Post-War Development of Housing Estates in the Sorela Style Joint with the Boom of Mining and Metallurgy in the Ostrava-Karviná Coal District and their Current Significance for Geotourism

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Abstract. The post-war Czechoslovakia needed to deal with a complex and urgent problem of rebuilding the destroyed industry after the Second World War. The complicated circumstances shortly after the war divided Europe into two antagonistic units. The former Czechoslovakia fell under the influence of the Soviet Union. Apart from the political and many other changes, the influence of this power also affected the style of the contemporary architecture. A new style called social realism (sorela) evolved and dominated also the culture and arts. The initial ornateness and exaggerated grandeur of the buildings gradually faded out due to economic reasons. The classical ornamental sorela is irregularly represented in many localities of the former Czechoslovakia. It takes form of discrete buildings or whole blocks. Among the most interesting and extensive units to house tens of thousands of citizens employed in mining and metallurgy, there are the buildings in Ostrava-Poruba and Havířov. The localities are nowadays conservation zones due to their significance.

1. Introduction
The Ostrava-Karviná Coal District, as parts of the Upper-Silesian Basin, has played an important role in the development of the industry not only in the regional but also in the national scale. The rich deposits of high-quality black coal have been exploited there for more than two centuries. The first application of coal is documented by archaeological findings in Landek, where a Palaeolithic mammoth hunters’ settlement was discovered in 1924 during ground formation works. More extensive mining especially in the 19th and 20th centuries and the boom of the related metallurgical industry led to the increase in the population, where people came also from other regions and countries. One of the prominent industrial landmarks in the history of the region occurred at the end of the Second World War. The war damage in the country was enormous. Apart from other raw materials, the contemporary Czechoslovak industry needed big quantities of coal and iron. The significance of the region grew then. For the reasons mentioned earlier, the Mining College was quickly moved to Ostrava from Příbram. Many of its
graduates later became leading managers of the state enterprises in the region. Apart from other after-war priorities, there was also the question of housing and community facilities due to the ever increasing number of inhabitants and the need for new flats because of unsatisfactory housing conditions in the miners’ colonies. The implementation of the housing plans was distributed into several stages. It was the so-called sorela, social realism that became the architectural model for the new development. The traces of the style are apparent in many towns of the former Czechoslovakia. Among the most important architectural units in the Czech Republic there are Havířov and Ostrava-Poruba.

2. Rise of social realism (Sorela) and its characteristics
This artistic direction was inceptioned in the former Soviet Union. The first pieces of artwork, i.e. some propaganda posters, containing the typical elements of this style come from 1917. This artistic direction featured the working class, agrarians and workmen in the artworks. The artistic work also frequently featured the representatives of the party and of the state. The most frequently featured leaders were V. I. Lenin and J. V. Stalin. The newly arising artistic direction also influenced some Soviet artists. Such artworks were first refused as bourgeois art. Some artists that differed were taken to court and sent to labour camps. Social realism was officially approved by USSR in 1932 via Stalin’s order. As a consequence of this order this artistic direction became the official style during the whole existence of USSR. After the Second World War it was exported into other communist countries. The victory of the Soviet Army over the Fascist Germany became another topic of the propaganda in the post-war period, a topic of the strength and heroism of the Soviet man. The artistic direction enjoyed the most fame during Stalin’s era. After his death, the signs of the personality cult were removed due to partial reforms. This process also mirrored in the weakening of the artistic direction but continued until Gorbachev’s era. A more complex description of the currently historic style may be found in [1], [3], [13], [15].

