

CZECH REPUBLIC

World Heritage and Development

Prague – a World Heritage Site in the Shadow of Commercial Projects

In the [northern] autumn of 2003, the President and three members of the Czech National Committee of ICOMOS visited the Lord Mayor of the City of Prague. They came to discuss with him the Czech Committee's serious concerns about some aspects of the present development of the city, including some particular projects endangering the values for which it was inscribed on the World Heritage List. Czech ICOMOS expressed disapproval that the municipal administration had gradually cancelled the function and authority of the Chief Architect of the City of Prague to coordinate the capital's urban development and supervise the standard of new constructions. Further, the City Council had annulled a special Decree on the Building Development Regulation within the Prague Conservation Area and later decentralised decision-making on the granting of building permits. From the municipal authority, a centralised city body, power was transferred to 13 separate city quarters that form today's city.

The Czech ICOMOS committee sees in all these measures a loss of interest by the city's management to maintain the possibility and mechanisms to direct appropriately the flood of investments, to regulate the city's urban development, to ensure the quality of new construction in its jurisdiction and to effectively protect its heritage buildings. In contrast, development is directed by the *laissez faire* principle, increasing the influence of investors with strong capital and allowing 'non-standard' methods to be used to force through their projects.

The Mayor and his deputy mayor were very polite and the discussion opened reciprocally. However, the participants did not arrive at an overall agreement or even partially constructive conclusions about the above issues. In contrast to the emphasis of Czech ICOMOS on the preservation of the heritage values, the Mayor set its development as the city's main priority. The deputy mayor replied to the Czech ICOMOS remark that in the case of Prague one of the main reasons for its listing as World Heritage site is Prague's extraordinary beauty in its urban integrity, meaning that its value is very vulnerable without efficient regulation, by stating that the listed area of the city is too large. In his opinion it was a mistake by previous city managers that its present representation would definitely not ever repeat, but had to cope with at present.

The results of this meeting are characteristic of Prague's present situation. In many respects it fulfils the prognoses and warnings by our Western European colleagues immediately after the 'Velvet Revolution'. At that time, we were full of euphoric, optimistic hopes and did not want to believe them. I am reminded of the outstanding international colloquy characteristically titled, *Prague, the Future of a Historical City*, organised in Prague in 1990. At that time, outstanding philosophers, historians, town-planners, architects and artists from France and several other Western European countries met Czech professionals (they included Jacques Derrida, Jean Viard, Michel Parent, Francois Choay, Leon Pressouyre and others).

Our Western European friends envisaged the threats to Prague in the following areas:

- in the capitalisation of Prague's unique beauty and atmosphere that may change into a sort of banal, consumer-oriented tourist attraction (Choay, Viard),
- in the 'triumphant scheming' that will radically change the

multipliers of land values and result in the start of numerous tower blocks (Pressouyre). There is the threat that 'the new development will eclipse the city, will want to include into the saturated urban and architectural form, its new non-changing structures, escaping the ability to newly integrate with the primary whole' (Derrida).

The situation was summarised in a concise way by Leon Pressouyre: 'Today Prague is exposed to capitalist speculation and to the test of economic and social choice. That will exclude, undoubtedly, the aesthetic choice required by the city's unique significance'.

It is not possible to say unambiguously yet, whether Pressouyre was or was not right. It is certain that 'the world of money' fell upon the unprepared city with unusual power. The financially powerful foreign investors managed, in the first phase, to fill almost all vacant sites and open spaces in the historical centre with new buildings that are bulky, and unfortunately largely unsuccessful from an architectural design perspective. 'Façadism' was brought into Prague from Western Europe, having not been previously applied here, and leaving only the outer shell of the historical building, covering what is in fact a completely new building. Other investors persist in striving for the demolition of existing buildings so that they might erect more massive new buildings in their place or excise parcels from areas of municipal parkland.

The following selected cases, highlighting the greatest risks to the urban integrity of Prague, are especially characteristic and described in greater detail in the attachments to this report. They do not cover the extent of the problem. Apart from ostentatious investment projects about which they convey basic information, less striking changes are performed in Prague's historical centre, which are no less destructive to the authenticity of the historical urban fabric with irreversible cultural losses occurring. It is, most of all, the extensive construction of attic flats inserted into authentic historical roofspaces, with their often unthinkingly designed dormers, that is destroying the until recently extremely poetic 'roof landscape' of the Lesser Town and the Old Town. A number of new shops, restaurants or casinos have destroyed not only the atmosphere, but the authentic layout and built details of the parterres of historic houses, heavily damaging them with their insensitiveness. Lobby groups for building contractors seeking major state or municipal permits present a not insignificant risk. Perhaps the most eloquent example was the project for the technical and, at the same time, functionally completely unnecessary reconstruction of our most valuable industrial heritage site, the Charles Bridge – after a long struggle it was fortunately cancelled.

Despite this I do not think that the extreme pessimism of Leon Pressouyre's prognoses is warranted. Despite all the enterprise, materialism and hostile greed of our present conditions the 'aesthetic choice', that is respect for the beauty and uniqueness of historic Prague, has not yet been excluded from the process in today's changes. For the city's wonderful urban integrity has resisted so far. It has preserved its unique natural surrounds in the green hills and Vltava islands, its majestic historical outstanding places, and the balanced heights of its built areas. Most of all, the harmonic composition of the city centre has not yet been shattered by deficient new tower buildings, as has occurred in a number of historic towns of Western Europe.

