee for Construction (author's photo, 2003)
Fig. 5.71: G57 exterior panel (1956) from the files of the Government Committee for Construction (author's photo, 2003)

Fig. 5.72: G57 corner joint with hook and staples (1956) from the files of the Government Committee for Construction (author's photo, 2003)
The Institute for Prefabricated Buildings built six G40 buildings in Gottwaldov in 1954 and another twelve G57 buildings, a type named for the year of anticipated completion of the projects, in Prague starting in 1955. (Fig. 5.73-5.76) In an effort to blend in with the buildings around them and to adhere to the stylistic expectations of Stavoprojekt, these early paneláks incorporated neo-classical decorative elements such as pilasters, cornices and elaborate entrances. These details were applied to the completed building and often hid mortar joints. After 1955, the facades were stripped of such ornamentation and the patterns of the panels became more pronounced, making the buildings look more crude and unfinished than the first experiments.

Fig. 5.73: G57 buildings under construction in Prague (c.1956) from New Techniques and Architecture in Czechoslovakia (1961)

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165 A series of formal studies that illustrate the variety of facade ideas accompanies this article, Havránek, "K architektonické problematice montovaných staveb (On the Architectural Problems of Prefabricated Buildings)," 42-52.
Fig. 5.74: G57 buildings under construction in Prague (c.1956) from *New Techniques and Architecture in Czechoslovakia* (1961)

Fig. 5.75: G57 buildings in Prague after renovation which covered the visible panel joints on the exterior (author's photo, 2004)
Once the Institute of Prefabricated Buildings began its analysis, the differences between structural and non-structural panel technologies became more clear. It was obvious from the start that systems three and four would offer the most benefits, however the distinction between the two were still being investigated. According to the 1953 statistics comparing the “S” type (Wimmer, system two) to the “G” building (system four), a housing block with a skeleton required 55% more reinforcing steel than one without. Although the building without a skeleton required 50% more cement, this was a more abundant and less expensive material. Steel was not only more expensive, but it had other lucrative uses, particularly for military equipment, which made it a less desirable material for housing construction. Another important statistic was that 15%
more labor was required to construct a building with a skeleton—4.9 months of work
versus 5.7 months. In economies facing shortages of skilled laborers and steel, the
advantages of the structural panel-building were clear. There was a problem, however,
with the new technology. A “G” building cost more than the other systems despite the
material and labor savings. The equipment and cost of production was much higher
than less industrialized technologies.\textsuperscript{166}

For this reason, the panelák was not immediately adopted on a nationwide scale.
Infrastructure needed to be built including a network of panel factories that could
balance the cost of production and transportation. Projects that used all four
construction systems were built around the country in the next five years as panel
technology was embraced as the best method for fulfilling the plan numbers for housing
units. By 1960, “G” buildings accounted for 17\% of all new apartment units, while
apartment blocks using a panel system with a prefabricated skeleton accounted for an
additional 53\% of the total.\textsuperscript{167} The remainder used large-block and hybrid systems. As
the cost was reduced for structural panel technology in the 1960s, it became the
dominant construction method.

\textsuperscript{166} For the full analysis, see Červenka and Sůva, \textit{Průmyslová výroba stavebních konstrukcí}, 53-
83. They also discuss the current situation in the Soviet Union and make the point that the
Soviets used systems one and two often, more than the Czechs and Slovaks in 1953, but they
were still developing the technology for systems three and four.

\textsuperscript{167} “Dodatek k harmonogramu výrobního zajištění bytové výstavby do r. 1970 – Dopis: Státní
plánovací komise, 5.9.1959 (Addendum to the production time table for producing apartments
until 1970 – Letter to the State Planning Commission, Sept. 5, 1959),” MT, carton 412, NA. Out of
42,301 apartments scheduled to be built in 1960, 7,061 were designated to be “G” buildings and
22,547 as T01-03B buildings, the panel system with a prefabricated skeleton.
The Central Administration for Housing and Civic Building

