

INTER-WAR
MODERNISM IN
CZECHOSLOVAKIA
HUNGARY AND
ROMANIA

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“...what is the new architecture? First of all, simplicity, proportioned and sharp volumes in space, straight lines, surfaces without unnecessary ornaments... This architecture allows the street and the city to develop in the same spirit of simplicity.”

- Horia Creangă, *The anarchy of styles and the art of the future*, 1935

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INTRODUCTION

The beginning of the 20th century came with great expectations, as the Industrial Revolution had made important leaps in the fields of manufacturing, building construction, transportation, urban development and many others, promising a modern future in various aspects of the society. The First World War had a significant impact on the geographic and economic situation of Europe, redesigning the map of the continent. The time of peace between the two World Wars, known as the inter-war period, is a unique part of history in which the modern architecture matured, as a movement throughout Europe.

The following analysis aims to highlight the implementation of the modern movement in the architecture of Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Romania, three countries that create the link between Western Europe and the Black Sea. The chain of countries showcases a conflicted relation between the different territories of the region and their similar expression of modernist movement, that manifested itself at the same time.

To follow their individual approach towards the new style, it is important to understand the context in which the architects were initially working. A brief explanation of the repercussions of the First World War on the European territories, will put in perspective the changes that took place within the society of the era.

In architecture, the history of the modern movement in Eastern Europe started by the initiatives of a few talented architects who were inspired by the German, French or Russian ideas, developed in various forums. Students from Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Romania had the opportunity to study abroad, were exposed to the avant-garde concepts that were gaining popularity at the beginning of the XX century in Weimar, Dessau, Berlin, Paris, Zurich and Moscow. In the academic and professional world, foreign artists and architects could build up relationships with individuals and groups that were essential for the development of the modernism. These connections had to be vital in legitimizing their future efforts in implementing the modern movement in their own countries.

The history of the new architectural spirit, in the three countries, will describe the issues that the new generation of architects had to overcome, as well as the evolution of the most representative figures of the movement. The relation between the avant-garde and the traditional schools of thought in each country differed significantly, as the historical and political context had an major influence on the public opinion. The relationships with groups such as CIAM and Deutscher Werkbund, helped in the exhibition and validation of projects in the uncharted territories. A short biography of the most important architects and artists of the movement, will paint a clearer picture of their involvement and influence on the new architecture.

The publication of articles and books on the thematic of modernism in Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Romania, created a forum of discussion, where architects and artists could share their ideas. The periodicals of the era are an important source of information, giving insight on projects and theoretical points of view.

The catalogue of typologies consists of a selection of projects that show peculiar attributes. Some works highlight outstanding designs, revolutionary at the time. Other projects have a new type of clients, a new category of people that the 20th century created such as e.g. owners of large industrial companies. Just as the architects and writers at the time used materials such as plans, sections, texts and images to convey their messages, the selection gives an insight in a series of typologies and socio-economic descriptions of the inter-war period.

Six different typologies are presented, from private villas to public healthcare projects, that included the latest hygiene and logistical programs. The momentum of modernity in architecture had ramped up considerably and new typologies such as social housing blocs, neighborhoods for multifamily housing and public buildings were experimented in later years.

The development stopped abruptly at the beginning of the Second World War. This was a destructive and demoralizing period, that changed dramatically the environment of the region. The architectural production, in what later would be considered as the Eastern Bloc, diverted from the architectural style of the inter-war period. Its ideology was modified towards a whole set of different principles and shifted from the private client towards a rather political agenda.

THE CONTEXT

The end of the First World War was the beginning of a challenging time in the history of Europe. The recovery from the losses of the war had taken a toll on the economy of all the countries that were involved in the conflict. The treaties of Versailles, Saint-Germain-en-Laye, Neuilly sur Seine and Trianon, that took place between 1919 and 1920, significantly changed the political map of the continent. Germany lost a large amount of land to Poland, which was recognized as an independent country. The Austro-Hungarian Empire had collapsed, severing its territory in smaller countries. Austria and Hungary were losing large pieces of land, which concentrated an important part of their economy, with numerous industrial factories and natural resource. Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia became independent states, having the possibility to express their personal identity on their own terms for the very first time. Romania and Italy had unified their territories from smaller into larger and more powerful countries.¹

¹ Dennis Hamley, *First World War*, 2008, pag. 10-15

The map of Central and Eastern Europe was thus redesigned. The idea of exploring specifically Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Romania, is based on the cultural and economic differences at the end of the First World War, dealing with the effects and the repartition of territories.

The neighboring countries were in a conflicted relationship with each other, as Czechoslovakia was aiming to create its own identity and economical independence from the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Hungary was recovering from a loss of a large amount of land and its powerful position in Europe, and Romania was reorganizing the newly formed Kingdom and the position of the monarchy in the country after unification with Transylvania.

One thing that all three countries had in common, was the demand from the general public to find a new identity for their nations. The times of monarchical empires were wearing off and a wish for a brighter future, that took into account the great innovations and the modernization of the general living standard realized in the century before hand, was rising. The relatively new social class of wealthy industrialists and business owners started to have a strong voice regarding the way the countries should be perceived in the future. The image of prosperity and innovation that was showcased in the West by Great Britain, France and the United States, encouraged the new middle and upper class to strive towards a futuristic identity.²

² Bernstein Serge, Milza Pierre, *Istoria Europei vol. IV*, Institutul European, 1998 pag. 336-344



Map of Europe in 1908



Map of Europe in 1922

Czechoslovakia. With the end of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the independence of the Czechoslovakian region was realized with the help of the United States of America and other Allied Nations. Tomáš Masaryk had a long friendship with the US politicians, visiting them several times. His organization of the Czech Committee was reconstituted later as the Czech-Slovak National Council and became the first provisional government in the Czechoslovak republic. He created a new vision for the country, which aligned with the English and American humanitarian mission. His ideas which were not only projected in the sphere of politics, but also in the freedom of the economic market, were widely accepted by the public.

The Treaty of Versailles had specified the borders of the newly born country, in which the four provinces Bohemia, Moravia, Slovakia and Sub Carpathian Ruthenia were unified. This led to the creation of a new democracy with a pluralist party government. Czechoslovakia had a major advantage to the rest of the newly independent countries in the surrounding area, as it started from a better economic situation at the end of the war. The lands that were composing the country were the former industrial provinces of the Austro-Hungarian Empire.³

The democratic state showed its attributes not only through its economic achievements, but also through a detachment from its former ties to Vienna and the search for a new identity. The functionalist movement filled the gap and was adopted quickly by the public and private investors. The relationship between the academics from Prague and Brno with the rest of the Western states showed the interest that the contemporaries had towards the modern movement.

³ John Macsai, Janos Bonta, Olgierd Czerner, *East European Modernism : Architecture in Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and Poland Between the Wars 1919-1939*, Rizzoli 1996, pag. 18-23

Hungary. After the defeat in the First World War, the Austro-Hungarian Empire went through a collapse that would hinder the economic growth of the states for the upcoming decades. After the treaty of Trianon, Hungary had lost over 71 percent of its territory and 60 percent of its population. More than that, most of the territories left under its control were agricultural lands, Budapest remaining the largest city in the country by far. The lands of the Austro-Hungarian Empire were divided between Czechoslovakia, Romania, Poland and the newly created Yugoslavia.

In 1920 the power of the country was assigned to the hands of Miklos Horthy, who was the regent of Hungary until 1944. His authoritarian ruling and anti-communist policies raised widespread criticism. Thus, a compromise was made and a series of prime ministers took the role to communicate between the public and their regent and bring back the country to an economical balance. In 1921 Count István Bethlen occupied this position until 1931. His reforms concentrated on industrial developments and a promotion of cereal export, that brought foreign currency into the Hungarian economy, in order to pay off the debts that the country accumulated in the earlier years of bankruptcy. The economic gains that were realized during his administration were shattered by the economical crisis which affected greatly the grain production at the end of the 1920s. Under political pressure, he resigned and was replaced by Gyula Gömbös, a strong advocate of the far right ideology, taking the political sphere of Hungary towards a radical side of the spectrum.

The modern movement in Hungary was received in a skeptical manner by the authorities, as it represented a sign of progress and development towards a new future, but at the same time it promoted the idea of a democratic and free society. The Modernism was however able to reflect itself in the inter-war period despite the difficulties that the country was undergoing.⁴

⁴ Stephen R. Burant, ed. *Hungary: A Country Study*, Washington, D.C. : Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, 1989, pag. 37-42

Romania. The Kingdom of Romania had the opportunity to unify the territory of Transylvania with the rest of the country, resulting in a complete reorganization of the monarchic political system. The unification of these territories was an awaited event as a large population of Romanians were living under the Austro-Hungarian ruling. With the new kingdom, a new identity of the Greater Romania was formed, as the Romanian ethnic minorities of former Austria-Hungary were now being integrated into the voice of the public.

The economic situation in the country was in a better state, compared to its neighbors, as Romania extended its territories. The additional industries and agricultural lands provided an increased benefit to the existing infrastructure, which had already been developed before the war. The small bourgeoisie continued to flourish during the 1920s. At the beginning of the 1930s the industrial bourgeoisie gained power as the economy grew. The new social class started to materialize its philosophical views through artistic and architectural approaches. The image of modern avant-garde projects sent a message of innovation that took into account the new position of the country and its future.⁵

The three countries overcame their differences with the appearance of the modern movement. They sought for an international style bound relationships between the Eastern and Western countries, creating a chain of communication between Romania, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Germany and France. The projects and ideas, that became the new avant-garde, unified the design language of the European countries. The communication between the representatives of the movement sparked a much larger conversation towards finding a common identity through the topic of architecture.

⁵ Ioan Scurtu, *Istoria civilizației românești - Perioada interbelică (1918-1940)*, Editura Enciclopedică 2009, pag. 25-27

THE NEW SPIRIT

The inter-war period was effervescent in Eastern Europe, as the newly shaped countries were looking for a better political, social and economic organization. Concerning the arts and the architecture, the most common debates took place between the adepts of national identities and those who militated for an international expression. The works of artists, architects, musicians and many others drew from these unrestricted possibilities and were expressed in a particularly creative way. The freedom of such an opinionated environment would not last long, as this malleable state would be detrimental in the end.

The modern ideas, that were promoted in the academic scene in Germany, France and Great Britain, sparked the curiosity of many international students and professors, who later on returned to Prague, Brno, Budapest or Bucharest, to create a conversation regarding the new style. Many of the first generation artists and architects in the movement created a significant base of high quality works, that had influenced future generations of students to follow their footsteps into the avant-garde direction. The inter-war period was short, yet the architects and artists who contributed towards the modern movement had built up a respectable amount of projects in a difficult environment of economic and political uncertainty.

The architecture in Czechoslovakia was not specifically initiated as an avant-garde movement. The artists and architects were rather focused on the absorption of ideas from the West and East, creating high quality projects that embedded the modernist style.

The experimentation with new architectural concepts started before the First World War, with the ideas brought forward by Jan Kotera, a former student of Otto Wagner, who became an advocate of the international style. As a professor in the School of Industrial Art in Prague, his experimental views influenced his students, who later materialized them in the earliest works of modernist architecture in Czechoslovakia. The works of Kotera and his pupils would be inspired by the cubist movement, especially by the Dutch tradition of brickwork. But it didn't take long until other ideas regarding a new architectural expression appeared, creating a separation in the vision of the local modernism.⁶

Karel Teige, who is considered as the most influential figure of the Czechoslovak avant-garde, rejected the general concepts brought forward by Kotera and his group. He considered their work as too traditionalist and similar to the Viennese school. Instead, he shifted his attention towards the ideas from France, Germany and Russia. He later started building up relationships with the most important figures in the modernist movement all around Europe, meeting Le Corbusier, Auguste Perret, Adolf Behne and others. He was interacting with the CIAM group in Switzerland, participating in discussions and exhibitions, exchanging ideas with the rest of the representatives of the modern movement in Europe. His contacts helped promoting architectural works that were realized in his country by organizing exhibitions and showcasing the works of Czech architects at the Hochschule Bauhaus, in Dessau. His efforts brought the Czechoslovak projects to the attention of a large audience of European artists and architects.

⁶ Vladimír Šlapeta, *Czech Functionalism, 1918-1938*, 1987. pag.8

A third group of architects emerged at the same time as Karel Teiges collective of academics, consisting of students graduating from the Technical University in Prague. They included influential characters such as Oldrich Tyl, Jan Visek and Ludovik Kysela, who concentrated on the constructive and technological aspects of the modernist style. The works of J.J.P. Oud, Walter Gropius, Amédée Ozenfant and Le Corbusier have been seen as exemplary theorists that the group was following. As their views were similar to Taige's and their ideas had to eventually overlap, they started to collaborate with him on many occasions, such as the architectural *Stravba* magazine that was directed by Taige, creating a consistent narrative for the modern movement.⁷

The main locations in which the Czechoslovakian architects were able to practice their work was the capital, Prague, and the city of Brno. The town, situated in the north of Vienna, became a center for modernist architecture. It was still in a state of development and became a place of opportunity for young architects. Many of the projects located in the city are encapsulated well up to the present day, showing the heritage of the inter-war architecture.⁸

The modernist movement in Hungary was introduced during a difficult social and economic time period. Nonetheless, through the efforts and initiatives of a few driven architects, some of the most important projects in the East European region were realized at that time frame.

During and after the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, many people emigrated towards Germany, France and Russia, where they were introduced to new ideas, that were circulating in the academic environments.

⁷ Vladimír Šlapeta, *Czech Functionalism, 1918-1938*, 1987, pag. 9

⁸ John Macsai, Janos Bonta, Olgierd Czerner, *East European Modernism : Architecture in Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and Poland Between the Wars 1919-1939*, Rizzoli 1996, pag.30-32

The Bauhaus movement had a profound influence on the Hungarian students and its principles could be recognized in the projects realized in the inter-war period.

Farkas Molnár was one of the students that came back after finishing his studies at the Bauhaus, in Weimar. He was taught by Johannes Itten and worked for Walter Gropius. After his return to Budapest, he started to apply the functionalist ideas in his projects, becoming an exemplary architect for the Hungarian Activism. In 1929, he and other six architects were invited by Gropius himself to attend the CIAM meeting in Frankfurt, which concluded with the establishment of the Hungarian branch of the organization.⁹

Their participation in the CIAM meetings and exhibitions was showcasing projects that were undergoing in the country. Throughout the 1920s and early 1930s, the Hungarian section realized around 50 buildings in a high standard of quality, a number that was in comparison lower to its Western counterparts. The main contribution was realized in form of private luxury villas, with very few exceptions of social housing projects, which were increasingly popular in the German movement. As the members of the group could not realize any public buildings that were fitting the vision of CIAM, Molnár dissolved the Hungarian branch in the late 1930s.¹⁰

During the economic crisis that followed in the 1930s, as the unemployment was high and none of the international currencies were as stable as the real estate, the government promoted new investments strategies, that were postponing the payment of taxes on new constructions. This decision resulted in an experimentation and realization of some of the first modernist housing blocks, which were developed by private investment groups, such as OTI.

⁹ E. H. Sipos, *Hungarian relations with Bauhaus and their influence in Hungary*, Institute of History and Theory of Architecture, Technical University, 1985, pag 100-101

¹⁰ Eric Paul Mumford, *The CIAM Discourse on Urbanism*, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2000, pag. 34

The inter-war period in Romania emitted a general optimism towards a time in which the unification and the economic development of the country were predominantly prepared. This hope spread into the academic realm, in which the adoption of new ideas from the West had significantly influenced the social and cultural situation in Romania. The relationship between the Romanian students and the West European academic world was therefore crucial to a young generation of students, that had the opportunity to study in Paris, Dessau and Zurich and became important figures in adopting the new modernist ideas in their own country.

The end of the 1920s marked the return of many of these artists and architects, initiating a wave of avant-garde projects and artworks in Romania. The most influencing representatives of the modernist architecture were Horia Creangă and Marcel Iancu. Their radical work paved the way for the new architectural modernist style.¹¹

Horia Creangă's portfolio of works influenced a whole generation of architects, especially in the 30s and 40s. After finishing his studies at the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris under the guidance of Gustave Umbdenstock, who was known for architecture in the context of railway infrastructure and actively debating the conflict between the traditionalist and the modern architecture style, Creangă returned 1926 to Bucharest and promoted almost immediately his architectural views. His career started with a competition he won for a new building financed by the ARO Assurance Company. This led to a long series of works for them, realized throughout Romania, building up relationships with powerful clients, that understood his vision and allowed him to implement his radical design ideas. One of his most important clients was Nicolae Malaxa, the owner of Malaxa Steel and Locomotive factory, which was at the time one of the biggest companies in inter-war Romania. He gave Creangă a level freedom

¹¹ Luminița Machedon, *Romanian Modernism: The Architecture of Bucharest 1920-1940*, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1999, pag 30

in the projects realized for the company, resulting in the most impressive works of modernist architecture of industry and office buildings in the country.¹²

At the same time, he was commissioned to design villas for affluent clients that were interested in progressive ideas. Concentrating his efforts purely on his extensive work, he never associated himself with any group or academic circle, but expressed himself clearly through distinctive stylistic features in his realized buildings.

Marcel Iancu, on the other hand, had a theoretical approach complementing his architectural projects. He was a painter and architect that traveled to Switzerland to attend the Federal Institute of Technology in Zürich, where he had the opportunity to enter artistic and academic circles, such as the group Cabaret Voltaire, where he established, alongside Tristan Tzara and Hugo Ball, the Dada artistic movement. This helped Iancu to create relationships with many artists and architects that attended the organized exhibitions and performances, such as Paul Klee, Arthur Segal, Walter Gropius and many others. His focus turned towards architecture once he returned to Bucharest and received from his father a commission for an apartment building, initiating his career and his search for a new modern style, suiting the Romanian landscape.¹³

Not long after he left the Dadaist group, Iancu started to network with local like-minded avant-garde circles in Bucharest. He collaborated with a circle of people for the publication about art, literature and architecture. He founded the magazine *Contimporanul* in 1923, in which he expressed theoretically his interests towards the modern movement and the need for it in the chaotic metropolitan city of Bucharest. In the 1930s, he got the opportunities to design a few villas and apartment buildings, in which he could express the modern style that he was envisioning in his writings.

