

“For Us, It Was a New and Difficult Task”:¹ Czechoslovak Embassy Buildings in the 1918 – 1939 Period and the Construction of State Representation

„Byla to pro nás úloha nová a těžká“:
Budovy československých vyslanectví v letech
1918 – 1939 a konstruování reprezentace státu

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LADISLAV MACHOŇ, RESIDENTIAL
BUILDING OF THE CZECHOSLOVAK
EMBASSY IN WARSAW, DINING
ROOM, 1924 – 1925

LADISLAV MACHOŇ, INTERIÉR
REZIDENČNÍ BUDOVY
ČESKOSLOVENSKEHO
VYSLANECTVÍ VE VARŠAVĚ,
JÍDELNA, 1924 – 1925

Source Zdroj: F. 26 – Machoň, National
Technical Museum (NTM)

Ke kulturnímu konstruování československé identity mimo území nově vzniklého státu měly po roce 1918 kromě pavilonů a expozic na mezinárodních výstavách přispívat i méně exponované budovy vyslanectví. Také tyto objekty měly potvrdit tezi o vyspělosti československé kultury, architektury a uměleckého průmyslu, kterou sdíleli představitelé státního aparátu. Tato studie se soustředí na necelou desítku realizovaných novostaveb, přestaveb a významných úprav legací z let 1918–1939 (podrobněji se tedy nevěnuje neuskutečněným záměrům v Tiraně, Tokiu nebo Moskvě či dílčím úpravám vyslaneckých budov). Více než na formální aspekty objektů se text zaměřuje na instrumentalizaci architektury k politickým cílům, na analýzu mechanismů a procesů vedoucích k zajištění jejich návrhů a realizaci a na vykreslení prostředí, v němž se uplatňovaly často odlišné zájmy zainteresovaných aktérů. Kvůli sledování vývoje těchto dějů v čase autor volí chronologickou strukturu textu odpovídající datu realizací jednotlivých záměrů. Při výzkumu se opírá především o fondy archivu Ministerstva zahraničních věcí ČR.

Po vzniku samostatného státu Československo postupně navázalo diplomatické vztahy s většinou evropských zemí, několika mimoevropskými velmocemi a následně i s řadou nezávislých států v Asii a Latinské Americe. Zastupitelské úřady tehdy státní aparát umísťoval zpravidla do existujících budov. V několika případech však ministerstvo zahraničních věcí symbolicky zdůraznilo přerušení kontinuity s činností rakousko-uherské diplomacie vlastní stavební aktivitou. Novostavby a adaptace stávajících objektů stát realizoval především v zemích střední a jihovýchodní Evropy. K výběru prostorů legací docházelo zpočátku živelně. Klíčovou roli v něm hráli tituláři, kteří vyhledávali vhodné budovy i pozemky. S postupnou stabilizací struktury ministerstva zahraničí i sítě vyslanectví se formalizoval také proces výběru a schvalování objektů. Zvyšoval se rovněž důraz kladený na hospodárnost veřejných investic. Kromě resortů zahraničních věcí a veřejných prací mělo v celém procesu stěžejní úlohu ministerstvo financí a Nejvyšší účetní kontrolní úřad.

Ministerstvo veřejných prací vysílalo do zahraničí kvůli vyhodnocení budov či pozemků svého znalce. Uměleckého experta na místo několikrát vypravil i resort zahraničních věcí. V roce 1920 opakovaně svěřil tento úkol Janu Kotěrovi. Ten v jednom ze svých posudků přisoudil Československu „kulturní výši“ a „pokročilejší citění“. Stylovému hodnocení a paušálnímu uplatnění konstruktů o kulturní vyspělosti Československa se však nevyhýbali ani znalci ministerstva veřejných prací. Kotěru v této roli v roce 1922 vystřídal grafik Jaromír Stretti-Zamponi, který záhy inicioval vznik tzv. meziministerské komise pro zařizování zastupitelských úřadů. Již v roce 1923 komise rozhodla o způsobu zajištění projektu novostavby vyslanectví v Bělehradu a o autorech návrhu adaptací legačních budov v Budapešti a Varšavě. Tento výběr se stal určujícím i pro přípravu návrhů a vlastnosti dalších legačních staveb a jejich úprav až do roku 1939.

Do prvního zahraničního stavebního počínu československé diplomacie komise ještě zasáhnout nemohla. Návrhem adaptace a přístavby budovy vyslanectví v Bukurešti a následně i projektem novostavby konzulárního oddělení ambasády československé úřady pověřily místního stavitele Oskara Grosse, který obě stavby mezi lety 1922 a 1924 také provedl. Mnohem

významnější akci pro Československo představovala výstavba nového sídla zastupitelského úřadu v Bělehradě. Přestože meziministerská komise na počátku roku 1923 zvažovala uspořádání vyzvané soutěže, posléze se rozhodla pro veřejnou soutěž (další obdobnou soutěž na řešení legačního objektu už úřady v meziválečném období nevypsaly). Vzhledem ke spolenectví obou států i narativu slovanské vzájemnosti přikládal státní aparát záměru mimořádnou důležitost. Ve vítězné studii architekt Alois Mezera navrhl velkorysou budovu střízlivě rozvíjející formy moderního klasicismu. Podařilo se mu vtisknout objektu monumentální charakter zdůrazňující vyspělost Československa. Stavba i přesto nabídlu jednu z relevantních odpovědí na program neokázalé reprezentace vytyčený prezidentem Masarykem.

Závažnými pokusy pojednat obdobnou úlohu bez větší opory v tradici a historicismu se v těžké době staly projekt adaptace vyslanectví v Budapešti a návrhy přestavby a novostavby legačních budov ve Varšavě. I tyto případy rozhodujícím způsobem ovlivnila meziministerská komise, která na sklonku roku 1923 na základě výsledků vyzvané soutěže kvůli „zdrženlivosti a celkové vkusnosti“ řešení zvolila Otakara Novotného coby autora projektu pro Budapešť. Odmítla přitom návrh Františka Krupky, člena bratislavské Společnosti umeleckého priemyslu, který jej vypracoval z pověření slovenského referátu resortu veřejných prací. Mělo jít o první realizaci svého druhu, kterou v oblasti doposud ovládané Čechy připraví Slováci. Během téhož jednání komise zároveň rozhodla o oslovení dalšího ze soutěžících Ladislava Machoně pro návrh interiéru rezidence tituláře ve Varšavě. Machoň měl napravit nedostatky návrhu přestavby, který z iniciativy československého vyslance vypracoval stavitel Jan Pacl. Otakar Novotný se v projektu pro Budapešť pokusil zjednodušit řešení prostoru; u vybavení a mobiliáře využil povětšinou uměřené geometrické formy a kontrastní barevnost. Ladislav Machoň v návrhu varšavských interiérů kromě odkazů na klasickou architekturu uplatnil i motivy z rejstříku národního stylu; u nábytku a dalších prvků se tradiční vzory pokusil soudobým způsobem interpretovat.

O návrzích dalších vyslaneckých novostaveb či adaptací se patrně již nerozhodovalo při jednáních meziministerské komise. Přestože Stretti-Zamponi zůstal ve službách ministerstva zahraničí až do pozdních třicátých let a významně se podílel na zařizování legací, klíčovou roli ve výběru autorů projektů měl stavební rada Pacold z resortu veřejných prací. Ten zjevně upřednostňoval autory, kteří již měli s návrhy legačních staveb zkušenosti. V roce 1925 tak po konzultaci s ministerstvem zahraničních věcí pověřil projektem nové úřední budovy ambasády ve Varšavě právě Machoně. Architekt stavbě vtiskl programově moderní charakter. Od roku 1928, kdy byla dokončena novostavba československého vyslanectví v Bělehradě, návrhy přestaveb, nových budov i zařízení dalších ambasád vypracovával téměř výhradně Alois Mezera. V letech 1928–1932 připravil projekt adaptace rezidenčního objektu vyslanectví v Berlíně. Nadčasovým pojednáním interiéru podtrhl společenskou a reprezentační úlohu budovy. V roce 1929 resorty zahraničních věcí a veřejných prací Mezérovi svěřily náčrt zastupitelského úřadu v Ankaře, poté co zamítly projekt původně osloveného Petra Kropáčka. Po několika letech odkladů musel Mezera svůj návrh výrazně

zredukovat; ke střízlivým, nezdobným formám „minimalizovaného moderního klasicismu“ rezidenční i úřední budovy tak kromě měřítka čtvrti přispěla i snaha o finanční úspory. Z pověření ministerstva veřejných prací pak Mezera v roce 1938 načrtl podobu nové berlínské rezidence, již si měla vynutit zamýšlená demolice původního objektu v rámci Speerovy připravované přestavby Berlína. Architekt zůstal věrný konzervativní moderně, vůči speerovskému monumentálnímu a doslovnému klasicismu však zůstal autonomní. Po okupaci Československa v březnu 1939 už k realizaci stavby nedošlo.

Tato studie ukazuje, že podoba československých vyslanectví realizovaných mezi lety 1918 a 1939 byla výslednicí řady různoběžných vektorů. Většinou staveb předcházelo implicitní zadání zdůrazňující náležitou důstojnost a reprezentativnost. Představitelé státu nicméně často artikulovali požadavek skromnosti a uměřenosti. Právě ta může v posledku spojovat všechny zkoumané realizace. Českoslovenští politici, úředníci i diplomaté také sdíleli konstrukt o vyspělosti československé kultury, architektury a uměleckého průmyslu, o náležitých formách reprezentace

se však téměř nevedla veřejná diskuze. Pojetí architektury coby nástroje reprezentace státu se u československých vyslanectví v čase příliš neměnilo. Přesto v první polovině dvacátých let, kdy výběr návrhů zajišťovala meziministerská komise, dostali příležitost tvůrci hledající pro tuto typologii soudobé formy. Častěji se však uplatnilo „univerzální“ nadčasové a mezinárodně srozumitelné tvarosloví, jež ve svých projektech dokázal rozvinout Alois Mezera, který se po roce 1928 stal téměř výhradním autorem návrhů legačních budov a jejich úprav. Kromě něj hráli klíčovou roli v celém procesu expert resortu zahraničních věcí Stretti-Zamponi a stavební rada Pacold z ministerstva veřejných prací. Studie rovněž potvrzuje stereotyp doprovázející soužití Čechů a Slováků ve společném státě. Reprezentaci republiky v zahraničí dominovali Češi. Slovenská strana se pokusila prosadit u návrhu a realizace vyslanectví v Budapešti, a demonstrovat tak slovenské umění i umělecký průmysl jako rovnocenné českému. Ambice se jí však podařilo naplnit jen zčásti. Je příznačné, že zástupci ostatních národnostních menšin v čele s Němci v návrzích a realizaci československých vyslanectví relevantní uplatnění nenašli.

