



1: Karlovy Vary, view of the city, J. Schindler 1652

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The Towns of the West Bohemian Spa Triangle in the Context of the European Spa Heritage

Spas and the spa industry per se are a remarkable cultural and social phenomenon that has been evolving for over 2500 years. In the course of these millennia, spa facilities and equipment were also developing so that they could meet the requirements of new balneological methods. Spa architecture, too, has its particularities, due to the special purposes it has to serve, which set it apart from common urban development. Spa locations therefore have specific architectural characteristics, especially in terms of high artistic and aesthetic quality. Although the tradition of the spa resorts in the West Bohemian Spa Triangle is not as old as that of the ancient resorts in Southern Europe or the Near East, their practices are closely linked to the hundreds of years of develop-

ment in the south and west of Europe, which puts them on a par with the most prominent global spa resorts.

Of the West Bohemian spas, Karlovy Vary has the longest spa tradition. When contemplating how to systematically populate the valley around Vřídlo (Sprudel), the King and Emperor of Bohemia, Charles IV, must have certainly had recollections of his travels in Italy at the beginning of the 1330s, and he must also have had them when he founded a university in Prague. Due to the fact that he was staying in Lucca while representing his father, King Jan Luxemburg, at the North Italian Signoria of Luxemburg, he must have known the already renowned spa locations in the Apennines

of Tuscany, such as Bagni di Lucca, Bagni di Pisa, Porretta, etc. Thanks to his broad classical education, he must have also known of the spa in Pozzuoli (Puteoli) on the shore of the Naples Bay, even if only from the poems of Pietro of Ebola (1220).

From the very beginning, medical treatments in Karlovy Vary consisted predominantly of bathing in mineral water. The first mentions from the 16th century speak of public bathhouses with bath cabins, called *Badenstuben*, as was the case in any other European spa (Baden in Switzerland, Aachen etc.). However, an undeniable rarity must have been the practice of transporting spring water directly to the bathhouses by means of wooden troughs.¹ Usually, the bathtubs or pools on the ground floor of the bathhouses were arranged in a square and were set into the ground, with descending steps for access. Next to the pools were benches along the surrounding walls, where people could rest or refresh themselves. Adequate ventilation was ensured by means of large openings in the wooden walls on the side facing the river. Notably, due to the temperature of the spring, the water had to be cooled for at least twelve hours so that its temperature would be tolerably warm for the patients. In addition to curative baths, there were common hygienic services provided, as well. Drinking treatments were administered in heated rooms on the upper level, where patients or guests would lie down for sweating. Service personnel would carry

the spring water to the spa guests in two-liter clay jugs and pour it into cups, called *ollulas*, from which the guests would drink it – they were the predecessors of the present-day spa cups. Spa guests, especially the aristocrats, would rent fully equipped houses for the entire length of their stay in the given spa.² Contrary to other spas elsewhere in Europe, there were no open-air pools here.

The public baths, *Gemeindebad*, stood directly at the Vřídlo (*Sprudel*) Spring and had the form of a single-storey structure with large openings covered with simple wooden-lattice shutters. The saddle roof with semi-timber gables had two long openings, one above the other, for releasing the steam from the spring water. The Vřídlo Spring had a total of three taps – one for drinking, one for the baths, and one for utilitarian purposes, such as laundry washing and scalding of slaughtered animals and poultry. Similar utilitarian exploitation of hot springs could also be observed in France (Plombières, Dax), England (Bath, Harrogate), or in a number of German spas.³

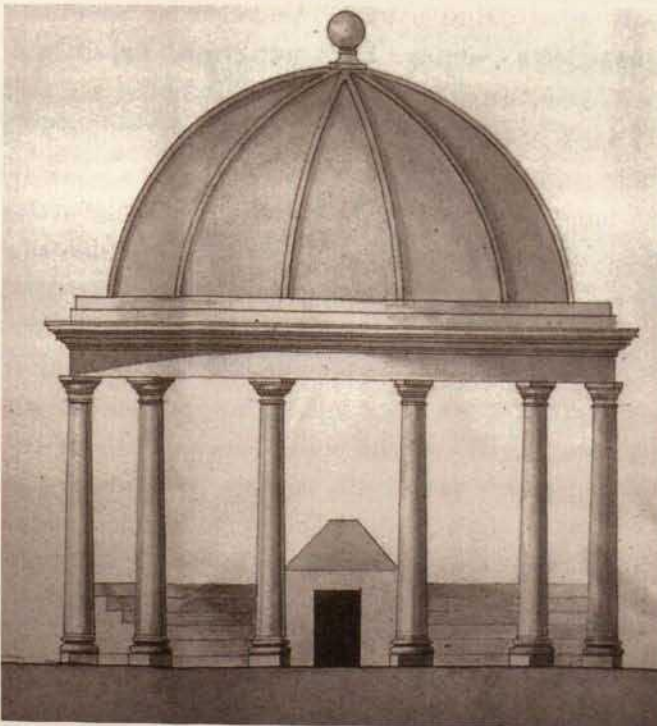
Substantial changes in the image of the town occurred only in the mid-18th century. The change was due to a different