¹² Radu R. Patrulius, *Horia Creangă: omul și opera*, 1980, pag 12-13

¹³ Luminița Machedon, *Romanian Modernism: The Architecture of Bucharest 1920-1940*, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1999, pag 36

STAVBA

ARCHITEKTURA

VOLNÉ SMĚRY

tér és
forma

arhitectura

SIMETRIA

PUBLICATIONS

The magazines published during the inter-war period played an important role in exposing the modern movement to a wider audience. They were the main medium in which artists and architects could express and share their avant-garde ideas freely to an interested public. Contributions written by influential representatives of the modernist movement from the West, helped to acknowledge the work of the local publications and the new style in the three countries.

The magazines of the era give an unique insight in how the portfolio of works from local architects and artists developed over the years. The early publications from 1920s mostly theorized the modernist ideologies, showing few examples of the pioneering works realized, while the later publications showcase a wider library of built projects.

Each country, magazine and editor had a specific agenda regarding the variety of topics selected in their magazines. Together, those journals offer a large collection of ideas from the inter-war period, that theorize new ways of living, especially relating to the idea of the housing. They also retrace which concepts have been materialized or abandoned throughout the years.

The circulation of architecture magazines in Czechoslovakia was a common practice, long before the independence of the country, with magazines such as *Volné směry*, *Stavba*, *Styl*, *Stavitel* and *Architektura*.

Volné směry was the oldest publications, dating back to 1896. It was not an architectural magazine per se, as it centered mostly on contemporary art, but included in numerous editions architectural examples of the avant-garde works that were realized in the region.¹⁴

Architektura ran its publication from 1939, until 1942. The short life cycle was followed by a reissue of the magazine after the war, in 1946, under the same name, being led by the same chief editor, Oldřich Starý. The original magazine was a compilation of projects, with special emphasis on housing projects, and displayed the latest view on the modernist architecture at the end of the inter-war period.¹⁵

Stavba ran its publication from 1915 until 1946, with the main editors including Bedřich Feuerstein, Jan E. Koula and Karel Teige. The publication had contributions from the most important avant-garde authors, such as J.J.P.Oud, Le Corbusier, Theo van Doesburg and others, shining a light on some of the relevant architectural topics in the foreign territories. The columnists discussed the modernist style, debating new typologies, examples of work that were realized by their peers and exhibitions of architecture throughout the world.¹⁶

The magazine, *Tér és Forma* was the most important publication forum for the modernist architecture movement in Hungary. It started out in 1926, as a monthly appendix for the *Vállalkozók Lapjának* (Entrepreneurs Journal), in which it showcased pictures and descriptions of different architectural projects.

¹⁴ Digital Library, *Národní digitální knihovna Moravská zemská knihovna*

¹⁵ Ibid

¹⁶ Chris Michaelides, *Chronology of the European Avant Garde, 1900-1937*, December 2007

Two years later architect Virgil Bierbauer joined as the chief editor and was the dominant figure of the publication. The early volumes described various historical architectural examples, but it did not take long for the publication to turn its focus on the modernist movement. *Tér és Forma* became the main voice of many of the architects, who were members of the CIAM group. Regularly, they published the overseas projects and put the works that were undergoing in Hungary in perspective. Topics, such as architectural interventions, interior design and urban issues were highlighted.¹⁷ As the inter-war period came to an end, the magazine focused on public buildings and low income housing projects, foreshadowing the future of the country and its architecture. In 1946, the magazine was acquired by a public institution and the authors were constrained to shift their work towards the new political agenda.

In Romania, the periodical *Arhitectura* is a typical example of the modernist movement legitimizing itself in a space that was dominated by a traditionalist style of architecture. The history of the magazine dates back to 1906, published for the first time under the direction of the architect George Sterian. The topics were mostly relating to traditional villas and houses, religious buildings and historical monuments. In the 1930s, modernist projects were included into the publications, as the new architectural style was adopted throughout the country. The mixture of the local architecture with Romanian traditional ornamentation and Le Corbusier style apartment buildings, highlights the monumentality of the modernist movement.¹⁸

The magazine *Simetria* was a collaborative effort between the architects G.M. Cantacuzino and Octav Doicescu. It was founded in 1939 as a collective, in which articles written by different architects and artists shared their ideas on a variety of topics. The magazine stopped its publishing in 1947.

¹⁷ Pál Ritoók, Ágnes Anna Sebestyén, *Communicating “space and form”: The history and impact of the journal Tér és Forma as the Hungarian pipeline of Modernism*, 2018

¹⁸ Digital Library, *Ion Mincu University of Architecture and Urbanism*

PROJECTS

The analysis of the modernist architecture in Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Romania could not be complete without a graphic selection of works from each country, with their most iconic architects and projects. The selected works are the result of the research of books and magazines of the time. The publications realized in the early 1920s until late 1940s have been archived by universities and private institutions of the countries for preservation, and have been a vital asset in finding plans, images and descriptions of the selected projects.

The following works have been grouped into six typologies: villa; apartment, office and industrial buildings; housing and healthcare projects. By categorizing the projects, a comparison between the works realized in different countries can outline many of the similarities regarding the clientele, design choices and the year of construction. The categories range from private projects, which were the majority of work realized by the modern movement in the inter-war time, to the public projects, which were scarce and realized towards the later years, leading up to the eruption of the Second World War.

a. VILLA

The villa constitutes the purest form of the architecture of the modernist style, as it represented an opportunity for the architects to express their new visions of design aesthetics. By its definition, it represents a large, usually multi-story house on a plot of land, big enough to give the property a park-like character. This typology was usually positioned on plots of land in influential parts of major cities or in beautiful landscapes, where it was used as a vacation house. The clients of the villas were wealthy individuals that climbed up the social ladder, successful business owners, important figures of the state or old aristocracy, that commissioned the villa as a place of residency or a stage for social activities.¹⁹

In Czechoslovakia, the design of the modernist villas was a radical rupture from the aristocratic residences, that were built in the 19th century. Karel Teige made a strong comparison between the traditional villas and the typical castles or palaces, showing that the new way of construction broke the stiffness of the typology of the past. The facades were free from the orientation towards a specific polarity, the plan was free from the large staircases that dominated the entrances and used the space only for a certain aesthetic value.

¹⁹ Ferkai András, *Buda Építészete a Két Világháború Között*, Művészettörténeti Kutatóintézet 1995, pag.15-16

*“The aristocratic country home and the turn-of-the-century villa districts are the hideous outcome of an art historical, “stylistic,” and decorative understanding of architecture.”*²⁰

The new residences, designed specifically for a niche clientele, became progressively popular from the mid to late 1920s. The iconic neighborhood of the Baba Housing Estate Werkbund (*Osada Baba*) was built in 1932, as an important large scale housing exhibition of the Czech Werkbund. Even though, the exhibition was funded by private investors and was personalized after requirements of the clients, the architecture showed a range of diversity from the minimalistic dwelling for a married couple to a large family villa with a flat for housekeeper. The exhibition represented a stepping stone for the local architecture and understanding of the villa.²¹

The Hungarian villas were built almost exclusively in Budapest and its surrounding regions. The hills overseeing the city center became popular locations for construction, as the plots of lands were more generous. The construction on hilly terrains emerged a specific style of villas that used concrete columns on the first floor, lifting the living space to the second or third level and created a panorama showcasing the landscape.²²

The use of new technologies was implemented throughout the 1930s, replacing the brickwork with reinforced concrete. The villa designed by Kozma Lajos on Lupa Island was a great example of experimentation with the structure, as he left it completely uncovered, the bare concrete acting as a decorative piece.

²⁰ Karel Teige, *Modern Architecture in Czechoslovakia*, The Getty Research Institute, 1929, pag. 20

²¹ Stephan Templ, *Baba, the Werkbund housing estate in Prague 1932*, Birkhauser 2000

²² Tamás Perényi, Mariann Simon, Boglárka Szentirmai, István Gyulovics, *Family houses*, Budapest University of Technology and Economics, 2013

In Romania, the early 1920s were predominated by Neo-Romanian bourgeoisie family houses, while the 1930s represent the start of the new architectural style. The private residences became less decorated and the volumetric shapes that emphasized on horizontal and vertical lines became more prominent. The work of the architects Horia Creanga and Marcel Iancu had a strong influence on the shape of important neighborhoods in the capital, such as Dorobanți, Primăverii and Aviatorilor areas.²³ They realized the first modernist villas in the country and became polarizing figures in the architectural world.

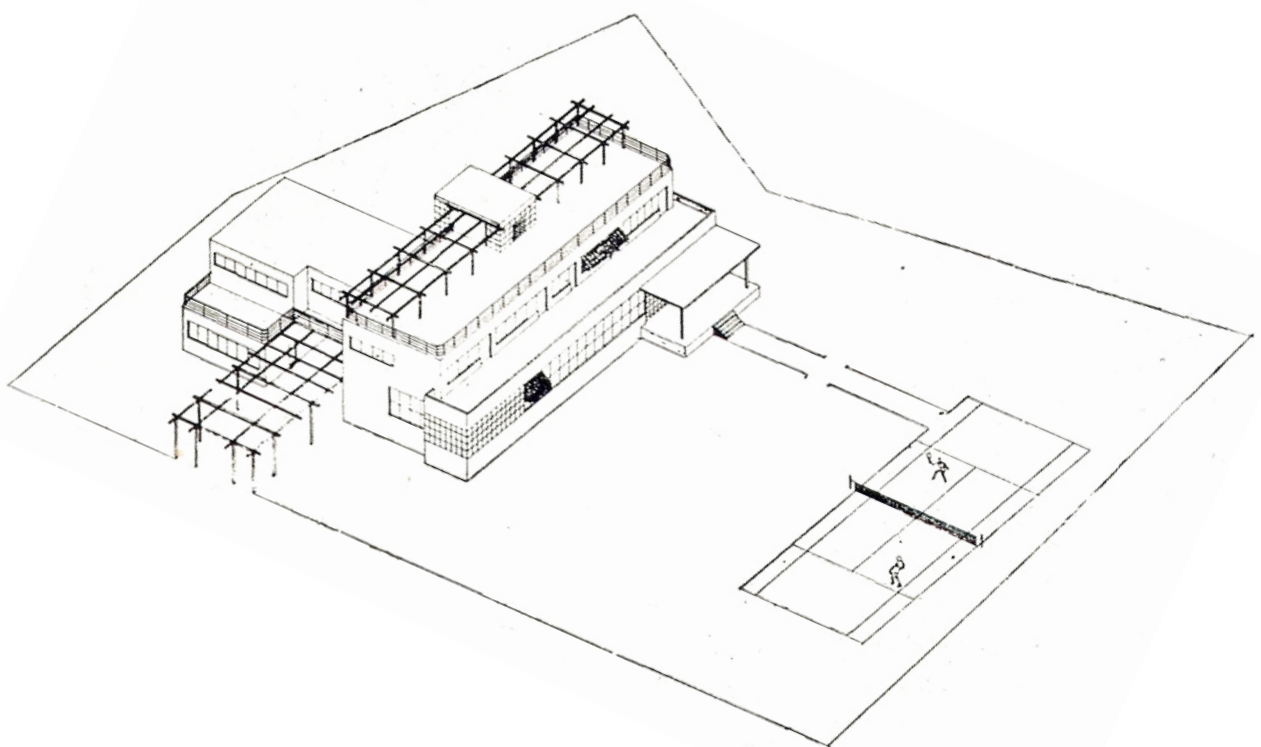
Architects that themselves came from wealthy families were lenient towards the traditional style. Although, architects such as Duiliu Marcu, Henrieta Delavrancea Gibory and G.M. Cantacuzino had adopted some of the modernist characteristics and combined them with the traditional elements. This created a new category of its own, as the traditional villa with a conventional volumetric was simplified to fewer decorative elements in the facades.

²³ Grigore Ionescu, *Arhitectura pe teritoriul Romaniei de-a lungul veacurilor*, Editura Academiei Republicii Socialiste România, 1982 pag. 363

JAROMÍR KREJCAR

Villa Gibiánova, Bubeneč, Prague, Czechoslovakia, 1927-1929

The project was chosen after a competition, that was set up by a building company for a wealthy client named Richarda Gibiána, a seller of printing technologies. The building incorporated an additional wing for a garage and a room for the caretaker. The construction was made with brick and a metal structure, which were then covered with plaster. The main facade facing the garden has a characteristic horizontal strip of ribbon windows. Another important element is the terrace on the second floor. In 1939 the building was confiscated during the German occupation, later on nationalized in 1961 and converted into six diplomatic apartments.

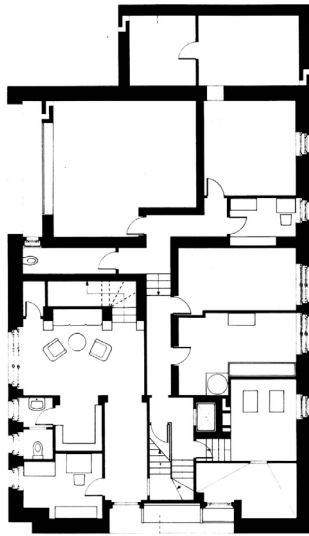


Axonometric projection

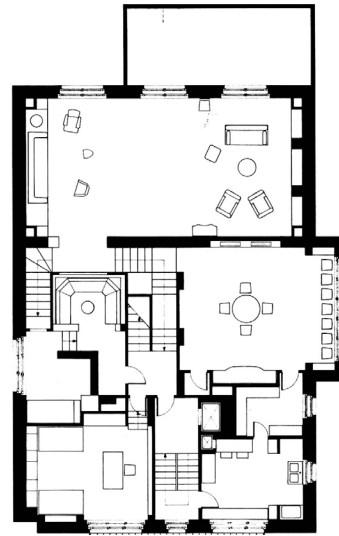
ADOLF LOOS

Villa Müller, Prague, Czechoslovakia, 1929-1930

The client of the villa was František Müller, a co-owner of a construction company that was specializing in reinforced concrete and new construction methods. The project was a collaboration with the Czechoslovakian architect Karel Lhota, taking over the project as Adolf Loos' health deteriorated. The villa was built as an experimentation with materials in the architects idea of functionalism. It expressed itself without ornamentations on the facades, the interior was luxurious, with expensive materials and built-in furnitures, that were specially designed for the client. The project was the subject of discussion at the time, being an early example of the modern style villa in the country.



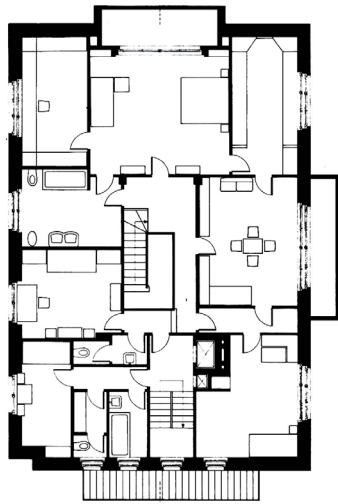
Ground floor plan



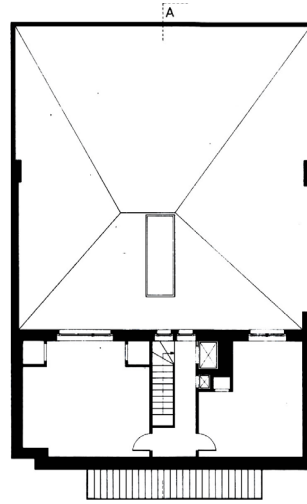
First floor plan



View from the Nad Hradním vodojemem Street



Second floor plan

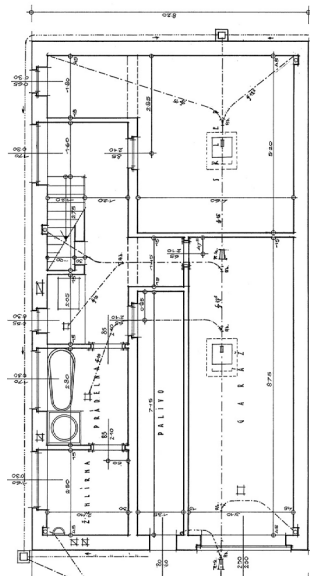


Third floor plan

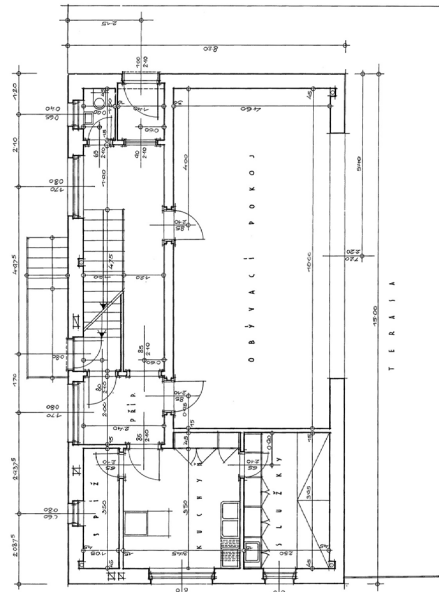
OTTO EISLER & MOŘIC EISLER

House for Two Young Men, Brno, Czechoslovakia, 1930-1931

The villa was built for the architect and his brother, being tailor designed for their own needs. The project is situated on a slope with a fruit garden, which allowed the use of an underground level for the staff. The ground floor of the house is a spacious common room, opening towards the landscape with large glazed windows. The first floor of the house hosts two bedrooms with a common area which leads to the terrace of the house. On the top floor there is a guest room, as the villa was used as a gathering place for numerous Brno and German intellectuals and artists.