“[...] and it was clear beforehand that the first attempts truly could not work out for complete satisfaction.”²

The cultural construction of state identity and the search for forms of state representation in architecture and other disciplines have received increased attention from many Czech researchers particularly in connection with the recent centenary of the founding of independent Czechoslovakia. Of the published works, it is worth mentioning the project *Budování státu* [Building the State] and the collection *Co bylo Československo* [What Was Czechoslovakia], initiated and realised at the Academy of Arts, Architecture, and Design in Prague. Similarly addressing the theme has been another current project by the same institution, *Architektura a česká politika v 19.–21. Století / Architecture and Czech Politics from the 19th to the 21st Centuries*.³ Included by the editors of *Budování státu* among the realised buildings constructed as symbols of Czechoslovakia's public representation between 1918 and 1939 was the Czechoslovak Embassy building in Belgrade. However, unlike the many international exhibits or fairground pavilions that the Czechoslovak government used to display itself internationally in this era, diplomatic buildings and their contribution to the formation of state identity have remained until now in the background. The one exception here is the academic work by Jan Jaroš from 2006, which addressed the strategy for selecting and acquiring buildings for Czechoslovakia's diplomatic premises in the interwar period from the standpoint of social history.⁴ The present study, therefore, takes as its goal the examination of these buildings in the context of the relation between state architecture and politics. More than the formal aspects of these realisations, it focuses on the instrumentalization of architecture towards political goals, on the analysis of the mechanisms and processes leading to the emergence of these designs and realisations, and on delineating the context that shaped the qualities of this one specific manifestation of state representation and joint construction of the image and identity of Czechoslovakia outside the state's borders. In this effort, the author has relied primarily on research in the archives of the Foreign Ministry of the Czech Republic.

The start of the building of the Czechoslovak embassy network can be linked already to the establishment of the Czechoslovak National Council in Paris in 1916. Shortly after its founding, the Council had branches in the Allied powers – Britain, Italy, Russia, the USA – as well as Switzerland. Right upon independence in 1918, the new state sent its first diplomatic representatives to Paris, London, Rome, St. Petersburg, and Washington, with representatives rapidly selected for Serbia and Japan. Over the next years, Czechoslovakia established diplomatic ties with most other European states, several non-European powers, and eventually with most of the independent states in Asia and Latin America. At the end of the war, for reasons of economy the state tried to use for its legations several former embassies of the Austro-Hungarian empire. However, according to the Treaty of St.-Germain, the embassy buildings of the former monarchy could only be divided between

Austria and Hungary.⁵ As such, Czechoslovakia had to select entirely new premises. Moreover, the necessity of locating official and residential spaces elsewhere, whether leased or purchased, allowed for a symbolic breaking of continuity with the previous Austro-Hungarian diplomacy and emphasising national independence and autonomous geopolitical orientation. In certain instances, the state commissioned entirely new buildings, or at least enlargements or extensive adaptations:⁶ entirely new embassy and residential buildings in Belgrade, a new diplomatic complex in Ankara, reconstruction of the ambassador's residence and a new embassy in Bucharest, adaptation of the residence in Warsaw and later a new embassy there, or minor alterations to the buildings in Budapest, Berlin, and Washington. However, plans for constructing new Czechoslovak embassies in Tirana, Tokyo, and Moscow remained unrealised before the outbreak of World War II.⁷

Choosing the spaces for diplomatic use initially took place on an essentially spontaneous basis. The key role went to the ambassadors themselves, who went looking for suitable buildings or sites. As the structure of the Foreign Ministry gradually stabilised, so did the process for selecting and approving embassy buildings, along with an increasing emphasis on economy regarding public investments. Guidelines for the procurement process appeared in February 1921 in the form of a cabinet ruling. Among its stipulations is the requirement that if a suitable building is offered via the legation, the proposal should be presented to the cabinet, the Supreme Accounting Audit Office (NÚKÚ) and the ministries of public works and finance. Once the government approves the investment and if there are no objections from either the Finance Ministry or the NÚKÚ, the Public Works Ministry, the investor for the purchase, adaptation, or construction, should by law send its own expert to evaluate the plan. Then, from the evaluation report, the final decision would be made by the cabinet. As it happened, while the Foreign Affairs Ministry in Prague immediately began following this procedure, the diplomats abroad repeatedly tried to evade it, citing the pressure of time.⁸ And ministerial investment plans regularly met with refusal from the NÚKÚ or the Finance Ministry, the latter speaking of the need to limit budgetary expenditures as well as offering priority to construction within Czechoslovakia to reduce unemployment. Of the involved institutions, the one most favourable to the plans tended to be the Public Works Ministry.

For evaluation of the buildings or their future sites, the Foreign Ministry repeatedly sent out its own artistic expert to the locations themselves. In 1920, the ministry assigned this task to the prominent architect Jan Kotěra.⁹ As of February 1920, Kotěra sent the ministry a testimonial regarding the plan to purchase two buildings in Berlin on Regentenstrasse and Rauchstrasse to serve respectively as the residence and the embassy.¹⁰ His evaluation of the Villa delle Rosa as the site for the embassy in Rome dismissed the contemporary Italian "poor taste that may be quite acceptable for an Italian, but less satisfactory for us, a nationality of the north".¹¹ Nonetheless, he recommended the purchase, since in the medium-term horizon it could be replaced with a new structure "that would fully match the cultural elevation of our state", one marked by "a more progressive sensibility".¹² Still, similar stylistic judgements and the automatic application of the idea of Czechoslovakia's cultural advancement occurred as well among the experts from the Public Works Ministry.¹³

Likely on grounds of his worsening health, Kotěra was replaced in November 1922 by the graphic artist Jaromír Stretti-Zamponi.¹⁴ It was Stretti-Zamponi, whose assignment (in contrast to Kotěra's) was not only to "ensure the artistic conditions and provide a good impression from the aesthetic side" but equally to arrange for the interior furnishings of the embassies and work with the architects on the designs,¹⁵ who shortly after his hiring initiated the formation of an "inter-ministerial" commission for acquiring embassy buildings. This body would evaluate buildings that were being considered for purchase and the plans for their intended alterations; alongside representation from the Foreign Ministry, it involved one delegate each from the ministries of public works, finance, and education, the last-mentioned institution being represented on the commission through Stretti-Zamponi's nomination of the prominent art historian V. V. Štech. Also representing the Foreign Ministry was the head of Section I/4. Stretti-Zamponi justified the forming of the commission with the reasoning that he was well aware of the "unclear opinions on artistic creation in the period just after the war at home and abroad", and that he could not rely for his work on support from domestic traditions and patterns, nor could he make decisions alone.¹⁶ Already by 1923, the commission had ruled on the method for ensuring the project of the new embassy building in Belgrade and on the authors for the designs adapting the current embassies in Budapest and Warsaw. As later became clear, this selection was decisive for the preparation of designs and the attributes of other diplomatic buildings up until 1939.

“The Ministry of Public Works assumes that the procedures will operate with the greatest economy and shall refrain from any ostentatious costs for adaptation.”¹⁷

Adaptation and New Construction in the Czechoslovak Embassy in Bucharest (1922, 1923–1924)

The first international construction project for Czech diplomacy was one in which the inter-ministerial commission could not yet intervene. Preparation of the design for adaptation and enlargement of the historicist building that would serve as the Czechoslovak Embassy in Bucharest, itself too small for all the necessary offices, was entrusted by the ambassador to local contractor Oskar Gross. As far as is known, the project commission did not spark any protests even from within the Public Works Ministry, which only worked toward limiting the budget, nor the national architectural community. Gross prepared the project and also realised it during 1922. With this experience in mind, the government then entrusted him with the design of a new two-storey building for the consular division, which Gross constructed between May 1923 and August 1924. Though it was one of only four diplomatic construction projects during the First Republic – and though Romania was one of Czechoslovakia’s main allies in the Lesser Entente alongside Yugoslavia – the national government evidently failed to consider the construction of an official embassy building in Bucharest as matching the significance of the new embassy in Belgrade, which became the subject of many ministerial and political negotiations, with the Public Works Ministry holding a public competition for its design.

“It is necessary to bear in mind the need for appropriate representation for the building to have dignity and to match the importance of the relation between the states of Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia.”¹⁸

The New Czechoslovak Embassy Building in Belgrade (1925 – 1928)

Discussions on the construction of an entirely new Czechoslovak legation in Belgrade were initiated in February 1921 by the then ambassador Antonín Kalina, who felt that the capitol of the then “Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenians” lacked suitable buildings for the purpose. After repeated rejections from the Finance Ministry and the NÚKÚ, the plan was approved in December 1922 by the cabinet, which consented to the purchase of a building site in Kralje Alexandra Street. Even though Czechoslovakia regarded the “Kingdom” as a major ally in the Lesser Entente and hence its representation in Belgrade formed an essential part of the embassy network, it was necessary for the foreign minister himself, Edvard Beneš, to urge his colleagues towards approval. Section I/4 of the Ministry emphasised, in the document it prepared for Beneš before the cabinet meeting, how



OSKAR GROSS, ADAPTATION AND EXTENSION OF THE CZECHOSLOVAK EMBASSY BUILDING IN BUCHAREST, 1922

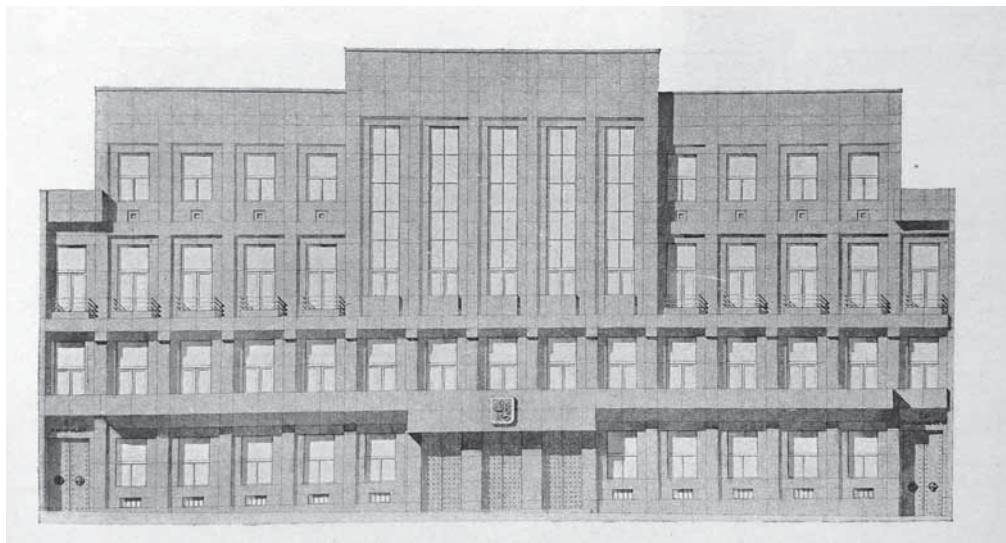
OSKAR GROSS, ADAPTACE A PŘÍSTAVBA BUDOVY ČESKOSLOVENSKÉHO VYSLANECTVÍ V BUKUREŠTI, 1922

Source Zdroj: Box 12, f. Prezidium 1918 – 1939, I/4 – budovy. Archive of the Foreign Ministry of the Czech Republic (AMZV)

**JOSEF CHOCHOL, BUILDING OF
THE CZECHOSLOVAK EMBASSY IN
BELGRADE, COMPETITION DESIGN,
1923 – 1924**

JOSEF CHOCHOL, BUDOVA
ČESKOSLOVENSKÉHO
VYSLANECTVÍ V BĚLEHRADU,
SOUTĚŽNÍ NÁVRH, 1923 – 1924

Source Zdroj: CHOCHOL, Josef.
1924. Soutěžní návrh na budovu
zastupitelských úřadů. Časopis
československých architektů, 23, p. 199



the new building would contribute to the furthering of ties between Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia, linked only by a “thin ‘brotherhood’”¹⁹ (The Pan-Slavic narrative, supported by the close friendship of T. G. Masaryk with the Serbian king Aleksandar I. Karadjordjević, was deployed – along with the thesis of the high level of Czech [!] architecture – in the letter from the chargé d'affaires Josef Švagrovský, who felt that Czechoslovakia should, “in the capitol of a brother nation”, display itself “with a building of true importance, giving proof of the high advancement of Czech builders and architects”.²⁰) The document even outlined the form of the building, which should embody in monumentality the “advancement and the importance of the Czechoslovak Republic in the Balkans, specifically in Yugoslavia”.²¹

