



**HOTEL PANORAMA IN THE HIGH
TATRA MOUNTAINS, NORTH VIEW,
DURING 1970S**

HOTEL PANORAMA VE VYSOKÝCH
TATRÁCH, SEVERNÍ POHLED, BĚHEM
SEDMDESÁTÝCH LET 20. STOLETÍ

Source Zdroj: Brno City Museum

Zdeněk Řihák's Hotel Buildings and the State Project Institute of Trade Brno

Hotelové stavby Zdeňka Řiháka
a Státní projektový ústav obchodu Brno

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Předkládaný text čtenáře blíže seznamuje s organizací a vybranými pracemi Státního projektového ústavu obchodu Brno (1960 – 1990; dále SPÚO), konkrétně se střediskem označovaným o1, které vedl Zdeněk Řihák. Jelikož tento architekt zemřel v roce 2006 a archiv projektové organizace na konci devadesátých let zmizel, stať ve svých závěrech vychází především ze vzpomínek architektů Růženy Žertové a Ivana Rullera v komparaci se sekundární literaturou a torzem Řihákovy pozůstalosti uložené v Muzeu města Brna.

Státní projektový ústav obchodu Brno vznikl v roce 1960, kdy vybrané architektonické ateliéry tehdejší organizace Potravinoprojektu přešly pod správu ministerstva vnitřního obchodu. Ředitelem nově založeného ústavu převážně pro projektování obchodních domů, hotelů, skladů a sil se stal brněnský architekt Jaromír Sirotek, který přizval ke spolupráci svoje dlouholeté přátele a spolužáky z brněnské techniky, mezi něž patřili právě Zdeněk Řihák nebo Růžena Žertová.

V Brně vznikla hlavní pobočka SPÚO, která zde měla tři hlavní ateliéry, její činnost dále doplňovala střediska v Praze a Bratislavě. Nakonec ale vzhledem k silné pražské konkurenci tamního projektového ústavu vznikaly stavby SPÚO více na Moravě a Slovensku než v hlavním městě republiky. Mezi ikony architektonické produkce ateliéru o1 dnes patří hotely Continental v Brně, Labská bouda v Krkonoších, Panorama a Patria na Štrbském Plesu. Ty byly před rokem 1989 označovány za „mezinárodní hotely“, i když oborová norma pro tehdejší přechodné ubytování tento pojem nepoužívala. Na druhou stranu mělo nařízení velmi podrobnou specifikaci vnitřního provozu těchto budov, které se dělily podle tříd na luxusní hotely A* de luxe určené pro zahraniční klientelu a na hotely B* pro tuzemské návštěvníky. I když byly tyto stavby v minulosti chápány jako vizitky československého státu a okna do socialistického bloku, v současné době mnohdy bojují o vlastní existenci. Příspěvek se proto snaží poukázat na jejich architektonické kvality a zasadit je do dobového mezinárodního kontextu, protože tyto budovy hned po boku hotelu a vysílače na Ještědu patří k signifikantním a ojedinělým dílům československé architektury před rokem 1989.

Studie svou pozornost soustředí především na osobnost a dílo architekta Zdeňka Řiháka pocházejícího z Napajedel nedaleko Zlína. Ještě před nástupem na brněnskou techniku v roce 1949 absolvoval vyšší odbornou školu ve Zlíně pod vedením sochaře Vincence Makovského. Získané základy v kresbě a práci s hmotou mohl později zúročit jako architekt na všech svých

stavbách a projektech. Ostatně vnímání architektury jako sopečného objektu je pro Řihákovu tvorbu určující, nejvíce patrné u hotelu Panorama na Štrbském Plesu.

Během studií na vysoké škole se Řihák stal zdejším pomocným asistentem u Bedřicha Rozehnal, nastoupil do Komunistické školy jako kreslič a s dostatečnou praxí poté získal umístění v Potravinoprojektu. Zde vznikl jeho návrh hotelu Continental, který v roce 1959 rozvedl s architektem Aloisem Semelou. Na poli československé architektury se jedná o projekt hlásící se k odkazu meziválečné avantgardy, i když je již plně ovlivněn západními vzory, zejména výstavou Expo v Bruselu. Po jeho dokončení se Řihák stal plně etablovaným architektem na domácí scéně a spolu s Ivanem Rullerem a Jindřichem Kumpoštem ml. projektoval nové brněnské regionální centrum s dvěma Priority a mezinárodním hotelem. Bohužel, z důvodu okupace v roce 1968 byly tyto plány odsunuty stranou. Zároveň také Řihák pracoval na již zmíněném projektu hotelu Panorama na Štrbském Plesu. Skulpturální objekt v prostředí slovenských velehor otevřel cestu zdejšímu novému architektonickým formám, které se částečně obracely k internacionálnímu stylu a reprezentovaly vzestup životní úrovně socialistické společnosti i jejího autoritářského zřízení. Řihák zde využil skrytých inspiračních vzorů, které našel například v Japonsku, a stal se tak ve své tvorbě celoživotním konceptualistou.

Na sklonku šedesátých let započala realizace dalšího a nejvíce stigmatizovaného Řihákovy hotelu – Labské boudy v Krkonoších. Stavba vstoupila do chráněné krajinné oblasti velehor a i přes značnou kumulaci betonové hmoty nakonec zapadla do zdejšího prostředí. Při realizaci architekt využil svažitosti terénu, nebyly tedy prováděny finančně ani časově náročné výkopy, a také vybral beton jako hlavní stavební materiál, který nejlépe odolává náročnému horskému počasí. Řihák ale porušil u tohoto hotelu zásady svého kolegy Jana Tymicha pro stavbu hotelů v drsných horských podmínkách, a pod náporem tíhy sněhové pokrývky se tak zhroutil přízemní lodžie budovy. Ta časem prošla nevhodnými stavebními úpravami, kdy byla například její čelní stěna opláštěna eternitem, nebo se spekulovalo i o jejím celkovém odstranění, což naštěstí finanční náročnost záměru nedovolila.

Jako poslední stavbu z produkce ateliéru SPÚO Brno text rozebírá hotel třídy A* de luxe Patria na Štrbském Plesu. Stejně jako předchozí příklady se ani tato budova v době svého vzniku nevyhnula kontroverzím. Její projekt vznikl ještě v uvolněné

atmosféře šedesátých let a byl dokončen během hluboké normalizace. Stavba se ve svém pojetí formy inspirovala skokanským mústkem i skalním masivem zdejších velehor. Ve vyjádření interiéru byly použity ve velké míře dřevěné prvky, které navazovaly na místní folklor. Budova dodnes nese výraznou stopu původního architektonického vyjádření jak v interiéru, tak v exteriéru. I přes mnohé výtky vůči její předimenzovanosti si našla způsob, jak splynout s okolním prostředím a vyhovět nárokům hostů i v novém miléniu.

V současnosti je bohužel značná část interiérů zkoumaných hotelových staveb zničena i spolu s jejich uměleckým vybavením. Příspěvek se je snaží sumarizovat a poukázat nejen

na význam zkoumaných budov pro historii československé architektury, ale také na jejich vysokou hodnotu, která stále nebyla dostatečně pochopena. Komplexně zhodnotit Řihákovy stavby nelze bez znalosti skrytých inspiračních vzorů, které autor přebíral ze zahraničí z odlišného sociálního a politického kontextu. V současnosti jsou největší hrozbou pro tyto stavby nové developerské projekty, které mnohdy nerespektují původní architektonický záměr a neznají ani hodnotu uměleckých děl pevně spjatých s těmito hotely. Sami developeři poté rádi zneužívají přísné až nezvyklé vybočení architektury socialismu z komfortního estetického rámce, aby ji neprávem označili za „ošklivou“.