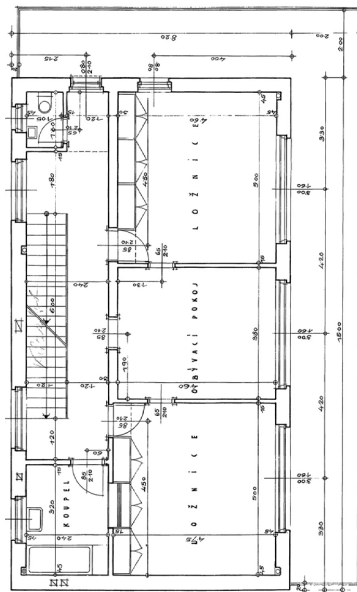
Underground floor plan



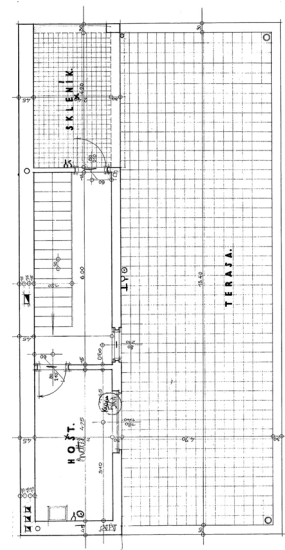
Ground floor plan



View from garden



First floor plan

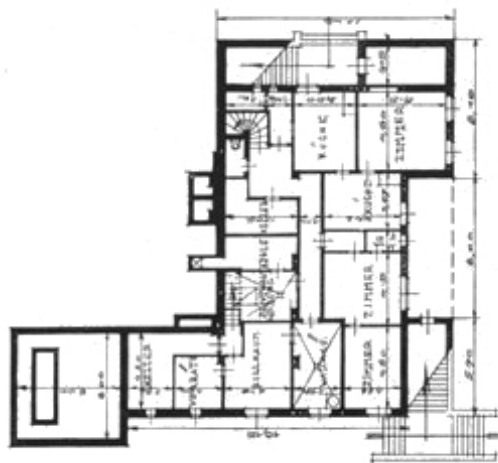


Second floor plan

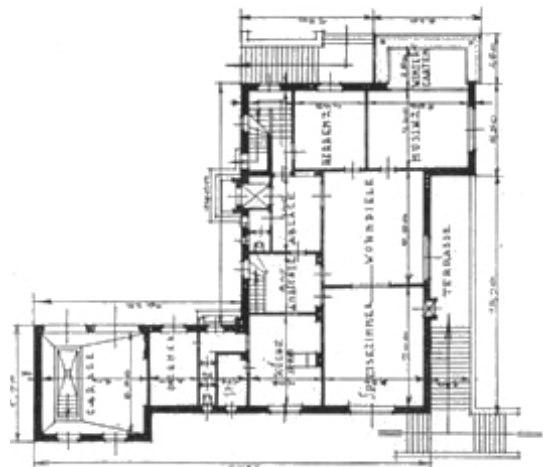
ERNST WIESNER

Villa Münz, Brno, Czechoslovakia, 1924-1926

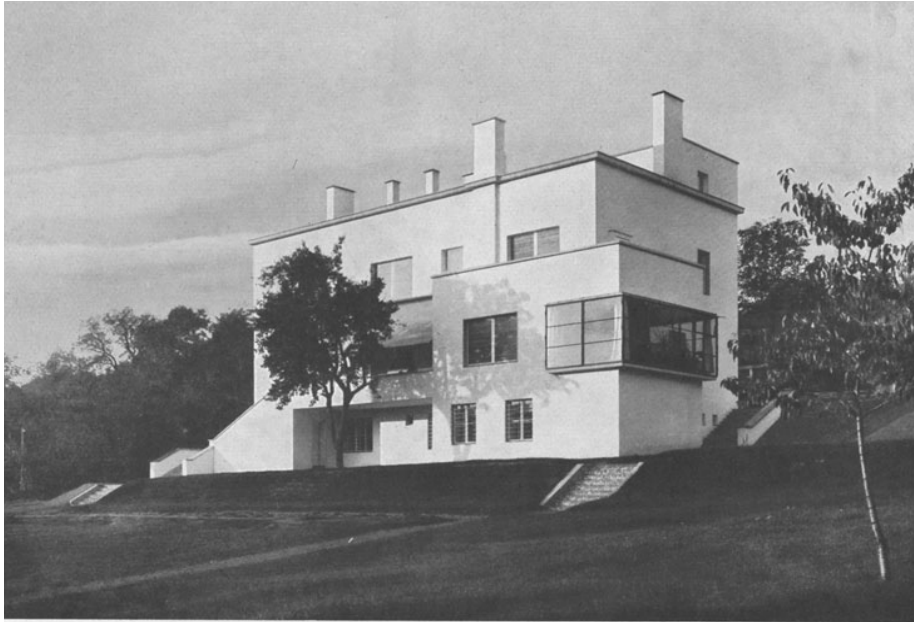
The villa was built for Eduard Münz, the director of the Czech Union Bank. The topography of the slope guided the design language, as well as the use of volumetric shapes, that delimit the functions of different parts of the house. The ground floor is accessible from the southern part of the plot and was used for the domestic staff members. The first two floors of the house were designed as a living space for the family with an access to the terrace. The use of a two wing design, which was common in Wiesner's architectural language, segments the different functions of the house. The top floor was used as a guest room with a large opening to the terrace.



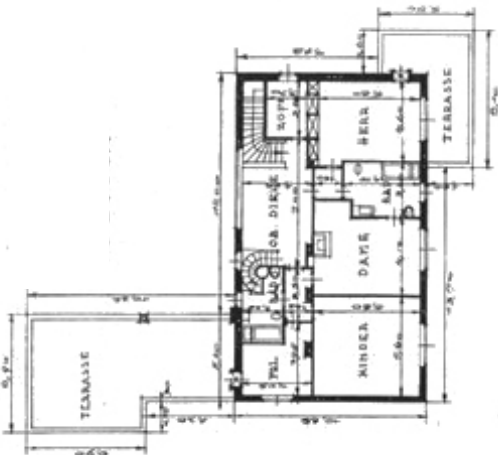
Underground floor plan



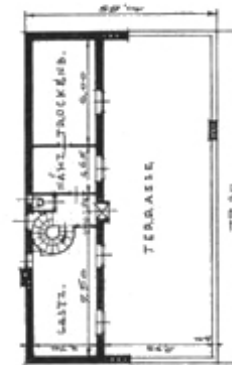
Ground floor plan



View from garden



First floor plan

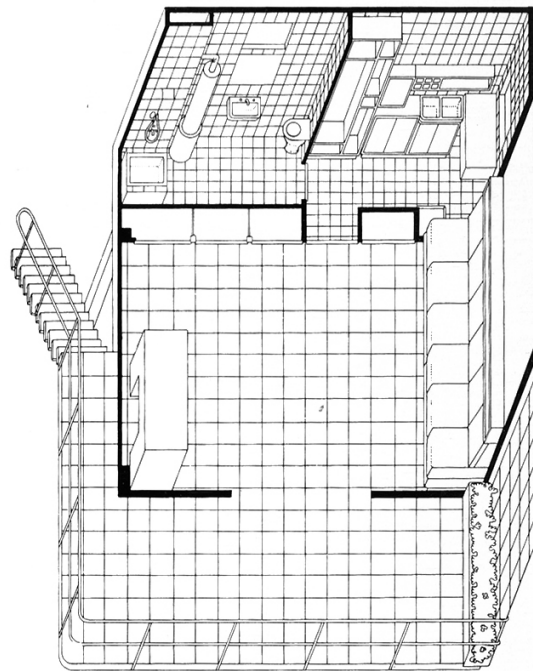


Second floor plan

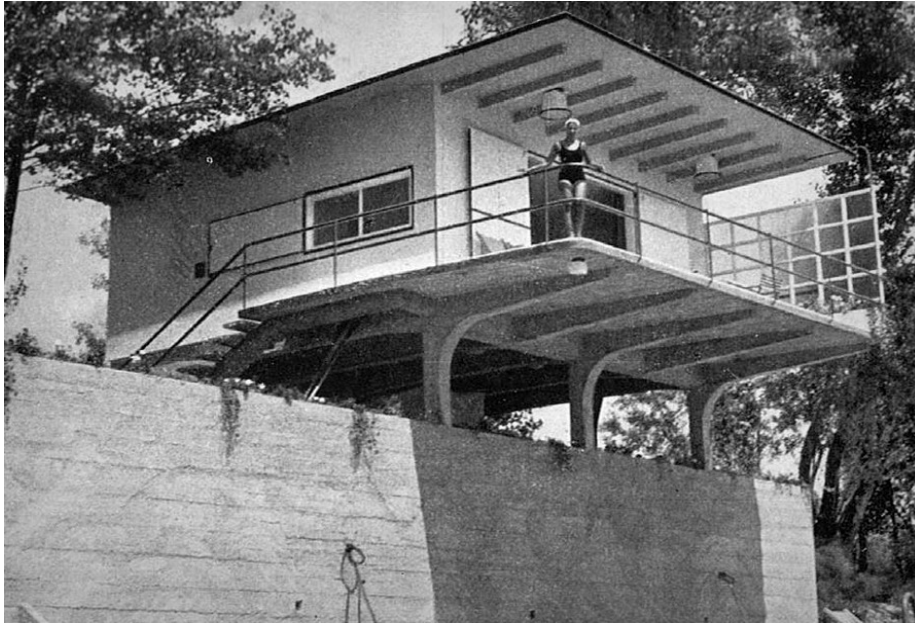
KOSMA LAJOS

Weekend House, Lupa Island, Budapest, Hungary, 1935

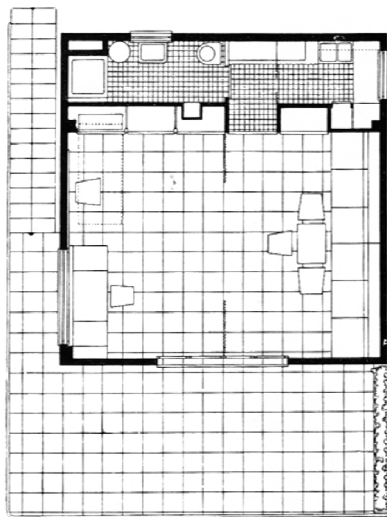
The architect designed a refuge house for the weekends on the Island of Lupa, which is situated close to Budapest, on the Danube river. The idea for the design was to resemble a nest, that is elevated from the ground. The use of reinforced concrete was made apparent from below, the visible structure acting as an modest ornamentation. The elevated “nest” gives a special emphasis and unobtrusiveness. The interior is divided in two rooms with a generous terrace overlooking the Danube and the forests surrounding it. The railing is made of a thin metal tubing which references the feeling of being on a boat, floating along the river.



Axonometric projection



Outside view

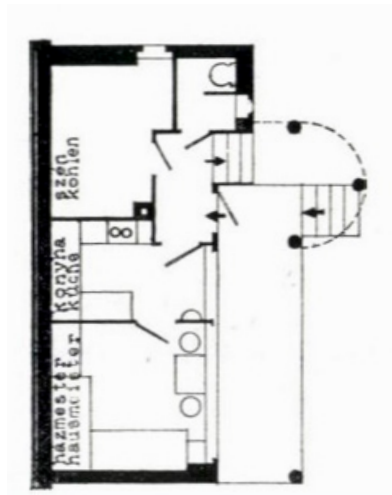


Floor plan

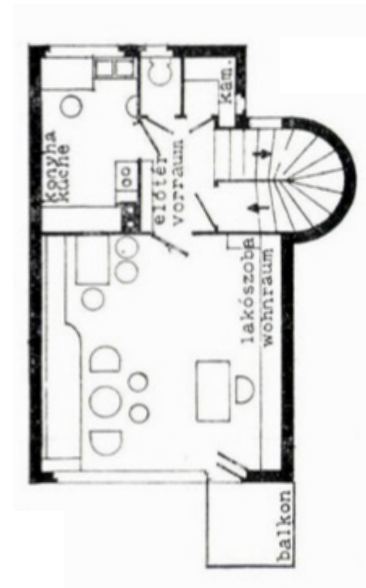
JÓZSEF FISCHER

Villa Hoffmann, Budapest, II District, Hungary, 1933-1935

The project is one of the examples of a Bauhaus influenced architecture in Hungary, as it embodies all its typical stylistic elements in a sensitive way. As it is situated on a hill outside the capital, the architect used the topography to create a volume on stilts, utilizing reinforced concrete throughout the project. The large windows of the living room in the top floor break the cubist villa and open up the room toward the landscape of the Danube. The staircase is designed as a half cylindered space, that unwraps the facade at the ground floor into three separate pillars. In a later period, another volume was added at the back of the building to increase the total living space.



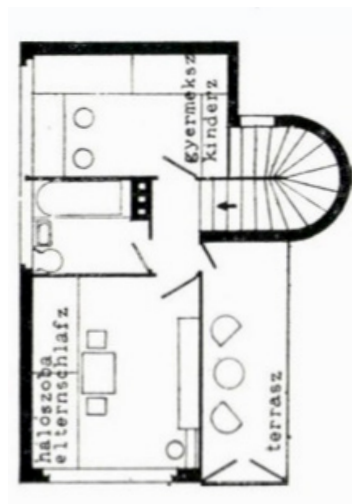
Ground floor plan



Second floor plan



View from the Szépvölgyi Street

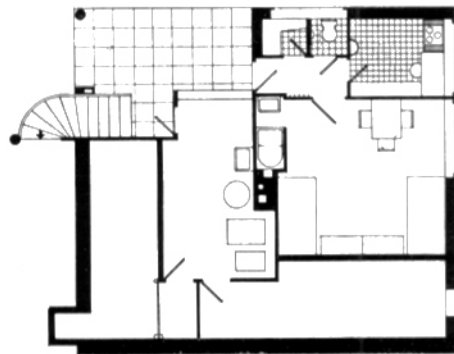


Second floor plan

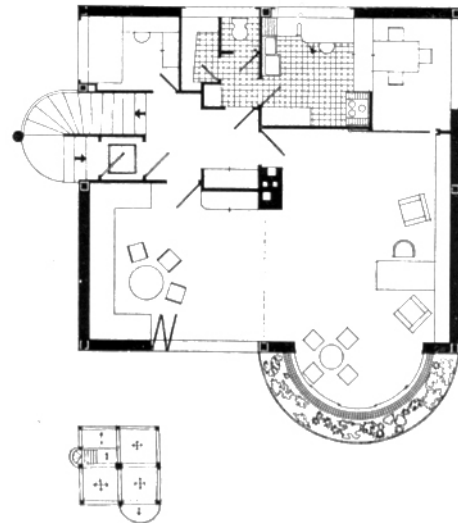
MOLNÁR FARKAS

Villa Dalnoki-Kováts, Budapest, XII District, Hungary, 1932

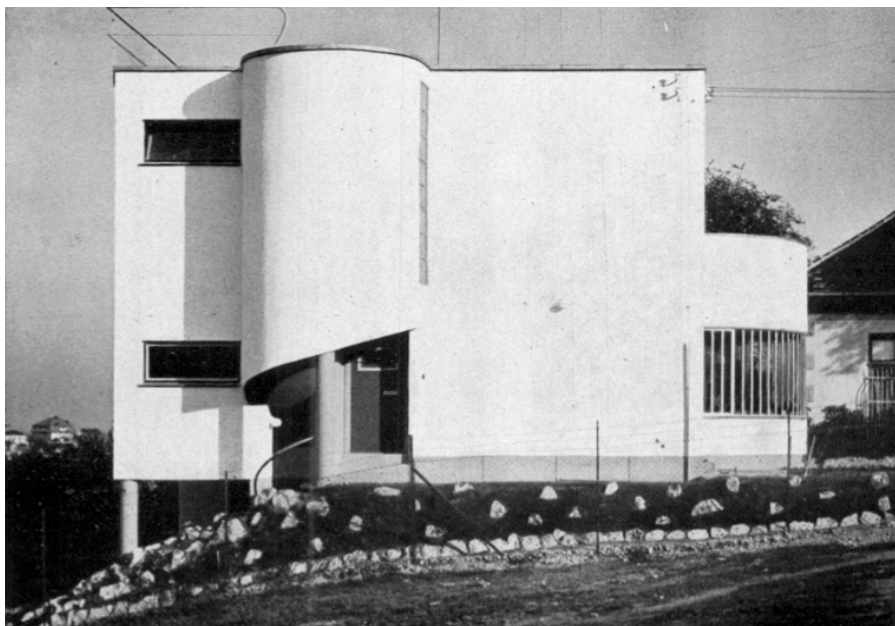
The villa was a commission from the chairman of the Hungarian Trade Association, Jenő Dálnoki-Kováts. The project was split in two separate apartments. The ground floor and first floor hosted the main apartment, while the underground level contained a studio apartment and a room for storage. The whole building is made of reinforced concrete, which allowed it in the use of pillars on the underground level, to open the apartment to the outside, as well as to elevate the semi-cylindrical staircase, which gives supplementary space to the entrance of the house. The second floor has two bedrooms, that open up to the terrace of the house, overlooking the garden.