The method of bringing the project to reality was decided by a meeting of the inter-ministerial commission. Originally, during the meeting on 20 January 1923, the commission planned to recommend that a restricted design competition be arranged, inviting for participation “exclusively Czechoslovak architects and artists”. Of those to be invited, there should be “at least three masters, perhaps preferably: for the older generation Professor Kotěra, for the younger, architect Kvasnička and for the Moravians Dr. Stockar, for Slovakia Jurkovič” (tellingly, this generational and national division lacked any representation from the state’s German minority).²² However, probably through an awareness of the concerted pressures from professional architects’ associations urging open competitions for all major state building projects, the commission abandoned its idea of an invited competition with the unusual composition of the ailing Jan Kotěra, his pupil Vilém Kvasnička (likely selected for his having fought with the Czechoslovak legions in Russia), the Bohemian-born Moravian Rudolf Stockar, and Dušan Jurkovič. As such, the cabinet ruled that the design for the first significant building representing the state abroad had to emerge from a public competition. The Ministry of Public Works was well aware of the “pressures of significant professional bodies to ensure that architects, suffering from the stagnation in construction activity, could find employment”.²³ The ministry’s construction councillor, Vladimír Pacold, finally agreed to the competition, though reserving the right of the ministry to nominate the jurors. It chose a conservative group, nominating to the jury alongside Pacold another councillor, Jiří Stibral, with Rudolf Kříženecký, Alois Dryák, Bohumil Hübschmann and Josip Plečnik, as well as a representative of the Foreign Ministry, probably Stretti-Zamponi.²⁴ In August 1923, the cabinet approved the plan and in November the construction program. At the same time, it expressed again the need for “appropriate representation for the building to have dignity and to match the importance of the relation between the states of Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia”.²⁵ This requirement was expressed in the competition guidelines as a “special regard for the importance of the building and the setting in which it will be constructed”.²⁶

Participating in the open competition were 34 architects from Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia. The jury did not issue any first prize; the two second prizes went to the Czech partners Alois Mezera – Karel Pecánek and to the Ljubljana architect K. Brünler,²⁷ with third prize assigned to



ALOIS MEZERA, BUILDING OF THE CZECHOSLOVAK EMBASSY IN BELGRADE, 1925 – 1928

ALOIS MEZERA, BUDOVA
ČESKOSLOVENSKÉHO
VYSLANECTVÍ V BĚLEHRADU,
1925 – 1928

Source Zdroj: Box 3, f. Prezidium
1918–1939, I/4 – budovy. AMZV



ALOIS MEZERA, BUILDING OF THE CZECHOSLOVAK EMBASSY IN BELGRADE, LADIES LOUNGE, 1925 – 1928

ALOIS MEZERA, BUDOVA
ČESKOSLOVENSKÉHO
VYSLANECTVÍ V BĚLEHRADU,
DÁMSKÝ SALON, 1925 – 1928

Source Zdroj: Box 3, f. Prezidium
1918–1939, I/4 – budovy. AMZV



ALOIS MEZERA, BUILDING OF THE CZECHOSLOVAK EMBASSY IN BELGRADE, LARGE DINING ROOM, 1925 – 1928

ALOIS MEZERA, BUDOVA
ČESKOSLOVENSKÉHO
VYSLANECTVÍ V BĚLEHRADU,
VELKÁ JÍDELNA, 1925 – 1928

Source Zdroj: Box 3, f. Prezidium
1918 – 1939, I/4 – budovy. AMZV

František Šrámek. The desired outcome, though, arrived only with the restricted competition among the authors of the three awarded designs, with the jury selecting the study by Mezera and Pecánek.²⁸ Mezera completed the project in February 1925, perhaps still with the involvement of Pecánek.²⁹ However, several months later the Public Works Ministry ordered the elimination of the entire third floor and made small changes in the interior plan: after the tender for construction was issued, it became clear that not even the subsequently increased budget would cover construction costs. Edvard Beneš confirmed the changes under the condition of keeping the two front staircases, the greatest efficiency in the layout changes, and immediate starting of construction.

Despite the loss of the third floor, the building presented Czechoslovakia to Belgrade in an imposing structure shaped by Alois Mezera's restrained contemporary furthering of the aesthetics of modern Classicism. (Karel Pecánek's sketches of the façade elevation from November 1924 used a notably more historicist vocabulary with accents of the folkloristic "National Style".) To achieve

**ALOIS MEZERA, BUILDING OF THE
CZECHOSLOVAK EMBASSY IN
BELGRADE, SMOKING LOUNGE,
1925 – 1928**

ALOIS MEZERA, BUDOVA
ČESKOSLOVENSKÉHO
VYSLANECTVÍ V BĚLEHRADU,
KUŘÁCKÝ SALON, 1925 – 1928

Source Zdroj: Box 3, f. Prezidium
1918 – 1939, 1/4 – budovy. AMZV



the monumental character desired by the ministry and by Beneš, Mezera laid stress on the tectonics of the main street frontage, in particular the eight full-length pilasters separating the slightly recessed windows in the central field of the façade, underscored by the long horizontal balcony.³⁰ The published designs by the less successful entrants Josef Chochol³¹ and the team of Vojtěch Vanický – Jan Chomout³² reveal that even other participants answered the political requirement of giving the building special meaning by using universal monumental forms, even if in slightly different formal garb. And it is telling that even for an architectural design to be raised in a “brotherly Slavic” land, there were virtually no reflections of the recent discussions on the Slavic roots of Czech architecture and the search for its national form. The competition jurors preferred a design with an internationally comprehensible appearance, meeting the demands for “dignified representation” voiced not only by the Foreign Ministry but also by the government in Belgrade.³³ Corresponding to this effort is the conception of the interior, where Mezera made extensive use of marble, brass, rosewood, coffered ceilings with ornamental décor, or even the custom-designed furniture or the figural torchbearers by Karel Dvořák. All the same, the embassy offers one of the most eloquent answers to the program of unostentatious display promoted by Masaryk.³⁴ The first attempts at conceiving a similar assignment without extensive reliance on tradition and hopes to avoid “academism and Teutonic historicism”³⁵ came at the same time with the adaptation of the embassy in Budapest and the rebuilt or new legation buildings in Warsaw. Yet the Czechoslovak embassy in Belgrade nevertheless remains a major reference point for further reflections on the appropriate representation of the state abroad.

[...] for representation we propose it be simple, dignified, distinguished, representing equally the advancement of production in our state.”³⁶

Adaptation of the Czechoslovak Embassy in Warsaw (1923 – 1925)

In Warsaw, the embassy staff in its search for a suitable building tried not only to find a “permanent and dignified” location for the embassy but also an escape from a situation where it had to pay high rent.³⁷ The solution was found in a pair of buildings connected by a shared garden: the ambassador’s residence with formal public rooms in a building on Szopena (Chopin) Street and the official premises in the building facing Koszykowa Street. After recommendations from Councillor Javůrek from the Public Works Ministry and agreement from the NÚKŮ, the cabinet approved the purchase in August 1921. Though the original plans only involved adaptation of the official building now the residence was also included in the proposal. A significant role in project preparation was

assumed by the then ambassador Prokop Maxa. To hasten the process, during autumn of 1921 he commissioned master builder Jan Pacl,³⁸ then working in Warsaw, to prepare blueprints for the rebuilding. In turn, he arranged for Pacl's plans to be submitted to the Public Works and Foreign ministries and receive their needed approval. Though Pacl could not boast of particularly high standing in the domestic scene, the section head of the Public Works Ministry Janota had no objections to his hiring – stating, instead, that Pacl had already worked for the ministry “very precisely, economically, and to full satisfaction”.³⁹

In May 1922, though, the adaptation met with sharp disagreement from the Finance Ministry. Maxa's reaction was to draw attention to the exceptional importance of the legation in Warsaw, to its broad and intensive activity, and to the “large and beautiful building” that the Germans had bought for their own embassy.⁴⁰ Even previously, he had supported his cause through pointing out the need for appropriate representation, formulating specific principles for Czechoslovakia' international presentation as “simple, dignified, distinguished”, with “correct, tasteful, and excellently produced furnishings”.⁴¹ The Finance Ministry, once Maxa agreed not to add the second floor to the official embassy building, consented to the adaptation of both structures and the project was approved by the cabinet. Though the Public Works Ministry originally through of using Pacl's preliminary plans for their own architect to complete the design, the entire project was eventually handed over to Pacl in February 1923. At this juncture, the idea of a rebuilding “by a contractor absolutely devoid of artistic qualifications” was jointly opposed in the daily *Národní listy* by four professional architects' associations.⁴² The Foreign Ministry defended its decision through the responsibility of the Public Works Ministry and the argument that the work was a “simple adaptation for which the embassy only selected an interim design”. Councillor Pacold, despite having small reservations regarding the conception of both main façades, left the project in Pacl's hands to prevent possible delays. And Pacl's “acceptable” project of adaptation of the building was approved in May 1923 by the Foreign Ministry. However, the main role in ensuring the final appearance for the ambassador's residence (as well as the fate of the main building) lay with the meeting of the inter-ministerial commission on 6 December 1923, during which the members decided on the author for the project of adaptation of the embassy building in Budapest.

