

CHAPTER 3

ARCHITECTURAL DEVELOPMENT IN TOWNS AND CITIES 1910-1923

- 1. The Prelude to the Great War**
- 2. Prague Influences: Rondo-Cubism/The National Style; Jan Kotěra, Pavel Janák**
- 3. Russian Influences: F. O. Shekhtel, G. Warchavchik**
- 4. Hungarian Influences: István Medgyaszay, Károly Kós**
- 5. Turkish Influences: Vedat Bey, C. E. Jeanneret**

CHAPTER 3

1. The Prelude to the Great War

From 1910-1923, effectively the timescale for the total upheaval of the First World War, Central Europe would know no peace. The reality of the 'Great War', as these events would become known, had been uppermost in Bismarck's mind years earlier, when he identified the Balkans as the flashpoint for the greatest conflict man had ever experienced. A united Germany desired greater influence and power; victory against Austria in 1866 (Austro-Prussian War) and France in 1871 (Franco-Prussian War) caused German territorial ambitions to grow. That expansion, following the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand in Sarajevo, the Serbian capital, in June 1914 was one of the major causes of the First World War. The second cause was the disastrous Russo-Japanese War of 1904-05 where Russia as a 'power' was defeated by lowly Japan. Aggression against 'Slavic Brothers' in Central Europe by Austria/Germany would be resisted as Russia tried to regain face using these events as a pretext for trying to occupy parts of the old Ottoman Empire, to be countered by Bulgaria, Romania, Greece and Turkey, leading to the Balkan Wars of 1912-13.

This intrigue of alliances and treaties, made by all the nations named above to avoid conflict soon compelled France, Belgium, Poland, Italy and Great Britain and latterly the U.S.A. to take up arms. These mobilisations sowed enormous distrust and were the catalyst for nationalistic movements and sentiments, echoing the feelings of 1848 across all of Central Europe again as territories were annexed or invaded during the war.

The map of Central Europe was redrawn. Because the First World War had reduced Europe and the international trade of the world to ruins: because Russia was in turmoil with its own civil war: and because the new superpower, America, was only flexing its political muscles the Peace Settlement was dominated by Britain and France. The Central Europeans were at the mercy of the negotiators.....The driving force behind the Versailles Treaty was twofold: to make the Germans 'pay' for the suffering that the allies over-self righteously claimed they had caused and to make sure that subject nationalities within the former Austro-Hungarian empire would have a chance of self-determination in their future.¹

This nationalism found voice in the arts and architecture of Central Europe. Previously architects had been educated abroad in Paris, Milan, Vienna, Berlin, London, Moscow, St Petersburg Chicago and New York. In the prelude to war many Central Europeans

returned to their native lands. Immediately post 1918 the desire to take architectural education and development into Central European control to build new countries and administrations would lead to a revolution of building techniques and architectural individuality. This scale and intensity of development was not rivalled anywhere else.

In summary, during their approximately twenty years of national independence following the First World War, Czechoslovakia and, in particular Hungary and Poland emerged from positions of considerable political and socio-economic disadvantage to rebuild their shattered economies, infrastructures, schools and national institutions. Despite tempestuous, often violent and painful beginnings, there is little doubt that these countries generated the most sophisticated modern architectural culture in Europe after the collapse of modern architecture in Germany, [post Werkbund].²

The nature of this conglomeration of ruined German 'States' with diverse administrative and governmental centres was such that the all-encompassing definitions of Germany as a prime mover in the development of the modernism after the First World War are an over simplification. As an example, Lichtwark who published '*Realistische Architektur*' (Realistic Architecture) in 1897 had within two years re-titled this work '*Sachliche Baukunst*'.³ Even though there is little actual difference in these two titles one is old school, the other modern. Equally attitudes in major German cities were polarised. The Bavarian Burgher in Munich has never shared the views of the cosmopolitan Berliner and this was particularly true after the defeats of the First World War and on into the 1920s. Examining the minutiae of the many terms used within works of this date: *sachlichkeit*, *neu Gegandstandlichkeit*, *Kulturarbeiten* and *Stilwille*, it is noticeable that as many times as these words are printed, authors' definitions rarely agree.

The key factor is that many of the buildings cited as in the vanguard of Modern Movement were not as yet built in 1920; they were only plans, ideas and ideals. In her introduction to Adolf Behne 'The Modern Functional Building', Rosemarie Haag Bletter states that *Der Modern Zweckbau* (The Modern Functional Building) written in 1923, published in 1926:

presciently unmasked many of the ideologies of functionalism, rationalism and European [Western] Modernism of the 1920's.⁴

This statement is questionable. Most of the works today considered to be of the Modern Movement in retrospect within the established Anglo-American annals were deliberately promoted, particularly by *Congrès Internationaux d'Architecture Moderne* (CIAM)

especially during the 'Cold War' and owe their pre-eminence to that organisation and American/Western European interests.

As has been seen previously, the Germans talked and bickered while the Czechs, Slovaks, Poles, Hungarians, Slovenians, Slovakians and Croatians built.

Germany lacks a common culture and would be easy prey for a dictator, if it did not have a chronic shortage of strong authoritarians (*Willensmensch*). No country has a harder time making unequivocal decisions. It swings between mistrust and belief, between democracy and dictatorship; between union with and isolation from Europe, between East and West, between yesterday and tomorrow.⁵

These words, written by Adolf Behne in 1925, are truly prophetic. Behne's great strength was in debating with Gropius their opposing views of how modernism was formed. This degree of development in other countries vis-à-vis Gropius' standpoint in 'International Architektur' and Behne's less xenophobic view was expressed thus:

countries with strong indigenous cultures and people are more apt to be evolutionary and rarely respond to dictatorial regimes.⁶

Having recently emerged from under the control of Austria-Hungary and escaping the Germanisation of their language and culture, Central European commentators clearly defined three related but separate terms:

Firstly, Functionalist building – since 1895 when Otto Wagner said that something impractical cannot be beautiful, the whole art of architecture needed to be tackled on type and function through fulfilment of purpose to achieve the desired building. One such work, the Trade Fair Building, Prague 1924–1929, Oldrich Tyl and Josef Fuchs, was arguably the first completely Functionalist Building in Central Europe. But István Medgyaszay pre-empted many of these Functionalist elements in his studios in Gödöllo, 1904, and theatres in Vezsprém, 1908, and Sopron, 1909, as did Max Berg in his Hala Ludowa, Wroclaw/Breslau, 1913. However, unlike the Trade Fair Building the three latter works had small elements of decorative work: crenellations and carved woodwork in the Gödöllo studios and columned porches with heroic statuary in the Hala Ludowa that clearly locate the whole stylistically, whereas Tyl and Fuchs allowed no such fashionable diversions. The essence of any Functionalist as opposed to functional building is that nothing, even superfluous decoration, interferes with its 'fitness for purpose'.

Secondly, Rationalist building – Rationalism as a representative and patron of standardisation and typification. Seen throughout the later works of Le Corbusier and stated as a clear principle in his 'Machine for Living' that followed on from 'form follows function' first uttered by Louis Sullivan in 1888. Rationalism can be seen as a progression of Functionalism and initially evidenced in the work of Loos, Type of Small House 1922, Rufer House 1922, Apartment Block 1924, and fully realised in the Müller Villa, Prague 1930 (3.1) – the most complete example of '*Rational Raumplan*' within the lexicon of architectural achievement. Unfortunately because it was contemporaneous with the Tugendhat Villa, Brno, 1930, Mies van der Rohe and Villa Savoie, near Paris, 1930, Le Corbusier, it never shared the same international spotlight.

While both the other houses stood in the spotlight of international architectural discourse, the Müller Villa was only praised for its cube shaped façade. The layout of the interior was misunderstood and dismissed as old-fashioned.⁷

Perhaps as Arnold Schoenberg wrote in his homage to Adolf Loos the viewers and critics were incapable of understanding how Loos' building flowed from a screen like façade marking the boundaries of public and private space to an internal development of interior space which abandoned any two dimensional separations between levels, but maintained a separation between family and servants.⁸ Implicit in this space plan is the complex interpenetration of one space within another. From entering the front door a narrow entrance passage leads to a short staircase which reveals the first view of the living room while some short steps above is the dining room. One's senses are immediately assaulted by the richness of materials and the contrasting white walls.

Loos was lucky in having František Müller as his client, as a qualified civil engineer and a partner in 'Müller and Kapsa' – a very large building company – Müller understood the spatial complexity of the design. This new house would serve a dual purpose as both showpiece office and home. The design uses the separation of space to allow the servants including a chauffeur, nanny and a cook to progress without disturbing the family as a different staircase was used for access to the family living areas.

Thirdly, Utilitarian Building – as expounded by Count Peter Kropotkin, an economic result of saving power, work and time, seen in industrial/commercial buildings following the organisational ideas of Henry Ford,

We will not put up elaborate buildings as monuments to our success. The interest on the investment and the cost of their upkeep would only serve to add uselessly to the cost of our products – so these monuments are apt to end as tombs.⁹

3.1 Adolf Loos, Villa Müller, Prague Střešovice 1928-1930

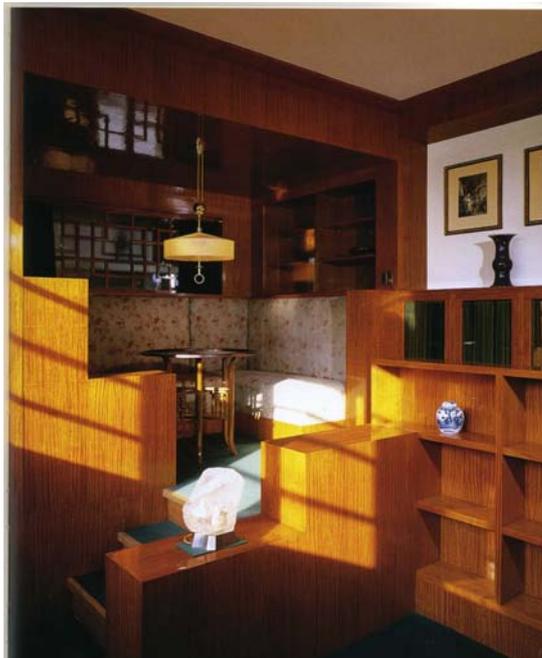


1

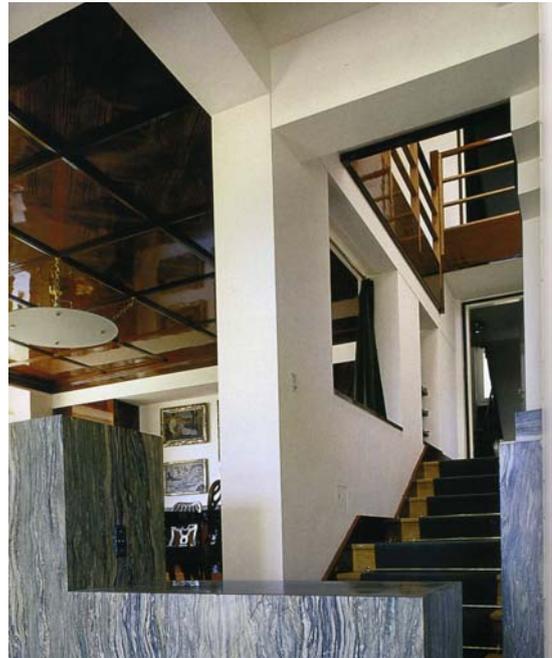


2

3



4



1 Dramatic stepped cubic exterior. 2 3 4 Interior views demonstrating mastery of *Raum Plan* with the use of opulent materials *Cipolino de Saion* marble, lighting from pendant lights and natural lighting through stairwell atria.