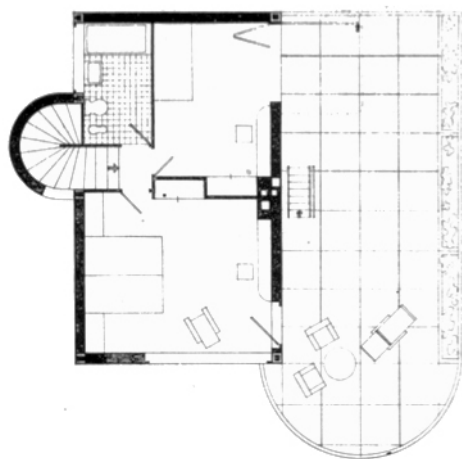
Underground plan



Ground floor plan



View from Lejtő Street

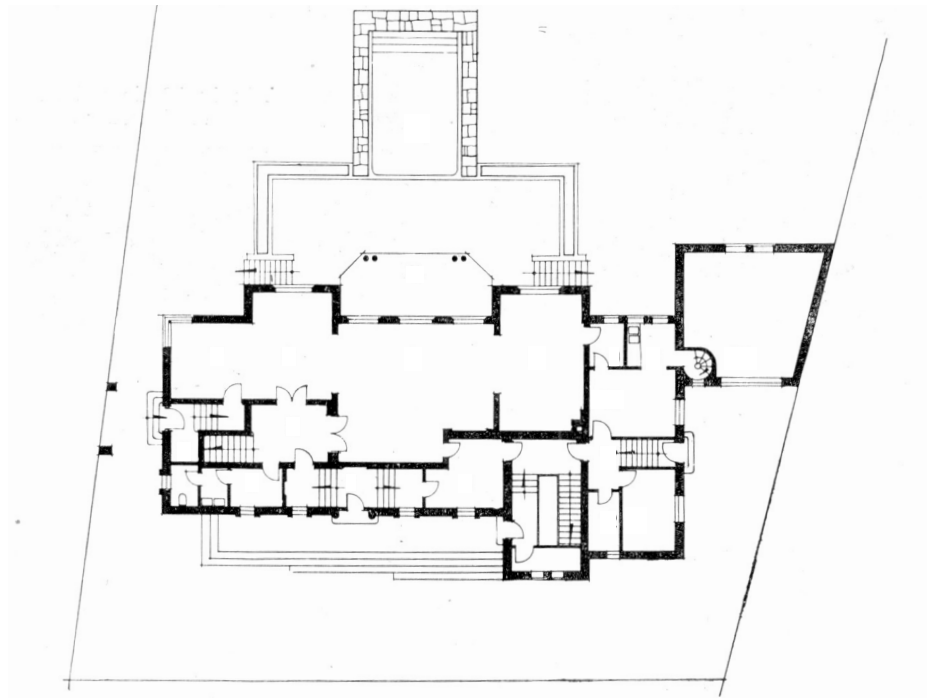


First floor plan

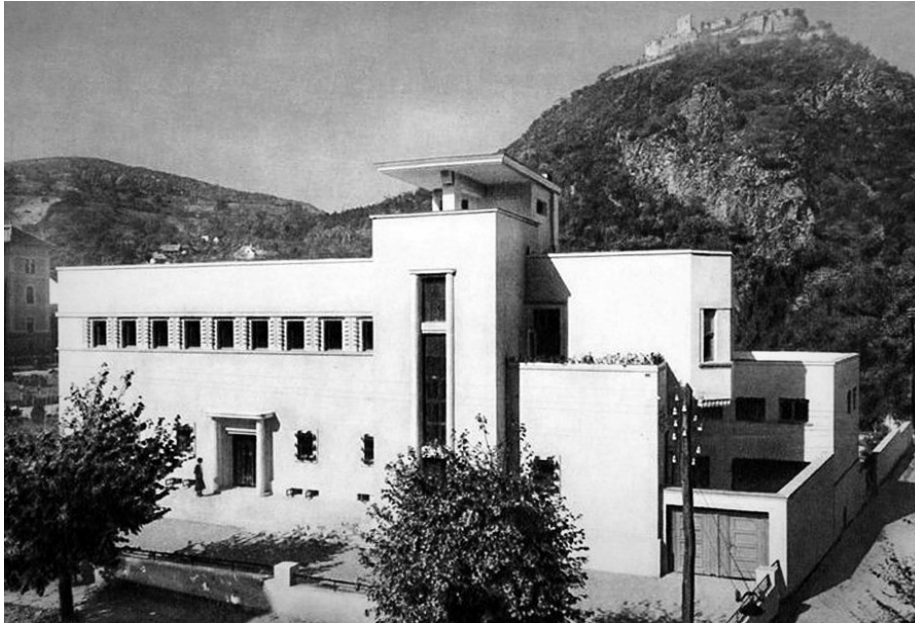
HORIA CREANGĂ

Villa Dr. Petru Groza, Deva, Romania, 1927- 1929

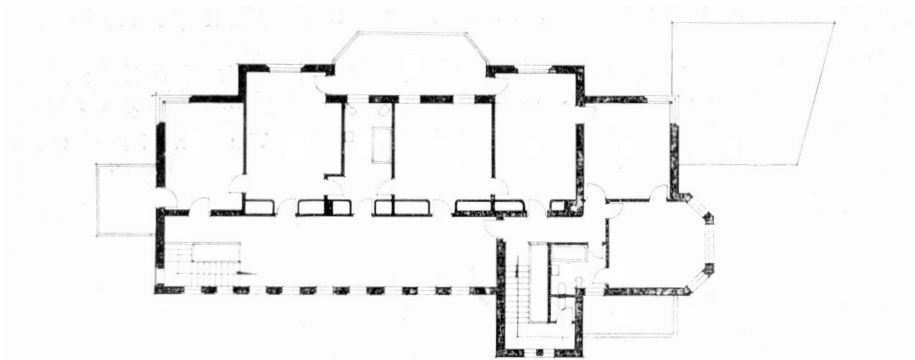
The building resides near the entrance of the Deva fortress, in the middle of the historical center of the municipality of Deva. The commissioner for the luxurious villa was Dr. Petru Groza, a successful lawyer and head of the first Romanian communist government after the World War II. The villa was a prime example of the avant-garde style in Romania, it has a historic importance as it had hosted many influential people at the time, such as writers, artists and politicians. In the present the bottom floor is used as an archive of the family Groza and the upper floor as a residential space.



Ground floor plan



View from Avram Iancu Street

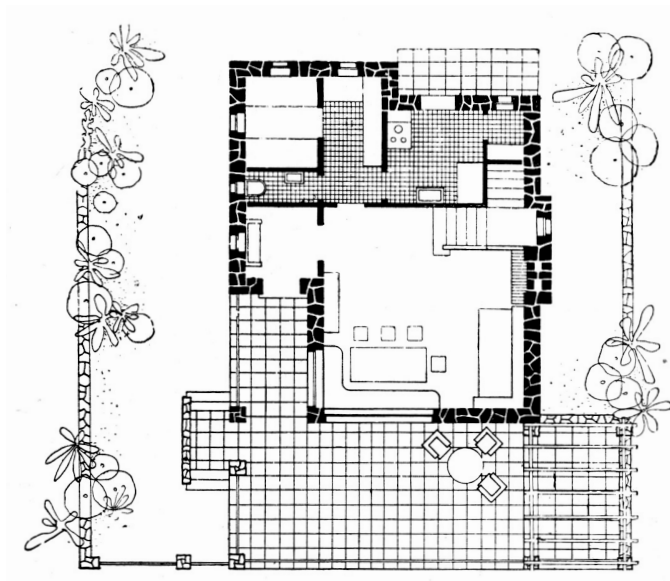


First floor plan

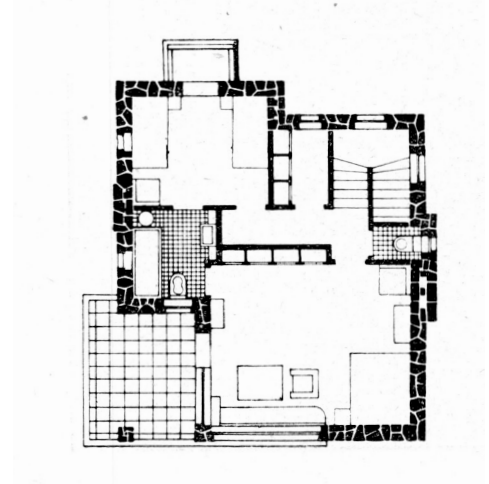
DUILIU MARCU

Villa "BEBE", Sinaia, Romania, 1934

The building is situated in the northern neighborhood in Sinaia, in the Romanian Carpathian Mountains. It is on a natural terrace in vicinity of similarly sized single family houses with beautiful views towards the landscape. The villa is a great example of cubist architecture, using local materials and techniques. The use of hard stone and fir wood in the facade resembles the local building techniques of the region. The interior walls were realized in brickwork and the ceilings in wood. The flat roof of the building is breaking away from the traditionally pitched roof to not block the view of the neighboring buildings, resulting in a modern look of the villa.



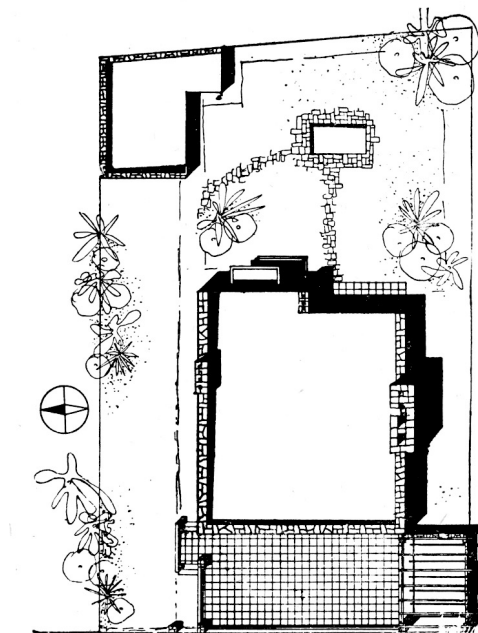
Ground floor plan



First floor plan



View from the Aluniș Street

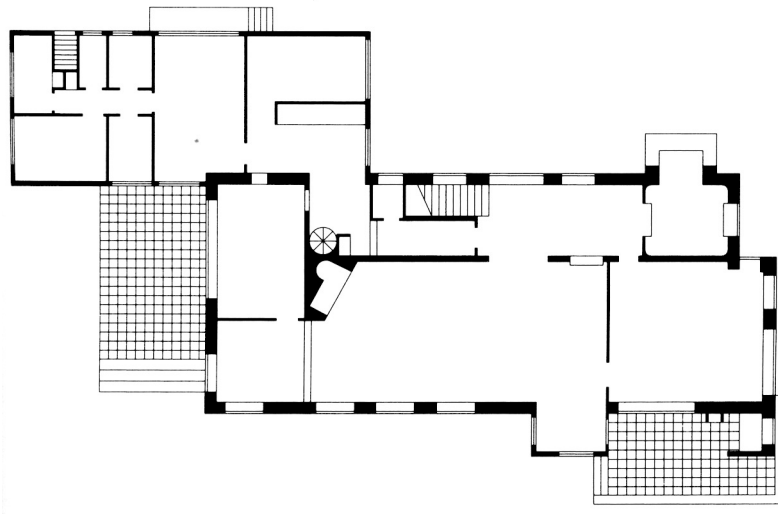


Site plan

ELISE LAZĂR & GIO PONTI

Villa Tataru, Cluj-Napoca, Romania, 1937-1938

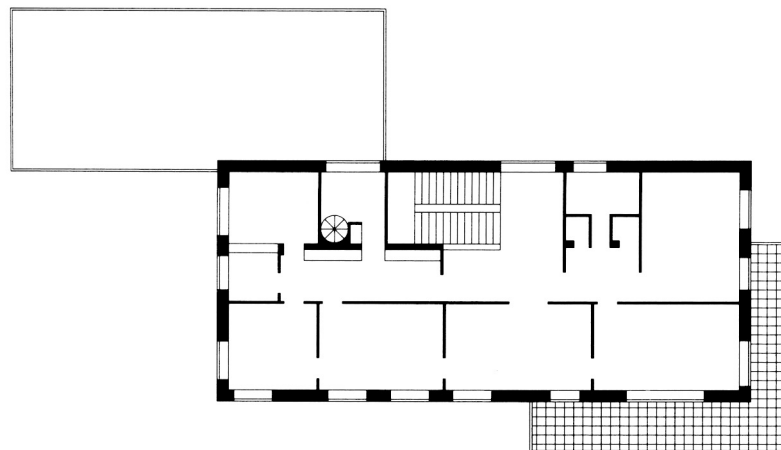
The villa was realized for the influential family Tataru, on a plot of land in the city center right in front of the Mori channel and the central park of the town. The collaboration between the two architects is interesting to note as it is a direct influence from the West applied on the Romanian territory. Elise Lazăr had previously worked for the Austrian architect Oskar Strnad, who was an adopter of modern living ideologies as well as a key participant in the creation of the Vienna School of Architecture. The influence of the Gio Ponti architectural office is obvious as well throughout the project, especially in the design of the interior spaces.



Ground floor plan



View from the Cardinal Iuliu Hossu Street

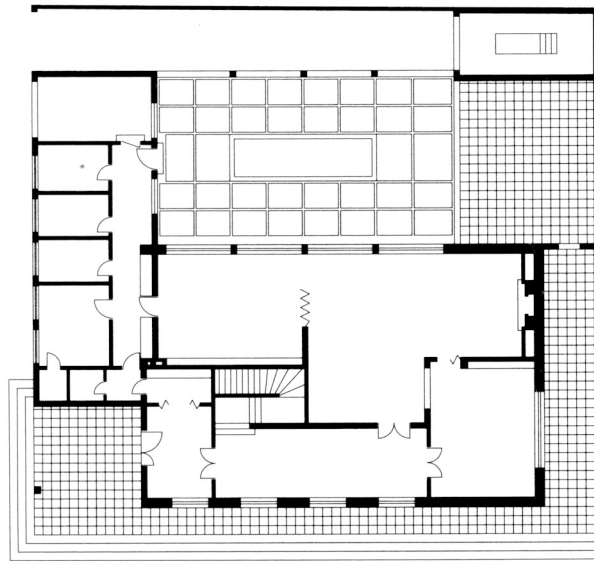


First floor plan

RUDOLF FRÄNKEL

Villa Flavian, Bucharest, Romania, 1936-1937

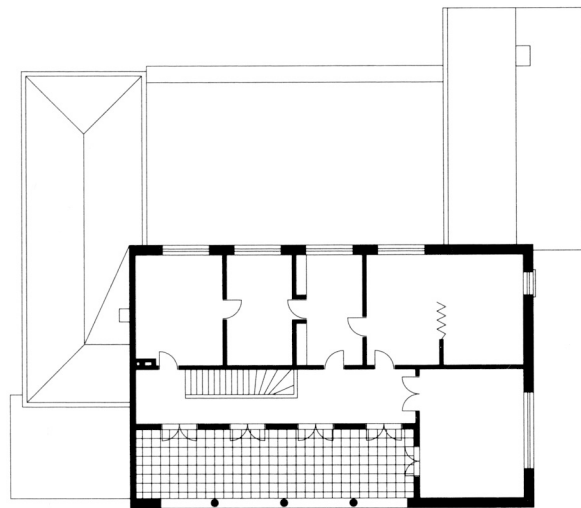
The Polish born architect had worked on this project once he had moved to Bucharest after being exiled from Germany, in 1933. He attended the Royal Technical College in Charlottenburg and later designed housing projects in Berlin and other major cities in Germany. The villa Flavian was situated on a central boulevard in the city. Its design reflects the Berlin influenced modern architecture and mixes with elements of the local style, such as the corner entrance with a slanted roof. Two years after this project was realized, Rudolf Fränkel designed a related villa in London with references leading back to this project.



Ground floor plan



View from the Kiseleff Boulevard



First floor plan

b. APARTMENT BUILDING

The apartment buildings realized in the inter-war period were in majority financed by private investors, as a way to raise capital in a quick and safe way. All the residential apartment buildings were designed for maximizing their value as they could be sold on a later date for a profit, or to create a high quality living space to raise the rent fees higher than the interest rates of the banks. The First World War interrupted the growth especially in Hungary and Czechoslovakia, stopping the momentum of large scale investments on the real estate market. In the 1920s the economy developed significantly and the interest in creating apartments for medium to upper middle class became a profitable and enticing investment again.²⁴

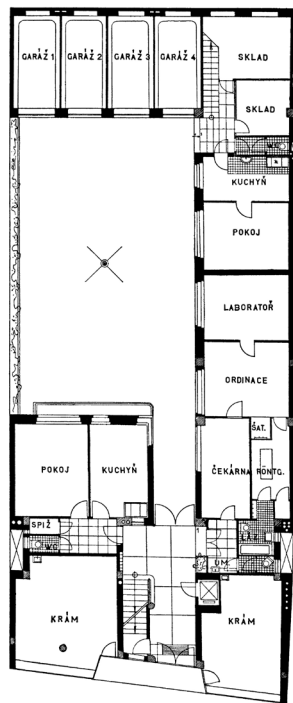
With the new wave of opportunities, a new and attractive architectural style was in need, a modernization of the house. The new dwellings that the modernist architects were offering were typically larger than the apartments built in the previous years, with a higher comfort and hygiene level. The apartments featured larger openings in the facade, letting more light in, and a proper ventilation. The amenities included running water and centralized heating.

²⁴ Ferkai András, *Buda Építészete a Két Világháború Között*, Művészettörténeti Kutatóintézet 1995, pag.16

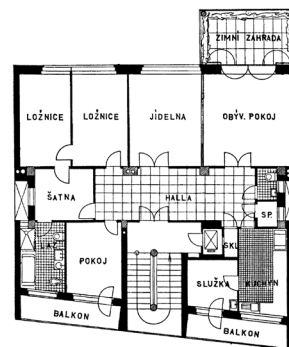
JOSEF POLÁŠEK

Dr. Karel Pur apartment building, Brno, Czechoslovakia, 1937

The associate professor at the Brno Faculty of Medicine, Dr. Karel Pur, commissioned Josef Polášek to modernize his original two story house to a new building. The new concept meant to incorporate a private surgery room, an apartment building and commercial spaces. The facade of the building is striking in the context of the rest of the street, with its segmented elements, dominated by the staircase that is emphasized by a volume in the center. The ground floor was used as the high end clinic of the client, which extends in the back in a garden. Apartments were distributed once per floor with access to both facades on the whole length.



