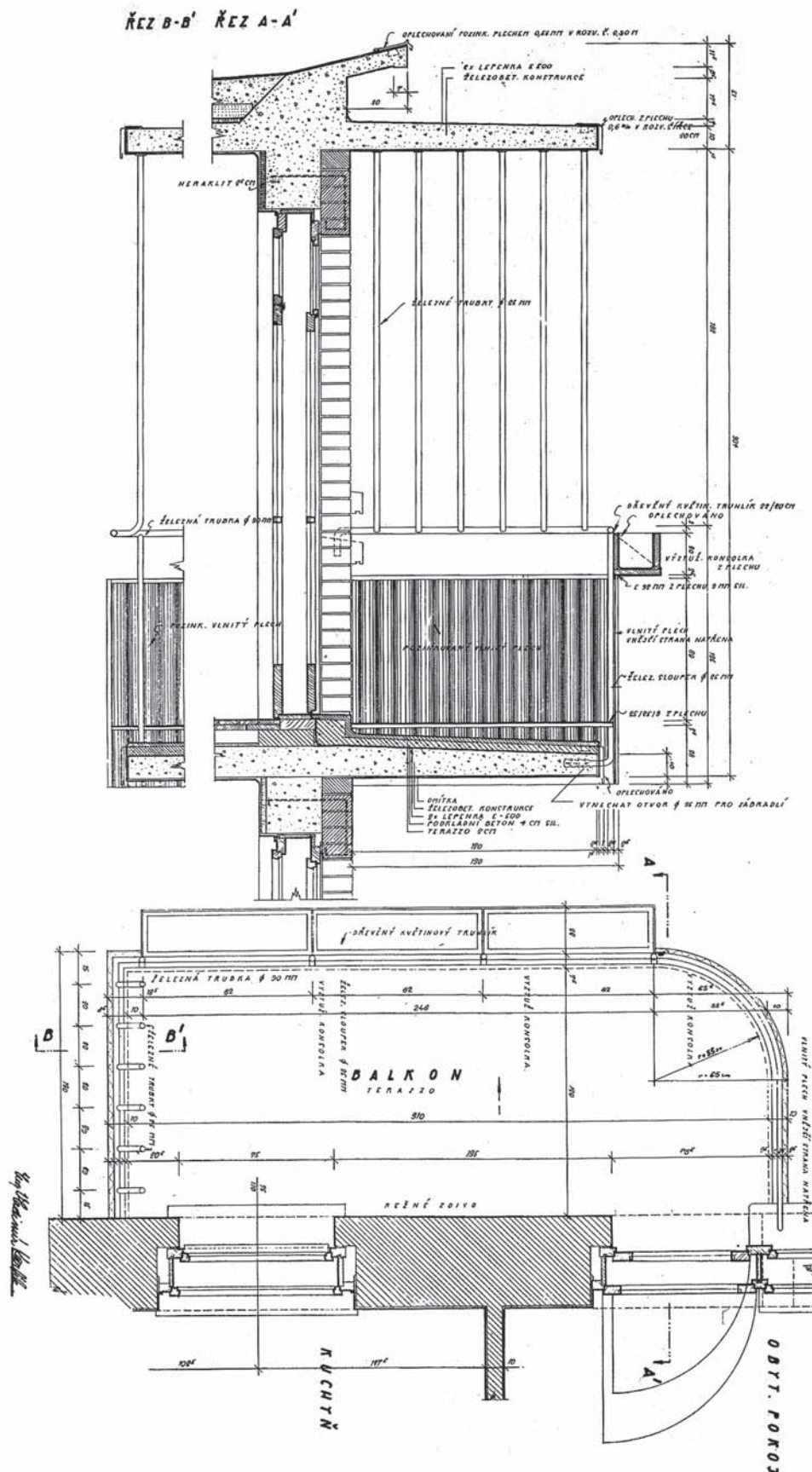


STRUCTURAL DRAWING OF THE BALCONY DETAIL WITH BALUSTERS MADE OF GALVANIZED CORRUGATED SHEETS, DESIGNED BY VLADIMÍR KARFÍK FOR THE 3-STORY APARTMENT HOUSES IN ZLÍN

DETAIL KONŠTRUKCIE BALKÓNA NAVRHNUTÉHO VLADIMÍROM KARFÍKOM PRE 3-ETÁŽOVÉ BYTOVÉ DOMY SO ZÁBRADLÍM Z POZINKOVANÉHO VLNITÉHO PLECHU

Source Zdroj: Standardní činžovní dum Zálešná (Karfík), Fond Baťa, a. s., Zlín, sign. XV, i. n. 877 e. Moravský zemský archiv v Brně, Státní okresní archiv Zlín



Karfík's "Swedish" Balconies: The Shift from the Garden City Conception to Scandinavian Inspiration in the Context of Baťa Company Housing in Zlín

Karfíkove „švédske“ balkóny: posun od koncepcie záhradného mesta k severskej inšpirácii v kontexte bývania v baťovskom Zlíne

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Štúdia cez prvok balkóna upriamuje pozornosť na odozvu severskej architektúry a myšlienok sociálneho štátu v návrhu 3-podlažných bytových domov od architekta Vladimíra Karfíka, ktoré boli realizované tesne po skončení 2. svetovej vojny firmou Baťa v Zlíne. Hoci z hľadiska celkového kontextu súvisiaceho výskumu sa balkón nemusí javiť ako zvlášť podstatný, je prvkom, ktorý indikuje architektonickú inšpiráciu severskými bytovými domami a zároveň je jedným zo symbolov demokratizácie modernej spoločnosti. V neposlednom rade, cez balkón je možné nepriamo čítať jeden z aspektov prítomných v Karfíkovej tvorbe, ktorému nebýva venovaná väčšia pozornosť. Nejde tu totiž výlučne o otázku prevzatia konkrétnej estetiky či formy – skutočnosti, ktorá je viac-menej známa –, alebo len o konštrukčné a materiálové riešenie spomenutého typizovaného prvku, ale o to, že sa architekt zaujímal a svojou tvorbou aktívne reagoval na aktuálne úlohy architektúry. Pri presadzovaní rôznych inovácií, črte typickej pre Karfíkovu tvorbu, neignoroval ani sociálne aspekty, aj keď sa k nim vo svojich textoch či rozhovoroch osobitne nevyjadroval.

Zaostrenie na balkón je pritom možné chápať ako určitú paralelu k prístupu sociológa, filozofa a teoretika kultúry Georga Simmela, ktorý si často vyberal zdanlivo nepodstatné detaily života, aby cez ne reagoval na významnejšie témy. Inšpirovanie Simmelom je vzhľadom na skúmanú tému opodstatnené aj z dôvodu, že Simmel býva považovaný za jedného z prvých veľkých teoretikov modernity. Aj keď v kontexte sociálnych politík, ktoré šli ruka v ruke s modernou architektúrou, je balkón všetko len nie nepodstatný, doteraz publikované práce týkajúce sa Karfíkovej tvorby, ako aj povojnovej výstavby zlínskych bytových domov, sa tejto téme špeciálne nevenovali. Balkón sa v štúdií stáva tiež prvkom, cez ktorý možno zdôrazniť význam, ktorý zohrávajú individuálne – a neraz menej viditeľné – snahy architektov pri presadzovaní konkrétnych inovácií. Platí to aj v kontexte histórie firmy Baťa, keď sa bežne vyzdvihuje jej podiel na zlepšení životných podmienok jej zamestnancov. Pri interpretácii autorského vkladu jednotlivých „baťovských“ architektov sú z pochopiteľných dôvodov zdôrazňované zjednocujúce črty

baťovskej architektúry – pretože tak možno upozorniť na jej historické a kultúrne hodnoty – čím sa však rola jednotlivých tvorcov dostáva do úzadia.

Trojpodlažné bytové domy inšpirované architektúrou severských krajín, sú dôvodom dotknúť sa aj témy sociálnej politiky firmy Baťa práve preto, že severské krajiny výrazne pokročili v presadzovaní ideí sociálneho štátu už v medzivojnovom období. Napriek tomu, že k realizácii bytových domov došlo až po vojne, úvahy Huga Vavrečky – čelného predstaviteľa firmy – písané začiatkom štyridsiatych rokov poukazujú na to, že model nájomného bytového domu by sa napokon presadil v prostredí baťovského Zlína bez ohľadu na povojnový vývoj politickej situácie. Dôvodom prehodnotenia tejto myšlienky – ktorú presadzoval už Le Corbusier v územnom pláne z roku 1935 i keď radikálnejším spôsobom – bola skutočnosť, že bytový dom ponúkal perspektívu racionálnejšej výstavby, ako aj efektívnejšieho riešenia technickej infraštruktúry než dovtedy uprednostňované individuálne rodinné domy.

