



THE TRADE UNION HOUSE /  
ISTROPOLIS AFTER  
COMPLETION, 1981

DOM ODBOROV / ISTROPOLIS  
PO JEHO DOKONČENÍ, 1981

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# The Trade Union House / Istropolis: The Birth and Liquidation of an Innovative Generator of Social Life, Culture, and Education

Dom odborov / Istropolis: Zrod a likvidácia inovatívneho generátora spoločenského života, kultúry a vzdelávania

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Dom odborov, po roku 1989 nazývaný Istropolis, je najväčším kultúrno-spoločenským komplexom na Slovensku. V priebehu ostatných dvoch rokov sa dostal do centra nezvyčajnej verejnej pozornosti. Dôvodom tohto záujmu boli okolnosti spojené so zmenou jeho vlastníctva, redukciou jeho využívania, uzavretím objektu a následným oznámením o jeho búraní a nahradení novou výstavbou. Tieto okolnosti viedli v rokoch 2019 až 2021 k sérii aktivít, ktoré mali zabrániť likvidácii diela a ktoré nebývalým spôsobom spojili odborné akademické prostredie s angažovanými predstaviteľmi verejnosti. Štúdia priblíži históriu vzniku tohto pozoruhodného architektonického komplexu. Upozorní na inovatívne urbanistické, typologické a konštrukčné riešenia. Poukáže na problémy hodnotenia a ochrany architektonického dedičstva druhej polovice 20. storočia. Keďže autor a autorka textu sa aktívne zapojili nielen do výskumu, ale zaujali angažovanú pozíciu aj pri obrane tohto architektonického diela, štúdia tak má ambíciu prispieť aj k diskusii o perspektívach angažovaného výskumu v oblasti historiografie a teórie architektúry.

Osvetové a kultúrne domy Revolučného odborového hnutia (ROH) sa vyvinuli v špecifických podmienkach bývalých socialistických krajín. Za ich typologické východisko možno považovať sovietske robotnícke kluby, kde sa mali vychovávať a ovplyvňovať čo najväčšie masy spoločnosti. Paralelne s ideologickými vplyvmi a sovietskymi vzormi formovala architektúra osvetových a kultúrnych domov medzinárodná architektonická diskusia. Tá sa od konca päťdesiatych rokov zaoberala sklbením požiadavky sociálneho štátu na investície do verejných kultúrno-spoločenských budov s efektívnym spojením týchto funkcií do jedného celku a primeraným architektonickým stvárnením, ktoré by súčasne vytváralo pôsobivý urbanistický kontext. Rodil sa nový typologický druh, multifunkčné kultúrno-spoločenské mestské centrum.

Celoštátnu urbanisticko-architektonickú súťaž na novostavbu Paláca ROH vyhlásili v roku 1956. Situovali ho na dnešnom Trnavskom mýte, dôležitom križovaní mestskej radiály s okružnou komunikáciou. Budova mala zahŕňať sídlo Slovenskej odborovej rady s administratívnymi a rokovacími priestormi, ako aj infraštruktúrou pre zamestnancov vrátane jedálne. Druhým

funkčným celkom mal byť Dom techniky, ktorý mal obsahovať rozsiahle výstavné priestory, študovne a knižnicu. Ďalším funkčným celkom mal byť Výskumný ústav bezpečnosti práce, ktorého špecifickými priestormi boli predovšetkým laboratória. Celý rozsiahly zámer dopĺňala kultúrno-spoločenská funkcia v podobe veľkej spoločenskej sály a kinosály.

V súťaži sa zišlo 25 návrhov. Porota ani jeden návrh neoznačila za víťazný. Udelila však viacero druhých a tretích cien, pričom tieto návrhy mali slúžiť ako podklad pre dopracovanie projektu najvyššie oceneným tímom. Kolektív architektov Tibor Gebauer, Ferdinand Konček, Ilja Skoček a Ľubomír Titl zaslal do súťaže až tri návrhy. Získal najvyššie druhé miesto, ale aj tretiu cenu a zníženú tretiu cenu. Stal sa tak fakticky víťazom súťaže a bol poverený spracovaním projektu. Konceptiu Domu odborov ďalej rozvíjali traja architekti Konček, Skoček a Titl. Od roku 1958 do roku 1965, keď vypracovali finálny zadávací projekt komplexu Domu odborov a techniky, vytvorili sedem detailne spracovaných alternatívnych štúdií aj s reprezentatívnymi modelmi. Tieto návrhy ilustrujú nielen genézu komplexu, ale aj trajektóriu premýšľania o forme domu odborov a schopnosť architektov reagovať na súdobé trendy v architektúre či formovať vlastný vyjadrovací jazyk. Všetky alternatívy pritom spájali základný princíp rozloženia jednotlivých prevádzkových celkov do samostatných objektov prepojených navzájom sériou komunikačných priestorov, ktoré rámcovali viac alebo menej uzavreté vonkajšie verejné priestory.

Realizácia komplexu sa začala výstavbou 16-podlažnej administratívnej budovy Slovenskej odborovej rady. Dokončili ju v roku 1968 a v tom čase bola najmodernejšou kancelárskou budovou na Slovensku. Objekt Domu techniky a Výskumného ústavu bezpečnosti práce dokončili v rámci druhej etapy výstavby v roku 1971. Jeho architektonické riešenie patrí medzi najpozoruhodnejšie príklady neskorkej moderny s prvkami brutalizmu v slovenskej architektúre. Ďalšiu stavebnú etapu tvoril Dom detí so sálou bábkového divadla, klubovňami a herňami. Interiérové riešenie zohľadňovalo špecifické potreby detského užívateľa. Celkový architektonický výraz pritom nadväzoval na ostatné časti komplexu. Dom detí dokončili v roku 1974. V roku

1975 dostávali krídlo spájajúce Dom techniky s hlavnou kultúrno-spoločenskou časťou. Uzatvoril sa tak priestor nádvorja vo východnej časti komplexu. V tom istom roku sa začala výstavba poslednej etapy Domu odborov, hlavnej kultúrno-spoločenskej časti. Tá sa v porovnaní s plánmi z roku 1965 radikálne zmenila. Dôvodom boli zmeny plánovanej priestorovej organizácie a funkčnej náplne územia, ako aj požiadavka zo strany ROH na rozšírenie kapacity hlavnej kongresovej sály z pôvodných 900 na 1200 miest. Celá programová náplň sa skoncentrovala do jedného bloku s hlavnou fasádou vo forme monumentálneho zuborezu orientovanou do rušnej križovatky. Koncentráciu objemu a monumentalizáciu formy tak možno chápať ako priamu reakciu na zmenu v priestorovej organizácii územia, ale aj na vývoj architektonickej diskusie. Tretia etapa výstavby zavŕšila realizáciu celku, ktorého každá časť reprezentuje iný prístup ku koncipovaniu priestoru. Od koncentrácie na jednoduchosť a prehľadnosť ortogonálnej pôdorysnej schémy determinujúcej priestory prvej kancelárskej etapy cez druhú etapu, kde koncepciu ortogonálnej mriežky ozvlášťujú inak dimenzované či inak tvarované priestory, až po zložitý priestorový plán hlavnej kultúrno-spoločenskej časti, kde je ortogonálna mriežka úmyselne relativizovaná až popieraná. Rovnako ako sa mení priestor, mení sa aj koncepcia pohybu v ňom, od priamočiareho cez voľný až po zdanlivo nesmerovaný, a predsa dômyselne scénograficky riadený pohyb v poslednej časti komplexu.

Dom odborov slúžil už v priebehu výstavby aj ako nástroj plnenia politických cieľov režimu, a to nielen vo forme ideologickej výchovy pracujúcich, ale aj ako príklad úspechov autoritatívneho režimu. Záujem zo strany Komunistickej strany dokumentovala jednak v dobovom kontexte nebývalo rýchla realizácia výstavby poslednej etapy, ale aj dramatické navýšenie rozpočtu v poslednej fáze projektu či osobné návštevy prvého tajomníka ÚV KSS v procese výstavby aj počas otvorenia objektu. Dom odborov, techniky a kultúry slávnostne otvorili 13. februára 1981.

Necelých 20 rokov po dokončení sa Dom ROH stal objektom výskumu. Ako významné dielo neskorého modernizmu sa objavil vo všetkých publikáciách, ktoré v súvislosti s architektonickým dedičstvom minulého storočia vyšli na Slovensku. Na začiatku 21. storočia zaujal komplex aj medzinárodnú odbornú scénu. Najväčšie ocenenie zo strany domácej architektonickej

scény sa však autorom Domu odborov dostalo v roku 2016, keď získali Cenu Emila Belluša za celoživotné dielo v oblasti architektúry. Svetová organizácia DOCOMOMO International zaradila v roku 2015 Dom odborov do svojho medzinárodného registra. Zastupiteľstvo mestskej časti Bratislava Nové Mesto odsúhlasilo v roku 2008 zaradenie Istropolisu do zoznamu pamätihodností mestskej časti.

Nové politické a spoločenské podmienky po roku 1989 spočiatku výraznejšie neovplyvnili fungovanie Domu odborov. Naďalej slúžil pôvodnému účelu. Až reštrukturalizácia odborárskej organizácie a prechod celého komplexu do vlastníctva Jednotného majetkového fondu viedol k postupnej zmene programovej náplne komplexu a k jeho odpredaju. Ako prvé predali spoločensko-vzdelávacie krídlo Domu techniky. Jeho priestory upravili na veľkopredajňu potravín. V roku 2017 odpredali súkromnému subjektu, ktorý reprezentoval investičné spojenie dvoch developerských spoločností Immocap a YIT, aj zvyšok komplexu. Programová a fyzická degradácia komplexu pokračovala a vyvrcholila v polovici roka 2020, keď vlastníak zverejnil zámer komplex zbúrať a nahradiť ho novou výstavbou. Jadro novostavby by malo paradoxne tvoriť práve nové kongresové centrum.

Odborná verejnosť upozorňuje na potrebu ochrany Domu odborov od apríla 2019. V tom istom čase podalo DOCOMOMO Slovensko podnet na vyhlásenie komplexu za národnú kultúrnu pamiatku. Po dvoch rokoch bezvýsledného úsilia o záchranu objektu došlo v apríli 2021 k vyhláseniu petície Zachráňme Istropolis, ktorú do konca októbra 2021 podpísalo viac ako 10 500 signatárov. Neúspešné pokusy o vyhlásenie objektu za národnú kultúrnu pamiatku, podpora petície zo strany verejnosti, rozporuplné reakcie adresátov petície aj konanie vlastníka objektu názorne ilustrujú zložitú situáciu v ochrane architektonického dedičstva druhej polovice 20. storočia na Slovensku aj špecifické postavenie angažovanej akademickej obce v tomto procese. Pokus o záchranu architektonického dedičstva v podobe bratislavského Domu odborov súčasne priniesol niekoľko zaujímavých skúseností, ktoré môžu v budúcnosti ovplyvniť podobné procesy. Týkajú sa naladenia spoločnosti vo vzťahu k architektonickému dedičstvu, ale najmä stratégie diseminácie vedeckých poznatkov a ich uplatňovania v praxi pamiatkovej ochrany a pri tvorbe prostredia všeobecne.

Bratislava's former Trade Union House [*Dom odborov*], after 1989 renamed Istropolis, is the largest cultural and social complex in Slovakia. During the past two years, it has been at the centre of unexpected public attention. The reason for this interest lies in the circumstances surrounding its change in ownership, reduction of use, followed by the entire closure of the object and the eventual announcement of its demolition and replacement with new construction. Between 2019 and 2021, the situation set in motion a series of activities hoping to prevent the liquidation of this architectural work and – unusually – brought together the professional academic sphere with engaged members of the public. The present study presents the history of the creation of this noteworthy architectural complex, drawing attention to its innovative urbanistic, typological, and construction solutions. Additionally, it draws attention to the problems facing the evaluation and protection of architectural heritage from the second half of the 20th century. As the authors of the text were active not only in the research but also took a significant public role in defending this architectural achievement, the study also has the ambition of contributing to the discussion on perspectives of engaged research in the fields of the historiography and theory of architecture.