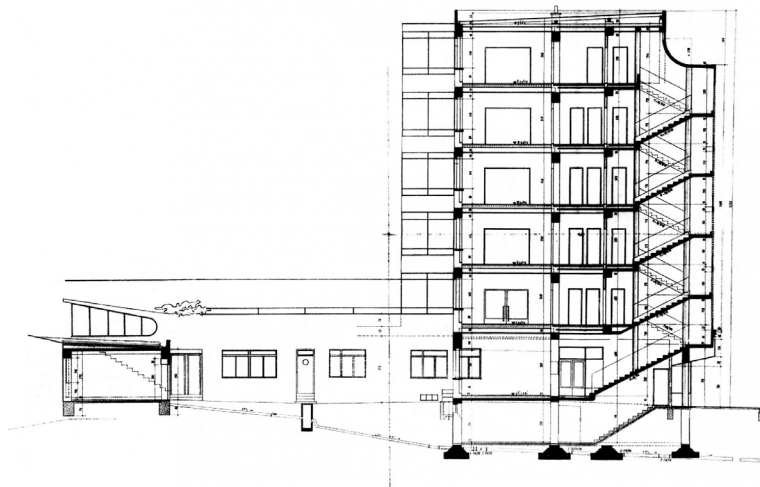
Ground floor plan



Typical floor plan



View from Údolní Street

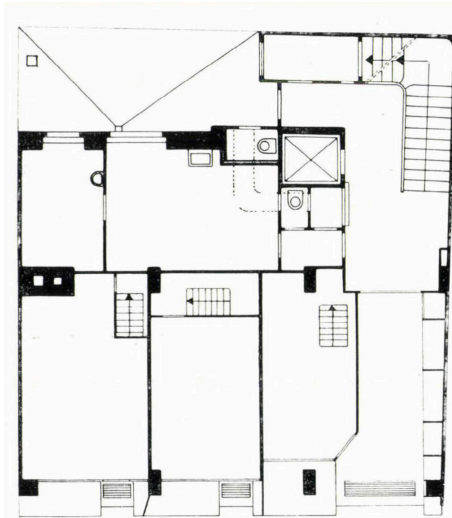


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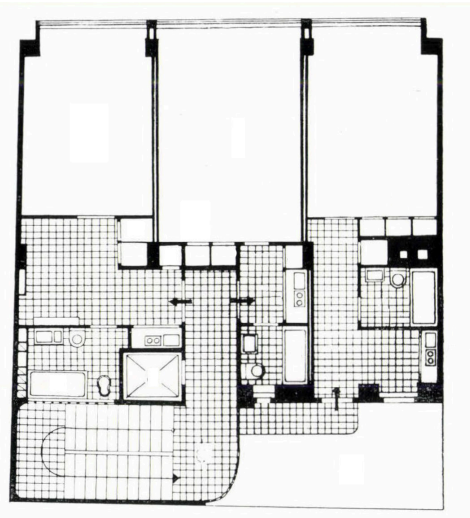
KOZMA LAJOS & DÉNES VILMOS

Apartment Building on Régi Posta Street, Budapest, Hungary, 1936-1937

The apartment building is situated on a small plot of land in a central street of Budapest, which was once occupied by a 19th century building. The building presents an interesting use of materials, such as marble on the facades and colorful ceramic tiles at the entrance. On the ground floor the spaces were occupied by shops with large windows that took advantage of the reinforced concrete structure, creating large displays for goods. The plans of the apartments show an impressive and carefully thought-out design, incorporating all the amenities that one could think of at the time. That drove the construction costs up, resulting in luxury apartments in the central part of the town.



Ground floor plan



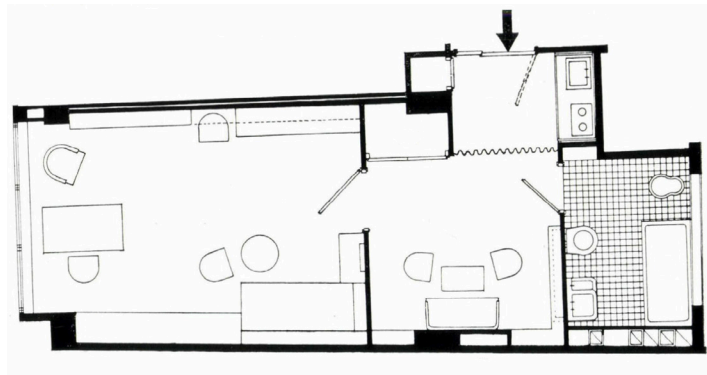
Typical floor plan



View from the Régi Posta Street



View of the courtyard

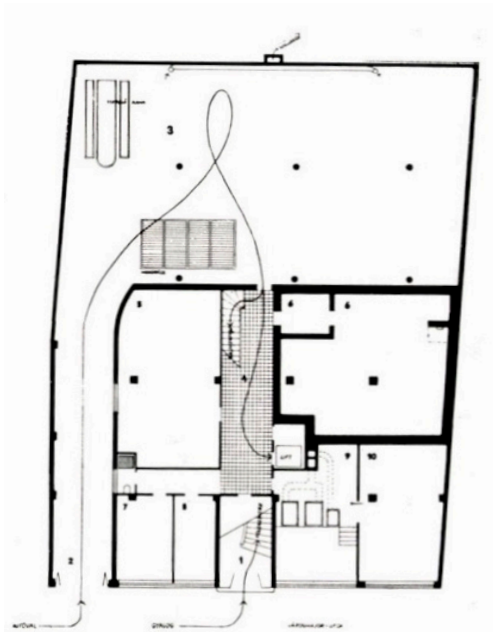


Apartment plan

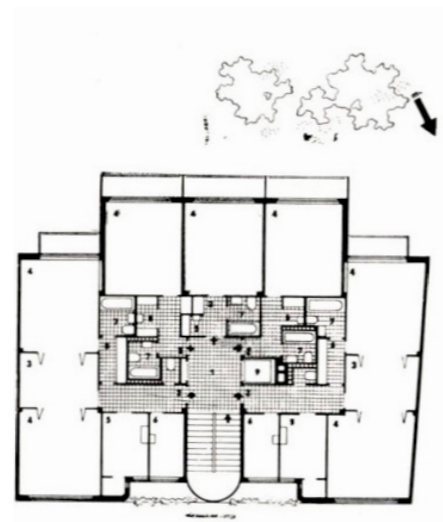
ALADÁR OLGYAY & VIKTOR OLGYAY

Apartment Building on Városmajor Street, Budapest, Hungary, 1940-1941

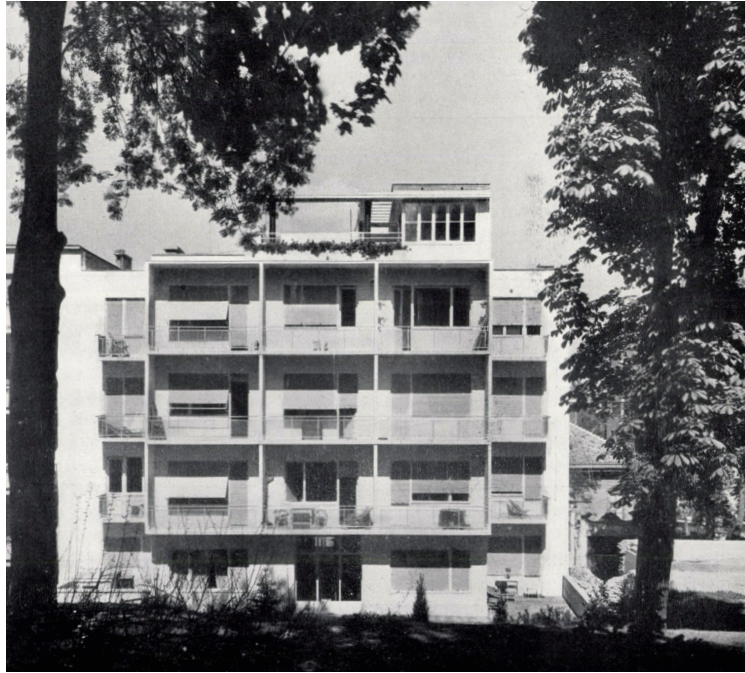
The commissioned residential building is as well located on a main street in Budapest. All apartments were designed to have the view towards the beautiful garden apart from the strip of apartment buildings, through semi-open verandas. The core of the building contains the circulation, the entrance to each apartment and the bathrooms with all the technicals. One feature, that stands out in comparison to other apartment blocks of the era, is the implementation of an underground parking lot, that was accessible through the vertical circulation of the building.



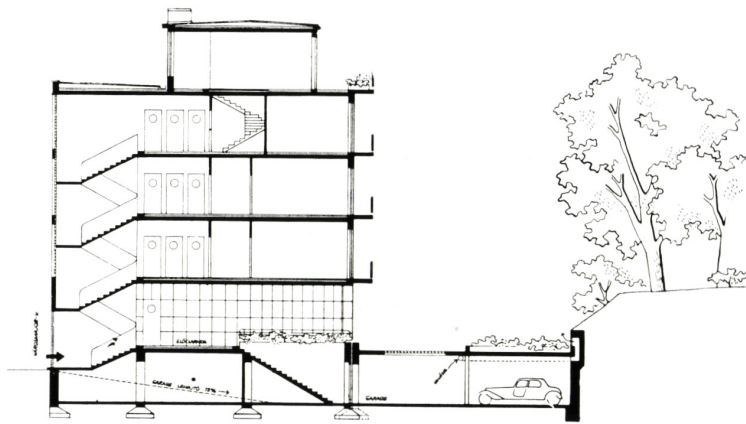
Underground floor plan



Typical floor plan



View from Hristo Botev Boulevard

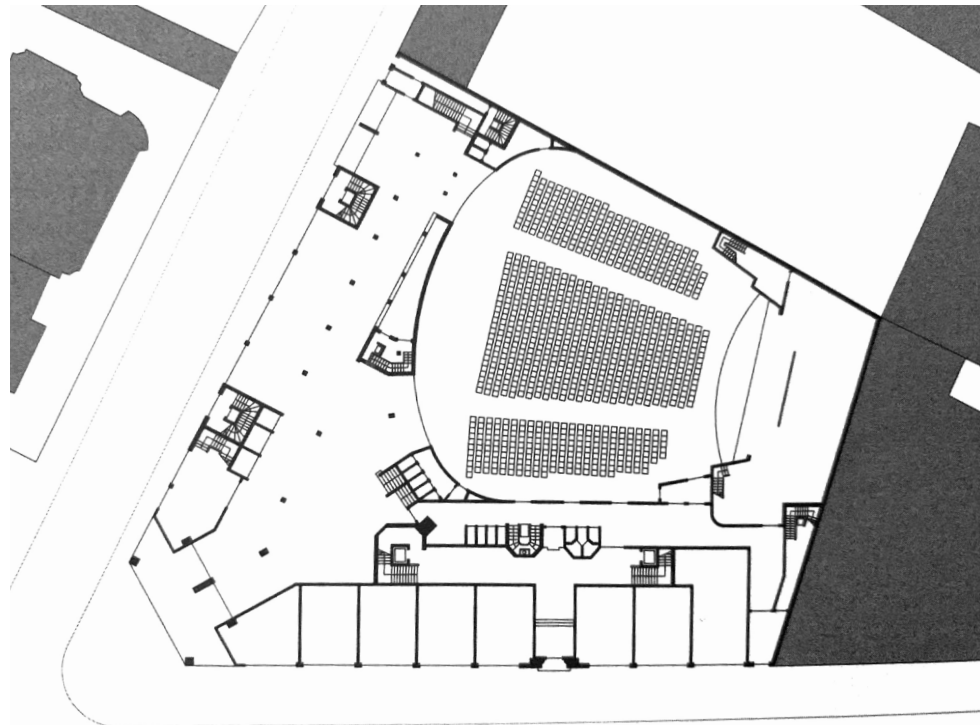


Section

HORIA CREANGĂ

ARO Building, Bucharest, Romania, 1929-1931

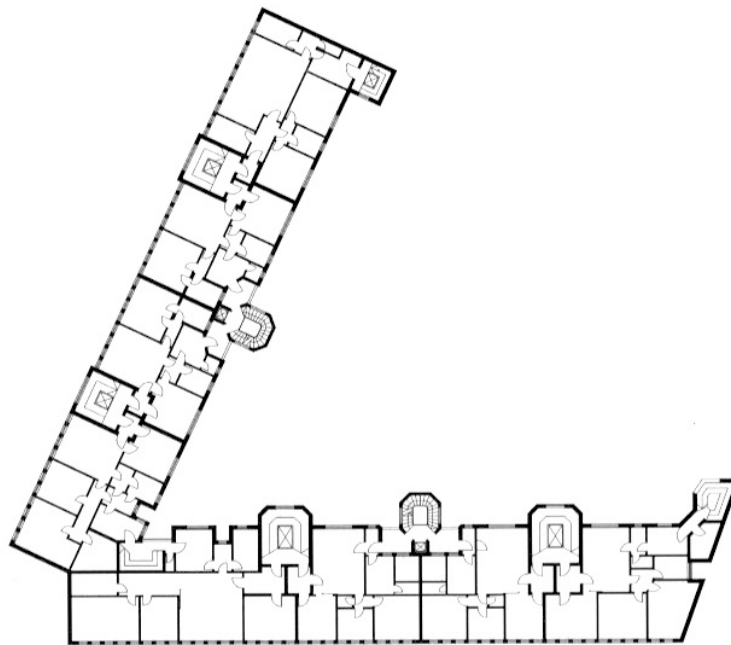
The ARO building is one of the symbols of the modernist movement in Romania. After an architectural competition, it was commissioned by the Romanian Insurance Company as the design of their new headquarter. Initially designed as a multipurpose building with offices, residential spaces, stores, conference rooms and a cinema, the building was redesigned in favor of more flats, due to the economic crisis. The two wings of the building are in different heights of five and seven stories, as the regulations permeated a limited height towards the smaller street. The tower was initially on the same axis as the Magheru boulevard, but later refined with a rotation towards the second wing.



Ground floor plan



View from Magheru Boulevard

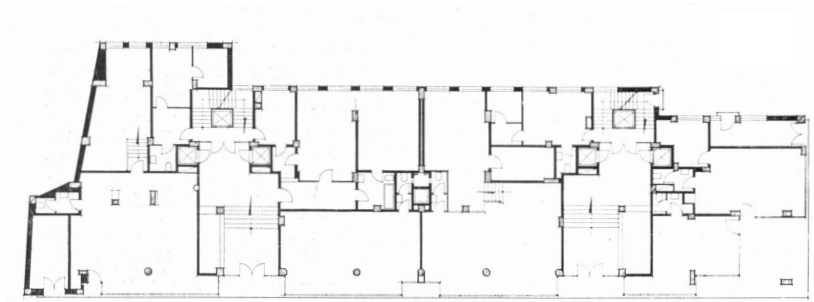


Typical floor plan

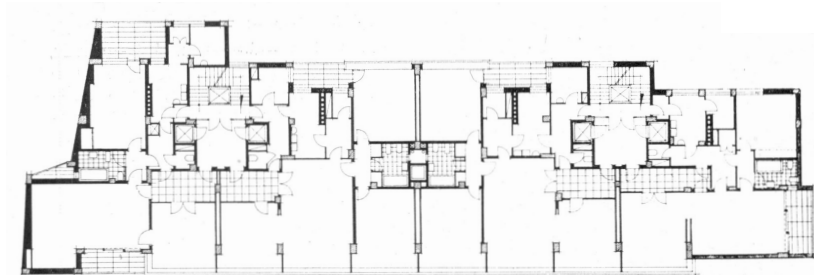
HORIA CREANGĂ

Malaxa-Burileanu Building, Bucharest, Romania, 1924-1926

The building located on one of the main boulevards in Bucharest was a commission from the Malaxa enterprise. In this project, Horia Creangă was able to express his ideas of a new style with the help of the client, which was a steel products manufacturer and therefore could submit the latest materials and technologies. The ground floor was dedicated to shops and showrooms, the top floor there included spaces for domestic offices. From the first to the seventh floor, each level contained four apartments, that were emphasized in the facade with continuous strips of windows, giving a dominant appearance on the facade towards the main street.