This prudent, cost-effective approach to architecture is witnessed in the creation of Zlin where Fordist principles were applied throughout the production and distribution process. All three of these definitions are used both singularly and co-operatively to frame architectural developments in Central Europe. With the advent of Rondo-Cubism, Cubism, Functionalism, Rationalism, Purism, Polish Constructivism and The Eight in Hungary along with continued works in Croatia, Slovenia, Slovakia, and the advent of Turkish Modernism all have to become part of a complete definition of modernism / Modern Movement from this point forward.

2. Prague Influences: Rondo-Cubism/The National Style; Jan Kotěra, Pavel Janák

Unlike Zagreb, Ljubljana, Vienna and Budapest, Prague could not develop commercial and residential buildings to any great extent within the tightly packed medieval streets. As a consequence the further development of modern architecture following the mentoring of Jan Kotěra evolved as particularly strong Rondo-Cubist structures. Identified by the term *Kubistická Praha* (Cubist Prague) 1909-25 the forms and understanding were informed from the Paris cubist works of Gris, Braque and Picasso from 1907 onwards. Visitors to Prague from 1900 had been recording their amazement at the variety and richness of Prague's historical, cultural, and architectural styles. One of the greatest commentators of Cubism, Guillaume Apollinaire, in writing 'Zone' in 1912, after a ten-year delay from his visit to Prague in 1902, expressed all the opposed emotions, anxieties and sensations of a new *genus loci*.

Sitting in the garden of a Prague suburban pub you feel entirely happy somebody left a rose on your table and you, instead of writing your story, regretfully while away your time, looking at a ladybird sleeping inside the rose. Aghast you see your own features in the agates of St. Vitus cathedral you were saddened to death on the day you saw your face in them resembling Lazarus whom light is crushing down. Ascending to Hradčany Castle and listening as night falls to Czech songs being sung in small pubs.¹⁰

From the mid nineteenth century Prague had confounded many visitors by the cosmopolitan meld of advances in the arts, education, research and philosophy. Prague resembled a laboratory where all disciplines were interconnected and all the diverse professionals were on first name terms. From 1910-1912 some of the greatest minds of the twentieth century were in Prague: Albert Einstein was lecturing on theoretical physics and exploring his theory of relativity while Sigmund Freud and Franz Kafka were 'giving flesh' to the inherent problems of this newly emergent world as they saw it. This

crucible of philosophical, scientific and cultural debate grew in the many bustling cafes, fine art clubs and numerous arts groups and their publications.

The need for better vehicle and train crossings in Prague north and south of the River Vlatava led to huge debate between architectural factions, especially in the influence of Wagner through Jan Kotěra. This debate led to a break away from the rationalism of Wagner, Berlage and Behrens to the new ideas and forms of Dutch architects in *Wendingen* (Upheaval) and in the very individual works of Jože Plečnik, The Langer House, Vienna 1900 which combined modern form, two juxtaposed cubic blocks (which would become a staple of the Modern Movement and Functionalism), with Secessionist decorative elements.

Of the new breed of Czech architects Pavel Janák was the first in both architectural and theoretical form to question the Wagnerian view of architectural function, i.e. construction and social engineering as the singular impetus for new architecture. The first built work that expressed a departure from the teachings of Wagner and the forms of Kotěra was the Hlávka Bridge in Prague 1909-1912 by Janák and his civil engineer František Mencl. Janák intended that the bridge, within its visible steel and reinforced concrete structure acting as both load bearing platform and supporting elements at the northern end, would be added to by a third unseen diagonal force. This force would come from inside the bridge through the active intervention of the architect's creative intent leading to a dynamic interplay of space, form and matter. The southern end would by way of contrast employ the more traditional bridge building systems. In late 1911 Pavel Janák, Josef Gocár, Vlatislav Hofman and Josef Chochol joined the painters Emil Filla, Josef Čapek, Vicenc Beneš along with the sculptor Otto Gutfreund in the newly formed *Skupina umělců výtvarných* (Group of "Plastic/Visual" Artists). Any remaining affinities with the Wagnerian school are seen in the sculptural medallions decorating the Hlávka Bridge.

The truest expression of the new direction at this time was seen in Gocár's *Dům u Černé Matky Boží* (House at the Black Madonna) department store, Prague 1912 (4.2). When Wagner and Fabiani were drafting the text to *Die Baukunst unserer Zeit* (later translated as *Modern Architecture*) from 1895 their statement:

here it is appropriate to shout a loud encouraging forward to the modern creative architect and to warn him against an excessive and heartfelt devotion to the old so that he might regain self-confidence, without which no great act whatsoever can arise,

could well have served as the clarion call for the Modern Movement.

The House at the Black Madonna of the Lord, to give the building its full name, exhibits what John Hejduk describes as:

the uniqueness of Prague is that throughout its time the architect who built simply fell in love with it and placed their hearts within its space as safekeeping: for future generations of lovers.¹¹

This is represented in the Cubist resolution of the building; in artistic terms the parallel to works by Gleizes, Metzinger and Feininger. A sympathetic articulation of form and space, it produced a harmonious balance resulting in the floor plan with a Modern conservatism in the façade.

This approach repeated itself many times from 1912-23, most noticeably in the construction of commercial buildings in *Nové Město* (City Centre): Diamant House, 1912-13, Emil Králíček and Matěj Blecha; Urbanek's House/Mozarteum, 1912-13, Jan Kotěra; Commercial and Apartment House, 1913-16, Emil Králíček and Matěj Blecha; Commercial and Apartment House, 1920-22, Rudolf Stockar; and the Adria Palace (which Le Corbusier mistakenly referred to as being an 'Assyrian structure'), 1922-25 (3.3) Pavel Janák and Josef Zásche. In fact the combination of classical Italian designs to celebrate the presence of *Riunione Adriatica di Sicurtà*, the Trieste-based insurance company in its northern most outpost, allowed the contrasting cubistic volume with detailing and massing to become known at the time as both the National Style and Rondo-Cubism. The greatest asset of the style was a flexibility which allowed the inclusion of elements as reminders or indicators of place, history and culture. In the Adria Palace there are clear references to Italian medieval castles and fortifications, which convey ideas of solidity, reliability and security in both the optic and haptic sense without direct mimetic reference.

The House at the Black Madonna presaged the first new building on a vacant city centre site, The Olympic House; Jaromír Krejcar led in the birth of a new modern Prague. *Skupina* had sponsored much that was happening through their magazine *Umělecký měsíčník* (The Arts Monthly) which had polarized the disagreement of proponents of the 'new art' identified through the work of Gris, Braque and Picasso as they developed their oeuvre into other forms and understandings, in opposition to the supporters of Cubism now exemplified by the work of Gleizes, Metzinger and Feininger.

This debate, which had rumbled since 1911, found voice in the works of Vratislav Hofmann, Emil Králíček, Josef Gocár and Josef Chochol and the builder's firm of Matěj

3.2 Josef Gocár, *Dům U Černé Matky Boží* (The House of the Black Madonna of the Lord), Prague 1912



Exterior view within the pedestrianised setting note how the Modern Cubist forms distinguish it from surrounding buildings. Appropriately now the museum of Czech Cubism



2 The Black Madonna of the name encased within a protective cage



3 The imposing doorway with Cubist columns and metal, glass panelled door

3.3 Pavel Janák and Josef Zásche *Riunione Adriatica di Sicurtà* (Adria Palace) Prague 1922-25 (Decoration by Jan Stursa and Otto Gutfreund)



Two views of the magnificent interior spaces with marble cladding, ceramic tiling, Heightened by a multi drop chandelier

Blecha. Kovarovics Villa, 1912-13, by Josef Chochol (3.4) was the first fully resolved celebration of Czech Cubism as a complete statement. In Kovarovic, Chochol had the ideal client, not only was Kovarovic the owner of a building firm he was a city councillor and inspector of all Prague's building firms. With the Villa Kovarovic began the architect's intention to avoid divisions or fragmentation to the surface, taking this aspect of the façade to new levels. Two further buildings, the Tenement House, Neklanova Street, No.56, 1913, Josef Chochol and Antonín Belada and, the fullest expression of cubist ideas to that date, Hodek's Tenement House, Neklanova Street No. 30, (3.5) 1913-14, both demonstrate a mastery of volume and scale.

Tatiana Petrasova has suggested that the vertical columns of the Hodek Tenement house front transforming into diamond crystalline vaults at the over hanging cornice are references borrowed from late gothic church architecture in support of the much overused mimetic approach.¹² It is always possible to see many references in the structure and detailing of any building to an historical past, indeed the columns and cornice could be equally classical. However when the understanding, implicit in the use of past styles creates something quintessentially new then the past should be forgotten. This was an idea well known to Chochol who in making sure Neklanova Street was not overdone, removed superfluous details such as the originally planned cubist chimneys very much in the form of Králíček's lamp standard in Jungmannovo Square.

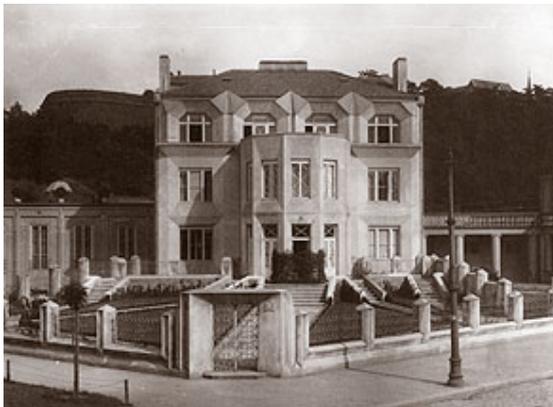
Rather than referring to the past, Chochol's Hodek Tenement can be viewed as a complete Czech Cubist work without deformation that pre-empted Le Corbusier's Purism, in the sense of the geometric proportional simplicity and exactitude being emphasised – as was Ozenfant's and Le Corbusier's intention for Purism to be an antidote to the convolutions of French Cubism. The most important thing about Neklanova Street is that the building takes ownership of all available space, as does Kovarovic's Villa as it cascades down the terraces to street level. The contrast between the rear and front of the building also demonstrates how advanced these architects and builders were to use such topographically challenging sites as part of the development, set as it was below the former Vysehrad Fortress with its steeply sloping earthworks. Neklanova Street, No.s 30/98 and 56 represent a modern statement of solidity and permanence.

