

CZECH REPUBLIC

Endangered and Unused Cultural Heritage

In the previous report, collated for ICOMOS in 2000, we focused on the general summing-up of the threats to items of cultural heritage in the Czech Republic. We also reviewed the poor building and technological condition of much of this heritage. In the text and accompanying photographic documentation, we highlighted some negative examples of the situation.

In the past year, only little has changed – for better or worse – in the condition of items of cultural heritage. The situation has somewhat improved in the sphere of Jewish items of cultural heritage, of which the greater part have been given back to the Jewish Community as restitution. The renovation of synagogues for instance in Prague (the Spanish Synagogue), in the Bohemian localities of Březnice, Radnice, Kdyně and Kasejovice, and in the Moravian localities of Třebíč, Boskovice, Holešov and Dolní Kounice, has been completed or is being undertaken. The State gives a financial contribution to some items of cultural heritage. Jewish cemeteries are also being gradually renovated, mainly through self-help.

The situation is also more hopeful as regards the items of cultural heritage in the former frontier zones, where efforts are made to renovate those little churches that still may be saved. The Czech National Committee of ICOMOS is dealing with these problems and preparing a seminar on the salvation of small churches in the frontier regions. Recently, restoration work is being carried out or has been completed for instance in the churches at Boletice, Malonty, Cetviny, Pohoří na Šumavě, Svěráz, Polná na Šumavě, Svatý Kámen, Dobrá Voda, Hůrka (the chapel for burials), Stráž, Svatá

Karlovy Vary, District of Karlovy Vary, the Spa House Peter, saved from demolition:
state of the exterior in 2000 after renovation, when it became a hotel again.



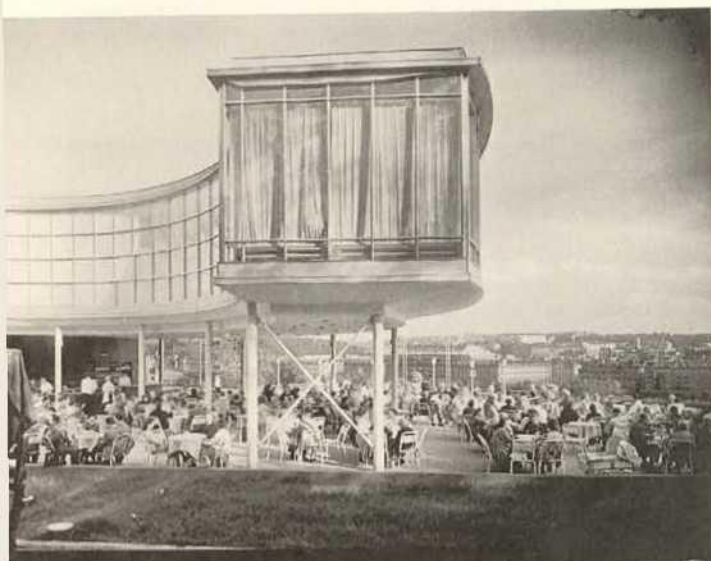
Prague 6 - Střešovice, Müller's Villa, state of the exterior after renovation

Kateřina, Údrč, Kuřivody, Brandov (the decision was made before 1989 to demolish it), Březno, Výsluní and others, but most of them are still waiting for renovation. In the Olomouc region, the salvation of the pilgrimage church of St. James the Bigger and St. Ann has begun; after the withdrawal of Soviet military units from this area, it was found that the state of this church was desolate. However, the Czech Army does not have the financial means for the restoration of cultural-heritage items, which are unneeded properties from its perspective; therefore, it has interrupted their restoration and this church continues to fall into disrepair.

Achievements and Successes

We are pleased that renovation is being carried out on a number of items of cultural heritage, which we listed as unused, endangered and in a bad structural condition for years, and for whose suitable re-use we have looked in vain. For instance, the chateaux at Chyšce, Čechovice, Jindřichovice, Valeč, Kaceřov, Hrádek u Sušice, Dolejší Krušec, Prášíly and others are being renovated successfully. After renovation lasting more than 20 years, the Kynžvart chateau and, last year, the Nebilovy chateau were re-fitted and opened to the public. The monasteries at Kladruby, Teplá, Rajhrad, Šternberk and in other localities, the farmyards Hubenov, Býkov and Kalc of the Plasy monastery, the extraordinary architecture of the riding school at Světce near Tachova, the stronghold Opálka and other monuments are being renovated gradually.