1 PAYER 1984, p. 22.

2 ZEMAN 2006, p. 13-14.

3 BOŘÍKOVÁ /BOŘÍK 2004, p. 59.

2: Harrogate, Sulphur Well, 1808 (l), and Františkovy Lázně, Francis spring (r)





3: Mariánské Lázně, Cross Spring

approach to the river as an element in the town's urban structure. By building stone banks along the river in 1756 the town created an elegant promenade lined with wealthy houses and summer cottages in the Louka (*Meadow*) suburban district. When the Supreme Margrave Rudolf Chotek had rows of chestnut trees planted along the stone riverbanks, the town suddenly gained an urban appearance of metropolitan quality. Making the town look as metropolitan and as similar to the Italian and French towns of a European format (Rome, Naples, or Paris) as possible was quite deliberate. The architectural solutions adopted by Karlovy Vary intentionally resembled the famous seaside promenade Via Nuova Marina with the enchanting view of the Naples Bay, or the promenade in Bad Ems. Until the 19th century, sand was regularly delivered to the Karlovy Vary promenade to improve the quality of the ground for walking.

As in other important spas, in Karlovy Vary, too, a building with a large hall (called *Cure Hall* or *Kursalon* or *Kursaal*) was built near the spring, where spa guests would gather and converse, undisturbed. Built in the years 1774-77, the „Sprudelhalle“ was the first real *Kursalon* or *Kursaal* in Karlovy Vary. This type of building was designated for group or individual entertainment, such as conversation, board games, and reading, even though it was called “sala di cure” (*the cure hall*), whereas in German-speaking countries it was also called Conversation House (*Konversationshaus*). The first

houses of this kind were inspired above all by the architecture in 18th-century England, where special buildings, called *Assembly Halls* or *Assembly Rooms*, were built in the Palladian style and used for small talk, social events, balls, evening parties with dancing and music, or where tea was served and card games were played (Bath, Harrogate etc).⁴ Karlovy Vary used to eye the most prominent spas in Europe, such as Termes Plombières in France or Bad Pyrmont in Germany, with aspiring adoration.

When in the 1760s Dr. Becher discovered that the healing water contains carbon dioxide which is very volatile, he thought of a way how to drink the thermal water immediately after collecting it at the source. The number of spa guests coming to the spring from their homes to get water for their daily needs was constantly growing. In order that water from the healing springs could be collected even in unfavourable weather, simple shelters and small pavilions were built over the spring outlets – eventually, these simple structures became more and more sophisticated. Historically, the period known as the age of Enlightenment coincided with an enthusiasm for the classical arts of Ancient Rome and later on also of Greece. Thus, with new temples, grottoes or a *monopteros* with open colonnades the pavilions and spring water facilities were designed so as to resemble

4 BOTHE 1984b.



4: Mariánské Lázně, Ferdinand spring (l), and Aachen, Elisenbrunnen (r, opposite page)

noble antique buildings.⁵ These pavilions provided access to the spring for many spa guests simultaneously, as well as the necessary ventilation of the area. In addition to antique and Renaissance models, the pavilions and glories were also often inspired by Georgian structures from England with Palladian motifs. Therefore, after England had adopted architectural motifs from Italy, these were subsequently transformed and imported into other countries and spas all over Europe (Harrogate, Bad Pyrmont). One of the earliest *monopteros* glorie structures is, without a doubt, the Dorotin Gloriette in Karlovy Vary, built in 1791, even though it was only a lookout pavilion without a spring. Thanks to the aristocrats from all parts of Europe taking fancy in socialising in Karlovy Vary, before long, the town's environment became known as a highly pluralistic society that could absorb and breed all kinds of artistic and historical impulses from most diverse sources.