Therefore, the wonder of Prague still exists. But this is not a result of the 'high culture' of our own and foreign investors, nor



The photo dated to about 1905 records that the panorama of the City of Prague has not been changed in the course of the last one hundred years



The view of Prague from the terrace of Prague Castle. The photograph shows the so far almost unspoilt heights of the built-up area on the horizon of which are the 'hollow teeth' of the unsuccessful tower buildings at Pankrác Plain.

due to some special wisdom, foresight and altruism of municipal representation and its administration. Nor can we overestimate the merits of the state heritage preservation institutions.

In my opinion, the greatest accolade for the current retention of historic Prague's integrity is owed to public opinion and elements of the original civic society – voluntary community associations, such as Klub Zastarou Prahu (The Club for Old Prague) with a hundred years of tradition, Deti zeme (Children of the Earth), Ceska umeleckohistoricka spolecnost (The Czech Art-Historians Society), Spolecnost pro trvale udrzitelny rozvoj (The Society for Sustainable Development) or community associations in local government areas. Also the media has become a large defender of historic Prague that largely stands for public opinion and particularly likes to publish the 'suspicious', 'atypical' or clear corruption cases. In many respects these elements actually replace the often ineffective state and municipal administration systems and, typically, the absence of clearly defined planning procedures to process developers starting projects in the city.

The struggle between the defenders of historic Prague and greedy investors continues and is often very intense. The first tower building or the first historic park sacrificed to speculation may become a precedent with unpredictable consequences. Nevertheless, I am properly entitled to optimism from existing campaigns. Today, not only associations and pressure groups of selfless defenders of historic Prague but also the wider public have begun to be aware of the unique, yet extremely vulnerable beauty and value of their city. People are waking out of their lethargy and community passivity forced on them over decades by a communist police regime.

I am convinced that we will not lose the struggle for historic Prague. This ancient, magically beautiful city will never be changed into a banal, standardised world metropolis, full of busyness, luxury and consumerism. I believe it will further preserve the testimony of its history, its beauty and its spiritual content.

Josef Stulc
Czech Republic ICOMOS

Endangering the Panorama of Prague

One of the most esteemed values of Prague as a historic city inscribed on UNESCO's World Heritage List is its famous and unmistakable panorama. The Prague Castle, with its almost theatrical effect, rises on its headland above the slopes covered by a dense historical built-up area. The panorama's foreground is formed by the wide and calm Vltava river in which the city is mirrored like a fairytale. For the entire past hundred years, since the neo-Gothic towers were built on St Vitus Cathedral at Prague Castle at the beginning of the 20th century, this panorama has miraculously remained unaffected by larger construction intrusions. It forms the worldwide known 'signature' of Prague, the mark that is recognisable to the entire cultural world. Sadder is the fact that efforts to yield the maximum commercial effect from these places in the city, highly attractive to tourists, above all present clear threats to Prague's panorama and built-up area on the riverbank. The original industrial items that traditionally belong to a historic town's riverbank – old mills, brickworks – gradually surrender not only to the pressure of new commercial and cultural and tourist use, which does not endanger them of itself, but are accompanied by attempts to forcefully adapt their volume, space and visual image to the new function.

The building of the Sova Mills, originally of the Renaissance and rebuilt and completed in the 1860s, was converted recently



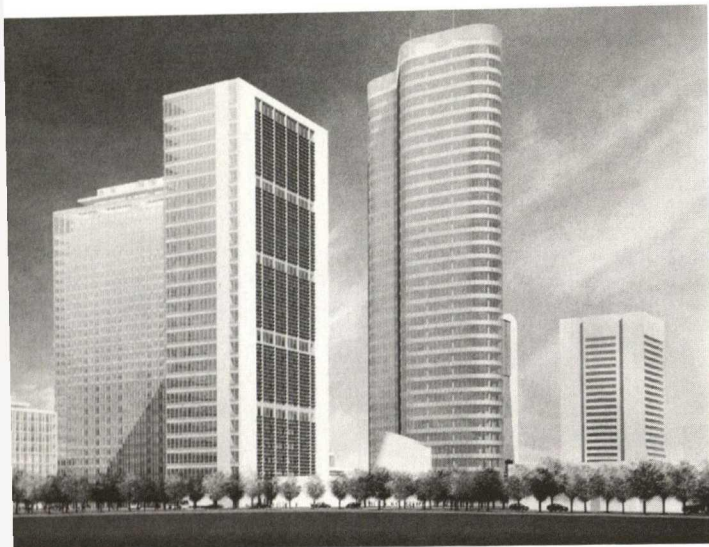
Prague, the large river bank area of the former Herget Brickworks in 2000. A typical picture of the forced re-adjustment of historic structure to new use



Prague, the historic Josefská Barracks from Republiky Square. The vacated building is ready for demolition. Only the façade is to be preserved.

Prague, the view over the former courtyard of the rear façade of the main building of the Josefská Barracks. The stables have been demolished already. At present rescue archaeological research is being done in the area. According to the house in the picture in the upper right sense can be made of the sizes of the parcels of land and the character of the surrounding built-up area. This can be compared with the planned new building that is to take up the whole free area in the photograph.





