

**curating memory**

ETH Studio Basel  
Contemporary City Institute  
Summer Semester 2006

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# Curating Memory

## Introduction

With the establishment of the socialist, multi-ethnic State of Yugoslavia after the Second World War, Belgrade becomes the capital of the Federative People's Republic of Yugoslavia. The establishment of this new federation lay under the leadership of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia, at whose head stood Josip Broz Tito.

Under his leadership, and with impressive willpower, large-scale architecture and urban planning projects were developed for the capital city of Belgrade, which were intended to give expression to the young state. The building projects include various urban functions and building typologies: governmental and administrative buildings, production facilities for state-run enterprises, museums, and hotels. They range from urban planning designs for New Belgrade, over infrastructure projects such as the Highway of Brotherhood and Unity, to small-scale interventions in the existing urban context. Notable and impressive is the high level of urban integration, architectural design, as well as the quality of construction found in a majority of these projects, which do not need to shy from comparison to Central European work of the same time. In many projects, one can even discern an individual architectural language, which does not draw on direct examples from other countries.

With the political takeover of Slobodan Milosevic in the 1980s, a threatening economic crisis ensued, which brought an end to the „Golden Era“ of Yugoslavia and heralded a slow, continual decline of the Yugoslavia multi-ethnic state under Milosevic's nationalistic leadership style. In the 1990s, this downfall climaxed in a civil war and the ensuing confusion and crisis, which led to the breakdown of the state. Subsequently, a number of new, national states declared their independence, including Serbia- Montenegro of which Belgrade is, once again, named the capital city. Under these entirely new conditions, the buildings of Belgrade, which had to fore stood as expressions of the federal state, loose their original meanings and are exposed to new interests.

Next to political and social fractures, the economic climate is also strongly altered. As a direct result of the breakup of the socialist system, the privatization of state property is set into motion and is intended to reach completion by next year. The land property owner by the city of Belgrade, in contrast to rural regions, remains under state ownership and is leased. Former owners have begun to make greater demands on their former lands, which were appropriated by the state at the time of Yugoslavia's establishment. Corresponding laws, which would regulate the return of these lands, have yet to be adopted. This process of privatization, occurring at a time of little financial means in the state and fragmentary legal control, has produced fertile ground for corruption, profiteering, and speculation. On the part of those people holding political or financial power, they lack the interest or opportunity to change this situation.

It is likely that a change in the current situation will not occur until the state's property has been fully privatized. All of the buildings examined in the following research were, or are still, under state's ownership. The course of this privatization process has an important influence on the fate of these buildings.

Further, questions are raised regarding the development of the relationship between Serbia-Montenegro (in the

## Introduction

future only Serbia) to the European Union. After the assassination of Djindjics in the year 2003, the absence of a strong, state personality in a time of transition is sensible throughout the nation. The country is led by small, fragmented parties and must decide its position vis-a-vis Europe and the therewith connected set of values. For instance, what impact would a membership to the EU have on the maintenance of cultural inheritance? A topic, which has understandably been neglected in sight of Serbia-Montenegro's political, economic, and social problems? This question is not so easy to answer - yet one can see the slow rediscovery of monuments by various interest groups. Today, monuments are questioned and set to trial regarding the possibilities of their adaptation and new forms of use. As a result of lacking legislation and corruption, the monuments are vulnerable to free market forces. The objects are treated as conflict points and negotiable commodities by various power seeking institutions and interest groups. The position and character of these monuments have thus been changed in a number of different ways. In some cases, conflicts of interests have resulted in stagnation and have thereby begun to emanate an atmosphere of being unconscious. In general it can be stated that the buildings, despite similar starting conditions, follow their own, widely differing paths of fate.

This paper attempts to retrace these paths and question the treatment by Serbia of its architectural inheritance. What happened or happens with the buildings, which were conceived, planned, and built for the former capital city? Is there a „curation of memory“?

For our study, we chose seven, representative buildings. In the forefront of our presentation of the transformation process, stand the development of the structure of ownership, as well as the historical and cultural meaning of the buildings since the time of their construction. How were, or are, the processes carried out? Who was, and is, involved? Who decided, or decides, the fate of these buildings?



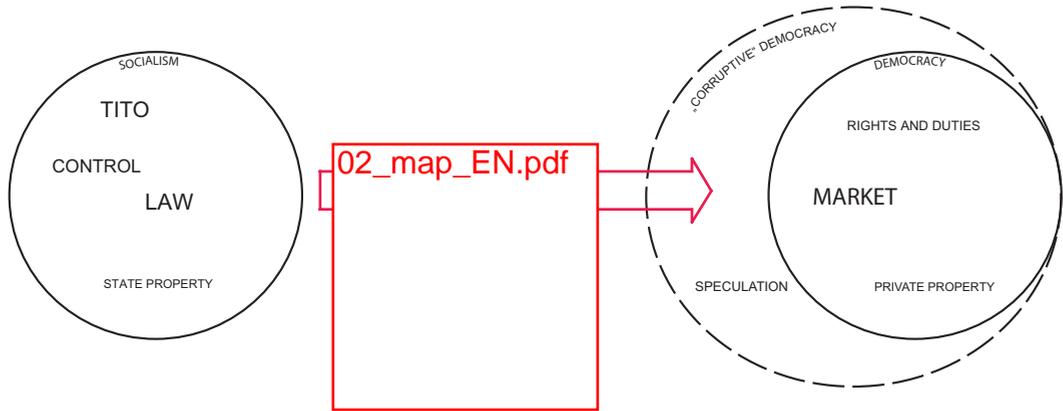
MULTIETHNIC SOCIETY



CONFEDERATION



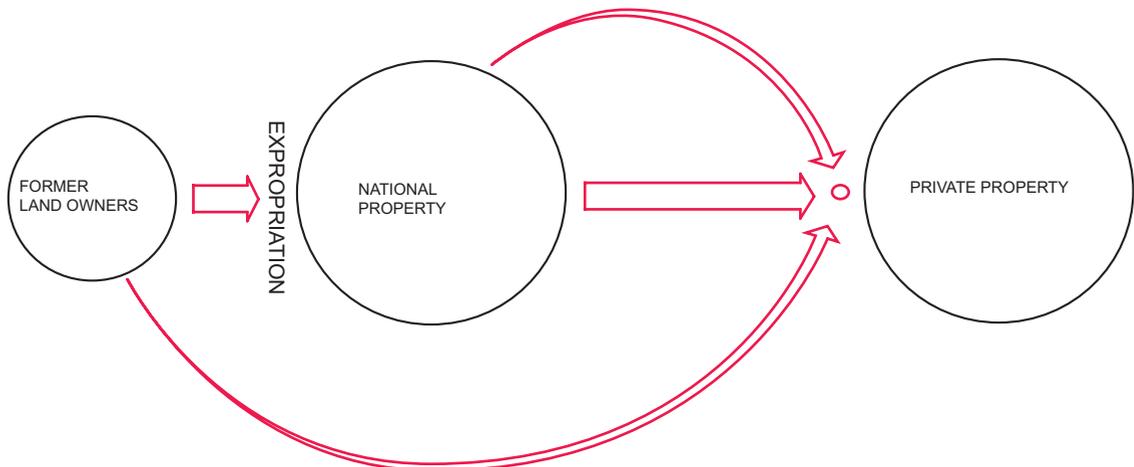
NATIONAL STATE



COLLECTIVE CONCIIOUSNESS

HISTORIC PRESERVATION

NATIONAL CONCIIOUSNESS





**Overview Plans  
Selection  
Historical Timeline**

Overview Plan





1 Palace of the Federation 1961  
Arch. Mihajlo Jankovic  
Bulevar Mihajla Pupina

2 CK Tower 1967  
Arch. Mihajlo Jankovic,  
Arch. Dusan Milenkovic,  
Arch. Mirijana Marijanovic  
Bulevar Mihajla Pupina

3 Avala TV Turm 1966  
Arch. Ugliesa Bogunovic  
and Slobodan Janjic  
Eng. Milan Krstic  
Hügel Avala

4 BIGZ (Prining) 1940  
Arch. Dragisa Brasovan  
Bulevar Vojvode Misica

5 Hotel Metropol 1957  
Arch. Dragisa Brasovan  
Bulevar Kralja Aleksandra  
(‘Bulevar revolucije’)

6 Museum „25. maj“ 1962  
Arch. Mihajlo Jankovic  
Boticeva bb

7 Military HQ 1963  
Arch. Nikola Dobrovic  
Crossing Kneza Milosa  
and Nemanjina streets

## Selection



Palace of the Federation 1961  
Arch. Mihajlo Jankovic  
Bulevar Mihajla Pupina



CK Tower 1967  
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Arch. Dusan Milenkovic,  
Arch. Mirijana Marijanovic  
Bulevar Mihajla Pupina



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BIGZ (Printing) 1940  
Arch. Dragisa Brasovan  
Bulevar Vojvode Misica



Hotel Metropol 1957  
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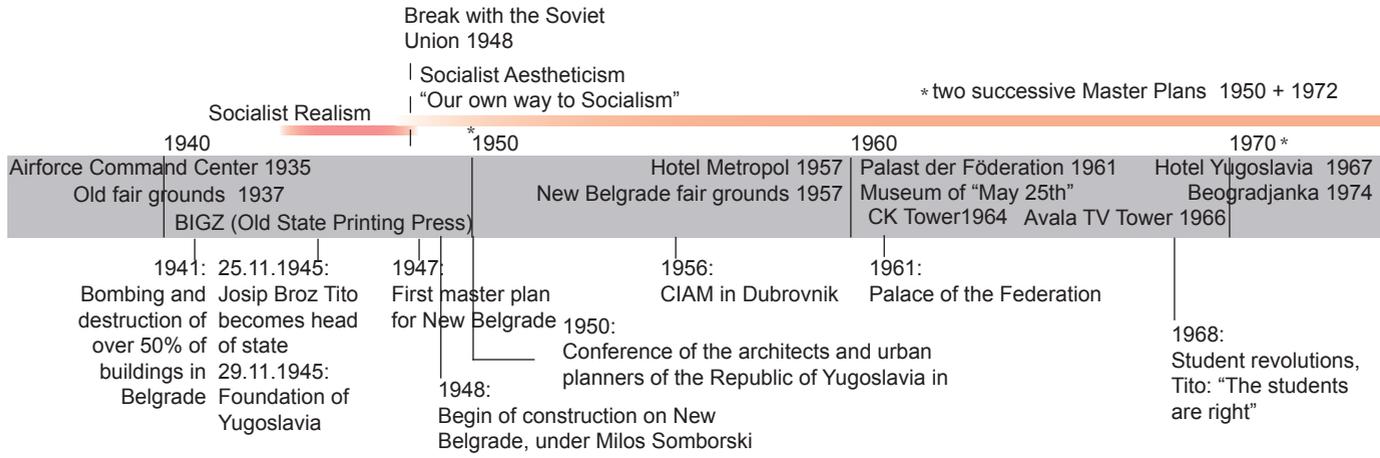


Museum „25. maj“ 1962  
Arch. Mihajlo Jankovic  
Boticeva bb



Military HQ 1963  
Arch. Nikola Dobrovic  
Crossing Kneza Milosa  
and Nemanjina streets

# History Line



In the 1950s, Serbian architecture was strongly influenced by the Brazilian school of architecture.

Bogdan Bogdanovic, Mihailo Mitrovic and Ivan Antic are key figures in the Serbian architecture between 1950 and 1980. Between 1950 and 1980, Bogdanovic builds over 20 monuments.

## BIGZ-Belgrade, Printing

Building Period 1933-1940  
Owned by the Publishing Agency

## Museum "May 25" 1962

Built 1962

## Palace of the Federation 1961

Anton Urlih, Vladimir Potocnjak, Zlatko Najman and Dragica Peral win the competition for the Palace of the Federation in 1947.

M. Jankovic realizes, along the design of the winning project, the "SIV" 1948-1961

Completed in 1961  
First Meeting of the Block Free States

Tito reigns in the palace

## CK Tower 1967

Headquarters of the Central Communist Party of Yugoslavia

## Military Headquarters 1963

Building period 1956-63

Owned by the Yugoslavian Army

## Avala Tower 1966

Hotel Metropol 1957 Famous hotel where Tito celebrates

1982 Bogdanovic becomes major of Belgrade

"Turbo Folk"

1980

1990

2000

2010

Academic Clinic of the Army 1981  
Interior Ministry 1983

Sava Zenter 1977

04.05.1980:  
Josip Broz Tito dies  
in Ljubljana

1991:  
Downfall of the Republic of Yugoslavia  
followed by civil war

04.02.2003:  
Foundation of the State of Serbia-Montenegro

Sanctions of the European Union

05.10.2000:  
Demonstrations/  
Revolution  
1999:  
NATO bombings

21.05.2006  
Montenegro receives  
its independence

*First signs of weariness are evidenced between the 70s and 80s, as Socialist-Aestheticism receives academic traits*

BIGZKTP still awaits privatization; in the meantime it rents rooms to 100 different studios and firms.

29.11.2002: BIGZ is divided into three firms: BIGZ, BIGZ Publishing, BIGZ KTP

28.07.2005: 70% of BIGZ Publishing is sold to Nova skolska knjiga Doo  
3. Level of the Building  
29.09.2005: 70% of BIGZ sold to Rasko Moskovljevic  
5. Level of the Building

Exhibition and conservation of Tito's gifts

The museum rents rooms from the city for exhibitions. The city of Belgrade uses the rooms during May and October in order to organize exhibitions.

Fixed point of many master plans (1948, 1950, 1957, 1960, 1970)

1996 first projects are built which weaken the urban prominence of the palace

12 different presidents reign in the building between 1980 and 1992.

Five different presidents reign in the palace between 1995 and 2006

1990s: Office and TV state of Milosevic's daughter Marija  
Strongly damaged during the bombings

2001 sold to European Construction.  
2006 reopened  
Rental of office space to private firms. MPC manages the building.

Strongly damaged during the NATO attacks

A part of the building is still used by the army.

Rebuilt in August 2006

TV and Telecommunications tower  
Weekend excursion for many picnickers, friends, and strollers

Completely destroyed in the NATO attacks

The company Dunav osiguranje AD http Dunav Turist d.o.o buys the hotel

The "Greek Hotel Group" buys the hotel at an auction.



