

SPECIAL PROBLEMS CONNECTED WITH THE CONSERVATION OF
GARDENS OF HISTORICAL INTEREST IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA

Owing to its geographical situation in the centre of Europe, our country's cultural development has been subjected to influences from south, west, east and north, and these are very visible not only in our architecture but in our ancient gardens as well.

The earliest reference to a garden of a decorative nature dates from 1130, when the King of Bohemia made over an estate to the canons of Prague to be laid out as a garden where they could walk and meditate. Our mediaeval gardens were small in size and were designed to serve a given purpose. A general idea of their appearance may be obtained from miniatures in illuminated manuscripts and from descriptions; they were cloister gardens shut in on all four sides or palace or castle gardens with a low rampart to surround them.

Not a single one of our country's Renaissance gardens has survived in its original state, unless we include a few dating from the late Renaissance, typified by their pleasure-houses, arcades and ornamental fountains.

An exceptionally strong influence was exerted in our country at this period by Flemish architecture, and an even stronger one by Italian. In 1535 the Italian architect P. della Stella built the little château of Queen Anne in Prague, with its lovely garden, while Vredeman

de Vries laid out an ornamental garden behind the royal castle. In 1583 Majo da Vomio built a little château at Kratochvile, in Southern Bohemia and at Brucovice in Moravia P. Terrabosco supervised the building of a castle with a moated garden during this same period. Talc has a little Renaissance garden surrounded by arcades, and Hradec Castle, in Southern Bohemia, still retains a similar garden with several ornamental rotundas and a fine well. In 1625 the Duke of Saxony has a splendid garden laid out at Ostrov in North Bohemia, and at Brandys, not far from Prague, a terraced garden connected to the castle by a bridge, dates from this same period, typifying the last phase of the Renaissance, when garden design broke away from the "grand" style of the Renaissance mansions.

Garden design during the baroque period is dominated by the natural element, and high "artificial" walls of greenery form as it were an inroad from the surrounding countryside. During this age Czech architects were influenced by trends from Italy and France, which they adapted to suit local conditions, and they have bequeathed us not merely gardens but entire landscapes adapted to suit the architectural tenets of the time.

The designer of the garden of the Wallenstein Palace in Prague, an architect named N. Sebregondi, in 1632 created a magnificent overall design at Jicin in East Bohemia in which the garden is an integral part of its surroundings; the garden of the mansion, which is inside the town, is connected by a double walk bordered by lime-trees to an imposing loggia in the open air and to wooded grounds where a highly complex system of paths provides vistas opening on to the neighbouring countryside and on to the ruins of Kumburg Castle.

At Decin, in North Bohemia, a baroque garden with a sala terrena and an harbour was laid out in 1668, on a high embankment overlooking the town. In 1678 a long garden divided up into squares was designed near Krumlov Castle, and at the same period the architect J.B. Mathey designed the château garden at Troja.

The first half of the 18th Century saw the birth of a large number of palace gardens in Prague, including among many others-those at Vrtba, Ledbur, Kolovrat, Palffy and Crnin. The same occurred in Moravia, at Slavkov near Brno, (D. Martinelli), while flower-beds were added to the garden at Lednice and the magnificent set of gardens at Jaromerice nad Rokytnou came into being. The great garden at Kromeriz, with its arcades and general lay-out, still harks back to the Renaissance, while the garden in the cloister at Osek, in North Bohemia, probably the work of O. Brogglio, may be classified, by virtue of its intricate design, among the gardens of castles and châteaux. A particularly remarkable garden is the one at Kuks in North-East Bohemia, which has statues and forms an organic part of a landscape remodelled in baroque style. The garden of the château at Dobris, near Prague, dating from 1765, already possesses some features distinctly belonging to the rococo stage of baroque.

At the end of the 18th Century the influence of the ideas of Rousseau led to an important change in conception; gardens and grounds were no longer primarily intended as settings for open-air festivities and the preference was for calm and retired "natural" spots conducive to meditation. It was with a view to this new kind of effect that the baroque grounds at Veltrusy were given an ingenious system of fountains.

In 1755 grounds were laid out at Vlasim which show distinct traces of the "Anglo-roman" style. Then, at the opening of the 19th Century, our garden design became strongly influenced by the English style, and an architect named Fantti adapted a whole 500 acres of Moravian countryside, near Valtice, to suit the current taste. The Empire-style château of Kacina overlooks grounds which merge into the surrounding landscape with nothing to bridge the interval between the two, and the park at Jindrichov Hradec was influenced in its turn by the same style,

while the vast grounds laid out around the new watering-places of Mariánské Lázně and Františkovy Lázně likewise bear the mark of influence from England.