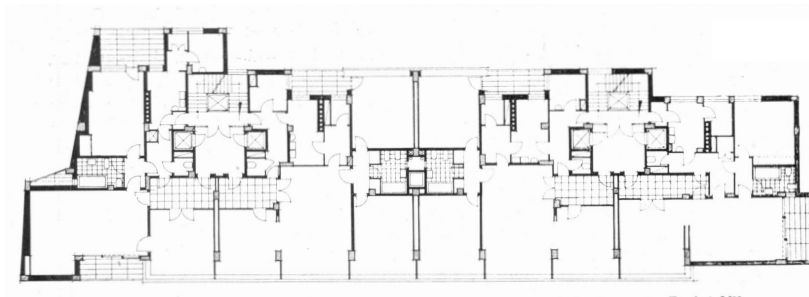
Ground floor plan



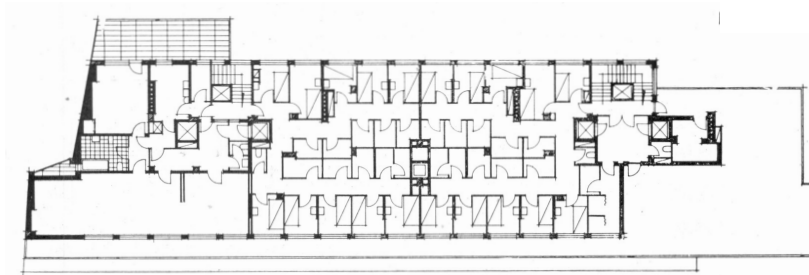
First to sixth floor plan



View from Bălcescu Boulevard



Seventh floor plan

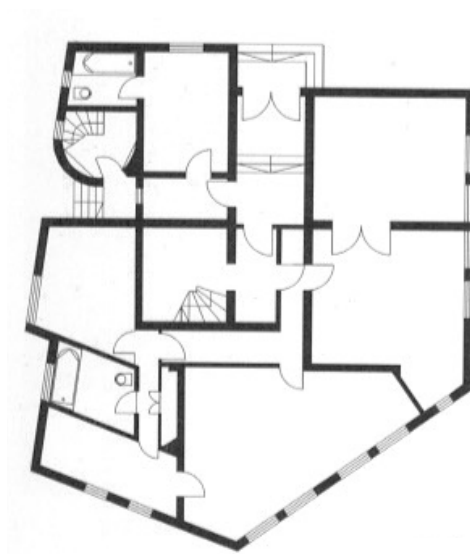


Eight floor plan

MARCEL IANCU

Solly Gold Apartment House, Bucharest, Romania, 1924-1926

The luxurious apartment building is situated near the commercial center of Bucharest. The irregular plot of land gives the plan of the building a polygonal shape with uneven sides. As it is situated on the corner of a junction, three of the facades are facing a road. Marcel Iancu took this opportunity to differentiate each side with a specific style. One side of the building appears in an expressionist manner through corners, that are extruding out of the apartments into the facade. The other side of the building projects a cubist spirit through a horizontal accentuation of a stripe of balconies. The two sides are connected on the center facade, which is accompanying the different characteristics by strip windows, opening up the living areas to the outside.



Ground floor plan



View from Hristo Botev Boulevard



Second floor plan

c. OFFICE BUILDINGS

The concept of an office building was mostly associated to public buildings where institutions of the state would conduct their work. During the inter-war period, the rise of industrial giants and large commerce companies created a demand of new spaces, where business could be administrated.

In Czechoslovakia, the business of the successful Bat'a shoe company, was structured after the American model, as Tomáš Baťa was influenced by Henry Ford and his theories about mass production and mass consumption. The modernist movement fit these futuristic visions of the company, and their offices and commercial spaces, that were designed between the 1920s and the 1930s, became iconic for the history of the modern architecture in the country.

In the rest of East Europe, the speculative market showed as well an interest in the office building typology, especially the industries expanding their funds towards the real estate investments.

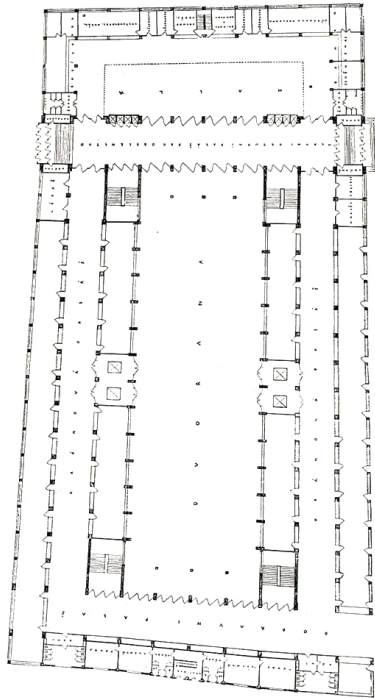
In the 1930s, the public sector shifted its interests towards a new style of administration buildings, with larger open spaces and wide openings in the facade, promoting therefore a better work environment.²⁵

²⁵ Jaroslav Andel, *The New Vision for the New Architecture Czechoslovakia 1918-1938*, Scalo Verlag AG, 2006, pag.124

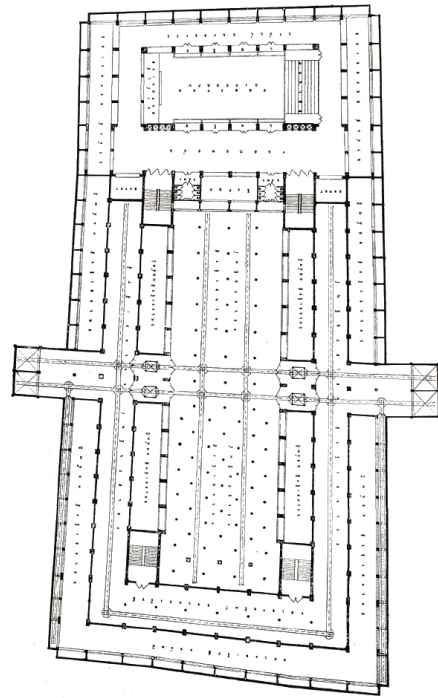
OLDŘICH TYL & JOSEF FUCHS

Trade Fair Palace, Prague, Czechoslovakia, 1924-1928

The building was as a multipurpose functionalist complex, unique at the time, as its size and number of functions was unparalleled. As the name suggests, it was mainly used as an exhibition space for trade shows. The ground floor consisted of a centered hall, that was designed for large scale exhibits and could be loaded from the left wing of the building. The use of reinforced concrete throughout the building led to large corridors and a free plan, giving it a diversity of functions.



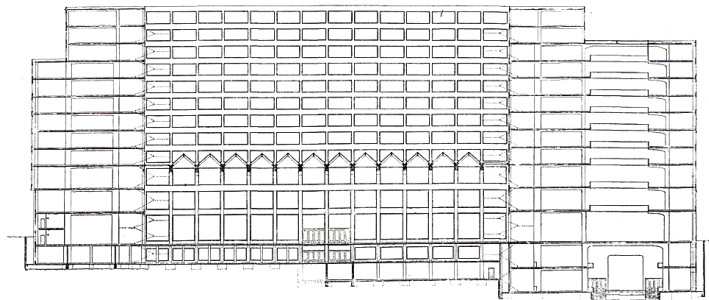
Ground floor plan



First floor plan



View from the Dukelských hrdinů Street

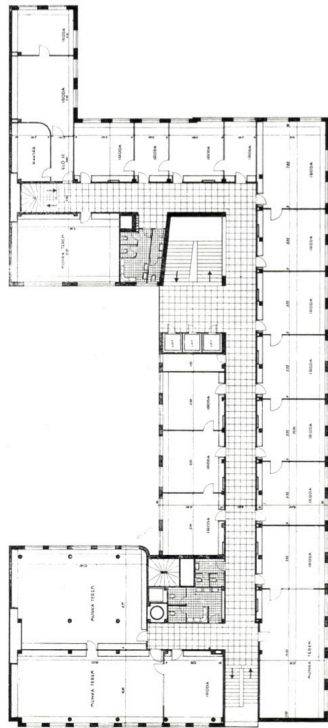


Section

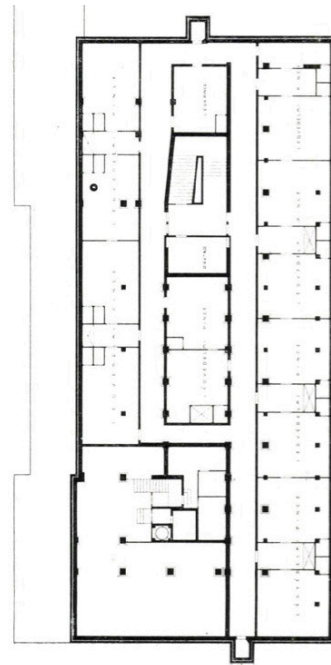
LAUBER LÁSZLÓ & NYÍRI ISTVÁN

The headquarters of the Financial Institutions Center, Budapest, Hungary, 1938-1940

The modernist style had infiltrated the administration sector, meaning it had risen past the level of petty bourgeoisie to large scale industrial and public buildings. Situated at the Unity Square in the city center, the project was considered controversial at the time, as it was not assimilating with the rest of the urban context. The public and local newspapers put out the question of “*Would it have been so hard for designers to imitate Art Nouveau?*”. The response given in the *Tér és Forma* magazine was that it integrates well, since the square already shows a wide diversity of architectural styles, such as Gothic to Classicism and even the Renaissance of 1896.



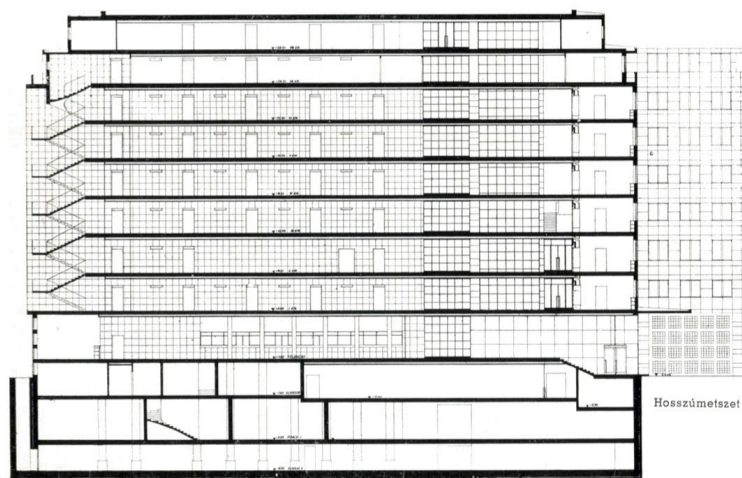
Typical floor plan



Underground floor plan



View from the Szabadság tér Boulevard

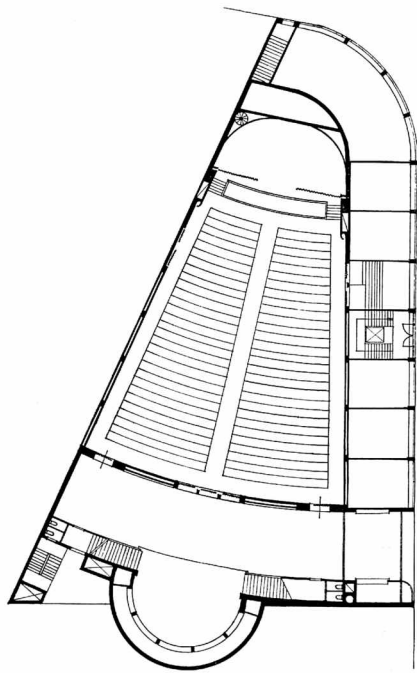


Section

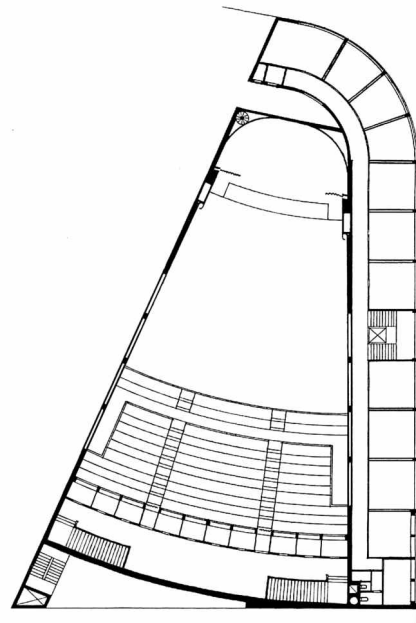
RUDOLF FRÄNKEL

Scala Cinema and Office Building, Bucharest, Romania, 1934

The project is already the second building on the Magheru boulevard, that incorporates a cinema behind the tall modernist volume. It represented a symbol of modernity, the film being a new and innovative medium of art. Rudolf Fränkel had already built a cinema called Lichtburg in 1928 in Berlin, from which he took his experience towards the design of the Scala Building. The curvature in the plan and the glazed windows in the facade give the building its unique form. The entrance of the cinema is placed in the intersecting volume of the facade, giving the effect of two independent entities joined in one complex.



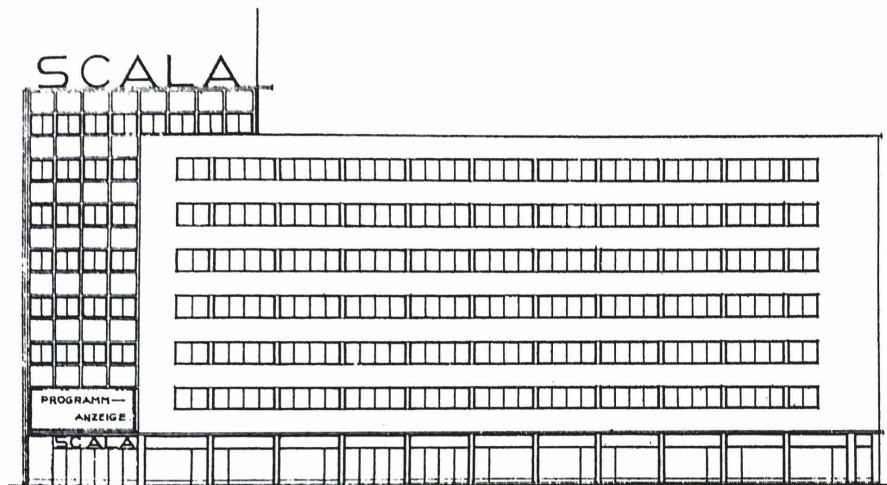
Ground floor plan



First floor plan



View from the Magheru Boulevard

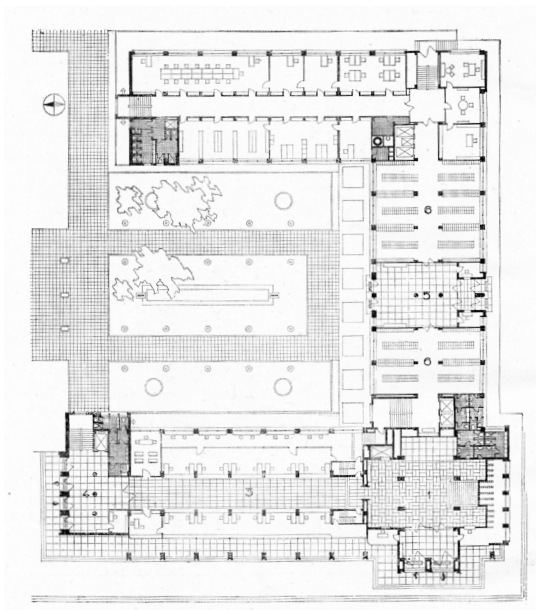


Facade

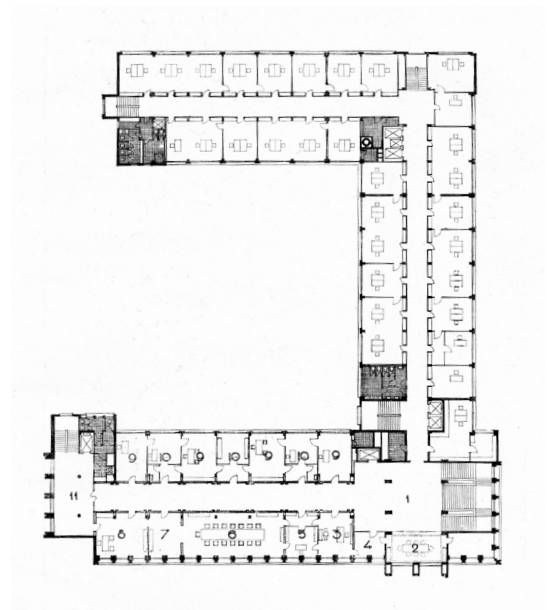
DUILIU MARCU

Palace of State Monopolies, Bucharest, Romania, 1934-1941

In the inter-war period, the Romanian state had a monopoly on manufacturing and selling of tobacco, salt and alcohol products. The administration of the monopoly required a new office building to conduct their work. The large plot of land located on the most important street in Bucharest, allowed the architect to create a U-shaped building with an interior courtyard. As to comply with the regulations of the time the office building was retreated from the busy street, creating a prominent entrance. The building is constructed with reinforced concrete and brick walls, the facades are rhythmized through large windows, that act on the ground floor as showrooms for their selling products.



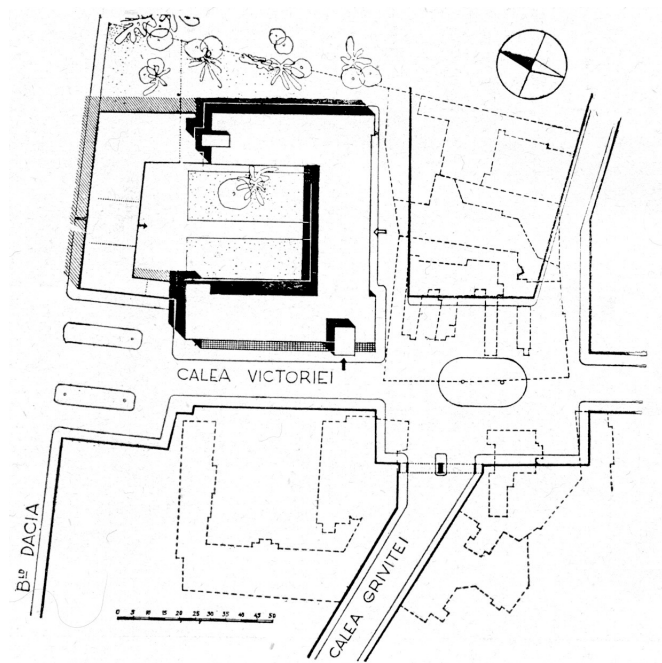
Ground floor plan



First floor plan



View from the Calea Victoriei Boulevard



Site plan

d. INDUSTRY

The industrial upheaval that took place in the inter-war period constituted the backbone of the economic development throughout Europe. The introduction of large scale manufacturing called for a redesign of the work environment. Clients demanded hygienic and efficient spaces that would increase productivity and create an positive image of the business entity.