Takže, akokoľvek sa zvykne sociálny prínos aktivít firmy Baťa vyzdvihovať, jej ekonomické záujmy ostávali v popredí. Navyše, firma sa už v koncepcii individuálneho bývania odklonila od ideovej podstaty modelu Záhradného mesta Ebeneзера Howarda, ako upozorňuje aktuálna štúdia historičky umenia Venduly Hnídkovej. Avšak, v snaženiach jednotlivých baťovských architektov – vrátane Vladimíra Karfíka – možno vidieť podobnú motiváciu, aká viedla ich severských kolegov, v snahe vytvoriť ľuďom lepšie životné podmienky pre ne samotné, nie ako prostriedok k ďalšiemu cieľu. Zároveň tým, že Karfíkova tvorba je viac o snahe navrhovať účelnú architektúru, než o snahe zaujať výrazom svojich návrhov, môže práve uvedomenie si architektovejho prístupu prehĺbiť súčasné poznanie Karfíkoveho diela, a tým prispieť k jeho väčšiemu doceneniu. Z tohto dôvodu štúdia stavia do popredia viaceré nové, aj zdanlivo okrajové skutočnosti, ak je predpoklad, že dokážu návrh 3-podlažných bytových domov interpretovať v nových súvislostiach, či už sa tieto opierajú o archívne materiály alebo o analýzu dobových publikácií, alebo o poznatky z aktuálnych historicko-teoretických prác.

Karčík bol na základe svojich jazykových schopností a zahraničných pracovných skúseností s takými osobnosťami ako Le Corbusier – s ktorým sa opätovne stretáva v Zlíne – alebo Frank Lloyd Wright, prizývaný vo firme Baťa na stretnutia so zahraničnými architektmi, ktorí do Zlína prichádzali. Bol aj vnímavý voči dobovým trendom a nebál sa zavádzať inovatívne riešenia. Materiály v archíve oddelenia architektúry Múzea mesta Brna dokladajú, že Karčík sa o bytové domy v zahraničí zaujímal už v medzivojnovom období. Navštívil sídlisko Siedlung Heimat v Berlíne, ako aj Cité de la Muette v Drancy a koncom tridsiatych rokov sa dostal aj do Štokholmu. Hoci nie je isté, či boli medzi architektúrou, ktorú počas svojho pobytu navštívil, aj bytové domy, v jeho osobnom fonde je viacero reprodukcí zo zahraničnej tlače, ktoré architektov záujem o tému dokladajú. Séria záberov obsahuje príklady z Dánska a Švédska, často s fasádami z rezného muriva a s podobnými balkónmi, aké Karčík neskôr použil vo svojich návrhoch.

Severské projekty bytových domov, o ktorých písali aj československé architektonické periodiká hlavne po vojne, boli realizované za pomoci rôznych iniciatív sociálneho bývania a angažovaním sa sociálne orientovaných architektov. Sociálne idey boli pritom severskou spoločnosťou vo všeobecnosti akceptované a nová výstavba vyvrátila negatívnu povesť, ktorá nájomné domy v minulosti sprevádzala. Nepodarilo sa to len vďaka samotnej kvalite architektonických návrhov, ale aj preto, že sami politici vnímali potenciál prepojenia modernej architektúry s ideami sociálneho štátu. K udalostiam, ktoré toto prepojenie medzi architektmi posilnilo, bola aj výstava v Štokholme v roku 1930, ako aj manifest *acceptera*, ktorý o rok neskôr organizátori výstavy (architekti Gunnar Asplund, Sven Markelius a ďalší) vydali.

V Karčíkovej zbierke sa okrem záberov s realizáciami popredných severských architektov nachádza aj šesť fotografí zachytávajúca všednejšie situácie, ktoré poukazujú na dobre riešené vybavenie domov, ako aj niektoré inovatívne prvky. To

naznačuje, že sa Karčík nezaujímal len o výnimočné architektonicko-estetické alebo stavebno-konštrukčné otázky, ale aj o to, ako sa architektúra dokáže vysporiadať s každodennými úkonmi a prispieť tak k zvýšeniu kvality bývania. Jeden z prvkov, ktorý Karčík prevzal, bol práve balkón so zábradlím z pozinkovaného vlnitého plechu, aký si všimla aj oficiálna delegácia českých architektov na ceste po Fínsku, Dánsku a Švédsku v roku 1946 a v článku uverejnenom v časopise Architektura ČSR mu dala prívlastok „švédsky“. Nebola náhoda, že sa balkón stal pre avantgardných architektov jedným zo symbolov demokratizácie spoločnosti. Tak ho vnímali v dvadsiatych a tridsiatych rokoch 20. storočia architekti, historici a teoretici architektúry, ako napríklad Sigfried Giedion, Bruno Taut alebo Nikolaus Pevsner. Zatiaľ čo v minulosti balkón zdobil reprezentatívne fasády palácov, zdôrazňoval *piano nobile* a akcentoval tým aj sociálnu triedu, ktorej prislúchal, v modernom bytovom dome sa stáva prvkom „pre všetkých“, plniacim navyše dôležitú ozdravnú funkciu.

Karčíkov návrh 3-podlažných bytových domov upútal od prvého momentu nadštandardnou kvalitou a sám Karčík tento projekt považoval za jednu zo svojich najúspešnejších zlínskych realizácií. Poznanie, že kvalita bývania nekončí dobre riešenými pôdorysmi bytov, a citlivý prístup k detailom bez potreby byť za každú cenu originálny dali vzniknúť architektúre, ktorej prívetivý výraz podporuje farebný kontrast žltého náteru vlnitého plechu zábradlí balkónov voči červenej tehlovej fasáde. Zatiaľ čo sa tehlová fasáda zvykne pri tomto projekte vyzdvihovať ako prvok reprezentujúci typickú zlínsku estetiku, sú to práve balkóny, ktoré zdôrazňujú vklad Karčíka ako jednotlivca. Balkón zároveň spája dva svety nielen v zmysle umeleckého (architektonicko-estetického) riešenia a praktického života – tak ako ucho vázy v jednej zo Simmelových esejí –, ale aj v zmysle súkromného a verejného sveta a naopak – dom sa cez balkóny načahuje von a vonkajší svet vstupuje dnu, čím čiastočne pokračuje idea obytných štvrtí v zeleni, aj keď je už v pozmenenej podobe.

Through the element of the balcony, this study endeavours to bring attention to the echo of Scandinavian (particularly Swedish and Danish) architecture and ideas on the welfare state in the designs of 3-storey apartment houses by the architect Vladimír Karčík, realized soon after World War Two by the Baťa corporation in Zlín. In the wider context, this discussion of the balcony may not appear particularly important; yet apart from it forming the physical element that most evidently manifested Scandinavian inspiration, it is a democratic symbol of modern society. Not least significantly, it is through the balcony that it is possible to read one aspect present in Karčík's work that is given scant attention. For it was not merely the appropriation of a specific aesthetic or form (as is more or less known) or a solution of construction and material of the given typified element (a problem that was certainly important for Karčík); rather, a question of the architect's interest in, and in his work actively responding to, what was asked of architecture in that day. In pursuing a variety of innovations, features typical of Karčík's work, he was mindful of the social aspects of architecture, even though he may not have stressed this dimension in his writings and conversations.

Moreover, concentrating on the balcony can be seen as a sort of parallel to Georg Simmel's approach, often choosing some apparently inessential detail of life to explain "more general intentions".¹ Although, in the context of the social policies that went hand in hand with modern architecture, the balcony is anything but inessential, the published work on Karčík, including the post-war construction of the Zlín apartment buildings, has not given this topic particular attention. Simmel's inspiration can also be considered justified because he was not just a philosopher and

theoretician of culture, but also a sociologist – regarded as the first great theoretician of modernity.² Indeed, in connection with his essay “The Handle” we might find a certain – albeit imperfect – semantic parallel between his vase and the balcony.³ Like the vase, a balcony belongs “in two worlds at one and the same time”: its function is practical as well as artistic and symbolic. If Simmel writes of the handles as the element that connects the vase to the world not limited to art, yet apart from their practical purpose simultaneously being part of the artistic form as a shape, then balconies too are not merely a functional but also often a compositional element of facades, and in architectural history have a symbolic meaning not to be overlooked.

