

Aerial view of the housing project of La Murette
at Drancy, before the Second World War

Letecký pohľad na sídlisko La Murette
v Drancy, pred druhou svetovou vojnou



Source Zdroj: <http://martinetienne.com/2012/01/31/bobigny-une-gare-entre-drancy-et-auschwitz/drancy-avant-guerre/>

FROM 'GRAND ENSEMBLE' TO ARCHITECTURAL HERITAGE, FROM CONCENTRATION CAMP TO MEMORIAL

The mass housing project of the Cité de la Muette in Drancy, near Paris^{/1/}

OD „GRAND ENSEMBLE“ K ARCHITEKTONICKÉMU DEDIČSTVU, OD KONCENTRAČNÉHO TÁBORA K PAMÄTNÍKU

Projekt sídliska Cité de la Muette v Drancy neďaleko Paríža

Architektúra mala po výstavbe Drancy prísť o všetky utopické ilúzie o zlepšení života ľudí prostredníctvom organizovania priestoru – ideál, ktorému architekti verili, keď vytvárali sídlisko La Muette. Výstavba Cité de la Muette v Drancy v okolí Paríža patrila ku kľúčovým momentom ohlasujúcim medzinárodný jav, ktorý sa po druhej svetovej vojne prejavil ako hromadná bytová výstavba a zahŕňal zárodok mnohých problémov charakteristických pre povojnové obdobie. Sídlisko La Muette v Drancy navrhli architekti Eugène Beaudouin a Marcel Lods a pokladá sa za prvý „grand ensemble“ vo Francúzsku. Jeho architekti boli v tom čase preslávenými modernistami, ktorí presadzovali technicky odvážne a sociálne pokrokové schémy. Objednávku získali vďaka významnému politikovi socialistovi Henrimu Sellierovi, ktorý inicioval výstavbu série záhradných miest na predmestiach Paríža. Koncepcia vychádzala z princípu takzvaného „vertikálneho záhradného mesta“ a z myšlienok CIAM (Congrès internationaux d'architecture moderne).

Sídlisko La Muette pozostávalo z niekoľkých menších častí. Prvá sa nazývala „hrebeň“ a tvorilo ju päť štrnásťposchodových vežiakov s krytou strešnou terasou, ktoré dopĺňala trojposchodová a štvorposchodová riadková zástavba. Druhá časť s pôdorysom v tvare U tvoril štvorposchodový bytový dom nazývaný „podkova“. Dopĺňalo ich niekoľko stredne vysokých bytových domov a občianska vybavenosť. Tento revolučný projekt bol prvým plne prefabrikovaným sídliskom. Jednotlivé časti boli prefabrikované priamo na mieste a potom zabudované do ocelevej konštrukcie. Utopický projekt bol uzavretý vo svojej vznešenej izolácii a obklopený pôvodnou zástavbou, od ktorej sa dištancoval.

Vežiaky a „hrebeň“ sídliska vybudovali v rokoch 1932 – 1935, ale mnohé zariadenia, ako napríklad spoločenské centrum, školu či kostol, nikdy nepostavili. Vstupný vnútroblok vznikol až po vojne. Sídlisko La Muette zostávalo dlho neobývané, a to z niekoľkých dôvodov: bolo situované príliš ďaleko od Paríža na severovýchodnom predmestí; neobsahovalo občiansku vybavenosť; na tomto parížskom predmestí chýbali príležitosti k zamestnaniu aj verejná doprava; obyvatelia

okolitých súkromných domov mali k projektu nepriateľský postoj; stavebné techniky prefabrikácie a výstavby výškových budov boli príliš zložitá a nespoľahlivá; nájomné bolo mimoriadne vysoké; túto situáciu ešte zhoršovali recesia a nezamestnanosť, príznačné pre európsku spoločnosť v polovici tridsiatych rokov 20. Storočia. Sídlisko tak ostalo neobývané a po štyroch rokoch sa premenilo na opustenú ruinu.

Sídlisko však vyvolalo nepokoj aj v politických kruhoch. Viacerí politici sa obávali, že takéto koncentrácia obyvateľov z robotníckeho prostredia môže viesť k vzburám. Dobová tlač opisovala vežiaky ako „diabolské mrakodrapy“ a „smiešne neludské vraky“. Pozornosť sa venovala mnohým technickým chýbам projektu: zvuková izolácia, defekty prefabrikácie, zatekanie, nepevné vnútorné steny, zadušajúca horúčava v lete a mrazivý chlad v zime na horných poschodiach atď. V polovici tridsiatych rokov 20. storočia zamrzlo šesťsto radiátorov, potrubia popraskali a poschodia boli zatopené. Betónové časti panelov sa začali odlupovať od ocelevej konštrukcie. Celá konštrukcia sa stala nebezpečnou.

O niekoľko rokov neskôr zažilo sídlisko dramatický obrat: rozhodlo sa, že budovy budú čiastočne obývané príslušníkmi jednotky národnej polície „garde mobile“ a ich rodinami. Rozsiahly centrálny priestor, kde mali byť zasadené stromy, sa stal parkoviskom.

Udalosti, ktoré nasledovali po počiatocnom spustošení sídliska, však boli ešte dramatickejšie. Dňa 14. júna 1940 budovu v tvare U a vežiaky zhabala nemecká armáda. V objekte v tvare podkovy zriadili internačný tábor. Ten sa stal väzením pre komunistov, ľudí podozrivých z príslušnosti k „piatej kolóne“, nemeckých Židov, ktorí utiekli do Francúzska, a francúzskych Židov zajatých za režimu Vichy vo Francúzsku. Hoci tábor strážila francúzska polícia, jeho skutočné spravovanie zverili jednotkám SS. Pôdorys budovy ulahčoval jej transformáciu na väzenský tábor: nový plot uzatváral vchod do podkovy aj cestičky, ktoré obkolesovali tri línie písme na U; uprostred podkovy na otvorenom priestore postavili drevené toalety; na štyroch rohoch budovy vznikli strážne veže a krytá cesta.

Pre políciu vo Vichystickom Francúzsku bolo nové sídlisko La Muette ideálnou lokalitou na vytvorenie aparátu represívneho režimu: napomáhali tomu logická organizácia priestoru a bývania; ľahkosť, s ktorou sa priestory mohli uzatvoriť, kontrolovať a strážiť; blízkosť jednej z hlavných obchodných staníc, odkiaľ viedli cesty na sever a východ Francúzska; a fakt, že budova už bola obývaná žandármi. Drancy sa stalo jediným centrom deportácií vo Francúzsku, začiatkom cesty do Osvienčimu. Deportovali odtiaľ okolo 67 000 Židov.

V roku 1948 budova „podkova“, v súvislosti s kritickým nedostatkom bývania, dokončili a vrátili do normálneho stavu sociálneho bývania. Sídlisko tak začalo plniť funkciu, pre ktoré bolo projektované a ktorú nemohlo plniť kvôli zvrátenosti dejinných udalostí. Vežiaky zostali vo vlastníctve príslušníkov polície „*grand mobile*“ a používali sa ako ubytovňa.