## Typological Starting Points for the Trade Union House

The official “Revolutionary Trade Union Movement” (*Revolučné odborové hnutie* – ROH), the monopolistic union representing all employees, was the largest and most widespread institutionalised social group in Czechoslovakia during the state-socialist era.<sup>1</sup> Along with other mass organisations and political parties, it formed part of the “National Front of Czechs and Slovaks”, under the *de facto* control of the Czechoslovak Communist Party (KSČ).<sup>2</sup> In the centrally planned economy of socialist Czechoslovakia, though, the standard trade-union agenda for negotiating working conditions or wages served more as a formality. As such, the ROH primarily assumed the role of caring for employees and propagating state policy.<sup>3</sup> Following the Soviet model, this care for employees was manifested not only organisationally, but no less materially: in consequence, the ROH formed one of the largest investors for the construction of recreational facilities and hotels, sanatoriums, or even educational centres and “houses of culture” across Czechoslovakia.<sup>4</sup>

The educational and cultural centres of the ROH conform to a typological category that emerged in the specific conditions of the former socialist bloc. For their inspiration, we could note first of all the USSR’s workers’ clubs, primarily those designed between 1927 and 1929 by Konstantin Stepanovich Melnikov. Characteristic instances of Soviet avant-garde Constructivism, these structures were modern multipurpose objects that included a social hall, theatre, cinema, library and study room, club spaces and a gym. Workers’ clubs were intended to be a “social condenser... both a ‘second home’ and a ‘church of a new cult’”.<sup>5</sup>

The desire to shape and influence the widest masses of society led to architectural solutions that not only allowed for parallel use of the building for various activities, but equally increased spatial capacity. Workers’ clubs were planned to expand into “urban zones”, as formulated by architect Ivan Leonidov at a conference on workers’ clubs in 1928.<sup>6</sup> By the later 1930s, these new complexes began to receive the name of union houses or palaces.<sup>7</sup>

This process of increasing monumentality in trade-union buildings was reflected in the first ROH buildings to be constructed in postwar Czechoslovakia. In most Slovak towns, these buildings were conceived as monumental urban landmarks shaping entire city blocks. Examples range from the Trade Union House in Žilina (Ferdinand Čapka, Pavel Řepa, 1962), formally still under the influence of the principles of Socialist Realism, through the ROH House of Culture in Banská Bystrica (Jozef Chrobák, 1979), a typical Modernist volume, or the House of Culture in Trnava (Jozef Danák, 1988) a unique instance of Brutalist architecture in Slovakia. As such, the “House of Trade Unions, Technology, and Culture” in Bratislava (Ferdinand Konček, Ilja Skoček, Ľubomír Titl, 1981) has an exceptional place in this series: from the start, it was planned as the largest and most central trade-union palace, which in fact it succeeded in becoming.

Without any doubt, the commissioning of the Trade Union House was backed by ideological reasons, and it was very likely that the Soviet patterns inspired the building’s commissioners in formulating its planned function. Yet in parallel, the architecture of Bratislava’s Trade Union House was significantly shaped by international architectural discussions across the Iron Curtain. Since the late 1950s, even Western European architects had reflected on how to combine the requirements of the social state for investment in public cultural-social buildings with the effective combination of various functions into a single unit, along with its most fitting architectural form capable of contributing to an imposing urban context. And a new typological category began to emerge: the multipurpose cultural-social urban centre. The idea of integrating various publicly accessible spaces for social and cultural use was realised not only by municipal governments investing both in the administrative spaces and the construction of ceremonial halls or spaces for everyday meetings, but equally by national governments, church and political groups, or private foundations. And multifunctional use also meant larger built volumes. Of many examples, it is worth noting at least the concert hall in Turku (Risto-Veikko Luukkonen, Ahti Korhonen, 1953), containing a multipurpose hall and a school, or the Lahti Concert Hall (Kaija and Heikki Siren, 1954), including a hotel and commercial spaces.<sup>8</sup> Conceived on a similar principle was the complex of the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation headquarters in Lisbon (Alberto Pessoa, Pedro Cid, Ruy Jervis d’Athouguia, António Viana Barreto, Gonçalo Ribeiro Telles, 1969) bringing together the offices of the foundation, congress halls, a contemporary art museum and a public park.<sup>9</sup> In rare instances, such as London’s Barbican (Peter Chamberlin, Geoffry Powell and Christoph Bon, 1976), which combined not only cultural, social, and educational institutions but also housing, these complexes could expand to the dimensions of an entire city neighbourhood.

The theme of the spatial organisation and architectural formulation of this type of built complex was also investigated intensively by Alvar Aalto. It was he who brought into Finnish architecture the concept that the individual operational units would remain separate but together create an exterior public space, while also differing in architectonic form. Aalto first employed this principle in the town hall for Säynätsalo (1952) and developed it further in the House of Culture in Helsinki (1958), itself created by a commission from the Finnish Communist Party. Linking several public functions into a single complex built organism was also the strategy for his largest project, the town centre in Seinäjoki (1958 – 1987).<sup>10</sup> With respect to Bratislava's Trade Union House, though, it is also worth mentioning the conception of outdoor space in Aalto's cultural-social facilities, marked by a seemingly random grouping of individual, often almost disharmonious spaces into highly complex wholes. The Greek architect and theorist Demetri Porphyros, who analysed Aalto's oeuvre in structuralist terms, compared this principle to Foucault's spatial heterotopia. And during the 1950s and 1960s, Slovak architects took great interest in new Finnish architecture: Finland was a favoured destination for professional study trips and books on Finnish architecture were mandatory in the libraries of every design institute and indeed every practicing architect. The authors of Bratislava's Trade Union House visited Finland several times and wrote about the country's architecture and urbanism as examples worthy of emulation in many articles in the journal *Projekt*.<sup>12</sup> With this in mind, we could justifiably state that it was the work of Finnish architects, and Alvar Aalto in particular, that served as primary inspiration in formulating the Trade Union House complex in Bratislava.<sup>13</sup>

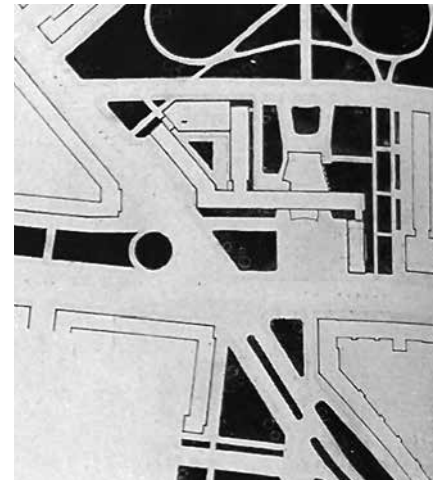
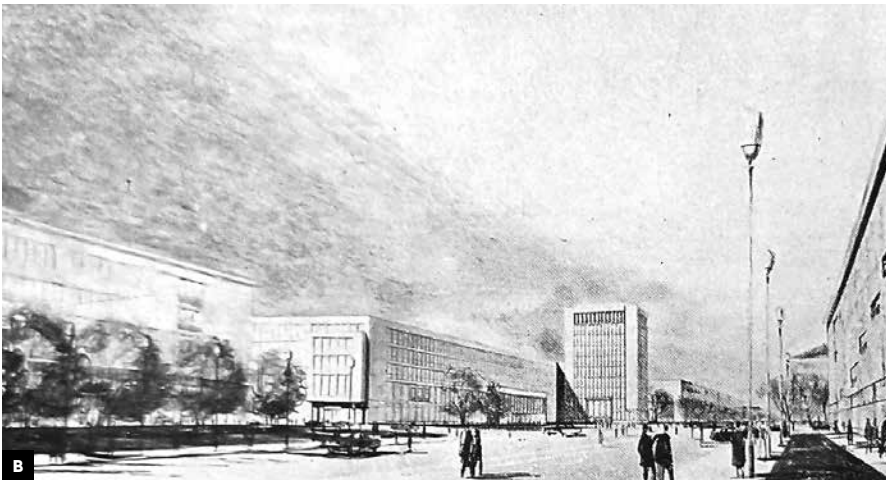
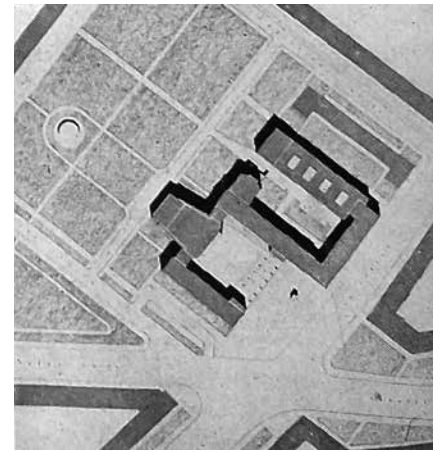
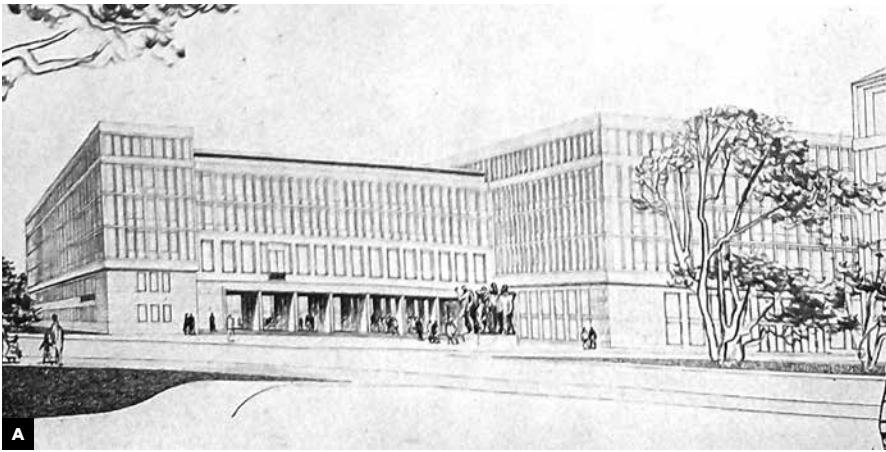
### The Trade Union House and Its Position in the City

Starting from the organisation's founding in 1946, the central headquarters of the ROH for Slovakia occupied the former "German Party House" (Hans Jaksch, Siegfried Theiss, Werner Theiss, 1946) at the edge of central Bratislava.<sup>14</sup> Designed for a similar group of functions as that demanded by the union, it contained cultural-social spaces, offices, and a printing works. However, in the wake of World War II, the former party of the Carpathian Germans had to reduce the scope of the original plan, which would have occupied an entire block along Májkova ulica; left unbuilt was the original right section with a cultural-social hall offering a capacity of 800 seats. When the union received the building after the war, it only added technical amenities such as lifts, instead of completing the full project. Large-scale public activities were organised in spaces leased in the newly completed public hall of the Park of Culture and Recreation on the Danube embankment. The other major ROH agenda, education and particularly technical training of workers, took place in adapted office spaces in the "House of Technology".

The need for construction a specialised trade union headquarters thus naturally ranked high among the ROH's interests, with a competition for a new ROH Palace announced less than a decade after their acquisition of the building in Májkova ulica. "The planned construction of the House of Trade Unions and Technology represents one of the largest and most socially important investments of the second Five-Year Plan in our capitol city", wrote Martin Kusý in reference to the competition for the Trade Union House in 1956.<sup>15</sup>

The on-site program was ambitious indeed. The building was intended to house the institutional headquarters of the Slovak Trade Union Council (*Slovenská odborová rada* – SOR) with administrative and congress spaces, as well as full employee infrastructure including a canteen. The second functional unit was to be the House of Technology (*Dom techniky*), primarily for propaganda and educational purposes, and offering capacious exhibition spaces, a study hall, and library. Yet another functional unit would have been the Research Institute for Workplace Safety, where the specific spaces would mostly have been laboratories. Completing the entire extensive plan were its cultural and social facilities in the form, in the form of a large auditorium and cinema.

The original ROH House was situated at the corner of Krížna, one of the major radial traffic arteries of the city, and Májkova. This site, which after 1948 has been known as Odborárske námestie [Trade Union Square], was assumed in the early 20th century as the locality where the city's modern centre would arise. However, by the century's midpoint it was already a relatively stabilised built environment, not suitable for construction of a large new complex. A more favourable site was found by the city planners at the opposite end of Krížna ulica at one of the key intersections of the radials with the outer ring-road, at today's Trnavské mýto. At the time of the competition, this area was the Central Marketplace (*Centrálné trhovisko*), which since World War II had formed



**COMPETITION ENTRY OF TIBOR GEBAUER, FERDINAND KONČEK, ILJA SKOČEK AND LUBOMÍR TITL AWARDED FIRST HIGHEST PRIZE (A) AND 3RD PRIZE (B).**

SÚŤAŽNÝ NÁVRH TIBORA GEBAUERA, FERDINANDA KONČEKA, ILJU SKOČEKA A LUBOMÍRA TITLA OCENENÝ PRVOU NA JUVYŠŠOU CENOU (A) A 3. CENOU (B).

**Source** Zdroj: KUSÝ, Martin, 1957. Nad súťažnými návrhmi na výstavbu Domu odborov a techniky v Bratislave. Československý architekt. 16(3), p. 126 and 128

the main retail space in Bratislava. To a large extent, this site was a genuine *terrain vague*, with the open marketplace with its rows of light wooden market booths sided by fragments of the old cattle market, a rail spur, military warehouses, and the Classicist palace of Count Berchtold.<sup>16</sup> Yet at the same time, this situation made it a locality with significant development potential. Moreover, the area between the inner and outer urban ring-roads formed, at the end of the 1950s and into the next decade, a challenge for the shaping of the city similar to that of the inner ring at the century's outset. The sites where the outer ring intersected with the main traffic radials were intended for public buildings of major significance. In short, the choice of the site was far from accidental.