These ideas bring us to the crux of this study: to emphasize the significance of individual – and often relatively undetectable – efforts by architects in pursuing specific innovations. This aim also holds true in the context of the Baťa corporation’s history. It is customary to stress its share in improving living conditions in the areas where the company located its factories, in its attempting to provide its labourers adequate housing with a higher quality than was standard. The contributions by individual architects employed by Baťa are sometimes less apparent, as their work is often so interpreted as to highlight the attitudes of founder Tomáš Baťa; indeed, for some projects it has become difficult to confirm beyond doubt a given architect’s authorship or share in conceiving a given design. Focusing on the unifying features in Baťa architecture, epitomized by a maximum effort at economizing, typification, and unification in construction – without detriment to building structural and architectural quality – is what primarily captures its historical and cultural values.

Yet bearing in mind that these values additionally reinforce the myth of Baťa’s corporate social policy, it is appropriate to subject it to critical scrutiny – especially in connection with the architecture of the 3-storey apartment buildings in Zlín directly inspired by Nordic architecture, which in the interwar period had already advanced appreciably in pursuing ideas of the welfare state and projecting them into architecture. Though the apartments were built only after the Second World War had ended and the Baťa concern was nationalized,⁴ their conception is consistent with notions written up during the war by one of the company’s directors and leading managers, Hugo Vavrečka,⁵ so their construction can be seen as a continuation of Baťa policy, rather than a new trend instigated by the changing post-war socio-political situation somehow hermetically separated from the preceding period. While the Baťa firm’s socially conscious tendencies cannot be regarded as totally altruistic since its goal was economic profit, efforts by individual architects demonstrate a motivation similar to that of their Scandinavian colleagues in their attempts to create better living conditions for people as such, rather than for some other purpose.

The same can be said of Vladimír Karfík in his creating the 3-storey apartment buildings. For this reason, it is worthwhile to focus not only on the physical attributes corresponding to this project, but also to examine various evidence that confirms this supposition. We can identify the characteristics of certain architects based on their style, even where this evolves over time – as for example in their frequent use of chosen elements or forms – but with Karfík’s work this is less viable. Though he used some elements recurrently – among them the balconies noted here – it would be difficult to characterize his work based on such stylistic indicators. As a result, many historians have claimed that Karfík simply identified with the vision of the Baťa company that employed him for over 16 years.⁶ Karfík’s work tends to be an effort at designing architecture to meet a purpose, rather than to attract interesting and create an impressive result, hence recognizing his creative attitudes can deepen our appreciation of it. Consequently, this study foregrounds many new findings, even seemingly unimportant, if they can be supposed to successfully interpret a design for multi-storey apartment buildings in contexts that make it possible to see their value in other connections.

The arguments behind these assertions were drawn from the author’s long-term research in the work of the architect Vladimír Karfík, and build on theoretical writings considered relevant to the issue researched, not least on materials obtained through standard methods of historical architecture research: field study and examination of the period’s literature, published texts, and archived materials, mainly in the hitherto unprocessed Vladimír Karfík papers in the archives of the Brno City Museum (known by the Czech abbreviation MMB), Moravian Provincial Archive (Moravský zemský archiv) in Brno, and State District Archive (Státní okresní archiv) in Zlín (SOKA Zlín), as well as the Fondation Le Corbusier in Paris.

The study’s introductory portions focus on the historical background of social housing initiatives that might have inspired the Baťa firm; efforts are made to give critical views towards the



AERIAL VIEW OF THE OBECINY QUARTER (FORMERLY JÚLIUS FUČÍK QUARTER) IN ZLÍN, WHERE THE FIRST 3-STORY APARTMENT HOUSES BY KARFÍK WERE BUILT IN 1946

ZÁBER Z VTÁČEJ PERSPEKTÍVY NA ŠTVRŤ OBECINY V ZLÍNE (PREDTÝM ŠTVRŤ JÚLIUSA FUČÍKA), KDE BOLI V ROKU 1946 VYBUDOVANÉ PRVÉ 3-ETÁŽOVÉ DOMY OD VLADIMÍRA KARFÍKA

Source Zdroj: Krajská galerie výtvarného umění ve Zlíně



STREET VIEW OF THE 3-STORY HOUSES IN OBECINY WITH BAY WINDOWS ON THE NORTHERN ELEVATION AND BALCONIES ON THE WESTERN ELEVATION

ULIČNÝ POHĽAD NA 3-POSCHODOVÉ DOMY V OBECINÁCH S ARKIERMI NA SEVERNEJ STRANE A BALKÓNMI NA ZÁPADNEJ STRANE

Photo Foto: Nina Bartošová, 2022

company's social policy. Drawing on ideas from Hugo Vavrečka that indicated plans to depart from the policy of detached single-family housing, the study brings attention to Vladimír Karfík's specific foreign inspirations, including selected Scandinavian countries and welfare state concepts. Later portions concentrate on the balcony element, both functionally and as a symbol of modern residential architecture. Further, it is shown the balcony element can be regarded as Karfík's personal contribution, characterizing his approach represented in his 3-storey apartment houses in Zlín.

Utopia and Reality – Social Initiatives for Worker Housing

The magnitude and the means through which the Czech industrialist Tomáš Baťa successfully realized his entrepreneurial vision, and how it translated into construction, was unique. Although he was not the first to attempt such work, and much of what he applied already existed elsewhere, the scale and the consistent ability to implement his vision in diverse places internationally, likely alongside his courage to follow through, was a stimulating force for the leading architects

he approached. With their help, Baťa earned a reputation not only for economic success making use of Fordist and Taylorist work management, but equally for architecture. Here, his built legacy is characterized on one hand by the emblematic manufacturing halls and support buildings with unfinished facades executed in reinforced concrete in standardized modules of 6.15 x 6.15 m, and on the other by individual family houses built among greenspaces using the pattern of gardening colonies. These latter dwellings must have been extremely attractive for the labourers given the chance to live in them, as they offered a living standard well beyond what they had known, as Baťa would often build his “satellites” in poorer areas.

However, efforts to improve working classes' housing quality had existed from the earliest times of the industrial revolution. Industrialization-spurred social changes induced many progressive utopian socialists early in the 19th century (such as Owen, Fourier, and Cabet), to formulate their visions in detail, leading in turn to their – at least partial – realization. The French philosopher Charles Fourier was convinced that the dissemination of his communal building concept (*phalanstère*) could change all human society.⁷ Alongside the progressive visions, some less ambitious projects were realized: in 1825 a Belgian mining company built 2-storey houses for its workers at Grand-Hornu.⁸ In urban settings, joint-stock companies were founded with reduced profit participation, sharing in constructing apartment houses with a “minimum” of rental units. Though the 1847 building by the architect Charles E. Lang in Liverpool is considered the first, similar buildings went up in the same period in Berlin and Vienna.⁹

At the same time, the concept later favoured by Baťa of single-family houses among greenery persisted. One example noted by the architectural historian Lukáš Beran in his book *Kapitoly z historie bydlení* is the *Société Mulhouseinne des Cités Ouvrières* initiated in 1853 by wallpaper manufacturer co-owner Jean Zuber the younger, for which the architect Emille Muller designed a quadruplex house situated in four small gardens in checkerboard pattern, similar to the later arrangement of houses in the Baťa colonies. In Bohemia, an effort was made at copying the Mulhouseinne model in 1869 by the Prague *Společnost pro stavbu dělnických obydlí*, founded by Smíchov factory owners. World expositions popularized examples of worker houses in London (1851) and Vienna (1873); building society legislation in Bohemia advanced the construction of worker housing, including the *Act on self-supporting associations* (1874), and the *Act on exemptions for buildings with healthful and inexpensive housing for workers* passed in 1902, specifying technical housing standards in detail.¹⁰

The Baťa Company's Socially Conscious Tendencies

For the design and urban plan of Zlín's socially motivated residential architecture, an important inspiration was Ebenezer Howard's Garden City. Yet, as noted in a current study by the art historian Vendula Hnídková, the Garden City principle as Howard understood it was incompatible with the conception worked out in 1915 by Tomáš Baťa and the architect Jan Kotěra. While the “garden city was to be a self-contained and self-governed community, the new settlement in the vicinity of the Baťa factory was, in contrast, to be acquired, financed, and ruled solely by the company and its owner”. The difference lay not only in governance and financing, but also in “misapprehension of the social objectives incorporated in Howard's scheme” translating into a final plan that retreated from the originally contemplated civic amenities that would have fulfilled the community's comprehensive needs in a new town model – including community farms – with ultimately only housing being constructed. This is one reason Hnídková maintains that in reality there was no significant social change, regardless of the positive feedback from families moving into the Baťa houses.¹¹