The growing interest of the age in biology soon produced grounds where the accent was on tree-growing; the most outstanding example is provided by the grounds of the château at Pruhonice, built in 1860 by Count Sylva-Taroucca.

At the end of the 19th Century our landscape design began to show a visible tendency towards eclecticism. Only a few gardens of the period are of any artistic value, exceptions being the garden of the château at Nové Město nad Metují, designed by D. Jurkovic, or the new garden of the royal castle in Prague, by Josip Plecnik.

This rapid survey of fine gardens mentions in reality only a few of the most representative historic gardens of Bohemia and Moravia. Since 1945 all ancient gardens and grounds in Czechoslovakia have become State property and are classified under six headings, i.e. :

- 1) Gardens and grounds of castles and châteaux
- 2) Gardens and grounds of palaces
- 3) Gardens and grounds adjoining houses of wealthy private citizens
- 4) Cloisters and gardens and grounds of abbeys
- 5) Parks
- 6) Artificial landscapes

Most historic gardens are included in the official list of historical monuments, and are thus protected under Statute n° 22 of 1958 covering such monuments. Statute n° 40 of 1956 on the protection of nature institutes norms governing the legal protection of national parks, sites.

landscapes, gardens, and rare minerals, plants and animals

This statute also provides for the protection of certain public parks and certain sites of particular value for their trees. A few historic gardens have been classed as "national reserves" and thus qualify for protection under both of these laws.

In Czechoslovakia the protection of historical monuments and of nature comes under the Ministry of Culture. The advisory body responsible in this sphere is the Central Committee for the Protection of Historical Monuments, and the competent body on technical problems is the National Institute for the Protection of Historical Monuments and of Nature, in Prague. In the counties or departments, (of which there are 8 in Bohemia and Moravia) there are regional centres for the protection of historical monuments, coming under the Departmental Committees, except as regards technical questions, which are dealt with directly by the National Institute. The departments are divided into administrative districts, in which there are "special sections" in charge of the protection of monuments, with the district committee, under a curator, acting as advisory body.

The various historical monuments departments are financed in accordance with the principles of the socialist economy, the government allocating the credits on the level of department, district and town.

In Czechoslovakia 35,000 buildings in all - of which 2,500 are castles, châteaux or palaces - enjoy State protection. 135 castles or châteaux have an ancient garden or wooded grounds, and each has a warden responsible for its upkeep ; generally he lives on the premises

Where an ancient garden has a genuine artistic value our historical monuments department generally does its best to preserve its

form and lay-out. Many of our baroque or Renaissance gardens were altered during the second half of the 18th Century or in the 19th, and turned into "landscaped" grounds and the arrangement of their trees was modified, though sometimes a few traces of the original design and a few buildings were left intact. Where this is the case, we leave these changes as they are; it is only very rarely that we restore such gardens to their original state. In our restoration work we have naturally rid ourselves of any exaggerated purist tendencies and our methods are basically analytical. When the garden we are restoring has undergone a certain amount of alteration, our primary concern is for those features which are of the greatest historical, artistic or biological value.

We are still faced, however, with a serious problem, which is that of how to provide for the regular upkeep of gardens once they have been restored, for we are seriously short of manpower for the purpose.

An important task which we have not yet satisfactorily accomplished is that of inventorying and classifying our castles, châteaux and historic gardens, as a preliminary to study and assessment in the light of uniform criteria for the whole of Czechoslovakia. An objective survey on these lines would provide us with a sound basis for the restoration of all our gardens of historical interest.

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In concluding her report, Mrs. Baseova drew attention to two major problems arising in Czechoslovakia, which were :

- a)- The difficulty of securing credits for the restoration of gardens which had been completely altered in style ;
- b)- The hostility of the people in charge of the conservation of nature to the major changes in planting involved when a baroque garden altered in the 19th century was to be restored to its original shape. These authorities did not understand why such changes were worthwhile.

ASSESSMENT OF THE VALUE OF GARDENS AND GROUNDS OF HISTORICAL INTEREST
AS USED IN CZEKOSLOVAKIA

1)- Name of garden

2)- Location :

a)- Region (7 geographical regions in Bohemia and Moravia ;
3 in Slovakia).

b)- District (about 75 in Bohemia and Moravia, 38 in Slovakia).

3)- Condition of the garden :

a)- When originality laid out ;

b)- After remodelling.

