

THE PROTECTION OF VERNACULAR ARCHITECTURE A MORAL NECESSITY FOR THE MAN OF TODAY

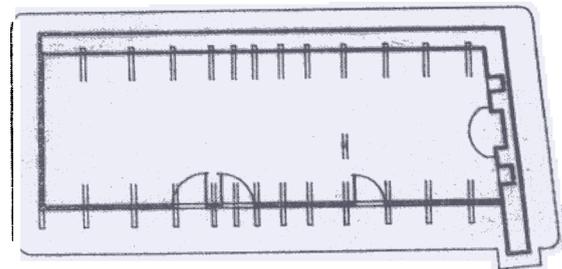
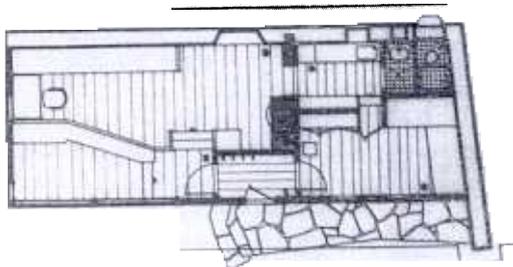
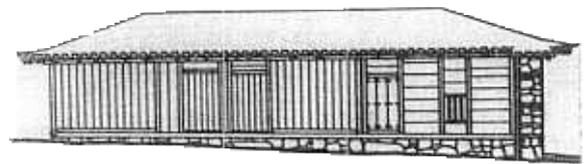
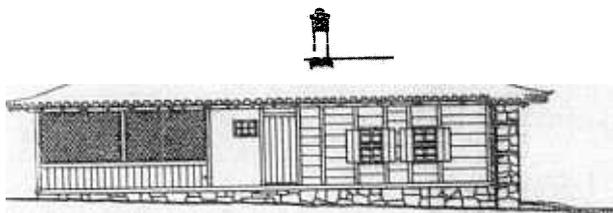
"I am happy to have been born in poverty and in a small town where there was intimacy and closeness in a social life"
Sherwood Anderson

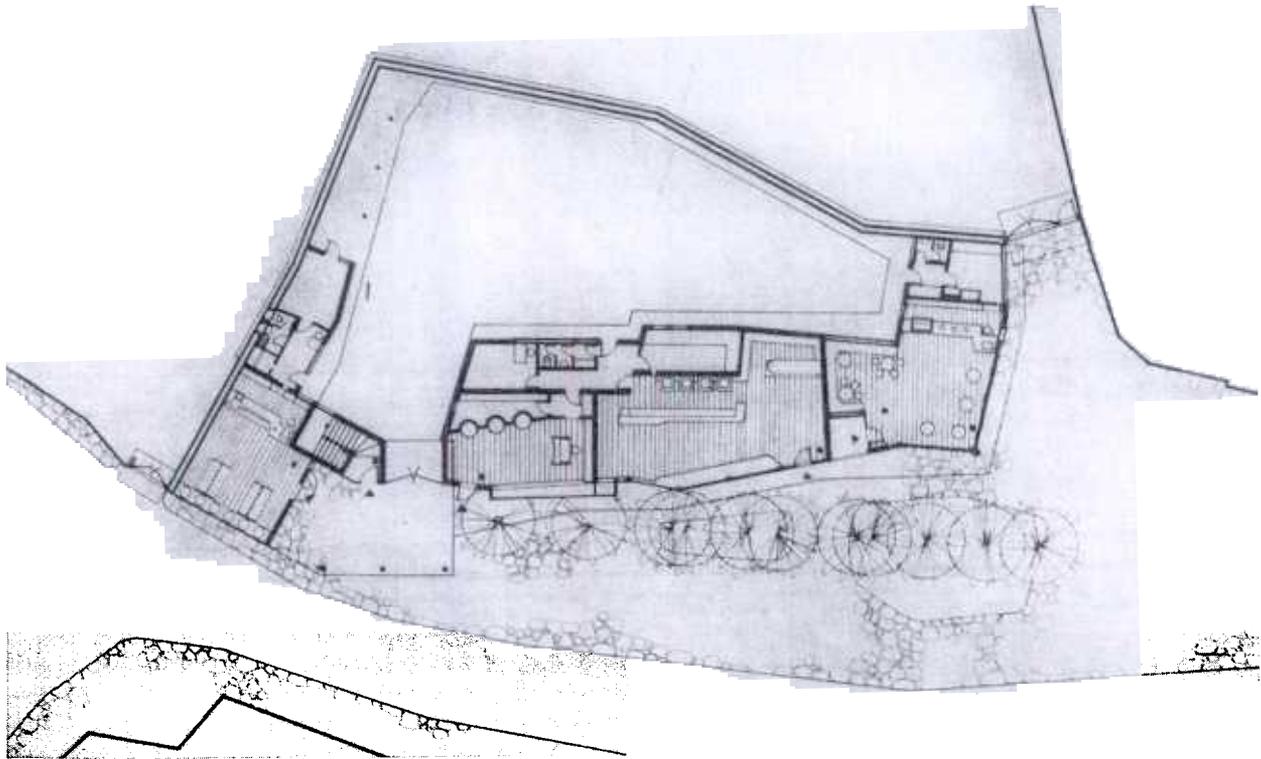
The process of urbanization, and the general state of tension and rhythm of work and life at the present day, together with the incessant changes in city environment, are circumstances which are creating, for contemporary man, a need for values and principles radically different from those he has been used to.