The model of the new group of still substantially taller high-rise buildings proposed for Pankrác Plain by Richard Meyer. A precedent that would find a number of eager successors.

into the museum of modern art (2002–2003). It was fitted with a bulky structure in the shape of a cube created in steel and glass, illuminated at night. Astonishing built adaptations to other parts of the building have already been designed.

The large area of riverbank of the former Herget Brickworks dating from the end of the 18th century was adapted during 2000–2003 for a completely new tourist use – restaurants and a commercial exhibition hall. As part of the reconstruction, historical vaults on the ground floor were vandalised by being torn down, and large openings were broken through the façade facing the river, in an originally solid wall, for the benefit of a view for the restaurant guests. Also, an apartment building with underground parking is planned to be built in the exclusive Herget Brickworks area.

The above-mentioned examples have the value of a tempting precedent for other subjects taking interest in the use and unsuitable structural adaptation of historic buildings in areas in Prague attractive to tourists. With the accomplishment of the two above-mentioned reconstructions the process has begun of a gradual interference with Prague's unique panorama – so sacrosanct that it should remain intact at any costs.

Katerina Beckova

The Planned Construction of the Giant Shopping Centre at the Republiky Square in Prague - a Crime Committed on the World Heritage Site

The intended rebuilding of the former Josefska Barracks at Republiky Square is so far the largest and most upsetting damage to the cultural values of the historic core of Prague since the fall of the communist regime in 1989. The area of the barracks was built up in 1857–61. It includes the main three-wing accommodation building near the square, the riding school along Na Porici street and the vast courtyard with free-standing stables. The area is protected as cultural heritage. In its place an enormously big shopping, entertainment and administrative centre is to be built. The total area of the site is expected to be built over. According to the project approval only the façade and some parts of the main building facing Republiky Square and the riding school are to be preserved. Behind the scenes a giant new building is planned with a

total capacity of over 100,000 m² of commercial area, including underground parking for about 800 cars. The project also includes the construction of an underground space beneath Republiky Square and car ramps leading to Revoluční Street.

Prague's centre does not suffer from a lack of commercial-administrative areas. This proposed use is not needed in this area, on the contrary. While commercial-administrative areas may also be successfully built in other places, at Republiky Square they will take up an important site that could be used in a markedly more useful manner for the city.

The proposed size is far too large and will lead to increased traffic overload. The privately-owned, commercial fee-paying underground car-park will probably be only rarely used by local inhabitants. Instead, it will serve visitors, customers and staff of the future centre. The proposed large-capacity car-parks are not the solution to the current parking problems. In comparison to the current situation, they represent pollution from hundreds more cars. Those cars will not only park there, but will also arrive and leave. By closing Revoluční Street, cars that now pass through the square will not disappear but will arrive through the adjacent streets of the Old and New Towns. And what will be the result? It will be many more cars in the narrow residential alleys of the adjacent historic built area.

Access to the underground parking is planned by ramps from Revoluční Street. That street is a part of the bypass in the location of the fortifications between the Old and New Towns. The construction of the exit ramps means that this important road will no longer be a thoroughfare. Let us imagine that the ramps to private parking were to cut the Ringstrasse in Vienna – that is a comparable situation. The point is not the closing of this street to car traffic, it is that by building the drive-in ramps that closure will be permanent and there will be no chance to reassess it in the future if necessary.

The area of the former barracks is an exceptionally well-preserved and, therefore, an extraordinarily significant archaeological site. Apart from others, medieval structures are preserved underground. Excavations for the new basements will destroy everything.

In the context of a historic town every original building is irreplaceable. With the demolition of most of the barracks, an important historic building will cease to exist. At the same time, other potential investors will be given the signal that the responsible authorities tolerate such treatment of architectural and archaeological heritage in Prague.

According to the 1987 Washington Charter, the basic values of a historic site include the original land subdivision, the relationship between the open spaces and built areas, the form and characteristic appearance of the buildings. In all the above cases, the proposed construction is completely out of keeping with the design of the surrounding urban area. Instead of the usual arrangement of the individual houses, roofs, and courtyards, a huge structure is proposed that builds over 100% of the area corresponding in size to tens of historical parcels of land. This poorly designed, large, unstructured mass will have a negative appearance in the overall viewshed of the historical centre.

In Prague, many historic heritage places can be seen, some quite well repaired. Many things have improved or, at least, there is the hope that they will improve. Nevertheless, the above example may be the first of a series of larger stones in a rolling avalanche. If nothing is done, in the future only the ruins will remain of the heritage values of Prague's historic core for which it was declared a World Heritage site.

Milos Solar

Sky Scrapers at Pankrac Plain

Pankrac Plain is an upland separated by the valley of the Botic stream on the southern border of the historic New Town of Prague. It is a very exposed position in the entire city's panorama. Therefore, the area is included in the buffer zone of the Prague Conservation Area. After the construction of the bridge across the valley and the metro line being inserted into the area, in the mid-1970s it became a very attractive construction area because of its rapid connection to the city centre. During the 'normalisation' phase of the Communist regime following the Soviet invasion in 1968, Pankrac Plain was chosen by the Communist Party leaders as the most suitable part of Prague for efforts to 'make visible' the socialist presence with pretentious constructions. The Paris quarter, La Défense, was presented as the source of inspiration to achieve the planned new 'world repute' for Prague. However, that comparison which is still used, is far from an analogy, as it is as if La Défense were built just above Étoile Square and not more than 5 km from the historic city. At Pankrac, the Communists managed to build three tower buildings, some 100 m high with the shapeless mass of the Palace of Culture in their foreground. The people of Prague aptly called that unsuccessful urban design 'hollow teeth'.