It is, however, appropriate to mention that even the English towns built to Howard's concept – such as Letchworth, constructed by First Garden City, Ltd, or Welwyn, designed by Raymond Unwin and Richard Barry Parker – failed to fulfil Howard's original aim, as they “almost instantaneously became sanctuaries of middle classes seeking refuge from the ravages of the industrial metropolis, and particularly, from the proximity to poor people”, as Abraham Akkerman comments in *The Urban Archetypes of Jane Jacobs and Ebenezer Howard*.¹² It was these visible divergences of realized projects from the original Garden City concept as presented in Howard's *To-Morrow: A Peaceful Path to Real Reform* from 1898 (later published as *Garden Cities of To-morrow*) that led to the misunderstanding and subsequent criticism of the Garden City principle by Czech avant-garde leftists influenced by the theoretician Karel Teige.¹³

The scale and quality of housing that the Baťa firm succeeded in providing its employees was admirable, but as the historian Ondřej Ševeček recalls in *Zrození Baťovy průmyslové metropole*, those

who rented Baťa's residences had no protections if they lost their employment. Though a law to protect tenants existed in Czechoslovakia, in 1931, as Ševeček writes, when rental flats made up 71.3 % of total apartments in Zlín, there was only "a marginal portion... in the category of apartments with protected tenancy". The reason was that most did not meet the established criteria, which in practice meant that employees who were given notice had to vacate their houses within a week.¹⁴ Still, Ševeček holds that in assessing housing policy it is important to see things in "the actual social and demographic context", i.e. taking into account the boom times in Baťa, when they had to provide a great many flats in short order.¹⁵

Thus, even if Ševeček states that some opinions of housing in the town assumed "the spirit of superhuman conceptions as to the character of Zlín's urban form, which after 1989 were once more sanctified with the 'Baťa myth'", he remains convinced that there was more to the effort at rationalizing construction than just the Baťa company's interest in maximizing profit. Primarily, the aim was an attempt at building as many flats as possible while ensuring an ample standard of living and construction quality. For this reason, Ševeček assesses positively how the firm resolved the housing issue, since the overall percentage of employees provided for was high, even though the lowest-ranking and unskilled labourers were often dependent on unsuitable provisional housing.¹⁶

One might argue that it was precisely the interest in increased profit that prompted the interest in hiring, and therefore by necessity housing, large numbers of people. In other words, not pure altruism but rather a mutually beneficial model, as the firm was giving people work, and it must be remembered that in providing housing, the enterprise was gaining far greater control over its employees.¹⁷ From the current perspective, it is a distortion to idealize Baťa's social consciousness, as did Antonín Čekota, the head of the Baťa press department.¹⁸ On the other hand, one must read with caution inter-war publications that opposed it with harsh criticism. One example was the reporter Rudolph Philipp, whose activity was sponsored by a group with certain economic interests allied with an association of German shoe manufacturers, intended to complicate the Baťa company's entry to their local market.¹⁹

Departure from Single-Family Houses

Another indication of the difficulty in determining the extent to which the Baťa firm was motivated purely by social consciousness are the ideas expressed by Hugo Vavrečka, one of its directors, who along with Dominik Čipera became its highest-ranking managers after Tomáš Baťa's death in 1932. In unpublished materials from 1942 – 1943, Vavrečka addressed issues he expected would have to be resolved after the war. One important area he considered was that of resettlement reforms that would ensure a higher standard of living. Clearly, he saw housing as more than a basic need to be satisfied on a slightly improved level; it was an important component of a new urban design that could enable the elevation of human society. Vavrečka believed the construction of towns and housing developments ought to be initiated mostly by public jurisdictions, and only partially – in industrial estates – were industrial concerns to take part in them. The process ought not to be an activity driven by monopoly financial (speculative) capital, and industry should be prepared by obligation – not merely based on goodwill – to house its workers "in a way corresponding to the current age".²⁰

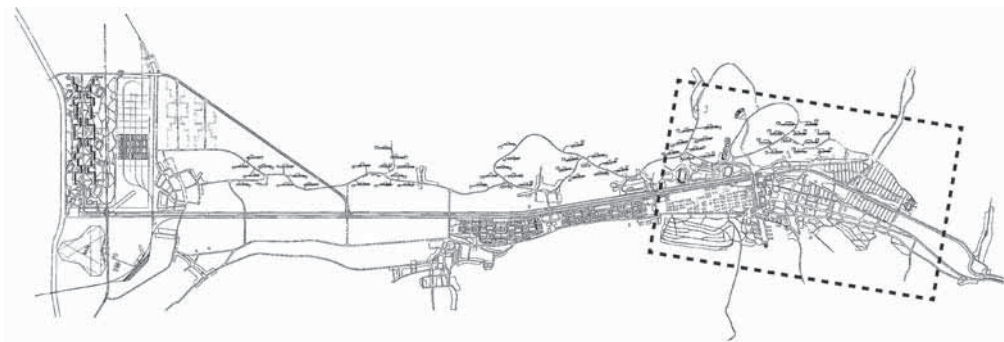
Here Vavrečka was plainly aware of international trends, which led him even to reconsider the firm's existing principles. He was convinced employees should be offered an alternative to single-family dwellings, providing greater variability that suited different family types.²¹ While Vavrečka emphasized social and societal grounds – highlighting the positive aspects of social coexistence, even as he criticized the disjointed nature of a garden suburb without any focal point that would facilitate vibrant interaction – there were also economic reasons motivating them to depart from the family house as the only suitable housing choice (setting aside the residence halls intended for unmarried men and women). The apartment building represented an opportunity for more rational construction, as well as greater efficiency for heating and other technical infrastructure. At the same time, it offered a goal of sustaining the quality of living that apartment buildings with sufficient spacing and a maintained garden housing complex could achieve, in contrast to historical central-city rental buildings.²² Thus, Vavrečka's thinking suggests that, regardless of the political situation emerging after the war, apartment construction would, in the future, be acceptable in Baťa's Zlín.

In fact, Le Corbusier had given priority to the idea of apartment buildings already in 1935, in the town plan he developed for the Baťa company. This French architect of Swiss origins took

PROPOSAL FOR THE URBAN DEVELOPMENT OF ZLÍN ALONG THE VALLEY OF THE DŘEVNICE RIVER BY LE CORBUSIER IN 1935. TO GIVE AN IDEA OF THE AUDACITY OF HIS PLANNING, THE REAL EXTENT OF THE CITY TERRITORY AT THE TIME (COVERED BY THE FOLLOWING IMAGE) IS INDICATED BY THE DASHED LINE.

NÁVRH ROZŠÍRENIA ZLÍNA POZDĹŽ ÚDOLIA RIEKY DŘEVNICE OD LE CORBUSIERA, 1935. PRE PREDSTAVU O ODVÁŽNOSTI JEHO PLÁNOVANIA JE ROZSAH EXISTUJÚCEHO ÚZEMIA MESTA (AKO HO ZACHYTÁVA NASLEDUJÚCI OBRÁZOK) VYZNAČENÝ PRERUŠOVANOU LÍNIU.

Source Zdroj: ZIKMUND, A., DOHNAL, F., KOTÁSEK, J. 1976. Gottwaldov – historie a vývoj Gottwaldovské aglomerace. Architektura ČSR, 35(8), p. 341.