The embrace of prefabrication occurred simultaneously with other changes in the organization of architectural practice. The first major restructuring of day-to-day activities in the state-run architecture offices occurred in January 1954 when a new central administration for Stavoprojekt was established at the Ministry of Local Enterprise. At this time, the original system of local ateliers within Stavoprojekt, a holdover from the interwar period with its architectural tradition of apprenticeship, was replaced by a regional system of fifteen State Design Institutes (Státní projektové ústavy), they would increase to twenty in 1956. As the producers of documents for standardized and typified buildings, the new design institutes borrowed their working philosophy from industry more than the traditional culture of the design studio. This transition coincided with the end of sorela and a reconsideration of the direction of architectural development in the wake of Stalin’s and Gottwald’s deaths. Although Khrushchev would not make his pronouncements against Stalinist architecture until later that year, the organization of architectural practice in Czechoslovakia was already beginning to change by early 1954 as the State Design Institutes attempted to recapture some of the technological enthusiasm of the first years of socialist architecture.

From a planning perspective, this was also a transitional time as the First Five-Year Plan ended and two stop-gap one year plans were put in place in January 1954 and

168 At some point in the 1960s, the name Stavoprojekt came back into use. By the time that Otakar Nový wrote his history of the organization in 1973, he refers to it throughout as Stavoprojekt, probably for clarity. See Nový, “Čtvrtstoleté jubileum založení Stavoprojektu (The Twenty-Fifth Anniversary of the Establishment of Stavoprojekt),” 483-90.
169 Ibid.: 489. See also, “Uvod (Introduction),” unpaged, ÚSOBV, finding aid, NA.
1955. According to economist Alice Teichová, problems including the hurried "process of [agricultural] collectivization, the falling standard of living and the severe currency reform at the end of the First Five-Year Plan [in 1953] led to increasing political tensions and, consequently, there was a temporary break in the strict pursuit of the planned targets."\textsuperscript{170} The one-year plans, which were given the label of the "New Course," lowered industrial targets and reduced investment funds for industry, while directing more resources to consumer goods.\textsuperscript{171}

For architects, the loss of the stability of the Czechoslovak Building Works and a decrease in construction investment had affected housing production; the number of new units completed in 1954 was the lowest since 1951.\textsuperscript{172} Since typical projects in this period took three years to complete, these numbers reflected problems that started in 1951. With more investment and production improvements gained through consolidation, the pages of Architektura ČSR were full of new housing projects by 1956, although they were mainly examples of T-series buildings adjusted for local site conditions. After two years without long-term planning, the Second Five-Year Plan was finally implemented in January 1956. It returned the economy to its earlier focus on investment in heavy industry and attempted to remedy inefficiencies in the previous


\textsuperscript{171} Taborsky, Communism in Czechoslovakia, 1948-1960, 363. The renewed interest in the "care of man" in the 1953 decree was certainly part of this. See Janů, "K otázce montovaných bytových staveb (On the Question of Prefabricated Housing)," 35.

plan by reducing paperwork, consolidating administrative tasks and giving specialists more power to make decisions in their sectors.\textsuperscript{173}

It would take another institutional shift to fully embed the logic of the panelák into the building culture of Czechoslovakia. The pivotal moment occurred in January 1956 when the state established a single administration that finally brought design, investment and construction together into a centralized body, the Central Administration for Housing and Civic Building (\textit{Ústřední správa pro bytové a občanské výstavby}). The new administration was charged with overseeing all construction of housing developments and their related civic buildings, including hospitals, schools, and recreational facilities. This substantial change was made to coincide with the start of the Second Five-Year Plan, since the housing sector had continued to lag behind its plan numbers throughout the first half of the decade.

The Central Administration for Housing and Civic Building, led by Vladimír Červenka, was a subordinate organization to the new State Committee for Construction (\textit{Státní výbor pro výstavbu}), also created in the months leading up to the Second Five-Year Plan. This committee was led by Minister-President Oldřich Beran, the former minister of State Controls, with the guidance of Jiří Voženílek as Deputy Director. Karel Janů became Deputy Director of the new Ministry of Building (\textit{Ministerstvo stavebnictví}) at the same time, which dealt more with the production side of the building industry in this new configuration. Both appointments signaled the return of a technocratic approach to housing and architectural practice that reemerged after Khrushchev’s 1954

\textsuperscript{173} Ibid., 74-79.
pronouncements. It also indicated the extent to which the sorela period had been a momentary change of direction for the administration.