V roku 1976 sprístupnili pred budovou podkova memoriál zasvätený táboru a deportovaným Židom. Nedávno objavené stopy po tábore – graffiti vytvorené väzňami, tajné chodby atď. – boli zachované ako prvky svedčiace o týchto historických udalostiach. Tábor v Drancy sa však nemohol stať memoriálom hneď po vojne. V sedemdesiatych rokoch „*hrebeň*“ – vežiaky a s nimi spojené „*doskové*“ budovy – kde boli ubytovaní príslušníci „*grand mobile*“, zdemolovali. Na ich mieste postavili sériu obytných veží. Bolo to viac než prekvapivé, keďže táto časť La Muette by sa mala pokladať za dôležitý príklad modernej architektúry, prefabrikácie a stavebnej výroby vo Francúzsku v oveľa väčšej miere než zachovaná „*konská podkova*“.

Jedným z problémov, ktorý bolo potrebné v tejto súvislosti vyriešiť, bol rozdiel medzi „*pamiatkou*“ a „*pomníkom*“. V deväťdesiatych rokoch 20. storočia vznikla diskusia ohľadom toho, či sa má rozhodnúť medzi demoláciou hlavnej časti cité a stratou dôležitej pamiatkovej lokality na jednej strane, alebo vytvorením pomníka na strane druhej.

Skúmanie „*grand ensembles*“ a politika rekonštrukcie môže byť úspešná len v tom prípade,

ak zistíme čo umožnilo redukciu pojmu „*cité*“. Dejiny sídliska La Muette vyvolávajú obraz zničenej modernistickej predstavy, sociálnej politiky a technológie – skrátka, obraz ruín modernej, experimentálnej a racionálnej architektúry, ktorá nebola schopná dosiahnuť dokonalú úroveň využívania priestoru, jeho fungovania či ideálneho životného štýlu, z ktorého vychádzala. Ako možno vysvetliť, že sa projekt náhle premenil na svoj opak? Je architektúra obeťou podobných historických udalostí? Hoci konečný úsudok urobí budúce generácie, kritický historický prístup môže byť nápomocný pri vypracovaní precíznejšieho obrazu okolností, ktoré viedli k rozhodnutiam umožňujúcim vývoj architektúry s takýmto dvojitém osudom.

Otázka, ktorá ešte stále nebola zodpovedaná, však znie: sú nádherná utopická vízia čistého priebehu modernistického mestského života ďaleko od historického centra na jednej strane a smutný osud, ku ktorému modernizmus predučil banlieue (predmestie) na druhej strane, len nekompatibilné, ale sú dokonca protirečivé? Nebol skutočný problém v tom, že namiesto vytvorenia spoločných záujmov vznikli protichodné ambície? Akoby „*grand ensemble*“ mal byť riešením preťaženého mesta rovnako, ako aj neporiadku na predmestí (banlieue) – „*grand ensemble*“ ako tretia cesta.

Pre lepšie pochopenie architektúry „*grand ensemble*“ musíme vedieť, akú úlohu hral v totalitných režimoch pojem masy. Masy sú súčasťou politiky týchto režimov – „*biopolitiky*“ v termínoch Michela Foucaulta a Giorgia Agambena – ktorá sa uskutočňovala mocenskými štruktúrami. Začínajúc 19. storočím bola moderná spoločnosť konfrontovaná s problémom masy. Takí architekti ako Lods a Beaudouin nechtiac zaviedli do koncepcie modernej architektúry vplyvnú ideu, ktorá bola technicky totalitná. Podľa nich existencia veľkých mas vedie k dopytu po určitom druhu architektúry. Pre ideologicky totalitné režimy masy ako také predstavovali surový materiál. Architektúra, ktorá sa v prípade Drancy dočasne stala táborom, predstavuje systém, v ktorom sa tento výnimočný stav stal dlhodobým.

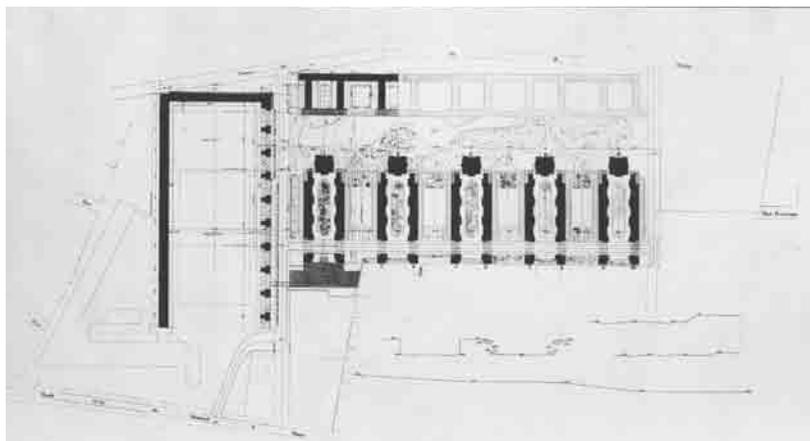
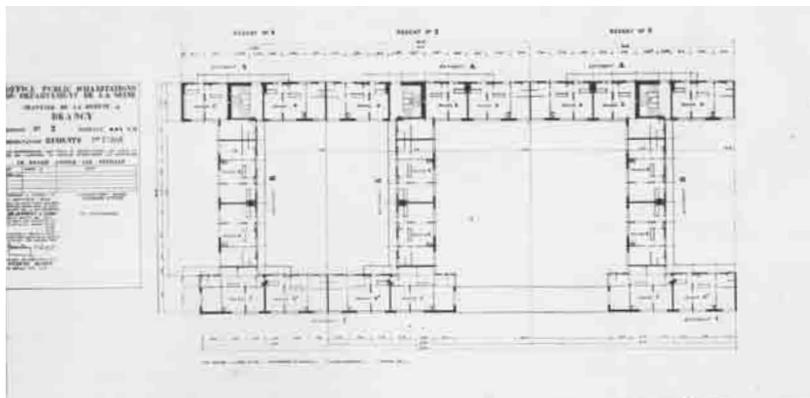
This article deals with the pre-war Cité de la Muette at Drancy, in the suburbs of Paris, as one of the key harbingers leading to the international post-war phenomenon of mass social housing. It constitutes a reflection on the clash between modern architecture and the responsibilities of history. In several respects, the project of Drancy is emblematic of the heritage of the Modern Movement, demonstrating that mass housing contained, even in its early experiences and development before the Second World War, the seeds of many of the main problems that characterise the post-war period.

The historical period from the end of the 1930s until today will be discussed through a number of urgent questions regarding the phenomenon of the "grand ensemble" (the French term for "mass housing development"). After Drancy, architecture should have lost all utopian illusions regarding the ability to improve people's lives simply by organising space, an ideal the architects must have held when they designed the housing project of La Muette, which was then considered to be a "model town planning operation in the Paris region, conceived by two functionalist architects yearning for modernity"^{1/2/}.

Building a New Society

At the time of construction of La Muette, Eugène Beaudouin and Marcel Lods were achieving rapidly rising fame as modernist architects for their technically bold and socially progressive schemes. At the time when they designed the Cité de la Muette at Drancy, they had built, among other projects, the Cité du Champ-des-Oiseaux at Bagneux, in addition to other large-scale housing schemes. By the time of their separation at the beginning of the Second World War, their achievements included their entry for the competition for a new major exhibition hall organised by the OTUA^{3/} to promote the use of steel; the open air school at Suresnes; the Festival of Light for the International Decorative Arts Exhibition in 1937; the clubhouse of the Roland Garros aerodrome at Buc; the House of the People at Clichy, and many others.