Chochol's evolution of this fully resolved style is demonstrated by the lineage from the Rasin Embankment, Duplex and Triplex Houses to Kovarovic's Villa, 35 Libušina Street through to Neklanova Street No.s 30/98 and 56 Vysehrad. One of the earliest Czech Cubist designs for the Prague Opera House in 1908 came from the pen of Pavel Janák.

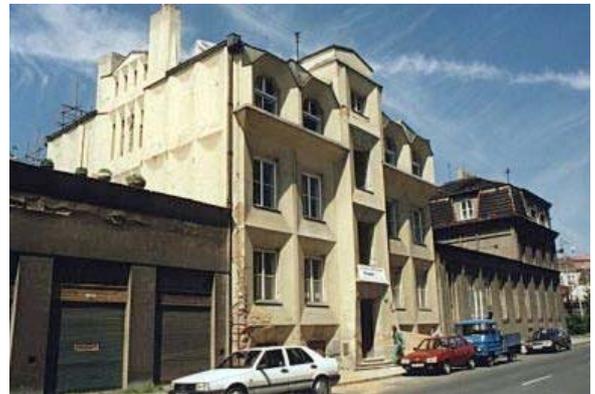
3.4 Josef Chochol, Villa Kovarovic, Prague Vysehrad 1912-13



1 Front elevation, recent photograph with mature gardens



2. A rather stark crystalline structure as completed by building firm Matěj Blecha



3 The significantly reduced height of the rear elevation testifies to the drop front to back

3.5 Josef Chochol, Hodek Tenement House, Neklanova 30/98, Prague



© BW Davies 2004

Equally the design for a monumental interior of Cubist columns and massive, diamond crystalline vaulting along with heavy cornices, balconies and cubic upper storey in the Vila Fara, Pehlrimov 1913, was an influence on the work of Jaroslav Fragner, who was one of the disciples of Purism. Not for the first time does a mimetic model fail, as using the same influences from Cubism many differing complementary and antagonistic styles are attained.

Pavel Janák in his essay 'Renewal of the Façade' 1913 took Riegl's expressed idea of the polarity of haptic and optic principles, in part inherited from Semper, but extended to be part of an analytical basis for evaluating architecture, fine art and design.¹³ Riegl's use of the haptic/optic principle, as explored by Matthew Rampley, puts stress on the relationship between and interaction of the hand and the eye. It is clear from this that to develop our understanding of the three-dimensional world there has to be a supplemental element of active bodily engagement. Simply put 'the child learns to see by touching'.

This process as Riegl would have seen does not in our modern understanding reinforce the difference between haptic/optic sensations as the criterion of sensation lies in the concept of similarity.¹⁴

Therefore it is mimetic because that is something which is known and fixed as sensation or physical experience which informs our knowledge and reaction to something which is unknown. In allowing all of these factors the haptic/optic polarity moves to a triumvirate of mimetic, haptic and optic sensation as a totality, interdependent one with another. Janák, in championing the central plan and longitudinal façade, was using optical consideration to arrive at a building typology. In direct opposition to the optic principle was Vlatislav Hofman who uses the central plan to generate the haptic principle. He envisioned architecture based on the sense of touching and feeling as constructed by what one sees and the range of emotions and responses thus elicited; an idea that people today are very familiar with and one that clearly placed Hofman in an informed, progressive position.

Josef Čapek's essay *Moderne Architektur* (Modern Architecture) 1914 sought to explain this unity of haptic, optic and mimetic senses as an architectonic expression given flesh through 'mysterious autonomy' and 'incalculable instructive logic'. This quest is reached through the translation of inner plasticity and one's reaction to it as an ideal form of *Raumplan* to be represented in the outward physiognomy of the building. This idea is somewhat similar to ideas in Futurism where the internal structures directly result in the

outward appearance of machines, buildings and cities as evidenced by Antonio Sant'Elia with adjustments for function; for example, a power station had to be architecturally powerful. No doubt these theoretical underpinnings would have been developed further had not the main spokespersons and many protagonists been injured or killed in the First World War. However the greatest theorist and demonstrator of this idea through writings and drawings prior to the First World War was Adolf Loos.

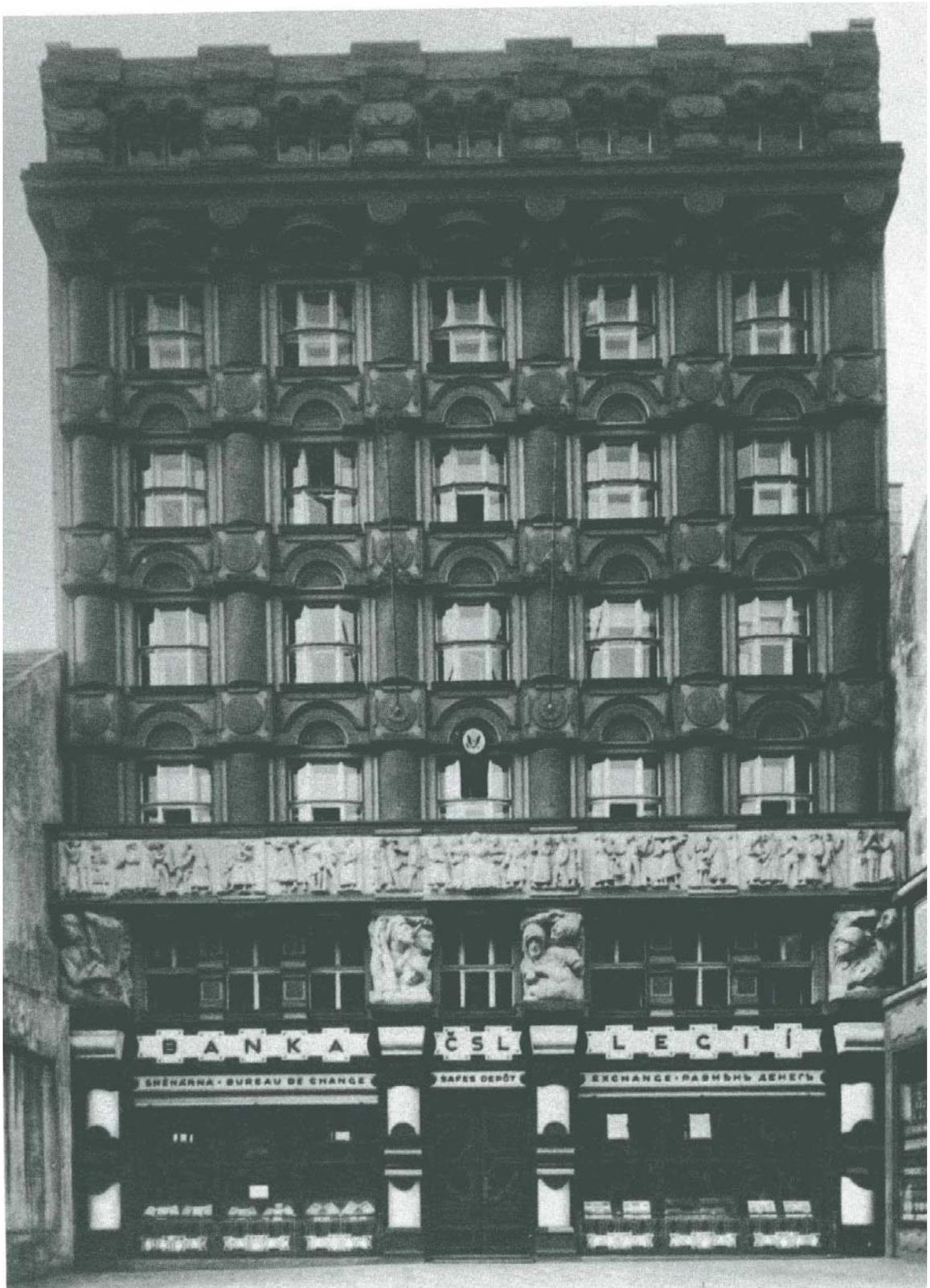
In returning to the Czech model it can be seen that Josef Chochol and Pavel Janák have many more completed buildings by contrast with Vlastislav Hofman. But comparisons based on output are worthless as both the optic and haptic arguments make clear that what is being investigated is that intangible quality of the occupants' feeling of well-being generated by the total scheme. Although they did not know it as a complete argument at the time, the haptic, optic and mimetic were all given equal consideration. Much of this debate was published in *Volné Směry* (Free Trends) and many other similar statements were published and discussed in both professional and popular press.

Rostislav Švácha has identified that between 1900-25 the 'Rondo-Cubist' and 'National Style' led to many articles from Janák, Hofman and Chochol whilst the 'indolent' Gocár, as they regarded him, made one single contribution, preferring to let his work talk for him. The vast number of Czech publications and individual issues following from *Volné Směry* (Free Trends) between 1897-1925: *Architekt SIA* 1901-50, *Styl* 1909-38, *Umělecký Měsíčník* (Arts Monthly) 1911-14, *Červen* 1917, *Stavitel* 1919-38, *Vytvarne Snaly, Dobne Umeni* 1920-30, *Veraikon* 1920-25, *Host* 1921-9, *Vytanna Prace* 1921-25, *Živet* 1921-48, *Stavba* (Building) 1922-38, *Disk* 1923 and 1925, *Pásmo* 1924-29 and *Bytora Kultura* 1925, added substantially to theoretical debate.

Two further buildings of this period that defy any clear identity with either the haptic, optic or mimetic proposition in isolation, are the Hlava Pathological Institute 1913-21 Alois Špalek and the Czechoslovak Legions Bank 1921-23 Josef Gocár (3.6).