In his speech at the inception of the Central Administration for Housing and Civic Building, Beran described the administration as “the objective organ of the state in economic, technical, and artistic questions of invested building and [one] which has as its work the complex solution of all questions related to investment and the technological development of building.”174 This was an institutional formation that itself encouraged the centralization and streamlining of standardized housing production, both in block construction and the early structural panel buildings. Production sites were coordinated and spread across each region so that materials could reach their destination quickly and inexpensively. When possible, local building materials were incorporated into designs to further reduce costs.

From an economic standpoint, the primary function of the administration was to ensure that the plan numbers were being fulfilled no matter what the effect on design standards might be. Each regional office was expected to submit monthly reports explaining the cause for any fulfillment problems. Common justifications were a lack of laborers, supply delays or production problems with the prefabricated pieces. The capacity of Stavoprojekt was also utilized across the country rather than only in individual regions. For example, architects from Olomouc, České Budějovice, and Prague were assigned to assist the office in Ostrava with designs for Poruba and other

174 “Projev soudruha ministra předsedy SVV na ustavující schůzi ÚSBOV,” Jan. 20, 1956, ÚSBOV, carton 2, NA.
satellite cities such as Havířov and Karviná. Therefore what had started in 1948 as a collection of independent architectural offices with relative autonomy had been transformed by 1956 into a consolidated national network with a system of accountability and structured centralized hierarchy.

At each bi-weekly executive council meeting, the top administrators in the Central Administration for Housing and Civic Building would share detailed statistics about the progress of building projects in each of the 20 design institutes. Data on the size, cost, and schedule of each project was collected and analyzed at regular intervals; most often quarterly and yearly. Meetings were focused on improving fulfillment numbers, decreasing the square footage and therefore the cost of apartments, and the implementation of new building technologies such as structural panels and lightweight concrete. Aesthetic concerns were never addressed and only rarely did functional questions about how these changes affected the inhabitants of the apartments enter into the discussion.

With the centralization of the management structure, regulatory departments, and data collection into a single administration, sharing information about new technologies and building materials among state agencies and with similar organizations abroad became much simpler. As Khrushchev’s reforms began to take hold in 1955, architects were eager to learn more about international developments inside and outside of the Bloc after the years of socialist realism. Study trips and trade

175 USBOV, cartons 1-14, these quarterly and yearly reports are filed in the records of the executive meetings.
fair visits to countries such as the Soviet Union, East Germany, Switzerland, Sweden, and France were approved for trustworthy architects to both learn about new technologies and to advertise the successes of Czechoslovakia.\textsuperscript{176}

In a report from early 1956, Chairman Vladimír Červenka argued that in many countries relevant research was being conducted on speeding up the process of design and construction, increasing the number of units being built, and lowering the total cost of projects. With respect to sharing this knowledge, he wrote,

Preparing data about typification is still a ground-breaking pursuit that is not good to learn on one’s own from foreign literature, because it just does not exist to the necessary extent. Specialists in other countries from the camp of peace occupy themselves in this way with the same ground-breaking pursuit. In the meantime, as far as we know, this preparation is not being carried out in capitalist countries to the same extent and depth with respect to their economic conditions, as it is in our case.\textsuperscript{177}

In addition to his commentary, this report contains six addenda from the Central Administration for Housing and Civic Building requesting that Czechoslovak specialists to be sent to East Germany and the Soviet Union over the next two years to share information about each country’s progress in these areas. A total of 25 delegates would travel for lengths ranging from one week to six months.\textsuperscript{178} Their mandate included

\textsuperscript{176} ÚSOBV, cartons 1-14, minutes from executive committee meetings, 1956-1958. Each quarter a proposal for international travel was made to the executive committee of ÚSOBV. Upon return, architects filed a report about their everyday movements. On average about 12 employees were permitted to travel per quarter with the exception of some larger delegations sent to socialist countries on study trips; these trips often numbered over 30 participants.

\textsuperscript{177} Vladimír Červenka, “Komentář k požadavkům na vědecko-technickou pomoc požadovanou od LDS a SSSR v roce 1957 (Commentary on the requirements for scientific-technical help sought from the People’s Democratic Parties and the Soviet Union in 1957),” undated, p. 1, ÚSOBV, carton 1, NA. The term 'countries from the camp of peace' referred to communist countries.