THE 3-STOREY APARTMENT BUILDINGS IN ZLÍN BY VLADIMÍR KARFÍK HIGHLIGHTED IN BLACK (1 – OBECINY, 2 – ZÁLEŠNÁ, 3 – DÍLY), ON THE MAP BACKGROUND BY ARCHITECT STAŠA DEPICTING THE BUILT-UP AREA IN THE YEARS 1945 – 47 (4 – THE OLDEST PART OF ZLÍN, 5 – FACTORY AREA, 6 – AMENITIES, 7 – RESIDENTIAL QUARTERS OF INDIVIDUAL HOUSES)

TROJETÁŽOVÉ DOMY V. KARFÍKA V ZLÍNE ZVÝRAZNENÉ ČIERNOU (1 – OBECINY, 2 – ZÁLEŠNÁ, 3 – DÍLY), NA MAPOVOM PODKLADÉ OD ARCH. STAŠU ZOBRAZUJÚCOM VÝSTAVBU MESTA Z ROKOV 1945 – 47 (4 – NAJSTARŠIA ČASŤ ZLÍNA, 5 – TOVÁRENSKÝ AREÁL, 6 – VYBAVENOSŤ, 7 – OBYTNÉ ŠTVRTE INDIVIDUÁLNYCH DOMOV)

Source Zdroj: Nina Bartošová (underlaid map/podkladová mapa: Mapy Zlína v postupných etapách výstavby, arch. Staša, Fond Bata, a.s., Zlín, sign. XV, i. n. 258 d, MZA Brno, SOKA Zlín)



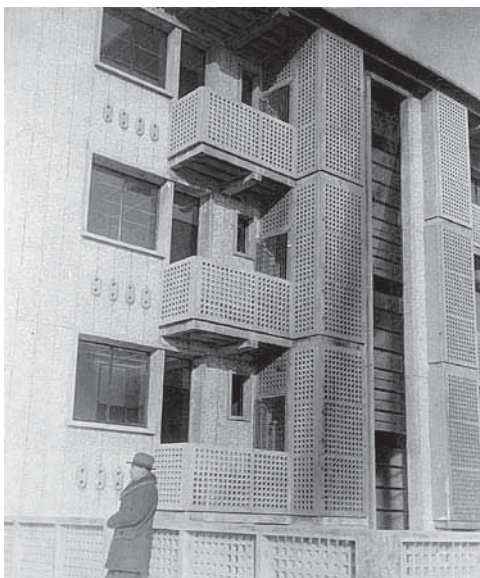
a severe stance against housing based on the garden city model, and after his experience from his travels in the U.S.A. in autumn 1935, in a letter to Jan Baťa, literally called this concept “cancerous”.²³ In this light, it is not surprising that his design pushed for a radical redevelopment of the city, including relocation of the existing manufacturing zone, with an extensive new residential zone north of the river Dřevnice. Evidence of his strong efforts to persuade Baťa firm leadership is provided in his letters to Baťa and Čípera, whom he also sent copies of his book *La Ville Radiuse*, in which he further developed his arguments.

The Fondation Le Corbusier in Paris has likewise preserved several letters to Vladimír Karfík, to whom Le Corbusier refers, along with F.L. Gahura, as good friends, with whom he expressed interest in discussing his proposals. Probably he supposed that Karfík, who had earlier had a three-month residency with him in Paris and (unlike Gahura) knew French well, would help him win over Jan Baťa to his design.²⁴ It seems that he was thinking of a project like *L'unité d'habitation*, first realized in 1947–1952 in Marseille. Le Corbusier's aspiration did not succeed; ironically it was right in Zlín that, in terms of realization, the architect Jiří Voženílek beat him to it by a few years with his own large apartment building (1945–1950).²⁵

**"CITÉ DE LA MUETTE"
DEVELOPMENT IN DRANCY
(1931 – 1934) BY THE FRENCH
ARCHITECTS EUGÈNE BEAUDOUIN
AND MARCEL LODS.**

KOMPLEX CITÉ DE LA MUETTE
V DRANCY (1931 – 1934)
NAVRHNUTÝ FRANCÚZSKYMI
ARCHITEKTY – ZNÁMYMI
MODERNISTAMI – EUGÈNOM
BEAUDOUINOM A MARCELOM
LODSOM.

Source Zdroj: Muzeum města Brna,
oddělení dějin architektury



Karfík's Interest in Foreign Trends

Vavrečka, of course, was not alone in taking up the question of Baťa Company apartment buildings; the architects themselves, in the main, followed architectural and urban trends. Working for a company where collaboration with top architects, including foreigners, was "to an extent programmatic", in the architect's own words,²⁶ Vladimír Karfík was the right person both for communicating with architects abroad and for bringing back innovative foreign solutions. Besides his language abilities, he also had extensive international work experience – apart from Paris, he had worked for Chicago firms and spent 10 months with Frank Lloyd Wright. Moreover, within Baťa, Karfík served as department head within the division for international design – thus continuing in regular contact with foreign influences.²⁷

Apart from the cities abroad that Karfík visited as lead designer – such as East Tilbury where he oversaw its urbanism, Amsterdam where he designed a department store, and Borovo (Yugoslavia) among others – his personal international travels were far more extensive. In the architect's private archives are various photographic negatives suggesting that Karfík had an interest in apartment buildings abroad even between the wars. One photograph identified was of the "Siedlung Heimat" development on Quellweg in Berlin from 1931, built for Siemens employees;²⁸ others are from the "Cité de la Muette" development in Drancy (1931 – 1934) by the French architects – then renowned as modernists – Eugène Beaudouin and Marcel Lods. This housing was an activity of Henri Sellier, the socialist-oriented politician behind the construction of numerous garden cities in suburban Paris; this particular project grew out of a "vertical garden city" concept and the principles of CIAM (International Congresses of Modern Architecture). It comprised a complex of two building types: 10 buildings arranged in rows and 5 fourteen-storey high rise buildings, in a "comb" plan.²⁹

As for Nordic inspiration, it is noteworthy that one place Karfík visited in the late 1930s was Stockholm. Additionally, there exists a thank-you note in the MMB, from the Swedish architect Lars Arborelius dated 3 August 1938, indicating that Karfík gave him a personal tour of Zlín's architecture. Arborelius expressed the hope that Karfík would visit him, but it is unclear whether they met in Stockholm the following month, when Karfík participated in a regional conference as a Rotary International member. However, among the documents Karfík saved from the trip is a note with Arborelius' name and address, over a list of several architectural works – with their architects' names – that Karfík probably visited.

While there are no photographs of this trip to Sweden, or any indication that Karfík was especially interested in its residences, the MMB has an envelope marked "rental houses, mass housing, and hotels" with depictions of Swedish and Danish housing. These are reproductions, as indicated by a screened picture, and the captions on some suggest they come from foreign publications. Among the photographs that Karfík marked on the back with his own monogram are some of residential building architecture typical of Scandinavian countries in the 1930s. Notably, the balconies



COPENHAGEN'S VESTERSØHUS, FROM 1935 – 1939, DESIGNED BY KAY FISKEK AND C. F. MØLLER. FAÇADE DETAIL IN A RECENT PHOTOGRAPH

KODANSKÝ VESTERSØHUS Z ROKOV 1935 – 1939, KTORÉHO AUTORMI SÚ KAY FISKEK A C. F. MØLLER. DETAIL FASÁDY NA FOTOGRAFII ZO SÚČASNOSTI

Source Zdroj: August Fischer, CC BY-ND 2.0. Available at: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/augustfischer/24113015751/>



STORGÅRDEN DEVELOPMENT BY DANISH ARCHITECTS POVLA BAUMANN & KNUD HANSEN. COPENHAGEN, 1935

PROJEKT STORGÅRDEN OD DÁNSKYCH ARCHITEKTOV POVLA BAUMANN A KNUDA HANSENA. KODÁŇ, 1935

Source Zdroj: August Fischer, CC BY-ND 2.0. Available at: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/augustfischer/23219525659>