The salvation of the 200 year old framed spa-hotel Peter in Karlovy Vary has been a great success; in recent years, it has faced seven demolition proposals (the last demolition notification was issued in 1989) and the intent to substitute a new building in its place. Successful renovation was completed this year. In Prague, Müller's Villa in Prague 6 – Střešovice, one of the most important architectural monuments from the first half of the 20th century (1928–1930), designed by architects Adolf Loos and Karel Hlota, the renovation of which was begun at the end of 1998, has been renovated successfully and opened to the public. This renovation



Praha 7 - the EXPO 58 Restaurant in the Letná Park: the exterior after the transfer of the building from Brussels after 1960.



The EXPO 58 Restaurant: the exterior after devastation lasting several years - photograph from 2000

Continuing threats

However, a large number of immovable items of cultural heritage remain threatened and not secured, their condition is deteriorating and some of them are already threatened with doom. The chateaux at Kostelní Bříza and Všechnovice, the house (land-register No. 14) in the square at Tovačov (broken-down floors), the house (land-register No. 4) in the square at Lipník nad Bečvou and the summer refectory at Klášterní Hradisko in Olomouc are among them. As a consequence of the ever-deteriorating state of the buildings on the premises of the Pivoň monastery, its farm buildings have collapsed. A number of examples of places in danger also exist in Prague, and these are discussed below.

The EXPO 58 Restaurant

Constructed for the Czechoslovak exposition at the World Exhibition in Brussels in 1958, this pavilion was assessed as the best and given the Golden Star prize. It also received another thirteen important awards as an excellent architectural work, as well as for its perfect interior. Therefore, the authorities decided to transfer the buildings of this exposition to Czechoslovakia. Set up in the Letná Park in Prague, this Brussels (originally Pilsen) Restaurant was used as such until 1990, when it was included in an auction within the so-called small privatisation of enterprises. Changes of owners, problematic management and vandalism ensued. As a result, the state of the property is desperate and only its basic structure remains. A problematic project to convert the restaurant into offices (an administrative building) has been approved. In mid-2000, the Club for Ancient Prague, together with the National Technological Museum, organised a protest press-conference. The situation has still not been solved in favour of this item of cultural heritage.

The Kinskýs' Summer House (land-register No. 98)

Situated in a dominant position in the Kinskýs' Garden in Prague 5-Smíchov, the house is an example of neo-classical architecture from 1827–31, designed by the Viennese architect J. Koch. Collections of the Ethnographic Department of the National Museum were housed there from 1905. As maintenance work was not carried out during the years of the totalitarian regime, the state of the property became so bad that the collections had to be transferred elsewhere. As the owner did not renovate or at least secure the property thereafter, the current condition of the building is critical. The present owner is the Municipal Council of Prague. Proceeding without permission, the former private owner pulled down part of the gatehouse (at the entrance to the Kinskýs' Garden) when reconstructing it for dwelling purposes. Although the owner asserts that he carried out reconstruction and only part of the monument collapsed, the fact remains that a new building now stands in which modern material has been used.

The Cibulka Farmstead (land-register number 118 in Prague 5 - Košíře)

The building has been documented as a farmstead as early as the 14th century. Rebuilt in Baroque style, it is an Empire farmstead that today has an extensive, quite overgrown park with several romantic buildings. Without intervention, it will continue to go to rack and ruin. A small Empire chateau with a tower forms the core of the ensemble; dwelling and farm buildings surround the central courtyard. The state of the entire site is gloomy. Since 1989, the