“[...] while we, a small and economically feeble republic, purchase for our diplomats abroad palaces at gigantic cost”.⁴³

Adaptation of the Czechoslovak Embassy in Budapest, 1923 – 1925

Czechoslovakia's diplomatic representation in the Hungarian capitol was forced to seek out better premises for its activities through the “unsuitable and [...] undignified” housing supplied for its staff as well as the unwelcome placement of its embassy offices in the same building used by the state of Austria. At first, the Finance Ministry rejected the plans to purchase a separate building, relenting only with the proposal of the Zichy Palace. Also favouring the purchase of this structure, “from the outside appearing a solid and monumental building” with a “calm” façade, was

LADISLAV MACHOŇ, ADAPTATION OF THE RESIDENTIAL BUILDING OF THE CZECHOSLOVAK EMBASSY IN WARSAW, LARGE SALON, 1924 – 1925

LADISLAV MACHOŇ, ÚPRAVA REZIDENČNÍ BUDOVY ČESKOSLOVENSKÉHO VYSLANECTVÍ VE VARŠAVĚ, VELKÝ SALON, 1924 – 1925

Source Zdroj: F. 26 – Machoň. NTM

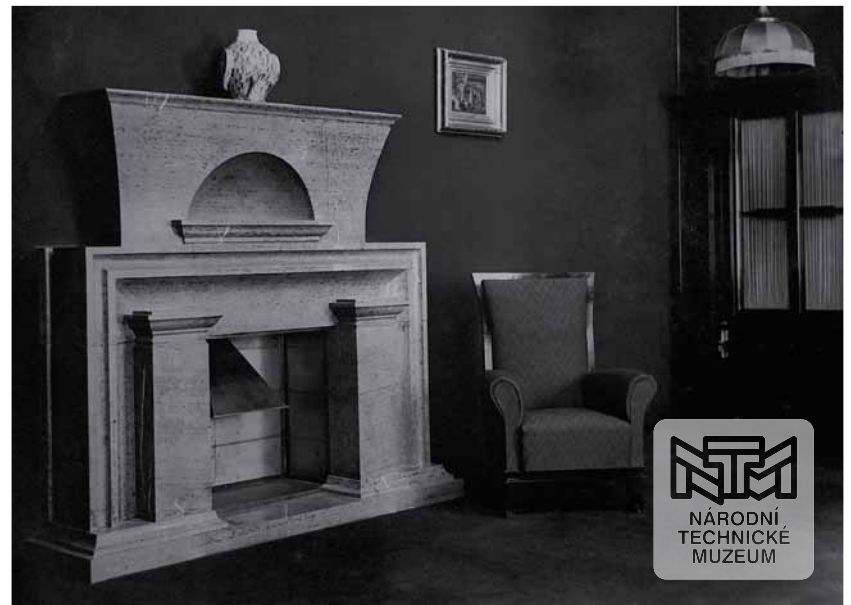




OTAKAR NOVOTNÝ, ADAPTATION OF THE BUILDING OF THE CZECHOSLOVAK EMBASSY IN BUDAPEST, DINING ROOM, 1924 – 1925

OTAKAR NOVOTNÝ, ADAPTAČE BUDOVY ČESKOSLOVENSKÉHO VYSLANECTVÍ V BUDAPEŠTI, JÍDELNA, 1924 – 1925

Source Zdroj: F. 80 – Novotný. NTM



OTAKAR NOVOTNÝ, ADAPTATION OF THE BUILDING OF THE CZECHOSLOVAK EMBASSY IN BUDAPEST, GENTLEMEN'S SALON, 1924 – 1925

OTAKAR NOVOTNÝ, ADAPTAČE BUDOVY ČESKOSLOVENSKÉHO VYSLANECTVÍ V BUDAPEŠTI, PÁNSKÝ POKOJ, 1924 – 1925

Source Zdroj: F. 80 – Novotný. NTM

even beforehand the Public Works Ministry commissioner Javůrek.⁴⁴ The cabinet approved the transaction in June 1922 despite the objections of the NÚKÚ and in December of the same year confirmed the building's adaptations. The task of selecting the author for the design again went to the inter-ministerial commission. On this occasion, they decided in favour of the more economical and rapid form of an invited competition, and in mid-September 1923 called for the submission – unpaid (!) – of plans for the legations furnishings from four “architects and interior specialists”: Pavel Janák, Otakar Novotný, Ladislav Machoň and Václav Ložek.⁴⁵ Considering the standing that the recently deceased Jan Kotěra had held among Czech architects and the trust he enjoyed at the Foreign Ministry, the choice of his two closes former collaborators, Novotný and Machoň, was only expected.⁴⁶ Likewise, the selection of Janák to be expected – as a respected architect and theorist close to V. V. Štech since his student years, and moreover chosen in the previous year by the government to adjust the design of the national pavilion for the world exposition in Rio de Janeiro. Speaking in favour of Plečnik's pupil Ložek was, most likely, his experience in interior design and the realisation of his design for the office of the Yugoslav ambassador in Prague.⁴⁷ The architects, though, all failed to submit their sketches within the one-month deadline and also requested a suitable honorarium. As such, at the end of October, the Foreign Ministry in cooperation

with Štech commissioned sketches of furnishings “suitable for diplomatic use in general” from Janák, Machoň, Novotný and as a new participant, furniture designer and woodcarver Jindřich Eck, another pupil of Kotěra’s.⁴⁸

However, the entire process witnessed a noteworthy discrepancy in the activities of the state apparatus. Also, for the first time, the preparation of the designs and realisations of Czechoslovak embassies registered a visible manifestation of the uneasy coexistence of Czechs and Slovaks in a single state and the desire of Slovaks (or at least architects working in Slovakia) to win a position for themselves in a field previously dominated only by Czechs. The Slovak councillor in the Public Works Ministry assigned, without any coordination with the central office, the task of preparing plans for the adaptation of the great hall and dining room to the Czech architect František Krupka, a graduate of Friedrich Ohmann’s masterclass at the Vienna Academy and working since 1918 at the heritage office in Bratislava under Jurkovič. Krupka, also a member of Bratislava’s Society for Applied Arts (SUP), immediately drew up a design for the reception hall and dining area. The final decision on the matter remained, of course, with the Foreign Ministry. However, Krupka, whose exclusive commissioning also won the support of Stretti-Zamponi, was defended to Edvard Beneš by the minister for administration of Slovakia, Jozef Kállay. For him, Krupka’s design using clear Slovak motifs formed a “dignified and quiet manifestation in favour of Slovakia”.⁴⁹ It would have been the first realisation of this kind entrusted to Slovaks (with the adaptation work assigned by the Public Works Ministry to the Košice firm of Zdeněk Frič & Alois Novák). Furthermore, the involvement of the SUP would serve as guarantor of the quality of the completed work. Yet despite Kállay’s appeal, the Foreign Ministry, matching the statements of the Public Works Ministry, rejected the choice of Krupka and offered him only the chance to enter the invited competition alongside the four Czech-based architects.⁵⁰

During the talks on 6 December 1923, the inter-ministerial commission evaluated the designs and termed Krupka’s sketches “excessively costly, insufficiently organic, and in their general appearance tasteless”.⁵¹ Of the other three designs, they favoured the study by Novotný, citing its “restraint and overall tastefulness” supporting the realisation of timeless artistic quality not subjected to changing fashion.⁵² Jozef Kállay was left with only the wish that Slovakia’s industry not be ignored.⁵³ After reaching agreement with Novotný, part of the work was assigned to the SUP. However, during the December meeting, Councillor Kubiček from the Public Works Ministry, Consul Barchan from the Foreign Ministry, Stretti-Zamponi and V. V. Štech not only ensured who would design the embassy in Budapest, but also shaped the future fate of Pacl’s project for Warsaw. Judging his design as excessively “modest (villa-like)”, they voted to redress its deficiencies by engaging a respected architect “who through his influence would improve the inside and have full authority [...] to hold sway over Pacl”.⁵⁴ Unanimously, they approved Stretti-Zamponi’s proposal of Novotný for Budapest and Machoň for Warsaw.⁵⁵

Already at the start of January 1924, Otakar Novotný set off for Budapest to complete his design based on experience from the site. He also agreed that before commissioning the furnishings offers be requested from the SUP; indeed, he saw it as necessary that all furniture and fittings be produced in Czechoslovakia. The desire to simplify the spatial design was reflected in the restrained geometric forms of the furniture items. Underlining the counterpoint between open space and free-standing items of furniture, in certain instances a contrasting colour scheme was deployed – while the furniture was rendered in dark tones, the curtains and accessories were far lighter. Even in the dining room, Novotný chose economic geometric shapes with rhythmically articulated wooden panelling and the vernacular motif of the chandelier as a wagon wheel; a somewhat more Purist form appears in the fireplace. The hall cabinet, in turn, formed an intersection of the classical tradition with certain allusions to the Czechoslovak National style. Most significantly, Novotný held true to established gender stereotypes in the women’s salon, where he used the greatest quantity of ornament, along with furniture intended as “light and movable”, while the gentlemen’s room gained furniture that was “dark, serious”.⁵⁶ In Stretti-Zamponi’s judgment, the interior of the Budapest embassy formed the first attempt at a contemporary design: “as is only natural, the ever-recurring outcome of new conditions and the visiting card of a new era”.⁵⁷

Ladislav Machoň began work on his design for Warsaw almost precisely in chronological parallel with Novotný. Probably by the end of February 1924, he sketched partial alterations to the layout with the aim of expanding the formal public areas; because of the advancement of construction work, though, only smaller changes were realised. In the design of the richly ornamented

interiors, Machoň offered both “references to the Baroque and Classical traditions”⁵⁸ alongside motifs from the more vernacular-minded National Style: for example, the wooden panelling in the staircase hall with its characteristic horizontal orientation to evoke the timbering of a rural Czech cottage. The staircase balustrade gained four realistic (“civilist”) wooden statues by Otto Gutfreund, also the author of the ceramic tiling around the fireplace in the same room; Machoň brought a contemporary touch to the space with his “point” lighting fixtures. As for the furniture, he strove to interpret traditional patterns in a contemporary eye. Additionally, he designed a series of carpets with geometric patterning (possibly based on the abstracted shape of a linden leaf, the Czech national tree), reflected in the ceiling frescos of the ambassador’s study. Completing the room were decorative lighting fixtures with figural motifs.⁵⁹ And, as a culmination of the eclectic mixture of visual references, the final element consisted of the historicist full-floor glass chandeliers. In Poland, the interior met with a favourable reception: the painter Szczesny Rutkowski, in his strongly positive review of the interior published in December 1925 in *Kurier Polski* praised the modernity of Machoň’s design.⁶⁰

Regardless of the essential contribution of the inter-ministerial commission for completing the Belgrade, Budapest, and Warsaw projects, the question remains open as to what degree the design of other embassy buildings was decided in the format laid out by Stretti-Zamponi. The extant sources indicate that many discussions continued to have an inter-ministerial reach. And Stretti-Zamponi continued to have a significant influence at the Foreign Ministry, where he regularly procured consignments of furniture and other fittings for diplomatic interiors. Yet the most vital role in selecting authors of the designs and supervising their construction evidently remained in the hands of Councillor Pacold from the Public Works Ministry.⁶¹

“Architect Machoň, in preparing his design, was guided by purely architectonic motives [...]”⁶²

The New Czechoslovak Embassy in Warsaw (1927 – 1929)

The first selection of authors for the design, most likely occurring outside any formalised body of the commission, took place during the final phase of the adaptation of the ambassador’s residence in Warsaw in March 1925. Confronted with the extent of the assumed costs for the proposed adaptation of the embassy, the Public Works Ministry gave priority to a simpler, more efficient new building.⁶³ Preparation of an ideal plan of the building, in the street frontage on the site of the extant structure, was assigned by Pacold “upon agreement with the Foreign Ministry” to Ladislav Machoň.⁶⁴ And he insisted on the recommendation even at the May meeting with representatives of the three involved ministries, the NÚKÚ, and the architect himself.⁶⁵ Judging from the accessible sources, there was never any question of holding an open competition. Once the plan was approved by the Finance Ministry and then the cabinet, Machoň drew up the building plan in the first half of 1926. The embassy design, a three-storey flat-roofed mass forming a visual transition from the detached villas to the adjoining five-storey block, moreover with a raised two-storey “addition” with a hipped roof next to the higher neighbour, was nonetheless rejected by the Warsaw authorities for its violation of local regulations⁶⁶ and “excessively modern” style that “did not match the vicinity”.⁶⁷ However, thanks to the efforts of the embassy, the project was realised in 1927–1929 in its original form.