The housing project of La Muette at Drancy is considered to be the first "grand ensemble" in France. The commission was awarded by Henri Sellier, one of the most important socialist



Source Zdroj: Marcel Lods, Archives of the Cité de l'architecture et du patrimoine, Centre d'archives d'architecture du XXe siècle, Paris

In the early thirties, the housing project by Eugène Beaudouin and Marcel Lods has not reached yet its final stage. The towers had already appeared on the plan but, at ground level, the 'horseshoe' still has an open side on columns oriented to the rest of the unit. The facilities are only approximately outlined

Sídliisko Eugèna Beaudouina a Marcela Lods bolo na začiatku tridsiatych rokov stále nedokončené. Vežičky síce stáli, ale „podkova“ mala stále časť prízemia otvorenú len so stĺpmi. Občianska vybavenosť sa len približne črtala

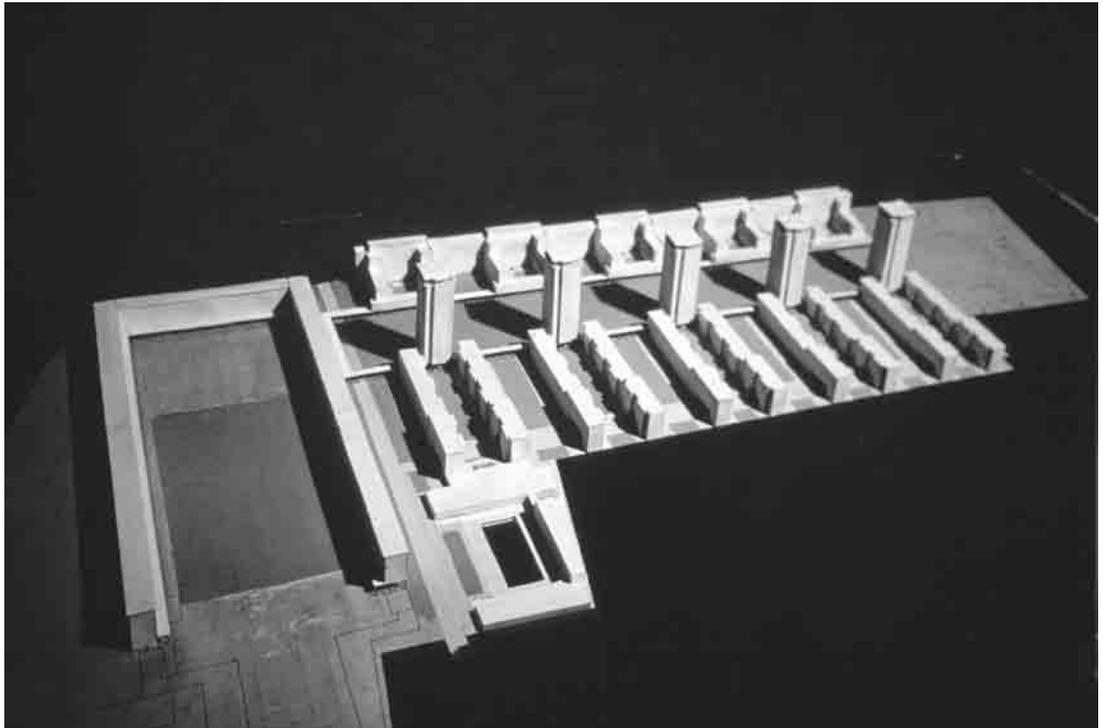
politicians of his time in France, senator of the Seine département and minister under Léon Blum; who initiated an important series of garden cities in the suburbs of Paris. The housing project of La Muette was conceived between 1931 and 1934 for the Office Public d'Habitation à Bon Marché de la Seine, one of the biggest social housing bodies of the Paris region, by the young modern architects Eugène Beaudouin and Marcel Lods, and built with the help of the engineer Eugène Mopin. It was also one of the earliest occasions that the builder Jean Prouvé, who designed the metal framework, had collaborated in an architectural project on this scale. The concept is based on the principle of what was termed the "vertical garden city", proposed by Beaudouin and Lods in response to the ideas of the CIAM (the International Congresses of Modern Architecture). The 1930 CIAM event in Brussels undoubtedly influenced both architects when the congress discussed Walter Gropius'

question on "low-, mid- or high-rise building?"^[4] High-rise construction was viewed less in terms of economy than from the point of view of its social and symbolic potential. To their "French" approach of the garden city as a whole of collective housing blocks, Beaudouin and Lods added several towers to emphasize its verticality and transform it into a modernist landmark.

Like many other examples of functionalist housing projects in the Netherlands and Germany, the mass housing unit of La Muette was composed of several sub-units: the first sub-unit was called the "comb" and consisted of five towers of fourteen apartment floors and a covered rooftop, alternating with ten housing bars of three to four floors; the second unit was a U-shaped 4-floor apartment building called the "horseshoe"; finally, there was also a series of semi high-rise apartment buildings, and some public amenities. Technically, the project was meant to be revolutionary, as it was

This model of La Muette, made by the architectural office of Eugène Beaudouin and Marcel Lods around 1934, shows the different components of the housing project (the 'comb', the 'horseshoe', the semi-high-rise buildings closing the unit in the north, the school, the pedestrian gallery linking all the buildings)

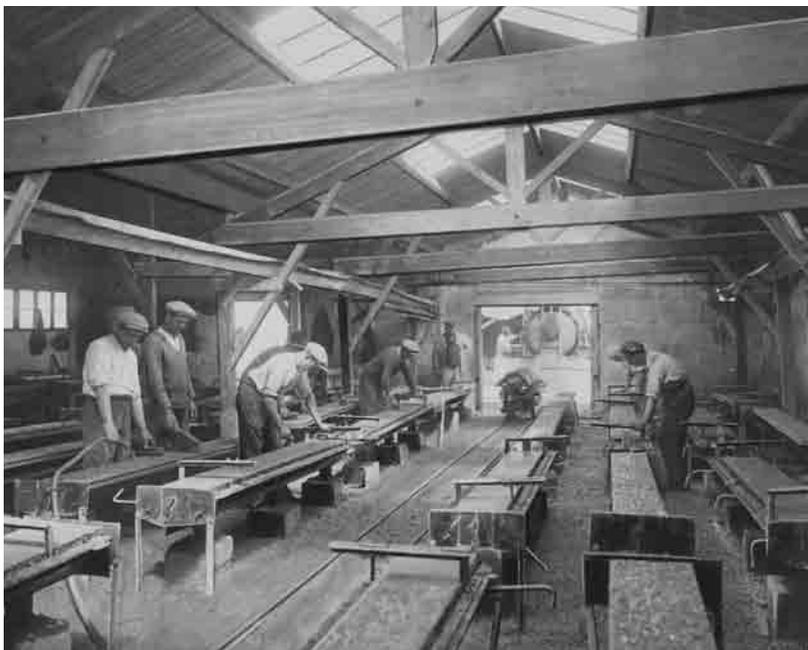
Tento model La Muette z kancelárie Eugène Beaudouina a Marcela Lods vytvorený okolo 1934, demonštruje rôzne komponenty sídliska („hrebeň, „podkova“, čiastočne vyvýšené budovy uzatvárajúce súbor zo severu, škola, galéria pre chodcov spájajúca všetky budovy)



Source Zdroj: Marcel Lods. Archives of the Cité de l'architecture et du patrimoine, Centre d'archives d'architecture du XXe siècle, Paris

the first entirely prefabricated housing ensemble. The elements were prefabricated on site and mounted onto a steel structure. For the housing project of La Murette, the two architects wanted at all costs to update the traditional concepts of the workers' housing complex and the garden city, by making a radical choice in favour of collective housing blocks and towers. They also wanted to avoid both cramming people into large towns, like Paris, and the indefinite spread of individual houses in the suburbs. Their project was utopian, at the same time extremely imaginative and very practical, enclosed in sublime isolation and surrounded by a built environment which they hated.