Introduction

The present text briefly describes the operation of one of the state planning establishments for hotel construction in Czechoslovakia from 1960 to 1990, placing the architectural work of SPITB employee Zdeněk Řihák¹ within the global context of that time. He went on to plan class A* deluxe and B* hotel buildings, the designs of which were closely associated in their internal operations with the industrial standards used in construction in market economies.² As part of this planning, these buildings provided an important means for obtaining foreign currency from foreign visitors, while simultaneously increasing accommodation capacity and presenting the best that architectural output at that time had to offer.

The destruction of the extensive SPITB archive³ has substantially complicated research into Czechoslovak hotel architecture during this period. Regarding the operation of the institute and individual architectural assignments, we can only find a fraction of the basic information presented in the magazines *Projekt*, *Architektura ČSSR* and *Československý architekt*. Moreover, the Zdeněk Řihák collection housed at the Brno City Museum only contains fragments of the architect's life work, and not even the written documentation or plans in the personal papers of colleagues such as Růžena Žertová⁴ and Vladimír Kovařík⁵ provide a sufficient quantity of sources. Despite these considerable obstacles, however, at least some part of the nowadays unjustly neglected topic of Zdeněk Řihák's professional development as an architect has been successfully reconstructed.⁶ In addition to the archive material and an analysis of the secondary literature, a substantial contribution was also made by interviews with architects Růžena Žertová⁷ and Ivan Ruller⁸ in 2016.

Žertová found employment in 1960 at the SPITB, where she worked as a department store designer until 1983. While she was assigned to this work, she became better acquainted with Řihák, who primarily designed hotel buildings and subsequently became her superior. Ivan Ruller, a Chemoprojekt architect, was Řihák's junior professional colleague and a classmate at the Technical University.⁹ The fact that Brno held on to its high-standard architects even after 1945 is borne out by the establishment of the SPITB, where the post of its first director was held by a mutual friend of both architects, Jaromír Sirotek. In addition to the Brno centre there was also a SPITB Studio 10 in Prague-Karlín (directed by Vladimír Bouček) and in Bratislava (a branch directed by Ivan Matušík). The institute itself was formed by the partial re-allocation of selected establishments from the state design studio Potravinoprojekt, though confronted with various bureaucratic complications. In Brno there were three primary studios headed by (01) Zdeněk Řihák, (02) Jaroslav Hlavsa and Alois Semela and (03) Jan Novák, as well as a technical centre headed by Josef Šibal.

To mark its decennial in 1970, the SPITB published a brochure summarizing its work to date as follows: "At present the Institute has 304 employees, 32 % of whom are graduates. Its base is made up of project centres that provide comprehensive planning together with the technology, special professions and economic facilities. The Directorate is in Brno, one of the centres is in Prague, three more are in Brno and there is a branch in Bratislava. In Brno there is also a centre for hydro-geological research, and one of the Brno centres deals with the surveying work. The Institute also has its own planography and modelling department. The Institute's average annual capacity is around 70 hydro-geological surveys, 50 studies and 40 comprehensive project solutions. Throughout its existence the institute has planned 289,000 m² of storage space, 120,000 m² of commercial facilities, 3,735 hotel beds and 7,087 table places at catering establishments. The Institute has long-term

experience of both the planning and construction of hotel buildings, public catering facilities, department stores, warehouse management outlets and other special structures such as semi-finished goods manufacturing plants, rice and coffee silos, roasting plants, packaging plants and other facilities not in the commercial sphere.”¹⁰

Jaromír Sirotek was compelled to leave the institute in 1970 for political reasons involving his rejection of the occupation of Czechoslovakia by Warsaw Pact armies. Two years later the information from the first brochure on planning activities was supplemented by the new, regime-compliant director Zdeněk Jiříčka on important hotel projects that had already been brought into operation or were under construction, including: *Zlatá loď* in Týn nad Vltavou (1966 – 1969), *Sliezsky dom* in Velická dolina (1965 – 1968), *Panorama* in Nové Štrbské Pleso (1967 – 1970), *Parkhotel* in Nový Smokovec (1967 – 1969), *Hotel Jednota* in Tatranská Lomnice (1968 – 1971), *Metropol* in Spišská Nová Ves (1966 – 1970), *Slovan* in Košice (1966 – 1970), *Hotel A* in Bratislava (1968 – 1971), *Montana* in Košice (1967 – 1969), *Labská bouda* in the Krkonoše mountains (1969 – 1972), *Hotel Vyšehrad* in Český Krumlov (1967 – 1969) and *Patria* in Štrbské Pleso (1969 – 1973).¹¹ Mention was also made here of the publication of special standards for hotels and retail units with technical and economic indicators that were also provided by the SPITB,¹² which at the beginning of the 1970s had 320 employees in all three branches, 39 of whom were architects and 59 of whom were engineers.¹³ The Brno branch, trained by such university luminaries as Jaromír Krejcar, Bohuslav Fuchs and Bedřich Rozehnal, had a total of 217 employees. The SPITB's comprehensive development and planning activities were presented to the public at exhibitions in 1970 and 1985 in Brno, where Řihák's hotels took pride of place amongst the silos and department stores.¹⁴

This unique institute was formed under the Ministry of Internal Trade. Jaromír Sirotek invited his friends and other co-workers to join, which was facilitated by the necessary connections and the more relaxed political atmosphere of the 1960s. Zdeněk Řihák headed Centre 01 at the local SPITB branch, where he collaborated over planned hotel interiors and other buildings with Vladimír Kovařík, who thanks to his previous activities at the Arts and Crafts (UP) works and the Nový Byt cooperative had also acquired sufficient experience as an artist and later as a designer at *Potravinoprojekt* and then the SPITB. Kovařík designed hundreds of interiors, only a small fraction of which survive today in fragmentary form. He also collaborated within the *Dílo Czech Fine Art Fund* (ČFVU) in Brno with various artists, e.g. Inez Tuschnerová and Jan Rajlich on the incorporation of their works in the interiors of buildings designed by the SPITB and others.¹⁵ Unfortunately, some extensive photographic material on Kovařík's work was recently destroyed, so it can only be admired on a few photographs in *Blok informací SPÚO Brno*,¹⁶ whose editorial board at the institute was headed by architect Petr Haimann.¹⁷

Řihák's Initial Work

In his personal papers, Zdeněk Řihák mentioned a school in Křenov near Svitavy, completed in 1955, as one of his first achievements. This realisation consisted of an architecture routine at that time for primary schools, matching the austere style of a two-storey building with hard cement plaster and a gable roof. It was also the first commission for which the architect invited painter Bohumír Matal to create a sports-themed canvas for the staircase entrance area. This period also saw a department store project in Nitra, Slovakia, where as a *Potravinoprojekt* employee, Řihák also completed this assignment for the Regional National Committee in four versions. The design gives a rather disjointed impression, due to the inconsistency of the layout, for example, and the size of the facade windows.¹⁸ It lacks the stylistic maturity that Řihák later achieved with his *Hotel Continental* in Brno. Meanwhile, however, Řihák also designed and was involved in the completion of the interior of a milk bar in Brno in collaboration with Jiří Brychta (1956), part of a housing estate in Olomouc (1957), saltworks in Alexandria, Egypt (1958), a malt house for Rio Claro in Brazil (1958), and ultimately the aforementioned *Hotel Continental* (1964).¹⁹

The Brno “Conti”