In 2001, the firm ECM Radio Piazza announced the project for a further wave of filling Pankrac with high-rise buildings, this time as high as 150 m. The developer advanced skilfully using the world-renowned architect, Richard Meyer, as the Trojan horse, in setting out the project. His design has of course indisputably high qualities, if it were intended for another place. Also, the developer won very active support for the project from the mayor of the local city quarter Prague 4. The mayor self-confidently stated to the media that his quarter had the right to have its own 'Hradcany' (that is, its own 'Prague Castle' as the city's most visible structure). The comparison really gets to the core of the problem. Indeed, the project is trying, quite consciously and with breathtaking arrogance, to 'outdo' the Prague Castle in the current extremely impressive panorama of historic Prague. Apart from the mayor's support, the investor also achieved an unusual welcome from all sections of the Prague Municipal Authority responsible to approve the project.

In the project's extensive publicity and the reaction to it, it was mainly the opinions of members of the Czech Architects Community that clashed. The main supporter, spokesperson and, at the same time, direct participant in the project team was architect Vaclav Aulicky. He is the designer of the infamous, already obsolete, TV tower of the first half of the 1980s, that was panoramically completely unsuitable for historic Prague, and politically imposed despite the resistance of the state heritage conservation agencies and public opinion, although at that time nobody needed to ask for this latter. The tower's main mission was to interfere with television and radio signals and thus prevent the inhabitants of Prague and Central Bohemia from receiving free information. The main spokesperson of those against the Meyer project, apart from conservators with a unified view, was the well-known architect Vlado Milunic, co-designer with Frank Ghery on the original and also highly contextual project, the so-called Dance House on the Vltava river embankment in the city's historic centre.

Apart from the adversaries in the theoretical discussion, the developer faced unexpectedly tough resistance from not only the state heritage preservation institutions (it is worth mentioning that their voice is only advisory, the municipal administration takes the decisions), but also of Prague's inhabitants, most of all in Pankrac itself. In the restored democracy, decisions can no longer be made behind closed doors as under the Communists. At their request, participants in the approval procedure became the community

body, Sdruzeni obyvatel Pankrace (Association of the Inhabitants of Pankrac) supported by other NGOs, Deti zeme (Children of the Earth) and Sdruzeni pro trvale udrzitelny rozvoj (Association for Sustainable Development). Despite the stubborn welcome to the project by the Municipal Authority officials, so far these NGOs have blocked the approval of the project successfully.

The problem is not yet resolved as to whether the new tower buildings will link back to the arrogance and arbitrary decisions of past Communist planners, and whether they will be built against the will of the local inhabitants and all lovers of historical Prague. Thanks to widespread publicity which we believe will not allow apparent corruption, the situation is mildly optimistic. Also the comparison helps with the recent, almost identical project of high-rise buildings near Vienna's central station, because of which that city almost lost its World Heritage status. Let us believe that the Prague administration will take a lesson from the Viennese precedent and will not expose its wonderful city to a similar risk.

Josef Stulc

Two Years After the Floods in Bohemia

The huge floods that hit much of Bohemia in August 2002 also deeply affected our cultural heritage, apart from human tragedies and considerable damage to the environment, factories, infrastructure and agricultural areas (see *Heritage at Risk, ICOMOS World Report 2002/2003*, pp. 71–81). Already during and immediately after the flood, various rescue operations started. The following brief case-studies inform you of some selected remarkable cases of these activities.

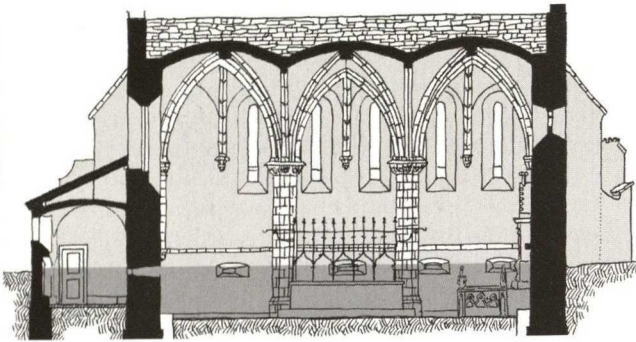
Prague, the Capital

The Restoration of the Old New Synagogue in Prague

The ancient Altnai (Old New) Synagogue, a remnant of the once important and large Jewish Ghetto of Prague, is a simple, oblong building with a high saddle roof finished with Late Gothic brick shields. The synagogue's two-aisled nave synagogue with six fields of Gothic five-part ribbed vaults on two buttresses with rich carved decoration on architectural details was built in the course of the second half of the 13th century. Low late medieval additions, serving as a hallway and a space for women, were gradually added to the southern, western and northern sides.

The latest major renewal of the structure was carried out 1997–1999, when the façades were repaired, the interior dried out, and the paving, plaster and furnishing, movable elements repaired, and the overall restoration carried out of all valuable stone elements, forged and girdlers' elements and of the entire tabernacle (*aron ha-kodesh*). All these works were performed with maximum technical precision under the supervision of the National Institute and with the participation of the best specialists.