The pride of the two architects in their project knew no bounds. At the end of his life, Lods commented on the project: *"In those years, we in France were a nation that people came to visit: all Europe visited Suresnes and Drancy. They came to see what was being done under Sellier's*



Source Zdroj: Marcel Lods. Archives of the Cité de l'architecture et du patrimoine, Centre d'archives d'architecture du XXe siècle, Paris

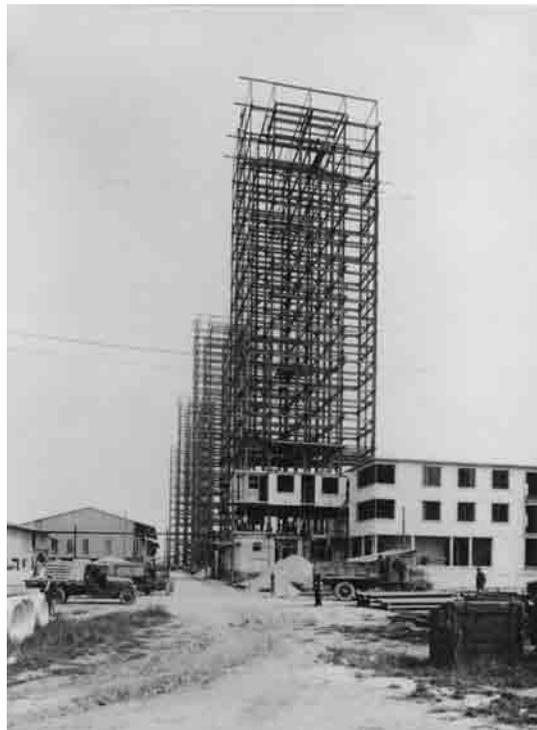
direction. He knew how to assemble a great team of architects around him, although with very different approaches. The Maisons-Alfort group of buildings, constructed with consummate art and making excellent use of brick, remains a very traditional concept. On the other hand, the boldness I showed in Drancy represented the extreme point which Sellier could permit himself, given his responsibilities as an administrator. In this town, which was growing very fast in an anarchic fashion, we wanted to bring some order – in one quarter, at any rate – the Cité de la Murette. In Drancy in 1932 these were the first tower blocks in Europe, the first high-rise apartment blocks – 14 floors! These were buildings with lifts, central heating, pneumatic waste disposal, greatly improved surroundings – and a big central park for the children, without any traffic. For housing to be really social, it has to include everything for social living – everything: not only the environment, but also schools, health centres, playgrounds”¹⁵¹.

View inside one of the workshops on the building site where the prefabricated elements were produced

Pohľad do vnútra jednej z dielní na stavenisku, kde sa vyrábali prefabrikáty

The five high-rise housing towers under construction – waiting for the prefabricated elements to be mounted on the steel skeleton

Päť vežiakov počas výstavby – krátko pred montážou prefabrikátov na ocelovú konštrukciu



Source Zdroj: Marcel Lods. Archives of the Cité de l'architecture et du patrimoine, Centre d'archives d'architecture du XXe siècle, Paris

Flying his own airplane,
Marcel Lods visits the
building site from the air.
The construction of the
'horseshoe', just started

Marcel Lods navštívil
stavenisko vo vlastnom
lietadle. Výstavba
„podkovy“, práve začala



Source Zdroj: Marcel Lods. Archives of the Cité de l'architecture et du patrimoine, Centre d'archives d'architecture du XXe siècle, Paris

In 1939, at the exhibition celebrating the tenth anniversary of the Museum of Modern Art in New York, where the project in Drancy was displayed, among others, the housing project of La Muette was described in the following terms: “If finished, this will be a complete community with its own schools, church, athletic fields, recreation building, shops, and even common central heating. Financed by the State. The well-spaced skyscrapers assure their tenants light, air and privacy; their location at the north of the entire group prevents their shadows from falling on occupied spaces. Despite structural and mechanical flaws, this scheme shows an important type of housing solution unrealized elsewhere.”¹⁶¹

The architects had turned away from the traditional, English-style garden city, putting in its place a combination of typologies designed in steps, with a “comb” formed by alternating bars,

courtyards and gardens. The “horseshoe” defined an enclosed area by way of a public square. The U shape of this part of the Cité had been conceived by Beaudouin. He mentioned explicitly his inspiration from the great bazaar at Isfahan, which he had studied up close during his detailed surveys of traditional and ancient architecture in the context of his Grand Prix de Rome. Although Beaudouin and Lods never made any reference to Bruno Taut’s and Martin Wagner’s “Hufeisensiedlung”, a social housing project in the form of a horseshoe, built between 1925 and 1933 as part of the garden city of Britz in Berlin, a conceptual relationship between both projects is plausible.

The towers, which did not appear in the initial pilot studies, appeared out of the blue, later on in the design stage of the project, expressing the architects’ desire to create a dense high-rise city. In 1933, while maintaining that the mass production

of the buildings was essential, the architects had not definitely decided in its implementation: *"It is quite difficult to say at present how the process will develop in the future. The way civilisation is developing, with its profound modifications to the length of the working day, could mean significant changes are necessary to the way such a problem is dealt with"*^{17/}.

Their "vertical garden city", while neither entirely tenement blocks nor precisely a miners' district, prefigured the model of the "grand ensemble" of the reconstruction, subject to the regime of prefabrication and the concept of large numbers and anti-urban town planning. *"Constructing large groups of buildings, which could be achieved with individual houses in lightly populated areas, or with tall, or even very tall, collective buildings in the most densely populated areas, provides the solution which will permit people to be housed in the best conditions. We can foresee that situating accommodation further outside city centres will increase travelling time. This will be the price to pay for the advantages of isolating people who cling to the idea of individual houses with gardens"*^{18/}, Beaudouin and Lods argued.

Loss of the Utopian Model

The towers and the "comb" of the housing project of La Muette were built in 1932 to 1935. Of the buildings in steps which were to enclose the ensemble to the north, only the western section was constructed. Many of the facilities, such as the social centre, the school and the church, were simply never built. The entrance courtyard was not laid out until after the war. Cut off from its vital organs and thus deprived of sense, the complex could not fulfil its programme, even if it was very advanced for its time^{19/}.

From the beginning, the housing project of La Muette remained unoccupied for several reasons: it was situated too far from Paris in the north-eastern suburbs; public facilities were non-existent; there was a lack of jobs and public transport in this "banlieue" of Paris; the inhabitants of the surrounding suburban individual houses displayed hostility to the project; the building techniques for prefabrication and high rise building were still too complex and fragile, etc. The project remained unoccupied for four years. It soon became an

abandoned ruin and lost its utopian dimension. The excessively high rents were another reason put forward, and the depression with its accompanying unemployment, which made itself felt in the mid 1930s, did not help at all, either. The whole site resembled *"a collection of ugly, great hulks at the mercy of the elements"*^{10/}. Execution of the project was hampered and then interrupted around 1934, when, in an uncertain social situation, a Malthusian scepticism and defeatism set in, reducing the French building industry to a state of inertia^{11/}.