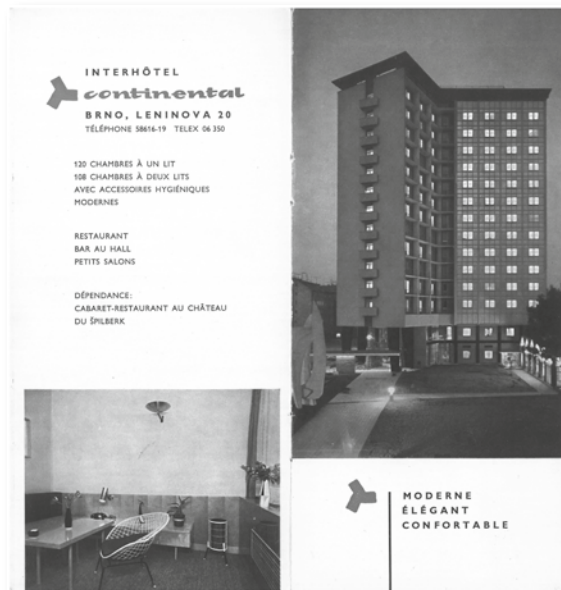
The first volumetric study was the *Hotel Sport Brno*²⁰ in April 1959. This preparatory project was designed by Řihák independently, without Alois Semela, but later in October of that year, both of them had signed the new version, which was built with a slight alteration to the lower communal section as the *Hotel Continental*.²¹ The mass of the building is divided, following its internal operations, into three equal volumes, creating a Y-shaped floor plan. At the junction the Y is the chief



HOTEL CONTINENTAL IN BRNO DURING THE 1970S, SOUTHEAST VIEW

HOTEL CONTINENTAL V BRNĚ BĚHEM SEDMDESÁTÝCH LET 20. STOLETÍ, JIHOVÝCHODNÍ POHLED

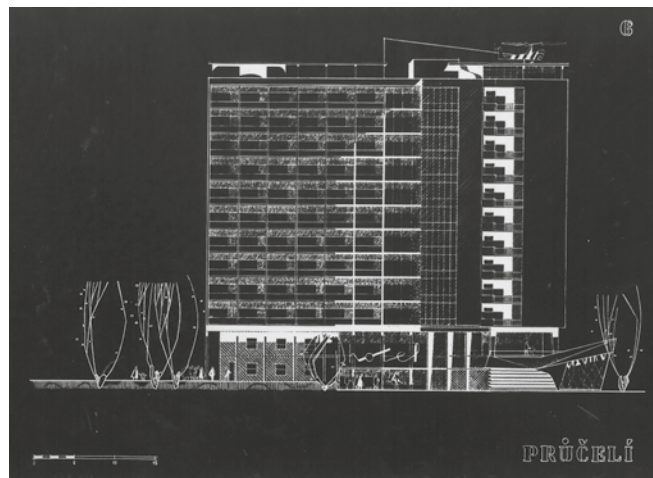
Source Zdroj: Brno City Museum



HOTEL CONTINENTAL IN BRNO DURING THE 1970S, INTERIORS

HOTEL CONTINENTAL V BRNĚ BĚHEM SEDMDESÁTÝCH LET 20. STOLETÍ, INTERIÉRY

Source Zdroj: Brno City Museum



STUDY OF HOTEL CONTINENTAL, 1959, ZDENĚK ŘIHÁK AND ALOIS SEMELA

STUDIE HOTELU CONTINENTAL, 1959, ZDENĚK ŘIHÁK A ALOIS SEMELA

Source Zdroj: Brno City Museum

communications centre, adjacent to which are the accommodation and communal areas along with the hotel kitchen and garden. The construction of the Continental (1961 – 1964) was originally intended merely as a hostel for the requirements of visitors to Brno's trade fairs. However, at the end of the 1950s local councillors decided to make the building a class B* hotel²² due to the lack of accommodation in the city. Hence even the first version of the design includes a modern SPA, based on the American hotel model, as the Brno hotel is very similar to one belonging to the Hilton chain in California, built by Welton Becket & Associates, which is also a Y-shaped high-rise.²³ This mass distribution served the practical purpose of preventing the building from overheating in a hot climate due to the sunlight travelling across the facade. Yet for the Brno hotel, the plan was not a fortunate choice, as visitors in the northern section of the hotel often complained about the lack of heating, which eventually had to be increased.²⁴

For its convenient pedestrian access to the centre and heat and electricity supply connections, the Municipal National Committee for Earthworks, Restaurants and Canteens Construction Department and Potravinoprojekt approved the V Mezírce building site on 9. 7. 1959. The primary argument in favour of having the hotel development here was the larger plot of land for construction and the more adequate number of parking spaces than in ul. Pekárenská, where the hotel's mass was predetermined by the surrounding built-up area. Moreover, if required, the architects were to erect a building for temporary accommodation similar to the Tempo Hotel in Košice, which they rejected, however, due to a failure to apply their inventiveness. As the archive material

indicates: “The design of the hotel involves a box system that omits spans and columns and opts for continuous transverse walls of concrete for vertical support. As the ground floor is based on the assumption of greater open spaces that do not preclude extending the vertical transverse walls to the foundations, a frame system will be required for use on the ground and mezzanine floors. Basement slabs will be used for the building’s foundations due to the low bearing capacity of the subsoil. Lightweight panels in steel frames with suitably insulated parapets will be used as non-load bearing external walls”²⁵

After the approval of this high-rise building (which stands out on the city’s skyline to this day), the primary issues were to blend it into the surrounding built-up area and to shape the facade surfaces using balconies and the hotel’s low entrance base. In accordance with the design and its implementation, the lounge is connected to the accommodation area and the mezzanine to the clubhouse by a spiral staircase in the interior. On every floor there are seventeen double rooms, each with the option of combination, as well as two single rooms, all with the option of an extra bed. Based on the design, each floor also has a bathroom, a hotel maid’s room, separate men’s and women’s WCs, a laundry storage area and a shaft for dropping laundry into the basement. The room amenities included a sanitary cubicle with shower, two sofas – one a sofa bed, a table, an armchair and two wardrobes. The building’s receding lower floor near the communal areas also enabled the architects to add two en-suite suites to the six single rooms above the entrance area. For passers-by, a prominent part of the Continental is the restaurant area on the ground floor, attached to the high-rise section of the hotel. It is meant to link up the latter with the surrounding buildings and optically downplay this high-rise monolith, at the top of which a restaurant, a Czech glass shop and a heliport were planned. Unfortunately, these bold schemes were only partially implemented, with just a high-view café beneath the roof. The architects also managed to incorporate a number of deluxe materials into the hotel interior, such as pieces of marble, sprayed sheet metal and polished metals. After its opening, the Continental ranked and still ranks among the showpieces of 1960s Czechoslovak architecture, both in its architectural design and its decoration with works of art.²⁶ These were approved by the Brno branch of the Czech Fine Art Fund in collaboration between the artist and the architect for a total of 350 000 Kčs, and in 1963 the hotel acquired 132 pictures.²⁷ After it opened the building offered 336 beds with an enclosed space of 63 645 m³.²⁸

The Global Context and the Inspiration for Řihák’s Work

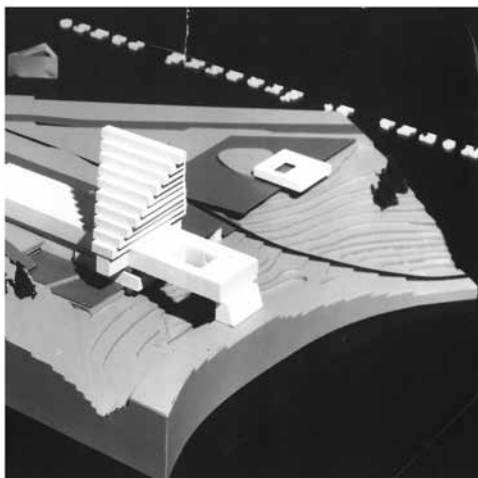
As mentioned above, in terms of the project’s spatial and compositional expression the architects drew inspiration from American hotel buildings. The visual appearance of the facade with its protruding balconies is of a dynamic nature, with its obvious aim to renew the link with interwar architecture, a legacy interrupted by the politically tainted ‘Sorela’ (Socialist Realism) of the early 1950s. Consequently, in the latter half of the same decade, a search for an adequate architectural context was evident on the Czech scene. Specifically, one major answer was offered by the Brussels Expo 58 exhibition, which enabled the architects to overcome the intellectual quandary that stemmed from Czechoslovakia’s political orientation and decelerating technical development.²⁹ This fact also shaped Řihák’s own subsequent architectural ideas, which made him a lifelong conceptualist without a defined programme. His individualism and his adoption of various influences from the West have hitherto made it difficult for the lay and professional public to understand his work adequately, leading to its neglect or even condemnation. Řihák’s architecture is based primarily on indiscernible foreign models detached from their local political and social context, and thus remains incomprehensible to the ordinary observer.

