

## CERTAIN ASPECTS IN THE ADAPTATION OF THE PLOVDIV HOUSE

From the National Revival period Plovdiv has preserved a remarkable and valuable architectural inheritance, among which housing architecture constitutes its most significant feature. Based on a particular socio-economic system, these houses represent typical town dwellings. They met the growing housing and cultural needs of the Bulgarian bourgeoisie which had begun to make its appearance, and in the middle of the 19th century became a very widespread social class.

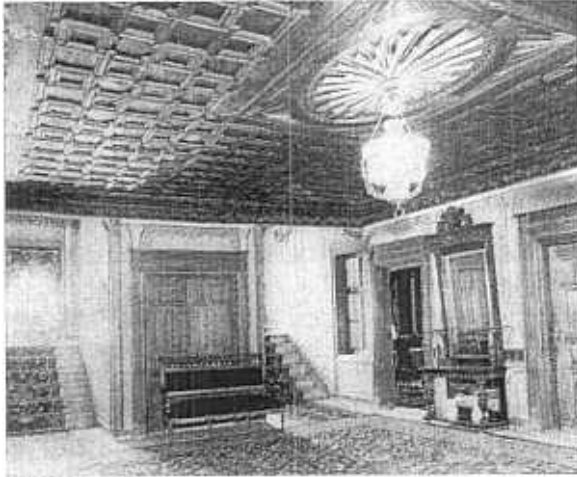
The design of the Plovdiv house rests on the principle of symmetry on two perpendicular axes. The internal focal point is the salon which is the reception room and most characteristic room in the building. Around it, the rooms are grouped symmetri-

cally on the two axes. Their number, size and decoration were determined by the wealth and taste of the owners and by the peculiarities of the terrain on which the houses were built. The individual interpretation of the canonic formula and the use of a great variety of artistic means of expression resulted in a great diversity of solutions.

The task of preserving the Plovdiv houses that survive today is connected with the solution of a number of legal, architectural, aesthetic and construction problems. Stemming from their specific architectonics, construction and erection, as well as from the climatic conditions of the region, they call for a concrete methodological approach, which is characterized by certain peculiar features.

1. Plovdiv. Hindlian's house — main elevation.





2. Plovdiv. Nedkovitch's house — interior

The first task in an architectural restoration of a Plovdiv house is to get rid of later alterations and additions, until its authentic architectural plan is established. Usually, this process is accompanied by supplementary studies of the structure of the building, for the purpose of elucidating the con-

3. Plovdiv. The Mavridi's house.



ditions of the construction and the building materials. As in most cases, the later reconstructions of the houses are without any aesthetic value, the date of the construction of the monument is usually chosen as optimum date for its restoration. The design for the architectural restoration and adaptation of the monument and the manner of its structural consolidation is made on the basis of the results thus obtained.

So far, most representative Plovdiv houses which survived in the old city nucleus have been restored and adapted. Their high historic and aesthetic value ranks them among the highest-class cultural monuments. That is why, a basic requirement in the design for their restoration and adaptation is the full or maximum preservation of their authentic architectural design, aspect and artistic details. Most of these houses have been or are to be adapted mainly for public needs, such as museums, galleries, centres of artistic institutes and public organizations, etc.

The removal of the representative Plovdiv houses from the housing stock and their adaptation for public functions is based on their typical features. Both the design of these houses, and the size of the individual premises — especially that of the salon — and the characteristic decoration of their interior reveal in many cases better possibilities of adaptation for public use, rather than for housing. As a rule, the rich Plovdiv houses are devoid of household facilities. The necessary kitchens and other auxiliary premises were often housed in separate buildings in the courtyard. This fact is a source of serious difficulties in adapting buildings of this kind to meet housing needs, without aggressive modification of their authentic structure. Naturally, the approach to every monument is individual. Individual houses, with a simpler design, and of a lower class, can successfully be adapted to serve a family's housing needs.

The structural condition of the Plovdiv houses that have come down to us is very serious. In the course of their one hundred years of existence, the wood work of these flimsy structures has worn out to an extreme degree, and this poses very serious restoration problems. Very often the consolidation of the buildings is impossible without serious structural intervention. Modernizing of the structures can be necessary because of the new use which the buildings will be serving. To this we should also add the need of technical installations: electrification, water supply and sewerage, central heating, etc.

A few typical realizations can illustrate the approaches chosen in adapting a Plovdiv house.

*The Nedkovich House* — a monument of national significance—is a two-storeyed building, typically symmetrical in design, including four rooms, with closets and pantries between them. It has been adapted to serve as reception room of the Plovdiv City People's Council. There has only been a very discreet insertion and the original design of the house has been fully preserved. The direct access from the toilet and bathroom to the salon — constitutes a functional compromise which is justified by the endeavour to preserve the original architectural design. The ground floor is equipped with furniture used in the Plovdiv houses in the 19th century and constitutes a small ethnographical exhibition, which completes the general historic picture created by the monument. The consolidation of the building has been achieved by an iron concrete slab on the floor level of the ground floor, the original manner of construction of the house having been preserved. *The Hindlian House* — a two-storeyed building revealing an interesting interpretation of the symmetrical architectural design. The decoration of

the interior is remarkable, as well as the courtyard complex in which the typical auxiliary buildings in a Plovdiv courtyard have been preserved, forming a harmonious group. The house has been adapted to serve for receptions, and the original architectural design has been fully preserved.

*The Birdas House* — is a dormitory and reception centre of the City People's Council. The salon, used as a reception room, preserves its original function. The house has central heating. Structural consolidation has been achieved through iron-concrete constructions. Analogous has been the approach in adapting the house of G. Mavridi (Lamartine), which is to be used as a creative centre of the Union of Bulgarian Writers.

*The House on P. R. Slaveikov Street* is adapted to be a tourist centre.

*The House on 14 Ivailo Street* is a monument of a lower grade. It has been adapted for housing needs and is privately owned.

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## RESUME

*Comparées aux maisons ouvertes du Réveil national bulgare, les maisons de Plovdiv constituent un habitat d'un nouveau type. Leur plan s'organise selon un schéma symétrique, avec deux axes perpendiculaires. Le salon est au centre de cette composition. Autour de cette pièce d'apparat s'ordonnent les chambres, de différentes dimensions, mais toujours disposées symétriquement par rapport aux deux axes.*

*Ce schéma a évolué en fonction des changements intervenant dans la forme et le décor du salon. Dans les cas les plus simples, le salon est rectangulaire, alors que dans les maisons plus riches il prend une forme ovale et est couvert d'un plafond en ellipse. Au centre de la maison, là où se croisent les deux axes, apparaît un troisième axe, vertical. La maison atteint ainsi*

*son caractère le plus solennel. Ces traits originaux sont très importants pour orienter le choix des solutions les meilleures pour permettre une modernisation fonctionnelle des maisons de Plovdiv.*

*La conservation et l'adaptation des maisons de Plovdiv pose un grand nombre de problèmes techniques et architecturaux. Les exemples les plus représentatifs de ce type de maisons ont été restaurés et adaptés à des fonctions nouvelles. Par leur intérêt architectural et historique, ils comptent au nombre de nos monuments historiques les plus précieux.*

1. Plovdiv. La maison des Hindlian — façade.
2. Idem. La maison des Nedkoviitch, vue intérieure.
3. Idem. La maison des Mavridi.