Small-capacity pavilions over mineral springs could no longer accommodate the crowds of spa guests and patients, as the popularity of spas continued to grow. Thus, pavilions began to be projected that were far more spacious so that they could provide access to many more people at once and simultaneously be used as a socialising element, i.e. for promenades. These long, airy structures – colonnades supported with straight architraves – were best suited for such purposes. In the course of this process, in addition to colonnades architects created for Karlovy Vary and Mariánské

Lázně unique dome-like structures with an open-air atrium that evoke Greek or Roman palaestrae. The origins of this magnificent architectural concept are credited mainly to Georg Fischer, a civil engineer from the country's Building Administration in Prague. Fischer was very effectively seconded by the director of the Building Administration, Josef Esch, who completed the construction of the Vřídelní Colonnade in Karlovy Vary. The colonnade had an open atrium surrounded with columned halls (not preserved). According to his own words, in his work Josef Esch always followed the rules of the best old masters (Antoine Desgodets, *Measurements of Roman Empire Monuments*, 1682), as well as more recent masters (Jean Nicolas Louis Durand). Simultaneously, he studied contemporary architectural trends (Joseph Kornhäusel, Baden near Vienna).⁶

Furthermore, architectural motifs of pre-revolutionary and revolutionary France (Etienne Louis Boullée, Claude-Nicolas Ledoux) were used, especially in terms of combining cylindrical and rectangular building elements. Thanks to Josef Esch's creative approach, this led to the formation of a new style of spa architecture, where the central dome, the so-called glorie, arches over the actual source of the spring, is elevated and linked to lower promenade halls in the form of colonnades or stand-up to areas with bay-style terminals

⁵ NESMĚRÁK 2002.

⁶ KUBÍČEK 1958, p. 299; ZEMAN 2006, p. 38.



suitable for socialising. A similar example of a pavilion with a colonnade can be found at the Elisenbrunnen in Aachen, built in the years 1822–27 by Johann Peter Cremer and Karl Friedrich Schinkel. They, too, added two lower colonnades (stoae) to a central gloriette with a portico.

In addition to balneological and balneo-technical information, the spa authorities in West Bohemia drew inspiration for their own spa facilities from the leading spa centres in Europe, not only as architectural models, but also as solutions for the urban development.

5: Františkovy Lázně, aerial view



One of the most important spa resorts in Great Britain, whose urban planning concept purposely reflects and exploits the countryside and which undeniably had a major influence on other European spas, was 18th century Bath with its semi-circular town square, named the Royal Crescent (John Wood Jr., 1765–75), open on one side into the park below. In Bohemia, a particularly unique example of a neo-classical symmetrical urban structure with axial streets surrounded with a large park is Františkovy Lázně, based on an urban plan by Tobias Gruber (1791). The late Baroque concept of axial streets is also found in Bad Brückenau, Germany (1747), where the two axes are connected to two small pavilions. The circular layout of Františkovy Lázně on the outskirts of the east end of the town was used as a horseback riding area, with references to a typical English Circus and a similarly shaped promenade in Bad Pyrmont.

The planned integration of a spa into a natural park is best characterised in the concept of Mariánské Lázně designed by Skalník and Esch (1818–23). There terraces were built along the circumference of a large park opening into the green area. This was reminiscent of Wood's new district in Bath and a similar principle applied in Harrogate. Since it is a known fact that Skalník had visited Great Britain before completing his plans for Mariánské Lázně, we may safely assume that he may have visited some of the then-popular English spas, in addition to various parks around aristocratic residences.

Thus, the West Bohemian spas came to be known above all for their colonnades. The structures built over the springs

and the majestic columns of the colonnades were the purest examples of classical or neo-classical architecture. Simultaneously, they represent one of the peak periods in the architecture of the first decades of the 19th century in the Czech lands and in Europe. As these architectural forms became very popular quite early in the spa industry era, they attracted many followers, thus greatly contributing to a promulgation of spa culture in other places. Also owing to the great popularity of the West Bohemian spas among the Russian gentry and on the part of Czar Alexander I, a great admirer of architecture inspired by antiquity, the West Bohemian styles, as well as English Palladianism, had a strong influence on Russian architecture, especially in St. Petersburg.⁷

The neo-classical development in Karlovy Vary, Mariánské Lázně and Františkovy Lázně can be compared to that in other parts of Central Europe, for example to Baden near Vienna during its neo-classical reconstruction after the fire in 1812, or the neo-classical development in Bad Ischl, Upper Austria. The list of important neo-classical buildings has to include those in the above-mentioned Bad Pyrmont, in Montecatini Terme (then Austrian Tuscany), or Abano Terme; in the United Kingdom, the neo-classical spa in Bath (Hot Bath 1777, Cross Bath 1783). In the Czech lands, the neo-classical architecture of the West Bohemian spa towns is comparable especially to the neo-classical period in Teplice (1787–1826), Libverda (1776–1818), and also to the unique, mostly wooden neo-classical buildings in Karlova Studánka in Jeseníky.