In the mid-1960s, a design group within the SPITB led by architect Jan Tymich designed the Horizon Hotel in Pec pod Sněžkou. Neither Řihák’s exhibition catalogue nor his private inventory of buildings held at the Brno City Museum mention this construction, so it can be assumed that it was primarily Tymich’s work. The hotel was initially criticized for its disruption of the mountain panorama, the vertical orientation of its bulk and the long construction period (1968 – 1979). The building had 241 beds plus a possible 144 extra, and the restaurant could accommodate up to 395 visitors. In addition to this hotel, in the latter half of the 1960s there was also a high-rise hotel project for a square in Pardubice, which was signed by both of these architects. However, this collaboration did not actually come about, because Řihák had now started planning the Brno Regional Centre, where apart from the main building of the complex and two Prior department stores, a new international hotel was also to be built.³⁰

**HOTEL PANORAMA, DESIGN,
UNDATED**

HOTEL PANORAMA, NÁVRH,
NEDATOVÁNO

Source Zdroj: Brno City Museum



**HOTEL PANORAMA IN IN THE HIGH
TATRA MOUNTAINS DURING ITS
CONSTRUCTION, 1967**

HOTEL PANORAMA VE VYSOKÝCH
TATRÁCH BĚHEM VÝSTAVBY, 1967

Source Zdroj: Brno City Museum

Hotel Panorama

In 1970 Zdeněk Řihák completed what was probably his most interesting work, which can be formally described as an inhabitable sculpture rather than a classic mountain hotel. For this project, the architect went back to his early work and his studies under the sculptor Vincent Makovský in Zlín, where he learned to look at architecture as a three-dimensional object modelled by light and shade, another of the special features of Řihák's work. In the case of his Hotel Panorama (constructed 1967 – 1970), the building gives the impression of shifting its spatial layout when viewed from different points of the compass, suggesting either a ski jump or part of a mountain massif. The construction comes close in concept to the “cluster in the sky”, an architectural form that the Japanese Metabolists aspired to in the 1960s but for technical reasons never achieved.³¹ The actual accommodation section of the pyramidal hotel layout seemingly levitates on a narrow steel structure wedged into the bedrock above the valley.³² The complex static foundation of the actual core and twelve other unevenly offset supports are covered at the bottom by what is now the glazed bar area of the two lowest floors, behind which are garages and staircases that take visitors up to the entrance lobby (also accessible via two lifts) and on to the restaurant and kitchen. These sections now transition from the main bulk of the hotel to a low four-storey building, which has recently been revitalized with the addition of two storeys. Řihák then accomplished the rhythmic modelling of the twelve-storey accommodation building by extending each upper floor past the lower one on two sides of the facade, while adding cascading balconies along the entire length of the remaining opposite sides of the hotel. At the same time the architect also altered the structure of the rooms,



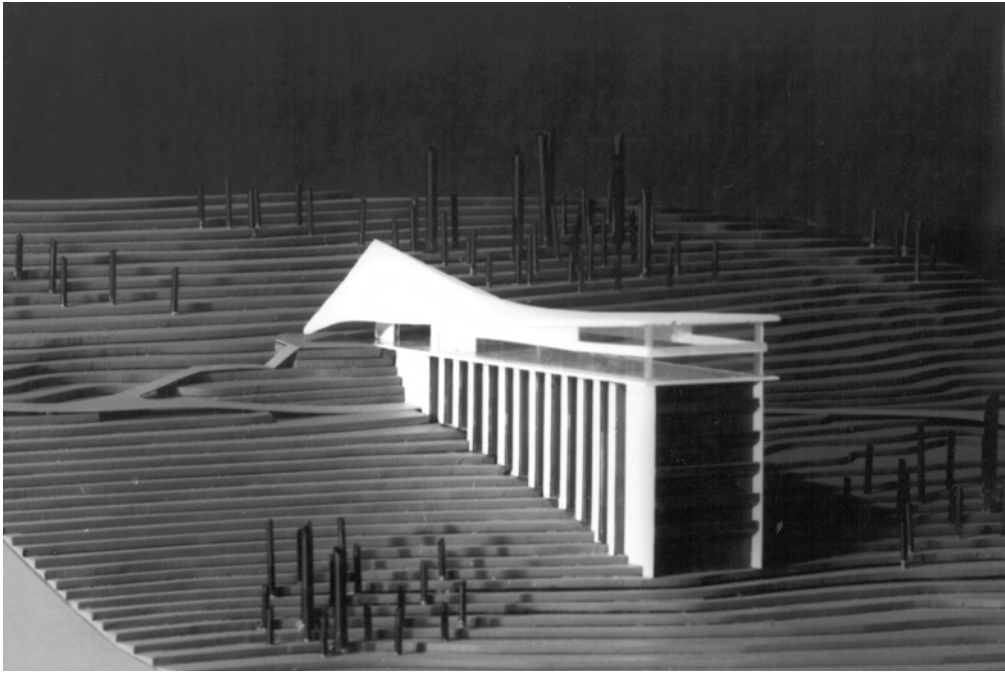
HOTEL PANORAMA IN THE HIGH TATRA MOUNTAINS, LOBBY, DURING 1970S

HOTEL PANORAMA VE VYSOKÝCH TATRÁCH, VSTUPNÍ HALA, BĚHEM SEDMDEŠÁTÝCH LET 20. STOLETÍ

Source Zdroj: Brno City Museum

with their rectangular floor-plans tapering towards the top in a prism shape. Although this is a truly massive building, it makes an elegant impression in this location and offers an attractive view of the surrounding landscape.

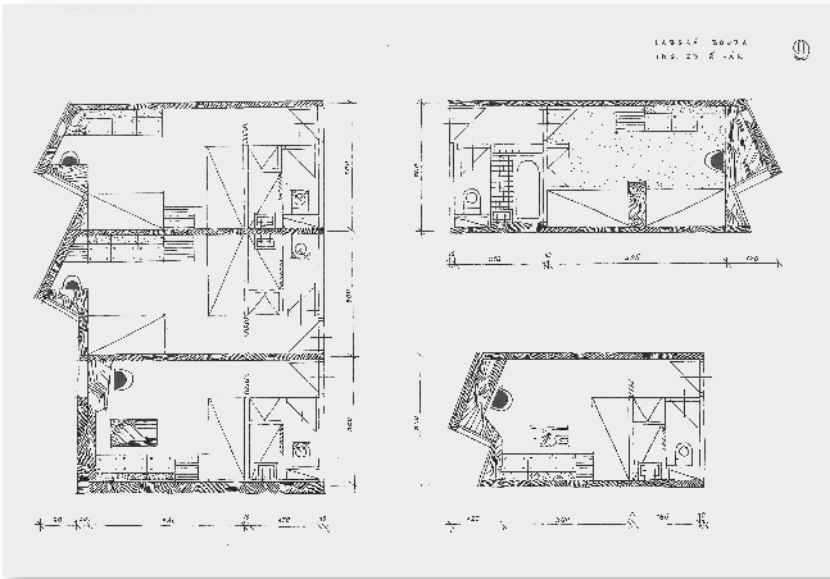
However, even at its start, the construction of the Panorama aroused controversy and was received with misgivings,³³ if only because at the time it was one of the first multi-storey buildings in a mountainous area within a conservation zone. Štrbské Pleso and its urban planning had first been addressed even before 1948, as had the regional development of Tatranská Lomnica. What were known as zoning plans for the Tatras were subsequently drawn up by such architects as Bohuslav Fuchs, Ján Svetlík and Emanuel Hruška. Due to the lack of funding and limited technical facilities, however, the Štrbské Pleso area was not basically developed until 1968, in line with four-year-old plans associated with the construction of the FIS winter skiing area.³⁴ The World Championships in 1970 opened up the Slovak mountains to mass tourism, even though the unavoidable limits of the area were made clear to all.³⁵ The Panorama served as a fairly inexpensive B* class accommodation facility, while a deluxe A* class hotel development still awaited Zdeněk Řihák in the form of the Patria at Štrbské Pleso, even though it had been in model form since the 1960s, when the architect had collaborated with such prominent figures in Czechoslovak photography as Alexander Jirousek, Milič Blahout, Milica Rényiiová and Adolf Vrhel. The latter incorporated his photographic works into large wall hangings, which he installed in collaboration with Vladimír Kovařík in the interiors of both mountain hotels in Slovakia. Unfortunately, there is nothing left of the original Panorama interior at all, i.e. textile works by Inez Tuschnerová, paintings by Pavel Navrátil and Alojz Klíma, wooden sculptures by Vladimír Kompánek, the wall sculpture by Erna Masarovičová originally hanging in the café or even the massive relief on the concrete wall in the hotel lobby by Rudolf Uher. Opened in 1970, the Panorama made the pages of the international journal *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui* thanks to its high standard of design and the contacts of Brno architect Jan Dvořák.