This *"garden city without a garden"*^{12/} as Rémy Butler and Patrice Noisette have described it, also aroused a certain degree of anxiety in the authorities, for political reasons. The project appeared to suggest a model of organised community life at the very moment when the Popular Front was rising. Some people feared that such a concentration of inhabitants belonging to the working class could lead to revolts^{13/} and the transformation of housing estates in the banlieue into *"fortified hotbeds of revolution"*^{14/}. Drancy appeared to become an example of *"the inability to complete the great urbanistic design to which H. Sellier had committed himself"*^{15/}.

The press at the time described the towers as *"diabolical skyscrapers"* and *"ridiculous, inhuman"*

Postcard from the thirties showing the towers of the Cité de la Muette at Drancy rising at the horizon. View taken from the neighboring commune of Bobigny

Pohľadnica z tridsiatych rokov – vežiaky Cité de la Muette v Drancy týčiace sa na horizonte. Pohľad z susednej štvrte Bobigny



Source Zdroj: <http://martinetienne.com/page/6/>

hulks". Louis Thomas, in his monumental, reactionary work on Le Grand Paris, wondered "who the devil could have had the peculiar idea of planting those five, fifteen storey towers there, topped with a covered terrace?"^{16/} The author saw in this "strange city whose pretentious skyscrapers are the crowning product"^{17/} of the "overheated imagination of two architects, Messieurs Beaudouin and Lods, of whom the least one can say is that they were much more logicians, and unrealistic, excessive and arbitrary logicians, than prudent and skilful property developers."^{18/}

Perceived as a curiosity, visited by many architects and eminent foreign personalities, the building site at Drancy – producing prefabricated concrete units to be mounted on a metal skeleton – allowed glimpses of the problems which would present themselves later on. Several technical faults were called into question: soundproofing, fabrication defects, water penetration, fragile internal walls, dwellings on higher floors that were suffocatingly hot in summer and freezing cold in winter, and the like.

This fate seemed to be the beginning of the end of the project as an uncompromising symbol of modernisation. In fact, it was only the start of its catastrophic history. In the mid 1930s, disaster struck in the form of an unexpected frost. Six hundred radiators were frozen, all the pipes burst, the floors were flooded. Sections of cement from the panels started to become detached from the iron framework. The structure itself became unsafe.

The popular press attacked en masse the modernity of the Cité. According to a contemporary journal, "the high-rise project in Drancy is not a mistake, but an unsuccessful experiment. The higher you go, the colder it gets. If at ground level or a few metres above, the walls of the rooms could be acceptable at moderate or temperate external temperatures – how can the interior of the apartments be 'bearable' at 10, 15, 20, 30 and 45 metres high? This is where the error lies with the new idea of Messieurs Beaudouin and Lods. It would not have happened with solid stone. How often do we have to say that cement and these iron and steel carcasses ... are not suit-

Map of the banlieue between the housing project of La Mulette at Drancy and the railway station of Bobigny

Mapa predmestia medzi sídliskom La Mulette v Drancy a železničnou stanicou v Bobigny



Source Zdroj: <http://www.memoire-viretuelle.fr/outils/cartes-et-plans/>



Source Zdroj: Marcel Lods. Archives of the Cité de l'architecture et du patrimoine, Centre d'archives d'architecture du XXe siècle, Paris

able for our regions, for our apartments, not even for the poor ... There are other materials beside conductive iron which are outstanding in heat and cold ... Yes, Messieurs Beaudouin and Lods, and you, too, M. Sellier, and if you do not know, we are going to tell you: there is French stone and also brick, and millstone. Maybe you will learn from experience. It will be expensive, though" /19/.

It seemed that irreparable damage was on the horizon. A description by Louis Thomas, dating from the beginning of the war, describes the state of devastation of the building known as the "horseshoe": "Some of the rooms in this building have been converted into a school, but twenty-nine of its thirty floors, with their gigantic windows, have been left to the tender care of the youngsters, who have already broken thousands

of francs worth of glass by throwing stones. Which will be an additional expense when they have to be replaced" /20/.

From Housing Unit to Concentration Camp and back

A few years later the project took a dramatic turn when the decision was made to have part of the housing project occupied by the "Garde mobile" (a sort of national police unit) and their families. In retrospect, for Lods, the occupation by the Garde mobile "was a disaster: the plan was never intended to be a barracks!" /21/ The great central space, which was to have been planted with trees, became a parking area for lorries /22/.

The events which followed this initial deterioration, however, were to be much more dramatic.

Lods himself took this chilling view from La Murette a few years before the Second World War. The building site will never be finished; the uninhabited housing unit prefigures the dramatic years during the war when it will become a concentration camp

Sám Lods zaznamenal tento desivý pohľad na La Murette niekoľko rokov pred druhou svetovou vojnou. Nedokončené sídlisko, neobývané bytovky predznamenávajú dramatické vojnové roky, keď sa majú zmeniť na koncentračný tábor

The first barbed wires enclose the 'horseshoe' building at the beginning of the war

Prvé ostnaté drôty uzatvárajú budovu „podkovy“ na začiatku vojny

View inside the courtyard of the 'horseshoe' with the wooden barrack which was used for body-searchs in the concentration camp, December 1942

Pohľad do vnútrobloku „podkovy“ s dreveným prístreškom, ktorý sa používal na osobné prehliadky v koncentračnom tábore, december 1942



Source Zdroj: <http://www.memoire-viretuelle.fr/de-neuville/a-drancy/histoire-dun-lieu/>

On 14 June 1940, the U-shaped building and the tower blocks, along with some neighbouring land, were requisitioned by the German army. A new use was found for the unfinished building site at La Murette by the Daladier government after the French Communist Party was declared illegal: the authorities set up an internment camp in the U-shaped building. The layout of the building facilitated its transformation into a prison camp: a double barbed wire fence was erected around the U, watchtowers were built in the four corners and a covered way was built.

Communists, suspected “fifth columnists”, German Jews who had fled Germany, French Jews seized in Vichy France, all were held there ^[23]. At first, the premises were managed by the French police. Then the Germans took over and made it their “Frontstalag III”. The actual running of the camp was entrusted to a young officer, SS Theodor Dannecker, who was succeeded on 18 June 1943 by Hauptsturmführer SS Aloïs Brunner, although the camp was guarded by the French police.

The horseshoe or U shape was considered very practical ^[24]. In fact, to close it, it was only neces-



Source Zdroj: <http://www.ajpn.org/internement-Camp-de-Drancy-67.html>

sary to put up a fence, while in the middle, on the central open space, wooden huts were erected for the toilets. Barbed wire was set up to close off the open side, as well as all around the path which encircled the three bars of the U.

“The configuration of the buildings was ideal for this new function of internment and control. The blocks were identified by letters of the alphabet and the twenty-two staircases were numbered. As the internal walls had never been built, each landing led to a huge room which took up the whole floor, with wooden bunk beds and one wash basin. Thirty to fifty people were crammed in there. The ground floor accommodation was used for communal services: hospital, hairdresser, steward’s office, tailor, carpenter’s workshop, vegetable store, food preparation room...” ^[25], states the historian Rémi Baudouï. For the police in Vichy France, the brand-new housing project of La Murette was the ideal location to install the apparatus of a repressive regime. The logical organisation of the space and the accommodation, the ease with which it could be closed off, controlled and guarded, the proximity of the railway and the fact that the building was already rented by the gendarmes; all favoured the choice of the housing project of La Murette. The clear and orderly design assisted in the bureaucratic numbering of the accommodation. Nonetheless, to invoke exclusively the ease with which the space could be organised is not by any means the only explanation.



