CZECHOSLOVAK ARCHITECTURE IN SUBCARPATHIAN RUS

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ABSTRACT: This paper deals with an outline of the doctoral student’s research work. It briefly lists some of the most important buildings left by Czechoslovak architects in Subcarpathian Rus in the interwar period.

KEY WORDS: Interwar architecture, Subcarpathian Rus, Czechoslovak architects, residential and civil buildings, urban planning

Introduction

On 10 September 1919, a treaty was concluded in Saint-Germain, according to which Subcarpathian Rus became part of Czechoslovakia.

There was a period of about twenty years which significantly raised the standard of living of the Subcarpathian population, alleviated illiteracy and at least partially ensured healthcare for the population. Unfortunately, development was halted in 1938 by the so-called Vienna Arbitration and finally ended on 29 June 1945, when the territory was annexed to the Soviet Union.

The article discusses the development of Uzhhorod, important buildings by Czechoslovak architects in some other cities, and projects related to the author’s research.
Czechoslovak footprint in Uzhhorod and Transcarpathia

After the annexation of Subcarpathian Rus to Czechoslovakia, Uzhhorod became the capital of the region, and a huge construction boom took place.

Uzhhorod did not have the necessary administrative infrastructure for the role of a capital city, so the construction of administrative buildings for the necessary government institutions, residential buildings for civil servants, schools, libraries, industrial buildings, roads, pavements, parks, residential districts conceived on the principles of a modern garden city, and cultural and sports facilities for the inhabitants - a city cinema, hotels, restaurants, swimming pools - began at a dizzying pace. In the first ten years after the annexation of Subcarpathian Rus to Czechoslovakia, the number of buildings in Uzhhorod increased by 75%.

The unprecedented construction activity was not restricted to Uzhhorod, but took place in basically the whole of Subcarpathian Rus. Technical infrastructure, transport buildings, industrial buildings, administrative, medical, educational, residential, social and sports buildings were missing everywhere in this new part of the republic.

In Chust, according to the project of the architectural office of Jindřich Freiwald and Jaroslav Böhm, a state grammar school with 15 classes, including physics and chemistry classrooms, an auditorium and a gymnasium was being built. Each teacher had their own classroom, and an office was designed for the headmaster. The school had a playground and a botanical garden.²

Fig.1 State colony in Chust³
In 1923-24, a state colony of houses in the garden city style was built according to the design of the same office. It was named after Czechoslovakian President Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk and 94 families lived there. Six more dormitories were built nearby.

Another residential colony was designed by the architectural office of Jindřich Freiwald and Jaroslav Böhm for the needs of the employees of the salt mines in Solotvyn (Slatina Mines). The colony was built in 1924-25 and again has all the features of a garden city.

![Fig.2 Mining colony of the State Salt Mines](image)

This unique building, appreciated not only in Czechoslovakia but also abroad and called by experts a European unique, was designed by Jaroslav Fragner for the Czechoslovak state children's home in Mukachevo. It complies with all the sanitary standards of the time and uses the latest technology and design solutions.

![Fig.3 Jaroslav Fragner: Infant pavilion at the children’s home in Mukachevo](image)
In many places the construction was carried out in a lively manner, in some places the designers tried to provide at least a partial urban solution. The city of Uzhhorod had a great advantage in this respect, where the prominent Czechoslovak architect and urban planner Adolf Liebscher was involved in the creation of the city’s regulatory plan.

Liebscher published a series of detailed articles about his time in Uzhhorod in the magazine Horizont in 1927.6

Uzhhorod did not have an overall regulatory plan at that time. But since the need for public and residential housing was urgent, a part of it, the Maly Galagov district, began to be developed separately. This was made possible by its favourable location, separated from the old town by the Uzh River and conveniently suited to a separate solution in terms of terrain. However, Liebscher was careful in his design to ensure that the solution would not be a problem for the overall regulatory plan of the city in the future. He first drew up a detailed plan for the roads and the connection to the old town by a new bridge linking the main street of the old town with the proposed main street of the new district of Maly Galagov. On this axis he located the central square with its representative public buildings, the courthouse and the prison, military headquarters and officers’ houses.