When visiting Prague for the second time in 1925 Le Corbusier admired the elegant steel construction of the Pathological Institute's anatomical halls. He would no doubt have railed at the Czechoslovak Legions Bank, as on first appearance it appears to be a backward step in Czech modern architecture for 1921. Rather like the façade of the Adria Palace that Jaromír Krejcar decried as 'historicism, futile nationalism and eclecticism', this type of observation does not fully understand the purpose of these buildings. The Czechoslovak Legions Bank is logical if viewed from the standpoint of growing nationalism. In celebration of the Voluntary Legions' military successes, what

3.6 Josef Gocár, Czechoslovak Legion Bank, Prague 1921-23



better than a form which in its dimensions and volume echo a Roman Triumphal Arch? From the massive cornice, down through a tripartite triumphal gate to sculpted relief within a banded frieze by Otto Gutfreund. Below which are four large cubist columns which frame both the doorway and windows of the ground floor. The whole in white, brown and yellow gold of the interior and exterior echo the colours of armour and accoutrements while making reference to Czech folk art in both form and decoration.

This national celebratory treatment is also seen in Pavel Janak's Julius Sweetshop, 1920, with the red and white and blue of the decoration being the new national colours (from 1919 blue was added to distinguish the red and white flag further from the flags of neighbouring Austria and Poland). As Czech architecture within the city centre progressed beyond the forms of Cubism two buildings more than any exemplify a newly developing Modernism/Purism. This later embodiment of the 'national style' is thought to have been exemplified by Gocár in the Legion Bank apartment house (now demolished) within the same plot, completed in 1925, although records and photographs of this building are very scarce. The last Cubist building to be constructed in *Nové Město* was most fittingly the Skoda Works Building 1923-26, Pavel Janák, which adjoined the Adria Palace and continued the façade of the former in a reduced manner. All of these early Rondo-Cubist and Cubist buildings presaged the development of Prague as a very modern cosmopolitan capital city from 1923-1939.

3. Russian Influences: F. O. Shekhtel, G. Warchavchik

Following the Russian revolution of 1917 much knowledge of what happened in Russia prior to the bloody conflict was lost with the imprisonment or death of important architects and planners. The bars on travel and suppression of all but communist ideas denied the rest of the world evidence of the use of modern materials and plans in the execution of architecture.

However as artists, designers and architects began to leave the motherland, news of one architect who had worked in Moscow filtered through. He was Fyodor Ostipovich Shekhtel (1859–1926), formerly known as Franz-Albert Schechtel, whose mother came from Bavaria and settled with his father, who was of Scandinavian birth, in the Saratov region on the border of European Russia but where the population was mainly of German extraction. In 1875 moving to join his mother who had already gone to Moscow, Schechtel converted to Russian Orthodoxy and became Fyodor Ostipovich Shekhtel. His mother had become the housekeeper of Pavel Tretyakov, the founder of the Tretyakov Gallery, and it was through this patronage and influence, especially via

Tretyakov's son-in-law, that Fyodor was able to create a wide oeuvre of works, totalling: 5 theatres, 5 churches, 4 chapels, 2 printing shops, a railroad station, a bank, a cinema, 3 estates, 6 summer houses and 30 mansions. This led to some calling him the Russian Gaudi as, like Gaudi, his stamp was on the city.

The similarities in working with some of the oldest and richest families combined with a mix of entrepreneur and industrialist – Shekhtel with Morozov, Gaudi with Guell – and their shared spiritual underpinnings make their reasons for being architects broadly similar, as does the lack of finery they both enjoyed as quiet modest men. Shekhtel, like all architects, had to work to his clients' wishes and so it was with his first building in Moscow, the Morozov Mansion, 1889. The client S. T. Morozov had spent some years in Manchester where the neo-gothic mansions of textile magnates by Alfred Waterhouse had impressed him and this medieval castle, in concert with Ryabushinsky Mansion, 1901 (3.7), paralleled progress in Central Europe from Gothic to Renaissance to Neo Classicism, Neo Gothic to Art Nouveau. As with many architects, Shekhtel stepped back from this progress and in 1901 created a mansion for A. I. Derozhinskaya.

Shekhtel's former works, like those of early Olbrich and Wagner, are a little over-done and florid as in the Ryabushinsky Mansion using an abundance of colour and ornamentation; whereas the Derozhinskaya Mansion 1901-1902, is a cool, almost half-tone representation of a growing modern style. Although the three villas all appear very different outwardly the one constant is their free planning, a pre-requisite of modern architecture; an anti-autocratic statement opposed to traditions in Russian architecture which would tie the architect to imposed standard building systems inherited from the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. To these Shekhtel added by stages volumetric mass in asymmetrical arrangements. The importance of Shekhtel and his architecture was lost for decades and even now his works are rarely seen except from a distance, as the buildings are foreign embassies or offices for Russian governmental departments.

Shekhtel's position as an architect, theoretician and educator are represented in a number of ways; firstly as a designer of The Russian Trade Pavilions at the International Exhibition, Glasgow 1901. It was while working on this that Shekhtel named Viktor Vasnetsov and A. Kamminsky (Tretyakov's son-in-law) as his mentors in reworking the simple volumes of traditional Russian timber architecture of both agrarian and ecclesiastical origin. His ideas were embodied in a lecture to Moscow students in 1919 under a somewhat Chekhovian epithet (they were great friends), '*A Tale of Three Sisters, Painting Sculpture and Architecture*'.

3.7 Fyodor Shekhtel, Ryabushinsky Mansion, Moscow 1901



© diplomatus.ru 2006

These three arts must operate as a totality, making full use of the applied arts in a supporting role and aiming to put the viewer into that mood which suits the buildings purpose.¹⁵

In this he is echoing the views of both haptic and optic principles being combined with the mimetic to generate architecture which gives due accord to tradition and function while sitting well within the environment as a whole.

In 1902–1903 Shekhtel, as a representative of the Strogonov School of Applied Arts, Moscow where he was a lecturer from 1896-1917, was charged with arranging the Exhibition of Architecture and Design of the New Style. In bringing the work of Charles Rennie Mackintosh, Margaret Mackintosh, Joseph Maria Olbrich, Henry Van de Velde and Kolo Moser to Russia, Shekhtel demonstrated a knowledgeable and well-read understanding of architectural developments in Europe and no doubt through this honoured company, a knowledge of Frank Lloyd Wright and Louis Sullivan. By 1910 Russian style was being replaced with a hybrid form of modern which allowed him to use all he had learned, with walls composed of rectangular mass, punctuated with many grid windows in an even tension that evoke comparisons with Glasgow School of Art, 1896-1909 and Hill House, Helensburgh 1902-03.

Another signature of a Shekhtel building from which C. R. Mackintosh may have borrowed for the Willow Tea Rooms, was the installation of south-facing pink tinted glass and north-facing blue tinted glass to dramatize the sun's orientation and create mood where the shimmering silvers, lilacs and touches of jade blue-green contrasted with the alabaster white of the interior walls. Equally Shekhtel, like Mackintosh, designed all the fixtures, fittings and fabrics while also commissioning integral works from the Symbolist painter Mikhail Vrubel. Although these architects can be compared, and it may be inferred who was first to use a particular element of visual language, such comparison and debates are irrelevant as Shekhtel clearly demonstrates he had contact with and knowledge of a group of Western European colleagues. How much he took from them and how much they took from him is as yet unknown as architectural historians have very limited access to these buildings at present. What is clear is that this freedom of cross-pollination enriched the world history of architecture where no one should be seen as isolated or unconnected.

Shekhtel continued to develop his architectural style. His pre-revolutionary era generated work with massive stone towers and rectangular form with great authority based on the architecture of Nizhny Novgorod, bearing comparison with C. R.

Mackintosh and his references to fourteenth century baronial castles. Perhaps great men can not only think alike they can build alike from their knowledge of their own histories by using appropriate forms and decoration.

It is also worthwhile to consider those who left after the revolution in the 1920s due to state intolerance of intellectual and artistic freedom, to fully understand the entirety of architectural cross-pollination West to East and East to West. Although not part of any major table of architects, except in Brazil, Gregori Warchavchik, 1862-1972, is a very good representative of the émigré. Being educated at the University of Odessa, graduating and moving to study at the *Scuola Superiore di Architettura* in Rome he then worked with Marcello Piacenti (Italian Rationalism) before setting sail to live and work in Sao Paulo.

Warchavchik was the first to introduce the Modern Movement to Brazil while working with the Simonsen Construction Company. Throughout his creative life he worked with many luminaries in Brazilian Modernism including Mário de Andrade and Lúcio Costa who would later give life to Corbusian Purist models for the Brazilian Pavilion at the New York International Fair of 1939 (The World Fair), by adding gardens and terraces to a rather barren 'pilotis landscape' and also with Oscar Niemeyer in the design for Brasilia in 1956. What this cross-pollination demonstrates is that Modernism did not arrive in any one location as if from a far planet. It is often through much more complex relations across many countries and years that architectural expression grows.

4. Hungarian Influences: István Medgyaszay, Károly Kós

In Hungary, as in Austria-Hungary, a hybrid Secession style was replaced in the first decade of the twentieth century with a drive towards a National Style in all the arts. As an almost equal partner in the Habsburg Empire, Hungary as the land of the Magyars had a long and complex history of invasion and cultural change. Hungarians were intent on rediscovering their history; as with all such ventures an inspiration was sought. This was found in the form of *Fiatolok* (The Young Ones) a group of Hungarian architects who rejected Odon Lechner's Monumental Secessionist Style. This led to architects exploring the National Romantic style, much of which was printed in the comprehensive opus *A Magyar nép művészete* (The Art of the Hungarian people).

Ede Thoroczzai-Wigand and Károly Kós and their followers found that Lechner's monumental architecture and that of his followers, Jakab Dezsô, Marcell Komor and most importantly Béla Látja, provided a negative focus to searches for indigenous folk

sources. It was believed that the Magyars came from the Kalotazeg region of Transylvania where the Székely people spoke a distinct dialect with different cultural underpinnings and that this clan of ancient Magyars had escaped any Ottoman influences as the Turkish hordes swept through Central Europe. The reason for this was that these people were the descendants of Magyar mercenaries who were protecting the furthest frontiers well away from the trails of occupation by the Janissaries and Attila's Huns.

Wigand became the largest collector of folk artefacts and assembled a large collection of sketches, photographs and illustrations that he published in 'My Village' and in 'In times of Yore' which explored the culture of the villages from flowers to myth and legend. By the 1910s a tour of this region was almost de-rigueur for all architects, painters and designer/craftsmen. Malonyay, as the author of 'The Art of the Hungarian people', proposed the argument for a National Style in his preface:

Scientific thinking – supposedly the great victory of human progress – protested at the beginning strongly against the national idea in the name of so-called universal joy of humanity; little by little, however after the practical fiasco of theories we understood that the higher goals of humanity can be most efficiently realized within the framework of a nation.¹⁶

This approach to a national style was also being echoed in Dalarna, Sweden and Karelia, Finland. In concert with these national sentiments painters established a number of schools and workshops where particularly the Hungarian and Finnish became kindred spirits probably because, unlike the rest of Europe, their languages came from the Finno-Ugric route and they could understand each other. Geza Maroli was a good friend of Eliel Saarinen for whom he went to work at the Cranbrook Academy in the 1930s. The greatest contribution of The Young Ones to modern architecture was a clearly developed understanding of the connection between architecture and the immediate topography.