3. Social realism in Czechoslovakia
The end of the Second World War also brought significant changes in the political arrangement of Europe. The East-European countries became the Soviet satellites for almost fifty years. In February 1948 the former Czechoslovakia adopted the communist ideology and the communist government started to take over all the Soviet programme patterns. Social realism appeared in the former Czechoslovakia already before the war, especially in literature. It became stronger after the war and turned to be the ideology. This was boosted by the control and central management of all art activities in the country. The art reflected the success of the post-war recovery in the country. The most attention was paid to the success of the regime. The artworks, for example, portrayed workmen in the factories and the industry, agrarians, socialist education and science. Failures were not discussed or even made secret. Significant features of social realism may be found in all forms of art. Also the architecture had to adapt. Similarly to agrarians, architects gathered into groups, in which their work was collective. This way and via nationalization, a state design organisation called Stavoprojekt was established in Prague in 1948. This organisation was in charge of regional design institutions. Most architects and designers at that time worked or were forced to work under this organisation. In 1953 there was the 1st National Conference of Czech and Slovak Architects, in which four contributions were dedicated to the future development of social architecture in Czechoslovakia. The Soviet influence manifested also in the years to come. Another example may be the decree of the Central Committee of the Soviet Communist Party of 1956 on the “Elimination of inutilities during design and construction of engineering structures”, the conclusions of which were also adopted by the former Union of Czechoslovak Architects.

4. Social realism in the architecture of Northern Moravia
The post-war period of the Czechoslovak development of architecture and art was influenced by social realism. The pre-war Functionalism was refused by the new political management and called bourgeois and rotten. In some towns, social realism appeared only marginally, but elsewhere whole units (quarters, towns) were constructed in this style. In Northern Moravia the typical example is the town of Havířov and a city quarter Poruba in Ostrava [2], [11], [14], [16]. This historical built-up area may be a form of
presentation for the region in the future, namely for the purposes of non-traditional forms of tourism. Recently, the most pronounced development has been associated with geotourism or geomontane tourism, which is discussed in the following studies [4], [6], [8], [9].

4.1. Locality 1: Ostrava - Poruba

The post-war Ostrava faced a huge lack of houses. The contemporary housing resources were partly old and largely destroyed by bombing and fights at the end of the war. The first post-war stage of construction, within the two-year economy plan, began in 1946. In total, 18 new houses were built in the Jubilee Colony in Ostrava-Hrabůvka. Unfortunately, the buildings did not cover the high demand for housing in that dynamic and thriving industrial city. Therefore, the government decided to continue in the development. A plan of a New Ostrava was prepared, which counted with new flats for 150 000 inhabitants. One of the chosen localities for the development was a former village Poruba. The locality was chosen for a number of reasons. Its name was suitable for the mining terminology. Next, the area was not widely built-up as many buildings were destroyed during the war. Therefore, wider demolition was not needed. The area was not undermined and the coal deposits underneath were small. An important factor was also the direction of wind directing the emissions away from this area. Around 400 architects and designers led by Vladimír Meduna cooperated on this project. The first block in Poruba was finished in 1955 and the others followed. The typical ornamentation and monumentality of soroła were one of the reasons why the originally planned project was implemented only partly. Later on, the economic aspects of construction were more important. Among the implemented buildings there are, for example, a complex of residential houses in the surroundings of the former Lenin’s Avenue (currently Main Avenue) and the so-called Towers by Boris Jelčaninov. In 2009 the southern part of the block was listed as the national monument due to its original sgraffito. Another interesting example is the construction of the gate, the so-called Arch, by the architect Evžen Steflíček. He had been inspired by the Palace Square in St. Petersburg. The semi-circular set of twelve buildings has a crossroads in the middle. The front of the building is decorated by sculptures celebrating the topic of work, leave to work and comeback home from work. In 2008 this monument was listed as the national monument of the Czech Republic. However, a number of planned buildings meant to become the dominants of Ostrava-Poruba were never constructed. Among the grand projects that remained only blueprints were, for example, a big water canal or the construction of 150-metre tall building of Regional National Committee. The majority of the buildings were designed for housing and were arranged in blocks. These units were symmetric and geometrically arranged. The concept of a town full of greenery, sun and peace was achieved by incorporating backyards and many parks. The construction of the current Main Avenue was meant to demonstrate the magnificence of the project. The social changes after 1989 also led to changes in the names of the original names of streets and squares. Gradually about a hundred of ideologically unsuitable names were changed in Ostrava. This concerns also the Main Avenue that was originally called Lenin’s Avenue that was meant to imitate the appearance of a world-class metropolis. The side streets of the avenue are mostly one-way roads. Many of the buildings around the avenue are decorated with ornaments. The patterns are taken over from the earlier historical architectures all the way from the antiquity, which are combined with the new topics of socialism. Among the neo-classical architecture features there are belt courses, arches, columns and pilasters. Renaissance elements also occur. Sgraffitos found on some buildings mirror the contemporary topics of the era. Frequent motifs were the life of the working class, children or the four seasons of the year. In 2003 this part of Ostrava-Poruba was listed as the zone of conservation.