**HOTEL LABSKÁ BOUDA, DESIGN,
UNDATED**

HOTEL LABSKÁ BOUDA, NÁVRH,
NEDATOVÁNO

Source Zdroj: Brno City Museum



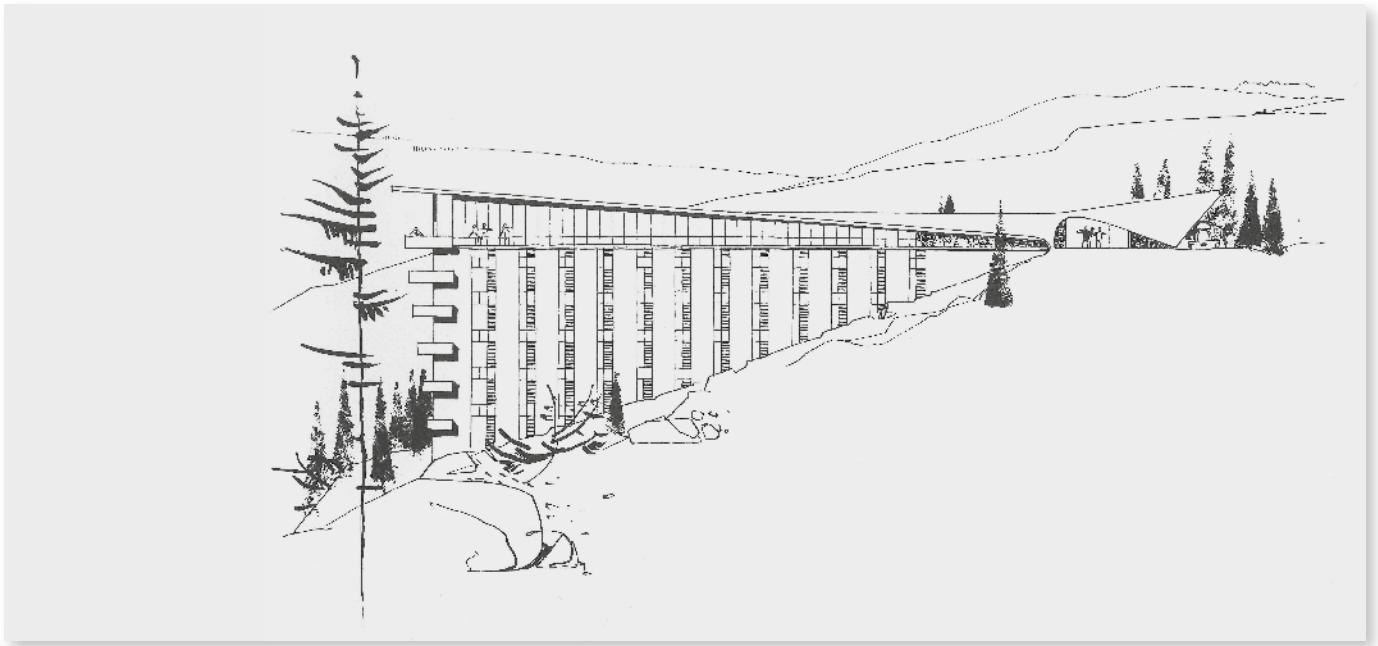
**HOTEL LABSKÁ BOUDA,
DESIGN OF ROOMS**

HOTEL LABSKÁ BOUDA,
NÁVRH MÍSTNOSTÍ

Source Zdroj: Brno City Museum

Hotel Labská Bouda

Labská bouda was built in the Krkonoše range (the Giant Mountains) between 1969 and 1972. Today it can be said with some certainty to be the most reviled building raised in the architect's entire career. It has been condemned from the outset for its location in a protected landscape area, as well as its allegedly inappropriate and unaesthetic architectural form. All these attacks and critiques are baseless and largely the result of ignorance regarding mountain architecture or a desire for personal profit at the expense of the building,³⁶ which is unique among Řihák's works, if only because to this day visitors cannot arrive by car, but only on foot or by snowmobile. The architecture of this exceptional B* class hotel is derived from several inspirational sources, while its construction is associated with another work, the Patria Hotel in the Tatras. As mentioned above, Řihák liked to draw inspiration not only from his own imagination as an architect and sculptor but also from the past, and he was not averse to comebacks in style, whose expressivity he successfully managed to adapt to present-day trends. Whether the models for the Labská bouda roof were 1940s American car bodies or architectural works by Lúcio Costa, its dynamic shape perfectly matched the massive



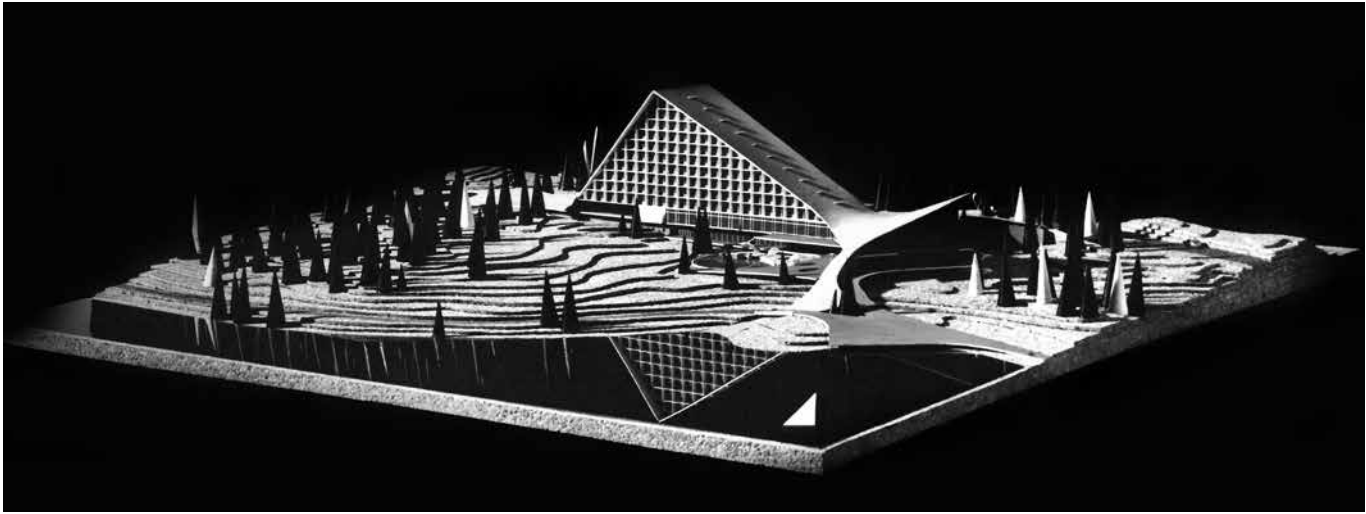
**HOTEL LABSKÁ BOUDAL,
DESIGN, SIDE VIEW**