## The Competition

In the nationwide urbanistic-architectural competition, 25 designs were submitted. The jury followed the practice then frequently applied: not one of the designs was indicated as victorious, but instead several second and third prizes were issued, with these designs proposed as the basis for completing the project by the highest-ranked design team. In its evaluation, the jury, focused on the urban planning of the locality.<sup>17</sup> In the conclusions, it also defined the principles that the architects should follow in preparing the design. The first recommendation was that the area be transformed into a large, unified space, to be named Odborárske námestie. "This space should organically (suitably) connect with the assumed vegetation on the site of the present rail track." The second recommendation was directed to the placement of the complex, "freely within the given space, without any automatic linking to the extant surrounding construction".<sup>18</sup> The jury rejected the traditional urban form of city blocks and corridor streets, stating directly in their final evaluation that the new structure should be the "dominating building of the Trade Union House as a freely composed object in open space, with entrances sufficiently distant from the intersection and the traffic routes".<sup>19</sup>





**WORKING MODEL, 1958**

PRACOVNÝ MODEL, 1958

**Source** Zdroj: Personal archive of Lubomír Titl

No less unequivocal were the jury's demands regarding the building's formal aspects, characterising each of the designs as unimaginative unimaginative, though a more detailed elucidation of this "unacceptable state" did not find sufficient space in the article.<sup>20</sup> All the same, none of the winning designs drew upon the formalistic principles of Socialist Realism: the authors did not deploy traditional artistic decoration but worked with the rhythm and grid of the fenestration in a strict rectangular pattern.

In all but name, the winner of the competition was the design team of Tibor Gebauer, Ferdinand Konček, Il'ja Skoček and Lubomír Titl. These architects in fact submitted three designs for the competition, with one winning the highest rating (second place), with the others awarded third and reduced third prizes.<sup>21</sup> Indeed, it was the combination of these three designs that the jury felt would create the ideal project.

The highest-ranked design was primarily praised for the effective layout and functional plan of the complex, though the jury did have a few reservations in this area that could "be resolved without significant alterations".<sup>22</sup> Negative evaluations, by contrast, were directed toward the complex's placement, which did not allow for a sufficiently imposing entrance space, as well as the compositional design of the massing with its uniform height levels.

For the massing and the positioning of the complex in the surrounding urban structure, the jury preferred the team's design awarded third prize. Here, they stressed the importance of creating a high-rise landmark as well as its placement in the situation of Vajnorská ulica. The design granted reduced third prize had, in the jury's view, the best functional layout scheme, yet they cast doubt on the complex's spatial effect, regarding the House of Technology as unacceptable, as well as the composition of the individual wings, which they felt gave a "fragmented impression".<sup>23</sup>

### **Crystallisation of the Right Configuration of the Complex**

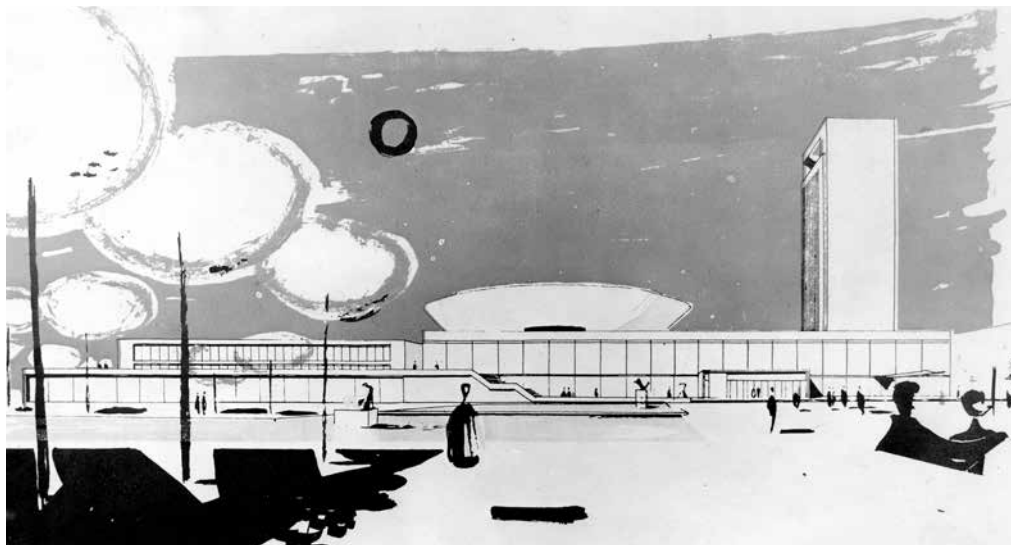
The Gebauer – Konček – Skoček – Titl collective was, matching the jury's conclusions, entrusted with preparation of the project, though Tibor Gebauer was himself not involved in any further stages. Conceptually, the Trade Union House was thus developed by the remaining three architects, who in their other architectural works as well formed one of the most successful authorial teams in the history of postwar architecture in Slovakia.<sup>24</sup>

Even during the competition, the architects demonstrated that their working method consisted of the testing of various volume and functional configurations of the complex. Nor did they cease to do so in the later design phases. From 1958 to 1965, when they completed the final

**SKETCH OF THE VARIANT DESIGN  
FROM 1959**

SKICA VARIANTNÉHO NÁVRHU  
Z ROKU 1959

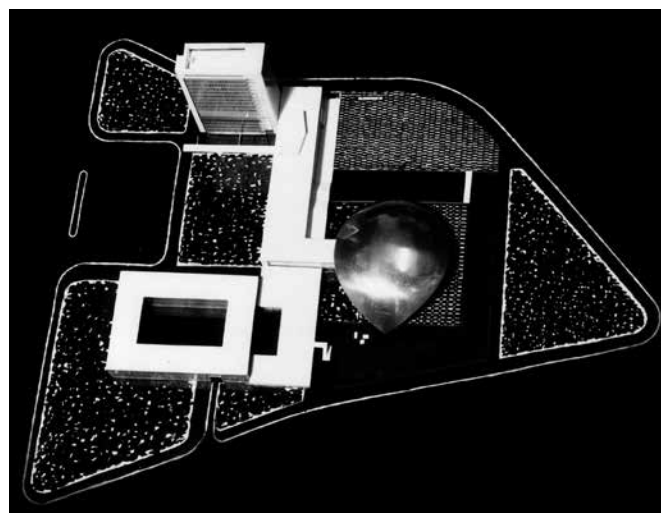
Source Zdroj: Personal archive  
of Lubomír Titl



**MODEL OF THE IMPLEMENTATION  
PROJECT FOR THE TRADE UNION  
HOUSE, 1960**

MODEL ZADÁVACEJ ŠTÚDIE PRE  
DOM ODBOROV A TECHNIKY, 1960

Source Zdroj: KUSÝ, Martin, 1960.  
Dom odborov a techniky v Bratislave.  
Architektura ČSR. 19(10), p. 687

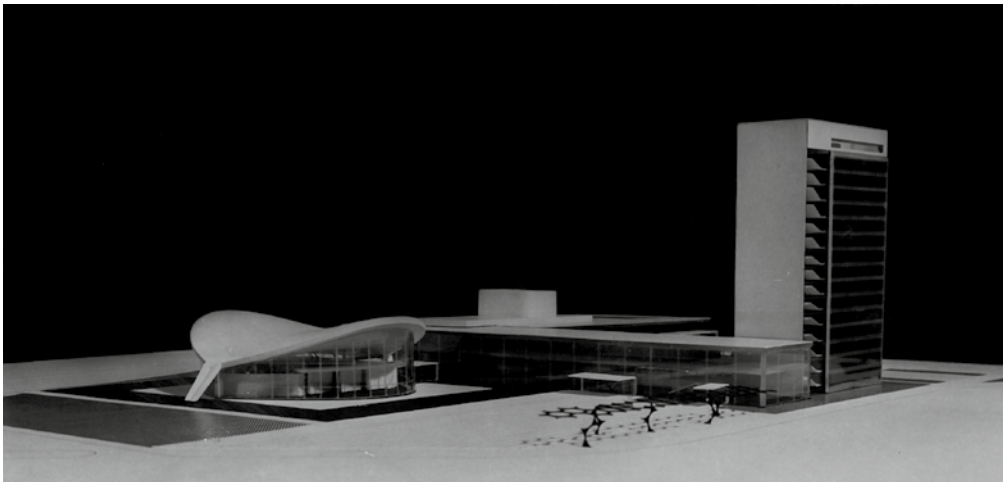


realisation project for the complex of the Trade Union and Technology House, they prepared seven detailed alternative studies complete with representative models. These designs illustrate not only the genesis of the complex but equally the trajectory of the idea of the building's form and the ability of the architects to react to contemporary architectural trends or generate their own expressive vocabulary. Each of these alternatives, though, was linked by an underlying principle of dividing individual functional units into autonomous objects mutually linked through a series of communication spaces, all framing (more or less) enclosed exterior areas.

The first three projects from 1958 and 1959 display a movement away from diffuse, multi-winged compositions toward a more concentrated form, involving the long horizontal line of the main pavilion with transverse attachments in the form of the high-rise office block of the Slovak Trade Union Council (SOR) and the large social hall. The high mass of the SOR building, in fact, was the only functional component to keep its fixed position, at the corner of the streets Škultétyho and Vajnorská, all the way from the first concepts.

While the first two alternatives remained essentially continuations of the competition design's strictly orthogonal shaping of the complex, the 1959 study shows a shift of opinion in the direction of a more expressive enunciation of the relations between the basic functional units. Transformation of the large social hall into a central element of circular outline roofed with a concave shell and positioned atop the roof of the horizontal block gave rise to an asymmetrical massing composition of verticals, horizontals, and curves, which in part through its echoing of Oscar Niemeyer's National Congress in Brasilia evoked the iconic outlines of postwar Modernism.

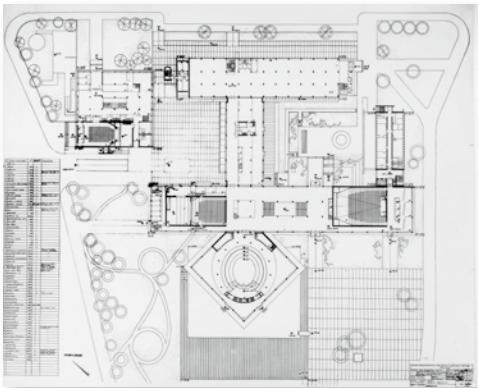




**SECOND VARIANT OF THE  
CENTRAL CONGRESS HALL, 1962**

DRUHÝ VARIANT ÚSTREDNEJ  
KONGRESOVEJ ŠÁLY, 1962

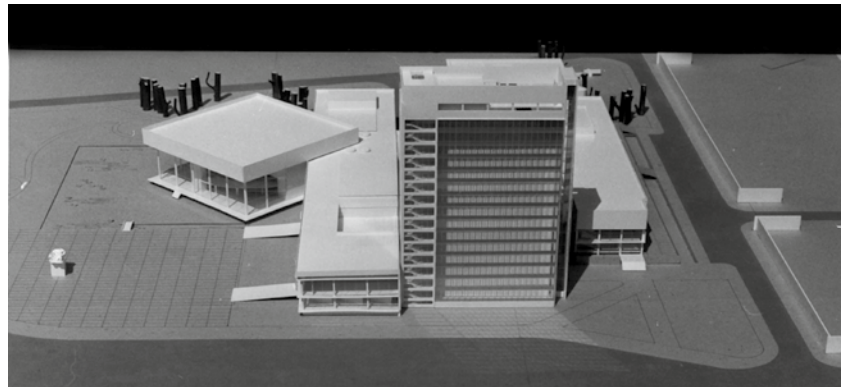
**Source** Zdroj: Personal archive  
of Lubomír Titl



**THE REALIZATION PLAN OF THE  
TRADE UNION HOUSE, 1965,  
(A) PLAN OF THE GROUND FLOOR,  
(B) MODEL**

REALIZAČNÝ PROJEKT DOMU  
ODBOROV, 1965, (A) PÔDORYS  
PRÍZEMIA, (B) MODEL

**Source** Zdroj: Personal archive  
of Lubomír Titl



Still in the same year, the architects further refined this design. Gradually, there emerged the crystallised shapes of the House of Technology and the Research Institute of Workplace Safety, designed as a two-storey object ending the complex in the direction towards the rail spur. The key theme, though, was the position and shape of the large social hall. In another alternative, which is known primarily through a surviving wooden model, the central hall was shifted into the open space of the intersection of the Šancová section of the ring road and the branches of the urban radials. Here, the convex outline of the roof was replaced by a cupola.