\textsuperscript{178} Ibid., 3-9.
inspecting urban planning schemes, exploring new lightweight concrete mixes, discussing transportation and infrastructure strategies, and most importantly, “establishing” in the Soviet Union and “continuing” in East Germany, “a direct scientific-technical cooperation in the preparation of new data about typification in apartment and civic building.”

The projects that resulted from this era of the Central Administration for Housing and Civic Building began to define a model that would be carried forward until the end of communism. With the consolidated strength of the Stavoprojekt offices and the regime’s ability to clear large tracts of land through slum clearance, the scale of the projects of the late 1950s were oriented to the idea of neighborhood. Few projects aimed to replace whole blocks of war-damaged buildings or to build entire new cities on the monumental scale of New Ostrava. Instead most projects were designed to complement historic city centers with new self-contained neighborhoods that offered local services and good transportation connections to nearby commercial districts and industries. Buildings were often a combination of low-rise masonry blocks and paneláks, punctuated with high-rise towers to give the neighborhood a definition in the skyline. Urban design, landscape architecture and transportation planning were all valued as part of the process, although financial problems often hindered what was finally constructed.

The Central Administration for Housing and Civic Building functioned independently for only two-and-a-half years until it was absorbed into the State

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179 Ibid., 3-4.
Committee for Construction in April 1958. Its demise was the result of an increasing mistrust in centralized organizations. When investment was returned again to the regional committees in March 1958, the dissolution of the Central Administration for Housing and Civic Building was ordered within a week. Its legacy remained, however, in the patterns of distribution and hierarchical decision-making strategies that had defined its tenure. In the end, architects’ concerns for aesthetics had no traction against the budgetary and material constraints imposed by the planned economy. The successive organizational realignments of the former Stavoprojekt continued into the 1980s and technological determinism continued to dominate the discussion until the early 1990s.

The Long Life of the Panelák

The building types that had been tested by the Institute of Prefabricated Buildings became the basis of the housing programs after 1956. G houses proliferated and their popularity accelerated in the 1960s. The Janů system of large block and skeleton construction developed into a series of types called the T 01 –T 08 blocks, but the potential of these buildings was undermined in the 1960s by the enormous political power of panel production industry itself, which according to Rostislav Švácha lobbied to keep other technologies out of the construction industry. During this time, housing developments also grew in scale as the low-rise compact designs of the 1950s gave way to the immense sprawling developments of the 1960s such as Jížní město (South City), a

Prague district with 100,000 inhabitants built entirely out of structural panel buildings to a single master plan starting in the late 1960s.\textsuperscript{181}

In the 1970s, the structural panel building, which had started off as a largely urban type in the Czech lands, made its way into smaller communities and Slovak territory as the post-1968 regime attempted to placate its citizens with hundreds of thousands of new apartments during the period of ‘normalization.’\textsuperscript{182} By this time, architects were forced to use lower-quality materials including plastics and design smaller apartments in larger buildings. For example, in the massive Petržalka project in Bratislava, which started construction in 1974, the average apartment contains 3.12 rooms in 45 square meters. This self-contained district of sprawling eight- to ten-story panel buildings with a total of 50,000 apartments was erected on the only piece of Czechoslovak land on the Austrian side of the Danube, leaving it accessible to the city and the rest of the country only by bridge. Its architecture and location make it a prime example of how this style of urban planning failed to respond to existing urban patterns and infrastructures.\textsuperscript{183}

Like Jižní Město and Petržalka, the 1960s and 1970s developments were typically at a massive urban scale—without trees, a pedestrian landscape or usable community spaces—and nothing like the older districts nearby. Today these groups of often shabby


\textsuperscript{183} Lizon, “East Central Europe: The Unhappy Heritage of Communist Mass Housing,” 109-114.
apartment blocks dominate the edges of Czech and Slovak cities and towns. Over 3 million people, or one-third of the population of the Czech Republic, still live in more than 1,100,000 apartment units in 80,000 structural panel buildings. One-third of Bratislava’s 450,000 people live in Petržalka alone. In the years since the end of communism, for residents and visitors alike, these drab buildings have come to represent everything that was wrong with Communism. President Václav Havel famously referred to them as “undignified rabbit hutchess (králikárny).” For Czechs and Slovaks, who are proud of their intact medieval cities and cathedrals, picturesque country towns, and a celebrated history of interwar modernism, it remains difficult to understand how panelák s could have become so ubiquitous less than forty years after the apex of the avant-garde.