⁷ ZATLOUKAL 2001, p. 204.

6: Mariánské Lázně, aerial view



The structural solutions of the spa facilities in West Bohemia were derived from the models and principles of individual bathhouses containing premises for curative procedures. Such structures were generally known under the German term *Kurhaus*. Like the ancient baths, they were purposefully designed to accommodate spa treatments, often with separate pools for men and women. Inner courtyards had circumferential corridors with access to individual rooms with anterooms leading to bathrooms with bathtubs along the circumference of the building. In the late 19th century, older dual-tract structural dispositions were based on the principle of a triple-tract with a central corridor and bath cabins on both sides. This layout was also applied in Karlovy Vary (Kurhaus, current Lázně III, Císařské Lázně), in Mariánské Lázně (Centrální, Slatinné, and Nové Lázně), as well as in Františkovy Lázně (Loimann, Cartellieri, and Císařské Lázně). The composition elements of Císařské Lázně in Františkovy Lázně (1878–80) derived from models of classical antiquity (Caracalla Terme with a large pool in the background), circular frigidaria or caldaria (Pompeii near Forum and in Stabiae before 62 AD), whereas the layout derived from a project by Josef Durm for the spa that he built for Heinrich Vierordt, a banker in Karlsruhe (built in 1871–73).⁸ The architectural forms of Císařské Lázně in Karlovy Vary (1893–95) clearly indicate a French influence.⁹

In the mid-19th century, elements of Historicism reached the West Bohemian region and were used along with the last phase of late neo-classicism. Thus, West Bohemia became the region where historicist architecture was most frequently applied in the Czech lands. During the age of Romanticism, towards the end of the 18th century, the first neo-Gothic buildings (Labitzký Hall in Poštovní Dvůr in Karlovy Vary, 1791–93; pavilion of the Ambrožův Spring in Mariánské Lázně, 1826) were erected. However, the best examples in the English neo-Gothic style in their most basic form can be seen in Františkovy Lázně, and in the buildings designed by the local architects Karl Wiedermann and Adam Haberzettel: in the 1850s, a small historicist ornament in the form of linear and articulated attics of the Tudor type, castellation (including defence bastions), pilasters with a recessed inner



7: Františkovy Lázně, colonnade Solný and Luční spring (a), and Wiesbaden, Conversationshaus, W. Tomblason, 1840 (b)

lace-like decorations all over the façade, giving Františkovy Lázně its unique appearance and subtle charm.¹⁰