# **Palace of the Federation 1961**

Arch. Mihajlo Jankovic  
Bulevar Mihajla Pupina  
(Lenjinov bulevar)

## **A New City for a New State**

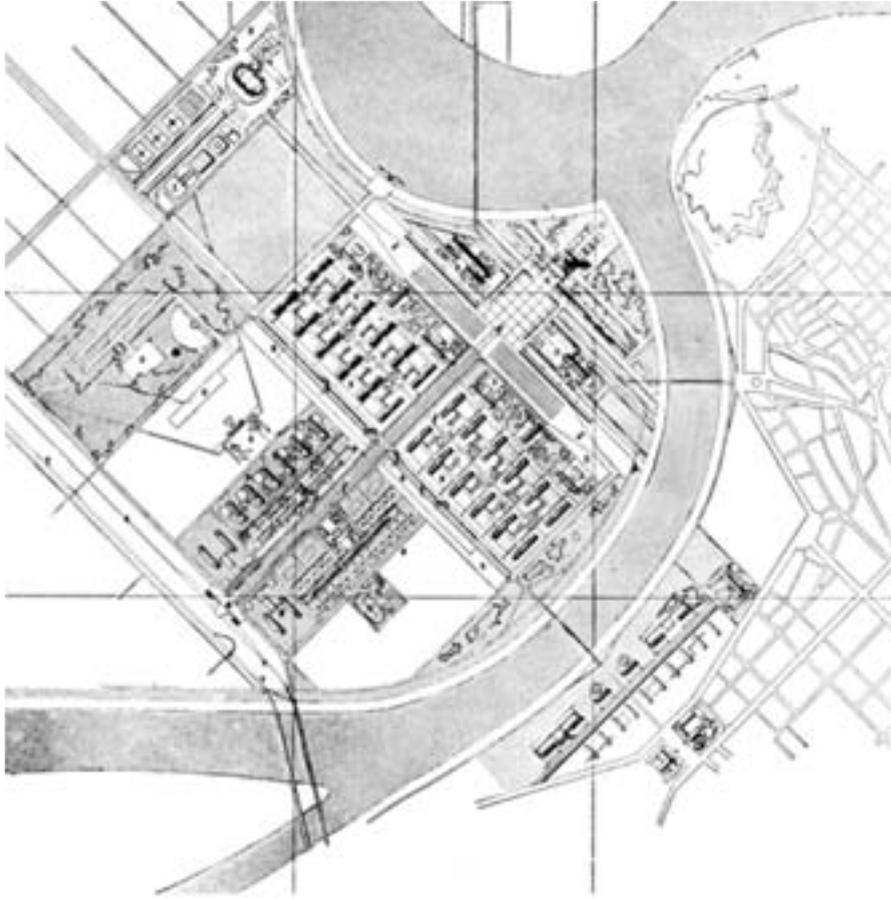
After the Second World War, Yugoslavia launches a gigantic project: the colonization of the swamps at the left shore of the Save, as a symbolic gesture of the newly established state. A brigade of 100,000 workers reclaimed the marshland for the new city. Conceived as seat for the most important institutions of Yugoslavia, the new city serves as political heart and as a model for a series of new, socialist cities.



Construction workers at drylaying the marshlands



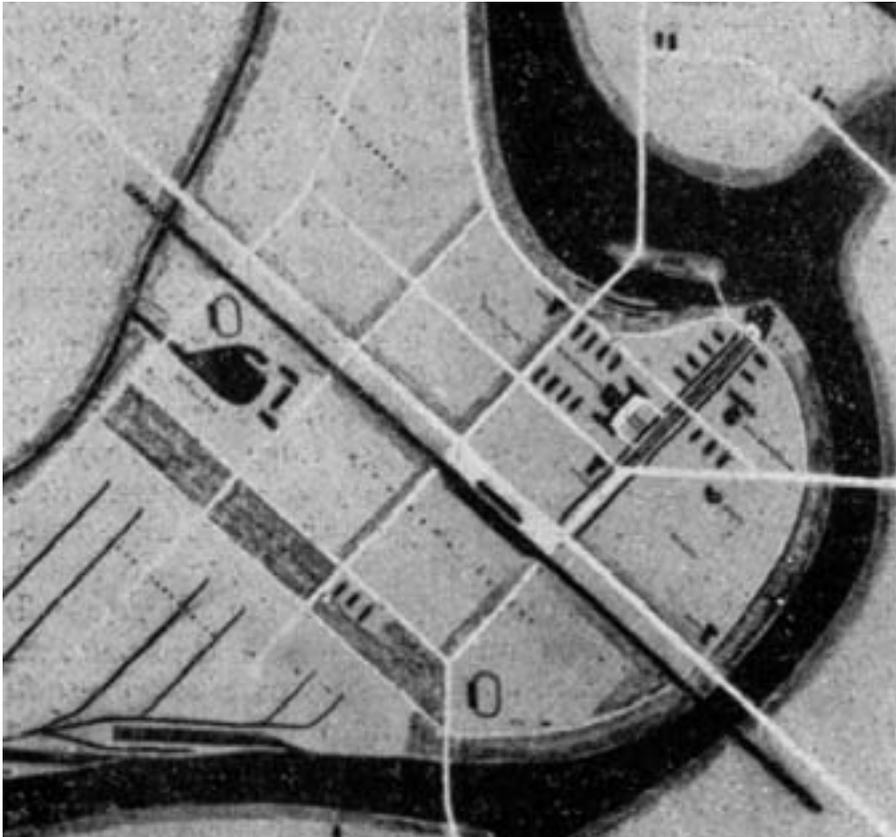
**Palace of the  
Federation**



City planning proposal for New Belgrade by Ravnikar for the Competition, 1947, plan and modell



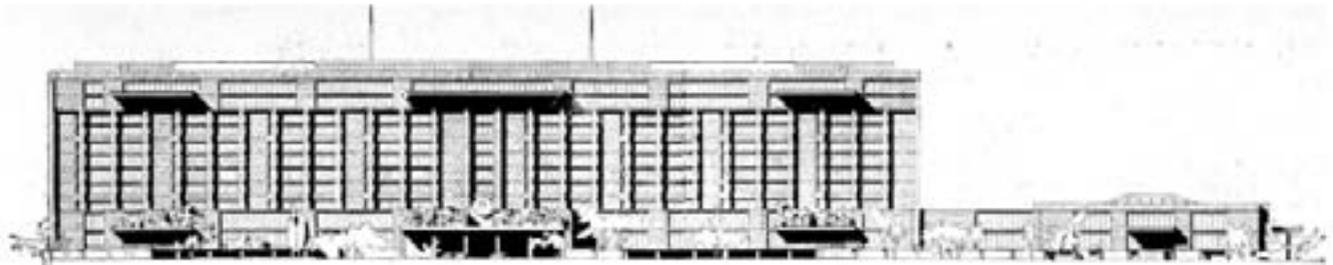
Alternative plan by the Serbian Institute for City Planning for New Belgrade



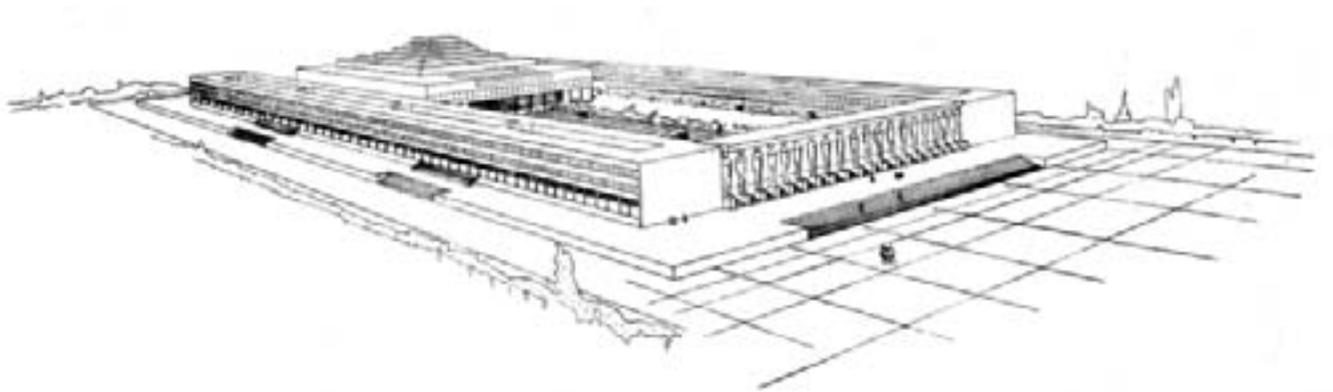
Potocnjak,Ulrich, Neumann and Perak, proposal for the master plan

## Palace of the Federation

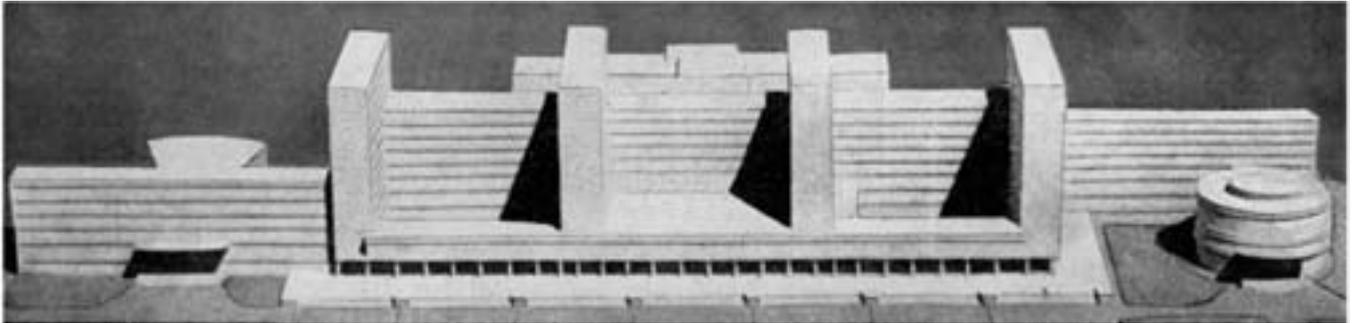
The results of the competition reveal a contrast between monumentality and functionality, stylistically categorized, we can distinguish between socialist realism and modernism. The requirements of the palace were of both functional, as well as symbolic nature. In the end, the architects Vladimir Potocnjak, Anton Ulrich, Zlatko Neumann, and Dragica Perak, of Zagreb, won the first price. According to the jury, their project embodied a 'middle line' between formal and functional demands. After the completion of the competition, Milorad Macura, one of the prize winning architects of Belgrade, wrote: „ the President's palace is pure, precise architecture, in which all the elements of good architecture stand in a balanced relationship. As organizational form, it is a functional building; in its construction, it is rational. In respect to the composition of parts, the building should evoke in its visitors precisely the sensation corresponding to a building of such function and dimension.



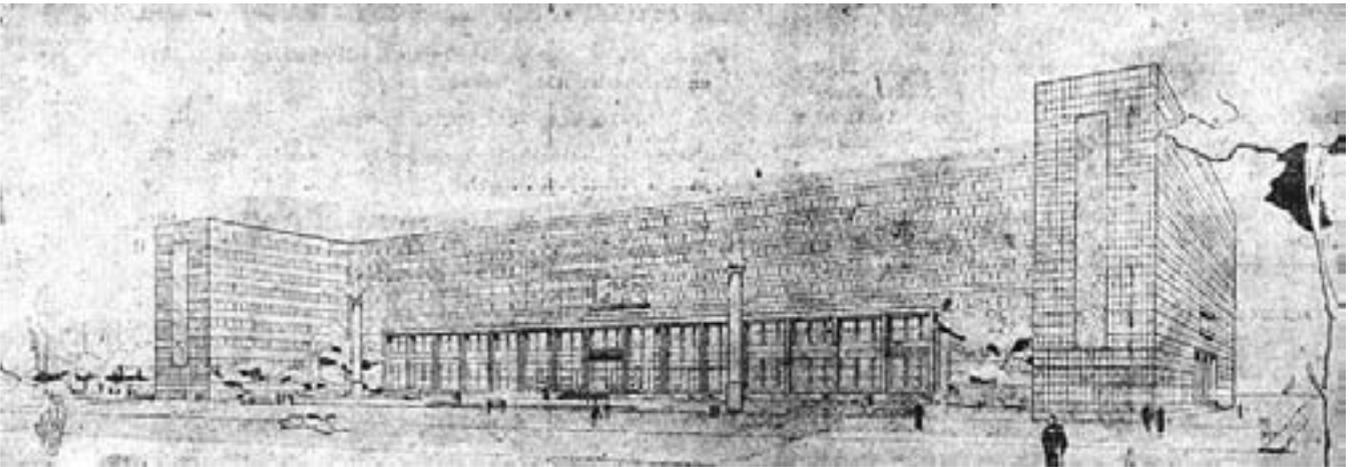
Ravnikar, Professor at the TU Ljubljana, third 2nd price



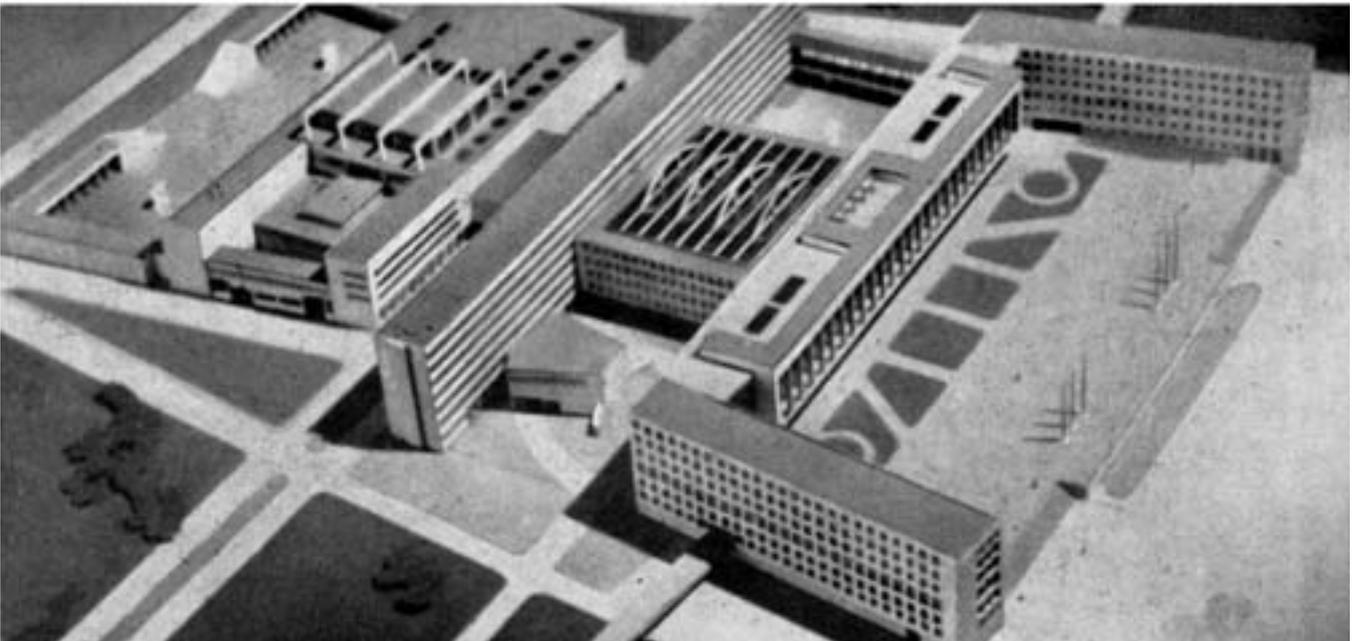
Segric, Galic, Bon, Augustincic, Sumunovic, first 2nd price