In its immediate stylistic context – between the low-rise historicist villas and the Neo-Renaissance apartment block – Ladislav Machoň imprinted a programmatically modern character on the building. The smooth stuccoed façade with rudimentary geometric décor throughout its entire width is divided by a large two-storey oriel covered with a gridwork of terracotta tiling. The same material appears on the plinth and a kind of running cornice above the windows of the “addition”. A relief of the Czechoslovak insignia is placed above the vertical of the capacious glass staircase volume situated at the corner. Inside, the architect used furniture with abstracted or newly interpreted classicist patterns, or geometric decoration on the surfaces and coverings.⁶⁸ A somewhat indirect objection to the highly contemporary conception of the interiors was voiced by the embassy when, shortly before completion, it agreed to the architect’s desire to create a hothouse and orangery in the garden with the somewhat curious and double-edged response that the best decoration for the interior of both buildings “where the modern stylistic simplicity requires a certain decorative supplement so as not to seem empty” would not be artworks but instead plants.⁶⁹



**LADISLAV MACHOŇ,
ADMINISTRATIVE BUILDING OF
THE CZECHOSLOVAK EMBASSY IN
WARSAW, 1927 – 1929**

LADISLAV MACHOŇ, ÚŘEDNÍ
BUDOVA ČESKOSLOVENSKÉHO
VYSLANECTVÍ VE VARŠAVĚ,
1927 – 1929

Source Zdroj: F. 26 – Machoň. NTM

“In brief, it is by necessity that in this matter, there should be for the entire building a definitive plan by a professional architect.”⁷⁰

Adaptation of the Czechoslovak Embassy in Berlin (1932)

The experience of designing one embassy building resulting in subsequent similar commissions was not unique to Ladislav Machoň. In fact, after 1928, the designs of new buildings, adaptations, or furnishings for Czechoslovak diplomacy were prepared almost exclusively by Alois Mezera. Between 1928 and 1932, he worked on the project for adaptation of the ambassador’s residence in Berlin. Since the city construction office, for reasons of the “aesthetic impression of the entire street”, forbade any alterations of the main façade, Mezera had to limit himself to a new concept of the interiors and changes in the layout that would underscore the social and public function of the building.⁷¹ On the second floor, he connected the ceremonial rooms into one, while replacing the original wooden staircase with a new one clad in marble. The same material appeared on the walls of the vestibule and the staircase area, with the staircase wall adorned with a sculpturally conceived relief of the state insignia by Karel Štipl. Unlike Josef Gočár, whose 1925 design for the furniture of one of the salons used contemporary forms,⁷² he worked with Stretti-Zamponi to furnish the interior (except for part of the library and likely the ambassador’s personal office) with genuine antiques: several Baroque chairs and tables would appear to have originated from the Foreign Ministry storehouse, which Stretti-Zamponi gradually assembled and regularly expanded. The unsurprising, conservative treatment of the interior, presenting Czechoslovakia in Berlin as a reliable partner with a strong cultural tradition, evidently enjoyed success among the relevant circles, judging from the favourable mention in the local diplomatic bulletin.⁷³

„[...] and if impoverished Austria decides to build, it could transpire that even richer Czechoslovakia would finally decide to build itself.”⁷⁴

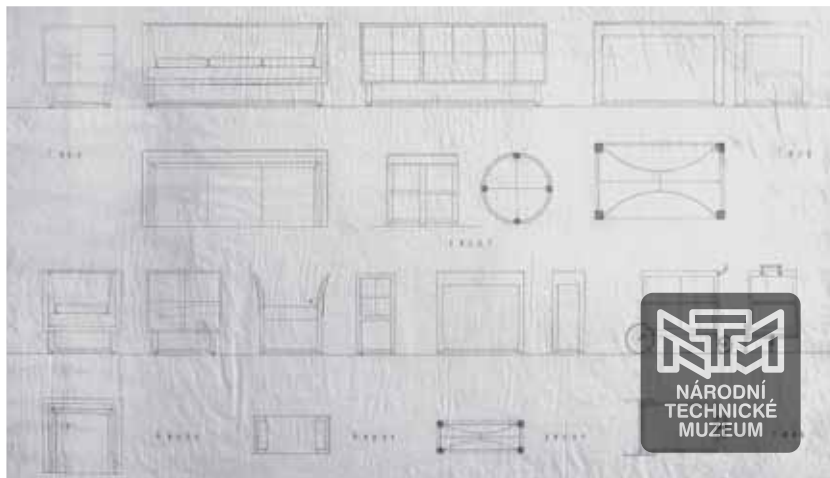
The New Czechoslovak Embassy in Ankara (1936 – 1937)

What would for many years remain the last realised new Czechoslovak embassy building began preparations in 1929, when the Czechoslovak authorities issued their decision to construct an embassy building in Ankara. After the Turkish capitol’s relocation from Istanbul in 1926, the embassy used two nearby buildings in Çankaya caddesi Street as the residence and official building. However, the ambassador himself complained of the poor state of the residence and its humiliating “Asiatic” accommodations, unbefitting the level of mutual relations between the two states or local conventions stressing the external attributes of political power.⁷⁵ Though Stretti-Zamponi

**JOSEF GOČÁR, CZECHOSLOVAK
EMBASSY IN BERLIN, DESIGN OF
SALON FURNISHINGS, 1925**

JOSEF GOČÁR, ČESKOSLOVENSKÉ
VYSLANECTVÍ V BERLÍNĚ, NÁVRH
VYBAVENÍ SALONU, 1925

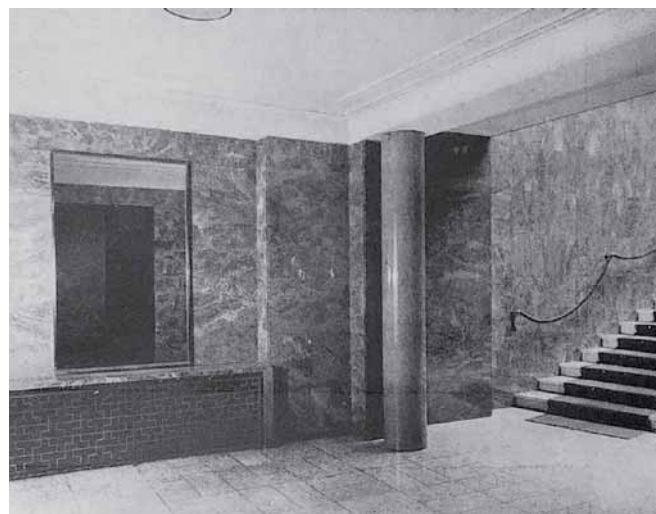
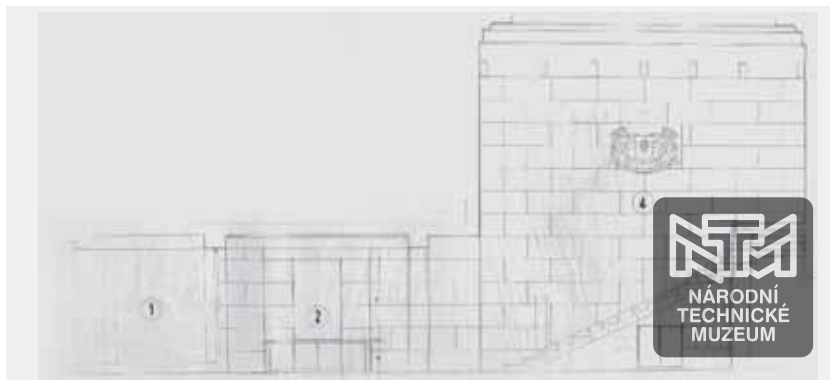
Source Zdroj: F. 14 – Gočár. NTM



**ALOIS MEZERA, RECONSTRUCTION
OF THE RESIDENTIAL BUILDING OF
THE CZECHOSLOVAK EMBASSY IN
BERLIN, DESIGN OF THE WALLS ON
THE GROUND FLOOR, 1932**

ALOIS MEZERA, PŘESTAVBA
REZIDENČNÍ BUDOVY
ČESKOSLOVENSKÉHO
VYSLANECTVÍ V BERLÍNĚ, NÁVRH
ŘEŠENÍ STĚN V PŘÍZEMÍ, 1932

Source Zdroj: F. 95 – Mezera. NTM



**ALOIS MEZERA, RECONSTRUCTION
OF THE RESIDENTIAL BUILDING OF
THE CZECHOSLOVAK EMBASSY
IN BERLIN, VESTIBULE WITH
STAIRCASE, 1932**

ALOIS MEZERA, PŘESTAVBA
REZIDENČNÍ BUDOVY
ČESKOSLOVENSKÉHO
VYSLANECTVÍ V BERLÍNĚ, VESTIBUL
SE SCHODIŠTĚM, 1932

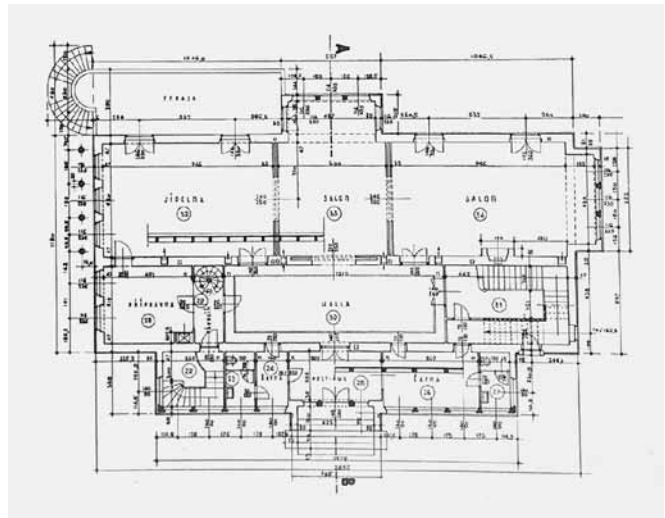
Source Zdroj: MEZERA, Alois.
1933 – 1934. Přestavba residenční
budovy československého vyslanectví
v Berlíně. Styl, 13, p. 35



**ALOIS MEZERA, BUILDING
COMPLEX OF THE CZECHOSLOVAK
EMBASSY IN ANKARA, 1936 – 1937**

ALOIS MEZERA, SOBOR
BUDOV ČESKOSLOVENSKÉHO
VYSLANECTVÍ V ANKAŘE,
1936 – 1937

Source Zdroj: F. 95 – Mezera. NTM



**ALOIS MEZERA, RESIDENTIAL
BUILDING OF THE CZECHOSLOVAK
EMBASSY IN ANKARA, DESIGN OF
THE WEST AND SOUTH FACADE,
1935**

ALOIS MEZERA, REZIDENČNÍ
BUDOVA ČESKOSLOVENSKÉHO
VYSLANECTVÍ V ANKAŘE, NÁVRH
ZÁPADNÍHO A JIŽNÍHO PRŮČELÍ,
1935

Source Zdroj: MEZERA, Alois. 1938.
Československé vyslanectví v Ankaře.
Styl, 21, p. 51

reached agreement with councillor Vodsedálek from the Public Works Ministry that the latter body would contact one of the Foreign Ministry-recommended architects to prepare plans, the Public Works councillor assigned the commission to one “architect Kropáček”.⁷⁶ Evidently, the legal obligation to hold a public competition for a new public building was equally disregarded by both ministries. In May 1929, at a meeting involving both the ambassador Kobr and Councillor Pacold, Kropáček’s study was rejected. In place of a palatial structure “suitable perhaps for a metropolis” but ill-matched to the “rural environment and setting in which [the building] would stand”, Kobr recommended instead a “villa of moderate size”.⁷⁷ Kropáček’s expansive concept with its formal “cour d’honneur” was even criticised by Stretti-Zamponi. Pacold then proposed that the design preparation should be granted “considering his acquired experience” to Alois Mezera.⁷⁸ Within a near-impossible deadline of only five days, Mezera drew up blueprints for the building, which within a week were approved by the Public Works Ministry. Then, the architect used the detailed construction program compiled by the Foreign Ministry to set out a design for a complex of three buildings. Because of the high construction costs, though, the Public Works Ministry laid the project aside.⁷⁹ It was the cabinet that revived the idea in 1935, when the diplomatic representation in Turkey returned to the highest level. After a meeting held at the Foreign Ministry, attended by Mezera, Stretti-Zamponi, representatives of the Finance and Public Works ministries, the NÚKŮ,