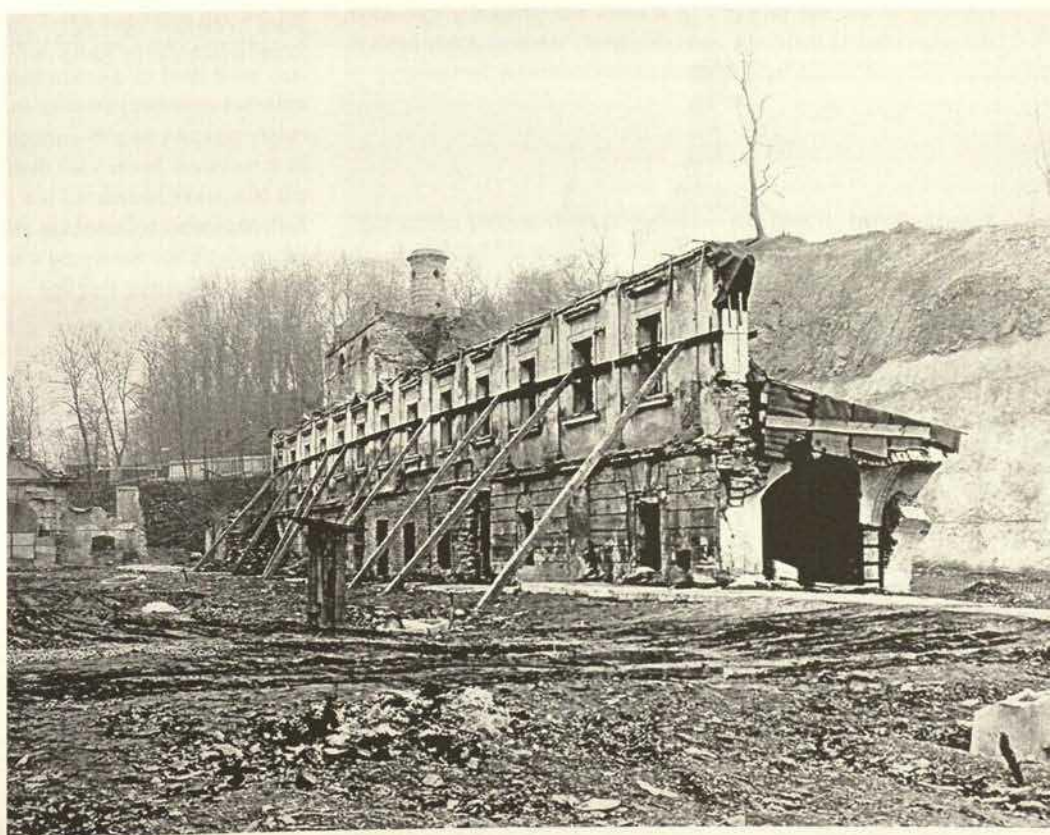
is exceptionally successful, because the original state of not only the interior and exterior, but also of the inner equipment, including furniture and the works of art, has been preserved to a maximum extent. A proposal for declaring the villa an item of UNESCO World Cultural Heritage is being prepared.

The renovation of important palace gardens below Prague Castle has also been almost completed. After the successful renovation of the Ledebur Garden and the Small and the Large Pálffy Gardens, the renovation of the Small Fürstenberg Garden was completed last year and this garden was opened to the public in a ceremony. The renovation of the Large Fürstenberg Garden is being planned.

An overwhelming majority of historic towns, municipal conservation sites and municipal conservation zones also endeavour to renovate items of cultural heritage; as a result, their aspect has changed much for the better in the last few years.



Praha 6-Bubeneč, the Imperial Mill
in the Royal Game Preserve: the
exterior in 1991



owner has been the Autoturist enterprise (with foreign participation); its original project was to use the buildings for tourist purposes, but as there is a surplus of such facilities, Autoturist presented a plan for the reconstruction of these buildings to convert them to luxury flats. However, this project has not been implemented, due to the pressure exerted by the authorities for the State preservation of monuments, and at least minimum security has been imposed: stop-gap repairs of roofs and gutters, provisional fencing and water removal from the cellars – undertaken with the financial contribution of the State.