In our analysis of those settlements in our country in which the architecture of the past century has been preserved, emphasis will be laid in those laws of construction which are an ethical necessity for the ordinary man and remain instructive for the creators of contemporary architecture. In actual fact, subconscious acceptance of these values renders the distinction between ordinary man and architect artificial, for in this context they are one

and the same. Here there is complete fulfillment of the need for settlements with a population small enough to enable everyone to know everyone else by sight; while at the same time the building rules which have been applied can provide the present-day town-planner with the ideal norms as regards building density. These same rules obey the principle that the natural features of the land are inviolable, thus creating an innate reverence for Nature. Low buildings whose location is a perfectly natural one can indeed create the illusion of actually having emerged from the ground. A settlement consisting of similar but not identical houses, with public buildings in spatial harmony with its houses and streets, and the whole in harmony with the natural environment, will have something to

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2. Koprivshitsa. New stores in the centre of the town.

teach us about unity of aspect.

It will also emerge from a study of such settlements that there are in reality only two rules in town-planning, namely, good ethics and naturalness: no house should stand in the way of any other, and its position on the building plot should be determined by the simple fact that it is the only possible one. The house and its walled courtyard will give us a sense of home and of the need of a world of our own — of our own piece of sky and our own bit of Nature. The street, which will lie outside those personal worlds represented by the houses with their courtyards will be a place where people can suitably meet together.

The small squares formed by the crossing of two streets or the open space between several gates are public places which provide an opportunity for contacts, a talk with a neighbour or a casual passer-by, or merely for watching a street activity in which one may wish to take part.

In the sphere of external perception an ordinary man will make a desperate attempt to understand a problem on which he possesses no reliable source of guidance. Any attempt to appraise architecture

in the absence of the necessary criteria or any other assistance will lead to utter incomprehension. But in vernacular architecture the simplicity of the natural material used and the visible character of the buildings as a whole are such that we can readily see what has been done and why it has been done, and these factors, together with what, in the true sense of the word, can be called decoration, give us the basic elements for an appraisal. The principal material is wood, and this we can understand intuitively; we have a sense of the dimensions required, the system of assembly and the system of decoration. Man is thus freed from oppressive ideas about something which is quite beyond his comprehension and is able to appreciate — apart from its utilitarian qualities — that quality which makes each building more than mere architecture, and which consists in its individual artistic image. If an explanation of this image is sought for, it will be found in the owner's personal participation in the building work, the uniting of creation and execution in the person of the master-craftsman. In the process of creation there will have been none of the usual distinctions between the designer on

his "superior" level and the mere executant deprived of any individuality of his own, and in the last analysis this artistic image is perhaps also partly the outcome of a natural attitude towards house-building as a useful activity like any other — the cultivation of land, for example — which is necessary to life. What the vernacular architect will require is an atmosphere of unsophistication in which the primitive values of architecture can manifest themselves, and there will be none of that painfully-thought-out work of creation which is the lot of the contemporary architect, overburdened as he is with accumulated knowledge and information.

The plan for Koprivshitsa is such as to provide an

opportunity for an overall scheme for a "museum" town, whose character would be expressed in the street network, the form of the plots, the general use of space and the town elevation and skyline. The preparation of the designs was influenced by the fact that implementation of the plan would require time, and also by unfavourable factors involving the risk that the fundamental idea might have to be abandoned. Lastly, the Koprivshitsa plan has only a relative value, since it is merely one element in an artistic whole, in which equal value attaches to the architectural image of the new buildings, the old houses, the courtyards and the individual details.

Stefan BEYAZOV, Bulgaria

RESUME

L'urbanisation, la grande intensité et le rythme accéléré de la vie contemporaine, les changements dans l'environnement urbain, entraînent naturellement le besoin de vestiges du passé contrastant avec l'expérience quotidienne de l'homme d'aujourd'hui. C'est ainsi que les constructions de l'époque du Réveil national bulgare nous offrent des exemples de mariage harmonieux entre divers bâtiments, et montrent le lien qui doit exister entre l'architecture et son cadre naturel. Les seules règles d'urbanisme mises en oeuvre dans ces agglomérations incomparables sont: éthique et simplicité. Les maisons ne sont pas seulement disposées les unes en face des autres, elles sont implantées de manière à préserver l'intimité de chacun. Le tracé des rues et des petites places en fait des lieux de ren-

contre. Ces espaces permettent le contact entre les habitants et les font participer à la vie sociale.

Les façades de ces constructions nous enseignent la simplicité et le bon emploi des matériaux naturels. La politique de l'Etat en matière de sauvegarde des ensembles anciens dans les villes — création de secteurs protégés — est illustrée par l'exemple de Koprivshitsa, „ville-musée“, qui a fait l'objet d'un plan d'urbanisme. Le plan de Koprivshitsa présente un grand intérêt car l'architecture des bâtiments neufs, des bâtiments anciens, l'aménagement des jardins, etc. . . y revêtent la même importance.

1. Koprivshitsa. Adaptation d'une étable en villa.

2. Idem. Nouveaux magasins dans le centre de la ville