Macura, Kortus, Anagnasti, Ilic, "Construction Worker Union", second 2nd price

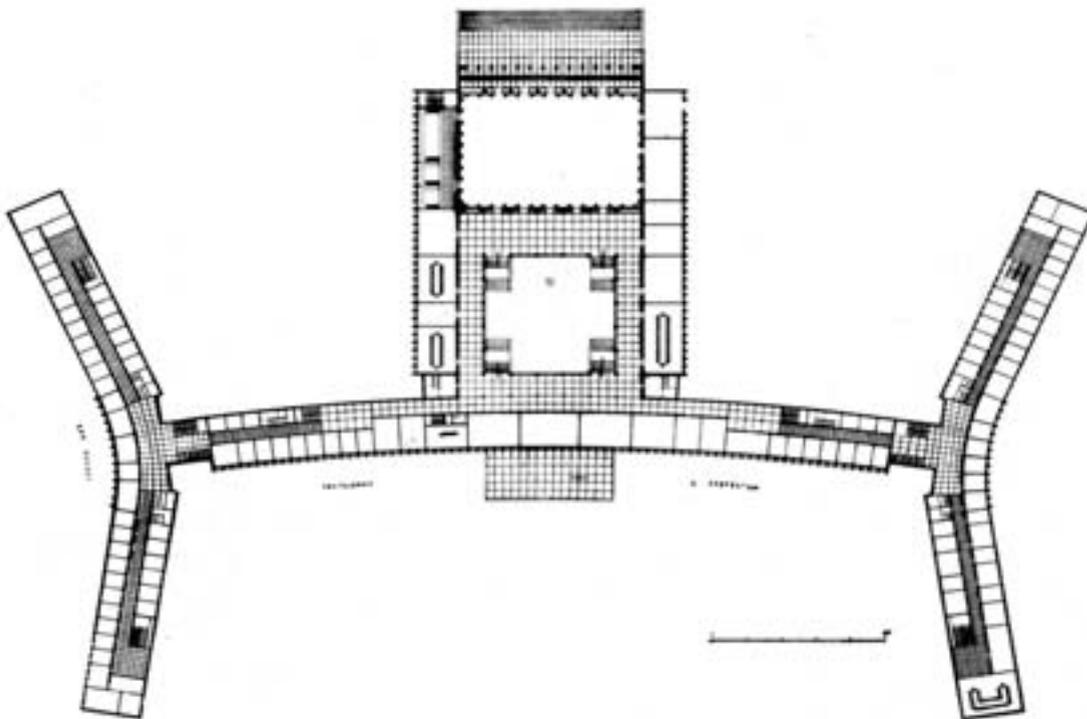
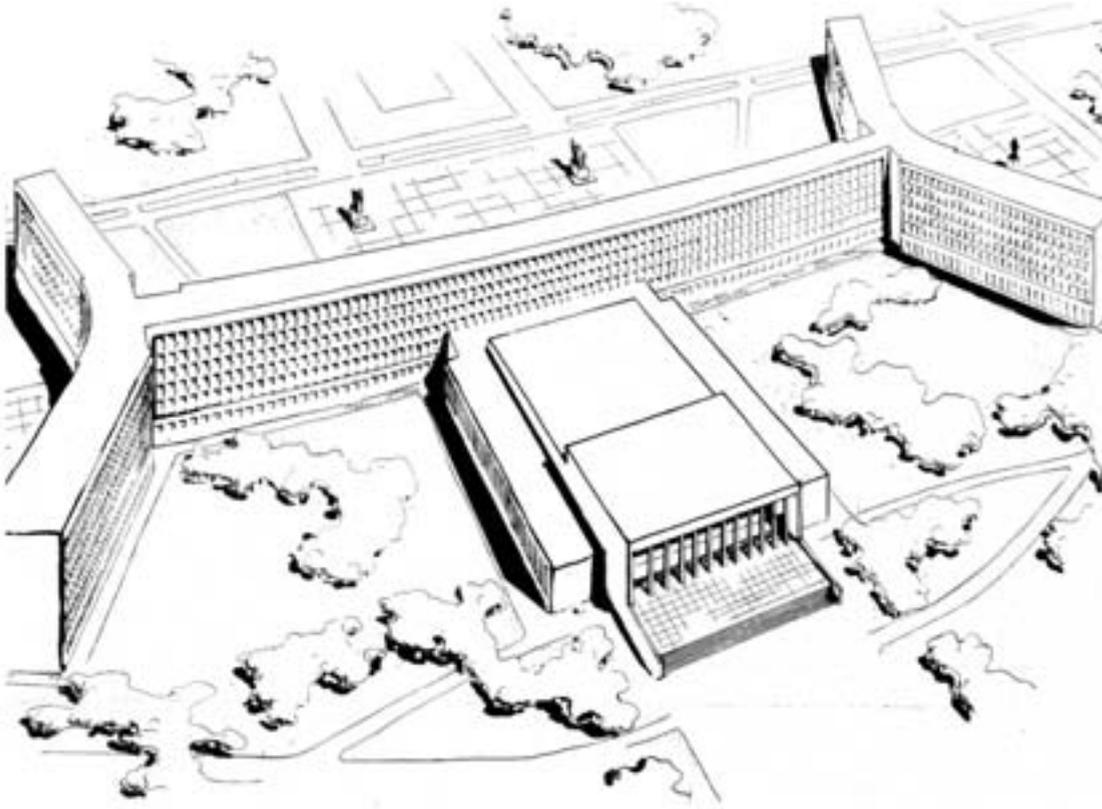


Petricic, Pujic, Bajlon, Bombardeli, Sercer, Tadic, Cirkovic, Maksinovic, fifth 3rd price



Kazimir und Ostrogovic, Marasovic, second 3rd price

**Palace of the  
Federation**



Potocnjak, Ulrich, Neumann and Perak from Zagreb won the first price

## First Building Phase

The construction of the government building began shortly after the conclusion of the competition. The foundation was laid in sandy ground and the concrete frames were already constructed when, suddenly, political problems arose.

In June of 1948, associations to the Soviet Union were severed, and all investments not directly coupled with industrial development were terminated. Among these, the President's Palace was also affected, though the construction continued for a short time, it was broken off in 1949.



Construction Workes at the Palace of the Federation, 1948

## **Second Building Phase**

After 1955, the political situation had calmed, new partners had been found in the West, and, with this, the economy was stabilized. Ideological guidelines were weakened and, from a centrally planned economy, a hybrid system with characteristics of a market economy evolved. This new beginning also resulted in new demands on the architecture of the time. With the resumption of construction work on the Palace, the political and social upheaval was to be reflected in the architectural expression of the building. The federal, executive council commissioned the Belgrade office of 'Stadion', under the leadership of Mihailo Jankovic, with the completion of the project.

Jankovic was neither a major theoretician, nor a particularly innovative architect, (he was not even part of the communist party) yet, he was a true master in the language of the international style. Additionally, he also constructed other projects such as the Museum of May 25th, the CK tower and the Partisan Stadium.

Major changes took place under Jankovic's leadership. As they had already been established earlier, the urban position and the construction grid of the building were retained.



Resumption of construction work since 1955



Palace of the Federation during the construction work



Photograph of the completed building



## Palace of the Federation

The plans of the building are adjusted to the complex program, which entails 500 offices and an addition of a number of large, representative rooms distributed among different ministries and secretaries. Jankovic almost completely refashions the exterior appearance of the building; instead of 18cm thick marble blocks, the façade is clad with much thinner panels. To emphasize the horizontality of the building, he forgoes the heavy pilasters intended for the facade. The window frames, originally planned in wood, are also replaced with aluminum.

Each aspect of the construction serves to give the building a light and transparent impression: from the central pavilion, which floats above a wide pool, to the countless canopies on the roof above the entrance and over the ramps, which lead to the garages. A new section, constructed on columns, serves as a connection between the side wings of the structure and the pavilion, emphasizing the spatial depth and formal complexity of the building, in contrast to the rigid simplicity of its predecessor. The main entrance is moved to the side of the building not facing the river. The curved facades of the two building wings, which retain traces of the past design in their imposing symmetry, are the only building parts, which continue reflect early, classicist influences.



Jankovic and his team also design a large part of the interior rooms and thereby create a rich, modern space with many works of art and pieces of furniture.

Ironically, according to Janovic's interpretation, the building now resembles more closely a modern version of Haberles, than the classicism of Potocnjaks. In this, one recognizes how strongly the desired image of a state has changed over time. The President's Palace is completed in 1961, for the occasion of the first conference of the heads of state and government of the Block-Free States. Meanwhile, the building itself is renamed to the "Council of Federal Executives" (SIV-Savezno Izvršno Veće), in order to reflect the institutional regrouping within the system of "Federal Socialism."

The building covers a surface of over 2000 hectares, and with its over 1000 rooms, six conference rooms for each member state, and Tito's large office, the building counts, as the largest administrative building of Central Europe, in its time. Due to the sandy ground, the building is supported by 3400 concrete columns, which, in part, reach to a depth of 15 meters beneath the ground. The Palace, the greater part five-storey, has a central dome above the Yugoslavia Room, with a diameter of 19 meters.



The Block-Free States Convention at the opening day of the Palace of the Federation in 1961

**Palace of the Federation**



Views of the Palace of the Federation





View of the west façade



# Images of the Interior

**Palace of the  
Federation**





**Palace of the  
Federation**





**Palace of the  
Federation**





**Palace of the  
Federation**





**Palace of the  
Federation**





**Palace of the  
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**Palace of the  
Federation**





**Palace of the  
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Lobby

**Palace of the  
Federation**



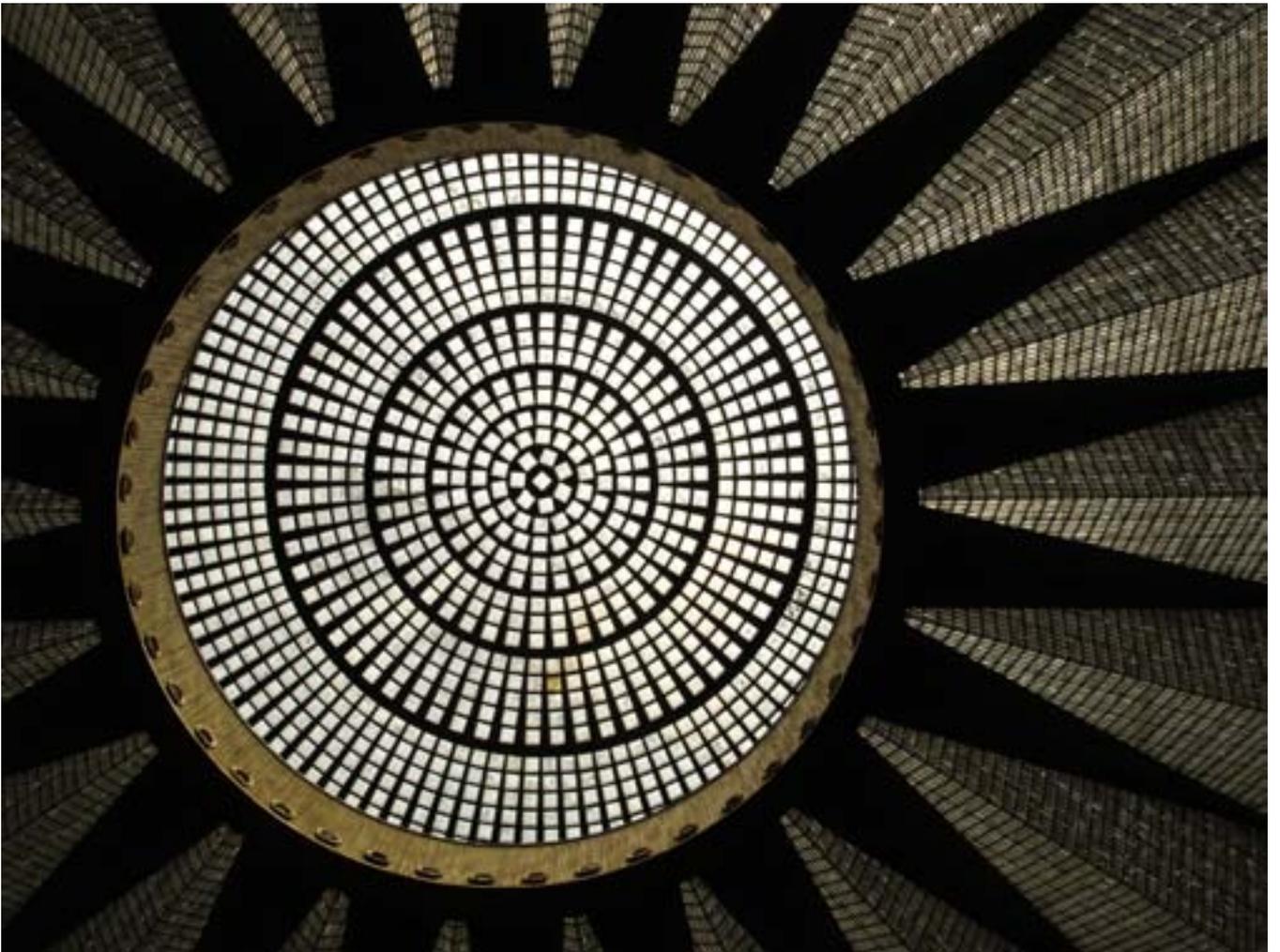
Main stairway to the conference rooms and to Tito's office