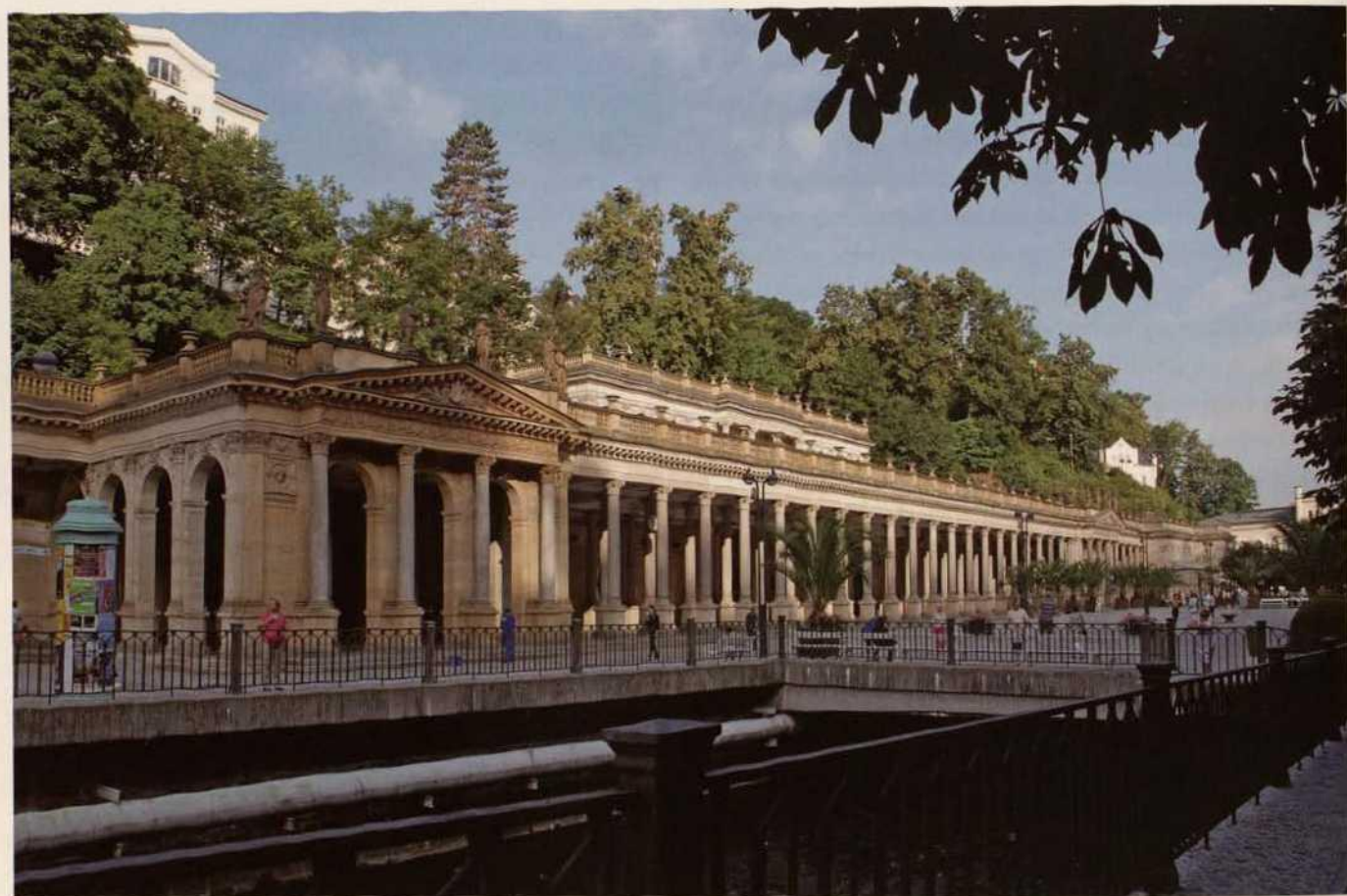
In addition to the neo-Gothic elements, the romantic character of the West Bohemian spas is further enhanced by special characteristics, such as wood-carved details and timberwork. Structures with decorative semi-timbered walls and masterly gable constructions, recessed balconies, bay windows or dormer windows, decoratively carved balconies and gables, are traditionally called Swiss or Tyrolean architecture. Architecture of this provenience is typical especially for the spa in Kyselka, where the initial stage of its development reflected the ambitions of the French Emperor Napoleon III in Vichy or Aix-les-Bains.¹¹ Densely structured timberwork with vertical beams and large St. Andrew's crosses is typical for French-speaking or English-speaking regions. Only towards the end of the 19th century did the West

⁸ BOTHE 1984a.

⁹ ZEMAN 2009.

¹⁰ MACEK 1989, p. 52; ZEMAN 2010.

¹¹ JARRASSÉ/GRENIER 1985.



8: Karlovy Vary, colonnade The Mill spring

Bohemian designers turn to the old German tradition of timberwork and wooden architecture for inspiration.

In the mid-1860s, strict Historicism and the style of the early Italian Renaissance began to penetrate the architecture of the West Bohemian spas. The first such structure was the former theatre in Františkovy Lázně, built in 1867 according to a project by the Viennese architect Hügel, in the style of a "classical" ancient basilica. An example of rather pompous Viennese Neo-Renaissance with a touch of French Neo-Renaissance can be seen in Františkovy Lázně, especially at the Conversation Hall of the *Kurhaus* (Společenský Dům, built in 1876), the majestic Císařské Lázně from 1878–80, or at the noble Imperial Villa from 1878 with caryatids in the recessed balconies and a stairway in the interior resembling the style of French spas of the Second Empire era (for example Vichy or Aix-les-Bains). Neo-Renaissance continued to follow the principles of Italian Renaissance colonnades and halls, as can be seen in the example of the elegant Mlýnská Colonnade in Karlovy Vary by architect Josef Zitek. By that time, the building authorities in Karlovy Vary were watching very closely the development in other spas elsewhere in the world, especially in Baden-Baden and Wiesbaden, as

they endeavoured to keep up with them in every way possible. After all, both architects, Ferdinand Fellner and Hermann Helmer, when designing Císařské Lázně in Karlovy Vary, let themselves be inspired by famous French spas. The design of the entrance with three bays capped with domes indicates an influence of the Casino concept realised by Charles Garnier in the French spa of Vittel in 1884 (which no longer exists in its original form).¹² The layout is shaped like a horseshoe, as in Vittel (1884) and in the Swiss spa Bad Ragaz (1866). In the case of the Karlovy Vary spa named Císařské Lázně, however, this structural setup was technologically quite unique at the time.¹³