This composition was further refined in 1960 in the implementation project published in the journal *Architektura ČSR*, again with an accompanying text by Martin Kusý.<sup>25</sup> Subjected to the greatest modification was the congress hall: still shifted into the foreground of the complex but with a different roof. Now, the cupola gave way to a shell-construction of concave form, anchored at two points in the surrounding area of water along all sides of the hall. Such a design placed the Trade Union House among the similarly striking – and structurally daring – projects appearing in Slovakia's architectural scene in the late 1950s and early 1960s.<sup>26</sup> However, Martin Kusý, both as architect and theorist, saw this element as problematic. In his text accompanying the project's publication, he noted that the "construction is indeed possible and the project convincingly demonstrates this, though to be sure, it is a question how appropriate or optimal it is for the given task." Here, he emphasised the "need for further consideration" in this design.<sup>27</sup>

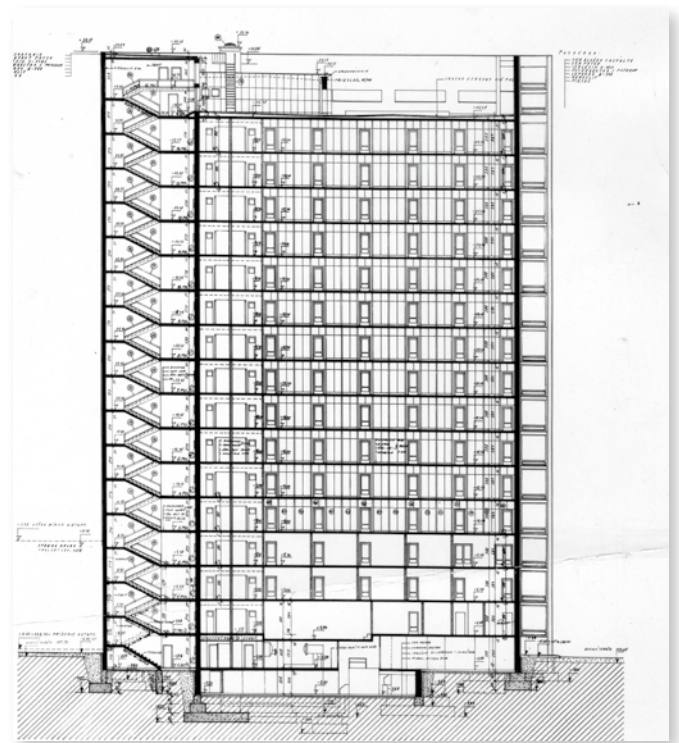
The project published in 1960 already assumed that the complex would be built in stages. First to be realised would be the 16-storey high-rise office building, later to be followed by the social and educational wing, and finally the congress hall. "The SOR organisational building is the first structure of such character and scope to be built in Slovakia after liberation. Through its place in the city organism, it will emerge as one of the most important high-visibility objects," was the judgement on the planned first stage of construction from Martin Kusý.<sup>28</sup>

The final realisation project for the Trade Union House was completed by the architects only five years later. Compared to the original concept, the most significant change occurred in the social

**CROSS-SECTION PLAN OF THE  
HOUSE OF THE SLOVAK TRADE  
UNION COUNCIL (SOR), 1960**

REZ BUDOVOU SLOVENSKEJ  
ODBOROVEJ RADY (SOR), 1960

Source Zdroj: Personal archive  
of Ľubomír Titl



and educational section. The House of Technology and the Research Institute for Workplace Safety were now planned as a three-storey volume in parallel with Škultétyho ulica, connected to the parallel horizontal slab of the cultural-social section through a shared entrance wing. Along with the high-rise office block, this object outlined a representative entrance forecourt. Another change to the concept was necessitated by the addition of another function, in this case the House of Children. The block of the clubroom with a stage for a puppet theatre was planned as a regular self-contained rectangle, completing the complex at the corner of the streets Škultétyho and Kukučínova.

No less radical a transformation was evidenced with the congress hall. Here, it is hard to say whether it was a reaction to the criticism by Martin Kusý or a request from the client. After the architects' testing in 1962 of a roofing variant involving a suspended cable construction in hyperbolic paraboloid outline, they decided finally for a more restrained solution. The object was designed as a strict cube, though with one edge inserted into the horizontal slab of the social wing, where it was directly connected to the entrance section, while the other edge faced outward into the large street frontage, in the direction of the city centre. At the very centre of this right-angled glass volume, they positioned the main auditorium as a cylindrical mass. In front of the hall, there continued the urban planning of the entire area up to the Karadžičova – Krížna – Legionárska intersection. In this way, the architects "strove to create a park-like space that this part of the city lacked, and which would also support the importance of the ROH House".<sup>29</sup>

Work on the realisation project ended in 1965 and at the same time, its integration into the city masterplan was approved. Construction of the complex began in the late 1960s. During this period, the area lost its one architecturally valuable building, the former Berchtold Palace. Nonetheless, the area under construction, situated close to Škultétyho ulica, did not interrupt the functioning of Bratislava's largest marketplace nearby.

### **The House of the Slovak Trade Union Council (SOR)**

The realisation of the complex started with the construction of the 16-storey office building for the Slovak Trade Union Council, completed in 1968. The structural basis of the building, laid out as a triple tract, used paired inner parallel walls of poured reinforced concrete, adjoined by transverse reinforcing curtain walls. For the spatial layout, the main element is the central corridor, terminating at both ends of the floor plan in communication cores. Thanks to the use..., the arrangement of the offices is notably flexible. The external appearance of this slender slab-form is shaped by the



**THE HOUSE OF THE TECHNOLOGY  
AND THE RESEARCH INSTITUTE OF  
WORKPLACE SAFETY, VIEW FROM  
THE COURTYARD**

DOM TECHNIKY A VÝSKUMNÝ  
ÚSTAV BEZPEČNOSTI PRÁCE,  
POHLAD Z NÁDVORIA

**Photo** Foto: Julián Hauskrecht, Personal  
archive of Lubomír Titl

two identical facades, where the strict rhythm of the fenestration alternates with inter-fenestral columns clad in grey mosaic tiling. Structurally, these are load-bearing prefabricated ferroconcrete pillars, in between which are full-panel windows with frames of anodised aluminium. These, in turn, are divided horizontally into two sections: the upper with an opening window turning on the vertical axis, and a lower parapet section formed by an aluminium panel with dark-blue paint and polystyrene inner insulation. Included in the window panels are exterior wooden parapets with Formica surface treatment and shading blinds descending from above. This ingenious façade system had been proposed by the architects already in 1960 and throughout the 1960s and 1970s it was used with various adaptations on other office buildings in Slovakia.

The uppermost floor of the building is used for the space of a “reception hall” attached to an outdoor viewing terrace, originally planned to have its own vegetation. The SOR building, at the time of completion, was the most modern office building in Slovakia, and even today its slender slab outline and noteworthy façade make it one of Bratislava’s most attractive high-rise structures.

### **The House of Technology and the Research Institute of Workplace Safety**

The project of the social-educational wing, containing the House of Technology and the Research Institute of Workplace Safety, was worked out in detail by Ilja Škoček. This component was intended to meet one of the crucial aims of the ROH: education and public awareness in both new technologies and working methods as well as investigation into safer working conditions. As such, the functional program of the three-storey object included specialised laboratories, classrooms, workshops, offices, and an exhibition space. Its construction base consisted of a regular reinforced-concrete skeleton with a span of  $6 \times 6$  m, allowing for organisation into a single built unit of operational functions with widely differing spatial requirements. The first floor, raised above ground level by 95 cm, with a generous ceiling height of 5.4 m, was occupied by the exhibition space. On the second floor, laid out as a three-tract plan with a central corridor, were other public social and educational functions, including a library, five lecture halls, and one larger auditorium with a lowered floor level. On the topmost floor, reserved for the research institute, were offices, laboratories, and a conference room. Ending the building at the northeast edge was a functionally separate unit with three private apartments, reached via a freestanding semi-cylindrical staircase, forming the visual culmination of the entire horizontal composition. Both main façades were determined by the strict rhythm of the skeleton construction with columns placed at the perimeter of the floor plan. Towards Škultétyho ulica, the façade is supplemented with a notable parallel line of a sculpturally protruding cornice; the western façade toward the entrance court was protected from direct sunlight by a freestanding reinforced-concrete construction of sunbreaks. The material solution was grounded in the contrast between the shiny glass-mosaic tiling of greyish colour and the rough surface of the smoothed concrete on the sunbreaks and the sculpturally formulated outlets of the ventilation system. The interior of the exhibition hall was defined by the concrete pillars,



## THE HOUSE OF CHILDREN

DOM DETÍ

Source Zdroj: Personal archive  
of Lubomír Titl

originally sheathed in sheet metal, and the floor of terrazzo flagging. Dense rows of rectangular light fixtures illuminated the space, effectively reinforcing its depth.

This building was completed during the second stage of construction in 1971. Its architectural design places it among the most noteworthy examples of Late Modernist style, with certain Brutalist elements, in Slovak architecture.

### The House of Children

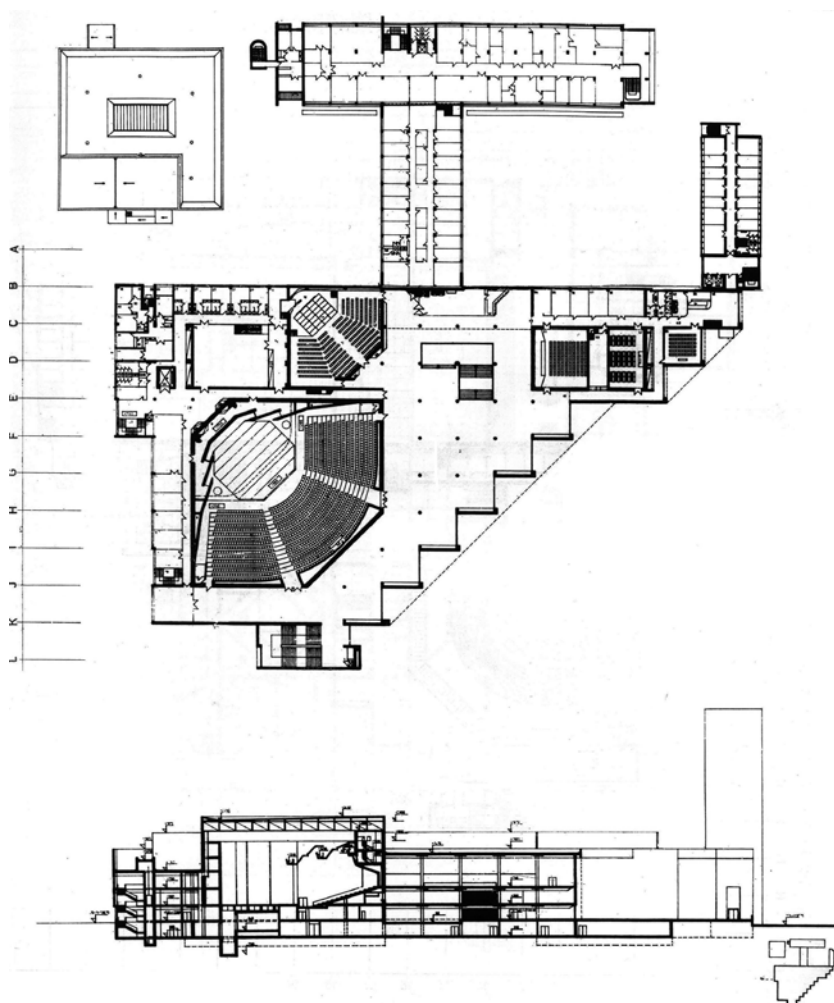
The next construction stage in the ROH complex, the House of Children, was prepared by Ferdinand Konček. The main functional requirement of the two-storey object of square floor outline was the hall for the puppet theatre, supplemented by spaces for clubrooms and playrooms. Here as well, the construction of the building consisted of a regular reinforced-concrete skeleton with span of 6 x 6 m. As for the layout, it is arranged around a central communication space illuminated by a ceiling skylight. The theatre hall, occupying two floors, is reached from the foyer at ground level, sided by the spaces for the theatre's backstage operations. Other club or playroom functions are on the upper floor, reached from an open gallery reached by a formal double-winged staircase placed at the building's centre.

With its colour scheme and the dimensions of the furnishings, the interior design directly reflected the specific needs of children as its users. The overall appearance of the interior spaces, the stone panelling, or the steel railings with glass infill nonetheless all match the other sections of the complex. One interesting interior element is the routing of the ventilation pipes through the ceiling skylight. Notably advanced for the time of construction was the generous handicapped-accessible theatre entrance with ramps located on the building's north side. The formal and material solution for the exterior curtain wall matches that of the adjoining House of Technology, though Konček here chose to stress the building's cubic form through a slight shifting of the massive rooftop cornice. Generous use of glass through the entire width of the module on the second above-ground level gives the building lightness and transparency, making it appear more of a pavilion. Solid surfaces of walls, pillars, or cornices are, as in the first two objects in the Trade Union House, clad in grey glass mosaic tiling, while the parapet infill has a blue colouring of the same shade as on the office building for the SOR. From the solid southwest façade, behind which stands the theatre, there is a staircase connecting the stage to the flies. The House of Children was completed in 1974.

**PLAN OF THE SECOND FLOOR AND  
SECTION OF THE COMPLEX, 1977**

PŮDORYS DRUHÉHO PODLAŽIA  
A REZ KOMPLEXU, 1977

Source Zdroj: Personal archive  
of Lubomír Titl



### The Clubroom Wing

In 1975, shortly after completion of the House of Children, a wing was built to connect the House of Technology with the main cultural-social part. Of three stories, it was linked to the House of Technology equally in its construction, layout, or function – even lacking its own independent vertical communication. The lengthwise entrance vestibule at ground level was reached from the exhibition space in the House of Technology, supplemented by the large space of a multipurpose auditorium for dance and movement activities. Similarly, the two upper floors are arranged as a dual tract with variously sized rooms for clubs or hobby groups, from photography darkrooms to sunlit drawing studios. The outer envelope of this wing was planned in the same way as the adjoining volumes of the House of Technology and the House of Children: a basic grid in the form of solid areas of outer load-bearing columns and ceiling slabs interspersed with glass inside aluminium frames.