**Palace of the  
Federation**

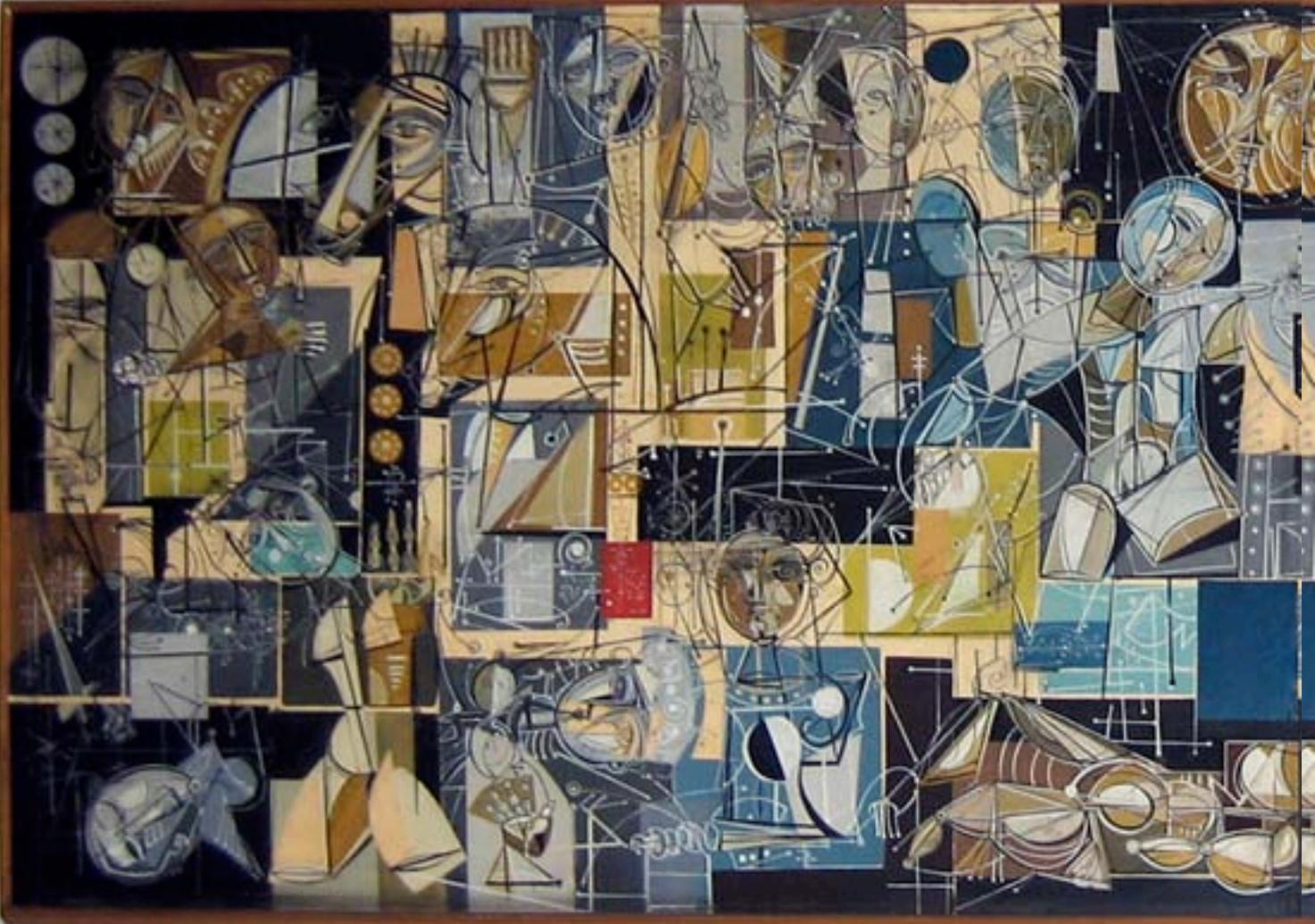


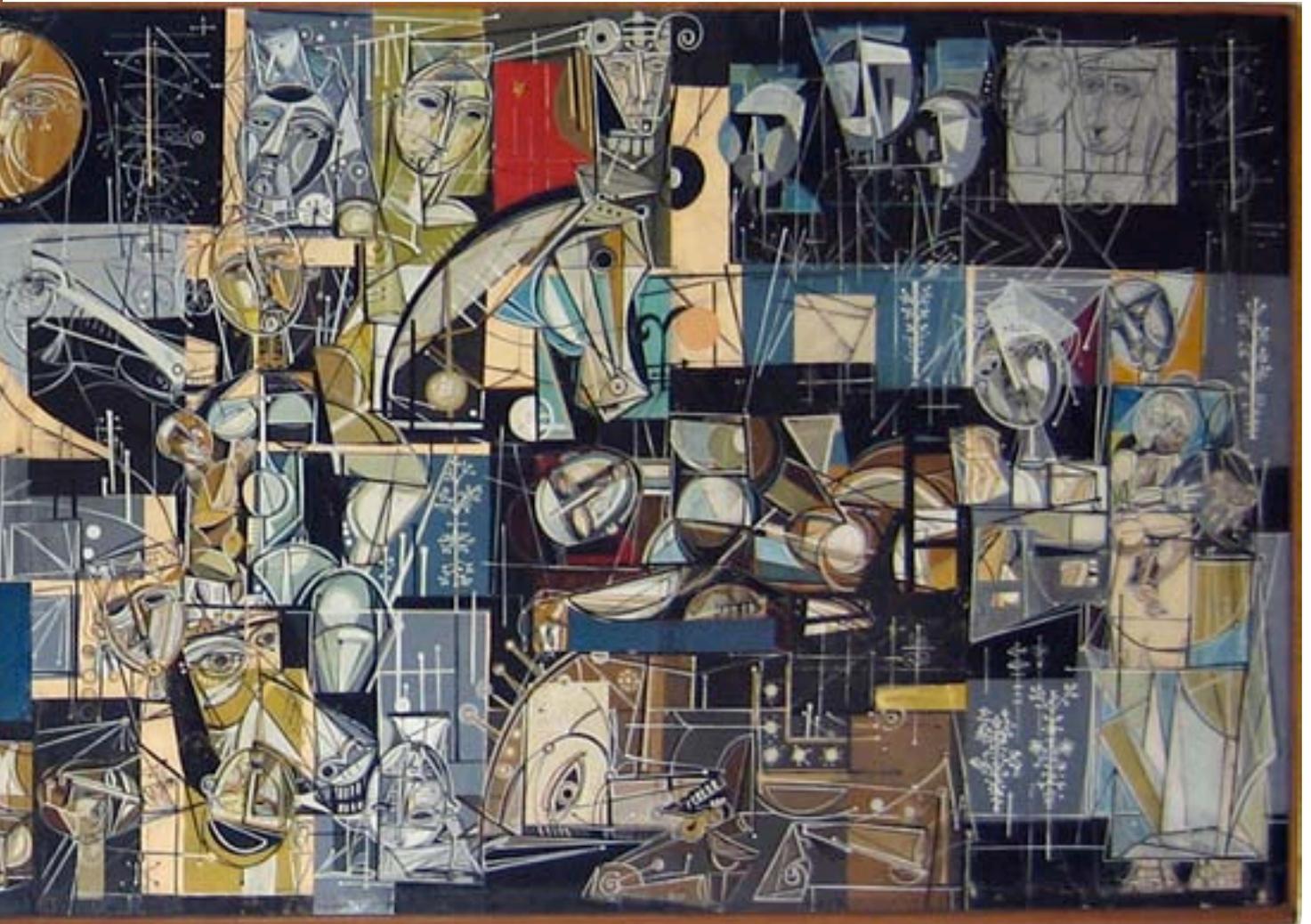
One of many art pieces in the Palace



Dome of the room "Yugoslavia"

**Palace of the  
Federation**



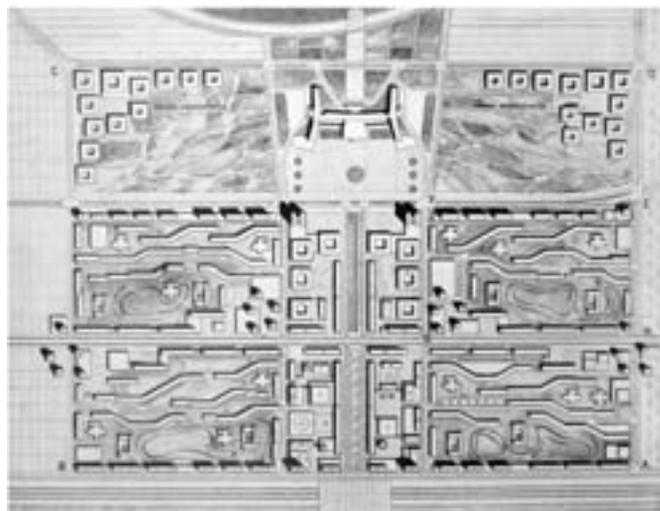


## **The Palace as Fixed Urban Point**

The urban hierarchy advocated by Porocnjak's office, gives unmistakable expression to the structure of political power, while the President's Palace acts as a cornerstone in the further development of the new city. A first consequence is the reformulation of the central axis, which is attributed a hierarchical order. It seems that almost all important transformations to the urban structure of New Belgrade can be attributed to the position and architecture of the President's Palace, as it remains a fixed point in each of the subsequent Master Plan designs: among which are the plan for New Belgrade in 1948, and 1950, as well as the plan for the central zone of New Belgrade in 1960. The palace, as central political organ, represents the highest density of symbolism in the Federalist State of Yugoslavia and is simultaneously among the largest works of modernism in architecture. These two aspects are visibly reinforced by the urban position of the building.



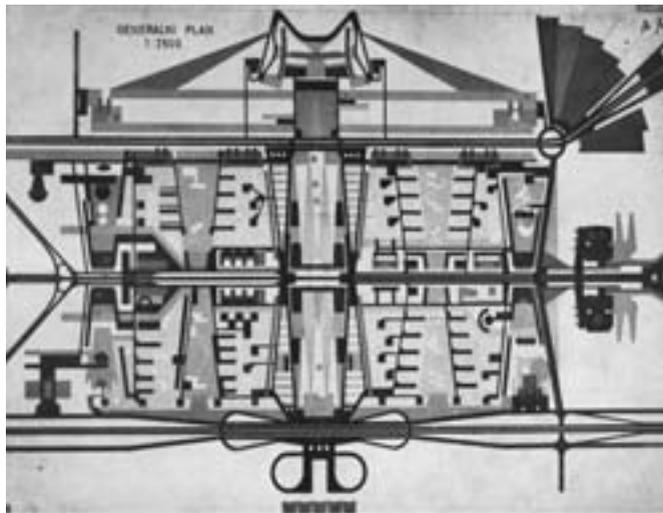
Nikola Dobrovic, sketch for New Belgrade 1948



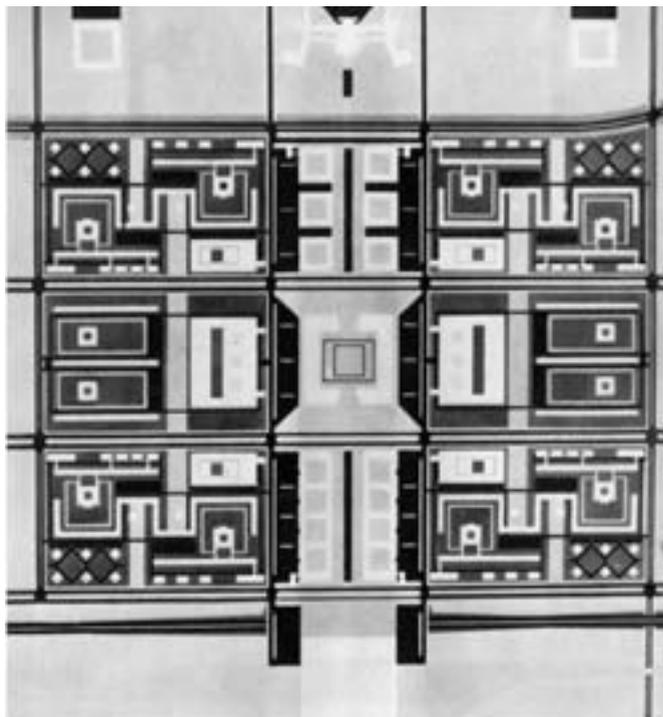
Svoboda, Milankovic, Glavicki, Drakulic, Lukic, plan of New Belgrade's central zone 1950



Petricic, proposal for a central plan on New Belgrade 1957



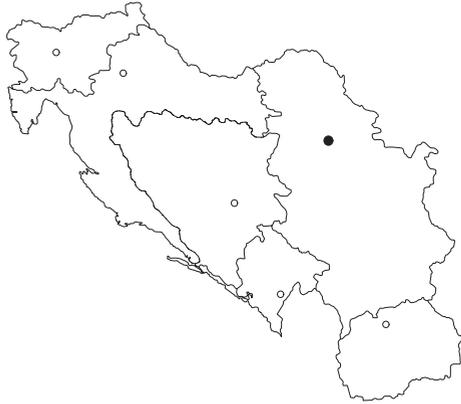
Bogojevic, Competition for first Residential Block, plan of New Belgrade's central zone 1958



Lenarzin, Glamik, Milenkovic, Martinovic, plan of New Belgrade's central zone 1960

## Today's Situation

After the death of Tito, twelve further presidents rule from within the President's Palace. With the breakdown of the State of Yugoslavia in 1991 and the ensuing civil war, the individual states break from the Yugoslavian Federation and the palace loses its original purpose.



Shrinking Yugoslavia

1945 to 1991

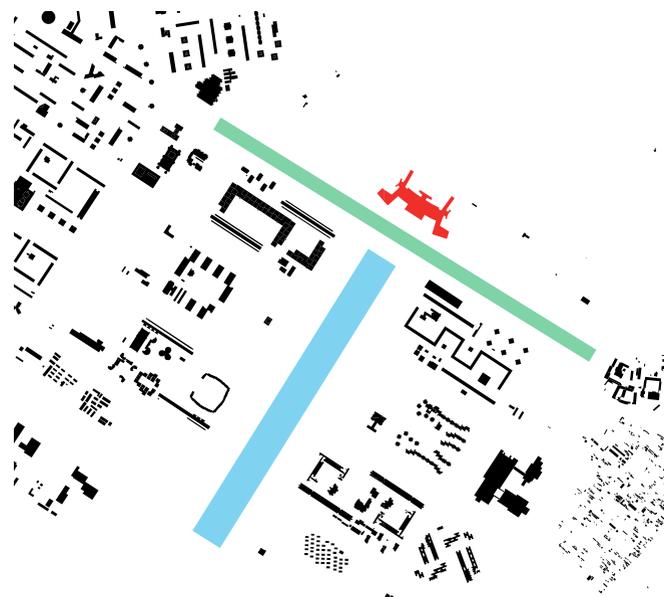


1991 to 2006



Situation since 2006

The urban situation of the building is also weakened after 1996. Buildings are constructed on the three, vacant fields facing the main entrance, and thereby underlining the prominence of the building, one after another and the palace is pushed further to the edge of New Belgrade. During the NATO bombings, the building is spared. Until recently, the President's Palace still functioned as the governmental building of Serbia-Montenegro, until the recent withdrawal of the state of Montenegro from its union with Serbia. The situation, in which the building stands today, bears no reference to its former position within the state. Yet, a modern enthusiasm still emanates from the monumental appearance of the building, even if this expression has come to represent the downfall of hegemony and centralization within the state.



Starting point for a monumental axis



Location in the parc since 1996



Development of the free Blocks 24, 25 and 26 in front of the Palace

## Palace of the Federation



Andjelic, in charge of Interior and Art Exhibits.

Should one wish to visit the governmental complex today, a load of telephone calls and letters are required before reaching the person responsible for the arrangement of such visits. At the entrance, one is met by a special guide who is also responsible for the countless works of art within the building. Aside from Tito's office, one visits all the large conference rooms, for instance the Croatian, Serbian, Macedonian, Montenegrin, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Slovenian rooms, each uniquely furnished. Occasionally one passes a pair of security guards, who stand, as if lost, in the gigantic and nearly abandoned ghost castle. The problems, which the Palace must face, are made apparent through the visit. There is a lack of funds, as well as new ideas for a possible use of the building, which would justify the maintenance of and breathe new life into the building. For a short time rumors were even circulated that the palace was to be transformed into a shopping complex. At the moment, the headquarters of the Ministry SCG, three ministries of the state's union, the SCG courts, and further administrative functions are located within the building. More ministries are expected to move into the building, but this fails to present a final solution, which would make use of the full volume of the structure. The newspaper "Blic" once featured an article regarding the way in which the palace might be best utilized. There were many suggestions: hotel, museum, concert and theater hall. It is also very difficult to restructure the complex due to the character of the rooms. Many free spaces thereby remain open to speculative use and the future of the palace is still undefined. The building has not yet been placed under historical protection, though it finds itself in a form of preceding phase. As seen from a different perspective, the building's strong historical and architectural character presents the question of what role it will play in its continually changing environment, which was founded through the construction of the Palace, yet pushes it to the limit of isolation today.



Children playing in the fountain of the Palace





Blic of 26.05.06: "What to do with the Palace of the Federation" after Montenegro split up from Serbia



"I know what i would do in the Palace"

**Palace of the  
Federation**







## **CK Tower 1964**

Arch. Mihajlo Jankovic Arch.

Dusan Milenkovic Arch.

Mirjana Marijanovic Bulevar

Mihajla Pupina

# A High-Rise as Monument for a New Ideology

## First Attempt

The first initiative regarding the construction of a building for the Central Committee of the Communist Party arose in 1946, as an element of a larger project: the establishment of New Belgrade. While a third of the city Old Belgrade was still in ruins and plagued by high poverty, a great, new ambition to colonize the marshlands with a new city emerged. Conceived as a headquarter for the most important institutions of the state, the building of the Central Committee of the Communist Party had the highest political standing. The form of a high-rise was favored, being seen as the best representation of the political power held by the Communist Party. A monumental design was clearly encouraged.