View of the courtyard of the 'horseshoe' of the housing project of La Muette at Drancy, transformed in a concentration camp

Pohľad na vnútroblok „podkovy“ na sídlisku La Muette v Drancy premenenom na koncentračný tábor

Source Zdroj: <http://www.ajpn.org/internement-Camp-de-Drancy-67.html>

Drancy became the hub for deportation from France. The U-shaped building was transformed into a transit camp for Jews being deported to camps in Germany. Five thousand people were interned there, with the first arrivals in August 1940. At the highest point, the population of the camp reached seven thousand people, although the buildings had been designed for seven hundred inhabitants^{/26/}. Drancy became the sole departure point in France, the head of the line for Auschwitz. La Muette was situated near one of the main goods stations for the north and east of France and, consequently, to Eastern Europe. From the first convoy on 22 June 1942, to the hostages taken when the camp was abandoned on 17 August 1944,

at the end of the war, some 67,000 Jews were deported from Drancy.

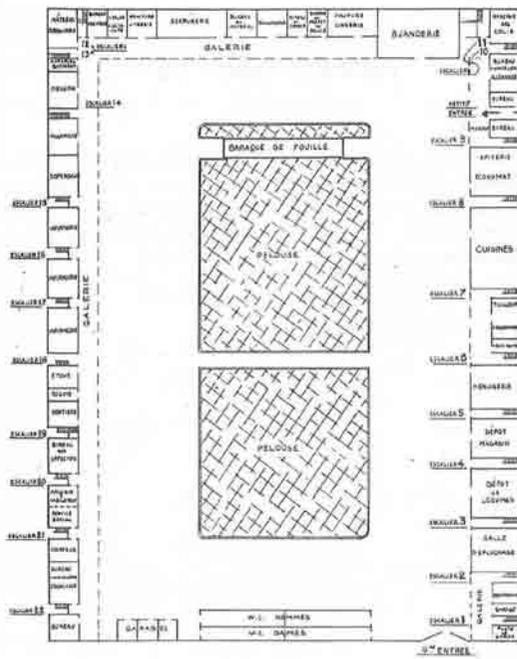
After the Armistice, the camp in Drancy served as a temporary holding centre for French, English and civilian prisoners of war^{/27/}. But very quickly, in 1948, in the context of a serious housing shortage, the "horseshoe" building was finished and returned to its function as social housing. The towers remained in the hands of the Gardes mobiles and were used as their barracks. The U-shaped building returned to its normal status, thereby fulfilling the function in daily life for which it had been designed and from which it had been obscenely diverted by History. However, at this post-war period, the real "work of history" had not yet begun. During the decades following the events of the

Arrival of Jews seized in August 1941. The Paris public transport bus has entered the central courtyard of the concentration camp in Drancy

Príchod Židov zatknutých v auguste 1941. Autobus parížskej verejnej dopravy vošiel na hlavný dvor koncentračného tábora v Drancy



Source Zdroj: <http://www.memoire-viretuelle.fr/de-neuville/a-drancy/histoire-dun-lieu/>



Plan du rez-de-chaussée du camp de Drancy

Source Zdroj: <http://www.memoire-viretuelle.fr/paroles-de-temoins/adolfo-kaminsky/>

Overall organisation plan of the concentration camp of La Murette in Drancy, at ground-floor level

Celkový plán organizácie koncentračného tábora La Murette v Drancy, prízemie



Present view of the inhabited central courtyard of the 'horseshoe', May 2011

Súčasný pohľad na obývaný vnútroblok „podkovy“, máj 2011

Photo Foto: Pieter Uyttenhove, 2011

war, the memory of the past would be represented but not really present.

Memorial or Monument?

In 1976, a memorial to the camp and the deported Jewish population was inaugurated in front of the "horseshoe". Remaining traces of the camp that have recently been discovered – prisoners' graffiti, a secret tunnel, etc. – are being retained as elements bearing witness to this history. However, the undesirable outcomes of the "grand ensemble" have been recorded. *The historic journey of this "place haunted by memories"* ^{/28/} has been traced by François Maspero: *"The Cité de la Mulette, a play in three acts. City of light. City of death. City of daily life. Banal. Ordinary. And soon: rehabilitated. Because they say you should never lose hope"* ^{/29/}. The camp at Drancy was not ready to become a memorial site immediately after the war. *"While the trial, taking place in Bordeaux in January 1953, of twenty-one of those responsible for the massacre at Oradour[-sur-Glane], was posing the delicate political question of the responsibility of the 'malgré-nous', forcibly conscripted into the SS 'Das Reich' division, Drancy-la-Mulette was finally finished and returned to its original function. Negligence or voluntary amnesia? Wiping out the memory results in everything being repressed"* ^{/30/}, explains Rémi Baudouï.

Marcel Lods, invited in 1972 to be a member of the jury appointed to choose the memorial for the concentration camp at Drancy, the "antechamber of the death camps" according to the commemorative text on the monument, was "in complete disagreement with the choice" made by the jury, who had voted for the project by the artist and sculptor Shelomo Selinger. Lods pointed out an irreparable error relating to the project which "will not fulfil the role which one would expect of a monument commemorating a sacrifice as great as this one" ^{/31/}. But Lods was unable to dissociate himself from the human tragedy of the camp in Drancy, and of what the Cité had made him suffer in his role as architect. The material ruin of the building repressed in his mind the disaster inflicted on humanity. Lods did not neglect to draw attention to this aspect:

This is not to diminish the interest there should be in ensuring that the young people of Drancy know a little of the history of the group of



Photo Foto: Pieter Uyttenhove, 2011

buildings at La Mulette. This has been, without doubt, in all my life as an architect, the one where I have encountered the most intense difficulties and disillusionment... The misfortunes did not begin – as you appear to think – when the site began to be used by the Nazis... many unfortunate adventures had already taken place before the final disaster. I would be very pleased if you could see the necessity of explaining this to the young people, but it is clear that this cannot be done at an inauguration ceremony. We need to devote a good hour to it one evening ^{/32/}.

In the 1970s the "comb" – the towers and the adjacent slab-buildings – where the garde mobile was housed was demolished and replaced by a new series of residential towers. This loss is more than surprising, as this part of La Mulette, much more than the actually remaining "horseshoe", should definitely have been considered as one of the most important examples of modern architecture, prefabrication and building techniques, in France.

Ginette Baty-Tornikian and François Laisney ^{/33/} were probably the first to have outlined the

Outside view of the housing block enclosing the north side of the 'horseshoe', May 2011

Vonkajší pohľad na obytný blok uzatvárajúci severnú stranu „podkovy“, máj 2011



The actual memorial composed of a sculpture by Shelomo Selinger, inaugurated in 1976, and a rail wagon added in 1988

Památník pozostávající z plastiky od sochára Sheloma Selingera, odhalený v roce 1976, a vlakový vozeň, přidaný v roce 1988

Photo Foto: Pieter Uyttenhove, 2011

historical events at Drancy, at the time when some of the towers and the bars were demolished, and when the horseshoe section – the camp – was left untouched. Baty-Tornikian places the history and demolition of the Cité in Drancy, within the infernal cycle of the object of the consumer society: “*production, consumption, obsolescence, destruction, production...*”^{134/}. Laisney is interested in the destruction of Drancy in 1976, which raises in his eyes a series of “*questions which reveal, among other things, the ambiguity of the policy of preservation of the heritage of modern building*”^{135/}. One of the questions to be resolved is therefore how to decide between heritage and memorial. Neither of these two has been properly examined. The demolition of the towers in the 1970s leaves no

doubt about the lack of interest in the Cité. During the 1990s, a controversy arose over choices to be made between, on one hand, the demolition of the main part of the Cité and the loss of an important heritage site, and on the other, the creation of a memorial site and its “disneylandisation”, as Françoise Choay described it^{136/}.