The wing of the clubrooms completed the space of the courtyard in the eastern part of the complex. Connecting the dance halls on the ground floor with the outside using a capacious terrace, or later a sculptural element in the form of a fountain by Pavel Mikšík, gave this space a formal yet also pleasantly intimate feeling.<sup>30</sup>

### The Main Cultural-Social Section

In 1975, the final construction stage of the Trade Union House was launched, the main cultural-social section. Compared with the plans from 1965, it had been radically changed, for reasons linked both to changes in the planned spatial organisation and to the functional program of the land. The original capacious landscaped park planned in front of the Trade Union House had to be



# THE SITUATION OF THE COMPLEX IN 1981

SITUOVANIE KOMPLEXU  
V ROKU 1981

**Photo** Foto: Ľubo Stacho

**Postproduction** Postprodukcia:  
Monika Stacho

significantly reduced, partially because of the increase in the traffic capacity of the intersection of the streets Šancová, Krížna, Vajnorská and Trnavská, but even more so because of the decision for placement of the new city market building.<sup>31</sup> “Unfortunately, the extreme delay in completing the ROH House was, for unknown reasons, forgotten with the urban composition of the city market inside the land that should have created an area of park in front of this structure,” was the response of the building’s architects to this situation.<sup>32</sup> Another change in the project was imposed by the ROH’s own desire for greatly expanding the capacity of the main congress hall from the original 900 to 1200 seats. Yet another influence on the change in the spatial conception, though, was a shift in architectural discussion, a gradual abandonment of modernist positions that manifested itself, in part, in the growing complexity of the spatial compositions. Hence the architects willingly took up the task of significantly reworking the congress and cultural-social part of the complex. As they stated in their own words, they put “emphasis on a strong and solid mass that, in its height, would eliminate the negative influences of the surroundings and through architectonic means determine the newly formed space.”<sup>33</sup> The entire programmatic functions were concentrated into a single block of triangular ground outline with its main façade facing the busy intersection.<sup>34</sup> This façade, literally a dentil pattern in monumental scale, is visually effective when viewed from all directions, or even when passing along the outer ring boulevard. This concentration of volumes and monumentalisation of form, in a sense, could be regarded as a direct reaction to the change in the spatial organisation of the surroundings. Underscoring the building’s monumentality is the stone tiling, of marble with striking black veins, as a material not used in any other building of its time, as well as its laying in a way not to reflect the direction of the patterning.<sup>35</sup> This irregular alternation of vein patterns on the individual marble slabs creates a moiré effect on the facade, optically causing the enormous surface to give the illusion of vibration. The smooth southwest façade, without any fenestration, is enlivened by the sculptural element of the formal staircase with entrance for prominent guests. This exposure of the rising line of the staircase arms could be viewed as a direct reference to the Finlandia Talo congress and concert centre in Helsinki, completed from Alvar Aalto’s design in 1975, which the architects of the Trade Union House visited personally during their conception of the final stage of the Bratislava building.<sup>36</sup>



**ENTRANCE TO THE  
REPRESENTATIVE FOYER ON  
THE SECOND FLOOR**

VSTUP DO REPREZENTATÍVNEHO  
FOYERU NA DRUHOM PODLAŽÍ

**Source** Zdroj: Archive of the Archtung  
group



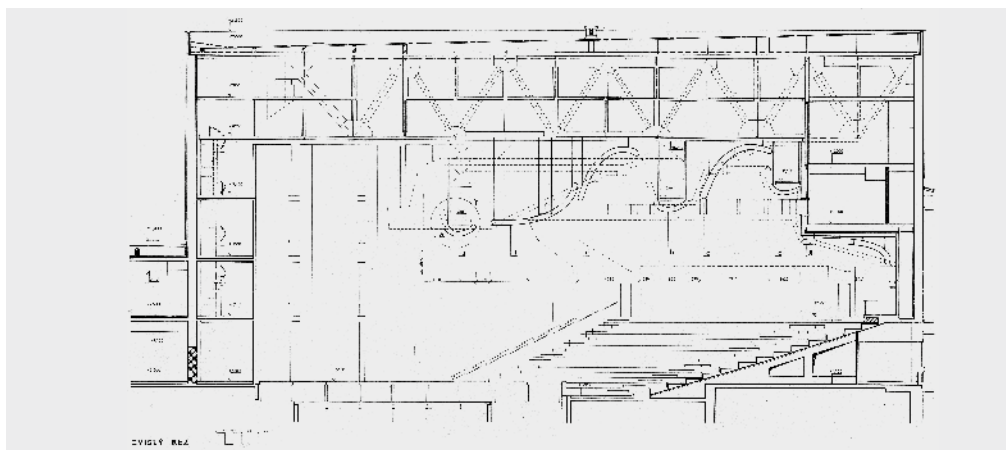
The construction of the building uses a reinforced-concrete skeleton with a span of  $8.7 \times 8.7$  m, along with load-bearing pillars with a diameter of 500 mm. The architects assumed that the key task would be “achieving an architectural form that would match the importance of the building and evoke a sense of celebration in its visitors.”<sup>37</sup> This goal was achieved not only through the monumental exterior, but perhaps even more through the layout plan and the interior design. Upon entering, the visitor is gradually led through the entrance spaces (including the ticket desk) on the ground floor, with a height of 3 m, up to the foyer on the floor above, containing a central complex of cloakroom and toilet facilities (ceiling height 3.3 m), and then to the still more grandiose foyer one level above, where the ceiling height is doubled to 6.6 m. Here, the height levels are matched with a series of wide-branching staircases. Reached from this main foyer, itself a kind of interior public space, are various types of halls and social rooms; various events can take place simultaneously for up to 3000 visitors. The foyer is characterised by a “forest” of slender load-bearing columns clad in highly polished stainless-steel sheeting. The suspended ceiling, composed of large hollow wood cylinders and imposing oval skylights above the entrance staircase, grants this space a fitting sense of formality and monumentality. Also reached from the foyer is the central congress hall with a capacity of 1200 seats as well as other meeting halls and an experimental theatre space.<sup>38</sup> Second in seating capacity is the panoramic cinema with 514 seats, reached from the floor below. Other social spaces include a multipurpose hall for 160 visitors with an extensive buffet area on the first above-ground level, or the smaller conference rooms on the second. Here again, the authors divided the detailed treatment of the design among themselves: Konček prepared the entrance foyers and the cinema, Skoček the experimental stage, the rear sections and the formal side staircase, and Titl the large congress hall.<sup>39</sup>

In both architectural and technical terms, the most exceptional space is the last-mentioned congress hall, which even today is one of the largest halls of this type in Slovakia. It uses a steel load-bearing construction inserted into a reinforced-concrete skeleton. The amphitheatre-shaped seating is oriented around a capacious stage with bleachers and even an orchestra pit. Dynamic transformation of its appearance is made possible with the seven hydraulically elevated stage tables. Artistically, the dominant feature of the space is the finned inner ceiling realised from a design by the prominent Slovak sculptor Jozef Jankovič. For this multifunctional architectural detail, the design involved the collaboration not only of the architects but several constructors and researchers.<sup>40</sup> Since everything in the hall was transmitted electronically, the ceiling does not have an acoustical function, but forms a sculptural object with the entire lighting system integrated within it.<sup>41</sup> The colour shading of the anodized fins creates a variety of atmospheres in the otherwise austere (though highly comfortable) hall.<sup>42</sup>

**PLAN OF THE INNER CEILING  
OF THE CONGRESS HALL**

VÝKRES PODHLADU  
KONGRESOVEJ SÁLY

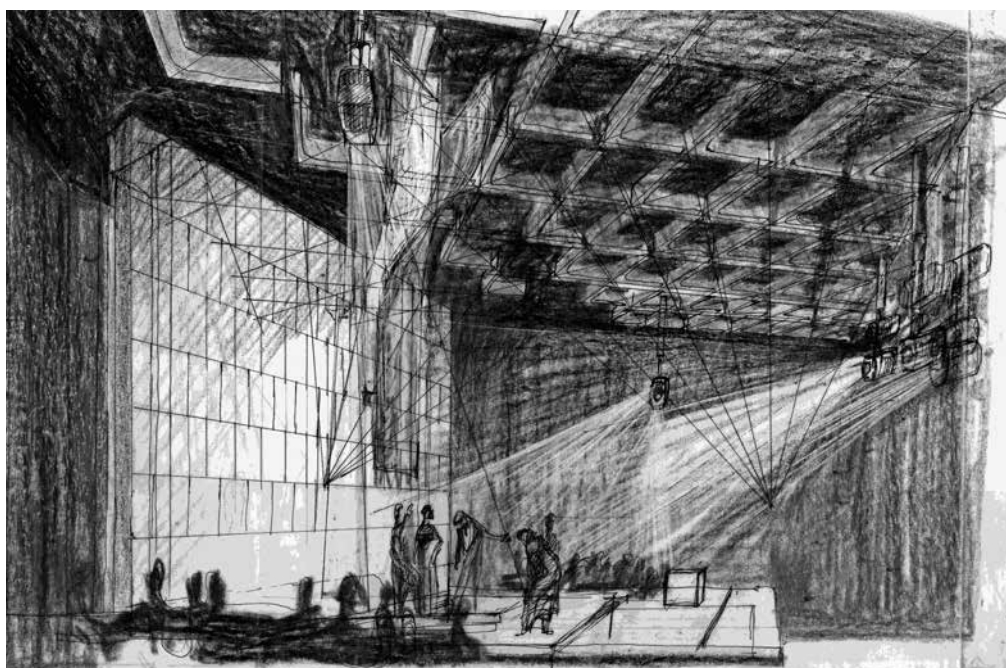
**Source** Zdroj: OHRABLO, František  
and ČERNÍK, Peter, 1981. Rubrika detail.  
Projekt. 23(7) p. 22



**SKETCH OF THE INTERIOR  
OF THE EXPERIMENTAL THEATRE,  
ILJA SKOČEK**

SKICA INTERIÉRU  
EXPERIMENTÁLNEHO DIVADLA,  
ILJA SKOČEK

**Source** Zdroj: Department of Architecture  
IH SAS Archives



The aesthetic effect of the inserted ceilings, in contrast with the minimalist abstract treatment of the walls and floors, is offset by various accents in the form of custom-designed furnishings and artworks.<sup>43</sup> Several artworks were directly integrated into the building's fabric, most notably the stained glass on the windows along the formal staircase, the work of op-artist Milan Dobeš.<sup>44</sup> The exterior public space in front of the Trade Union House is formed as a raised stone plinth softened by the surrounding vegetation; additional design elements are the monumental lighting columns by Jozef Vachálek or the flag standards by the three architects of the complex.

The third stage of construction culminated in the realisation of the whole, with each section representing a different approach to the conceiving of space. Concentration on simplicity and clarity of an orthogonal layout plan formed the determining factor in the spaces of the first (office) stage, while the second stage added special touches to the concept of the right-angled grid through differently scaled or shaped spaces, ending in the complex spatial plan of the main cultural-social section, where the orthogonal grid is deliberately relativised or even disregarded. In parallel as the space changes, so does the conception of movement through it: from direct through free, almost undirected, and finally into the clever scenography directing motion in the complex's final part. Precisely the same method of introverted organisation of a complex whole can be found in the late works of Alvar Aalto, like the cultural centre in Wolfsburg (1953) or the previously mentioned Finlandia congress centre.

THE CONGRESS HALL DURING  
THE 16TH CONGRESS OF THE  
COMMUNIST PARTY OF SLOVAKIA,  
25. 3. 1981

VELKÁ KONGRESOVÁ SÁLA POČAS  
16. ZJAZDU KSS, 25. 3. 1981



FIRST CONGRESS OF THE  
MOVEMENT VPN "PUBLIC AGAINST  
VIOLENCE", 27. 1. 1990

PRVÝ ZJAZD HNUTIA VPN,  
"VEREJNOSŤ PROTI NÁSILIU",  
27. 1. 1990

Sources Zdroje: TASR



## The Opening of the Trade Union House and its Gradual Ideological Emptying

Construction of the largest trade-union social condenser in Slovakia took over two decades. In the words of its director, Igor Mitterpach, the new object should "meet the tasks ensuing from the ideological-educational and cultural work of the ROH" and adapt itself to the "demands of individual age groups of Bratislava's working population to act, to the widest extent, on forming their socialist consciousness".<sup>45</sup> All the same, the revolutionary charge of the early Soviet ideas of the trade union as a social condenser, shaping the New Soviet Man, had long expired. At the start of the 1980s in Slovakia, all that remained were meaningless official ceremonies and rhetoric.

Even under construction, the Trade Union House served as an instrument for meeting the regime's political goals, not in the form of the ideological training of the working masses, but as an example of the success of the authoritarian regime. Interest from the ruling Communist Party is confirmed not only by the unusually rapid (for the era) realisation of the final stage, which lasted a mere three years, but equally the dramatic increase in the budget during the final project phase or the personal visits of the First Secretary of the Slovak Central Committee, Jozef Lenárt, during construction or at the building's opening.<sup>46</sup> This latter event took place with great ceremony on 13 February 1981. Soon after, the complex hosted two large-scale events that trenchantly illustrate the social situation in Czechoslovakia. At the end of March 1981, the large congress hall witnessed the annual congress of the Slovak Communist Party, bringing together the leading powers in political life. In May, the politicians were followed by the most widely attended popular music event in Slovakia, the "Bratislava Lyre" festival, including not only stars from across the East Bloc but also

Billie Preston from the USA.<sup>47</sup> These two events staged in the Trade Union House match the imposing official status of the building, combining a program of high-level political actions with popular mass culture. Yet the spaces within the complex could be used well by more intimate formats, from experimental theatre through panoramic cinema screenings, children's theatre, science and technology exhibits, or a wide range of regular courses and activities.