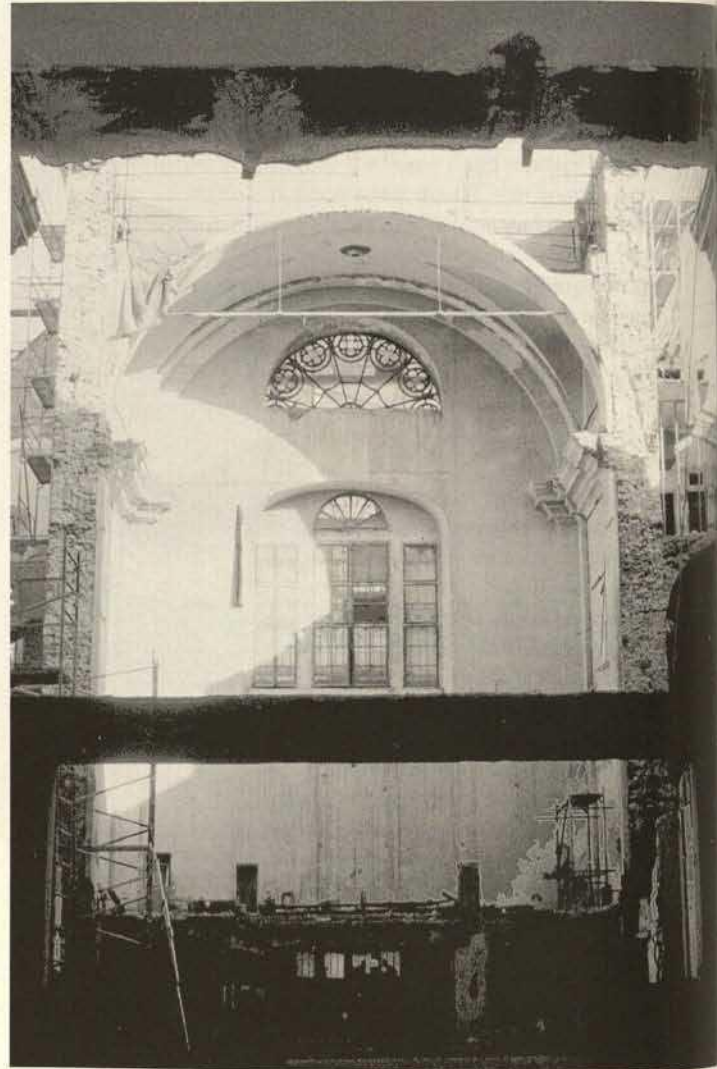
The destiny of monuments that have been impaired or destroyed by human intervention forms a separate chapter. Recently, a bulldozer demolished a Gothic house with frescoes in the square at Kašperské Hory. At Velešín, the house (land-register No. 65) with mediaeval vaults has been torn down after the procedure for its inscription as an item of cultural heritage was initiated.

Prague

Sadly, this part of the report also concerns the gem among towns – Prague. We have outlined several negative examples of the approach to the renovation of items of cultural heritage in the city.

The Imperial Mill

The Mill is located in the Royal Game Preserve at Bubeneč in Prague 6, which the Emperor Rudolph II acquired in 1584. From around 1589 it was reconstructed as his private summer residence – it represents a unique set of mannerist buildings, works of garden architecture and waterworks. Due to a lack of maintenance, the structural condition of the individual items gradually deteriorated. The owner (known as ART CENTRUM before November 1989 and renamed after it became a joint-stock company) allegedly built depots at the site; its successor, EDERA Ltd, declared its intention to use the property as a hotel and gradually tore-down the neo-classical buildings and completely destroyed this extraor-



Praha 1 - the New Town, the U Hybernů House: the interior of the nave of the former church after its partial demolition, photograph from 2000

Kuřivody, District of Česká Lípa, St Gallus' Church: state of the exterior after the withdrawal of Soviet military units from this former military zone



Kuřivody, District of Česká Lípa, St Gallus' Church: the interior today



dinary monument, of which only ruins have been preserved: part of the grotto and part of the entrance gate and a corridor or gallery.

The U Hybernů House

Originally the early Baroque church of the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary, it was built by C. Lurago between 1653 and 1659. The church building was reconstructed between 1811 and 1813, after being closed down by the Emperor Joseph II, to become a neo-classical customs house. Valuable architectural elements were mostly preserved, as shown in a photograph from the 1940s, at which time it was reconstructed for use as an exhibition hall. The State leased the property to the enterprise MUSICAL Ltd. The present reconstruction of the property to convert it to a musical theatre has fundamentally damaged and impaired this cultural monument: approximately one-quarter of the preserved walling of the church has been demolished, including both pillars of the triumphal arch with the adjacent areas of the chancel and of the transept of the church, to enable enlargement for the stage and the gridiron area. Part of the building was newly roofed with a metal truss, which incorporates storeys and was substituted for the original wooden truss. This drastic intervention has greatly damaged and impaired this important work of architecture.

Among other problem sites, we will mention only Herget's brickyard in Prague 1 – the Lesser Town, and the Hotel Juliš in Wenceslas Square in Prague 1 – New Town.