Conclusion

The role of Zlin and the legacy of the Bat’a Corporation in the development of prefabrication technologies in Czechoslovakia was undeniable. Despite the impression that panel technology was a Soviet import, Czechs and Slovaks were pursuing this research before the communist period and without Soviet involvement. A pivotal change did occur in the 1950s that brought what was an experimental technology in a


186 Reynolds, "Still Standing."
small institute into the mainstream of building culture. Soviet interest in panel
technologies and the nature and requirements of the planning economy in
Czechoslovakia converged in such a way that the panelák appeared to be the only
solution to the continuing housing crisis. Although most architects would agree that it
was a poor spatial and formal solution for housing, the state system itself was incapable
of responding with alternatives at a national level given its rigidity and long-term
approach. In pragmatic terms, the technology also allowed Czech and Slovak architects
to shorten construction time and costs. In a 1966-1967 study, Slovak architect Peter Lizon
concluded that a five- to six-story masonry building took fourteen to sixteen months to
complete, while an eight-story panelák took only eight to ten months.187

The establishment of the Central Administration for Housing and Civic Building
and the embrace of prefabrication in the mid-1950s signaled a larger reconsideration of
the role of technology in the new society. Architects were still struggling to define
themselves with respect to the traditional domains of the profession, namely beauty and
functionality. As these concerns were overtaken by the endless charts, numbers, and
quotas that were inherent to the planned economy, architects themselves were stripped
of their value to the process. Instead of being creative contributors, they were
transformed into assembly-line workers churning out iterations of the same project over
and over again. The physicality of architecture was also laid bare by the pressures of the

187 Lizon and others have proposed, however, that the technological success of such projects
was irrelevant given the damage they caused to the urban landscape and people’s everyday
lives. See Lizon, "East Central Europe: The Unhappy Heritage of Communist Mass Housing,"
104-14.
system. In its blankness, the generic panel embodied this loss of creativity as much as the anonymous architects in the design institutes.

In the push towards centralization and standardization, architects who were being written out of the creative process seem to have taken some comfort in the pure numerical abstraction and opacity of the panelák form. In its first incarnation as a technological solution to an economic dilemma, it was also widely accepted by the architectural committee in a time when questions of form were being expelled from the collective consciousness because of the suffering of the sorela period. Finally, the Soviet presence in this narrative is not as the oppressors of Czechoslovak creativity or even as the dictator of progress. Instead, it could be argued that the regime's attempt to force a Soviet model into Czechoslovak practice ended up having the opposite effect as architectural culture returned to its technocratic interwar roots to a degree never before achieved.
Conclusion

Khrushchev’s criticism of the Stalinist cult of personality in February 1956 ended not only the darkest period in the history of the Soviet model of socialism, but also the most dangerous period of the Cold War between West and East. The socialist revolution had not yet engulfed the world in wars, but in the process of peaceful competition, capitalism eventually yielded to the superior productivity of socialist work and more advanced Soviet science and technology. 1 – Rostislav Švácha, 1995

In May of 1961, a twenty-two member delegation from Britain arrived in Czechoslovakia to view the country’s achievements in architecture and urban planning. In the travelogue published later that year in the magazine Town and Country Planning, delegation member Preston Benson reported that “[we] found the architects and planners of Czechoslovakia very sure of what they were doing. They were convinced that their vast apartment-building program was the best and most urgent thing for them.”2 As this dissertation has shown, the path from the avant-garde-inspired housing projects of the late 1940s to this ‘vast apartment-building program’ was not linear, logical or preordained. Czech and Slovak architects found industrialization, standardization and typification to be the best methods for achieving the goals set out for them by the architectural administration, the political elite and in some cases, their own beliefs in state socialism. The character of some of those goals—to build as many housing units as quickly and economically as possible, to make buildings that celebrate the national heritage, to change the architect from an artist into a technician—can be seen as justified


in the terms of postwar Europe where all countries, capitalist and communist, faced war
damage, housing and labor shortages, uncertain political alliances, and the threat of
American corporate and cultural imperialism.