In August 2002 water penetrated the Synagogue's newly restored interior during the large flood and inundated the interior to an approximate height of 1 m. Thanks to well-organised rescue works by Prague's Jewish Community, significant state financial



Prague, longitudinal section of the Altnai Synagogue shows the location of the two vast buttresses, almemor and the box for the torah (aron hakodesh). Marked in blue is the level of water during the 2002 flood.



The southern hallway is the oldest addition to the Synagogue, it originated, evidently, already during the construction in the last quarter of the 13th century. The condition shortly after the falling off of water during the 2002 flood.

The most valuable part of the interior of the Altnai Synagogue from the liturgical and ancient monument point of view is the box for the torah (aron hakodesh). The condition after the performance of the conservators works in 2002 within the framework of the removal of the consequences of the flood.



support and the professional approach by experts, the results of the damage were removed during 2002 and today once again visitors from the whole world can admire this extraordinary historic sanctuary.

Ondrej Sefcu

The Region of Central Bohemia

Roztoky, the mansion house

This late medieval stronghold and mansion of the 15th and 16th centuries was not damaged greatly by the flood and, fortunately, no significant structural problems appeared on the building of the neighbouring mill. Nevertheless, the buildings suffered considerable partial damage and had to undergo a general overhaul. That included, above all, the removal and cleaning of dirt and damaged plaster up to the level affected by water. A restoration survey was also conducted and valuable plaster layers from the oldest building stages were documented and made stable.

The former mansion is part of the Regional Museum of Central Bohemia, that also includes laboratories equipped with extremely valuable instruments. The laboratories served the entire region undertaking investigations, analytical tests and other operations as a part of the restoration of manuscripts, paintings, sculptures and other historical works of arts.

Damage caused to the laboratory equipment was considerable and the laboratory operations were practically destroyed. The irradiation room was silted with mud, and had to be cleaned and dried out. Only then could repairs begin, including a general reconstruction of the technology. Above all, the ionising radiation source including its protective container, the lifting device and the shield gate, complete electric installation, the air-conditioning and ventilation system and the security system were repaired. The equipment is now ready for further operation, necessary tests having been performed.

Dolní Berkovice, the Historic Country House Area

This manor is a late Renaissance building remodelled extensively in neo-Renaissance style in the mid-19th century.

The country house proper and its adjoining park were hit by the flood and had to be cleaned out and let dry before repairs could be started. Works for to stabilise the north-west corner of the house and the chapel have already been completed. Carpentry and new roofing repaired part of the roof. Plaster and floors were also repaired in the damaged part of the manor. The chapel furnishing was restored, that is the movable objects and decoration including hanging paintings and murals.

Libiš, St James Church

The church is a simple Late Gothic structure from 1391, remarkable for its extremely well preserved series of Gothic mural paintings.

The medieval building's stability was not compromised. Thanks to its solid foundation and the building materials that had been used, the damage was limited to only its plaster. However, the interior furnishing and decoration and, above all, the medieval murals, were hit severely. Quite complicated and expensive



Roztoky, the manor house, an overall view of the main building at the premises



Roztoky, the manor house, the main building courtyard



Dolní Beřkovice, the Historic Country House, an overall view



Libiř, an overall view of the church with the cemetery and the bell tower

Hořín, a view of the country house courtyard



Hořín, the country house farmyard



restoration works had to be carried out because of subsequent high humidity, which persisted for a long time. After the building was finally dried out, the church decoration was made stable.

The neighbouring wooden bell tower was overhauled, the repairs including the reinforcement of the wooden structure and renovation of the shingle roofing.

Horin, the Country House with St John of Nepomuk Chapel

Horin Manor is an important item of Bohemian Baroque of the 18th century with a very original architectural design and rich Rococo-style decoration in its interiors. The building located in the flood area was severely inundated.

Buildings on the premises were thoroughly cleared out of the flood deposits. Certain projects were planned for and preparatory works started. The most valuable interiors damaged by the flood were restored. The entire country house area has not however been used for a long time and is deteriorating slowly, a condition unrelated to the 2002 flood.