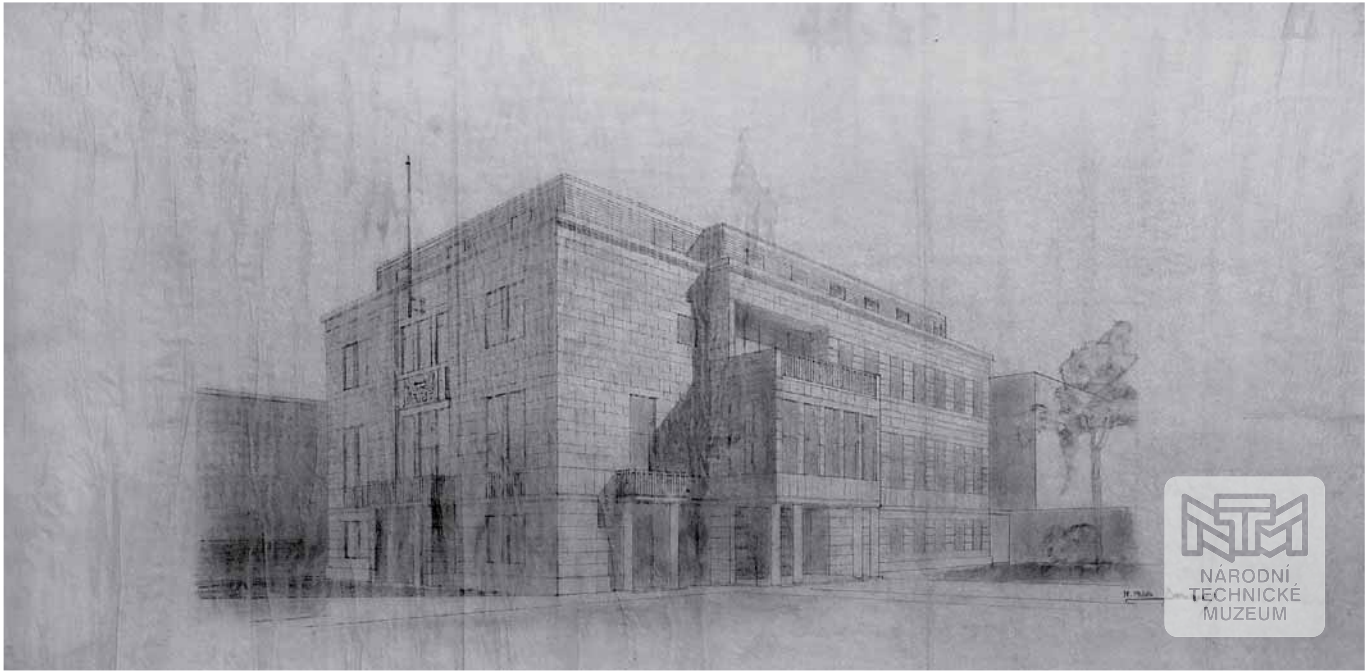
and even Ambassador Halla, the architect began to alter the original design. Though the Finance Ministry favoured reducing the three buildings to one, the Foreign Ministry, in agreement with Public Works, defended the completion of separate official and residential buildings. Still, Mezera had to reduce the built volume by one-third and “significantly simplify the construction and rendering of the building”.⁸⁰ In 1936, the adapted design was approved by the cabinet. Construction took place in 1936–1937, with the residence submitted in January 1938 and both buildings receiving approval for use in the same year.

With its modest scale, furthered by the forced reduction in volume of both two-storey buildings, the embassy complex aptly matched the nearly rural character of what was then a villa suburb. The desire for economy was equally reflected in the highly austere, unornamented forms of “minimised modern classicism” of the two masses below their hipped roofs.⁸¹ The main attribute of the representative function of the residence was given by Mezera’s insertion of a framework with six full-length columns above the main entrance in the symmetrical street façade. This restrained, almost utilitarian project, which was of vital importance for the legation staff, allowed Czechoslovakia to present itself in Ankara in a way matching the position of its diplomacy at the boundary of the Balkans and Asia Minor, as well as the importance of Kemalist Turkey in the nation’s international geopolitics. Here, perhaps more than the resulting architectural forms, the most resonant gesture was the realisation of the new building itself. Yet the new embassy evidently won favour with Turkish governmental authorities, since in 1937 they invited Mezera to participate in the international invited competition for the design of the Turkish National Assembly in Ankara. And Mezera, working with František Šrámek and Rudolf Vichra, won first place out of the fourteen designs with the study for a building in equally abstract forms of modern Classicism,⁸² though the Turkish government never took steps towards its realisation.

Moreover, we would avoid the “critical statements of German architects bearing in mind the differing conception of architecture from an artistic standpoint.”⁸³

The Unrealised Design of the New Embassy in Berlin, 1938

Only six years after completion of his adaptation of the ambassador’s residence in Berlin, Alois Mezera sketched out the form of a new building to replace it.⁸⁴ The project for rebuilding Berlin drawn up in the later 1930s by Albert Speer required the demolition, among other structures, of nine buildings of international diplomacy, including the Czechoslovak embassy. Of the offered possibilities for compensation, the Czechoslovak state decided at the turn of 1937 and 1938 for a new building to be built at Germany’s expense.⁸⁵ The Public Works Ministry recommended, however, that the entire project not be left to Berlin and again entrusted the preparation of designs to Alois Mezera. In this case, he remained true to his conservative modernism emerging from traditional Classicism, clearly with an awareness of the context of the architecture of the Third Reich. Still, his design for a four-storey volume of bare cubic forms clearly reflected the more austere forms of Modernism, keeping Speer’s monumental and over-literal Classicism at a clear remove. The enclosed mass of the building, with minimal three-dimensional elements and rectangular windows set flush with the façade, was articulated with an asymmetrically positioned volume protruding from the longer side façade on the second storey, while the shorter entrance façade remained symmetrical. For the smooth outer cladding, stone tiling was proposed, with the set-back uppermost floor using stucco. Mezera’s design, in the view of the representative of the Berlin construction council, matched contemporary German architecture and “fit well into the framework of the new Berlin”.⁸⁶ However, a German architect named Tischer, whom the national building administration appointed to prepare the final design following the intentions of Mezera’s study, sketched a different treatment for the exterior to make it match the “architectures in which the other embassies in Berlin will be executed”.⁸⁷ Though the German response was merely stated as a suggestion rather than a requirement, any differing identity transposed into the architectonic forms of the diplomatic buildings of various countries could hardly have found its place in the Berlin of Hitler and Speer. Tischer’s further work on the project was ended by the occupation of Czechoslovakia by German troops in March 1939 and the building was never constructed. Indeed, with the Nazi occupation, the state lost all autonomy and thus all foreign policy. Except for a few diplomats who resisted German pressure, the Czechoslovak staff turned their office over to Germany’s foreign service. And Germany



ALOIS MEZERA, RESIDENTIAL BUILDING OF THE CZECHOSLOVAK EMBASSY IN BERLIN, PERSPECTIVE, 1938

ALOIS MEZERA, REZIDENČNÍ BUDOVA ČESKOSLOVENSKÉHO VYSLANECTVÍ V BERLÍNĚ, PERSPEKTIVA, 1938

Source Zdroj: F. 95 – Mezera. NTM

also seized part of the embassy furnishings: some were returned to Prague, others sold off, and some discarded. The next construction work for Czechoslovakia's diplomacy involved the post-war renewal of the embassy buildings.

Representing the State

The present survey of the process of creating buildings for Czechoslovakia's embassies between the two world wars reveals that their realised form inevitably resulted from a wide range of diverging vectors, starting with the different departure points of the governmental ministries involved. A central role in initiating building plans was played by the importance of the given state in Czechoslovak foreign policy and the level of mutual diplomatic relations. Most of the construction or adaptation projects were preceded by vague (or implicit) political and ministerial assignments stressing sufficient dignity and representation. Yet the representatives of the state did not call for grandiosity, but instead frequently voiced a need for modesty and moderation. Additionally, they shared a general narrative of the advanced state of Czechoslovakia's culture, architecture, and applied arts, which the buildings of the embassies should bring into being.⁸⁸ As for the right forms for representation, though, there were never any public discussions worth noting.⁸⁹ The subject of professional critiques tended to be different building types, or different buildings realised by the state. Considering the low number of realisations and their location outside the national borders – hence outside the field of public vision – buildings for diplomatic use formed a marginal genre in Czechoslovakia's architectural scene. The struggles over the form and direction of the nation's architecture were fought elsewhere; whenever they managed to be somehow reflected in embassy buildings or their furnishings, it was only indirectly.⁹⁰

Analysis of Czechoslovak embassy buildings from the 1920s and 1930s indicates that the conception and application of architecture as a tool of state representation did not, in the case of these buildings, undergo much change over the period. Nonetheless, during the period of operation of the inter-ministerial procurement commission, architects seeking contemporary forms for this typology received opportunities for realisations (especially Novotný in Budapest and Machoň in Warsaw).⁹¹ After 1928, the authorial base virtually narrowed to a single name: Alois Mezera. Evidently, for the given ministries, the repeated involvement of this perceptive architect, who after his victory in the open competition for the embassy in Belgrade acquired a good orientation in the needs and possibilities of the state as well as the specific built typology, was the simplest choice. Yet with this direct assignment, the state relinquished the possibilities of finding new starting points or forms

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of representation through the pluralistic mechanisms of open competitions. Possibly thanks to his training under Plečnik, Mezera could develop in his embassy designs the “universal” and timeless forms that worked to represent the state abroad, which – like the neo-Classicist façades of ministry buildings in Prague – confirmed “the allegiance of Czechoslovaks to the cultured nations of the West and their equal standing in this company”⁹² As with Novotný or Machoň, Mezera was able to retain creative autonomy in his designs,⁹³ even despite frequent limitations of financial resources or interventions by the ambassadors during his design work. Alongside Mezera, two persons playing a key role in the entire process were the Foreign Ministry expert Stretti-Zamponi, initiator of the creation of the inter-ministerial commission, and Councillor Pacold from the Public Works Ministry.

Investigation into the process of the creation of Czechoslovak diplomatic offices simultaneously confirmed the standard narrative of the co-existence of Czechs and Slovaks in the shared state in the interwar years. Representation of the new republic abroad was dominated by Czechs, even though Slovaks tried to claim a place in the design and realisation of the embassy in Budapest, even outside the initiative of the central government authorities. Five years after the dissolution of Austro-Hungary, this participation was for Slovakia a matter of prestige and honour, as well as a chance to demonstrate Slovakia’s artistic and craft work as equal to their Czech counterparts. Yet this ambition on the Slovak side could only be met partially. And it is telling that representatives of the other national minorities, specifically the Germans, found no relevant voice at all in the design of Czechoslovakia’s diplomatic buildings.