4.2. Locality 2: Havířov

Historically, the town of Havířov belongs to the most recent towns in the Czech Republic. Its construction began shortly after the Second World War. The first concepts of 1946 were implemented in the municipality of Šumná already in 1947. In 1949 almost a hundred of new flats were constructed in the housing estate Šenov-Šumná. These were meant to replace the then old and unsatisfactory mining colonies with missing engineering communications and service pipelines or the civic amenities.
In addition, the colonies had to be rebuilt due to undermining. The initial construction of the so-called “two-year plan development” was implemented in the Functionalist style by private building firms. In 1950 the construction works continued with building the boarding house for the apprentices of the Pavka Korčagin’s Apprentice Training Centre in the more classicist Functionalism as well as sorela. An important landmark in the history of Havířov is the implementation of the first stage of development between 1952 and 1955, resulting in the centre of the future town. This construction already used significant features of social realism. At the start of the 1950s the planned construction was divided into 8 stages, to which 2 stages were added in the 1960s. The company of Stavoprojekt Ostrava became the main project engineering company and principal architect was Zdeněk Špaček. Along with building flats, they also built schools, cultural property, post offices, shops and many other buildings necessary for the daily life of the local people. From the very start the plans were to build a large housing estate for sixty thousand citizens. The blocks were constructed in the cadastres of three municipalities and a new problem of administration arose. By the end of 1955, the town received its rights and the name of “Havířov” (the town of miners) was selected among hundreds of suggestions within an open competition. In the following years the construction works continued in the town and the pace accelerated until 1968. Later on, the development of the town slowed down and was rather problematic. The 1980s experienced a decline in the development. The first urban concept was based on a uniform architectural composition of a half-walled block construction. The axis of the town is a four-lane avenue with a central belt of greenery. Studying the town’s architecture more closely, a slightly different approach was applied there than in Ostrava-Poruba. While Ostrava-Poruba copies the Soviet model, Havířov better meets its citizens’ needs. The town has a number of buildings that are interesting examples of social realism. Among the first buildings there were the building of the current Town Hall, the former Korčagin’s Apprentice Training Centre. Another interesting building is, for example, the combined building of a cinema or the basic school. The historical decorations found on many buildings come, for example, from Czech Renaissance. In 1992 the centre was listed as the zone of conservation. The architecture of the town is still being studied, which contributes to the protection of certain engineering structures. For example, the building of the railway station built in the Brussels style of the 1960s belongs among the best representatives of the style. Few years back the building was planned to be demolished.

5. Conclusions
Social realism significantly influenced the architecture in many East European towns. Dominant buildings belonging to this style may also be found in the capitals, such as Warsaw, Prague or Moscow. Sculptural decorations were also frequent in the towns. The decorations were mostly removed and lost for ever. An example is also Stalin’s Memorial in Prague, out of which only a pedestal with underground premises have been left to date. The Ostrava–Karviná Coal District is one of the regions where intense development took place after the war. A sharp increase in the industry in the region and a rise in the population caused favourable conditions for the development of extensive units. These are nowadays dignified witnesses of the hard times of the 1950s. At present, Ostrava-Poruba and Havířov are perfect examples of the contemporary architects’ work reflecting the need to follow the style as being parts of the state enterprise. Inter alia, mining has influenced more than the architecture in the Ostrava-Karviná Coal District. Recently, a due attention is paid to the issue, not only in scholarly studies [5], [7], [10], [12], but also with the aim to conserve the cultural heritage. From the point of view of geotourism or geomontane tourism, the zones are becoming attractive for tourists, thus enriching the already wide offer in the region.

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