The last attempt at an ideologically motivated shaping of the complex was the installation of the last monumental artwork in 1988: a bust of the trade union functionary František Zupka, to mark the naming of the entire square after him, created by one of the most favoured sculptors of the socialist regime, Ján Kulich. The architects Konček, Skoček and Titl designed the sculpture's base, which in its height and overall form softened the excessive dimensions of the figure.<sup>48</sup> Indeed, the history of the artistic decoration of the Trade Union House, which involved both "prominents" of the system and artists from the unofficial scene, provides a clear picture of the internal divisions within socialist Czechoslovakia in the system's final years.

However empty and meaningless the rituals of the Communist Party and the ROH may have been, they could not damage the architectural or functional value of the building.<sup>49</sup> The Trade Union House genuinely met the goal of serving as a generator of social life, culture, or education. As such, it is hardly paradoxical that the main hall of the complex was the site of the first assembly of the "Public against Violence" movement, the main force in the democratic changes in Slovakia in 1989.<sup>50</sup>

### Reflection on the ROH House

The first major expert analysis of the completed complex was published by the journal *Projekt, revue slovenskej architektúry* in July 1981. On twenty pages, it analysed in detail the structural, layout, and functional qualities as well as the interior furnishings and artistic decoration. Quotations were provided by the complex's architects and many specialists. In the words of one elder statesman of Slovak architecture, Štefan Lukačovič, "the operational, spatial, and architectonic aims of the building were met to the greatest possible extent".<sup>51</sup> Jozef Huntier, as an expert on cultural buildings, stated that the work faithfully reflected the requirements of modern architecture, such as the "multipurpose use of hall spaces, spatial connections, creation of larger operational units, linking of interior and exterior, colour harmony in spaces, a human scale, suitable artistic shaping of interiors and exteriors, shaping of the building's surroundings, etc".<sup>52</sup> According to art historian Karol Kahoun, the realisation "formed an important element in new and inspiring designs, primarily through the cultivated harmonising of architecture and artistic detail, particularly accentuated in the interior".<sup>53</sup> Finally, engineers František Ohrablo and Peter Černík, discussing the inserted ceiling of the main hall, noted that it was a "unique, original, and in its final effect quite simple ceiling insert with an exceptionally good artistic appearance".<sup>54</sup> After completion, the Trade Union House was awarded the State Prize of the Ministry of Construction and Technology, but failed to win the most prestigious architectural award, the prize of the Union of Slovak Architects: in 1981, this award went to Milica Marcinková and Eleonóra Sopková for their House of Culture in Bojnice. In itself, the elevation of a small-scale building over an enormous complex tellingly illustrates the growing exhaustion with gigantic Late Modernist conceptions, as well as the cautious emergence of post-modern critiques into the Slovak architectural scene.

Less than 20 years after completion, the ROH House became a major object for research into 20th-century architecture in Slovakia. As a significant work of Late Modernism, it appeared in all publications addressing the architectural heritage of the century only recently elapsed. It is worth noting the striking differences in the reception of this work by two generations of architectural critics and historians. While the older authors, who shaped their views in the age of the postmodern critique of Modernism, were largely neutral towards the building, the younger counterparts, viewing it with a greater chronological distance, viewed it unambiguously positively.<sup>55</sup> Matúš Dulla and Henrieta Moravčíková, the first authors to provide a full-scale, comprehensive evaluation of all 20th-century architecture at the start of the new millennium, drew attention to how the building makes visible the paradigm shifts under way in architectural discussions. In the Trade Union House complex, they wrote, it is clear to see how the architects "slowly abandoned the old modernist idea of free-flowing space and the breakage of traditional compact urban fabrics, to return to a more traditional understanding of space".<sup>56</sup> At the same time, they admitted that an "exhaustion from the great concepts of these years brought about a cold reception of this architecture", predicting that this built legacy would "need to wait for its more objective evaluation, separating its

inner values from what was damaged by the deformations of its age”.<sup>57</sup> Dulla and Moravčíková also arranged for the work’s inclusion in the Register of Modern Architecture, presenting a selection of the most valuable achievements of modern architecture within Slovakia.<sup>58</sup>

At the start of the 21st century, this monumental complex also captured the attention of international experts. It was given a place in the unique survey *Eastmodern*, the first volume to present Slovakia’s Late Modernist architecture to the world public.<sup>59</sup> In 2013, the Faculty of Architecture at the Slovak Technical University in Bratislava held the first retrospective exhibition of the Konček – Skoček – Titl collective, in which the authors presented as their most significant work none other than the Trade Union House.<sup>60</sup> Yet an even greater recognition from the national architectural community was given to the same authors in 2016, when they jointly received the Emil Belluš Prize for their lifetime oeuvre in architecture.<sup>61</sup> The organisation DOCOMOMO International placed the Trade Union House, as a significant document of modern architecture in Slovakia, in its international register in 2015. And in the spring of 2020 the channel RTVS broadcast a series of documentaries, *Ikony*, dedicated to the leading creators of modernist architecture in Slovakia. One of the episodes focused on Ilja Skoček, in which the Trade Union House was mentioned for the first time not only as one of the leading works of Late Modernism in Slovakia – but also as a key example of architectural heritage under threat.<sup>62</sup>

### **From Programmatic and Physical Degradation to Deliberate Liquidation**

The new political and social conditions after 1989 had, at first, relatively little influence on the functioning of the Trade Union House. The complex continued to serve its intended purposes, and since its spatial and technical qualities remained unmatched by any other building in the city, it was almost permanently in use. At the start of the 1990s, the panoramic cinema even underwent modernisation, becoming the first in the country to acquire a Dolby system. Even then, however, the building’s owner gradually reduced its activities as a union and gave increasing space to commercial use. The foyers became occupied with various small businesses, with provisional setups that degraded the original imposing spatial designs. And restructuring of the trade union organisation and the transferral of the entire complex to the ownership of its “Unified Property Fund” brought about a gradual change of the building’s use and eventually its sale. First to be sold off was the social-educational wing of the former House of Technology, adapted as a supermarket. At the start of the 21st century, though, the greater part of the complex remained in the possession of the Unified Property Fund. The building was in good technical condition and, outside of standard maintenance, required no major interventions – though in fact less and less such maintenance was being applied. And increasingly, the functioning of the complex was overshadowed by the loss of its original unified programming direction, and the absence of an ideological motivation on the part of the union to keep up the building. Indeed, the day-to-day functioning lacked any kind of vision. Influenced by this situation, the district of Bratislava-Nové Mesto voiced interest already in 1999 of purchasing the largest cultural-social complex in the city for itself. However, the Unified Property Fund found the offered price too low. Nor did the sale take place later in 2005, when a purchase offer was made by the Bratislava municipal government along with other districts. At this time, the proposed purchase price was 200,000,000 Slovak crowns, with mention made of the need for additional investment of 100,000,000 crowns for reconstruction. Even then, however, there were “comments that the spaces of the Trade Union House do not need reconstruction, ... but even more so good management in the organising the enterprise”.<sup>63</sup>

In the end, no public body managed to purchase the complex. All the same, the views of the public and local government officials on the values of the former Trade Union House began to grow more favourable. The district assembly of Bratislava-Nové Mesto agreed in 2008 to list Istropolis as a landmark on the district level.<sup>64</sup>

It was only in 2017 that the building’s original owner sold it, to a private entity represented by the investment alliance of two development companies, Immocap and YIT.<sup>65</sup> The media termed this transaction as the “developers’ deal of the year”, but expressed a certain scepticism since neither the purchase price nor the sales conditions were ever made public.<sup>66</sup> And the programmatic and physical degradation continued even after the change in ownership. Insufficient maintenance made itself evident on the exterior cladding of the individual sections of the complex as well as the interior. The new owner did not adapt the complex into a well-functioning urban cultural and congress centre, a role that it could still meet – but instead the reverse. In the middle of 2020, it

made public a plan to demolish the entire complex and replace it with new construction. Paradoxically, the core of the new structure was planned as a congress centre. This decision was defended by the developer in terms of the poor physical condition and the inability of the Trade Union House to be matched to current conditions. Other reasons that Immocap cited as justification included the results of its architectural competition, where the victor was the international studio KCAP. However, the company has never made public the conditions of the competition, the assignment, the participants, or even the evaluation criteria – despite its regular transmission of the development plans to the public through all possible communication channels.<sup>67</sup> Part of the developer's strategy was also an attempt to arrange the authorship rights with the complex's three architects, offering financial rewards if they relinquished all authorial rights.<sup>68</sup>

In the same year that the Istropolis complex was sold into private ownership, an "Initiative for a National Cultural and Congress Centre" appeared.<sup>69</sup> By 2020, the Initiative gained a promise of state support for a maximum sum of 60,000,000 euros. It required, though, offering several alternatives for the location and design of the centre. Several developers entered the competition for the subsidy, including Immocap. The proposed core of the new congress centre should, in the wording of the initiative, be a "main hall with balcony and the possibility of division into smaller halls, with a total capacity of seating at around 3000 places."<sup>70</sup> The existing Trade Union House does not meet this criterion, which its owner used as one of the main arguments for its demolition.

### Engagement of the Academic Community: Save Istropolis!

Along with other members of the academic community, both authors of the present study drew attention to the need to protect the Trade Union house as early as April 2019, when the new owner demolished the base of the sculpture in the entrance space for the cultural-social section.<sup>71</sup> DOCOMOMO Slovakia, which has long been active in investigating and evaluating 20th-century architecture, immediately submitted a proposal for declaring the complex a national heritage site.<sup>72</sup> The Slovak Heritage Institute (PÚ SR), as the body responsible for the process of declaring this status, did not respond despite repeated appeals for over a year.<sup>73</sup> Only in mid-December 2020, in other words 20 months after the submission of the proposal, did DOCOMOMO Slovakia receive a communication from the Slovak Heritage Institute in which it stated that the proposal was an "object of long-term investigation" and that the institute was working on all its aspects.<sup>74</sup> Oddly, by the start of November 2020, the commission for evaluating the heritage fund of the Institute had already recommended granting the complex of the Trade Union House protected status.<sup>75</sup>

The evasive responses from the Slovak Heritage Institute as well as the media campaign from the developer of Nový Istropolis aiming to cast doubt on the professional stances of the academics from DOCOMOMO finally led to the announcement of a petition, "Save Istropolis".<sup>76</sup> The initiators addressed the petition to representatives of the public institutions with direct authority on the development of the situation on the ground. At the same time, the petition hoped to address the wider public and awaken an interest not only in the specific building but also the architectural heritage of the second half of the 20th century in general. The petition was signed by the end of October 2021 by over 10,500 signatories and was supported by many publicly visible figures in various areas of cultural and social life.<sup>77</sup>

The launching of the petition sharpened the conflict between the petitioners and the building's owner. The developer accelerated the conflict with the involved academics and members of the public within the media into the form of a cultural war between democracy and totalitarianism, drawing upon the standard narratives and strategies encountered by efforts at preserving postwar modernist heritage in all post-socialist countries. In addition to the anti-Communist principle, in which the developer simplistically interpreted the architectonic forms of the building as a materialisation of the totalitarian regime, these mostly consisted of arguments of the building's age and the health-damaging properties of its materials. In support of its arguments, it also used that of the vox populi, creating its own public opinion surveys with suggestively formulated questions, also regularly used in defending the demolition of similar "Communist monstrosities".<sup>78</sup> One admitted innovation in their approach was the strategy of casting doubt on the building's value through quotations of earlier scholarly texts that were more critical of it.<sup>79</sup> This misuse of academic discussion was also aimed at undermining the authority of the experts who had initiated the petition. Understandably, the voluntary activism of DOCOMOMO could not compete with the professionally managed media pressure from the developer.<sup>80</sup>



Most of the individuals addressed in the petition reacted. The first to arrange a meeting with representatives of the petition committee was the then acting director of the PÚ SR, Radoslav Ragač. During the discussion, though, he merely repeated the ambiguous position of the office, while repeatedly appealing to the need for a greater historical distance and the risk presented to the institute in declaring buildings in private ownership as national heritage sites.<sup>81</sup> This stance appears notably unconvincing when considering the nearly two-year-long process of examining the building's value on the part of the PÚ SR. And it is even more surprising when we consider the context of the conclusions of the international conference on protection of late 20th-century architectural heritage organised by the institute in cooperation with the Institute of Constructions and Architecture at the Slovak Academy of Sciences as far back as 2008: to cite, "Special attention should be devoted to those works that date conceptually from the more politically tolerant 1960s. These form a cultural layer in which the national architectural scene emerged from ideological isolation, approached a European level, and created several buildings that were internationally noteworthy. In parallel, they were a manifestation of the authentic national architectural culture, and several of them should be given the status of symbols of the national past."<sup>82</sup>

The second in the series to meet with members of the petition committee was the lord mayor of Bratislava, Matúš Vallo. He expressed doubts of his possibilities to protect the building, but also recommended initiating a meeting between the petition committee and the developer. Mayor Vallo appealed to the representatives of both sides to work towards achieving consensus in their discussion; however, the developer rejected any negotiations by stating that it had already put too much time and resources into the project.<sup>83</sup>

In May 2021, representatives of DOCOMOMO met with the district mayor of Bratislava-Nové Mesto, Rudolf Kusý. The meeting was held at the district town hall with several public employees in attendance, yet despite the understanding expressed by the district mayor for the initiative, it did not lead to any binding promise to protect the building from demolition.<sup>84</sup>

The only respondent with whom the petition committee failed to meet up until the end of 2021, despite repeated requests, was Slovak Culture Minister Natália Milanová. The Ministry communicated with representatives of DOCOMOMO only in writing, arguing that the protection of the building was in the competence of the Slovak Heritage Institute.