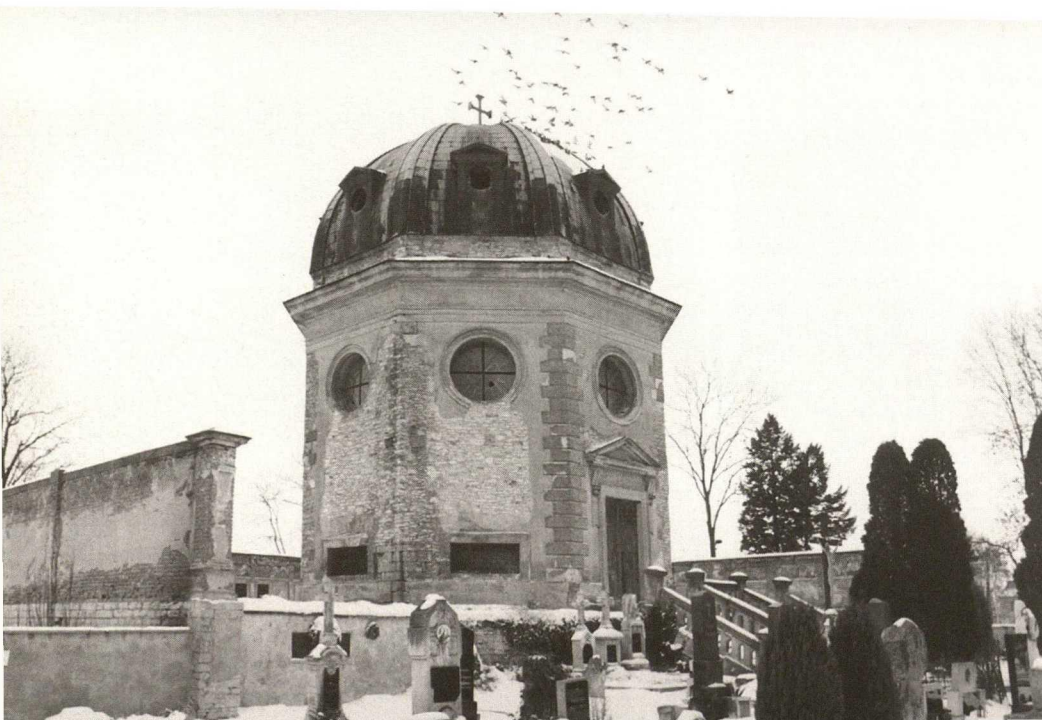
The original country house complex also includes a farmyard, most of which is neither used, nor secured. The condition of the farm will soon pose a risk to the existence of the entire heritage site. The condition is alarming for the splendid family vault from the first part of the 19th century, built in Italian Renaissance style. Regardless of its general deterioration, the family vault remains in its condition from the flood. The crypt with coffins was flooded and silted with mud, and has not been cleared out, nor secured from free access.

Libechov, the Historic Country House and Park

Originally a late medieval fortified mansion, the house was substantially rebuilt and completely remodelled in Baroque style in the 1730s. Interiors were redecorated in Romantic style in the 1840s.



Libiš, the wooden bell tower



Hořín, the chapel with a vault at the cemetery

The flood caused considerable damage to the country house, its condition already requiring a general renovation before the flood. Now, it is being repaired in gradual stages. The premises were cleaned to remove the flood's direct effects. Numerous projects have been planned to save the house including its extensive premises and park with significant sculptures. Restoration inspections and basic physical security works have already been conducted to be followed, if possible, by further necessary stages. The manor's granary and probably the outbuildings in front also will undergo an overhaul this year. The Orangery remains one of the biggest problems, as the building was already badly affected before the flood and now it needs extensive repairs.

Veltrusy, the Country House Area and Landscape Park

Veltrusy Country House, built in the 1730s, is a most remarkable piece of Bohemian Baroque architecture. The house with its very original layout and significant interior decoration is surrounded with an extensive landscape park and 'ferme ornée', the first of its kind in Bohemia.

In this case the flood damage was the heaviest in the region. The flood affected the ground badly, resulting in alterations in the worst hit area where the protective dike broke. The old, original trees, which withstood the torrent's surge and were not uprooted, are often dying from being waterlogged. Buildings were mainly structurally affected, in addition to direct damage to furnishings. Such damage is gradual and of long-term character.

In the first stage, repairs focused on the basic physical security of the place by replacing the destroyed dike at the river mouth. Silted sand and soil were removed and by contrast hollowed out areas were back-filled.

The country house and other buildings on the premises were immediately basically secured. The damage to the area inspired a greater interest in the place, which resulted in detailed surveys and preliminary works being conducted on a large scale. General repairs took place at the same time and necessary building started where essential. Given the extent of the needed repairs and adaptations, this is still merely the beginning of the general rehabilitation of the manor area. These efforts should result in putting the country house back to its original form from its historically most important period.

Vsestudy, so-called Red Mill in the area of Veltrusy Historic Country House

The early Gothic-revival mill was located in a strong torrent of the swollen floodwaters and commensurate extensive damage resulted to the building. Therefore repairs had to focus on a general stabilisation of the building and on reconstructing its interior machinery. Difficult building works and interior adaptations have already been completed.

Jiri Mrazek

The Region of South Bohemia

Ceske Budejovice, the Historical Centre Conservation Area

In the administrative building of the Regional Unit of the National Institute for the Protection and Conservation of Monuments and



Liběchov, the country house premises with the main building and other buildings



Liběchov, the garden front of the country house

Veltrusy, a west view of the country house





Veltrusy, a newly built dike on the western side of the park



Všestudy, Red Mill at the premises of Veltrusy park

Všestudy, an overall view of Red Mill



Sites at Senovazne Square, the files and plan archives were flooded and irreparable damage was caused by flood to the photographic archives. For almost a month the Institute's routine program was interrupted and the staff of the historic monuments conservation section, assisted by volunteers, both students and colleagues from unaffected localities, separated the saturated documentation files and dried out the archival materials on lines stretched in the lofts, corridors and empty offices. Although the premises of the Institute reminded one rather of a laundry drying room, more than 80% of the agenda files, including photographic documentation was successfully saved in this way.

In the building itself, the water pressure forced out the entry gate and carried it across the entire Senovazne Square, and sewage water damaged both outside and inside façades, including the windows and doors on the ground floor, the pavement, outside historic fence and greenery.

Research was undertaken, the damaged street façade restored and the clean-up took place of the interiors of all three branches of the National Institute, located in listed historic buildings in Ceske Budejovice.