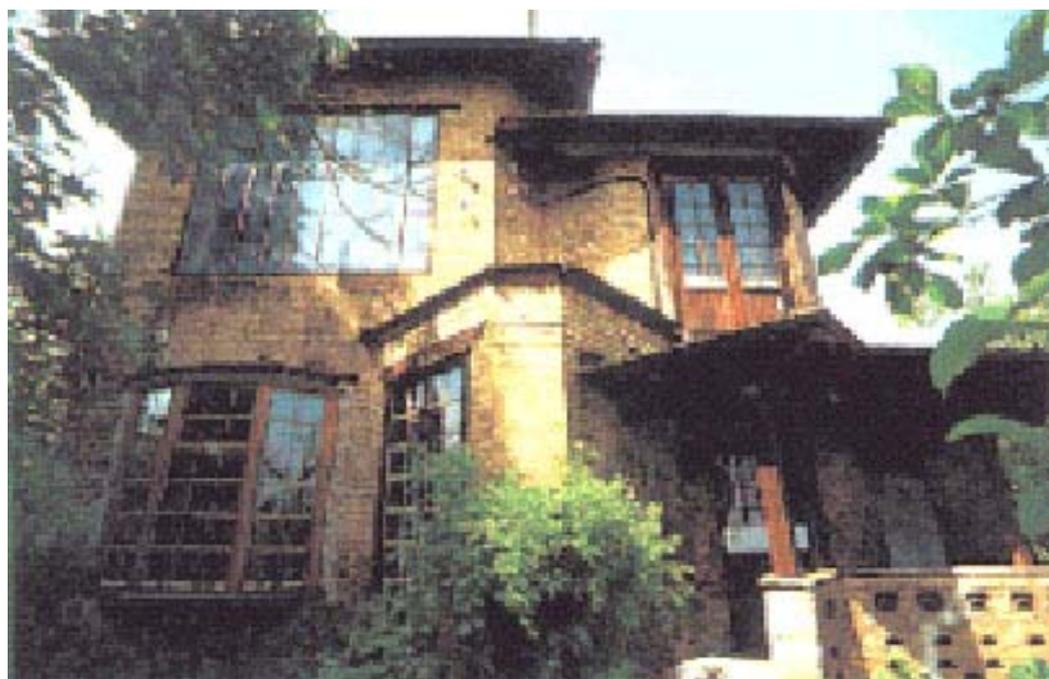
This understanding was exemplified in the architectural works of István Medgyaszay. As a student of Otto Wagner, Medgyaszay made the required field trips to study Hungarian villages from the plain to the mountain but unlike Kós and Wigand and The Young Ones did not arrive at the same architectural forms. The villas of the Gödöllo Artists Colony for Leo Belmonte (3.8-9), an artist of Swedish-French birth, and Sándor Nagy, the Hungarian painter (3.8-9), both from 1904, show the influences within Medgyaszay works. They are not only from the narrow tract of a Hungarian National Style based on the Kalotaseg region but also via his knowledge of architecture through

3.8 István Medgyaszay, Gödöllo Studio-Villas, Gödöllo, Hungary 1904

An early photograph of the Leo Belmonte studio-villa

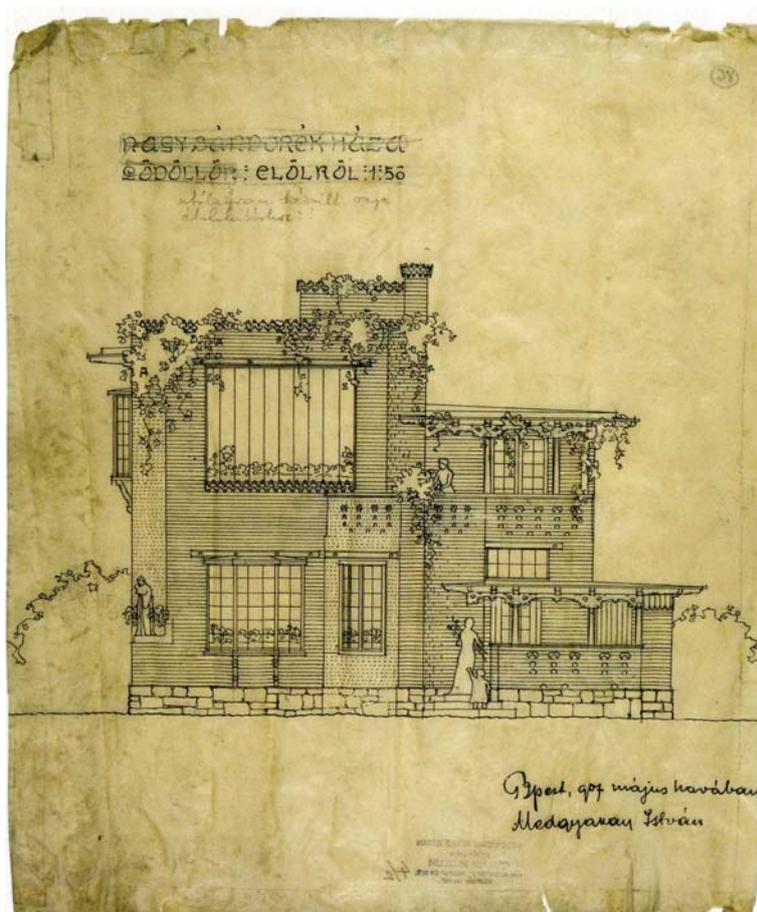
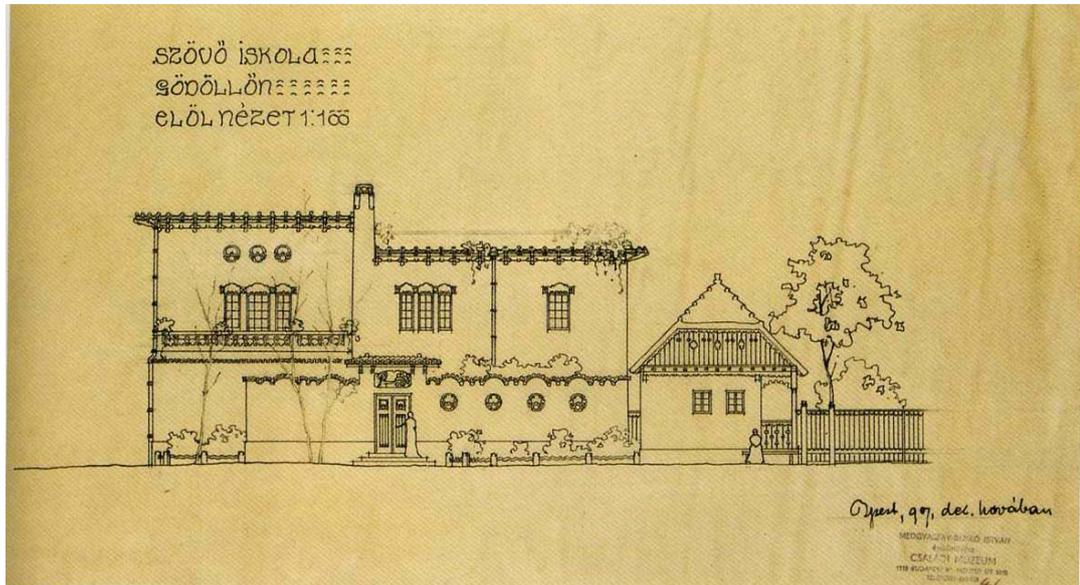


A recent photograph of the Sándor Nagy studio-villa



3.9 István Medgyaszay, Gödöllo Studio, Gödöllo, Hungary 1904

Two original drawings of the Belmonte studio-villa and the Nagy studio Villa



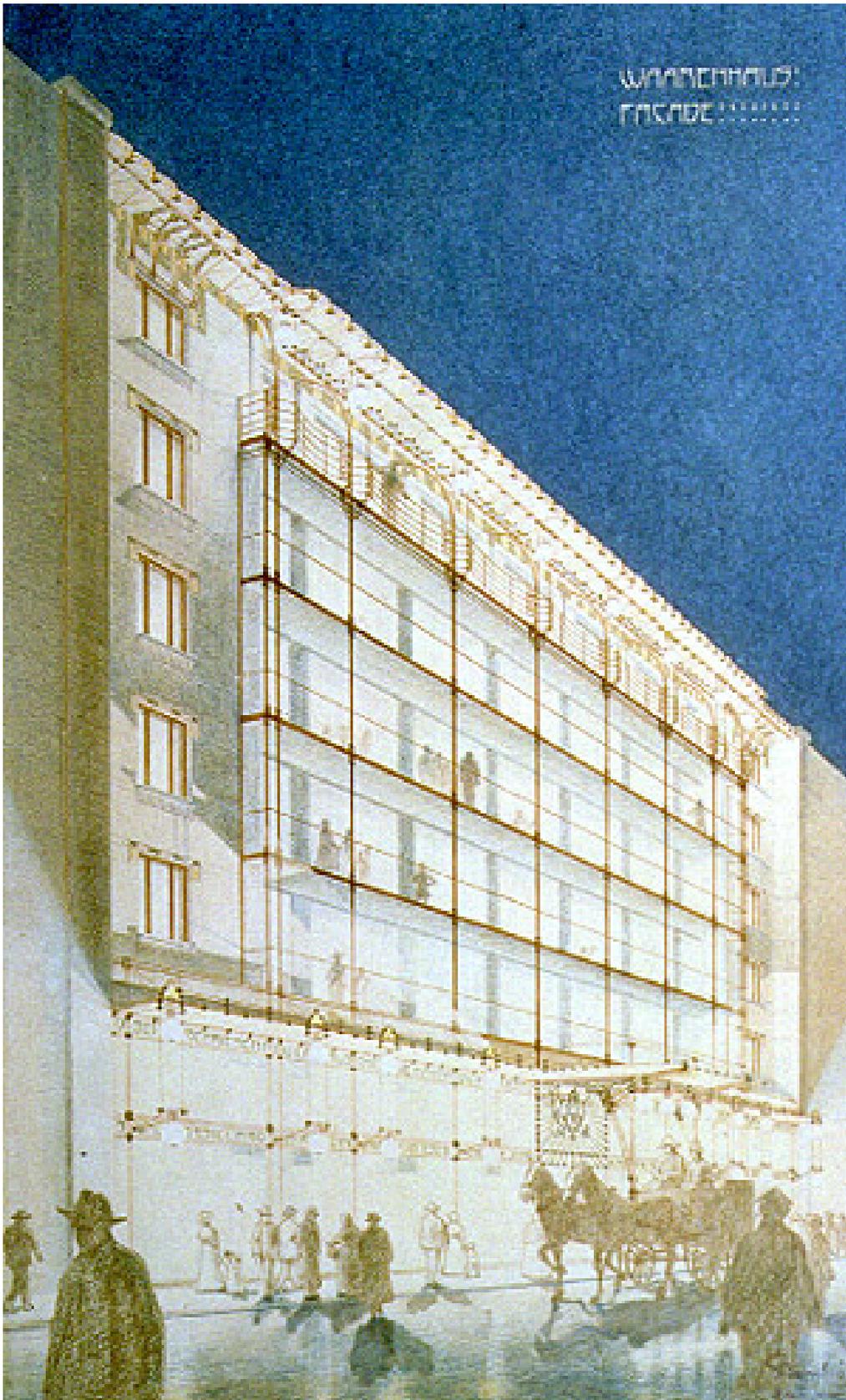
Central Europe to the Balkans, Near East, Turkey and on to North Africa and Egypt – all places he would visit from 1911 onwards.