1 Vyjádření uměleckého poradce ministerstva zahraničí [Jaromíra Strettiho-Zamponiho], i. n. 19.601/1–4/33, box 11, f. Prezidium 1918–1939 (1954), I/4 – budovy. Archive of the Foreign Ministry of the Czech Republic (AMZV).

2 Vyjádření uměleckého poradce ministerstva zahraničí [Jaromíra Strettiho-Zamponiho], i. n. 19.601/1–4/33, box 11, f. Prezidium 1918–1939 (1954), I/4 – budovy. AMZV.

3 In the context of the present study, the primary work referenced is the second of the total of five completed publications: HNÍDKOVÁ, Vendula (ed.). 2020. *Duch, který pracuje. Architektura a česká politika 1918 – 1945 [A Spirit at Work. Architecture and Czech Politics]*. Praha: Vysoká škola uměleckoprůmyslová, 607 p.

4 JAROŠ, Jan. 2006. *Budovy zastupitelských úřadů ČSR v meziválečném období; strategie jejich výběru a získávání*. MA thesis. Department of Economic and Social History, Faculty of Arts, Charles University, Prague.

5 Jaroš, J., 2006, p. 74.

6 Primarily in the countries of Central and Southeast Europe, the purchase of suitably representative existing buildings was often very difficult for reasons of their limited number or poor condition.

7 For the embassy in Tokyo, damaged in 1923 by a severe earthquake and the subsequent fire, ideal sketches were prepared for the new complex in the following year by Antonín Raymond with Bedřich Feuerstein. Though

this building continued to appear in the national budget even into the 1930s, neither the main building “in European manner” nor the flats for the Japanese staff created “in Japanese style from wood” were ever realised – in contrast to the projects that Raymond and Feuerstein created for the Belgian and Soviet embassies, completed respectively in 1928 and 1928–1931. Annex no. 873/22–29, box 49, f. Prezidium 1918–1939, I/4 – budovy. AMZV.

8 Jaroš, J., 2006, pp. 65 – 67.

9 Kotěra first made contact with the Foreign Ministry already by 1919, when he participated in talks for an exhibition of Czech artwork in Paris. ŠLAPETA, Vladimír (ed.). 2001. *Jan Kotěra 1871–1923. Zakladatel moderní české architektury*. Praha: KANT, Obecní dům, p. 374.

10 In the same year, he returned at the Ministry’s urging to Berlin to evaluate the furnished interior of the diplomatic residence, which “formally bears the stamp of eclecticism per Baroque and Empire models matching generally valid taste”. Box 6, f. Prezidium 1918–1939, I/4 – budovy. AMZV.

11 This building was evaluated only through photographs and plans sent to Prague. Box 38, f. Prezidium 1918–1939, I/4 – budovy. AMZV.

12 Box 38, f. Prezidium 1918–1939, I/4 – budovy. AMZV.

13 For instance, Janota stated after a viewing of one of the selected buildings in Budapest in 1922 that the “extreme Secessionism in which

the public rooms [...] ostentatiously flaunt” did not correspond to “our [i.e., national] taste”. Box 11, f. Prezidium 1918–1939, I/4 – budovy. AMZV.

14 The correctness of this choice was confirmed at the request of Stretti-Zamponi himself by the Education Ministry, where the secretary in charge of care for contemporary arts was V. V. Štech. Box 42, f. VII/9, Osobní spisy do roku 1945, Jaromír Stretti-Zamponi. AMZV. Štech had a longstanding personal connection with Stretti-Zamponi: the two had known each other since 1906, when they met during preparations for the “Beautiful Prague” exhibition in the Rudolfinum. Additionally, the two were also members of the Hollar Graphic Artists’ Association. ŠTECH, Václav Vilém. 1969. *V zamlženém zrcadle*. 2nd edn. Praha: Československý spisovatel, p. 172.

15 Box 42, f. VII/9, Osobní spisy do roku 1945, Jaromír Stretti-Zamponi. AMZV.

16 Box 42, f. VII/9, Osobní spisy do roku 1945, Jaromír Stretti-Zamponi. AMZV.

17 Section head of the Public Works Ministry Janota in a document for the Foreign Ministry, 21. 12. 1922. Document no. 21.865/III–1922, box 12, f. Prezidium 1918–1939, I/4 – budovy. AMZV.

18 Public Works Minister Srba in a report to the board of the council of ministers, 27. 3. 1925. Doc. i. n. 3b–41/187, box 3–4, f. Prezidium 1918–1939, I/4 – budovy. AMZV.

19 Komise pro zařizování budov zastupitelských úřadů, i. n. 162.055–V/4.22, box 3–4, f. Prezidium 1918–1939, I/4 – budovy. AMZV.

20 Doc. i. n. 1480/3/1/22, p. 5, box 3–4, f. Prezidium 1918–1939, I/4 – budovy. AMZV.

21 Komise pro zařizování budov zastupitelských úřadů, i. n. 162.055–V/4.22, box 3–4, f. Prezidium 1918–1939, I/4 – budovy. AMZV.

22 Further proof is the original crossed-out version of the minutes from the commission meeting. Komise pro zařizování budov zastupitelských úřadů, i. n. 162.055–V/4.22, box 3–4, f. Prezidium 1918–1939, I/4 – budovy. AMZV.

23 Doc. no. 3b–41/169, box 3–4, f. Prezidium 1918–1939, I/4 – budovy. AMZV.

24 Copy for no. 3b–41/155, box 3–4, f. Prezidium 1918–1939, I/4 – budovy. AMZV. Against the highly conservative membership of the jury for the competition for the Ministry of Trade Building, held in the same year (Josef Gočár and construction councillors Ferdinand Havlíček, Ludvík Lábler, Jiří Stíbrál, and Josef Zlatník), there is still a highly visible difference in favour of practicing architects of the middle generation. VYBÍRAL, Jindřich; HNÍDKOVÁ, Vendula. 2015. *Architektura a politická moc*. In: Bartlová, M. Vybíral, J. et al. *Budování státu. Repräsentace Československa v umění, architektuře a designu*. Praha: Vysoká škola uměleckoprůmyslová, p. 107.