Cesky Krumlov, the Historical Centre – a Conservation Area

The surroundings of the castle and the palace are inscribed on the World Heritage List.

The rocky headland above the Vltava river bearing the castle and palace of Cesky Krumlov protected that architectural jewel from the 13th to 18th centuries against direct damage to the buildings or the historically significant movable heritage in their interiors. The narrow rocky isthmus, however, is water-locked by the river from one side, and from the other side by the Polecnice brook. Across the artificially dug rampart, the inner palace is connected with the theatre building by the Plastov bridge pillars. Under them, on both sides of the rock, the approach road passes between Cesky Krumlov's centre and the car park in the neighbourhood called Jelenka formed by Rybarska and Hradni streets. The Polecnice floodwaters streamed through that vacant site towards the Vltava river. It hollowed a 2 m deep trough, uncovering the collector distributions and waved the road's asphalt covering like a ribbon. The strong flow of the Vltava river then eroded the bedrock and removed or deeply eroded part of the walls on the banks.

Only one month after the flood abatement, the Ministry of Culture of the Taiwanese Republic of China contributed financially to fix the destroyed electricity, water and sewerage networks and pledged the provisional pedestrian footbridge between the town centre and Jelenka. Works have continued on solidifying the banks, securing the eroded rock and building the bulk of the access road.

Trebon's Historical Pond System

The area of the Renaissance Trebon palace is near the Svet pond. In the 16th century the group of ponds of the South-Bohemian pond-diggers Stepanek Netolicky and Mikulas Ruthard of Malesov was completed by Jakub Krcin of Jelcany with the construction of the large water regulation system, draining the marshy landscape of the Trebon region. The ingenuity of the connection of the individual ponds by the Zlata stoka (Golden drain) and Nova Reka (the New River) was only shown during the crisis days of August, 2002. The water system took away, without causing any



Veltrusy, Laudon's Pavilion in the park



Ceské Budějovice, in the conference room of the institute the flooded files were dried



Ceský Krumlov, the condition of the access road under the Plášťový Bridge after the water falling off



Ceský Krumlov, the brought down asphalt road in Jelenka

Kratochvíle, foundation of willow wattles on the bank of the brook near Kratochvíle



critical damage, more water than the Vltava cascade built in the 1950s and '60s. To prevent the break-up of the Svet dam, it was necessary to begin a controlled discharge of the stored waters through the palace park, spread out below the level of the pondage. The Svet pond waters then swamped the foundation and stone footings of the park fence and damaged most of the historical pool in the parterre part of the park. Extensive replacement of the fence footings took place and the pool was repaired, the works having to be performed very quickly given the closure of the road leading to the town's centre.

Kratochvíle, the Historic Country House and Park

The flood had an impact also on the Kratochvíle mansion, a jewel of late 16th century Renaissance art and architecture. Its neighbouring pond was built at the same time by the Lords of Rozmberk to supplying agricultural irrigation. However, the pond filled with the 2002 rain storm, overflowed the dam, flooded the area in front of the chateau and destroyed the stone banks of the stream in the south of the area. When considering the original damage, a procedure was selected that is not often used today, although proven in the past, of solidifying the banks with willow wattles. The historians were also greatly concerned about the strongly sodden surrounding mansion walls.

Maja Havlova

North Bohemia

Kresice – the Church of the Visitation of the Virgin Mary

The most heavily affected historic monument in the village of Kresice was the Baroque pilgrimage church of the Visitation of the Virgin Mary, built in 1729–1732 on the site of the older Baroque chapel by the renowned builder of Litomerice, Octavio Broggio. The building's structural stability was affected and the interior damaged by the flood, primarily the interior plaster and the movable items. The outer façade, repaired in 2001, survived the impact of water almost without any harm. The water that flooded the church was up to a height of 370 cm, and almost all inside features were seriously damaged. The main Baroque altar from 1763 with rich sculpted decoration was very seriously damaged as was the wooden pulpit of the third quarter of the 18th century. Both side altars of St Joseph and St Anna, in mid-19th century neo-Renaissance style, also suffered minor damage, as did the church pews and two confessional boxes.

In the face of the relatively extensive damage that the flood caused to the church of the Visitation of the Virgin Mary, demands for restoration for both the building itself and the movable items already began in 2003. Research on the building's stability was carried out, and on the basis of its results, securing of the vault ribs was started in 2004, along with minor mending of the lower rafters. Also subject to conservators' research was the interior painting and in the most damaged areas the paint was re-fixed. As part of the overall restoration, the damaged painting will be completely fixed and secured in 2004. The interior movable elements were already treated with biocides in [northern] autumn 2002 and in 2003 the restoration was started for the most significant historic features – the main altar and the pulpit. Both of these historic monuments were dismantled and moved to the conservation studio. Conservators' research on both historic features was undertaken that show older significant polychromy, and restoration was then begun. At present both historic features have been cleaned,

and repainting and some retouch carving has been done. Conservation of the other movable heritage is also anticipated for completion in 2004, together with the overall restoration of the church.