Following Medgyaszay's apprenticeship with Otto Wagner at the *Akademie der Bildenen, Kunst* (Academy of Architecture), Vienna, moving to the *Technische Hochschule*, (Technical High School), Vienna, and finally graduating from the Palatine Joseph Technical University, Budapest, in 1904. By which time Medgyaszay was working with a blend of both domestic and functional architecture where unadorned brick was used within stepped terraced, cubic structures realised in revolutionary reinforced concrete with glazed curtain walling. The Gödöllo studios were a new form, echoing Kotěra's Villas and some of Garnier's houses in the '*Cité Industrielle*' although this was not published until much later in 1917.

The construction of the Belmonte Studio in Gödöllo used modern ideas and materials throughout, be it the use of brick without a coat of whitewash or plaster or the reinforced concrete lintels. The Nagy Studio that appears at first glance to have more traditional elements especially in the ornamentation belies the use of reinforced concrete. The earliest of his modernist buildings of any type was a design that came from his training with Otto Wagner. This design for a Budapest department store in 1902 (4.10) shows this stunning building having a façade which, from Medgyaszay's night time rendering, clearly shows a reinforced concrete skeleton. This skeleton had two vertical fenestrated wings from which projected a large glass box divided by four lateral bands. All was surmounted by a fifth floor which rises to cornices of lacy lightness draped over impossibly slim iron cantilevers. Medgyaszay's nocturne revels in the effects of electric light and all the possibilities of the beauty of the big city as the colours change in rain and fog from the effect of the lights hung from overhanging cornice where the reflections dance and glitter across the wet pavements.

The use of electric light in a retail environment was also a first, not surprisingly being an extension of Wagner's Hotel Bristow in Warsaw for which Medgyaszay designed and patented a method of hanging bulbs in multiples for the illumination of interior spaces. In referring back to (3.10) it is noticeable that a further two floors below the glass box construction are lit by eighteen separate lamps suspended from a canopy of great lightness of touch with a cantilevered glass porch to keep customers dry. When compared with Fabiani's Portois and Fix Building, Vienna 1899-1900, and Plečnik's Zacherl House, Vienna 1903-05, which were undoubtedly modernist buildings, it can be observed what sets Medgyaszay apart; this difference is best put by Franz Famlmer.

3.10 István Medgyaszay, Department Store, Budapest 1902



Note the incongruity of the horse and carriage, representatives of the nineteenth century, with the modernism of the façade executed in glass, steel and reinforced concrete as indicators of the beckoning twentieth century

© Prestel/Blau and Platzer 1999

It is frequently said that shop windows [are] decorated according to modern artistic principles and places for the cultivation of art that were born from a practical and sober business life can awaken the natural artistic sensibility dormant in peoples' souls and can support the education of taste. It is obvious that the artistic efforts to transfigure everyday life are now closer to a general success due to the modern architectural design of storefronts. This proposition is reinforced in Moravánszky's view. Curved glass panels at the corners of the entrance eliminate disturbing frames and urge the customer to enter the store with a symbolic gentle hint.¹⁷

Having learned his craft in Hennebique's studio in Paris where he learned about the properties of ferro-concrete architecture Medgyaszay then delivered an immensely significant lecture, 'The Artistic Design of Ferro-Concrete' at the 8th International Congress of Architects, Vienna 1908, where he praised concrete as a uniquely versatile material but abhorred the aesthetic problems of the finish. So it was that when Medgyaszay was commissioned to design the Theatre of Veszprém 1908 (3.11) and the Theatre of Sopron 1909 (3.11) he exploited all the properties of ferro-concrete. He designed balconies supported by prefabricated consoles, patented windows, column capitals, pergolas and lampposts all of concrete.

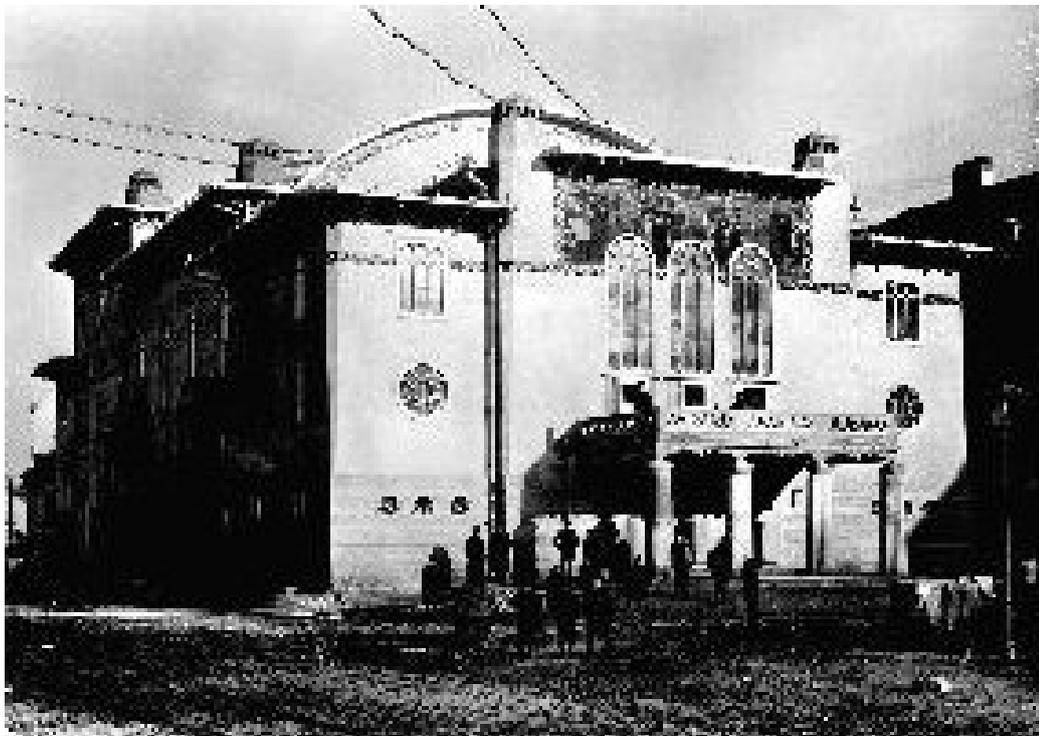
To solve the problem of spanning the auditoriums of both theatres he used a double-layered vault of a moulded soft inner ceiling suspended below a reinforced concrete barrel vault. This usage was extended further in 1910 with the building of the Raros Mulyrad Tomb-Church now Mul'a, Slovak Republic. In this church Medgyaszay covered an octagonal space in ferro-concrete with an 8 centimetre thick shell-dome which merges into a belfry tower with a 4 centimetre thick concrete shell. The cupola consists of prefabricated segments of ferro-concrete with a visible steel ring securing the whole structure. The pavilion of the Military Exhibition in L'viv 1916 echoed these methods of construction.

In all his work Medgyaszay resisted what he and many of his contemporaries saw as the modern pollution of dreary, grey blocks of soulless concrete proposed by German modernism under the principle of 'purposeful construction', which to the Hungarians lacked aesthetic appreciation or even the lightest artistic touch. As Medgyaszay put it, basing his works on Hungarian traditions in no way limited his modernism but this reinterpretation allowed an architectural happiness to permeate his and others' work at all times.

3.11 István Medgyaszay, Theatres at Veszprém 1908 and Sopron 1909



© 1virtual tourist.com 2006



© MIT Press/Moravánszky 1998

One of his greatest works though never realised was the design of the National Pantheon, Budapest, situated on the dominating slope of the Gellert Hill. This design won awards in 1903, 1906, 1907 and 1909 in Vienna, Budapest, Paris and London respectively. Medgyaszay's influence on modernism in form, materials, especially steel skeletal structures with reinforced concrete construction, glass box and lighting, verandas, roof terraces and pilotis – all parts of his visual vocabulary by 1904 – cannot be underestimated. The same is true of his use of Perso-Turkish forms in modified *köşk*, *yali* and *çikma* construction, observed afterwards and employed in the work of Charles Edouard Jeanneret, later to call himself Le Corbusier after his visit to Central Europe and Turkey in 1911.

The importance of these Turkish styles of architecture is made clear in Sibel Bozdoğan's book *Modernism and Nation Building – Turkish Architectural Culture in the Early Republic*, 2001.

The official history of modern architecture was written in the West with Le Corbusier as its main author and protagonist at once. According to this account, which has become a part of the mainstream cultural history of the 20th Century “modernism” or the “Modern Movement” as it was then called, encompassed a revolutionary aesthetic canon and a scientific doctrine in architecture originating in [Western] Europe during the interwar period.¹⁸

This history is flawed in the chronological, topographical and cultural context. Just how important Le Corbusier's visits to Central Europe and Turkey were in informing his and many others' architectural vocabulary will be discussed later particularly in regard to Perso-Turkish influences and his contact with Devëtsil and Karel Teige.

5. Turkish Influences: Vedat Bey, C. E. Jeanneret

The study of modern architecture beyond Central Europe is a relatively new study. This is particularly true of the Islamic and Ottoman culture where scholars concentrated on the 'golden age' of the sixteenth century classical period. For these writers every part of Turkish Islamic architecture had not retained any authentic or pure traditions since that time. This argument is particularly focused in nineteenth century Turkey where Ottoman revivalism, as with all other revivals, was expressed as a decorative historical and historicist envelope wrapped around modern materials and modern construction techniques.