In the second half of the 19th century, architecture and the building industry were marked by an increased utilization of new construction materials, for example iron and cast iron. Elements made of these new materials became fashionable even in the construction of colonnades, as was also the case in the West Bohemian spa towns, where designers had begun to take a fancy to the monumentality of the Baroque

¹² Ibid.

¹³ ZEMAN/PRUDIK 2009.



9: Karlovy Vary, Theatre (l), and Wiesbaden, Theatre (r)

style and late Historicism. Such inspiration came especially from England and later on also from France, where spa towns, both large and small, built pavilions, verandas, lodges, as well as majestic covered promenades (galleries) with iron and cast-iron structural elements, instead of using wood (as in Harrogate and Royal Tunbridge Wells in the UK; Bad Kissingen in Germany; Contrexéville, Vichy and Vittel in France; Spa in Belgium). However, the sturdiness of the colonnades in Karlovy Vary and Mariánské Lázně was superior to all the others.

In the 1880s, architecture began to adopt several diverse styles at the same time, as the general development led towards the adoption of late Historicism. A determining influence is being ascribed above all to the architecture of Imperial Vienna. Among the most important architects active in Karlovy Vary during this period were above all Ferdinand Fellner and Hermann Helmer. The subsequent remodelling of buildings by using the vocabulary of Historicism took root particularly in Karlovy Vary and Mariánské Lázně, assuring these towns a leading position among the spas not only in Bohemia, but in all of Europe, and worldwide fame. Symbols played a major role in the architectural designs of that period. The purpose was to create an illusion of the world, and the objective was to make it as theatrical as possible. Architecture enabled spa guests to travel in space and time without having to leave the place of their stay. It enabled them to take a walk in sunny Italy, visit enchanting parts of

France, the British Isles, or even see the Orient.¹⁴ Moreover, the natural setting of the West Bohemian spas in the romantic environment of parks, forests, and rock cliffs was as attractive as the idealised props of the *Theatrum Mundi*.

As the fame of the West Bohemian spa towns kept growing, so did the number of spa guests. It was necessary to assure adequate accommodation capacities. In addition to the existing small roadside inns, new *spa hotels* were built which began to fulfil multiple functions – as food providers and social places, in addition to providing overnight accommodation. Before long, these grand hotels, sanatoria, boarding houses, and villas changed the overall appearance of spa towns considerably and forever. The most important examples are: Grandhotel Pupp and Imperial in Karlovy Vary; Hotel Výmar and Esplanade in Mariánské Lázně; and Radium Palace in Jáchymov. In the 1890s, a new phenomenon emerged – the ostentatious neo-Baroque, influenced once again by Viennese architecture, and this time combined with elements of “new” Rococo. Likewise, the architects and builders in Mariánské Lázně let themselves be inspired by the elegant architecture in France and Italy. The appearance of Mariánské Lázně in the late 19th century is attributed primarily to architect Josef Schaffer, who also returned to his native town after completing his studies in Vienna, and to Arnold Heymann, who was a native of Vienna. Their projects are counted among the most beautiful buildings of this spa

14 ZEMAN 2010.



10: Mariánské Lázně, New Spa (a), and Monaco, Monte-Carlo, Casino (b)

town to this day. In the case of Schaffer, his inspiration by the architecture of the French Riviera is quite evident. The strongest influence of this source of inspiration can be seen in his design of New Spa, which has a pair of turrets next to the entrance bay, and a *Kursaal* with a massive dome and recessed balconies with porticoes on the side wings, built in the neo-classical style of Josef Esch's *Vřídelní Lázně* in Karlovy Vary. The central section with the dome was loosely inspired by Hyacinth Michel's *Kurhaus* in the Imperial spa of Bad Ischl from 1872–75.¹⁵ The façade of the Palladian villa in Mariánské Lázně, with its portal adorned by giant female

figures, evokes the impression of Venice or Vicenza. Arnold Heymann favoured central motifs with a pair of turrets and brought the fairy-tale image of the spa palaces to perfection, giving them the image of excitement, mobility, and rich decor, combined with an abundance of details ranging from the Renaissance to the emerging Art Nouveau (hotels *Hvězda*, *Pacific*, *Bohemia*, *Polonia*). Portals with two turrets, following the example of the world-famous Grand Casino in Monte Carlo designed by architect Charles Garnier in 1878, became virtually the architectural norm for Mariánské Lázně, giving this spa resort a completely unique appearance.