COOPERATIVE APARTMENT BUILDINGS IN THE FREDHÄLL HOUSING ESTATE IN STOCKHOLM FROM THE 1930S

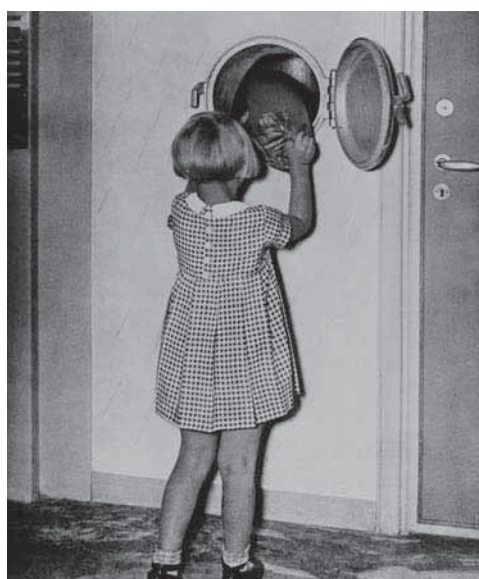
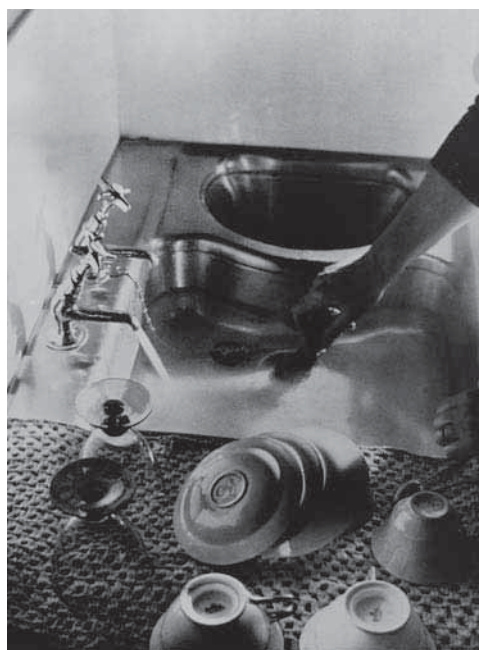
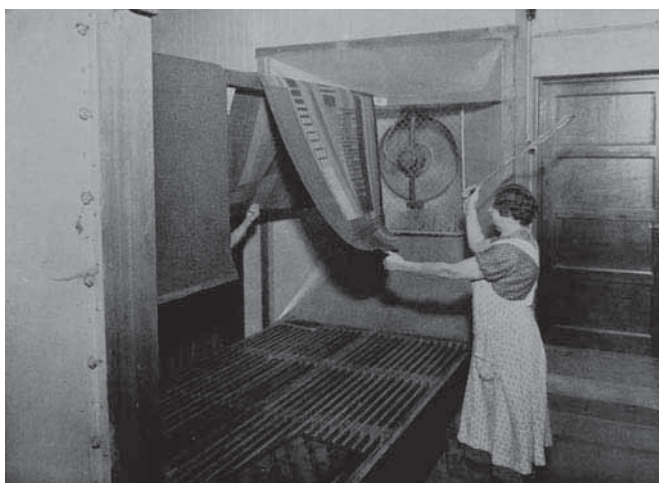
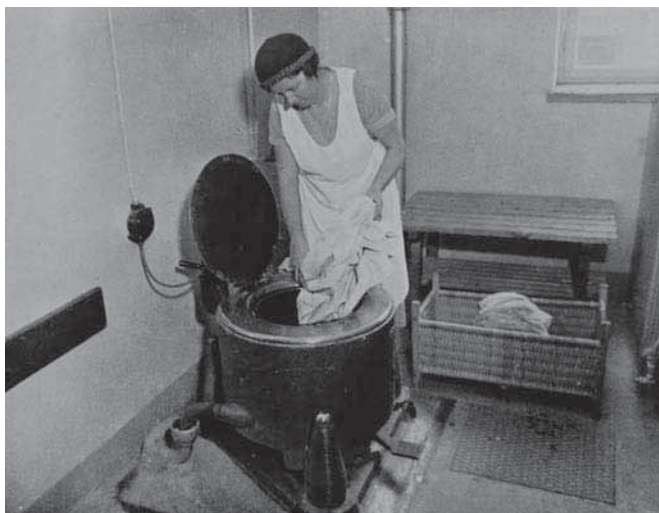
DRUŽSTEVNÉ BYTOVÉ DOMY NA SÍDLISKU FREDHÄLL V ŠTOKHOLME Z TRIDSIATYCH ROKOV 20. STOROČIA

Source Zdroj: Muzeum města Brna, oddělení dějin architektury



projecting from the facades resemble those Karfík later used in his own designs. The facades are mostly of unfinished material – much like Zlín's architecture – but visibly the Nordic buildings typically have gable or hip roofs rather than flat ones.

A bird's eye perspective captures the Copenhagen complex of Bispeparken, acclaimed as Scandinavia's largest. The project came about in 1939 – 1943 at the initiative of the Social Housing Association (FSB) and Kooperative Arkitekter; its historical significance, as described by Danish sociologist Christian Sandbjerg Hansen, lies in its offering, alongside a few similar realizations, an alternative to the then-dominant notion that even in the Nordic countries, suitable housing for a family meant a detached family house with a garden. Hansen adds that, though he was unable to find anyone except socially conscious architects in cooperatives who idealized apartment house living, "the buildings were constructed hand-in-hand with a social imagery widely shared among the



**PHOTOS OF EVERYDAY SITUATIONS
FROM NORDIC HOUSING
PROJECTS COPIED BY KARFÍK**

ZÁBERY VŠEDNÝCH SITUÁCIÍ
Z PROSTREDIA BYTOVÝCH DOMOV
SEVERSKÝCH KRAJÍN, KTORÝCH
KÓPIE SI KARFÍK ZHOTOVIL.

Source Zdroj: Muzeum města Brna,
oddělení dějin architektury

debaters”.³⁰ At the same time, new projects successfully refuted the negative characteristics attributed to older rental apartments in the historic core, regarded as “dangerous, costly and chronically damaging for the social body”.³¹

Adjacent to Bispeparken is a project from another identifiable photograph, of a design by the Danish architects Povl Baumann and Knud Hansen from 1934 – 1935 (with addresses Tomsgårdsvej 70-110 and Storgården). This is not a row of freestanding apartment buildings, but a single 230 m long 5-storey block, slightly oblique at the northern end in keeping with the shape of the street, with “the party walls staggered on plan, so that all living rooms, each equipped with a cantilevered balcony, face south-east. The north elevation is, by contrast, almost flat and its windows are set flush with the outer face of the very utilitarian brickwork.”³² One more identifiable project from Karfik’s collection is Copenhagen’s Vestersøhus, from 1935 – 1939, designed by the major Danish architect Kay Fisker with Christian Frederik Møller (usually called as C. F. Møller); this was not social housing.³³ Stockholm’s Fredhäll, later pictured in the journal *Architektura ČSR*, appears in another reproduction.³⁴

It is noteworthy that six of the fourteen photographs capture quotidian situations, nonetheless revealing the quality of the solutions for the buildings’ amenities as well as certain innovative elements: washing dishes in a double kitchen sink, a little girl placing a bag into a chute opening for rubbish collection at the bottom of the staircase, a woman in the laundry room operating (then quite advanced) electric appliances, and carpet beating on a special frame. Another photograph shows children on a playground near the building. If Karfik found it necessary to make copies even of these “ordinary” scenes, this finding shows his interest was not limited to pure architectural/aesthetic or construction issues but extended to how architecture can address everyday chores and thus raise the quality of living. Although there is no record of this architect having written or spoken directly of Scandinavian architecture – he was not an architect who verbalized his conceptions or expressed himself as to his inspirations – many elements present in it interested Karfik enough for him to incorporate them into his own designs.

Welfare-State Architecture in the Scandinavian Countries

Karfik was hardly alone in Czechoslovakia in his interest in architecture in Scandinavia. After the war, several articles ran in the journal *Architektúra ČSR* that overtly praised it.³⁵ One reason for the increased interest was that during the Second World War, Swedish, Danish, and Finnish journals were the only foreign expert literature available in occupied Czechoslovakia.³⁶ The Nordic countries had a long tradition of architectural periodicals – many of them published from the turn of the 20th century up to the present – and linguistic kinship meant there was lively cultural exchange between them. Annotations from selected parts of these journals appeared regularly in the periodicals of inter-war Czechoslovakia from around the 1930s, when Nordic architecture began to be noticed internationally, i.e. not just during the Second World War. In the 1930s however it achieved a particular status in part because of apartment buildings, which achieved a new level of architectural excellence.

What makes Scandinavian apartment architecture special is not just its architectural qualities per se, but in the connection between modern architecture and notions of the welfare state. It is widely held that the events that reinforced this connection included an exhibition in Stockholm in 1930, and the manifesto *acceptera* that the exhibition organizers – the architects Gunnar Asplund, Wolter Gahn, Sven Markelius, Gregor Paulsson, Eskil Sundahl and Uno Åhrén – published a year later.³⁷ All this built on a 1928 speech by the leader of the Social Democratic Party (later Prime Minister of Sweden) Per Albin Hansson, propagating the term *Folkhem* (the people’s home) and emphasising widespread hygienic and good-quality housing as the right for all citizens. All the same, despite the existence of various subsidies, this goal was, even in Sweden, inaccessible to most; speculation in housing dominated the market, resulting in some of the highest rents in Europe, without the apartments even affording their residents essential comfort. The 1935 – 1948 period saw the public building initiative entitled *Barnrikehus* – houses for multi-child families – to fund housing construction through public financing and subsidized rents. One of the first public social housing initiatives, it went on to serve as a foundation for the country’s housing policy.³⁸