Political changes from the mid-nineteenth century allowed the formation of the Young Ottoman movement, composed of European-educated bureaucrats and intellectuals. They began to think of a reformed Ottoman nation that realised the importance of the Dardanelles and Bosphorous Strait as strategic targets within European history – as did many other nations. This was especially so with the Russians, as evidenced in the Crimean War 1853–56, the Ottoman Empire declaring bankruptcy in 1876 and the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877.

The Russians presumed they could step in and take over the lands of the ‘sick man of Europe’ as described by many commentators. Bernard Lewis, the eminent historian, in describing Turkey’s plight remarked,

Young Turks may have failed to give Turkey constitutional government; however they gave Istanbul its drains.¹⁹

The failure of an organised national government was due to the fact that an Islamic elite ruled a number of segregated religious societies identified as the Ottoman Empire. The Young Turks and their approaches to architecture was further commented on by Le Corbusier, the simplicity of their fathers, was preferred through the ‘classic mosques’ and the tradition of wooden architecture. Paradoxically, Le Corbusier used these forms as part of a modern architectural vocabulary based on Central European and Turkish vernacular architecture, as discussed by Adolf Max Vogt in the *Noble Savage*, 1998.

As with many Western European buildings the work of Vedat Bey often disguised an underpinning of great modernity. The Central Post Office in Sirkea, completed in 1909, is contemporaneous with Otto Wagner’s Postal Savings Bank in Vienna, 1906. Beyond the confection of classical Ottoman forms, Corinthian orders, Beaux Arts axial plan and symmetrical layout lies a magnificent interior space formed by a ferro-concrete and iron truss arrangement, spanning a large hall lit from above by an elegantly simple glass roof. Like Vienna, Istanbul was a city emerging from turmoil and the Sirkea work was a symbol of an imperial, cosmopolitan power desperate to change their fortunes under the Young Turks.

From 1908 to 1931 a new style of architecture emerged in Turkey known variously as The First National Style by non-contemporaneous historians or more properly as the National Architecture Renaissance that began with Vedat Bey but also found voice in the works of a corporate style for ferry termini. Vedat Bey designed the Haydarpaşa terminus while Ali Talat Bey was responsible for the Beşiktaş building and Mihran Azaryan completed a palatial arched and domed pavilion in Büyükkada. Similar to many

Western European movements, the National Architecture Renaissance did not have one, clearly delineated form based on a cultural or political ideology; all was in a state of flux. As with the development of modern industrial states worldwide, the old Ottoman Empire had to join the twentieth century. The re-invention of traditional types or the revival of cultural aesthetics was in denial of a very active population where old ways were still very much alive.²⁰

It is this aesthetic that both Medgyaszay and C. E. Jeanneret recognised and used, although transported across continents, significantly re-scaled and rendered in the most modern materials. Although this is difficult to prove as Medgyaszay's notebooks and sketch books are part of a family museum the understanding gleaned by both Medgyaszay and Le Corbusier of Anatolian/Central European means and methods is clear. The importance they placed in their knowledge of Turkish traditional architecture is ever present in both works. Striking south towards the Balkans and Turkey, Jeanneret encountered the atypical Oriel Principle or *Çikma* Construction of the town of Veliko Turnovo, now in Bulgaria, which he sketched assiduously. Here he learned about cantilevered house structures that climbed the mountainside freely, which was inherited from Anatolian houses as identified by E. A. Kümürcüoglu. Jeanneret was astounded by the two-storey oriel projecting over the ground floor, especially so in the lowest houses where the upper oriel flies in defiance of the mountain precipice. Continuing the journey south, Jeanneret drew a conspicuously protruding oriel and enormous garden wall in Rodosto/Tekirdağ on the northern shore of the Sea of Marmara. South of this his travels brought him through Anatolia and on to Istanbul where he and his travelling companion, Auguste Klipstein, occupied an fruitful seven and a half weeks.

However their passage to Istanbul was less than auspicious:

the leaden gray sky poured down, a gray drizzle turning the sea gray. The Golden Horn full of mud... the mosques dirty like old ruins rose sharply against the gloomy wooden houses.²¹

Despite the abysmal weather – it rained and rained – Jeanneret threw himself into a quest to discover every type of oriel structure he could find. In Stamboul, the oldest part of Istanbul based on early Byzantium, he drew many oriel structures as both frontages and all around projecting upper floor. In addition to this, Jeanneret observed and drew two superb examples of *çikma* construction that explored the relationship between housing, gardens and their containing walls where an external pavilion is supported on pilotis. As his architectural vocabulary expanded Jeanneret realised the possibilities of

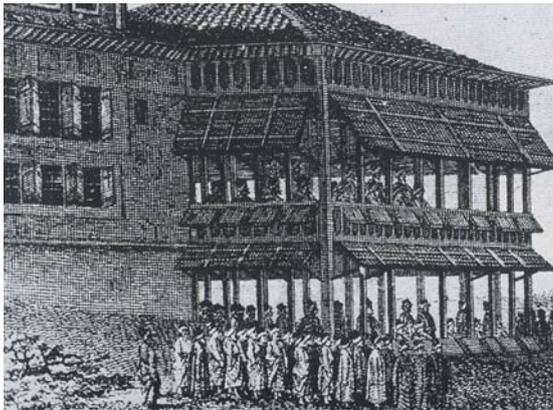
these forms when expressed in glass, concrete and steel. One particular divided pane end window has great similarities with the work of Charles Rennie Mackintosh.

Vogt makes tenuous connections in his book 'Le Corbusier, the Noble Savage' between what Jeanneret saw and the resultant architectural forms by which he would later be identified. Nevertheless, this reasoning cannot be accepted too easily. From the Turkish drawings to the Salvation Army Building, 1926, or the Weissenhof Siedlung, 1927, the similarities are not sufficiently clear and Vogt goes too quickly, passing over Jeanneret's other discoveries that would make more sense of this progress.

The *köşk* or pavilion can trace its routes back three hundred years in veneration of water as a purifying symbol of the Islamic religion; it is believed in the case of the Alay Köşkü in the grounds of Edirne Palace a fountain was placed in the central part of a pool. Another observation by Jeanneret with regard to folding shutters handling air currents and light allowed a further understanding of oriels as defined more completely by E. A. Kümürçüoğlu in 1966. Additional to this was the observation of Köprülü seaside pavilion where it was noticeable that if the oriel façade is divided into three bands, the upper third and fourth bands have no windows, contrasted by the lower band that has continuous window openings, which provide a cool, high roofed open space. As with the Edirne Palace, this form goes back to 1699. Here an immense oriel projects over the waterside. As opposed to the *çikma*/oriel construction this form was known as a *yali* (summerhouse on the water).

In its most impressive form the *köşk* employed that ubiquitous, later Corbusier staple, the pilotis (3.12). Unlike the European tradition of enormous columns and orders, these pilotis are presented as simple forms buttressing enormous paired oriels as in the Sofa Köşk in the grounds of Top Kapu Saray, the Sultan's Palace in Istanbul 1752. In addition to Jeanneret's observations there had been an examination of Turkish buildings that were explored in the engravings of Anton Ignaz Melling. As a draftsman, builder and engraver, Melling's images have a stunning precision and sensitivity (3.12). The collection *Voyage pittoresque de Constantinople et des rive du Bosphore*, Paris 1819, might well have been known to Jeanneret in some form, probably after his return from his Voyage to the Orient in 1911. The publication of Mellings work lasted from 1809, when he set up an engraving studio, to 1819 when he completed the forty-eight views and three maps. A labour of love, his accomplishments were celebrated in Paris and throughout Europe well in into the 1870s with reviews of 'infinite artistic sensibility' in the *Gazette de Beaux Arts*.

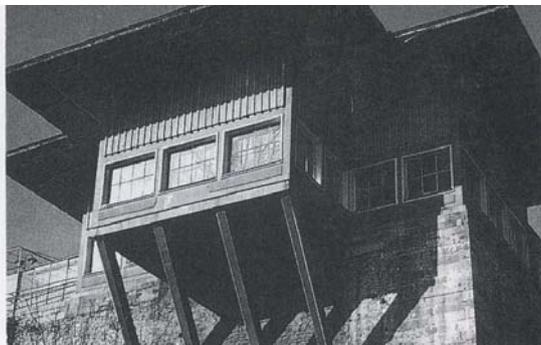
3.12 Le Corbusier's sketch of the Oriel Principle in the town of Veliko Turnovo, Bulgaria



1.



2.



3.



4.

1. Double-decker oriel, 2. Needle thin pilotis, 3. Cantilevered oriel with wide overhang and 4. An engraving, showing the action of air through shutters and the presence of flowing water within a garden courtyard. All would become staples within Le Corbusier's architectural language.

© MIT Press/Voght 1998

You recognize these joys: to feel the generous belly of a vase, to caress its slender neck, and then to explore the subtleties of its contours, the intoxication of the fantastic glazes.²²

Melling's career and evocative engravings would have appealed to the romantic in Jeanneret, as he would have seen a reflection of himself in Melling who at the age of nineteen began his travels in Turkey; Jeanneret was twenty four at the start of his 'Useful Voyage' both men clearly had an ego and talent to match. By introduction from the Danish Ambassador Melling met with the Sultan's sister, Princess Hatice, who asked him to rework designs for her home at Ortakeuil where he landscaped and improved services. He then met with Sultan Suleiman III who very quickly appointed him imperial architect. The licence to explore and roam extended to Melling was without parallel even to the Harem within the most secret and private recesses of the Palace.

With the upsurge in interest in Orientalism at the beginning of twentieth century it is reasonable to assume that Jeanneret would wish himself to be, a foreign adventurer who had position and power comparatively. Jeanneret would also have searched for the very best observed and executed visual records, architectural drawings and design as reference materials. Melling's Turkish portfolio could be said to be one of the finest ever produced. As Corbusier would say in later life:

I practiced architecture without professional lectures, without schools, without diplomas. I set out on a road across Europe: Paris Constantinople, Asia Minor, Athens, Rome, I looked, saw, observed, discovered. Life belongs not to those who know, but those who discover.²³

This is what Melling achieved a century earlier, Melling and the young Jeanneret were clearly kindred spirits with a lust for life and a belief in their own greatness. Prior to Melling's engravings there is a drawing by the Swiss-born, French-speaking painter, Jean-Etienne Liotard, known as The Turkish Painter. Liotard was a prominent member of the Bosphorus painters from 1738–1742 when he resided in Istanbul. His love of Turkish motifs and the nuance and sensitivity of the country and the people were demonstrated provocatively in wearing Turkish dress on returning to the West. The images of people in oriental clothing within a Turkish interior are his usual metier, but it is the drawings of traditional country houses from 1740 which clearly show oriels surmounting lower open floors supported by pilotis which are the most pertinent.