The factory was the perfect base for the modernist architects. The already functionalist space were redesigned to fit the modern narrative. The projects selected are iconic representations of the modern movement on a large scale, as the complexes allowed a lot of flexibility in the design.²⁶

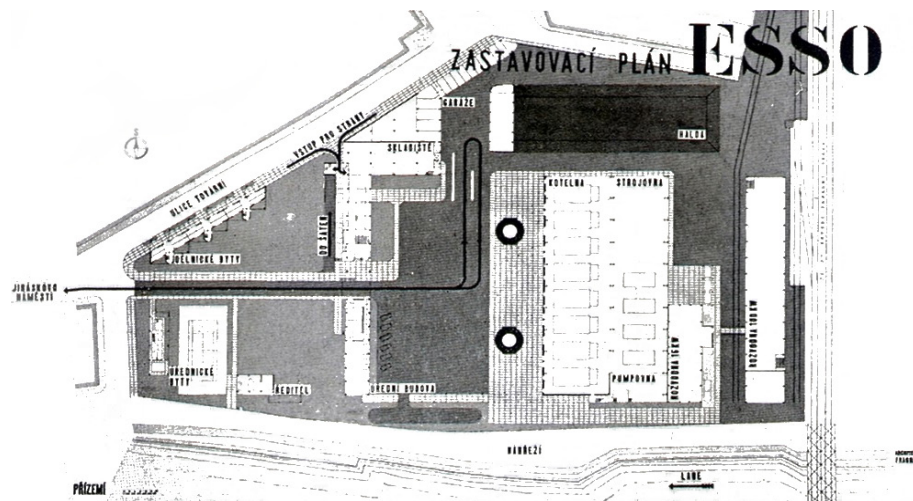
The samples of industrial architecture presented bellow took advantage of the technological innovations and of the economical resources of the owners, applying functionalist ideas, displaying a pure and radical architecture. The modern expression, in these cases, was more than a stylistic choice, the workers benefiting from the simplicity and logic of the serial production organization.

²⁶ Jaroslav Andel, *The New Vision for the New Architecture Czechoslovakia 1918-1938*, Scalo Verlag AG, 2006, pag.82

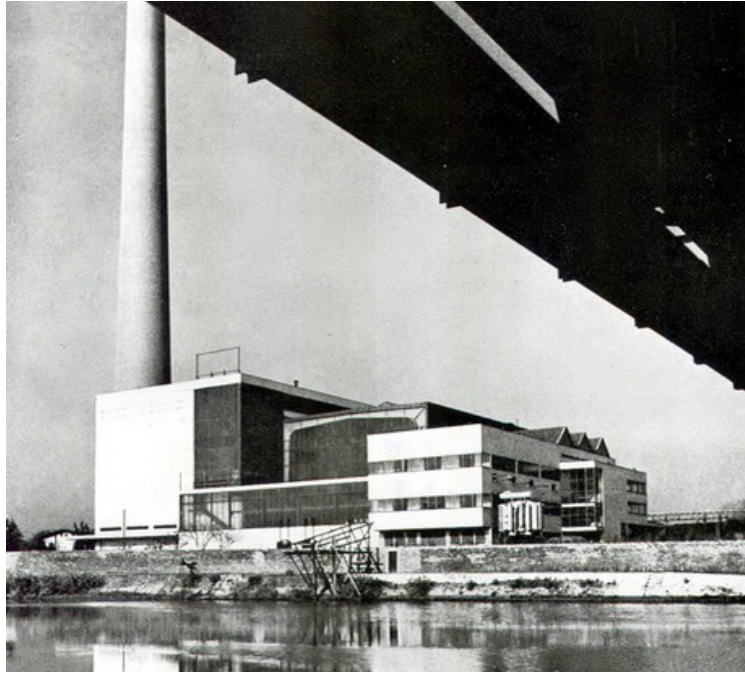
JAROSLAV FRAGNER

ESSO Thermal Power Plant, Kolín, Czechoslovakia, 1929-1930

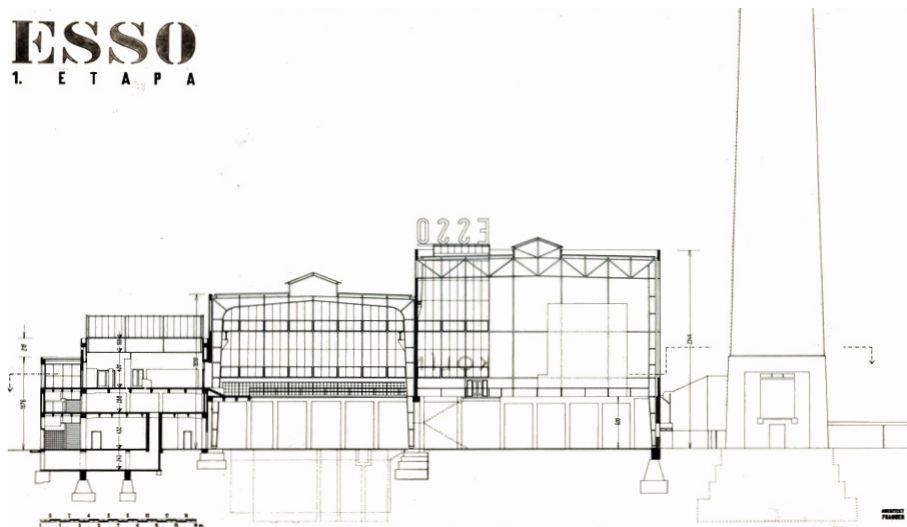
The power plant is positioned on the northern bank of the Elbe river near to the rail road tracks, the ease the access to transportation. As the energy consumption rose, the need for a new efficient power plant for the company ESSO resulted in an architectural competition. The winning project was designed by Jaroslav Fragner, a young member of the avant-garde group *Puristické čtyřky* (Pourist Four). The project entailed an operating building, an administrative building, a warehouse, garages, staff housing and a villa for the director. The reinforced concrete in relation with the slim metal frame construction and glazing windows, made this industrial complex an icon of modernity in architecture throughout Europe.



Site plan



View from the bank of the Elbe River

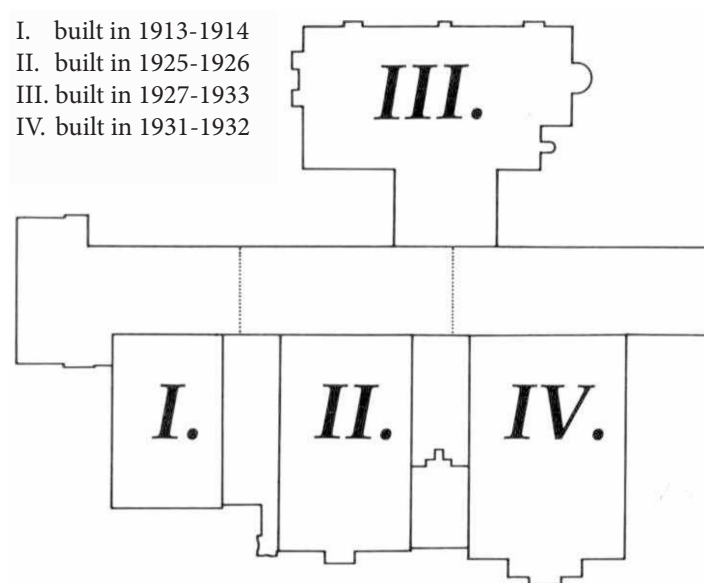


Section

VIRGIL BIERBAUER

Kelenföld Electric Power Plant, Prague, Czechoslovakia, 1913-1932

Kelenföld Electric power plant was one of the most advanced power stations in Europe at the time. As the electrification of Budapest represented a major step forward for the capital's society, the work of Virgil Bierbauer reflected a new and futuristic vision of architecture. The *Control Room* was the most representative space in the project with its oval shaped glass ceiling, green rubber flooring, whitewashed concrete and streamline lit-up control panels. The room created an aesthetic and orderly atmosphere, which was praised in the *Tér és Forma* magazine as a unique aesthetic, that put a constant attention towards the detail, present throughout the buildings.



Plan of the main building



View from the control room

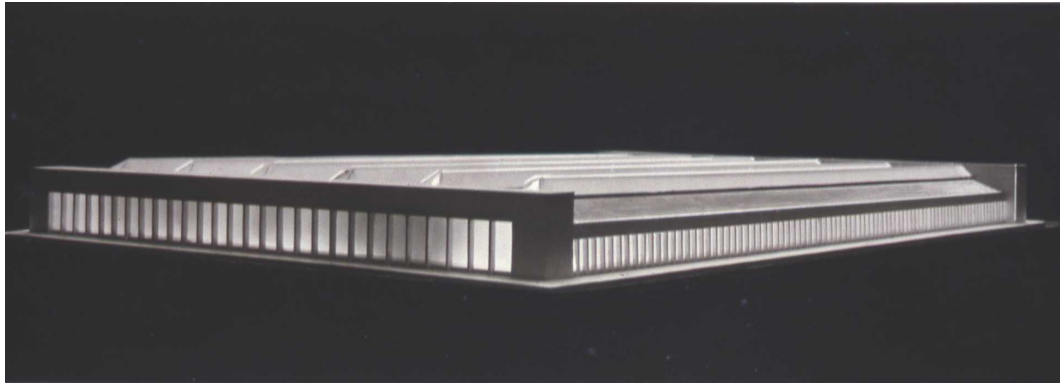


Transformer building

HORIA CREANGĂ

Malaxa Factories, Bucharest, Romania, 1930-1939

The Malaxa steel and locomotive factories were the first large scale modern complexes of manufacturing in Romania. Horia Creangă was firstly commissioned to design two assembly line buildings, after which a series of projects followed, such as an administration pavilion, canteen, laboratories and other annexed buildings. They were all equipped with the latest technologies and sanitary standards. In the magazine called “Vremea”, H. Oprescu described Horia Creangă as the originator of the industrial architectural style that never loses the humanity of the workers out of his sight. *“The worker is treated by other means than just orders”*. His work for the company climaxes with the design of a large hall of 200m x 300m, incorporating all aspects of an industrial manufacturing line under one roof.



Model of the main building



View from the entrance



Facade of the manufacturing building

e. HOUSING

The concept of housing and affordable dwelling was not a foreign concept during the time period that followed the First World War. Many theories relating to the subject were circulating in the academic circles throughout Europe. Its materialization began with the rise of the industrial development especially in England, France and Germany.

The experimentation with the new architectural typology started in the mid 1930s with the help of organizations, that were interested in developing large scale apartment blocks, as well as governmental incentives, that tried to find a solution to the housing crisis that many larger cities were facing at the time.

In Czechoslovakia, Karel Teige was a big advocate for a redesign of the typical apartment block towards a new modern typology. In the book “The Minimum Dwelling”, he expresses his ideas relating to the role of the domestic space and how it could be redesigned to accommodate a new type of residents, the proletariat.

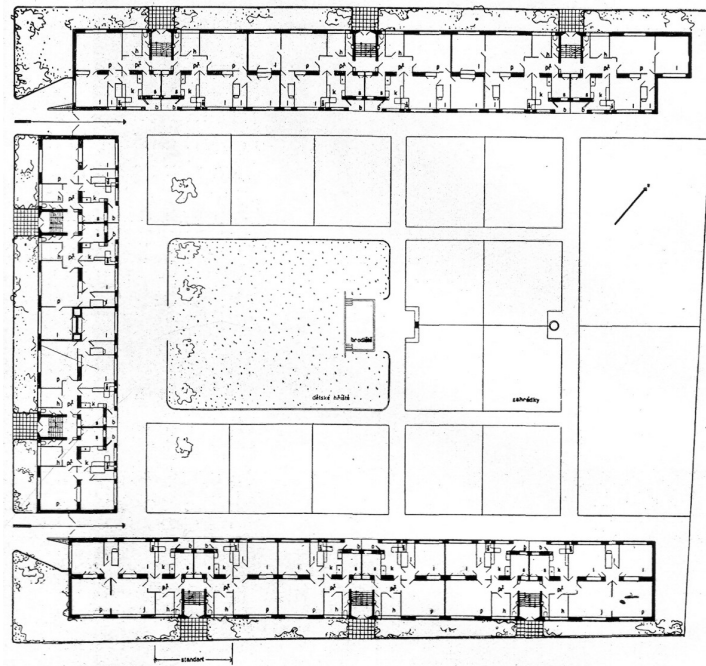
Farkas Molnár published in the *Tér és Forma* magazine, various articles regarding housing and minimal existence. His time at the Bauhaus University, fueled his interest in the new living typology and in the late 1930s he was able to participate in the construction of the housing projects in Budapest.²⁷

²⁷ Pál Ritoók, Ágnes Anna Sebestyén, *Communicating “space and form”: The history and impact of the journal Tér és Forma as the Hungarian pipeline of Modernism*, 2018

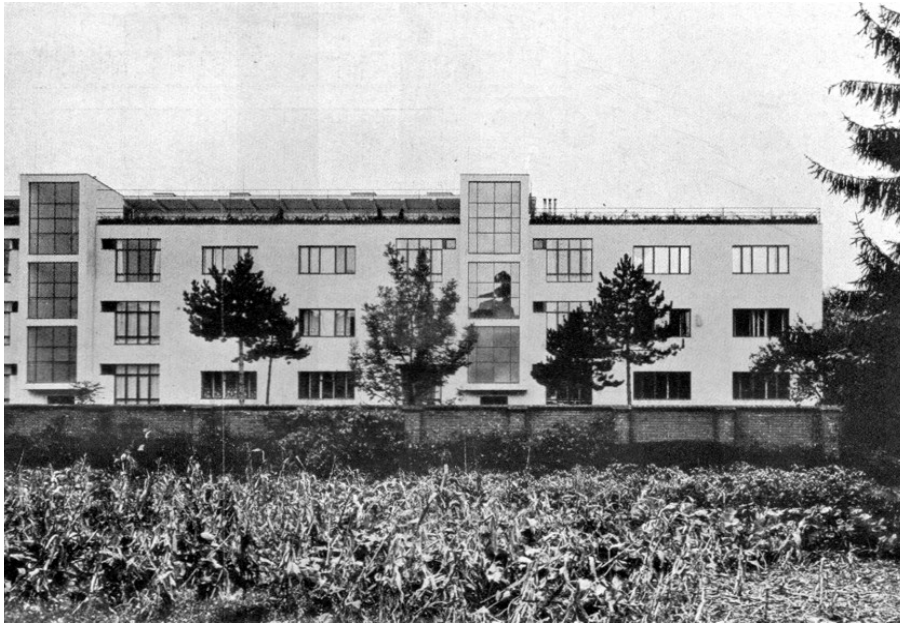
JOSEF POLÁŠEK

Masaryk Colony for Bank Officials, Košice, Czechoslovakia, 1926-1932

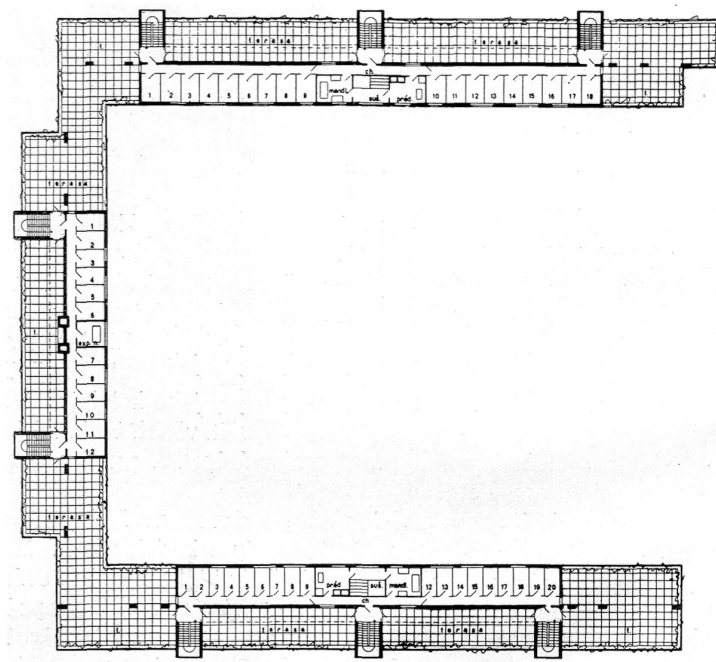
The housing project was a collaboration of 48 Hungarian, Czech and Slovak families of banking employees across Košice, that were determined to create an international housing project with high quality apartments. The clusters of apartments created an U-shaped complex with a generous courtyard, that included a playground for children, a garden for the residents and a swimming pool at the open edge of the plot. The project incorporated all the modern amenities of collective housing such as centralized heating, hot and cold water, and common laundry room, which was located on the top floor of the building. The roof acted as a terrace with large areas open for the public.



Site plan



View from the Jarná Street



Top floor plan

VARIOUS ARCHITECTS

OTI Köztársaság Square, Budapest, District VIII, Hungary, 1932-1935

The OTI group had a significant role in the start of social housing construction, as it was a relatively new concept, that has never been realized in the way before as the project at the Köztársaság Square. The duration from the beginning of the design process to the finalization of the project was not a long one, showcasing the ability of modern frame construction technologies. In order to provide the best possible lighting, ventilation, and views for peer-to-peer small flats, the idea of a three block complex has been developed. Three bars were connected on the ground floor with a series of shops, creating a wall of spaces, acting as a continuation of the urban fabric.