- 25 Doc. no. 3b–41/185, box 3–4, f. Prezidium 1918–1939, I/4 – budovy. AMZV.
- 26 Soutěžě. 1924. *Časopis československých architektů*, 23, p. 30.
- 27 Also given as Brüller.
- 28 For the restricted competition, the Public Works Ministry specified in greater detail the instructions primarily on the plans for the functional layout, as well as drawing attention to the need to keep in mind the warmer climate in Belgrade.
- 29 Ambassador Šeba addressed one of his reports in March 1925 still to both architects. Doc. no. 1143/II/25, p. 2, box 3–4, f. Prezidium 1918–1939, I/4 – budovy. AMZV.
- 30 PK [Petr Klíma]. 2015. Entry Č. kat. 4/9. Československé velvyslanectví v Bělehradě. In: Bartlová, M., Vybíral, J. et al. *Budování státu. Reprezentace Československa v umění, architektuře a designu*. Praha: Vysoká škola uměleckopřmyslová, p. 123.
- 31 CHOCHOL, Josef. 1924. Soutěžný návrh na budovu zastupitelských úřadů. *Časopis československých architektů*, 23, pp. 199 – 200.
- 32 VANICKÝ, Vojtěch and CHOMOUT, Jan. 1924. Budova zastupitelských úřadů R. ČS. v Bělehradě. *Stavitel*, 5, pp. 143 – 146.
- 33 Belgrade's Deputy Mayor Pajević "[...] voiced the wish for the Czechoslovak Government not to economise on the sum that it wished to release for construction, and particularly to take care that the building's façade be truly artistic and imposing". Doc. no. 1480/3/I/22, p. 5, box 3–4, f. Prezidium 1918–1939, I/4 – budovy. AMZV.
- 34 KROFTA, Kamil. *Deník*, unpublished manuscript (entry from 22. 7. 1921, p. 3), cit. in: Jaroš, J., 2006, p. 77.
- 35 Notes from the interregnum by Otakar Novotný quoted from HNÍDKOVÁ, Vendula. 2013. *Národní styl. Kultura a politika*. Praha: Vysoká škola uměleckopřmyslová, pp. 54 – 55 and ZIKMUND-LENDER, Ladislav. 2016. Machoň na export: Reprezentace Československa v zahraničních realizacích architekta Ladislava Machoně. In: Zálešák, J. (ed.). *Sborník textů z Doktorandské konference FaVU 2016*. Brno: Vysoké učení technické v Brně, Fakulta výtvarných umění, p. 172.
- 36 Ambassador Prokop Maxa in a report intended for the central office of the Foreign Ministry, 27. 1. 1922. Doc. no. 15570–V/4, box 52, f. Prezidium 1918–1939, I/4 – budovy. AMZV.
- 37 Box 50, f. Prezidium 1918–1939, I/4 – budovy. AMZV.
- 38 A graduate of a secondary school for the building trades, Jan Pacl (1877–1938) worked until 1910 and again in the 1920s with the Slovak architect Dušan Jurkovič in a joint atelier in Bratislava. Among Pacl's independent designs is, e.g., T. G. Masaryk's summer residence in Slovakia in Bystrička u Martina (1930–1931). Jan Pacl. *abART* [online]. Available at: <https://cs.isabart.org/person/56888> (Accessed: 29 May 2020); LUKES, Zdeněk. 2018. Palác, univerzita i pošta. Jak Češi stavěli na Slovensku. *Lidovky*. cz [online]. Available at: https://www.lidovky.cz/relax/design/jak-cesi-staveli-na-slovensku.A180205.131645.In-by-dleni_ape (Accessed: 21 May 2020).
- 39 Doc. no. 487/40/V–1/22 Ma, box 52, f. Prezidium 1918–1939, I/4 – budovy. AMZV.
- 40 Doc. no. 1831/40/V–1/22/Ma, box 52, f. Prezidium 1918–1939, I/4 – budovy. AMZV.
- 41 As a "rich" and equally "politically leading" state, Czechoslovakia should present itself in Poland, a land with aristocratic traditions "and splendidly appointed [...] palaces" – as Stretti-Zamponi emphasised – "in a very correct manner" (though not "extravagantly"). Doc. no. 487/40/V–1/22 Ma, box 52, f. Prezidium 1918–1939, I/4 – budovy. AMZV; Appendix to no. 211848/V–4/23, box 51, f. Prezidium 1918–1939, I/4 – budovy. AMZV.
- 42 These bodies were the Architects' Association, the Club of Architects, the Alliance of Building Work, and the Architects' Group of the Association of Czechoslovak Engineers and Architects. Protest korporací architektů. 1923. *Národní listy*, 63(61), p. 4. In the same year, the Architects' Association intervened with the regional committee again regarding the projects for the embassies in Belgrade and Warsaw, allegedly achieving an improvement of the competition conditions and higher fees. 1923–1924. *Styl*, 4, p. 161.
- 43 Statement by the Finance Ministry regarding the intention to purchase the building for the Czechoslovak Embassy in Budapest. Box 11, f. Prezidium 1918–1939, I/4 – budovy. AMZV, cit. in: Jaroš, J., 2006, p. 69.
- 44 Box 11, f. Prezidium 1918–1939, I/4 – budovy. AMZV.
- 45 Adaptace a zařizování budovy vyslanectví v Budapešti, box 11, f. Prezidium 1918–1939, I/4 – budovy. AMZV.
- 46 Otakar Novotný succeeded Kotěra in his professorship at the Academy of Fine Arts, Ladislav Machoň took up his unfinished design for the Faculty of Law. Additionally, Machoň enjoyed a close friendship with art historian Zdeněk Wirth, then section head for
- "public enlightenment in artistic matters" at the Education Ministry.
- 47 LOŽEK, Václav. Pracovna jihoslovenského vyslanca v Praze. 1921–1922. *Styl*, 2, p. 12. Ložek later prepared the design for the interiors of the Czechoslovak Embassy in Sofia, realised in 1925–1926. Doc. no. 1814/adm., box 43, f. Prezidium 1918–1939, I/4 – budovy. AMZV.
- 48 Adaptace a zařizování budovy vyslanectví v Budapešti, box 11, f. Prezidium 1918–1939, I/4 – budovy. AMZV.
- 49 Adaptace a zařizování budovy vyslanectví v Budapešti, box 11, f. Prezidium 1918–1939, I/4 – budovy. AMZV. After Slovakia declared independence and established its own state in 1938 and 1939, Krupka was forced to leave, as were many other Czech-born architects. HRDINA, Miroslav. 2010. Niekoľko poznámok o postavení architektúry v rámci prvej Slovenskej republiky (1939 – 1945). *Architektúra a urbanizmus* 44(1 – 2), p. 86.
- 50 Adaptace a zařizování budovy vyslanectví v Budapešti, box 11, f. Prezidium 1918–1939, I/4 – budovy. AMZV. This dispute over authorities was registered even in the daily press: B. 1924. Úpravy čs. vyslanectví v Pešti, *Lidové noviny*, 32(17), p. 5.
- 51 Adaptace a zařizování budovy vyslanectví v Budapešti, box 11, f. Prezidium 1918–1939, I/4 – budovy. AMZV. Janák submitted his design later, probably only in January 1924.
- 52 Adaptace a zařizování budovy vyslanectví v Budapešti, box 11, f. Prezidium 1918–1939, I/4 – budovy. AMZV.
- 53 Adaptace a zařizování budovy vyslanectví v Budapešti, box 11, f. Prezidium 1918–1939, I/4 – budovy. AMZV.
- 54 Protokol o meziministerské poradě konané 6/XII 1923, box 52, f. Prezidium 1918–1939, I/4 – budovy. AMZV.
- 55 Protokol o meziministerské poradě konané 6/XII 1923, box 52, f. Prezidium 1918–1939, I/4 – budovy. AMZV. The national government also entrusted Novotný with the design of the Czechoslovak pavilion at the Venice Biennale (1925).
- 56 The gentlemen's room also had statuettes on the chandelier by Ladislav Beneš and a ceiling fresco by Vratislav Hugo Brunner, who also designed the inlaid tabletop in the reception hall with motifs of Czechoslovak monuments and scenery as well as the room's stained-glass windows. The grill surrounding the radiator in the hall was the work of Karel Dvořák. Doc. no. 12691/24–V4, box 11, f. Prezidium 1918–1939, I/4 – budovy. AMZV.
- 57 Vyjádření uměleckého poradce ministerstva zahraničí k čís. 19.601/
- I–4/33, box 11, f. Prezidium 1918–1939, I/4 – budovy. AMZV.
- 58 Zikmund-Lender, L., 2016, p. 171.
- 59 Selection of appropriate fittings for the building, including the fireplace grill on the ground floor by Bedřich Stefan or the sculpted ornament of the fountain in the great salon by Jaroslav Horejc, involved the efforts of Stretti-Zamponi, with the goal of limiting "costly décor, bronzes, fountains, etc." and a more effective design for the terrace. Box 52, f. I/4, Budovy ZÚ ČSR 1918–1940. AMZV.
- 60 Doc. no. 17680/25, box 50, f. I/4, Budovy ZÚ ČSR 1918–1940. AMZV.
- 61 Because of dissatisfaction with the completed and adapted embassy buildings, the Foreign Ministry actually created a new commission at the end of the 1920s. Its purpose was to evaluate building projects by the ministry even before negotiations with the NÚKŮ and the Public Works and Finance ministries, as well as the submission of the design to the cabinet, in terms of their building program and judge whether the buildings fully corresponded to their function. It would seem that this body assumed part of the agenda of the inter-ministerial commission. Box Seznamy úředních budov, f. I/4, Budovy ZÚ ČSR 1918–1940. AMZV.
- 62 Report by Ambassador Rudolf Künzl-Jizerský to the central office in Prague, no. 1901/29, box 50, f. I/4, Budovy ZÚ ČSR 1918–1940. AMZV.
- 63 Doc. no. 3b–3/190, box 50, f. I/4, Budovy ZÚ ČSR 1918–1940. AMZV.
- 64 Box 50, f. I/4, Budovy ZÚ ČSR 1918–1940. AMZV.
- 65 Not present among the participants were Jaromír Stretti-Zamponi and V. V. Štech, as it was not a meeting of the inter-ministerial commission.
- 66 The building exceeded the maximal height level by three metres, while its oriel extended into the space of the street. Doc. no. 8885/27, box 50, f. Prezidium 1918–1939, I/4 – budovy. AMZV.
- 67 Doc. no. 8885/27, box 50, f. Prezidium 1918–1939, I/4 – budovy. AMZV. The perspective from which Machoň's design was regarded by the Warsaw authorities clearly diverges from the traditional image of Ladislav Machoň as an architect tending towards conservative positions.
- 68 Another artistic element in the interior was a sculpture by Jaroslav Horejc.
- 69 Doc. no. 1901/29, box 50, f. Prezidium 1918–1939, I/4 – budovy. AMZV.

70 Ambassador František Chvalkovský in a report to the Foreign Ministry central office, no. 442/29 res, box 6, f. Prezidium 1918–1939, I/4 – budovy. AMZV.

71 MEZERA, Alois. 1933–1934. Přestavba residenční budovy československého vyslanectví v Berlíně. *Styl*, 13, pp. 33–38.

72 Gočár designed the new furnishings of the salon in July 1925, only three months after the opening of the International Exposition of Decorative Arts in Paris, where he enjoyed success as the author of the Czechoslovak pavilion. In the case of the Berlin embassy, it is likely that his design remained only on paper.

73 *Diplomatisches Bulletin*, 1933, 10(62), p. 1.

74 Chargé d'affaires Michal Hanák in a report for the Foreign Ministry central office, no. 74/dův.–35, box 2, f. Prezidium 1918–1939, I/4 – budovy. AMZV.

75 Jaroš, J., 2006, p. 99.

76 Evidently, this architect was Petr Kropáček (1889–1931), who in 1930 designed the villa for Hana and Edvard Beneš in Sezimovo Ústí (1930–1931). The commission was arranged by urbanist and landscape architect Otokar Fierlinger, who designed the garden surrounding the villa. It was Fierlinger, an employee of the Public Works Ministry whose brother Zdeněk had long worked in the diplomatic service as well as the Foreign Ministry, who could have recommended Kropáček as well for preparing the preliminary plans for Ankara. Viz Michal Kolář – Vladimír Drha, *Edvard Beneš v Sezimově Ústí. Vila, zahrada, domov*, Praha 2004, p. 8–10, 16.

77 Doc. no. 912/1929, box 2, f. Prezidium 1918–1939, I/4 – budovy. AMZV.

78 Doc. no. 912/1929, box 2, f. Prezidium 1918–1939, I/4 – budovy. AMZV.

79 Ambassador Kobr, long frustrated by the highly unsuitable condition of the embassy buildings, blamed Mezera for the failure of the selection proceeding, having “caused through his impossibly grandiose plans the delay in construction, the only possible solution, even 2 or 3 years ago, in a rational way to the question of accommodating the embassy in Ankara”. Doc. no. 350–32, box 2, f. Prezidium 1918–1939, I/4 – budovy. AMZV. The ministry then had Kobr summoned back to Prague, so he would not be forced to represent the state in disadvantageous conditions, leaving Ankara only with a chargé d'affaires. Jaroš, J., 2006, p. 101.

80 Possibly he could have used as a guideline information from Ankara about the construction of the Austrian

and Yugoslav embassy buildings – in comparison with them, Mezera’s final design was more modest and had significantly less built space.

81 Their use in place of the originally planned flat roofs is likely through the influence of Ambassador Kobr, or perhaps equally Mezera’s visit to Ankara, where he could gain an intensive knowledge of the local climate and the buildings of other diplomatic services.

82 AM [Alois Mezera]. 1938. Alois Mezera – spolupráce František Šrámek a Rudolf Vichra: Projekt paláce Velkého národního shromáždění tureckého v Ankaře. *Styl*, 21, pp. 37–49, 54–55.

83 Report of the Supreme Accounting Audit Office to the board of the Council of Ministers, no. 5.268–VIII–1938, box 6, f. Prezidium 1918–1939, I/4 – budovy. AMZV.

84 In the interval, in 1934, Mezera designed the furnishings for the embassy in Den Haag. In the same year, using the plans of the Public Works Ministry, the upper-level addition to the residential building of the embassy in Washington was completed.

85 The building was planned for a site at Rauchstrasse 22 close to the current official building.

86 Doc. no. 434/38 dův., box 6, f. Prezidium 1918–1939, I/4 – budovy. AMZV.

87 The design had to be adapted as well because of the planned demolition of the one next door and the widening of the street. Doc. no. 581/39 dův., box 6, f. Prezidium 1918–1939, I/4 – budovy. AMZV.

88 Whenever it was economically and technically feasible, the ministries assigned the maximum quantity of work to Czechoslovak architects, artists, and craftsmen.

89 Over the period, the Czech architectural press published the competition designs and the realised appearance of the embassy in Belgrade, as well as the adaptation in Berlin and the new embassy in Ankara. In 1926, the graduation designs of Gočár’s students at the Academy were published in which they themselves designed embassies. MEZERA, Alois. 1924–1925. Československé vyslanectví v Bělehradě. *Styl*, 5; MEZERA, Alois. 1933–1934. Přestavba residenční budovy československého vyslanectví v Berlíně. *Styl*, 13, pp. 33–38; MEZERA, Alois. 1938. Československé vyslanectví v Ankaře, *Styl*, 21, pp. 50–53, 55–56; *Stavitel*, 1926, 7, pp. 112–113, 115–117, 121.

90 All the same, in most realisations of embassies, these two premises of representation and restraint – regard-

less of how inconclusively formulated – managed to be met.

91 For example, for new ministerial buildings in Prague, the architects’ efforts at developing specifically “national” architectonic forms emerged only in the “decoratively conceived interiors of certain ministerial offices”. VYBÍRAL, Jindřich. 2020. Vážnost a důstojnost ministerských budov. In: Hnídková, V. (ed.). *Duch, který pracuje. Architektura a česká politika 1918–1945*. Praha: Vysoká škola umělecko-průmyslová, p. 167. More modernist stances began to find their place in this typology after 1925 thanks to the competition successes of Pavel Janák or Kamil Roškot. Vybíral, J., 2020, pp. 135, 137.

92 Vybíral, J., 2020, p. 167.

93 In March 1933, Stretti-Zamponi stated that “it would be hard to achieve from [...] Prof. Novotný any changes in various forms [...] In this limitation, he saw his own artistic voice.” Vyjádření uměleckého poradce ministerstva zahraničí k čís. 19.601/1–4/33, box 11, f. Prezidium 1918–1939, I/4 – budovy. AMZV.