The analysis of the Borecki house by Kümürcüoğlu (3.13) shows how the living quarters and the utility spaces are wholly independent of one another, with the upper storey

being built on a raft of timbers supported by pilotis anchored with angled braces. Many of these forms can be seen in the Villa Savoie, Poissy 1929 (3.13), by Le Corbusier. Although it is clear that C.E. Jeanneret could never have seen this house (situated in the remote farmland of Ortalica near Tosya) nor would he have known of the autarchic and ethnological context, nevertheless there are similarities that demand comparison in the two buildings stylistic constants and their diametrically opposed cultural context.

The raised dwelling of the self-supporting poor that goes back to un-recorded times meets the raised dwelling of the affluent and its modernity. Their needs are completely different, but they choose the same construction; for completely different reasons, they choose the same raised site for their completely different styles of living.²⁴

It is clear that Jeanneret on this trip did not have access to ethnological collections and data. He also is noted for not keeping a diary, his sketchbook serving to record times, places and key words. Therefore Klipstein's account of his and Jeanneret's reaction to architecture in Istanbul has to be relied upon:

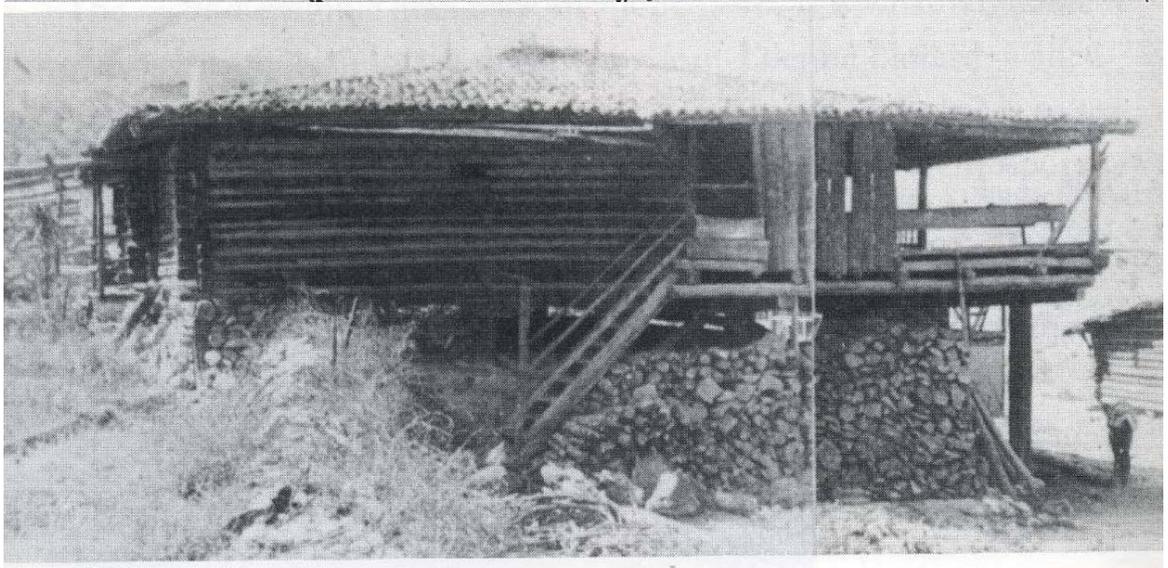
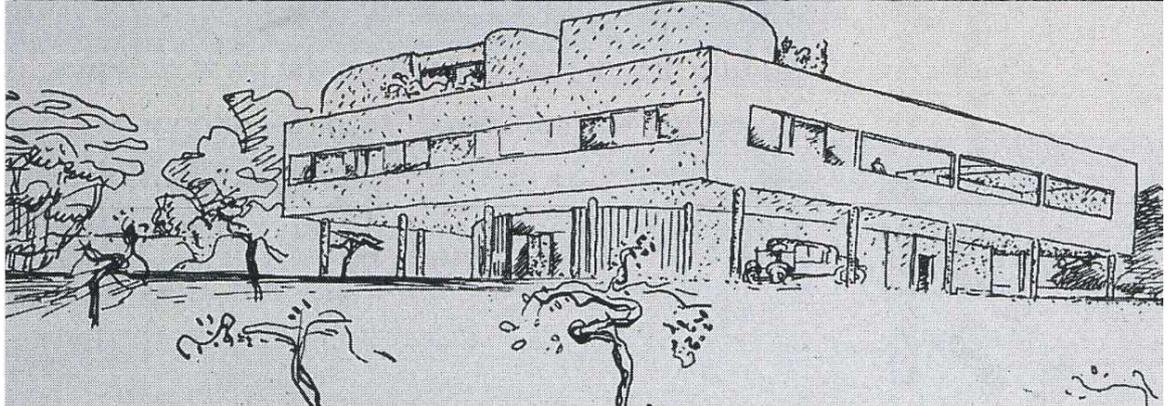
The more we get to know these buildings the more we like them [we] would like to see such a house on the inside. The rooms must be of a generous size and designed to hold a lot of light.²⁵

After seven and a half weeks the travellers moved on and so it was that Jeanneret returned to Europe eventually. This kit-of-parts, which he would use extensively in his architectural works, was retained for recall at will from his renowned elephant-like memory.

While allowing for Jeanneret's knowledge the mistake made by chroniclers is to presume others were not aware of these architectural forms. Many of the ideas of oriels, kosks, yali and old Turkish houses existed outside of Turkey. This was due to the Ottoman occupation of the Balkans and Central Europe and the dissemination of knowledge of these building types particularly by architecture students on their voyages of discovery; two such being Medgyaszay and C. E. Jeanneret.

István Medgyaszay demonstrates this knowledge clearly from both Perso-Turkish-Anatolian and Hungarian sources but probably more importantly he is the first to use many of these forms in their entirety in the Gödöllo Studios, 1904. Here oriels unite with

3.13 The Borecki House in Ortalica, Mid. Eighteenth Century and Le Corbusier's, Villa Savoie 1929-31



pilotis in villas which, like their Turkish counterparts, allow air and light to penetrate the whole of the interior space unencumbered by small doors or windows as in the Western European model governed by the needs of privacy and propriety. Although more decorative and formalised in the Gödöllo Studios, many Anatolian staples are employed: roof terraces are arranged on which to grow plants, taking full advantage of the passage of the sun around the villa or, as in the original Turkish example, fruits and herbs are arranged for cultivation and sun drying with a shaded pergola for growing vines and highly perfumed flowers. The whole clearly engages all of the haptic, optic and mimetic sensations but equally interesting are that most of the other studios in Gödöllo were self-build as the members of the colony were conservationists and environmentalists, before their time. Therefore Medgyaszay had to satisfy their reaction to the Belmonte and Nagy studio villas as these were an integral part of the whole community. In stylistic terms the complex use of forms and materials within an understanding of conservation and approaches to architecture that might be seen as organic in their intent, if not outward appearance, predate other complete cubic structures with cantilevered floors, terraces, gardens and pilotis .

This is not to say that Medgyaszay and Jeanneret were isolated in this knowledge as the principles of these forms were used by many others, either as extant examples of their own cultural traditions or as a result of the influence of the large number of illustrated publications featuring the Exotic Orient which were prevalent throughout Europe from 1850 onwards and were a constant reference source of reference for architects and artists throughout Europe. The traditional forms of Perso-Turkish-Anatolian architecture clearly impacted on the resolution of modernist architectural forms across Europe, particularly in the hands of Medgyaszay and (somewhat later) Le Corbusier. To bring these advances to a wider audience both commercially and aesthetically the nations of central Europe now embarked on an ambitious programme of creating trading show grounds, building exhibitions and industrial garden cities as could be seen most notably for example, in the case of Zlin.

Notes to Chapter 3

- ¹ Meller H., *European Cities 1890-1930s History, Culture and the Built Environment*, John Wiley, Chichester, 2001, p.79
- ² Lésnikowski W., *East European Modernism, Architecture in Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Poland Between the Wars, 1919-1939*, Rizzoli, New York, 1996, p.32
- ³ R.Haag Bletter, Behne A., *The Modern Functional Building*, The Getty Research Institute for the History of Art and the Humanities, Santa Monica CA., 1996 p.48
- ⁴ Ibid., p.1
- ⁵ Ibid., p.61
- ⁶ Ibid., p.61
- ⁷ Sarnitz A., *Loos*, Taschen, Koln, 2003, p.71
- ⁸ Schoenberg A., *To Adolf Loos on his 60th. Birthday*, Berlin, 1930
- ⁹ Op.cit., Haag Bletter, 1996 p.41
- ¹⁰ Apollinaire G., 'Zone', *Alcools (pronounced al-coal and meaning 'spirits')*, 1912
- ¹¹ Šlapeta V. and Templ S (eds.), *Prague 20th Century Architecture*, Zlatý rez, Prague, 1999
- See Hejduk J, p.5
- ¹² Petrasova T., www.lib.cas.c.z./arch 1069.html, 1998
- ¹³ Schweighofer H., *Pavel Janák 1882-1956, Architektur and Kunstgewerbe*, Vienna, 1984
- ¹⁴ Rampley M., q., Vischer R., *The Art Bulletin, March 1997*, Theories of Empathy
- ¹⁵ Shekhtel F.O., *Lecture Address 'A Tale of Three Sisters, Painting, Sculpture and Architecture'*, Moscow, 1919
- ¹⁶ Malonyay D., q., Moravanzsky, 1999,p.263
- ¹⁷ Fammler F., *Die moderne Ladenfront (The modern Store/Shopfront)*, Der Architekt 12, 1906 q, Moravanzsky,1999, p.155
- ¹⁸ Bozdogan S., *Modernism and Nation Building, Turkish Architectural Culture in the Early Republic*, University of Washington Press, Seattle,2001, p.4
- ¹⁹ Ibid., Bozdogan, 2001, p.18
- ²⁰ See Hobsbawm E., *Age of Extremes, Michael Joseph, London,1994*, Chapter 7 End of Empires, p.199-222 for a vivid exploration of the changing face of the world
- ²¹ Voght A.M., *Le Corbusier the Noble Savage Toward an Archaeology of Modernism*, MIT Press, Cambridge Ma., 1998, p.35
- ²² Jencks C., *Le Corbusier and the Continual Revolution in Architecture*, Monacelli Press, New York, 2000, p.79
- ²³ Ibid., Jencks, 2000, p.69
- ²⁴ Op.cit., Voght, 1998, p.48
- ²⁵ Ibid., p.48