HOTEL LABSKÁ BOUDA,
NÁVRH, BOČNÍ POHLED

Source Zdroj: Brno City Museum

monolithic structure of the building. The roof is attached to the body by a series of outlets which in places come down to the ground, producing an almost organic effect. Also unique is the massing of the building, due to the steep configuration of the terrain, which affects the very way the hotel's operation was planned. Řihák was able to take advantage of the mountain slope gradient, just as e.g. František L. Gahura did in the construction of his large cinema in Zlín. In neither case did financially demanding excavations need to be carried out during construction. As a result, guests have an excellent view of the valley from their hotel rooms, as well as from the communal area beneath the roof on the seventh floor, where the reception and two visitor entrances are located. There are also category I (for guests) and II (for passers-by) restaurants seating 150 people.³⁷ Unfortunately, their large windows have recently been divided into several smaller sections and the outer front wall covered with Eternit, which has detracted from the original architectural appearance of the building. The hotel rooms are located on the lower floors below the lounges, where Řihák also situated the private staff areas. The architect liked to work with the sculptor Miroslav Buřival, whose wooden spatial sculpture and blue-green ceramic panelling in the form of a fireplace wall can be seen in the restaurant, along with other minor features. Unfortunately, the textile works by artist Jaromír Masejdek have not survived, and nowadays we only know these missing pieces from photographic reproductions.

In her reminiscences of "Zdena" Řihák, Růžena Žertová also linked his architectural work with that of Igor Svoboda. Here the alleged inspiration was inter alia her husband's silos, which he designed at the institute.³⁸ Like her husband's warehouse premises, Labská bouda has an undulating facade with vertical ribs, while the common denominator of these buildings is concrete. For practical reasons, the windows are partially set in a sheltered position, and in addition to the regular grid of ribs, the great bulk of the two side walls is broken up by the exterior wooden panelling. Combined with the construction material, these elements are ideal for building a hotel in harsh mountainous conditions, as used, for example, by Jaromír Sirotek at the Sliezsky dom hotel in the Tatras. Moreover, thanks to its bulk, Labská bouda remains to some degree in harmony with the surrounding buildings on the local ridges, i.e., the military bunkers from World War II. In terms of technical design, however, its inventiveness lags behind that of the most famous hotel and transmitter on Ještěd by the Association of Engineers and Architects (SIAL) in Liberec, which was completed in 1973. Moreover, much like the Panorama, Labská bouda had construction problems during its erection, as the lower front loggias collapsed under the weight of the snow. By using this element, Řihák had basically broken the rules of construction in mountains as recommended by his colleague Jan Tymich.³⁹ Labská bouda was completed in 1972 as a class B* hotel with 10 single and 52 double rooms. The built-up area of the construction is 21 371 m³.



HOTEL PATRIA, DESIGN, 1960S

HOTEL PATRIA, NÁVRH, ŠEDESÁTÁ
LÉTA 20. STOLETÍ

Source Zdroj: Brno City Museum

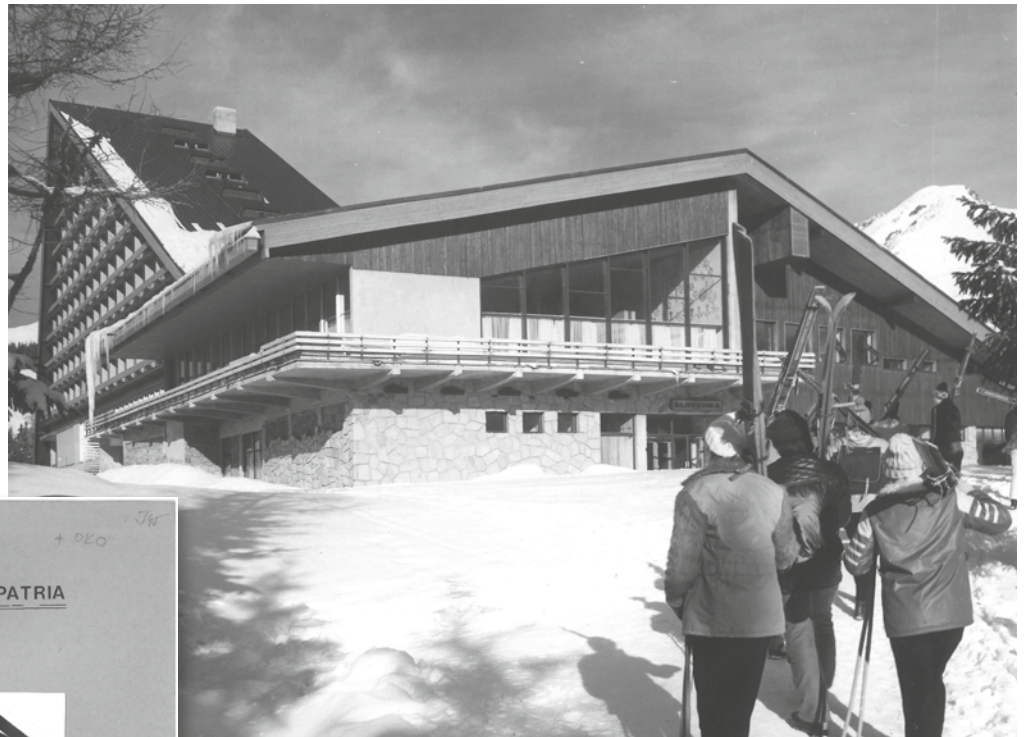
Hotel Patria

The 1970s were marked by increasingly difficult conditions for the construction of international hotels. The Union of Czechoslovak Architects was wound up and replaced by the new Federal Union, which was headed from 1972 by Vladimír Meduna, an architect compliant with the regime.⁴⁰ Řihák himself said that at the time it was no longer possible to get a solid working team together, take home a high salary and do good hotel architecture work.

He discussed this decade extensively with Zdeněk Kudělka in the magazine *Věda a život*,⁴¹ he basically presented the ideas behind his greatest life's work, the class A* deluxe Hotel Patria (constructed 1968 – 1976) at Štrbské Pleso.⁴² The construction of this mountain resort started before the occupation of Czechoslovakia in August 1968 and was not completed until deep into the normalization period. Alois Semela again collaborated with Řihák on the sidelines of the project, while Bohuslav Rychlink created the overall scheme behind the hotel's interior design. This architect had already proven his worth, for example, with the Strojimport administration building in the Vinohrady district of Prague between 1967 and 1971.