Totalitarian Architecture?

Condemning “grands ensembles” by questioning the policy of reconstruction^{137/} can only succeed if we take into account how their architectural model was constructed, or, in other words, if we analyse what permitted the making of a reductionist concept, in the historical and philosophical sense, of the notion of “cité”.

As one of the architects of Drancy, Lods always refuted any accusations of a modern architecture which had fallen into totalitarianism. He attributed this criticism to the worst ideological controversies between totalitarian and democratic thought: *"Large collective buildings have never, in fact, been encouraged by totalitarian theories ... It was always the opposite which happened. Experiments which have been done, in Germany or elsewhere (in Sweden, for example, to mention only the most successful examples) with the use of large, collective buildings, were never done by totalitarian governments but strictly to the contrary, always by democratic governments ... The great movement of German modern architecture, from 1925 – 1930 (Gropius, Ernst May, Mendelsohn, etc.), had designed and constructed many collective buildings. Let us quote, for example: Cologne, Kelkerfeld, 1927; Hamburg, 1928; Frankfurt-am-Main, 1926 – 1928; Berlin, Britz, 1925 – 1926; Leipzig, Lossing, 1928; Berlin, Siemensstadt, 1927; etc. This movement developed uniquely under the Weimar Republic. The first thing Hitler did was to sweep it away. The most highly rated architects left the country, to the great benefit of the countries which welcomed them and offered them prominent positions: Gropius is a professor at Harvard, Ernst May, after working in the USSR is now in South Africa, Mendelsohn is working in the Middle East after spending time in London. After which the Nazi regime, precisely because it was totalitarian, only built housing in individual units ... And this is how history is written"*^{/38/}.

In this context, how should we view the architecture in Drancy? David Whitham considers that the buildings which have survived arouse unfortunate memories and reveal a distorted view of Sellier's urbanistic vision^{/39/}. The history of the housing project of La Muette inevitably invokes an image of ruin: the ruin of a certain modernistic belief, of a social policy, of a technology, in short, the ruin of a modern, experimental and rational architecture, which was unable to achieve mastery of either its use of space, or its functioning, and even less, the image of an ideal life-style on which it was based. If stark, depressing ruins^{/40/} – whether produced by war, catastrophe or vandalism – inevitably give rise to thoughts of the natural or human violence which caused

them, the ruin which bears witness to the history of the housing project of La Muette in Drancy was only created by a complex convergence of circumstances. It remains to be decided whether this convergence was the result of chance, or inscribed in the logic of its architecture. How can we explain the method by which a project can suddenly switch to its opposite? Architecture is generally considered as a victim of this kind of event, but is this really the case? Although judgement belongs to future generations, the witness of those directly involved must be able to help us develop a more precise idea of the circumstances leading to the decisions which permitted the development of an architecture with such a cruelly ambiguous destiny.

For Lods, Drancy anticipated the concept of the new town. Its urban characteristics lay in the town-like concentration of accommodation and services, at the heart of what constituted an ensemble, a real city centre, but situated outside the town. For this generation of reforming architects between the wars, it was in the deprived outer city areas that the fate of urban society was played out, along with that of modern architecture. Known as the "banlieue rouge", this murky area of factories and houses surrounding Paris, including Sellier's pleasant garden cities, the first skyscrapers in Drancy, André Lurçat's Karl Marx school at Villejuif, functioned as a test bed for modern buildings from the 1920s to the 1960s^{/41/}. However, the question still remains unanswered: considering the glorious and utopian clean sweep of modernistic city life, far away from historic town centres, and the sad plight in which this same modernism has left the banlieue, have they not led simply to their incompatibility, even to their contradiction? Instead of creating a common interest, was it not this coincidence of antinomic ambitions which constituted the real problem? As if the "grand ensemble" had to be the solution both to the congestion in the town and the disorder in the banlieue: the "grand ensemble" as third way.

For a better understanding of the architecture of the "grand ensemble", we need to take into account the role played by the notion of the masses in all the totalitarian regimes. The masses are part of the policy – of the "biopolitics"^{/42/} to

speak in terms of Michel Foucault and Giorgio Agamben – put into practice by the ruling powers. Modern society, since the nineteenth century, has been confronted by the problem of the masses. Architects, anxious to build housing in large numbers, felt obliged to deal with the constraints of hygiene and distribution imposed by congestion, movement, traffic and the ebb and flow of human bodies. Architects like Lods and Beaudouin unwittingly introduced an influential idea, which was technically totalitarian into the concept of modern architecture. For them, the existence of a great mass of people led to the demand for appropriate architecture. For ideologically totalitarian regimes, the masses were in themselves raw material. They had to serve the monumentalism of social life and

became the object of the constant, obsessive control of the “naked life”^{/43/} of individuals.

Inspired by Giorgio Agamben, it is therefore necessary to ask what is the structure inherent in the conception of modern architecture which enables events like those in Drancy to take place?^{/44/} What was done so that architecture could make these events possible? The architecture, which in the case of Drancy became a concentration camp temporarily, is a system in which the state of exception is fulfilled over the long term. According to Agamben, “*the camp is the space which opens when the state of exception begins to become the rule*”^{/45/}. The Italian philosopher made a direct link with what we will have to call the “perverse effects” of functional architecture:

View of the towers of La Muette at the beginning of the 70s still occupied by the national police, shortly before their demolition

Pohľad na vežiaky La Muette na začiatku sedemdesiatych rokov, obývané príslušníkmi národnej polície, krátko pred zbúraním



Source Zdroj: Pieter Uyttenhove: Marcel Lods. Archives of the Cité de l'architecture et du patrimoine, Centre d'archives d'architecture du XXe siècle, Paris

*"The camp as a site of dislocation is the secret matrix of the policy we live under nowadays, which we must learn to recognise in all its metamorphoses, in the waiting areas of our airports as in the suburbs of our towns"*¹⁴⁶. We remember what Pierre Francastel thought of Le Corbusier's views about modern architecture: *"In the world dreamed of by M. Le Corbusier, joy and cleanliness will be obligatory – with no mention of the rest. Does M. Le Corbusier realise that people entered Buchenwald to the sound of violins? A serious word has just been written, and not by accident. The world of M. Le Corbusier is the world of concentration camps. At best, it is the ghetto. I repeat that there is no question of making M. Le Corbusier a propagandist of the order of Pétain*

*and Hitler, those men with hands or sleeves soiled with mud stains and spots of blood"*¹⁴⁷.