*"Proletarians of all nations unite!"*

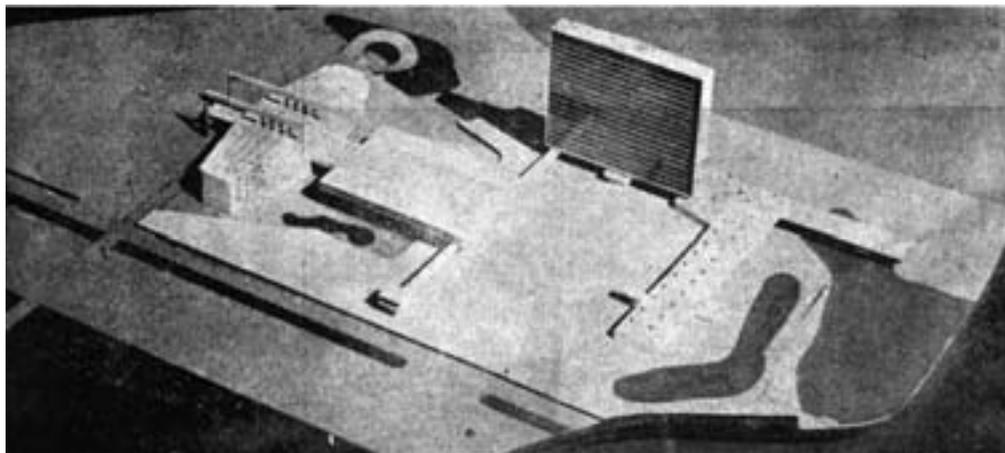


Members of the communist league during the Second World War. Dr. Baaric, Ivan Milutinovic, Edvard Kardelj, Josip Broz Tito, Aleksandar-Leka Rankovic, Svetozar Vukmanovic-Tempo and Milovan Dilas

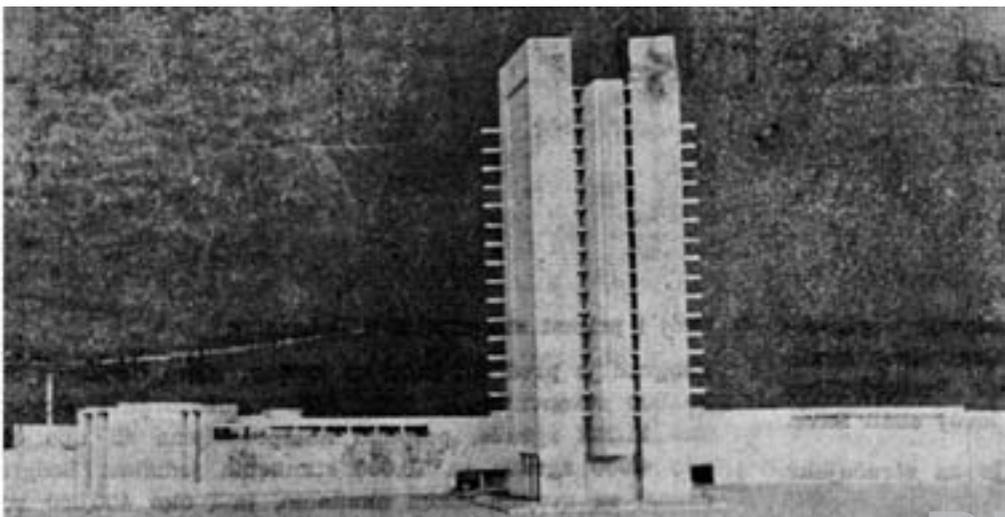
Yet none of the competition entries met the set requirements and in place of a winning project, three participants were awarded the second prize. When the relationship between Russia and Yugoslavia came to an end in 1948, the project was further laid on ice.



Krstic, Preljevic, Marinkovic, Radovanovic, CK KPJ, 1947, competition purchase

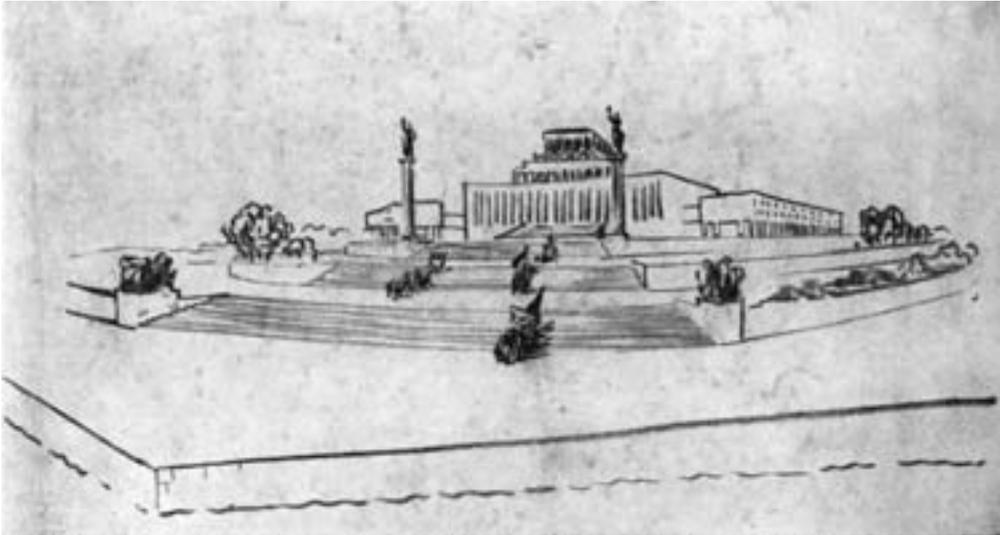


Turina, Bolitar, Niksic, CK KPJ, 1947, competition purchase



Bogojevic, Momcilovic, Bogojevic, Krunic, Partonic, Bogojevic, CK KPJ, fourth 3rd price

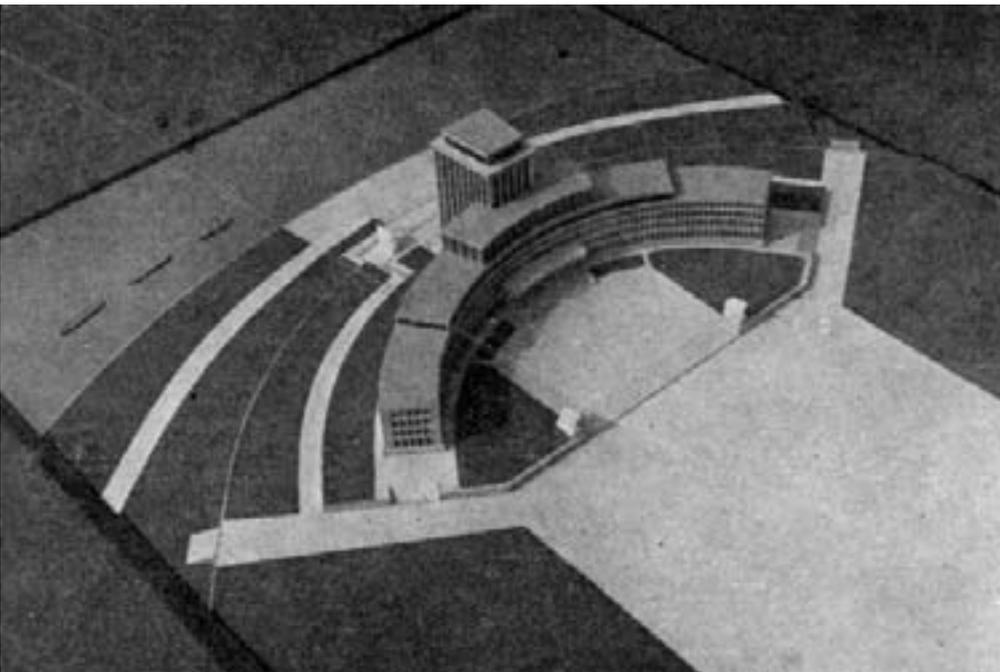
## CK Tower



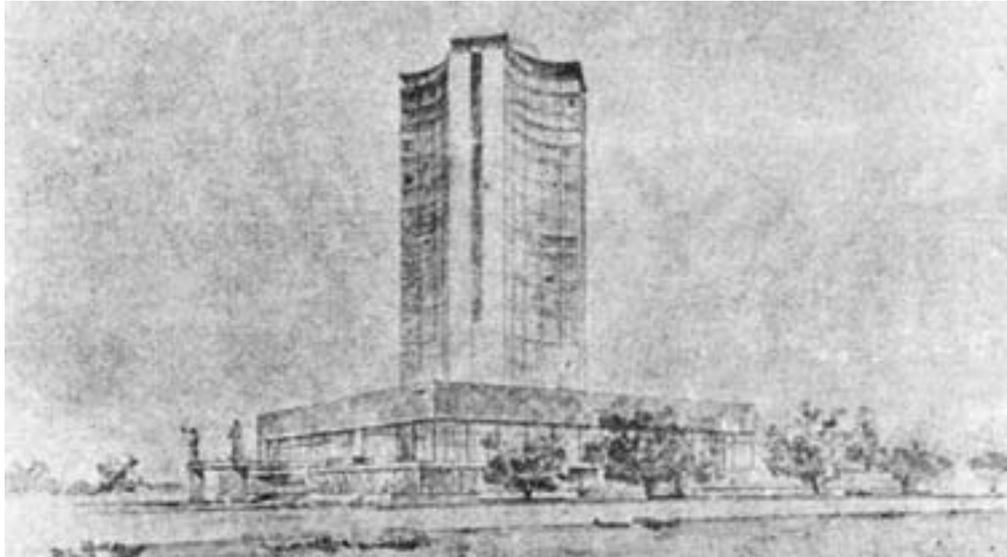
Segric, Galic, Bon, sketch for the competition



Bajlon, Cirkovic, Bombardeli, Taclic, Sedlar, secnd 3rd price



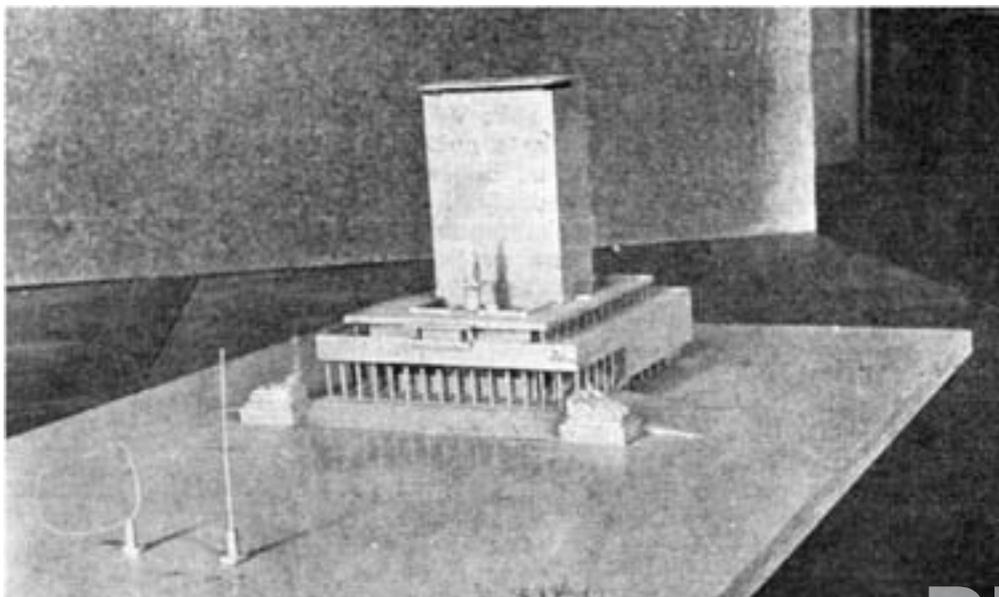
Bon, CK KPJ, solution after the competition



Kanzlaric, Horvat, Sajsl, Sinkovic, CK KPJ, fifth 3rd price



Marasovic, CK KPJ, external purchase



Vitic, CK KPJ, non-rewarded project

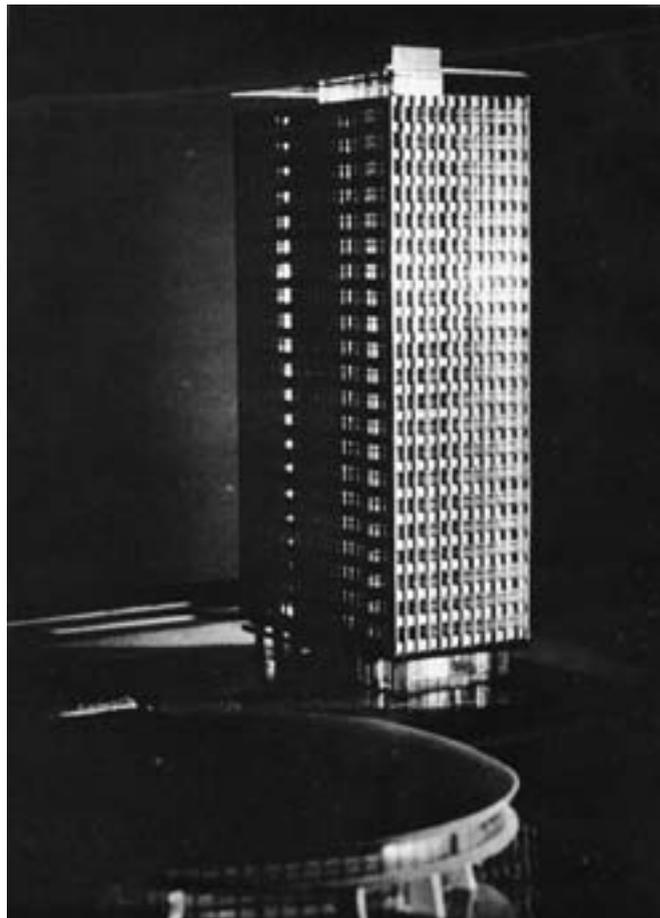
## Second Attempt with Modified Criteria

After the state had recovered from its break with Russia, a new competition was initiated in 1959. The criteria were oriented less towards socialist realism and more towards the International Style.

Mihajlo Jankovic, the architect of the Palace of the Federation, Dusan Milenkovic, and Mirjana Marijanovic, together with the building engineer Milan Krstic, were the designers of the winning project. They proposed a hundred meter high office tower in addition to a conference pavilion raised on stilts. A later idea proposed a transformation of the conference room into the form of a round "saucer", supported by thin, horizontal planes. Yet in the end, the pavilion was never built and the solitary tower was accidentally transformed from a Niemeyer to a Mies inspired project in its outer appearance.



First ideas for the Highrise Building, 1959



## Structure of the High-Rise

The CK high-rise was completed in 1964. The structural system is composed of an elevator core and a grid of columns along the façade, which enable a great freedom in the interior arrangement of space. Functionally, the building is divided into two areas; the 'youth-committee' and office space for the republic of Serbia are located on the first five floors, with a separate entrance, foyer, stairwell and lift. The remaining rooms, are used by the Central Committee. The aluminum covered, concrete columns, as well as the grooved fixtures covered with green glass give the façade the illusion of a curtain wall. In order to safeguard the longevity of materials and construction, a great deal of importance was placed on the façade details. The interior finishing was very simple: linoleum floors, wallpaper, and standard furniture. The higher the office of an official within the building, the higher his position within the party.