Discussions had been under way for some considerable time over what the correct architectural form for a hotel in the Slovak highlands ought to be. Apart from modern concepts drawing on Western models, buildings of a regional character based on Tatra chalets were beginning to appear with greater use of wooden elements in the interior. In monumental fashion, the Patria project promoted the economic growth of socialist society and the strength of its authoritarian apparatus.⁴³ The interior furnishings of the hotel were, in turn, based on national traditions and Slovak folklore.⁴⁴

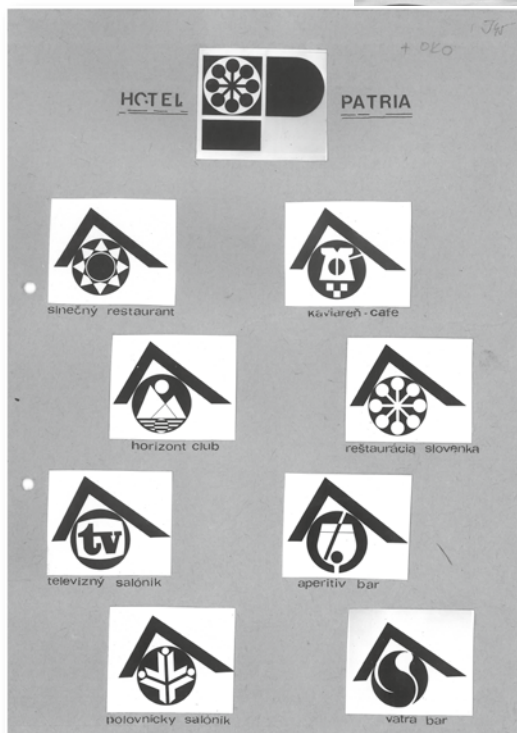
The basic range on offer at the hotel extends to 302 beds and a total of 800 dining places, figures by no means exceptional for mountain accommodation capacity. On the other hand, the roof spanning ten floors came under criticism at the time due to its length, even though Řihák had endeavoured to make the building fit into the protected landscape area as much as possible both in architectural and landscape-planning terms. The southern facade of the hotel facing the tarn has large spacious windows on the ground floor in front of the "Sunshine Restaurant", where we can find a considerable amount of handcarved as well as industrially processed wooden details, including motifs of forest animals and a glowing disc. The wooden sculptures for the interior and exterior were created by Miloš Vlček, Heřman Kotrba and Miroslav Buřival. Moreover, a number of artworks were created for the hotel by textile artist Inez Tuschnerová, who specifically dedicated one of the black and white designs for Patria to the architect Řihák.⁴⁵ As this is a large hotel building, several prominent figures worked on its preparation. The plan for the bedroom section was drawn up by Vladimír Kovařík, the communal areas were designed by Kamil Fuchs, the aforementioned Bohuslav Rychlink harmonized the overall expressive effect of the interior, including the above restaurant, a conference room and a hotel lobby on the ground floor, embellished by the Tatra garden, the Vatra night bar and the Horizont mountain club. Larchwood panelling and other interesting carved decorations are used as the harmonizing element for the rooms, imaginatively alluding to



HOTEL PATRIA, SOUTH VIEW, 1980S

HOTEL PATRIA, JIŽNÍ POHLED,
OSMDESÁTÁ LÉTA 20. STOLETÍ

Source Zdroj: Brno City Museum



HOTEL PATRIA, PICTOGRAMS

HOTEL PATRIA, PIKTOGRAMY

Source Zdroj: Brno City Museum

local folklore. A signposting system was even designed for the Patria with the hotel's own letter-P plus Edelweiss logo, while Růžena Žertová created a series of original lighting fixtures for the hotel rooms at Řihák's request.⁴⁶

The challenges of constructing such a massive structure near the tarn are demonstrated by the complications involving seepage from the local moraine, which meant the project had to be moved to the opposite bank of the body of water.⁴⁷ Due to complications with the building's foundations, three structural engineers – Konstantin Čolakov, Bohumil Honomichl and Jozef Lachvác – were brought in, with the material for the steel structure supplied by Hutné stavby Košice. Řihák brought in Antonín Zemánek from the SPITB as the chief designer at Patria.

At the time it opened, the hotel's interior and technical facilities achieved the highest standard category for temporary accommodation. The built-up area came to 71 790 m³, which was later expanded by the addition of a swimming pool. It was a unique building for a Slovak mountain setting during the 1970s and its opening attracted due attention. Though Hotel Patria is the last grand-scale work by Zdeněk Řihák, it is worth noting as well that during its construction, for example, the Brno department store Prior was also built (1974 – 1984).



PICTURE OF ARCHITECT ZDENĚK
ŘIHÁK, 1980S

FOTOGRAFIE ARCHITEKTA ZDENĚKA
ŘIHÁKA, OSMDESÁTÁ LÉTA
20. STOLETÍ

Source Zdroj: Brno City Museum

Photo Foto: by Michal Novák

Conclusion

Zdeněk Řihák and his generation of architects had a great influence upon the development of Czechoslovak architecture. Unfortunately, their works are now disappearing due to a lack of understanding or to free up land for developers. In most cases, however, these are valuable buildings whose rights to existence and heritage conservation have not yet been adequately exercised, so that not even Řihák's hotels are safe from inappropriate alterations and impending demolition. Fortunately, visitors can nonetheless still admire the best-preserved examples of Hotel Patria at Štrbské Pleso and Hotel Continental in Brno, whereas Labská bouda and the Panorama now appear worse off.

The SPITB was officially closed in 1990. Its extensive library was dispersed by its staff and the architectural archives stored in ul. Antonínská in Brno were moved by the company's liquidator to a storage facility in Třebachovice pod Orebem for several years. There was a reason behind the loss of project documentation for almost all Brno centres. It opened the way for the reconstruction of buildings in the 1990s and triggered a series of legal disputes over the authorship of buildings built before 1989. For the same reason, today we only have a fraction of the information about the work of such an outstanding architectural enterprise.