Type of garden (or grounds) : castle, monastery or palace garden ;
private or public town garden.

Year (or century) originally laid out.

Style (Gothic, Renaissance, baroque, rococo, classical, Empire,
neo-romantic).

Designer

Size (in hectares)

Character (geometrical, landscape, or combination of the two)

Type of ground (flat, sloping, hilly).

4)- Value : a)- of the whole design

b)- of the architectural and formal elements

c)- of the trees and plants.

5)- Present-day condition : Year examined

State of the composition as a whole

State of the architectural and formal elements

Condition of the trees and plants.

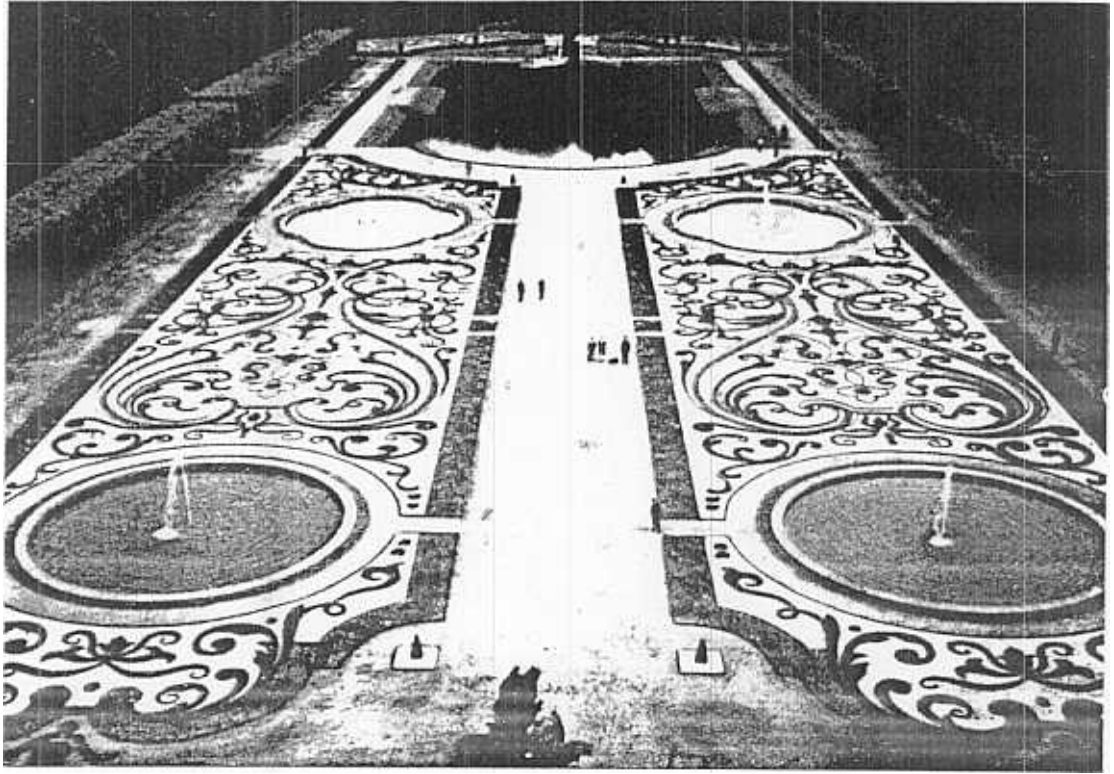
- 6)- Legal status as property in relation to :
 - a)- the person responsible for upkeep,
 - b)- the user.
- 7)- Importance for the human environment.
- 3)- Category (I, II or III in descending order, based on all relevant criteria).
- 9)- Remarks (e.g. change of environment following the building of a dam immediately next to château and garden).

(Assessment under 4, 5 and 7 including : categories numbered XXX, XX, X, in descending order).

En terminant l'exposé de son rapport, Madame Baseova attire l'attention sur les deux problèmes majeurs qui se posent en Tchécoslovaquie :

Il est difficile de trouver les crédits nécessaires à la remise en état des jardins transformés.

- Lorsqu'il est envisagé de restituer dans son état d'origine un jardin baroque qui a été modifié au XIXème siècle, ce qui entraîne d'importants changements dans les plantations, on se heurte à l'hostilité des responsables de la conservation de la nature, qui ne comprennent pas l'intérêt de ces changements.



Les parterres de broderie du Parc de Brühl, Allemagne.
Parterres at Brühl, Germany.



Sevenice, Université Technique de Brno, Tchécoslovaquie.
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