CK Tower under construction 1963

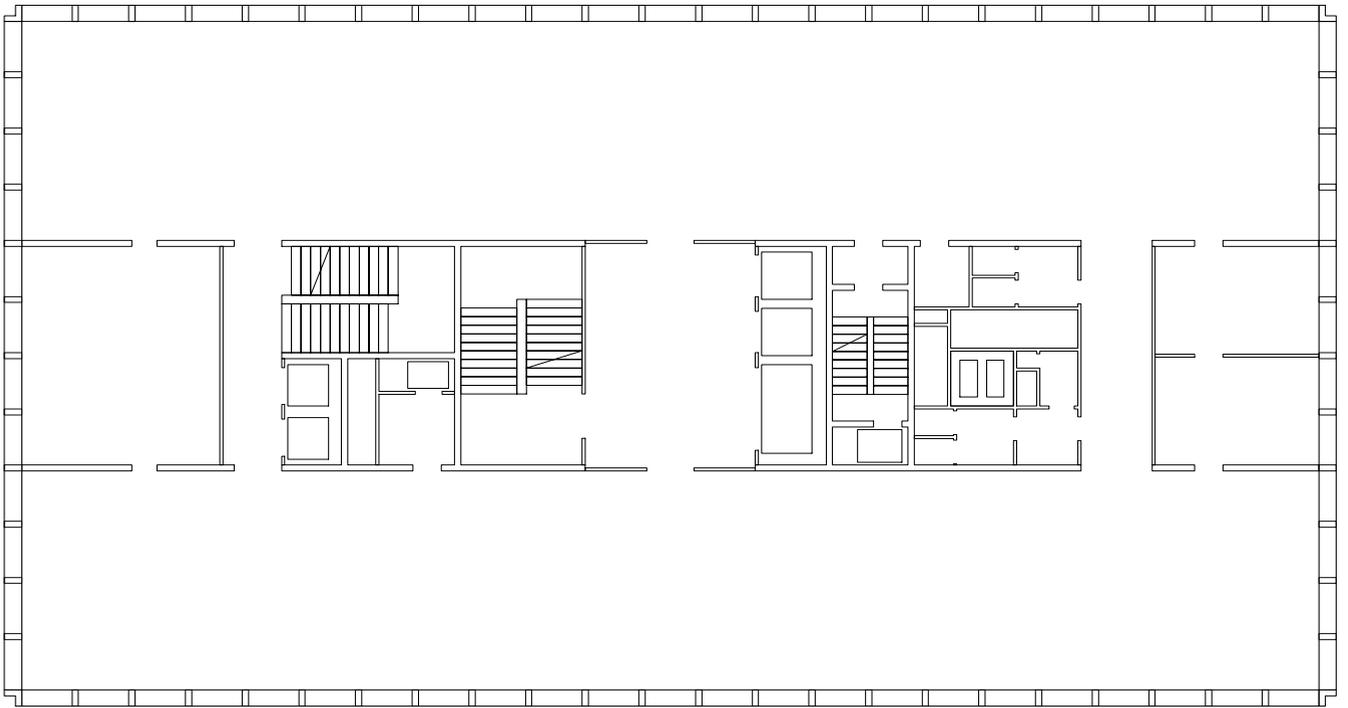
## CK Tower



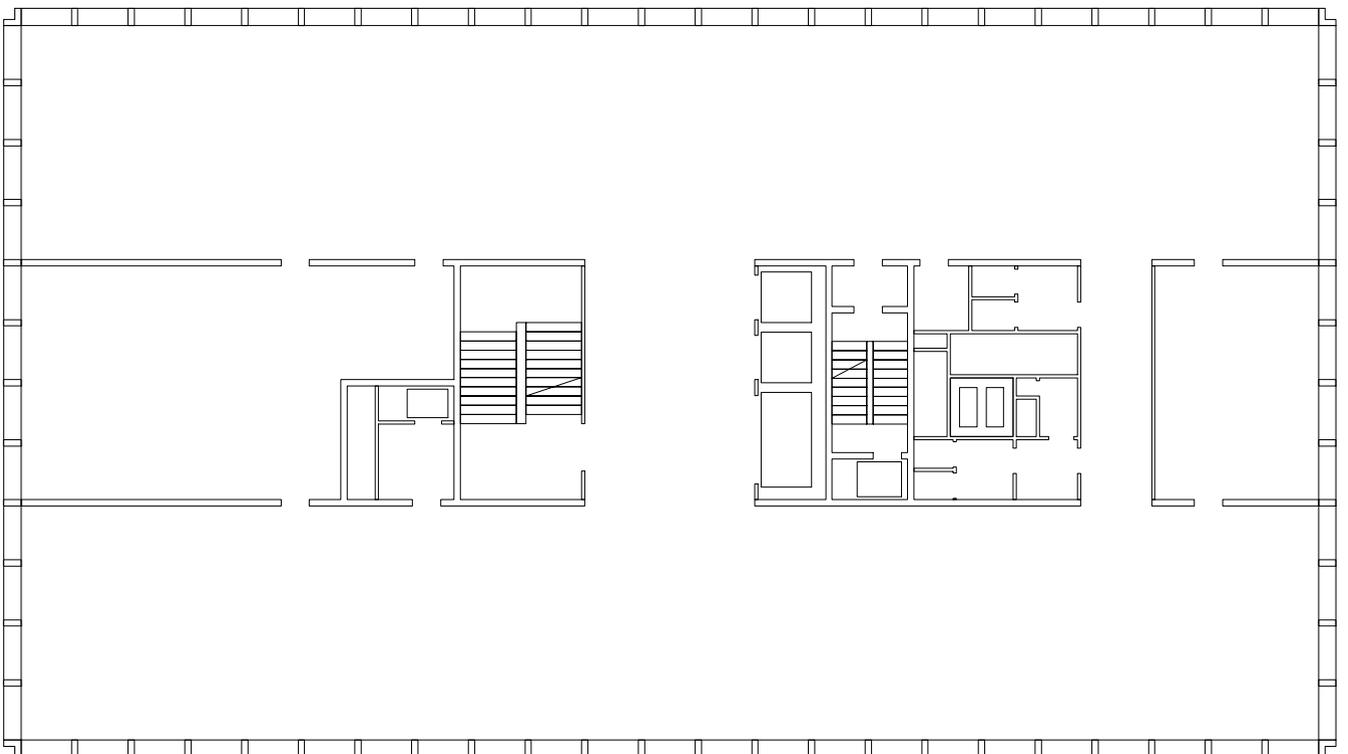
CK Tower, after 1964



CK Tower, view from the Sava



Floor plan of the first five levels with separated staircase for the youthparty



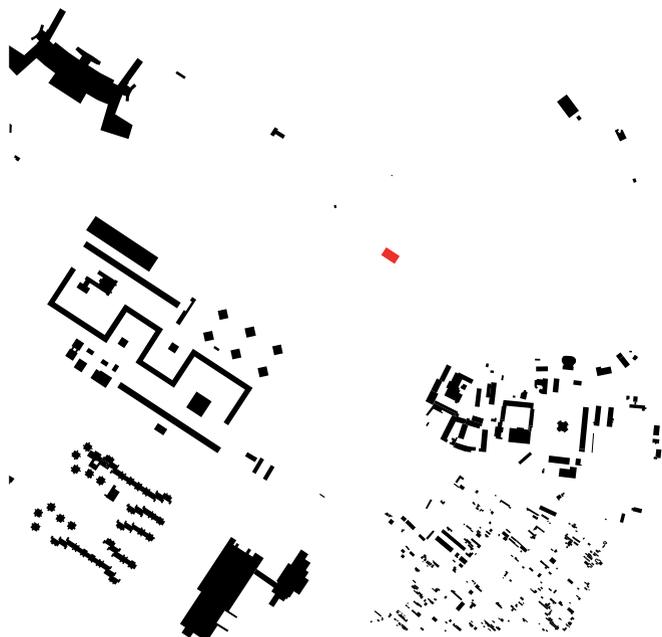
Floor plan for the levels above the 6th floor

## The Unfortunate Effect

The high-rise has only symbolic reasons to thank for its height. Constructed in a completely empty environment, the building underlies its dominant urban situation, especially shortly after its completion when there were few buildings in the vicinity. The desired effect however, remains unrealized. Despite its size, the tower has less representative potential than in its first design. The tower functions only in part as a communist symbol, as it is above all an apparatus for representatives of the state. However, it turned out that the building possessed a secret gimmick; lights were installed behind the façade, which enabled the CK tower to be illuminated as a body of light during the night. The comparison between the high-rises of Mies, which developed into commercially used prototypes, and the CK Tower, used politically, presents the problematic of creating a direct connection between form and ideology.



Urban situation, 1964



## The Failed Attempt

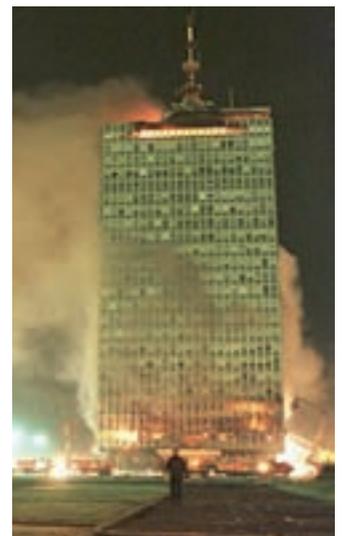
In 1979 the anti-communist, Serb Nikola Kavaja attempted to hijack a plane in Chicago with the intention of an assault on the CK Tower. Although Tito had visited the building only at its opening and had since avoided it, Nikola Kavaja was convinced that Tito lived in the building and that he could therefore assassinate him in his assault. Through Kavaja's own incompetence, however, the plan failed.



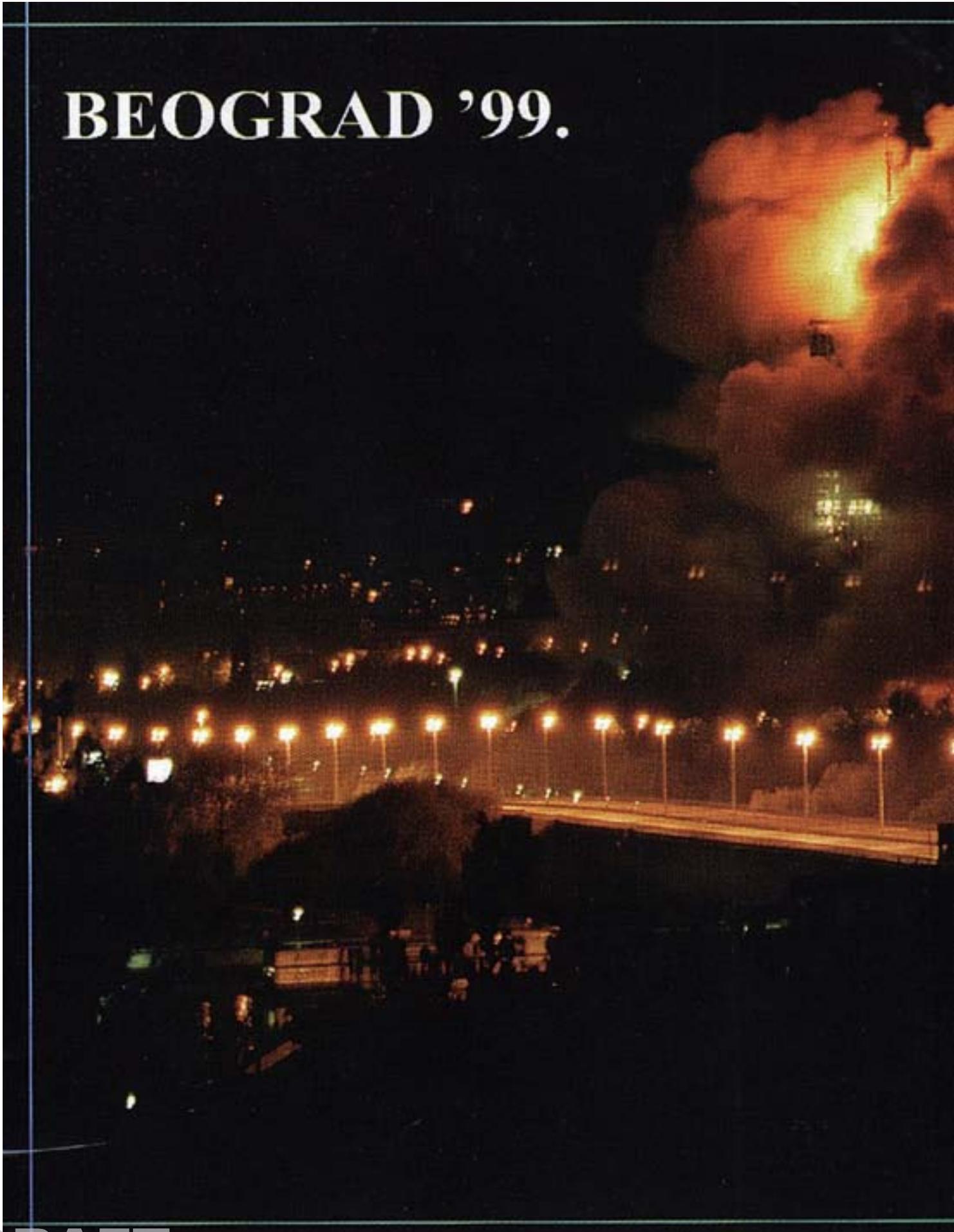
Nikola Kavaja

## From Rental Object to Target Object

In 1990, Milosevic and his profit oriented, Socialist Party SPS comes to power, presenting themselves as the heirs to the CK Tower. They transform the building into a rental object, retaining one part for themselves, while renting the rest out to newly established, private firms associated with Milosevic's regime. To these belong the radio and TV stations, owner by Milosevic's daughter. The new income generated by the rental structure was used to reinforce the financial means of the party. The NATO attacks strongly damaged the building through numerous rockets, but incredibly the tower did not collapse. The goal of these attacks was to disable the TV and radio transmitter, as well as the political apparatus of Milosevic's regime.



# BEOGRAD '99.



**DRAFT**

Postkarte vom CK Turm während der Bombardierung

© ETH Studio Basel



# Biznis centar „UŠĆE„

## CK Tower



After the attacks on the CK Highrise Building on the 19th of April 1999



After the downfall of Milosevic in 2000, a public competition is initiated in November 2001, for the renovation and purchase of the high-rise. The participants were unknown and the execution of the competition was quite unclear. In the end, a consortium "European Construction" bought the tower for 5 million Euros. The renovation work, for which the architectural office "Slavija" drew the plans, cost an additional 30 million. The high rise was completed in June 2006, and was heightened to 130 meters, with 25 additional floors; this time around the façade became a real curtain wall. The building is now named USCE Tower. MPC Holding, a daughter firm of European Construction, administers the building; they organize meetings and events and rent out office space for 20-25 Euro/m<sup>2</sup>. The upper floor is used as a bar/restaurant and can be rented for events at night. The former political apparatus of the communist party has thereby been transformed into an office building. The draw of the building lies, above all, in its prominent position and the distant views one gains from the tower.

As a former monument of the communist party, the building has become mutated to as symbol of the free market economy. Here, we are faced with the problem of finding a direct relationship between form and ideology.

OBJEKAT :	"POSLOVNI CENTAR USCE" BLOK 16, Novi Beograd
INVESTITOR :	"EUROPEAN CONSTRUCTION" d.o.o. Beograd
GLAVNO REŠENJE :	YORR INTERNATIONAL LIMITED, LONDON
ODGOVORNI PROJEKTANT :	SLAVIJA BROS, Beograd BEDSP PARTNERSHIP, London GRADJEVINSKI FAKULTET, Beograd
GLAVNI IZVOĐAČ :	EUROPEAN CONSTRUCTION d.o.o. Beograd
NAZIVNI ORGAN :	B M S K, Beograd CITY REAL ESTATE, Beograd
ODOBRENJE ZA IZGRADNJU :	br. 351-213/04 od 07.06.2004. godine
POČETAK RADOVA :	decembar 2003. godine
ZAVRŠETAK RADOVA :	14. septembra 2004. godine
gradjevinski radovi PMC inženjering d.o.o. Ratko Mirović-Dedić	instalaterni radovi Montaža d.o.o. Beograd
kovale ROJO 1869	liftovi OTIS GmbH, Wien
željezna konstrukcija TRMO inženjering d.o.o.	specijalizirani radovi GR

[www.uscetower.com](http://www.uscetower.com)

**USCE**

TRMO inženjering d.o.o.