The *acceptera* authors, whose manifesto depicted typified interiors furnished by the mass-produced furniture also featured at the Stockholm exhibition – itself a response to European avant-garde tendencies – never saw standardization as a barrier to expressing users’ individuality.³⁹ The

architect Lucy Creagh explains that this binary of “private individualism and public collectivism” that defined the Swedish welfare state concept was something the manifesto authors identified with. And while they acknowledged the benefits of individual housing of the garden city variety, this clashed with the ideas of frugality as the foundation for modern housing. This thinking led to the form of building known in Swedish as *lamellhus*: parallel block buildings oriented toward the cardinal directions, to maximize sun exposure and access to fresh air, characterized by neutral and unadorned facades. Moreover, in 1942 the Social Democrats succeeded in implementing state subsidies and mortgages to assist the non-profit, municipal and cooperative sector, and disadvantaging private business without nationalizing industry; many towns had been buying up land since 1904. In general, this contributed to “public housing” gradually losing the perception of being strictly for the impoverished.⁴⁰

In Denmark, the historian Martin Søberg notes that starting in 1918 state-funded financing became available for municipal housing projects, housing associations, and private developers’ projects, leading to much expansion of construction, particularly in Copenhagen. Yet social housing was not indicative of inclination to communism – as was the leftist tendency in Czechoslovakia – but to the contrary a response “to the unstable political climate and the fear that either fascists or communists might gain power if the needs and demands of the population, in particular the working class, were not responded to”.⁴¹ In 1922 – 1928, a state housing foundation provided significant loans, while land prices were regulated to prevent speculation; additionally, too much land belonged to municipalities. In the 1930s, housing in poorer urban quarters was at the centre of attention – the Danish periodical *Arkitekten* covered it. Politicians assumed that era’s population decline was caused by housing not being available, and architects aimed to make it more accessible through standardization and typification. Though politicians of the time did not explicitly use the word “welfare”,⁴² it could be said that this idea underlaid the aims of architects working with housing at the time.

As for apartment building construction, Denmark and even more Sweden were at the forefront, in part because of staying neutral in both world wars. Finland faced a much worse situation; but housing cooperatives also came about here, such as the Housing Cooperative HAKA that built Helsinki’s Olympic Village with the intention of its subsequently serving Finnish families. In Finland too, some industrialists considered it important to provide their labourers with housing: one realization was Sunila, designed by the architect Alvar Aalto in 1937 – 1941 for the Ahlström company.⁴³

The first moves to create accessible and hygienic housing in Nordic countries resulted in drab oblong blocks, criticized by the aforementioned *manifesto* authors, encouraging architects to find more interesting architectural solutions. It was the balcony that became the relatively simple element that could give individual expression to buildings, and in the 1930s a sudden flood of balconies appeared across the facades of apartment buildings, especially in Stockholm and Copenhagen. In the latter city, the balcony began to be used for the prosaic reason of a change in construction legislation. A city ordinance after 1929 stipulated that it was sufficient to have only one staircase for egress from an apartment, provided it had fire protection, as long as every flat had either access to a shared balcony on one side or its own balcony on both sides of the apartment building block.⁴⁴

The Balcony on the Modern Apartment Building

Throughout Scandinavian countries, there exists a definable and recurring balcony type using baluster panels of corrugated metal. This motif gained the attention of architects Josef Gočár, Gustav Paul and Karel Storch in an article where they summarized observations from a visit to the Scandinavian countries, in which they participated as part of an official Czechoslovak architects’ delegation in summer 1946. These authors gave it the term “Swedish balcony”: “One sees hundreds of these completely identical balconies, employed in the most various fashions.”⁴⁵ Apart from the corrugated panels painted in various colours, Nordic architects frequently utilized concrete or spindled balusters, or sometimes full brick panels. The balconies often featured slightly rounded corners, or even planters designed into the balusters. For his own designs, Karfík appropriated both the corrugated panel balusters and the use of planters as a design component atop the baluster, along with vertical rods fitted into to one of the balcony’s sides (probably intended for climbing plants).

Balconies have long been an inspiring and rewarding compositional facade implement for architects, yet traditionally they used them sparingly, mostly to heighten the formality of some facade

at the *piano nobile* level. The balcony was a place from which the aristocracy could gaze over the rest of the world from above, a position eagerly taken by authoritarian politicians to show everyone their power. The 19th-century propagation of the balcony during Haussmann's renovation of Paris was not universally applauded, as implied by the descriptive entry on balconies in the *Dictionnaire historique d'architecture* (1832) by the French architect and philosopher Quatremère de Quincy. The same statement was cited in *Elements of Architecture*, a publication for Rem Koolhaas' 14th Architecture Biennale of Venice by architect, historian, and theoretician Tom Avermaete: "Nothing disturbs more the order of palaces and houses than these projections that are almost always cantilevered and seem to take pride in a childish boldness of construction. Nothing spoils the form of the openings more than the inordinate length of the balcony... These elements are foreign to good architecture."⁴⁶

De Quincy hoped that one day "good taste will indubitably forbid the balcony". However, this never happened, and avant-garde architects adored it in their conceptions of apartment houses, both for its practical function – as a means of improving quality of life at a time when the risk of tuberculosis was constant – and on the symbolic level. The balcony made it possible to air bedding and clothing, and to dry linens – and if it were big enough, a baby pram could fit there too – meaning that it partially replaced the garden of a family house. Furthermore, in a modern apartment building it also came to signify democracy and equality among residents, representing a social shift in the architecture of housing. It was this latter view that architects, and historians and theoreticians of architecture, among them Sigfried Giedion, Bruno Taut, and Nikolaus Pevsner, assumed toward the balcony in the 1920s and 30s. Taut, in fact, believed balconies (along with loggias and bay windows) comprised a true system of architecture.⁴⁷

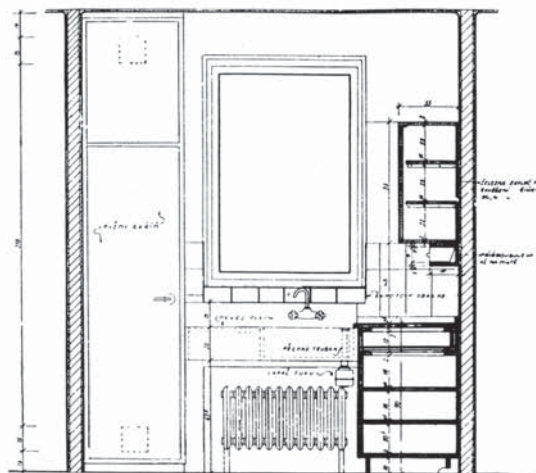
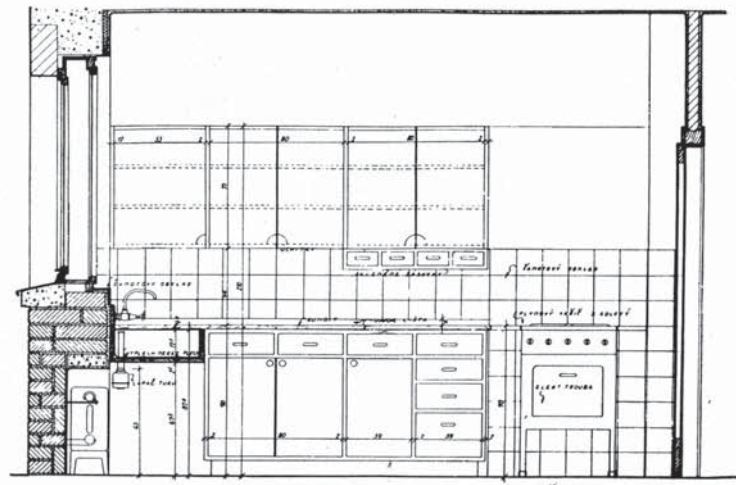
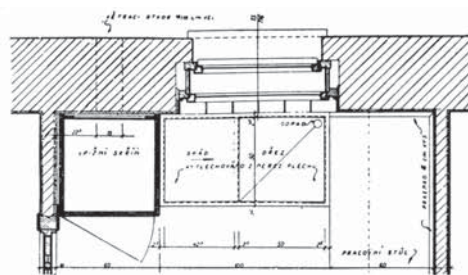
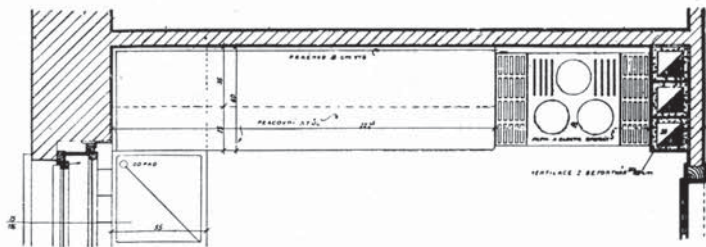
The 3-Storey Residential Houses in Zlín

As the architect Jiří Voženílek notes in an *Architektura ČSR* article, when Zlín was bombed during the Second World War, 140 apartment flats were destroyed. As construction work in town all but ceased during the occupation, housing was a high priority after the war as considered in the new zoning plan for Zlín, in which Karfík participated along with F. L. Gahura, V. Kubečka, T. Slezák, A. Vitek, and J. Voženílek.⁴⁸ Vladimír Kubečka was the architect behind the division for rental housing construction; its aim was to supplement the existing housing in the company's detached family houses economically that would provide greater comfort for approximately the same costs as family houses.

