

ARCHITECTURE of the First Republic of Czechoslovakia and its place in the historic context of towns and landscape

The Czechoslovak Republic was a democratic country, successfully developing economy, science and culture. Its impressive economic growth (Czechoslovakia was among the top ten countries in the world), openness to new thoughts and art styles, and optimistic views of the future, this was the perfect ground for outstanding architectural works. They were driven by large government commissions (reconstruction of the Prague Castle as the seat of the President and the symbol of new democracy, building of new ministries, universities, medical facilities, cultural buildings and sport facilities) as well as private projects (new banks, the stock exchange building, department stores and residential houses).

The architects of the early modern era could follow up on their outstanding performances from the prewar years (Czech cubism in architecture); also, they soon opened to the vanguard works from other countries. Many used the opportunity to take part in the internships with the world's best architects (such as A. Perét, Le Corbusier, W. Gropius or H. Scharoun). Thus, Czechoslovak architecture made it to the world class in the interwar era.

It was also necessary to live up to the environment, in which new projects were built – the millennial architectural legacy of Czech towns and landscape. Even before the war, many architects (such as P. Janák, J. Chochol, A. Engl, B. Hübschmann etc.) joined the Club for Old Prague, founded in 1900 to advocate the conservation of historical art values of the city.

Here, they were looking for ways to save and conserve historical neighborhoods through reconstructions and re-animation (as a positive alternative to demolition). They attempted at harmonious connection of new buildings and historic environment, whose values they respected and honored. However, the dynamic development of the interwar era didn't always enable these principles. The new generation of the modern functionalism didn't feel such need to respect the context, and sometimes, it flatly rejected it. Despite this, some of the non-contextual works of this era are of superior architectural quality, and thus belong to worthy parts of our cultural legacy.