OTIS GmbH, Wien

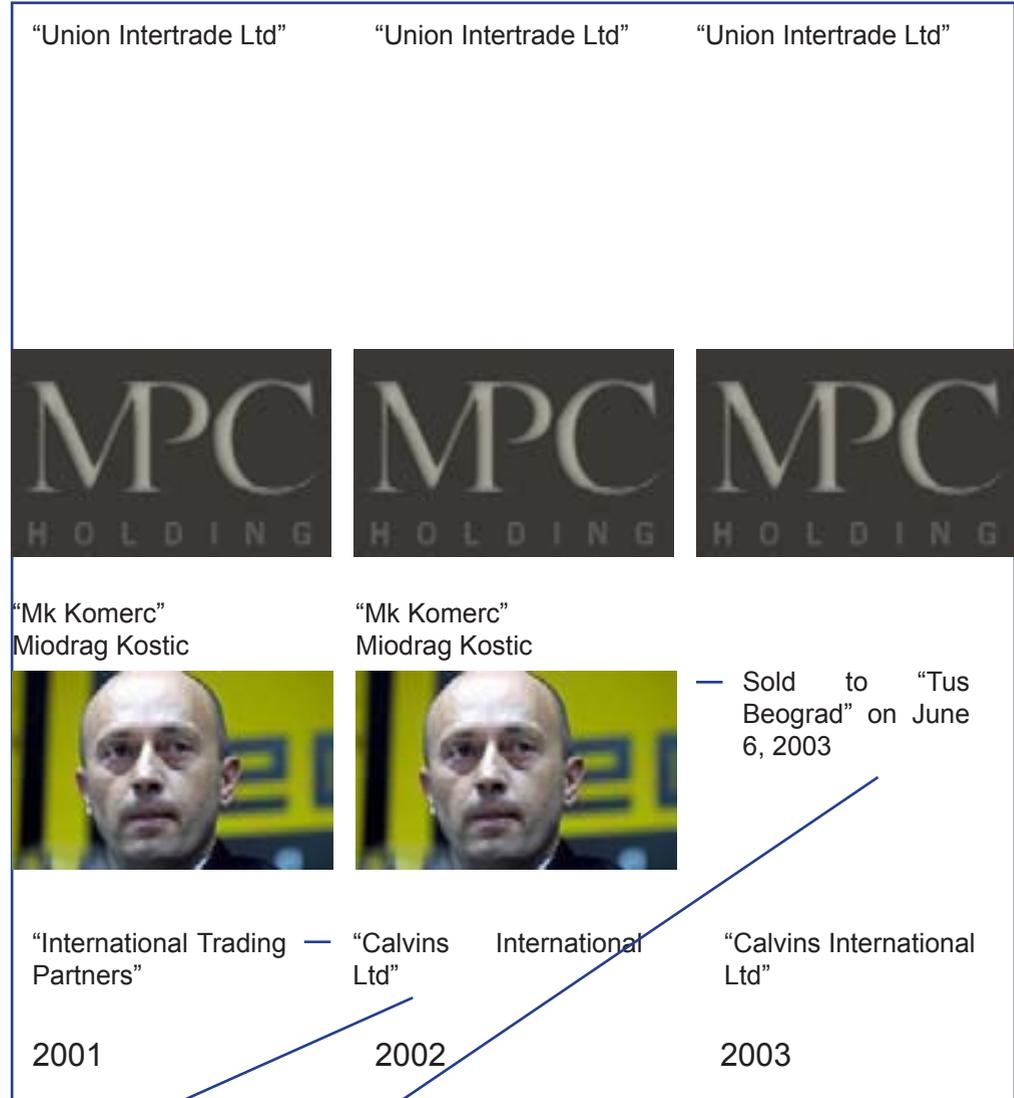
GR

# Organization of the Company “ European Construction”

The consortium “ European Construction” is founded by the buyers of the CK Tower on 06.12.01

“Union Intertrade Ltd”  
British Virgin Islands  
Vuk Hamovic  
Electricity Trade  
“controversial  
businessman”

“MPC”  
is owned by Petar Matic



“Mk Komerc”  
Miodrag Kostic



“Mk Komerc”  
Miodrag Kostic



“Mk Komerc”  
Miodrag Kostic



— Sold to “Tus Beograd” on June 6, 2003

“Calvins International Ltd”  
is registered at the same  
address as “Union International”

“Tus Beograd”. Mirko Tus  
comes from Slovenia. His  
main company is named  
“Energo Tus”



Office



Meeting room



Vacant rooms

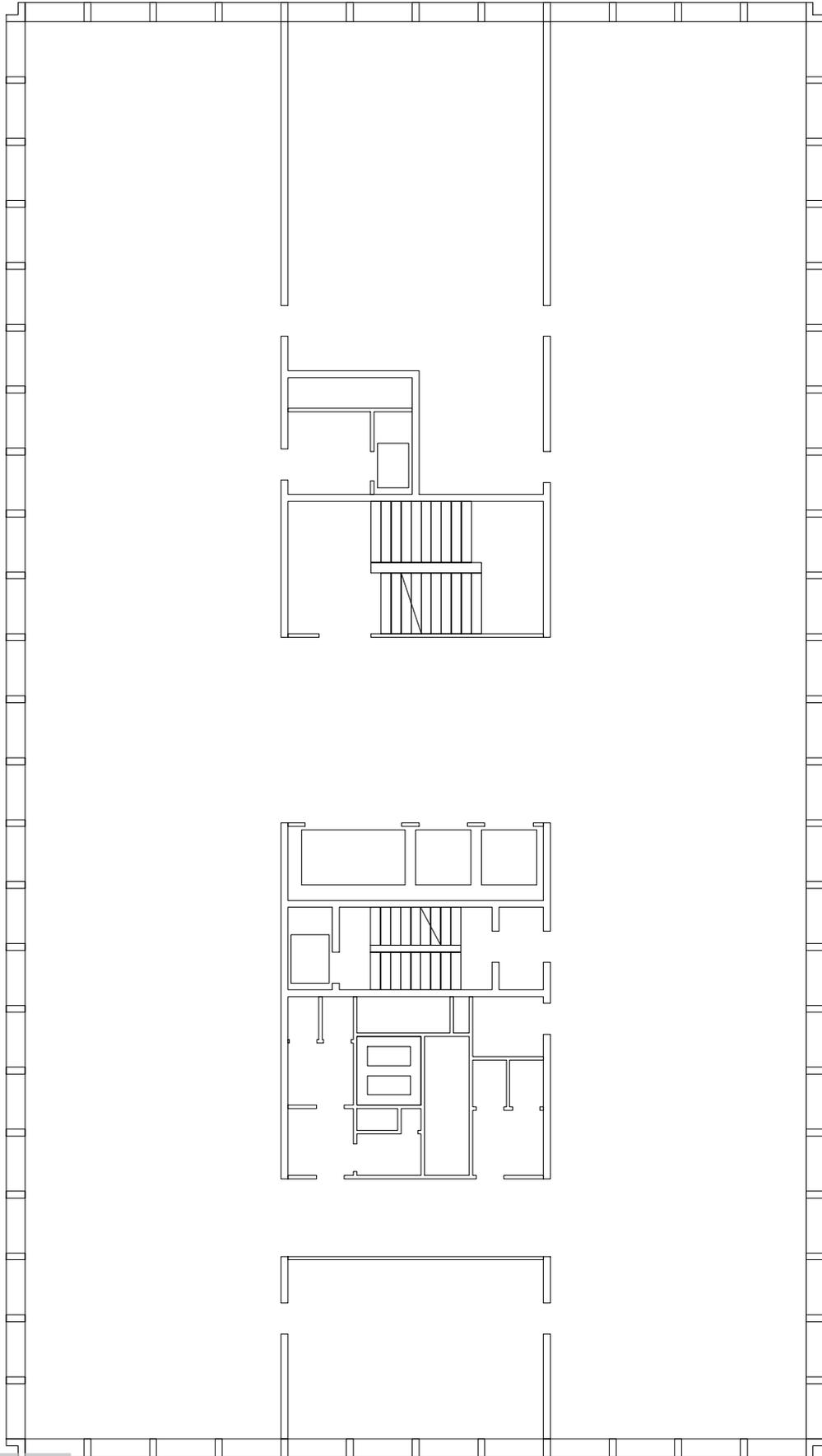


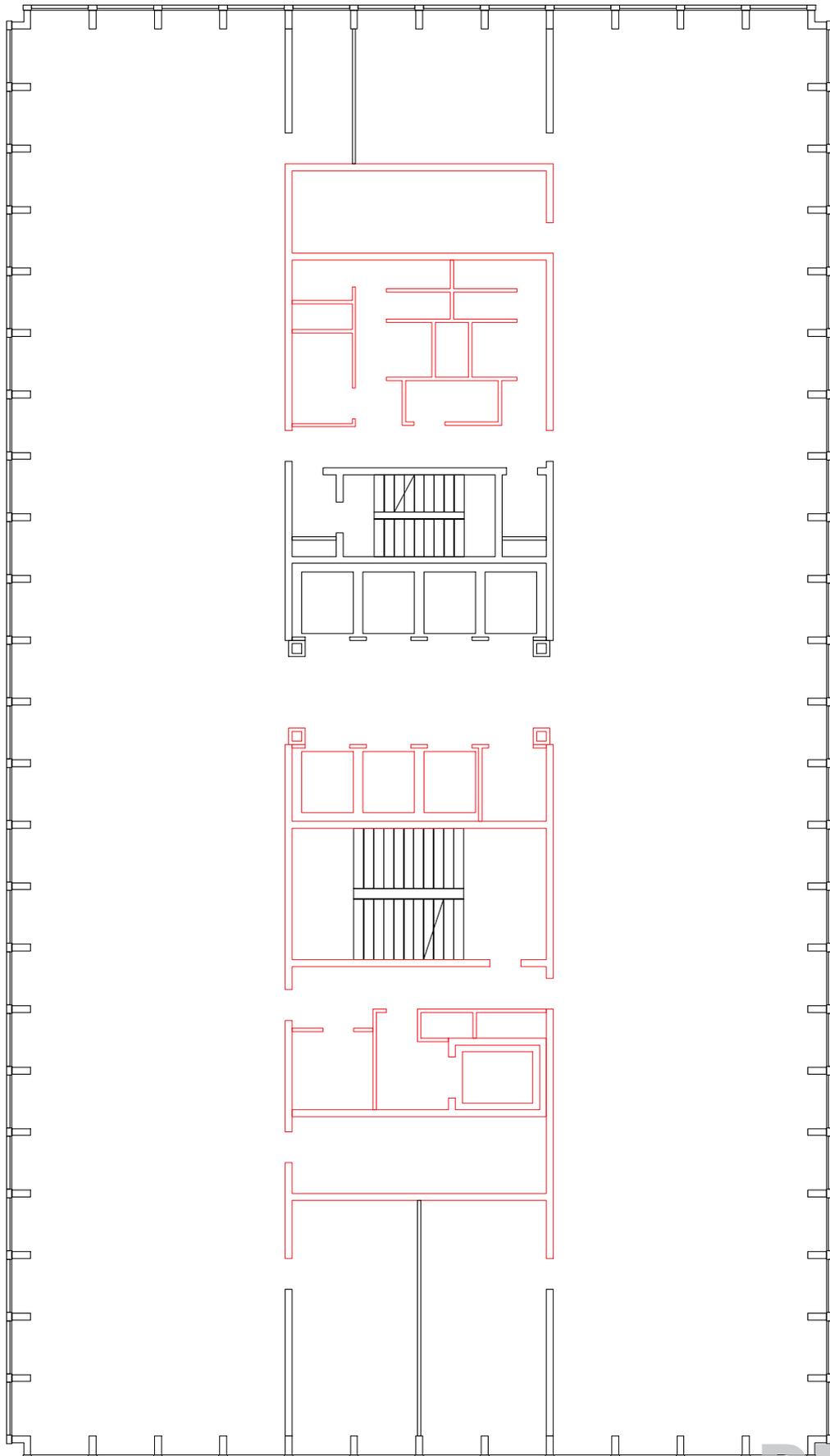
Event Space on the top floor



Office

**CK Tower**





New floor plan since June 2006

## CK Tower



CK Tower 1970



USCE Tower June 2006

A further 100 Million are to be invested into a second tower, with a shopping center. When the project is to be realized is still unclear, yet it is planned that the complex, with shopping center, hotel, cinema, fitness, and sport facilities, is to be built by 2008. However, the first design was rejected by the Institute of City Planning, as it did not conform to zoning regulations and needs to be adjusted in order to meet these conditions. In the new plan, the distance between the new and old high rise is strongly reduced. Through this change, the urban position of the original structure is weakened and thereby loses its dominance and individuality. In this, the negation of the building's history is clearly apparent and its duplication shows the transformation of the building into an instrument of the free market economy.



First design for the USCE Complex



Design for the USCE Complex modified to match the zoning laws

**CK Tower**







# **AVALA TV Tower 1965-1999**

Arch. Ugljesa Bogunovic

Arch. Slobodan Janjic

Eng. Milan Krstic

Avala Hügel

## A TV Tower as Symbol of Progress

In September 1938, on the exhibition grounds of Belgrade, the first professional demonstration of the television is given by "Phillips". After 1958, the general JRT (Yugoslavia Radio Television) is transmitted throughout Belgrade, Ljubljana and Zagreb. The rapid augmentation of productive efficiency by the new RTS transmitter enabled a reduction in the initial transmission time of Belgrade Television from several hours to 77 hours on three programs per day. Simultaneously a radio signal transmitter and telecommunications facility was constructed in order to raise the reception area to include 98% of the Serbian population.



Studio Beograd, one of the first transmissions

## Competition

In 1962, a competition was initiated for the construction of a telecommunications tower on the Avala hill. Through its architecture, the tower was to give expression to the technical advancement of the state. It was also to act as an emblem, bringing together the new State of Yugoslavia. After some adversaries circulated the opinion that the tower would act as detriment to its urban situation, uncertainty spread regarding the position of the structure. Although the tower was to cast a shadow on the Avala hill and the monument to anonymous soldiers, the geographic advantages of this situation led to its ultimate realization in the originally selected site.



The Anonym Soldiers monument

## **The Realisation**

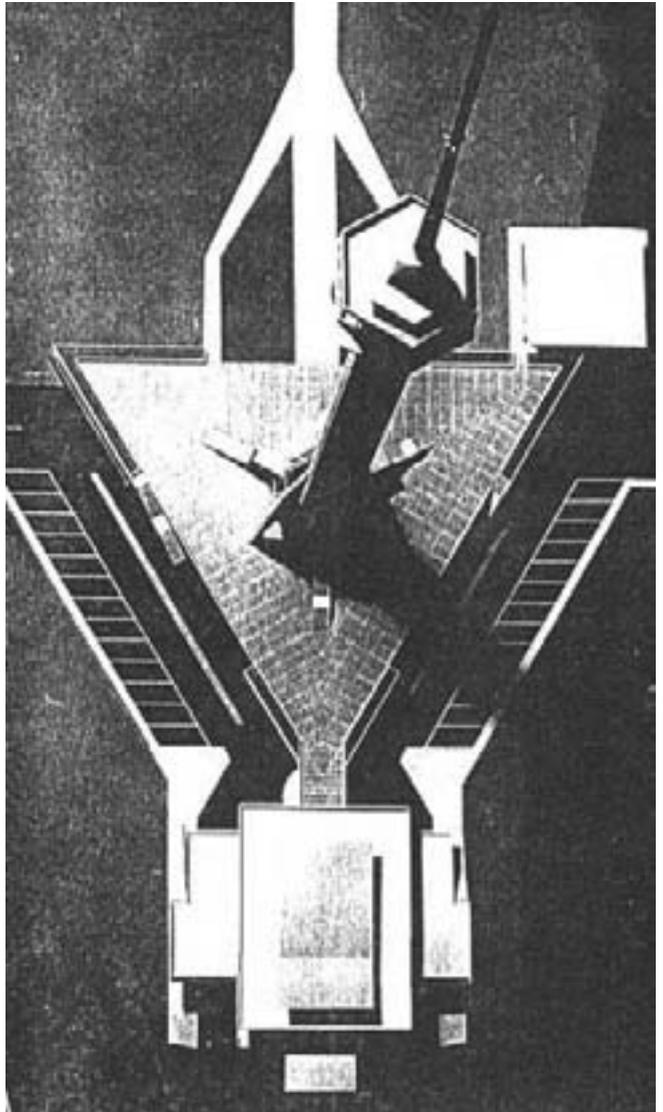
The architects Ugljesa Bogunovic and Slobodan Janjic won the competition, while the engineer Milan Krstic was commissioned to actual plans for the execution of the building.

From 1963 onwards, around 100 workers were employed on the construction project. The ambition to complete the tower as soon as possible is evident in the perseverance of the workers who, working under any weather condition, utilized over 4000 tons of concrete for the construction. The climax of the construction process was the erection of the 60-meter high, 25-ton antenna at the top of the tower. The construction was completed in 1965 and the tower was set into use immediately.