This effort led to Vladimír Karfík's design for 3-storey apartment houses, the multi-storey "Morýs houses" of single-corridor apartment buildings, and high-rise blocks by Miroslav Drofa.⁴⁹ New family houses were to be raised only as a mass-produced series.⁵⁰ Another reason for the change to multi-storey apartment buildings was the limitation of the area available for construction.⁵¹ Building began in 1946 on the 3-storey apartment buildings in the Obeciny quarter (1951 – 1993 known as the Július Fučík quarter),⁵² with work continuing in two further phases up to 1970.⁵³ According to available sources, this was the first such realization within the Two-Year Plan in post-war Czechoslovakia. From 1946 to 1949, buildings went up using the same plans in the Zálešná quarter, and in a smaller variant in Díly.

Though it was not Karfík's custom to philosophize, and he expressed himself in apolitical terms all his life, avant-garde ideas were not outside his experience, and as an architect he had good perception and a broad perspective. Thus it cannot be said that, in designing his 3-storey apartment buildings, he used the element of the balcony in Zlín (and later for similar buildings in Bratislava) to declare some sort of revolutionary outlook. However, the way he composed balconies, other elements, and properly resolved plans into the buildings' design shows he had a clear idea of what apartment living required to provide its residents a decent standard of living. What is more, the form of the balcony grants otherwise relatively monotonous architecture a graceful human expression, supported by the colour contrast of yellow paint on corrugated panels with the red brick facade.

Even if it is a typified element, a balcony makes a building more personal, and comes under the control of the individual flats' residents, even if this autonomy appears here more or less only in the selection of plants they chose for their planters. Surprisingly, this personal character is hardly weakened by the mass-scale use of the identical balcony in the Zlín quarters of Obeciny and Zálešná (in Díly they opted for less expensive balusters of perforated concrete). Thanks to the balconies, the building creates the impression that it is more than a "machine for living", while the lower number of storeys likewise supports the impression of a human scale and an interconnection of indoors and



THE KITCHEN SINK UNDER THE WINDOW SHOULD ALLOW A MOTHER WORKING IN THE KITCHEN KEEP HER EYE ON CHILDREN PLAYING OUTDOORS

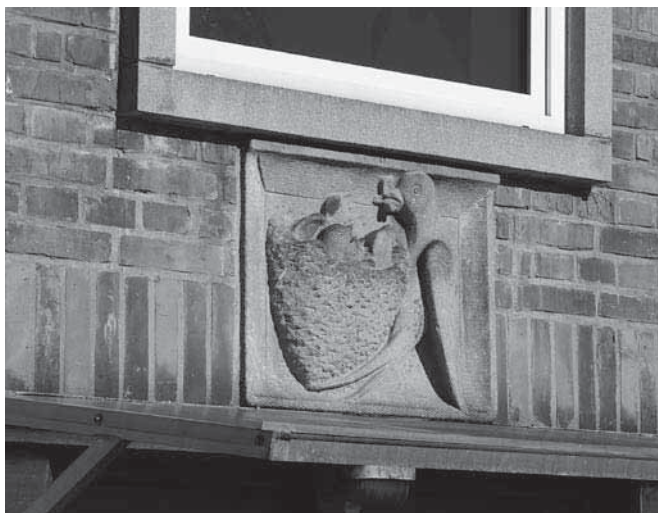
KUCHYNSKÝ DREZ SITUOVANÝ POD OKNOM MÁL UMOŽNÍŤ MATKE PRACUJÚCEJ V KUCHYNI DOZERAŤ NA DETI HRAJÚCE SA VONKU

Source Zdroj: VOŽENÍLEK, Jiří. 1947. Nová výstavba Zlína. Nájemní dům o třech podlažích. Architektura ČSR, 6(3), p. 82

outdoors, which in Zlín is full of greenery. Hence it is an element linking two worlds, in the sense both of artistic/architectural/aesthetic and practical life, and of the private and public worlds – and vice versa, as via the balconies the building reaches out and the outer world enters inside.

As with the balconies, Karfík worked into his designs several other elements of Scandinavian inspiration. One example was the living room's bay windows in the flats at the end of the northern section of the row of 3-storey buildings, giving an interesting accent both to the exterior facade and the interior of the apartment space, which gained improved access to daylight. The kitchen sink situated under the window let a mother working in the kitchen keep her eye on children playing outdoors. The waste chute with access on every storey allowed residents easy rubbish disposal; and the building's above-average shared amenities – a pram room, or laundry and drying spaces – as well as the separate storage spaces in the basement, surpassed the standard of the day, while additionally indicating Karfík's sensitivity to everyday situations.

Karfík went beyond the mere satisfaction of dwelling standards to a genuine consideration of the people who were to live in the buildings and how they felt about them, as indicated in the detail of the reliefs placed over a building's main entrances to tell them apart – not unlike in the Middle Ages, before buildings were numbered. The reliefs depict a variety of themes, from zodiac signs to flora and portraits, and give the buildings a personal touch. Alongside the other aspects noted, even the subtler ones, they show how a good architect's work need not depend on grand artistic gestures, though Karfík was quite capable of designing buildings with aesthetics that interest the onlooker at first glance. Yet he was equally capable of winning the onlooker's interest in a humbler manner and creating understated apartment buildings, whose main task was to provide people good housing unobtrusively, just as architects did in Scandinavia.



**SEVERAL EXAMPLES OF RELIEFS
OVER THE MAIN ENTRANCES OF
KARFÍK'S 3-STOREY APARTMENT
HOUSES IN ZLÍN**

NIEKOĽKO PRÍKLADOV RELIÉFOV
UMIESTNENÝCH NAD HLAVNÝMI
VCHODMI 3-PODLAŽNÝCH
BYTOVÝCH DOMOV V ZLÍNE

Source Zdroj: Nina Bartošová, 2022



Conclusion

The success of domestic architecture as part of the Baťa firm's legacy can be seen in Tomáš Baťa's confidently formulated ideas, creating the impression that behind everything lay individual genius or resulted from a remarkable collaboration of many who participated in responding to the events of the time. Indeed, the architecture historian Petr Vorlík is convinced that many fundamental changes in housing culture resulted from "broader, external, often ostensibly unexceptional influences, independent of the architectural community's ambitions", and observing these may bring the most reliable evidence" of the ambitions of the age and the dramatic transformations in the residential environment."⁵⁴ For this reason too, any attempt to seek a single powerful motif may yield but a distorted conception. Architects working for Baťa did not have a unified notion of architecture, shaped as they were by diverse environments; yet all the same they managed together to create a Baťa style with characteristic simplifying features that brought international distinction to Zlín's architecture.

Although Zlín itself has undertaken exemplary renovation in recent decades, many Baťa towns are fighting to preserve their architecture – and unsurprisingly the interests of preservation draw attention to aspects that emphasize its values as part of the integrated Baťa legacy. Conveying its significance emerges more powerfully as its unifying features are highlighted. This approach is especially warranted toward the general public, but if we intend to put together a comprehensive picture, there is equally a need to focus on the individuality of the architects that jointly created the Baťa mosaic. Some of their inclinations are well known; others may seem inessential as long as they are not conspicuous in the resulting building. Yet the degree of significance in an idea that became part of Baťa architecture is not necessarily directly proportional to its visibly legibility. It could be said that this holds true of Vladimír Karfík: his creative footprint had many facets but only some features of his work are persistently emphasized, hence his creative achievement is only partially recognized. For this reason, this study, in drawing attention to many apparently inessential aspects, has attempted a "Simmelian" validation, using the balconies on Karfík's 3-storey apartment houses, to make it clear that the mythified architectural legacy of the Baťa company and its socially conscious policies could not have come about without the contribution of the individuals engaged in it.

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