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- 1** Zdeněk Řihák (10. 8. 1924 – 15. 8. 2006) studied under sculptor Vincent Makovský in Zlín and at the Beneš Technical University in Brno 1945 – 1949. Here he also became an assistant professor as well as an employee of the state institute Komunotechna. In 1953 he joined PotravinoProjekt as an architect, and from 1960 served the studio director at the SPITB until its dissolution in 1990. He then started his own design agency, which operated until 2002.
- 2** The Ministry of Trade of the Czech Socialist Republic and Slovak Socialist Republic, 1976. *Categorization of accommodation facilities and establishments for temporary accommodation and classification signs for their categorization in classes – industry standard ON 73 5412*. Prague: Merkur.
- 3** SPITB work was based on many years of design agency tradition at Moravian municipalities, towns and districts, before the Second World War in Brno. After 1948 the agency served national committees as a means to build local civic amenities, and from 1953 it became a branch of the State Project Institute for Designing Foodstuffs Industry, Purchasing and Internal Trade Buildings (PotravinoProjekt). This institution gave rise in 1960 to the SPITB, thanks to the reassignment of a group of studios for Ministry of Internal Trade requirements the SPITB was wound up in 1990.
- 4** Růžena Žertová (4. 11. 1932 – 5. 10. 2019) studied at the Beneš Technical University in Brno 1953 – 1957. Following her studies she was employed at PotravinoProjekt and from 1960 as an architect at the SPITB. From 1983 she was an employee at the Czech Fine Art Fund, through which she sold her lamps and jewellery. After the revolution she made a living as a private architect designing houses.
- 5** Vladimír Kovařík (30. 6. 1920 – 20. 11. 1996). Following his graduation from Brno Technical College, he joined the United Arts and Crafts Works as a trainee in 1939. After gaining experience as an artist and designer, he joined Studio 01 at the SPITB in 1960 and designed furniture and interiors in collaboration with the Czech Fine Art Fund (ČFVU).
- 6** KOS, Lukáš, 2020. *Czechoslovak International Hotels 1956 – 1989*. PhD Dissertation. Ostrava: Ostrava University, Faculty of Arts, supervised by Pavel Šopák. pp. 182 – 235.
- 7** KLÍMA, Petr (ed.), 2016. *Růžena Žertová – Architektka domů i věcí*. Prague: Academy of Arts, Architecture and Design in Prague.
- 8** KUDĚLKOVÁ, Lenka and MIZEROVÁ, Alena (eds.), 2004. *Architekt Ivan Ruller*. Brno: VUTIUM.
- 9** BUCHAROVÁ, Eva, DOLEŽEL, Karel, GLOSOVÁ, Dagmar, RYŠAVÁ, Hana and SEDLÁK, Jan, 1999. *80 let české školy architektury v Brně*. Brno: Faculty of Architecture, Brno University of Technology.
- 10** SIROTEK, Jaromír, 1970. *10 let práce Státního projektového ústavu obchodu*. Brno: SPITB, (unpaginated).
- 11** 1972. *Státní projektový ústav obchodu*. Brno: SPÚO Brno, (unpaginated).
- 12** For example: ŠTĚPÁN, J., SRNCOVÁ, D., SLODIČKOVÁ, A. and CHUPÍKOVÁ, E., 1977. *Základní sestava THU – Hotely „B“*. Brno: SPITB.
- 13** SIROTEK, Jaromír, 1970. *10 let práce Státního projektového ústavu obchodu. Československý architekt*. **16**(13 – 14), pp. 1 – 2.
- 14** VRÁŇNOVÁ, Jana, JANÁS, Robert, PETŘINOVÁ, Eva, SVOBODOVÁ, Růt and RIEDL, Mirko, 2000. *90 let Domu umění města Brna – Seznam výstav a katalogů*. Brno: Dům umění města Brna (Brno Arts Centre), p. 35.
- 15** ŘÍHOVÁ, Vladislava and KŘENOVÁ, Lucie, 2016. *Archivní fondy podniku Českého fondu výtvarných umění Dílo. Opuscula Historiae Artium*. **65**(2), pp. 104 – 119.
- 16** ŘIHÁK, Zdeněk, 1970. *Architekt Vladimír Kovařík padesátníkem. Blok informací SPÚO Brno*. (3), pp. 13 – 20.
- 17** Kos, L., 2020, pp. 221 – 235.
- 18** Brno City Museum, Architecture Department, Zdeněk Řihák fonds, Nitra obchodní dům.
- 19** CRHONEK, Iloš, 1989. *Zdeněk Řihák – výběr z architektonického díla*. Brno, Brno Arts Centre.
- 20** Brno City Museum, Architecture Department, fund Zdeněk Řihák, Hotel Sport Brno.
- 21** Brno City Museum, Architecture Department, fund Zdeněk Řihák, Studie výškového hotelu – Brno.
- 22** Under this standard, a B* class hotel included an entrance lobby combined with a reception and porters' desk. The rooms for accommodation had a vestibule or a small enclosed space. At least 25 % of the rooms had a bathroom with a bath and shower cubicle with a washbasin. The other rooms had a washbasin in front of the living room. The floor area for a single room was 10 m², and 14 m² for a double room, but only if there was no built-in furniture. This type of hotel primarily served domestic visitors.
- 23** LOUŽENSKÝ, Gustav and URBAŇNOVÁ, Marie, 1957. *Společné ubytování (hotely)*. Prague: Study and Typing Institute in Prague, p. 60.
- 24** I am grateful to Professor Ivan Ruller for this information.
- 25** Brno City Museum, Architecture Department, fund Zdeněk Řihák, State Project Institute for Designing Foodstuffs Industry, Purchasing and Internal Trade – PotravinoProjekt, Brno branch: Study for a high-altitude hotel, Brno, 1. 10. 1959, Zdeněk Řihák and Alois Semela.
- 26** Cf: GAJDOVÁ, Petra, 2008. *Hotel Continental*. Bachelor's dissertation. Brno: Masaryk University, Faculty of Arts, supervised by Jiří Kroupa. PAŽOUTOVÁ, Kateřina, 2004. *České výtvarné umění a architektura 60. let 20. století*, PhD dissertation. Brno: University of Technology in Brno, Faculty of Architecture, supervised by Jan Sedlák.
- 27** Moravian Provincial Archive, fonds G 606 – Czech Fine Art Fund (ČFVU) foundation Dílo – Brno district centre, box 213.
- 28** KONČEK, Ferdinand, 1964. *Nový hotel pre Brno. Architektura ČSSR*. **23**(10), p. 692.
- 29** BEREND, T., Ivan, 2005. *Central and Eastern Europe, 1944 – 1993*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 137.
- 30** KOS, Lukáš, 2016. *Brněnské regionální centrum "Nové srdce města dvacátého století"*. In: *Brno v minulosti a dnes. Příspěvky dějinám a výstavbě Brna*. 29. Brno: Statutární město, Archiv města Brna, p. 403.
- 31** OTA, Kayoko and WESTCOTT, James (eds.), 2011. *Rem Koolhaas – Hans Ulrich Obrist, Project Japan Metabolism Talks...* Köln: Taschen, p. 41.
- 32** PRAGER, Karel, 1973. *Nový stavební druh / Nové urbánne formy. Projekt*. **15**(1), pp. 28 – 33.
- 33** HRUŠKA, Emanuel, 1970. *Stavba Štrbského Plesa – Dějiště FIS. Architektura ČSR*. **29**(7), pp. 266 – 275.
- 34** MORAVČÍKOVÁ, Henrieta, 2013. *Stavět v Tatrách: dilema formy. Architektura šedesátých let a sedmdesátých let 20. století ve Vysokých Tatrách*. In: Petrasová, T. and Platovská, M. (eds.). *Tvary – Formy – Ideje, Studie a eseje k dějinám a teorii architektury*. Prague: Institute of Art History Academy of Sciences, pp. 132 – 143.
- 35** About the problems of massive tourism see: WETTSTEIN, Domonkos, 2016. *Deformations of the Vacationscape. The mechanism of changing effects on the Balaton landscape after 1968. Architektúra a urbanizmus*. **50**(1 – 2), pp. 38 – 55.
- 36** Archiweb.cz. *KRNAP chce dál prosazovat koupi a zbourání Labské boudy*. [online] 2010 [cit. 28. 2. 2021]. Available from: <https://www.archiweb.cz/en/n/>
- 37** Brno City Museum, Architecture Department, fund Zdeněk Řihák, Project and planning documentation – Labská bouda hotel.
- 38** SVOBODOVÁ, Šárka, SEDLÁK, Jaroslav and KLÍMA, Petr, 2014. *Růžena Žertová a Igor Svoboda. Zlatý řez. Poučení z modernity? / Learning from Modernity?* (37), pp. 16 – 27.
- 39** TYMICH, Jan, 1961. *K výstavbě horských hotelů. Projekt*. **3**(4 – 5), pp. 89 – 90.
- 40** ŠLAPETA, Vladimír, 2004. *Tvůrčí bilance*. In: Kudělková, L. a MizeroVá, A. (eds.). *Architekt Ivan Ruller*. Brno: VUTIUM, p. 17.
- 41** KUDĚLKA, Zdeněk, 1970. *Jak stavět hotel? Interview with Zdeněk Řihák. Věda a život*. (1), pp. 39 – 41.
- 42** Under this standard, an A* deluxe class hotel included an extensive lobby with a reception desk. All the rooms had their own lobby, bathroom with bath, shower, bidet and WC, which was separate. At least two rooms on the same floor could be combined. The floor area for a single room was 12 m², and for a double room 14 m².
- 43** MORAVČÍKOVÁ, Henrieta, 2009. *Monumentality in Slovak architecture of the 1960s and 1970s: authoritarian, national, great and abstract. The Journal of Architecture*. **14**(1), pp. 45 – 65.
- 44** DULLA, Matúš, 1989. *Dvesto rokov našej tatranskej architektúry – kruh sa zatvára? Projekt*. **31**(3), p. 6.
- 45** Brno City Museum, Architecture Department, fund Zdeněk Řihák, hotel Patria.
- 46** Brno City Museum, Architecture Department, fund Růžena Žertová.
- 47** MERJAVÝ, Pavol, 1978. *Hotel Patria – nová, hoci diskutabilná dominanta Štrbského Plesa. Projekt*. **20**(9 – 10), pp. 16 – 19.