The new Romanticism of the late 19th century exclusively looked for inspiration in medieval architecture. It was a period of architectural transformation, accompanied by digression from naturalist motifs to premeditated imitation of life on the background of medieval setups. This gradual development can best be seen in the well-known residential district of Karlovy Vary, called Westend, where many villas were built in the late 19th century designed as neo-romantic Gothic palaces and fortresses, often with timberwork elements.

The years 1890–1914 are referred to as the “Golden Era” in the West Bohemian spas. The elevated atmosphere of that period is parallel to the Belle Époque after 1900, during which a new style, named Art Nouveau (*Secese*), emerged. The Viennese and Austrian style, in general, still played a dominant role as the internationally accepted eclectic style. Thus, we can only find partial attempts at Art Nouveau in Karlovy Vary, Mariánské Lázně, and Jáchymov, incorporated into neo-Baroque architecture. The first to bring purely French floral Art Nouveau to Karlovy Vary was a Viennese architect named Karl Haybäck, who designed the Felix Zawojski house at Tržiště in 1897. Other Art Nouveau creations in the West Bohemian spas were inspired by the more modest and moderate Art Nouveau from Vienna. Gradually, Art Nouveau architecture had the tendency towards geometrical lines that led to the development of yet another highly decorative style, Art Deco. A particularly splendid example of geometrical Art Nouveau, however, is the Hotel Esplanade in Mariánské Lázně from 1910–11, one of Arnold Heymann's last projects. An extraordinary rendering of Art Nouveau architecture with a touch of Baroque and neo-classicism is the Otto Spring Pavilion and Colonnade in Kyselka (1897–98) by

15 FÖHL 1984, p. 81–82.



11: Františkovy Lázně, New colonnade (l), and Wiesbaden, Theatercolonnade (r)

architect Karl Haybäck from Vienna. Similar structures where Art Nouveau and neo-Baroque elements were mixed with neo-classicism were thereupon erected in the years 1909-13 in the Széchenyi Bath in Budapest. The West Bohemian spas of that period can be compared to Vichy, Bad Nauheim in Germany, as well as to the spas in Budapest. The spirit of modern times entered the West Bohemian spas, despite the prevalence of local conservatism. Classical ten-

dencies are most pronounced in the examples of the Friedrich Ohmann's Zámecký Spring in Karlovy Vary or the Alžbětiny Lázně spa designed by the building engineer and head of the municipal building administration of Karlovy Vary, Franz Drobny, where the motifs of majestic porticoes with recessed balconies are particularly impressive. In Františkovy Lázně, the New Colonnade with its distinguished colonnade is particularly notable. When the spa in

12: Karlovy Vary, aerial view



Poděbrady (in Czech) was built in 1911, the design quite logically took up the composition principles of the colonnades and glories in Františkovy Lázně. And when architect Ugo Giovannozzi was designing his Terme Montecatini in the years 1927–28, it was no coincidence that the magnificent colonnade of the Tettucio complex, in the very heart of Tuscany, came to be called “Italian Karlsbad”.

These locations continued to prefer classical designs, as is demonstrated in the example of the monumental building Dvorana Courtyard in the Glauberovy Springs in Františkovy Lázně, based on a project by Ernst Engelhart in 1930. The setting of these spa resorts has always been considered precious, so that development approvals were fortunately reserved for projects where the classical principles of architecture and the “dignifying and elevating style” were applied.

The West Bohemian Spa Triangle comprises the largest spa centres in the Czech Republic, whose architectural and functional features are considered to be typical for certain groups of large West and Central European spas of cosmopolitan character. A particularly noteworthy aspect of the matter is that all of these three spa towns are situated in a relatively small geographical area, whereby each of them represents a unique urban as well as architectural entity. Nonetheless, the three of them represent entirely different urban planning concepts. Thanks to their position among the leading European spa centres, these towns are living testimonies to the history of human values from the 18th to the 20th centuries, when balneology predefined their architec-