Former Military Sites

There is continued difficulty in dealing with the cases in which military garrisons have ceased to exist in extensive areas with items of cultural heritage. This is especially true of former monasteries, such as Zelená Hora, Louka or Chotěšov, where, for several years now, the authorities have been unable to find either the financial means or investors interested in the renovation and suitable re-uses of these properties.

Still more complicated is the search for a suitable use for the Baroque fortresses – municipal conservation sites Terezín and Josefov – where garrisons have ceased to exist. In both these cases, the problem is the use of extensive military properties for other purposes, the blocking of some properties due to property rights issues that have still not been clarified, the natural devastation of the properties as they have been unused for several years, and the preservation and gradual renovation of the fortification system.

Terezín has four big barracks and a peripheral fortification circle, all in a bad structural condition and left unused for 2 to 3 years. The interventions into the structure of the town will be carried out according to a recently drawn-up regulation plan for the centre. For the time being, the authorities have been unable to find another use or sufficient financial means, either domestic or from abroad.

Most of the buildings in Josefov were used by Soviet military units, including the largest property in the town – the hospital – which they abandoned in 1991. Since then, it has been empty, becoming dilapidated, and it has been impossible to find a use for it. Meanwhile it has been possible to reconstruct the headquarters building to make flats. As this process has proven to be a good one, steps have been taken to transfer the ownership of the former artillery barracks to the municipality. The project documentation for the reconstruction of the barracks to make flats has been completed and the municipality is trying to find the means to implement this project. The preservation and gradual renovation of the three-kilometre-long fortification system is a problem. For the time being, the authorities have been able to provide for the main-

tenance of three sections, whereas the remaining part of the ramparts gradually fall into disrepair or are being dismantled as building material.

Threatened Items of Cultural Heritage – Vernacular Village Buildings

Original vernacular village buildings (such as barns, granaries, cowsheds, sheds, haylofts) are a specific group of items of architectural heritage. Due to progress, many of these buildings lost their original function, especially in the 20th century. Methods of agricultural production, dwelling and the overall life-style have changed substantially. In the conditions existing in Czechoslovakia, the era of the rise of communism impacted unfavourably on the overall image of the countryside on the one hand and, on the other, on the thought and opinions of village people – the result was a break in the continuity of cultural development. The post-revolutionary period led to a relaxation and a revival of citizens' activities, but the deformations of past decades are manifested in the absence of humility and deference to the values created by humans and nature, in the intensification of the way of life focusing on consumption and fostered already by socialism, and in the loss of legal consciousness. In the village setting, this may be seen particularly in the increasing pressure for usually unsuitable and even ruthless reconstruction of valuable original works of vernacular architecture, to adapt them for residential and commercial pur-

Stará Voda, District of Olomouc, the pilgrimage church of St. James the Bigger and St. Ann: state of the exterior in 1991 after the withdrawal of Soviet units from this area



poses. It is also seen in the continued wilful and ill-considered elimination of older high-quality housing, owing to the desire to obtain new building plots.

The general shortage of means for protection of cultural heritage is a very serious problem, with particular impact on monuments of vernacular architecture. A long list of threatened village buildings protected as monuments is a consequence of this situation. Cases of the intentional damaging of, or of a conscious lack of interest in these monuments, leading to their gradual devastation and ruin, are the saddest. These cases include:

- the gradual 'disappearance' and complete rebuilding of the timbered farm (land-register No. 45) at Studeňany;
- the demolition of the half-timbered cottage (land-register No. 78) at Stachy, which was damaged by fire, but could have been saved;
- the timbered house (land-register No. 1/106) at Rumburk, the setting on-fire of which was not due to an unlucky coincidence;
- the collapse of the attractively built mill (land-register No. 66) at Nová Ves nad Popelkou;
- the unauthorised demolition of the farm (land-register No. 59) at Neubuz and of another farmstead at Vysoká;
- the total reconstruction of the farms (land-register No. 84) at Vysoká Lípa, (land-register No. 17) at Újezd, (land-register No. 11) at Slatina, (land-register No. 42) at Pístina, (land-register No. 4/28) at Dobčice, and more.