Steti – the Church of St Simon and Judah

The late Baroque church of St Simon and Judah, built in 1785 after a large flood had destroyed an earlier church, was damaged, mostly its artistic fittings. The building itself was not seriously damaged, with the exception of the interior plaster, façades and entrances. However, in the interior the main altar of the second half of the 18th century was damaged, the marbling mainly suffering, as well as both of the side altars of St John Baptist and the Birth of the Lord. Fortunately, the altar pictures were not seriously damaged, but the painted illusory design of all the altars was more damaged. Unfortunately, this included the main painted illusory altar by one of the most significant Bohemian painters of late Baroque, Josef Kramolin. Major damage was suffered by the richly carved wooden pews of about 1730 brought here in the past from the church of St Franciscus in Prague and by the wooden Baroque pulpit of the second half of the 18th century, of which the lower part had almost completely disintegrated.

The restoration of the inside furnishings of the church was already started in [northern] autumn 2002 when the renewal and restoration of the marbling of damaged altars were undertaken and biocide conservation was begun of the illusory painted design. Over time, it became clear that the damage to that part of the church was the most serious, because despite repeated biocide treatment, mould on the paintings' surface kept reappearing. For this reason, the complex conservation has not been started yet, as its achievement is also dependent on amassing sufficient funds. However, in 2003 the overall restoration of the church pews and the pulpit was undertaken in the church interior, so that both of these items can now continue to serve their function as before. The completion of the restoration of the interior of the church, that is, the restoration of internal plasters, decoration, and so on, is planned for 2004.

Pocáply – the Church of St Adalbert

The architecturally unique church of St Adalbert in Pocáply built in the style of dynamic Baroque according to Kilian Ignaz Dientzenhofer's design from 1724 to 1726, was flooded to a height of about 130 cm. In the building itself the plaster, façades and entrances were damaged. In the interior the floor was damaged, sinking at the triumphal arch, and the movable items also damaged. The wooden refectories of the side altars from the period around 1735 with St Benedict and with the scene of Crucifixion was most badly affected. The pulpit of the first half of the 18th century and the Baroque carved pews of the same period were also markedly impacted. The main altar's painted illusory design by the painter of Litomerice, F Kutschera, was affected in a very similar manner as the altar of St Simon and Judah church in Steti.

The conservation and building restoration on the church structure were already started in [northern] autumn 2002. The early 21st century outer façade was not so seriously damaged and its treatment only needed cleaning and minor repairs. Already in [northern] autumn 2002, the most seriously damaged refectories of the side altars were brought to the conservation studio where they were restored at the turn of 2002–2003. Then during 2003 the overall treatment of the interior church furnishings was carried out. The church pews, the pulpit and the main altar were stabilised and cleaned. At the same time the floor was repaired. The restoration of the illusory-altar architecture by F Kutschera is planned for 2004.

Prosmky – the Chapel of St Franciscus Seraphinus

The 1770s chapel of St Franciscus Seraphinus in Prosmky was flooded up to a height of about 300 cm. The aggressive floodwaters caused considerable damage to the outer façade, which by contrast to the façades of the other churches, had not been recently repaired, and to the interior decoration. Due to damp's capillary action the wall and ceiling decorations of the second half of the 18th century were also damaged, although they were not directly flooded. Further, the building's stability was slightly weakened and the interior furnishings damaged, the greatest damage being suffered by the marble altar and pulpit of the second half of the 18th century.

The structural and conservation works in the chapel were mostly done in 2003. In both cases it was a total and complex restoration. The structural works included securing its stability, repairs to the truss, re-laying the roofing and repairing the outer façade, including its coating. The restorer's work concentrated principally on the restoration of the fresco decoration of the vaults and walls, and at the same time the pulpit was restored and conservation started on the main altar. Also the interior door was restored, and the stone portals and stone grid separating the presbytery space. The overall treatment of the chapel of St Franciscus Seraphinus will be completed in 2004 with the complex restoration of the main altar.

Petr Hruby and Jakub Patek
Czech ICOMOS

The Imperial Mill in Prague 6 - Bubeneč

Among the many examples from the Czech Republic, presented in the *Heritage at Risk 2002/2003* report in connection with the devastating floods of 2002, was the Imperial Mill, whose condition is still very alarming. This unique Renaissance building with its splendid entry gate based on designs by Sebastiano Serlio and a domed grotto was extensively described by Ivan Prokop Muchka (*Architecture of the Renaissance*, Prague 2001):

In 1584 the Czech Chamber bought an already existing mill which stood at the confluence of the Bubene stream with one of the branches of the Vltava, and work on Emperor Rudolf II's intention to build a kind of garden courtyard compound began almost immediately. Part of the cliff in the hill called Pecka, falling steeply into the water, was quarried out so that it would become accessible not only from the south, along the stream, but also from the middle of Stromovka park, from the summer palace. In this way, business operations could be separated from 'recreational' ones, which served only the ruler. Rudolf favoured this place because he could come here completely alone, on a path with beautiful scenery – the cliff overhang, tiny islands and the picturesque banks of the Vltava – and devote himself to observing the world of nature. (...) The layout of the 'recreational' part of the complex is very simple. It consisted of a two-storey building with a floor plan in the shape of the letter L; the longer side was in practice only an arcaded corridor. Both storeys ended on the west side with a shorter wing, on the ground floor with a passage to the business area and in the upper floor with a hall which could be heated by an 'Italian' fireplace. Unfortunately, in the second half of the 18th century the open arcades were walled in, and in the first half of the 19th century another storey was added. At the beginning of the 20th century the mill became redundant after the canalisation of the river and the complex was recently adapted for new intended uses.