tural appearance. The architecture of these three towns forms part of the cosmopolitan trends in European architecture during the above-mentioned period, as it reflects the lifestyle of the middle and upper middle classes. These towns feature predominantly authentic architecture of extraordinary or high artistic value. At the time of their greatest boom, the West Bohemian spas were fully on a par with the leading spa centres of Europe, despite the fact that most impulses of urban planning, architecture, typology, and technology were taken over and adopted from elsewhere, whereupon their development may have taken its own course in these localities. In view of the chronological order of development and the different phases of prosperity, as well as the different topographical disposition within the Karlovy Vary region, the three large spa centres each have an entirely specific appearance and character. Today, the West Bohemian spas stand out in a European and global context, because the concentration of artistically first-class architecture is spread over a large area and yet quite intact in terms of preserved historic urban structure throughout the entire spa territory. Although we still find individual first-class buildings in most European spas, their spa setting is no longer intact. There are but a few towns that can compare with the West Bohemian Spa Triangle in terms of classical spa culture. Besides, there are even fewer still functioning predominantly as spas.¹⁶ Therefore, the size and integrity of the spa heritage in West Bohemia are quite outstanding in comparison to similar places anywhere in the world.

16 ZEMAN/KUČA/KUČOVÁ 2008; ZEMAN 2008.

Die Städte des westböhmisches Bäderdreiecks im Kontext des europäischen Kurerbes

Das westböhmisches Bäderdreieck umfasst die größten Kurzentren in der Tschechischen Republik. Ihre architektonischen und funktionalen Eigenschaften gelten als typisch für bestimmte Gruppen von großen west- und mitteleuropäischen Kurorten. Aufgrund ihrer Stellung unter den führenden europäischen Kurzentren sind diese Orte lebende Zeugnisse für die Entwicklung menschlicher Werte vom 18. bis zum 20. Jahrhundert, also in einer Zeit, als Balneologie auch die bauliche Erscheinung vorbestimmte. Die Architektur dieser drei Orte ist Teil der kosmopolitischen Strömung in der europäischen Architektur jener Zeit und spiegelt den Lebensstil der mittleren und oberen Gesellschaftsklassen wider. Diese Orte verfügen überwiegend über authentisch erhaltene Architektur von außerordentlichem

oder hohem künstlerischen Wert. Heutzutage nehmen die westböhmisches Kurorte im europäischen und globalen Kontext eine Sonderstellung ein, aufgrund der Konzentration künstlerisch erstklassiger Architektur in einem großen Gebiet und wegen des weitgehend intakten Zustands der erhaltenen städtischen Strukturen. Obwohl es auch in anderen europäischen Kurorten noch einzelne herausragende Bauten gibt, sind die Kurensembles nicht mehr intakt. Es gibt nur wenige Orte, die sich mit dem westböhmisches Kurdreieck vergleichen lassen, was die klassische Kurkultur angeht. Noch weniger gibt es übrigens, die noch heute vornehmlich als Kurorte fungieren. Aufgrund seiner Größe und Integrität ist das Kurerbe in Westböhmen weltweit einzigartig.

Les villes du « triangle des villes d'eaux » en Bohême occidentale dans le contexte d'un patrimoine européen de villes d'eaux

Le triangle des villes d'eaux en Bohême comprend les plus grands centres thermaux en République tchèque, dont les caractéristiques architecturales et fonctionnelles sont considérés comme typiques pour certains groupes de villes de cures en Europe occidentale et centrale. En raison de leur position parmi les villes d'eaux européennes éminentes, ces villes sont des témoins vivants de l'histoire de valeurs humaines du 18^e au 20^e siècle, une époque où la balnéologie décida alors aussi de l'apparence architecturale. L'architecture de ces trois villes constitue une partie d'un mouvement cosmopolite dans l'architecture européenne de l'époque, reflétant le mode de vie de la classe moyenne et supérieure. Ces villes disposent, pour la plupart, d'une architecture authentique d'une valeur extraordinaire ou d'un grand niveau artistique. Aujourd'hui, les villes d'eaux de

Bohême occidentale occupent une position privilégiée dans un contexte européen et global, grâce à la concentration d'une architecture de premier ordre dans un vaste espace et grâce à la préservation presque complète des structures urbaines historiques. Bien que l'on retrouve des bâtiments isolés de premier ordre dans la plupart des villes d'eaux européennes, leur ensemble de cure n'est plus intact. Il n'y a que peu de villes européennes qui puissent être comparées avec le triangle des villes d'eaux en Bohême occidentale en ce qui concerne la culture de cure classique. Il y en a, d'ailleurs, encore moins dont la fonction primordiale de nos jours est la cure thermale. Grâce à sa taille et son intégralité, le patrimoine de Bohême occidentale est unique dans le monde.

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