Architects:

Árkay Aladár
Faragó Sándor
Fischer József
Heysa Károly
Ligeti Pál
Molnár Farkas
Pogány Móric
Preisich Gábor
Vadász Mihály



Site plan



View from the II. János Pál pápa tér Park

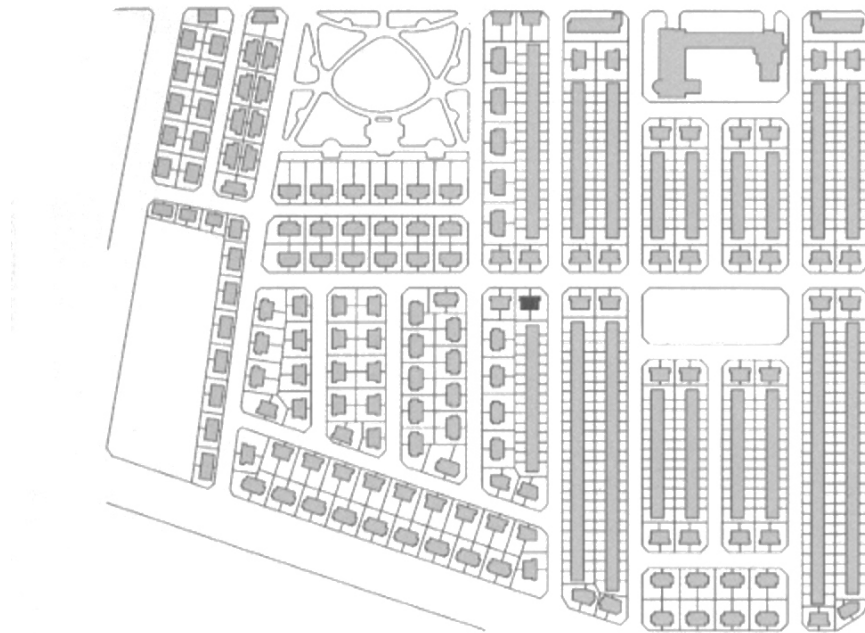


Floor plan

I. HANCIU, N. APRIHĂNEANU & R. UDROIU

Vatra Luminoasa, Bucharest, Romania, 1933-1946

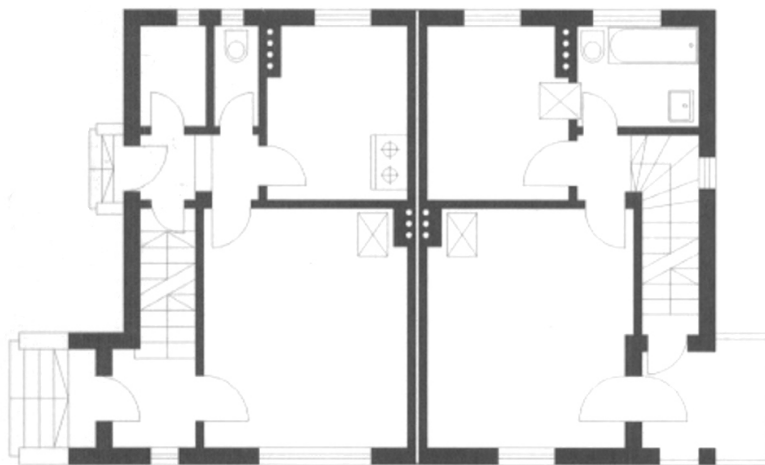
The housing project was financed by the Central Social Security Institution of Romania and represents one of the early examples of affordable housing in the country. The project, issued by the mayors office, was realized through an initiative to extend the capital city. The area of 50 hectares was acquired by the developer and the construction of semi-detached terraced houses, designed by the three architects, started in 1933. The buildings differ in style and function from quarter to quarter, as they were done gradually throughout the years. Altogether, 266 houses were constructed in eight different building types.



Site plan



View of the green area



Ground floor

First floor

f. SANATORIUM

The commonality of illness after the First World War, in particular tuberculosis, demanded the construction of new healthcare institutions. One of the most compelling arguments brought by the adoption of the new architectural style, was the possibility of improving the standard of living and efficiency of space.

The architecture of the hospital was oriented towards the concept of sanatoria, spaces in which people suffering from infectious diseases could be isolated and cured. The common practice of treating the patients was to expose them to the open air and sunlight, thus creating a new typology of architecture in the natural landscapes. Buildings that contained architectural elements such as flat roofs, terraces and strip windows that especially allowed the light to enter the rooms, became the new standard for modern day healthcare.²⁸

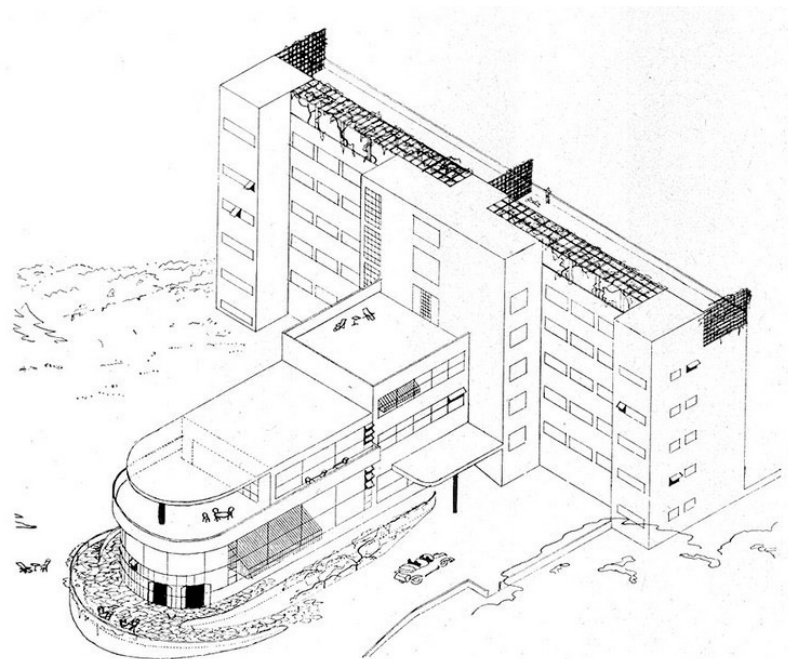
With the discovery of penicillin as a form of treatment of tuberculosis in 1942, the concept of sanatorium became obsolete. Many buildings specialized on curing tuberculosis fell in states of disrepair or became scarce to be found in a still good condition.

²⁸ Margaret Campbell, *What Tuberculosis did for Modernism: The Influence of a Curative Environment on Modernist Design and Architecture*, Cambridge University Press, 2005

JAROMÍR KREJCAR

Sanatorio Machnác, Trenčianske Teplice, Czechoslovakia, 1930-1932

This sanatorium was built by the Health Insurance Company of Private Clerical Workers and represents one of the iconic functionalist architecture examples in Czechoslovakia. It was designed with a volumetric and programmatic division of private rooms and public life in separate sectors. The bedrooms were located in the tall volume with the facade facing the south, as architects put emphasis on the idea of comfort for the individual and a hygienic environment. The social gathering space is located in the rounded volume on the ground floor, the construction of reinforced concrete pillars allowed a free plan and open sight. The roofs act as recovery spaces, offering views towards the landscape.

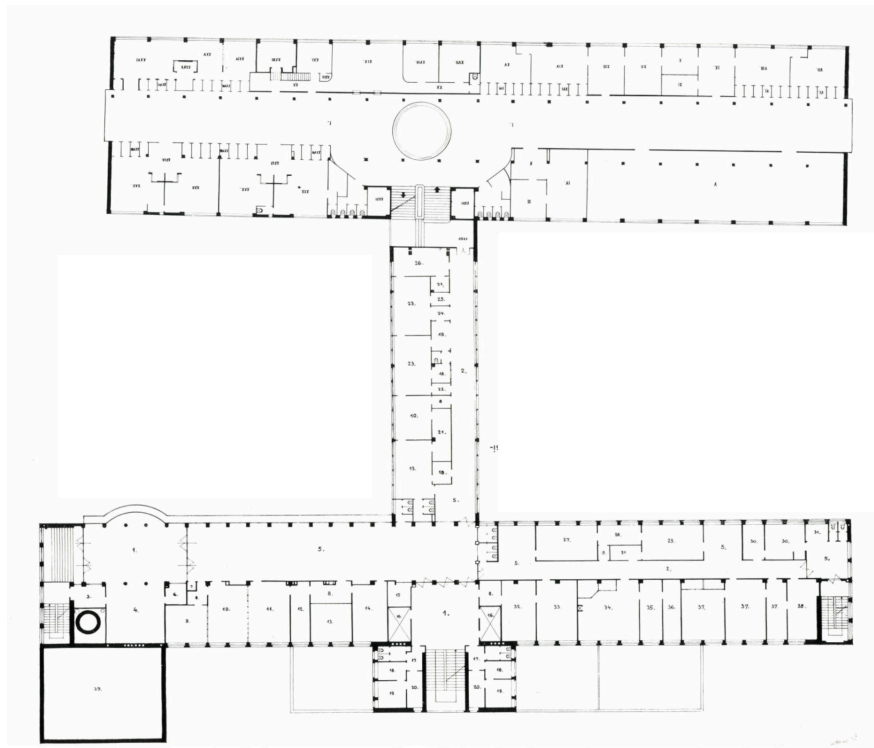


Axonometric view

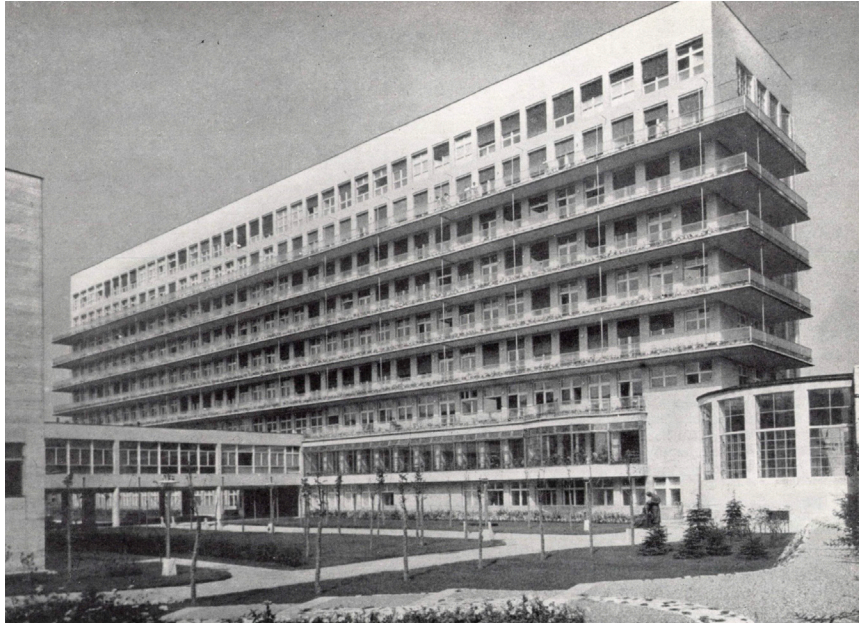
GEDEON GERLÖCZY & NÁNDOR KÖRMENDI

OTI Hospital, Budapest, Hungary, 1937-1939

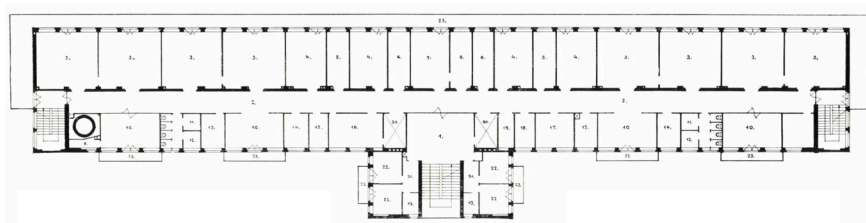
The project was financed by the OTI group to develop a new clinic for bodily injured patients. The design of the hospital was centered around the fast recovery and the quality of life for those hospitalized. The building was positioned on one of the capitals main streets. It was designed vertically, to give all patients rooms with large openings to brighten up the rooms. Each floor represents a sector of the hospital, creating an organized and less cross-contaminated environment. The transportation of patients was done through the vertical circulation with the help of elevators.



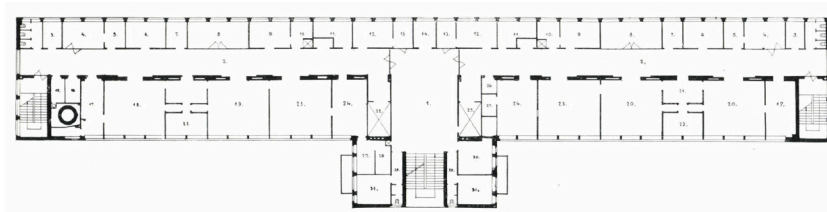
First floor plan



View from the Varna Street



General floor plan

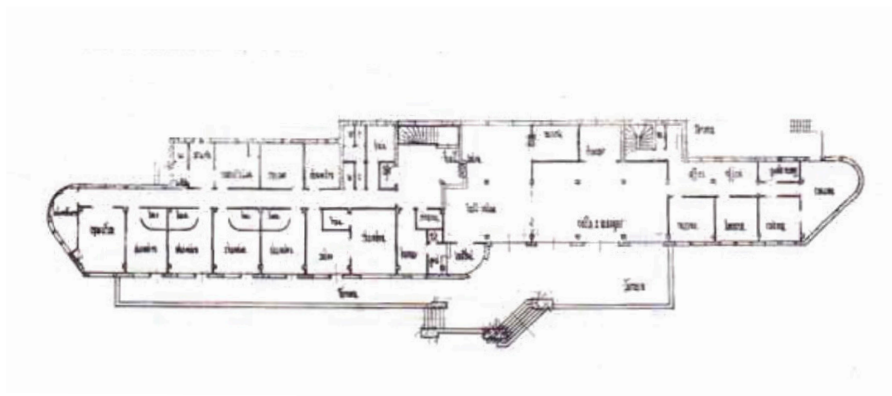


Seventh floor plan

MARCEL IANCU

Sanatorio Bucegi, Predeal, Romania, 1934

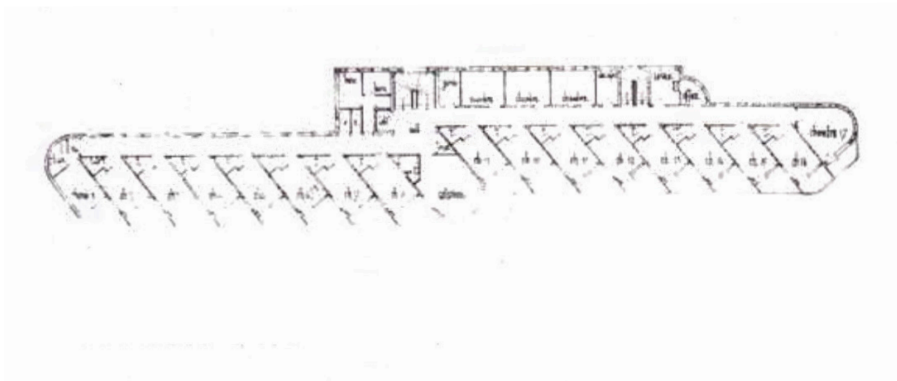
The hospital was constructed in the Bucegi mountain range as the first private establishment for lung infections in Romania. The project was designed in a functionalist spirit, benefiting from high-standard equipments and spaces. The ground floor was dedicated to recreational areas such as a smoking lounge, a cinema and a dining room, while the upper floors contained the patient rooms, the service rooms, a solarium and a terrace. The floors are split in the center of the building, creating two wings for the program. The large building is tamed with a curvature of the main corners, integrating the volume in the landscape.



Ground plan



Outside view



First floor plan

TROUBLE AHEAD

The Czechoslovakian, Hungarian, and Romanian architects efforts towards a new identity, transpired through high quality projects that changed the image of Prague, Brno, Budapest and Bucharest. The projects might not be seen as revolutionary or important as the works of Walter Gropius, Le Corbusier or Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, but they were the attempt to bring innovation in a new chapter of history for the three countries.

The architects applied many motifs of modernist architecture, bringing the projects to a minimalist form, following the rules of Le Corbusier, or respecting the percepts of the Bauhaus Manifesto. The common use of flat roofs, striped windows, vertical and horizontal characters, new materials (reinforced concrete, steel, glass, white plaster), terraced roofs, visual expression of structure and specific color schemes, in the selected works, unify the architectural movement in the three countries, creating an axis of International style through the European continent.

The industrialized Czechoslovakia and it's proximity to Germany and their progressive ideas, adopted a new architectural style, through the industrial and commercial development of private businesses. The real estate investments made by a young generation, allowed architects to realize high quality projects, embodying the Western ideals.

The activism of Hungarian architects towards the introduction of the modern movement to the local scene, resulted in a series of projects embodying a functionalist spirit, by the choices of industrial materials, holistic design choices and clear facades. The collaboration between CIAM and the Hungarian branch, throughout the years, witnessed their desire towards an international relationship between different representatives of the movement.

In Romania, some architects fully embraced the modernist style, while others tried to adapt it to traditional aesthetics and lifestyle. The clients were, on the one hand industrialists who valued the new design as an appropriate expression for their assets, on the other hand upper middle-class investors with a certain pragmatism and cultural opening.

The advancements of the movement would come to an abrupt halt, as the political sphere of the European continent took a turn for the worse. Many architects that were involved with the modern movement fled to other countries, to escape persecution from the authorities, which became increasingly present with the rise of the nationalist parties. The modernity of the projects built before 1939 had a large enough impact to convince the public that the future lies within the new architectural language, but the Second World War would shape the political sphere in the East Central Europe towards a totalitarian regime, replacing the ideals promoted in the inter-war period with a communist ideology.

After 1945, some of the remaining architects who activated in the inter-war period were persecuted for being exponents of the bourgeoisie and others, continued to work for the communist regime. The architecture of the 1940s and 1950s in the three countries, favored the classicist style, known as socialist realism.

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