The analysis put forward in the five chapters addresses these goals not in the
terms of their intentions, but rather as objectives that were themselves contingent and
constructed and which could have been achieved in multiple ways. The Czechoslovak
government and its architects made certain choices, sometimes under pressure, that
determined how they would provide housing units, what formal strategies would be
acceptable and what role there would be for architects. One of the primary conclusions
of this dissertation is that this was only one vision of socialist modernity; other choices
and the empowerment of other individuals may have yielded different results. On the
other hand, it is also evident that architects did not act alone in making these decisions.
They were part of a larger web of economic, social and political calculations that limited
their possibilities, sometimes this was a result of an internal debate and at other times
this was due to external forces. This remains true in capitalist societies as well, however,
the mechanisms of the planned economy made it especially difficult in the communist
context where working outside the system was virtually impossible.

The conclusion that architects determined much about their own destinies in
postwar Czechoslovakia is a departure from traditional totalitarian models of
Communist rule which assumed that decisions were made at the top and communicated
down through the hierarchy unchanged. In many disciplines the totalitarian model has
been challenged for decades, however art and architectural history have clung to this
notion, in part because it helps to explain away ugly or derivative expressions by individuals. In this case, it is hard for architects and historians writing about the 1940s and 1950s from the perspective of the 1990s or 2000s to give agency in the postwar period to architects whose memories are most vivid as avant-garde practitioners. There are also several generations of architects who own experiences in the communist period, especially in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s, may not match with my particular presentation of the materials.

Yet through these archival documents and the records of architectural production available in print and on the street, it is no longer possible to claim that local actors had no power in the communist system. Architects, like all workers in socialist economies, gained their power from the state's need for them to work. If no housing was designed or built, then factories could not hire workers, plan targets suffered and so forth. Communist societies, therefore, relied on negotiation as a survival strategy at every level. For architects, this meant that the state gave them professional autonomy at times when quantitative aspects of production were the priority. As long as the plan targets for housing units were met, architects could make many of their own decisions. When the cultural sphere and aspects of architectural form became gages through which the regime could judge its adherence to Stalinist cultural models in the early 1950s, the state intervened and took much of this autonomy away. In return, budgets for housing production were increased, universities were encouraged to strengthen their

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curriculums in the history of western architecture, artistic methods once again became
central to practice, and enthusiasm for socialist realism was rewarded with commissions
even for young architects.

After Stalin's death and Khrushchev's reforms, architects used this semblance of
professional autonomy to return to the forms and methods of the 1940s, which as
chapter one illustrates, were in part derived from the arguments for 'scientific
functionalism' in the 1930s. In this way, the late 1950s were the fulfillment of the project
of the farthest left architects in the interwar period. This was not the modernism of Karel
Honzík, Ladislav Žák, Jaromír Krejcar or Bohuslav Fuchs, but the architecture of Jan
Gillar, Jiří Kroha in his Marxist-Leninist phase and the Architectural Working Group. It
was no coincidence that Janů and Voženílek both returned to high-ranking positions in
the architectural administration in the late 1950s.

By 1961 and the arrival of the British delegation who found such confidence
among the architects, more than fifteen years had passed since the establishment of
BAPS and the creation of a broad coalition of architects who saw their future in
collective work. The intervening years brought surprises and disappointments that few
had anticipated and we cannot forget the personal difficulties that many of these
architects faced, yet in the terms set out by the initial leaders of BAPS, the building
industry looked remarkably like what they had first proposed. From the perspective of
architectural history, the transition from an artistic model of practice to one reliant on
technology and industrial production was a critical transition in the history of
modernity that needs more attention. It can also be argued that we are just now in the
midst a similar moment in the history of global architectural practice as technologies with capabilities that far surpass the human hand make their way into architectural practice.

In hindsight, there is a clarity to the ebbs and flows described in this dissertation, although it was impossible to see this at the start of the project. The initial questions that I posed in the introduction about the relationship between interwar and postwar architecture have been answered thoroughly as the same architects repeatedly appear in each chapter and each new technology or building style can be tied to the one that came before it. The most satisfying answer I can offer to the question of what happened to the modern project in Czechoslovakia is that nothing happened. Communism provided a different set of circumstances, priorities and obstacles for architectural practice, but modernism continued on, perhaps more so in the Eastern Bloc and the Soviet Union than anywhere else in the world.
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