With this in mind, we can say that the active professional public repeatedly encountered a series of identical arguments. The main reason offered was that the process of assigning heritage status should have started before the building went into private ownership, since declaring a privately owned building as protected was allegedly problematic. A second argument relied on the legislative possibilities of the construction office, which was said to be unable to prevent the demolition of a building, even if it was convinced of its value, if the owner presented all the documentation necessary for this step. The third argument addressed the land-use planning documentation, which in the form of the Bratislava master plan did not sufficiently specify the values in the area, even though the building was located in a territory termed stabilised. The only clearly expressed standpoint was that of the Ministry of Environmental Protection, which in the process of evaluating the environmental impact of the proposed investment provided a series of objections and returned the plan for revision.<sup>85</sup>

From all the twists and turns listed above, it is evident that what has primarily spurred the professional and academic community to civic activism is the lax approach of the responsible government agencies, which insufficiently (or directly fail to) meet their legally stipulated obligations, while simultaneously ignoring the findings that these experts have achieved through their knowledge and research.<sup>86</sup> Yet direct confrontation of political power on the part of the active academic community, even if supported by voices from the public, is often regarded not only as a "departure from the ivory tower" but even as a politicisation of research and a weakening of the academic independence of the scholars. Such a simplistic understanding of "impartiality", though, ignores that not reacting to the destruction of a specific layer of historic heritage is itself a political stance. Objecting to demolition can, in fact, be regarded as part of scholarly discourse, in which earlier findings regarding the value of an architectural work are communicated to the public and new findings added within the theory of heritage protection. Direct engagement of the academic community in this process can allow for a better understanding of the mechanism of the acceptance (or refusal) of the values of postwar modernism.<sup>87</sup>



**THE ADVERTISEMENT SIGNS OF SMALL BUSINESSES OCCUPYING THE FOYER AFFECTED THE FRONT FAÇADE, C. 2000.**

REKLAMNÉ PŮTAČE DROBNÝCH PODNIKATELOV OKUPUJÚCICH FOYER OVPLYVNILI AJ VYZNENIE FASÁDY, OKOLO ROKU 2000.

**Photo** Foto: Ľubomír Titl



**THE DILAPIDATED STATE OF THE BUILDING IN NOVEMBER 2021**

OPUSTENÝ STAV OBJEKTU V NOVEMBRI ROKU 2021

**Photo** Foto: John Aintken

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The effort to save architectural heritage in the case of the Bratislava Trade Union House also brought up several interesting findings that might in the future influence similar processes. These concern the public mood with relation to architectural heritage, as well as the strategy for disseminating scholarly findings and their application in the practice of heritage protection or environmental creation generally. The public reaction to the petition showed a growing sensitivity towards architectural questions and architectural heritage, including that from the late 20th century. It is clear that the negative connotations associated with the architecture of the undemocratic Communist regime are gradually retreating in favour of a more objective view of this heritage as part of collective memory. In this aspect, it is necessary to stress specifically the importance of popularising research results, which need to be transmitted on an ongoing basis and not all at once in the event of a threat to a specific building. This would form the best way to prevent the misuse of the research process against its authors or its investigated subjects. On the other side, it is in fact the emotions connected to the threat toward built heritage that contributed to this otherwise obscure “preservationist” theme becoming a question for the wider public.

One important lesson to be gained from the efforts to protect the Trade Union House is likewise the need to build trust between the public and the academy. Academic research is financed from public funds and is not motivated by profit or any other short-term goals. Justifiably, it should be assumed to be unbiased. Indeed, the independence of academic knowledge is a strong argument supporting the position of the research community in public discussions.

Another major finding is that of cooperation between the academic community and public bodies of state and municipal government. Contact between the academy and governance should be permanent, not on a chance or specific basis. There is no doubt that findings about architectural heritage should be immediately communicated to heritage authorities, local government, and in particular their planning and construction offices. The standard method for this communication is through the scholarly and professional press. Yet it now appears that this is insufficient. One solution could be arranging working committees for this purpose that would bring together representatives of government and the academy, which would address this issue on a regular basis.

Most of these mentioned recommendations are, more or less, implemented in the process of preserving architectural heritage. Academic researchers investigate, publish, or popularise; communication with the political sphere exists, and there are even extant working committees. What the situation with the Trade Union House reveals all too clearly, though, is that without an engaged approach and the personal courage of those involved, it remains a toothless formality. And, all too likely, the construction office of the Nové Mesto district will eventually issue a demolition permit for the building: the investor agreed already in November 2021 with representatives of the district on the conditions that would allow for such a step.<sup>88</sup>

- 1 Though in legislation the ROH was officially a voluntary organisation, in many enterprises its membership was automatic and mandatory. Viz. *Act no. 68/1951 Coll., Act on Voluntary Organisations and Assemblies*. slov-lex.sk [online] 1951 [Accessed 25. 11. 2021]. Available at: <https://www.slov-lex.sk/pravne-predpisy/SK/ZZ/1951/68/19580701.html>
- 2 "The Revolutionary Trade Union Movement has an exceptional task in gaining the awareness and allegiance of the wide masses of the working people and in realising the politics of the Czechoslovak Communist Party" – so the subordinate position of the ROH was explicitly confirmed in 1981 by Gustáv Husák, then Czechoslovak president. HUSÁK, Gustáv, 1985. Z prejavov a statí súdruha Gustáva Husáka. *Práca*. 22. 5. 1985.
- 3 After 1951, the ROH also administered workers' sickness and injury insurance.
- 4 For the extent of the ROH's construction investment, viz. e.g., BUDOVIČ, Milan, 1968. Rozhovor o investičnej výstavbe ROH. *Odborár*. 19(7), p. 18.
- 5 BOKOV, Anna, 2017. Soviet Workers' Clubs: Lessons from the Social Condensers. *The Journal of Architecture*. 22(3), p. 404, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13602365.2017.1314316>
- 6 SIEGELBAUM, Lewis H., 1999. The Shaping of Soviet Workers' Leisure: Workers' Clubs and Palaces of Culture in the 1930s. *International Labor and Working – Class History*. 56, p. 81.
- 7 Viz. historian Lewis Stigelbaum, who investigated the theme of workers' houses using the example of the Likachev Palace of Culture (ZIL) in Moscow designed by the brothers Vesnin. Siegelbaum, L. H., 1999, pp. 81 – 84.
- 8 JETSONEN, Sirkkaliisa, 2000. Humane Rationalism – Themes in Finnish Architecture of the 1950s. In: *20th Century Architecture Finland*. Museum of Finnish Architecture – DAM, p. 89.
- 9 TOSTÖES, Ana, 2016. Towards a New Monumentality: The Creation of an Urban Cultural Landscape. *Architektúra e-urbanizmus*. 49(3 – 4), pp. 240 – 256.
- 10 TUOMI, Timo, 2000. Aspects of the 1960s Architecture as Social Activity and Art-form. In: *20th Century Architecture Finland*. Museum of Finnish Architecture – DAM. p. 110.
- 11 PORPHYRIOS, Demetri, 1978. Heterotopia, a study in the ordering sensibility of the work of Alvar Aalto. In: *Alvar Aalto*. London: Academy Editions, pp. 8 – 9.
- 12 E.g., TITL, Ľubomír, 1962. Fínsko 1962. *Projekt*. 4(11 – 12), pp. 253 – 258. TITL, Ľubomír and TITLOVÁ, Lýdia, 1964. Fínsko 1964. *Projekt*. 6(10), pp. 235 – 237.
- 13 In the personal library of Ľubomír Titl, for example, there were several dozen titles on Scandinavian architecture, including books specifically focused on interpretation of the work of Alvar Aalto.
- 14 The project was created in 1942, but the building was approved for use only in 1946 – now for the needs of the trade union. More on this topic in SZALAY, Peter, BOGÁR, Michal, HABERLANDOVÁ, Katarína, BARTOŠOVÁ, Nina and KRISTEKOVÁ, Laura, 2019. *Vojnová Bratislava 1939 – 1945*. Bratislava: Marenčin PT, pp. 83 – 87.
- 15 KUSÝ, Martin, 1957. Nad súťažnými návrhmi na výstavbu Domu odborov a techniky v Bratislave. *Československý architekt*. 16(3), p. 126.
- 16 Viz. MORAVČÍKOVÁ, Henrieta, SZALAY, Peter, HABERLANDOVÁ, Katarína, KRISTEKOVÁ, Laura and BOČKOVÁ, Monika, 2020. *Bratislava (Un)planned City*. Bratislava: Slovart, pp. 460 – 461.
- 17 The composition of the competition jury was not made public in the sole longer text about the competition published in the journal *Architektúra ČSR*.
- 18 Kusý, M., 1957, p. 127.
- 19 Kusý, M., 1957, p. 127.
- 20 Kusý, M., 1957, p. 127.
- 21 In addition to this team, the jury also awarded another third prize to the design by Jozef Lacko and a reduced third prize to the design by the team of Vladimír Deděček, Rudolf Miňovský and Juraj Švaniga.
- 22 Kusý, M., 1957, p. 130.
- 23 Kusý, M., 1957, p. 132.
- 24 The most extensive research on the three architects has been conducted by Katarína Andrášiová
- 25 KUSÝ, Martin, 1960. Dom odborov a techniky v Bratislave. *Architektúra ČSR*. 19(10), pp. 685 – 690.
- 26 Note, e.g., the cable-supported roof of the Pasienky sports hall in the shape of a hyperbolic paraboloid (Jozef Chovanec, 1958 – 1962) or the lens-shaped academic hall of the University of Agriculture in Nitra (Vladimír Deděček, Rudolf Miňovský, 1959 – 1965).
- 27 KUSÝ, Martin, 1960. Dom odborov a techniky v Bratislave. *Architektúra ČSR*. 19(10), p. 687.
- 28 Kusý, M., 1960, p. 688.
- 29 KONČEK, Ferdinand, SKOČEK, Ilja and TITL, Ľubomír, 1981. Komplex Domu odborov, techniky a kultúry v Bratislave ukončený novostavbou Domu Revolučného odborového hnutia, Slovo autorov. *Projekt*. 23(7), p. 10.
- 30 The fountain was completed in 1980, with design assistance provided by architects Konček, Skoček and Titl. ŠTRAUCH, Štefan, 1980. Bratislavské fontány – včera dnes a zajtra. *Technické noviny*. 27(10), p. 3.
- 31 In 1975, the modernisation of the tramline was completed, including a new pedestrian underpass. In the same year, the then chief architect of Bratislava, Dušan Kedro, decided on the location of the market building. (Ivan Matušík, 1983). Moravčíková, H., Szalay, P., Haberlandová, K., Kristeková, L. and Bočková, M., 2020, p. 484.
- 32 Konček, F., Skoček, I. and Titl, L., 1981, p. 4.
- 33 Konček, F., Skoček, I. and Titl, L., 1981, pp. 10 – 11.
- 34 In the design from the end of 1976, the architects were working with the motif of a row of columns inserted into rectangular cuts into the façade of the cultural-social block. By the introductory design for DOTK II from August 1977, the columns have vanished, and the basic façade form is a pure monumental dentil pattern. The strikingly shifted line of the main cornice accentuates the play of light and shadow on the new façade. Archive of Ľubomír Titl.
- 35 The marble tiling was supplied by Cuba as payment in kind for its debt to Czechoslovakia.
- 36 According to the recollection of architect Juraj Hermann, the architects visited the Finlandia Talo centre along with the ROH leadership during their preparation of the final stage of the Trade Union House at the end of the 1970s. Personal correspondence of the authors with Juraj Hermann, 7. 12. 2021.
- 37 Konček, F., Skoček, I. and Titl, L., 1981, p. 11.
- 38 The experimental theatre space had a variable seating capacity (360 to 480 seats), an audiovisual centre with two lecture halls (capacity of 180 and 70 seats), or even a press room and rehearsal area for dance groups featuring a large mirrored wall.
- 39 According to the recollection of Juraj Hermann, the architects "did the conception and final study together, then they divided the entire project into three roughly equal parts and then democratically pulled out of a hat which one would work on each part independently." HERMANN, Juraj, 2016. *Moje spomienky na „Lordov“*. p. 56. In: Andrášiová, K. (ed.). *Konček, Skoček, Titl*. Bratislava: Spolok architektov Slovenska, p. 66.
- 40 A mathematical model of the fins was prepared by Ing. V. Matiaš with the Slovak Academy of Sciences, and the suspended structure was formed by engineers M. Macek and F. Koller. OHRABLO, František and ČERNÍK, Peter, 1981. Rubrika detail. *Projekt*. 23(7), p. 22.
- 41 The electro-acoustical solution for the hall was a truly pioneering realisation in Czechoslovakia. It was designed by the engineers Herchel, Kubenka and Krňan; realised in the Tesla Bratislava works under the supervision of Ľubomír Mackovič. TASR press release, *Dom ROH v Bratislave pred dokončením*, 14. 11. 1981. source: <https://vtedy.tasr.sk/zoom/323654/view?page=1e-p=separatee-tool=info>. The aluminium fins were calculated following the mathematical model of V. Matiaš and plasma-cut in the S. M. Kirov Works in Tlmače. The anodizing took place in the SNP Aluminium Works in Žiar na Hronom.
- 42 Freshly cooled air is forced into the hall from underneath the "comfortable and functional seats with folding desk attachments" designed by the Italian firm Destro. HUNTIER, Jozef, 1981. Zreteľ na požiadavky kultúrno osvetových budov. *Projekt*. 23(7), p. 14.
- 43 In addition to the main hall, it is worth recalling the functional inserted ceiling in the experimental theatre space, designed by Ilja Skoček. Among the furnishings, we should mention the seating in the main foyer by Ivan Slameň, the seats in the main hall and cinema, or the stackable tables in the conference halls, all products of the Italian firm Design Destro, along with the information system by Ladislav Čisárik and M. Korkošová.
- 44 Also directly integrated was the portal of the VIP entrance by Alexander Vika.
- 45 GRÜNEROVÁ, O., 1981. Nový dom odborov v Bratislave. Rozhovor s Igorom Mitterpachom. *Odborár*. (10), p. 28.
- 46 Ľubomír Titl stated that while in the first stage of the project (the high-rise office block, the House of Technology and the House of Children), the investment was 80,000,000 Kčs, while for DOTK II it was almost 450,000,000. TITL, Ľubomír, 1984. Skúsenosti s predprojektovú a projektovú dokumentáciu Domu ROH v Bratislave. In: *Projektovanie a výstavba kultúrno spoločenských zariadení*. Zborník z celoštátnej konferencie. Bratislava: Dom techniky ČSVTS Bratislava, pp. 80 – 81.
- 47 TASR press release. 24. 5. 1981. <https://vtedy.tasr.sk/zoom/327174/view?page=1e-p=separatee-tool=info>
- 48 In its dimensions, the bust approached those of one of Kulich's earlier works, the bust of Lenin in Žilina,