Who should we blame and what exactly should we accuse them of? The rift appearing in modern architecture from the experience in Drancy runs through a series of historical ideologies: the ideal of the garden city, the myth of industrialised building, the politico-sociological ideologies of the "Existenzminimum", the regional planning of big metropolitan cities, the urgency of social housing, high-rise buildings, the idea of the housing estate, reducing congestion in towns, the metaphor of the machine, etc. At what moment and under what conditions can the architecture produced by these ideologies betray the integrity of its expressed will to construct a new society?

NOTES POZNÁMKY

¹ This article is based to a great extent on my book: UYTENHOVE, Pieter: Marcel Lods. Action, architecture, histoire. Paris, Éditions Verdier 2009.

² BAUDOUÏ, Rémi: La cité de la Muette à Drancy (1933 – 1945). In: FOURCAUT, Annie (ed.): Banlieue rouge 1920 – 1960. Années Thorez, années Gabin: archétype du populaire, banc d'essai des modernités. Paris, Éditions Autrement 1992, p. 219.

³ OTUA stands for Office Technique pour l'Utilisation de l'Acier.

⁴ MUMFORD, Eric: The CIAM discourse on urbanism, 1928 – 1960. Cambridge, Massachusetts/London, England, The MIT Press 2000.

⁵ LODS, Marcel: Henri Sellier. S.l.n.d., 1982, p. 7. [Manuscript, fund M. Lods, Cité de l'architecture et du patrimoine, Archives d'architecture du XXe siècle, Paris]

⁶ GUTHEIM, Frederic – McANDREW, John: Houses and housing. In: Art in Our Time, 1939. New York, Museum of Modern Art 1939, pp. 288 – 331, p. 323.

⁷ BEAUDOUIN, Eugène – LODS, Marcel: La cité de la « Muette » à Drancy. Paris, Office Public d'Habitations du Département de la Seine 1933, p. 6.

⁸ Ibidem, p. 6.

⁹ YVER, Carole: Marcel Lods, sa vie, son œuvre. Mémoire de l'École du Louvre, Paris 1991, pp. 168 – 171.

¹⁰ MASPERO, François: Les passagers du Roissy-Express. Paris, Éditions du Seuil 1992, p. 180 (English vers. Roissy Express: A Journey through the Paris suburbs. London, 1994). See also YVER, Carole: op. cit., pp. 168 – 171.

¹¹ TAUPIN, Jean-Louis: Architecture et urbanisme des groupes d'habitations. In: BONNOME, Camille et al.: L'Urbanisation française. Paris, Centre de recherche d'urbanisme 1964, p. 140.

¹² BUTLER, Rémy – NOISSETTE, Patrice: Le logement social en France 1815 – 1981. Paris, La Découverte/Maspero 1983.

¹³ Pointed out by YVER, Carole: op. cit., pp. 168 – 171.

¹⁴ See in this context RAGON, Michel: Histoire de l'architecture et de l'urbanisme modernes, 2. Naissance de la cité moderne 1900 – 1940, Paris, Casterman/Seuil 1991, p. 187, 189.

¹⁵ NICOLAUD, Olivier: De la cité-jardin à la cité moderne. In: Burlen, Katherine (ed.) La banlieue oasis. Henri Sellier et les cités-jardins 1900 – 1940. Saint-Denis, Presses universitaires de Vincennes 1987, p. 136.

- 16 THOMAS, Louis: *Le Grand Paris*. Paris, Aux Armes de France 1941, p. 159.
- 17 *Ibidem*, p. 159.
- 18 *Ibidem*, p. 160.
- 19 Anonymous text quoted in YVER, Carole: *op. cit.*, pp. 168 – 171.
- 20 THOMAS, Louis: *op. cit.*, p. 164.
- 21 LAISNEY, François – BATY-TORNIKIAN, Ginette: *Grandeur et misère d'un chef-d'œuvre rationaliste*. *L'Architecture d'aujourd'hui*, 187, 1976, p. 101.
- 22 LODS, Marcel: 'Et pourtant, elle tourne...' (Galilée). S.I.n.d., p. 23. [Manuscript, Fund M. Lods, Cité de l'architecture et du patrimoine, Archives d'architecture du XXe siècle, Paris].
- 23 MASPERO, François: *Les passagers du Roissy-Express*. Paris, Éditions du Seuil 1992. English vers. *Roissy Express: A Journey through the Paris suburbs*. London, 1994, p. 182.
- 24 See the passages on pp. 168 – 171 in Yver, C.: *op. cit.*
- 25 BAUDOUÏ, Rémi: *op. cit.*, p. 213.
- 26 Today four hundred people live there. Cf. MASPERO, François: *op. cit.*, p. 182.
- 27 BAUDOUÏ, Rémi: *op. cit.*, p. 212.
- 28 WHITHAM, David: *Drancy revisited*. *Planning History* 1, 1994, p. 33.
- 29 MASPERO, François: *op. cit.*, p. 175.
- 30 BAUDOUÏ, Rémi: *op. cit.*, p. 219.
- 31 Letter from Lods to Maurice Nilès, Deputy Mayor of Drancy, dated 4 June 1973. [Fund M. Lods, Cité de l'architecture et du patrimoine, Archives d'architecture du XXe siècle, Paris]
- 32 Letter from Lods to Andrée Roberty, dated 22 April 1974. [Fund M. Lods, Cité de l'architecture et du patrimoine, Archives d'architecture du XXe siècle, Paris]
- 33 See LAISNEY, François – BATY-TORNIKIAN, Ginette: *op. cit.*, and also LAISNEY, François: *La fleur de l'âge*. *L'Architecture d'aujourd'hui*, 187, October – November 1976, p. 103; BATY-TORNIKIAN, Ginette: *Obsolescence*. *L'Architecture d'aujourd'hui*, 187, 1976, p. 110.
- 34 BATY-TORNIKIAN, Ginette: *op. cit.*
- 35 LAISNEY, François: *op. cit.*
- 36 CHOAY, Françoise: *Drancy: le culte patrimonial*. *Urbanisme*, 325, July – August 2002, pp. 90 – 92.
- 37 See, in this connection, for example, the chapter: *La politique de qualité architecturale des années 1970 – 1990*. In: ANDRIEUX, Jean-Yves – SEITZ, Frédéric: *Pratiques architecturales et enjeux politiques, France 1945 – 1995*. Paris, Picard 1998, pp. 12 – 21.
- 38 LODS, Marcel: *De quelques affirmations contenues dans différents documents et des réponses qu'il convient d'y faire*. S.I.n.d., 1948, pp. 12 – 13. [Manuscript, private collection Denise Lods]
- 39 *Ibidem*, pp. 12 – 13.
- 40 Cf. the chapter: *Poésie et art de la ruine*. In: AGA-CINSKI, Sylviane: *Volume, Philosophies et politiques de l'architecture*. Paris, Gallilée 1992, pp. 251 – 265.
- 41 See on this subject: FOURCAUT, A. (ed.): *op. cit.*
- 42 See on this subject: AGAMBEN, Giorgio: *Homo sacer. I: Le pouvoir souverain et la vie nue*. Paris, Seuil 1997 (Italian vers. *Homo sacer. I: Il potere sovrano e la nuda vita*. 1995.).
- 43 On the subject of this concept, see: AGAMBEN, Giorgio: *op. cit.*

44 AGAMBEN, Giorgio: Moyens sans fins. Notes sur la politique. Paris, Payot & Rivages 1995.

45 Ibidem, p. 49.

46 Ibidem, p. 55.

47 FRANCASTEL, Pierre: Art et technique aux xixe et xxe siècles. Paris, Minuit 1962, p. 41.

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