![Fig.4 Conceptual building plan of Maly Galagov (source Horizont 1927)](image)

The dominant feature of the square was the government building in a central position. Other state buildings envisaged in the city’s building programme were the gen-
darmerie headquarters with a military school, the public works department, and the state printing office. The specification for these buildings was drawn up by the Public Works Department, and the buildings were intended to be two storeys high, with at most a loft extension. In the urban area of Maly Galagov (but also in the other intended area of Velyky Galagov) it was envisaged to build large residential quarters, which Liebscher describes as villa quarters. The city’s plan also had amenities in mind and planned for a Russian national house, a trade academy, a public gymnasium, a reading room, a bathhouse, a poorhouse, a modern slaughterhouse, and public toilets. In keeping with the city’s intentions, Liebscher also placed restaurants, cafes, and shops in the conceptual development plan to enliven the neighbourhood. The new district was to be completely self-contained, independent of the old district.

Fig.5 A. Liebscher View of the government building (source Horizont 1927)

Adolf Liebscher also designed for Uzhhorod a building for use as a courthouse and a penitentiary and state residential buildings for Czechoslovak officers, postal workers and employees of the financial administration.

Fig.6 Courtrooms and punishment cells - overall view (source Horizont 1927)
The construction of the prison is timeless, using glass and reinforced concrete structures, which was then less common, to lighten the central part of the building and the galleries. The glass-reinforced concrete structures were made by the company Duplex-prismat, s.r.o. from Prague.
Fig. 9 State residential houses for Czechoslovak officers (source Horizont 1927)

Fig. 10 State residential houses for postal employees (source Horizont 1927)

Fig. 11 State dwelling houses for employees of the financial administration (source Horizont 1927)
In addition to Adolf Liebscher, the architect František Krupka, who designed the building of the Provincial Office with its beautiful marble halls in the style of modern classicism, and Josef Gočár, the author of the design of the functionalist main post office building, also designed for Maly Galagov. The generous regulation of the Uzh River and the pleasantly designed waterfront, with a beautiful pedestrian promenade and avenue of lime trees, created a perfect space for a pleasant rest for the inhabitants of the modern city being developed.

Jindřich Freiwald and his office were designing the villa districts here as well. The projects are described in the book Our Buildings.⁹

Fig.12 Side, front and rear facade of the house with 4 flats (source Jindřich Freiwald Our buildings)

Fig.13 Clerical semi-detached house - front and side facade (source Jindřich Freiwald Our Buildings)

In 1938, however, the so-called Vienna Arbitration brought the development of Uzhhorod to a complete halt. A number of already planned projects remained unrealised, such as the hotel on Uzhhorod’s waterfront designed by the architects Šrámek and Vichra.

In June 1945, Subcarpathian Rus was definitively annexed to the Soviet Union and the works of Czechoslovak architects in Subcarpathian Rus fell into oblivion for many decades due to the political situation. Interest in them has only recently begun to manifest itself, especially by Ukrainian non-profit organisations, such as the Uzhhorod Modernism association.¹¹
The Czech Centre in Kiev launched the Czech Footprints in Uzhhorod project, which is followed by the Czech Footprints in Transcarpathia project.

**Results and discussion**

The results to date have been gained through the author’s study of the available literature and research in archives in the Czech and Slovak Republics.

The research is also linked to the specific research project FA-J-22-8095 entitled “The Heritage of Czechoslovak Architects in the Former Subcarpathian Rus in the Context of Historic Preservation” within the framework of which there was a colloquium with three main topics:
• the common journey of Czechoslovakia and Subcarpathian Rus through the examples of family roots, obligation to the future
• the Czechoslovak footprint in Subcarpathian Rus
• monuments in danger

Papers from the colloquium are presented in the proceedings The Czechoslovak footprint in Subcarpathian Rus, monuments in danger and the tasks of monument conservation with emphasis on the importance of cultural heritage. This project is being followed this year by the specific research project FA-J-23-8333 entitled “The Heritage of Czechoslovak Architects in the Former Subcarpathian Rus in the Context of Past and Present Historical Context”. One of the aims of this project is to involve Ukrainian students studying at the Faculty of Architecture of Brno University of Technology in the form of a questionnaire survey.

Conclusions

The architectural and construction activities of Czechoslovak architects, builders and firms in Ukraine and especially in Subcarpathian Rus in the period between the two world wars have not been systematically mapped so far. Therefore, the author of this article set this task as the aim of her dissertation. The current situation - the horrific Russian aggression, the impossibility of predicting the further development of the conflict, and thus the unfeasability of field research, on which the author of the article placed great emphasis, restricts the author for the time being to research materials and literature available from the Czech Republic.

Literature used

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Footnotes

[3] FREIWALD, Jindřich. 1924. Our buildings. Illustrations, plans and designs of state, cooperative and factory colonies, family houses, villas, summer residences, tenement houses, public buildings and industrial buildings. Prague, own expense, addendum II.
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