There is a large number of original village buildings threatened by a long-term lack of maintenance, including:

- the mediaeval granary (land-register No. 1) at Modlešovice;

Stará Voda, District of Olomouc, the pilgrimage church of St. James the Big-ger and St. Ann: the interior today

- the extensive timbered farm (land-register No. 36) at Havlovice;
- the framed farm (land-register No. 111) at Hynčice;
- the timbered house (land-register No. 10) at Krásná, probably the largest in the Czech Republic;
- the farm (land-register No.8) at Ounuz;
- one of the last intact Valachian farms, (land- register No. 25) at Nový Hrozenkov-Vraneč;
- the mill (land-register No. 22) at České Křižánky;
- the set of timbered haylofts in the wet meadows near Třeboň.

In addition, there are those buildings damaged by unauthorised and quite unsuitable remodelling carried-out gradually, such as:

- the Renaissance farm (land-register No. 1) at Krnín;
- the Renaissance mill at Dolní Věstonice;
- the remarkable farmsteads (land-register No. 19) at Krsmol, (land-register No. 93) at Pavlov, (land-register Nos. 12 and 49) at Štítary, (land-register No. 4) at Ubušín, (land-register No. 37) at Šluknov, (land-register No. 32) at Studeňany, (land-register No. 5) at Záluží u Vlastiboře;
- part of the historic housing in the Old Town at Strážnice.

However, many positive examples of successful repairs on, and regeneration of, protected vernacular village buildings with a suitable and satisfactory use also exist. For instance:

- the farms (land-register No. 53) at Rtyň, (land-register No. 171) at Čistá, (land-register No. 34) at Vidlatá Seč, (land-register Nos. 4 and 6) at Střezivojice;
- the house (land-register No. 4) at Krásná Lípa;
- the farms (land-register Nos. 8, 9 and 13) at Doubrava and (land-register Nos. 1 and 13) at Nový Drahov;
- several farms on the village greens at Příkazy, Vratěnin, Záluží, and Holašovice.

Ongoing challenges

Cultural-heritage properties, especially the chateaux that have become objects of speculation (as we wrote in the previous report), remain a problem; their owners attract credit for their other activities, not for the securing or renovation of properties that are items of cultural heritage value. Bankruptcy proceedings have been instituted for some of these chateaux, and bankruptcy administrators appointed. Without help, all these chateaux are quickly falling into disrepair.

Sadly, the situation does not change with respect to the number of thefts that have literally inundated the country after the revolution (1989). These are thefts not only of furniture, paintings, china and sculptures, but also of built-in pieces of cultural heritage: large forged gratings; statues in churches, cemeteries and the landscape; wayside shrines, crosses, steps to churches, copper grates and fallpipes, building material and more.

The inhibition of industry contributes to an improvement in the environment on the one hand, but on the other leads to the redundancy of old factory-halls and equipment, thus raising the problem of either their new use or of their elimination. This also concerns the cessation of mining activities, coal pits and steelworks in the Kladno and Ostrava regions and the general issue of items of industrial cultural heritage.

For Ostrava-Vítkovice, a comparative study was drawn up in 2000 of the costs of both the demolition of the premises and the indispensable securing of selected properties. It turned out that the costs are approximately equal. Moreover, the document titled 'The solution to the problem of the preservation of the premises of the



Hlubina Mine, coking plant and a blast furnace in the Vítkovice Ironworks', including the cost of repairs, has been drawn up.

At present, the Philosophical Faculty of Charles University is drawing up a sociological study 'The public interest and the cultural-heritage protection, preservation and presentation to the public of the premises of the immovable item of cultural heritage: The Hlubina Mine - the Vítkovice Ironworks in Ostrava'.

In the sphere of archaeological items of cultural heritage, everything stated in our 2000 report remains the same.

Financing for the renovation of items of cultural heritage continues to be insufficient. The promised total amount available for 2002 for programmes for which the Ministry of Culture of the Czech Republic contributes to owners for the renovation of items of cultural heritage is a little higher than in 2001, but the real need is multiple. The funds for preventive protection against thefts have been diminished substantially (approximately to one-tenth of their total amount in 2000).

The List of the Most Endangered and Unused Immovable Items of Cultural Heritage in the Czech Republic, which the State Institute for the Preservation of Monuments drew up and published in 1999, will be updated in 2001.

ICOMOS Czech Republic



Studeňany, land-register No. 45, District of Jičín - a dilapidated timbered farm before its complete demolition



Havlovice, land-register No. 36, District of Trutnov - a timbered farm from the end of the 18th century in a critical state



Krásná, land-register No. 10, District of Jablonec nad Nisou - a massive timbered house built in the mid-18th century, its present state being critical