claimed as the largest in the world. ŠTRAUS, Tomáš, 1992. *Slovenský variant moderny*. Bratislava: Pallas.

**49** At the end of the 1980s, the experimental stage gained a new multifunctional seating area by Imrich Vaško, Josef Ondriaš, and Juraj Závodný, regarded as an early instance of deconstructivism in Slovak architecture. In: MORAVČÍKOVÁ, Henrieta and DLHÁNOVÁ, Viera, 2011. *Divadelná architektúra na Slovensku*. Bratislava: Divadelný ústav, pp. 229 – 233.

**50** The meeting was held on 27. 1. 1990. TASR.sk [online] 1990 [Accessed 12. 12. 2021]. Available at: <https://vtedy.tasr.sk/zoom/464335/view?page=1&p=separate&tool=info>

**51** LUKAČOVIČ, Štefan, 1981. Maximálne naplnené zámery. *Projekt*. **23**(7), p. 14.

**52** HUNTIER, Jozef, 1981. Zreteľ na požiadavky kultúrno-osvetových budov. *Projekt*. **23**(7), p. 15.

**53** KAHOUN, Karol, 1981. Výtvarné dotvorenie Domu ROH v Bratislave. *Projekt*. **23**(7), p. 21.

**54** OHRABLO, František and ČERNÍK, Peter, 1981. Architektonický detail.... *Projekt*. **23**(7), p. 23.

**55** Compare the texts of Matúš Dulla, Jana Krivošová, Elena Lukáčová and those of Katarína Andrášiová. ZALČÍK, Tibor – DULLA, Matúš, 1982. *Slovenská architektúra 1976 – 1980*. Bratislava: VEDA – vydavateľstvo SAV, p. 55.

**56** DULLA, Matúš and MORAVČÍKOVÁ, Henrieta, 2002. *Architektúra 20. storočia na Slovensku*. Bratislava: Slovart, pp. 227 – 228.

**57** Dulla, M. and Moravčíková, H., 2002, p. 228.

**58** Register modernej architektúry oA HÚ SAV [online] 2013 [Accessed 12. 12. 2021]. Available at: <https://www.register-architektury.sk/sk>

**59** HURNAUS, Hertha, KONRAD, Benjamin and NOVOTNY, Maik, 2007. *Eastmodern*. Wien: Springer Verlag, p. 183, [www.ostmoderne.com](http://www.ostmoderne.com)

**60** ANDRÁŠIOVÁ, Katarína and BARTOŠOVÁ, Nina, 2013. *Konček Skoček Titl*. Exhibition catalogue. Bratislava: FA STU.

**61** Andrášiová, K., 2016.

**62** RTVS.sk, *Ikony (Ilja Skoček)* [online] 2020 [Accessed 12. 12. 2021]. Available at: <https://www.rtvs.sk/televizia/archiv/16250/241724>

**63** (juh), 2005. Mesto prejavilo vážny záujem o kúpu Istropolisu. *Bratislavské noviny*. 28. 7. 2005, p. 1.

**64** Bratislava Nové mesto [online] 2012 [Accessed 12. 12. 2021]. Available at: <https://www.banm.sk/subor-objektov-domu-odborov-a-kulturneho-zariadenia-istropolis/> In 2020, Istropolis was also listed as a landmark by the City of Bratislava.

**65** YIT sold in 2019 its 50% share to Immocap, viz. YMBA.sk [online] 2019 [Accessed 12. 12. 2021]. Available at: <https://www.yimba.sk/novy-istropolis/yit-ustupuje-od-projektu-prestavby-istropolisu>

**66** VAŠUTA, Tomáš, 2017. Developerský obchod roka? Odborári rozhodujú o predaji Istropolisu. *Trend online* 24. 4. 2017. *Trend.sk* [online] 2017 [Accessed 12. 12. 2021]. Available at: <https://reality.trend.sk/realitny-biznis/developer-sky-obchod-roka-odborari-rozhoduju-predaji-istropolisu/2> ; VALČEK, Adam, 2017. Istropolis predávajú odborári čudne. Cena nemusí byť kľúčová. *Sme.sk* [online] 17. 5. 2017 [Accessed 12. 12. 2021]. Available at: <https://ekonomika.sme.sk/c/2053105/istropolis-predavaju-odborari-cudne-cena-nemusi-byt-klucova.html>.

**67** Publicity for “Nový Istropolis” appeared in the form of paid PR texts or advertisements in professional journals as well as regular weeklies or dailies. The developer is also highly active on online social media.

**68** According to information from Lýdia Titlová, the request was for agreement on intervention in the building. According to the wife of Ferdinand Konček, the other two authors agreed, Konček was the only one not to sign. From personal conversations with Lýdia Titlová and Ľubica Končeková, summer 2021.

**69** The civic initiative emerged from the activities of popular musicians Martin Valihora, Peter Lipa and Anton Popovič in cooperation with the organisation Globsec, which organises one of the most famous congress events in Bratislava. *Kulturnecentrum.sk* [online] 2017 [Accessed 12. 12. 2021]. Available at: <https://kulturnecentrum.sk/>

**70** *Kulturnecentrum.sk* [online] 2017 [Accessed 12. 12. 2021]. Available at: <https://kulturnecentrum.sk/#developer>

**71** The plinth was removed for the temporary placement of a fanzone during the world hockey championships. Letter from DOCOMOMO Slovakia to the general director of the Slovak Heritage Institute, 15. 4. 2019.

**72** Proposal for declaring the Complex of the former Trade Union House (now Istropolis) in Bratislava as a national cultural monument, addressed to the general director of the Slovak Heritage Institute, 15. 4. 2021.

**73** Communication from DOCOMOMO

Slovakia addressed to the SHI, 17. 8. 2020, and communication addressed to the general director of the SHI, 9. 12. 2020.

**74** Response to the proposal for declaring the complex of the former House of Trade Unions and Technology in Bratislava as a national heritage site, and response to the request for information addressed by DOCOMOMO Slovakia, 16. 12. 2020.

**75** Minutes of the Committee for Evaluating the Heritage Fund – heading 8. 11. 2020. A positive stance on the heritage value of the building was also issued by the Regional Heritage Institute in Bratislava already by 8. 9. 2020.

**76** The petition was announced 8. 4. 2021. In addition to the director of the SHI, Matej Ragač, it was addressed to Culture Minister Natália Milanová, Bratislava mayor Matúš Valo and district mayor of Bratislava-Nové Mesto Rudolf Kusý. The petition committee was: Henrieta Moravčíková, Peter Szalay, Katarína Haberlandová, Michal Bogár, Katarína Andrášiová, Laura Krišteková, Monika Bočková / DOCOMOMO Slovakia, Andrea Londáková, Arkitekt SAR/MSA and Jakub Lipták / iniciatíva Ľudská mierka. *Peticie.com* [online] 2021 [Accessed 12. 12. 2021]. [https://www.peticie.com/peticia\\_zachranu\\_istropolisu](https://www.peticie.com/peticia_zachranu_istropolisu)

**77** A short video was posted on the Facebook page of DOCOMOMO Slovakia Stop búraniam modern. [online] 2015 [Accessed 12. 12. 2021]. [https://www.facebook.com/DOCOMOMOSlovakia/?ref=pages\\_you\\_manage](https://www.facebook.com/DOCOMOMOSlovakia/?ref=pages_you_manage)

**78** From the PR articles on the survey, a large part of Slovakia's news media published such results as Ipsos Findings: Nový Istropolis Preferred by Four out of Five in Bratislava, 27. 5. 2021. *Aktuality.sk*, [online] 2021 [Accessed 12. 12. 2021]. online: <https://www.aktuality.sk/clanok/894470/prieskum-ipsos-novy-istropolis-preferuju-viac-ako-styri-patiny-bratislavcanov/>

**79** Repeatedly in its reactions to the statements of DOCOMOMO, the investor attempted to argue against the building's value using earlier texts by researchers, as in its reaction to the petition announcement: *Nový Istropolis: Odpoveď Immocap-u k otvorenému listu organizácie DOCOMOMO Slovakia* 21. 7. 2021. *Archinfo.sk* [online] 2021 [Accessed 12. 12. 2021]. <https://www.archinfo.sk/diskusia/blog/architektura-vseobecne/novy-istropolis-odpoved-immocap-u-k-otvorenemu-listu-organizacie-docomomo-slovakia.html>

**80** *Communications from the developer were professionally managed by a PR agency*. Katedra komunikácie.sk [online] 2021 [Accessed 12. 12. 2021]. <https://www.katedra-komunikacie.sk/>

[katedrakomunikacie.sk/ako-vysvetlujeme-preco-bratislava-potrebuje-novy-istropolis/?utm\\_source=linke-din](https://katedrakomunikacie.sk/ako-vysvetlujeme-preco-bratislava-potrebuje-novy-istropolis/?utm_source=linke-din)

**81** The meeting took place 29. 4. 2021 with the participation of the director of the PÚ SR Radoslav Ragač, Michal Bogár, Katarína Haberlandová, Henrieta Moravčíková, Peter Szalay.

**82** *Závery medzinárodnej vedeckej konferencie Hodnoty a perspektívy ochrany architektúry a urbanistických štruktúr 50. a 60. rokov 20. storočia*. PÚ SR, ÚSTARCH SAV, Nitra 2008 Pamiatkový úrad SR [online] 2011 [Accessed 12. 12. 2021]. <http://www.pamiatky.sk/sk/page/konferencia---50-60-te-roky-20-stor>

**83** The meeting took place 14. 6. 2021 in the building of the Bratislava City Hall. The Immocap representatives finally agreed that they would at least view alternative designs for the complex prepared by students of the Faculty of Architecture. At the meeting at the Slovak Technical University, though, the same situation was repeated, with the developer stating that it no longer had time to spend on this question.

**84** The meeting took place 20. 5. 2021 with the presence of district mayor Rudolf Kusý, Peter Vaškovič, Tatiana Pífková, Anton Gábor, Michal Bogár, Henrieta Moravčíková and Peter Szalay.

**85** Documents evaluating the environmental impact of the planned project are available on the website of the Environmental Protection Ministry. *Enviroportal.sk* [online] 2021 [Accessed 12. 12. 2021]. <https://www.enviroportal.sk/sk/eia/detail/novy-istropolis>

**86** Representatives of DOCOMOMO Slovakia had a similar experience in protecting the department store and the hotel on Kamenné námestie in Bratislava from demolition. MORAVČÍKOVÁ, Henrieta, 2008. *Modern Architecture in Time and Appropriate Conditions for its Sustainability: The Kyjev Hotel and the Former Prior Department Store, 1960 – 2008*. *Architektúra & Urbanizmus*. **42**(3 – 4), pp. 181 – 196.

**87** For a similar perspective in the case of the social sciences, viz. e.g., JACKSON, Jen. M., SHOUP, Brian and HOWELL, H., Williams, 2021. Why Civalically Engaged Research? Understanding and Unpacking Researcher Motivations. *PS: Political Science & Politics*. **54**(4), pp. 721 – 724. doi:10.1017/S1049096521000822

**88** sita, 2021. Investor Nového Istropolisu nakoniec ustúpil, podmienky Nového Mesta splní a postaví novú sálu. *webnoviny* [online] 27. 11. 2021 [Accessed 12. 12. 2021] <https://www.webnoviny.sk/vrealitach/investor-noveho-istropolisu-nakoniec-ustupil-podmienky-noveho-mesta-splni-a-postavi-novu-salu/>