The Ministry of Communication commissioned the project, the main construction firm was Gp "Rad", the subcontractor was Janko Lisjak, and the installation of the antenna was completed by the firm "Gosa".



First designs for the tower



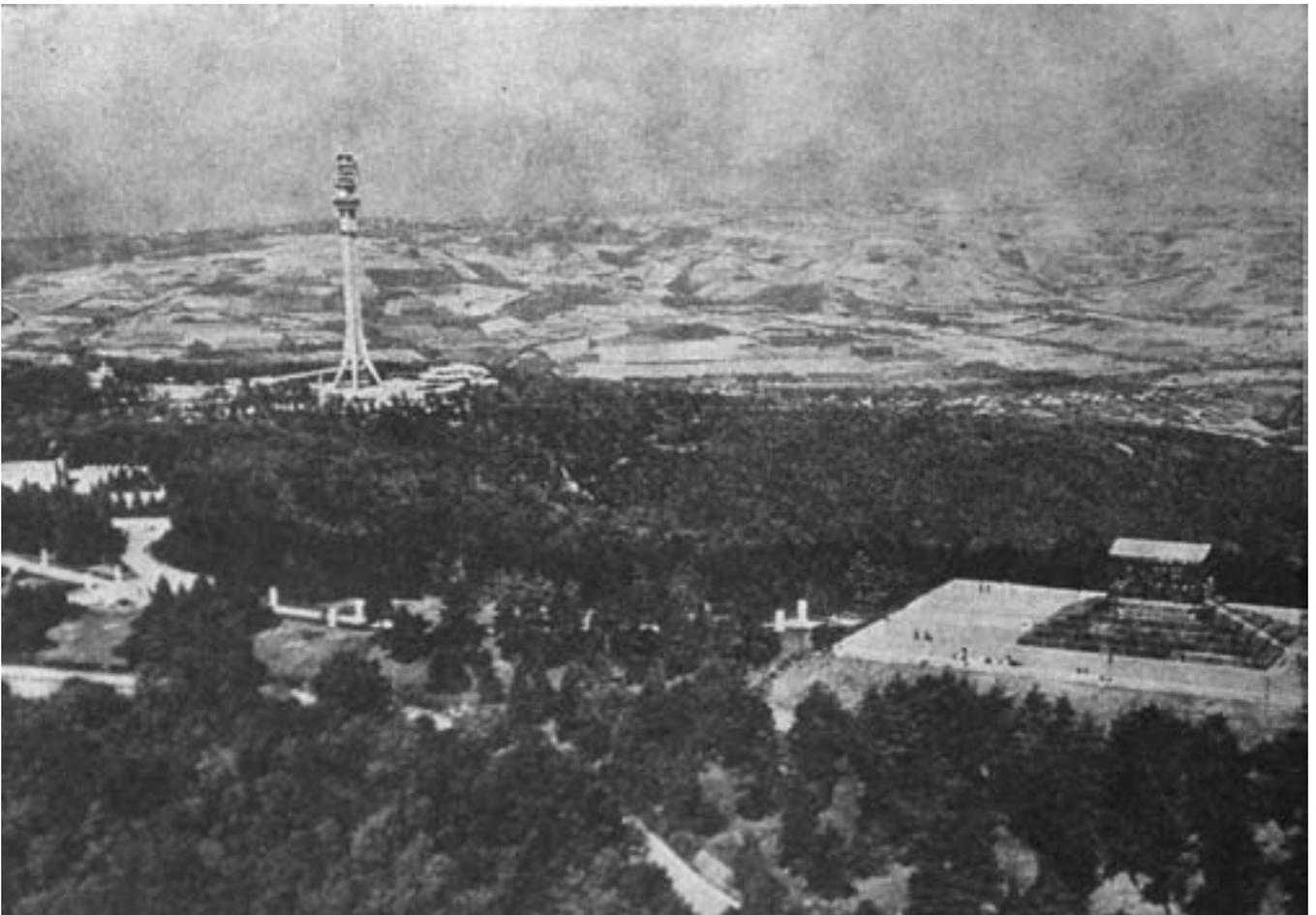
## The Particular Characteristics

With the antenna, the tower reached a height of 202.87 meters. A seven-storey body, reduced by two floors due to insufficient funds, was located within the 102.75 meter high concrete construction. Four platforms were open to visitors, on which they were permitted to admire the view.

Its particular structure gave the tower its singularity. It was the only tower in the world whose cross section possessed the form of an equilateral triangle, with side lengths of 7 meters, and stood on three legs. Each leg had a circumference of 1.05 meters and their joints lay on a 1.4-meter deep foundation.

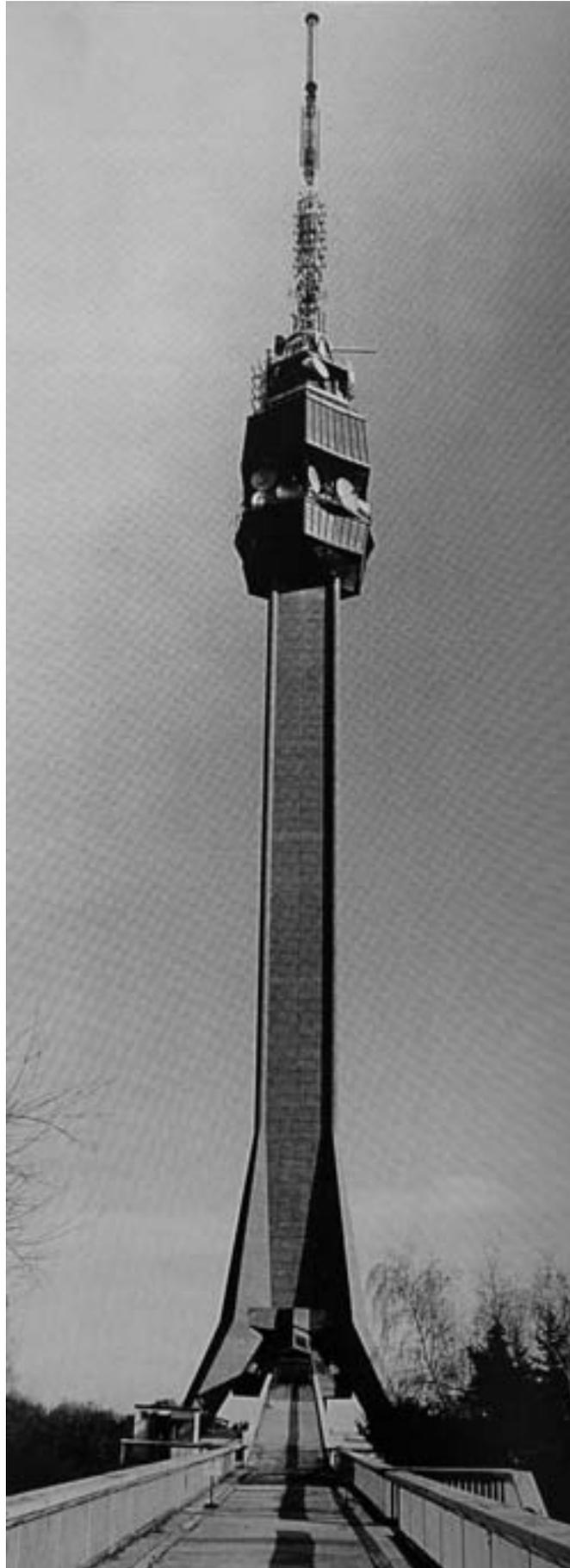
The form of the television tower rests on precise, functional decisions, producing a praiseworthy building both in its architectural, as well as construction concept. The design of the base and entry to the tower underlines this expression. The area around the base is manifested in a play of ramps and levels, which are designed with equal energy and precision.

After its completion, the tower in no way negatively influenced its situation, but became, along with the monument for anonymous soldiers, an destination for many: friends with picnics, people strolling, and loving couples. For pilots, drivers, and train and bus drivers, the tower became a point of orientation, signaling the arrival in Belgrade.

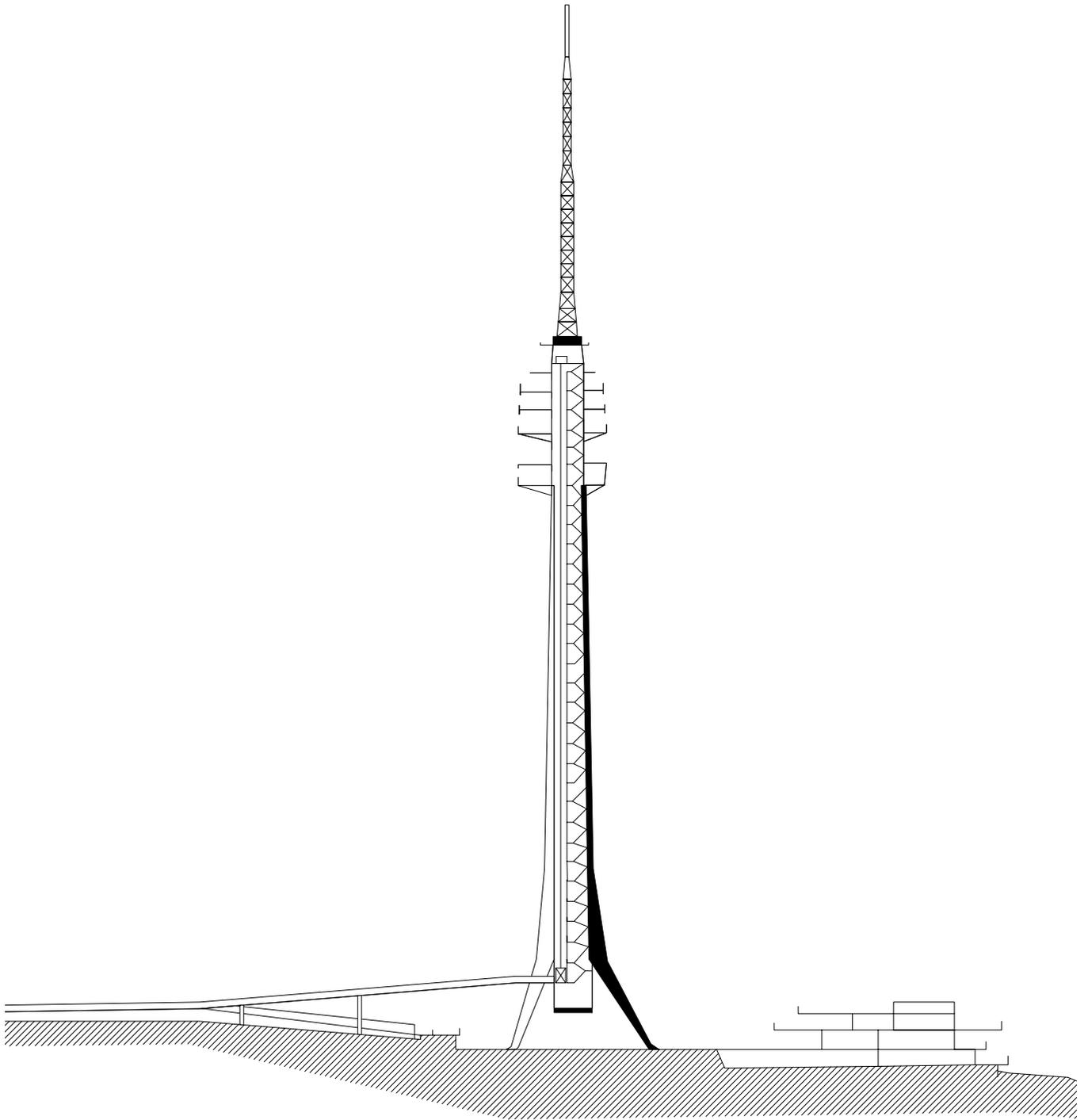


The Anonym Soldiers tower and monument

## Avala TV Tower

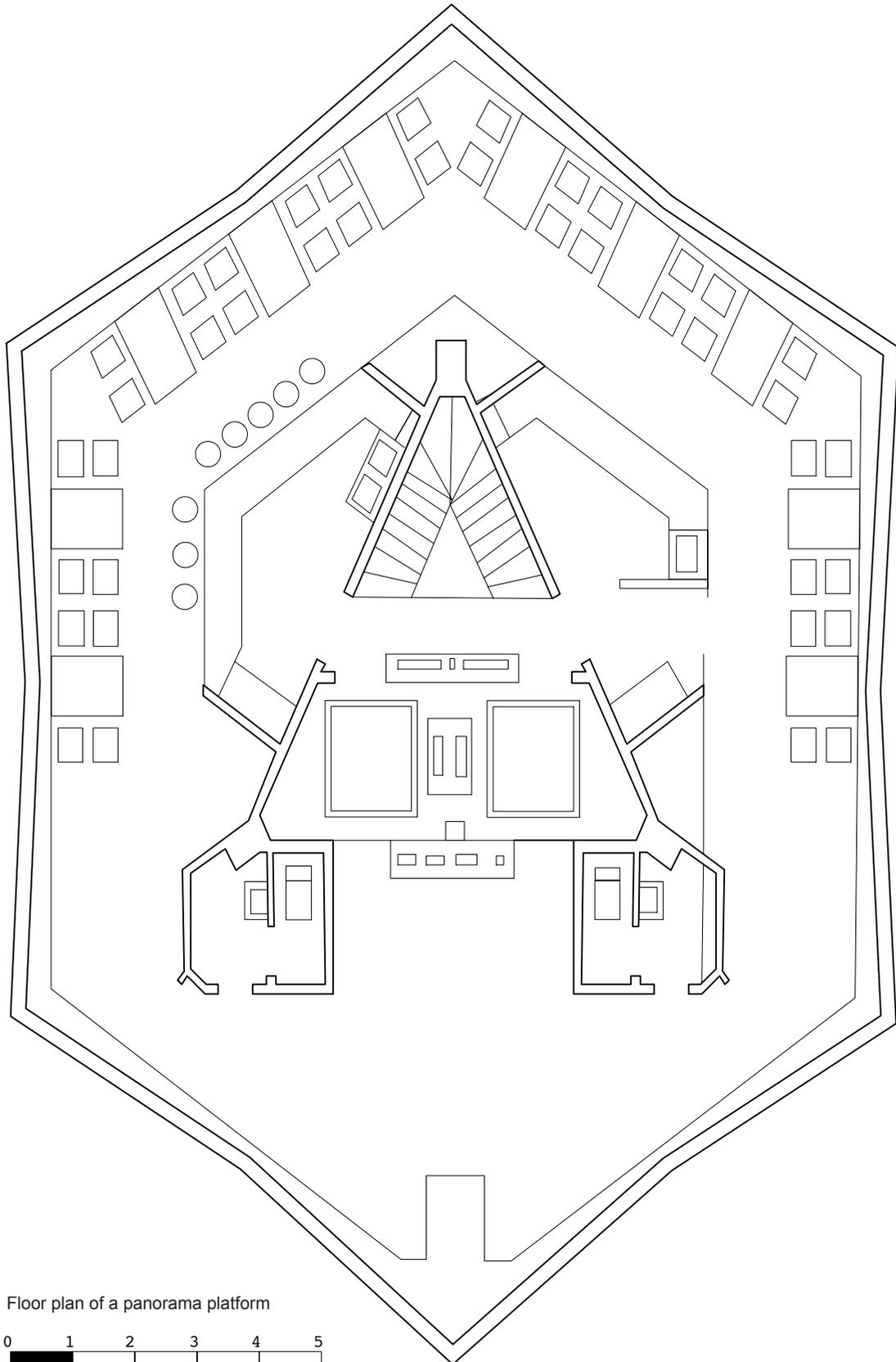


Ramp leading towards the tower



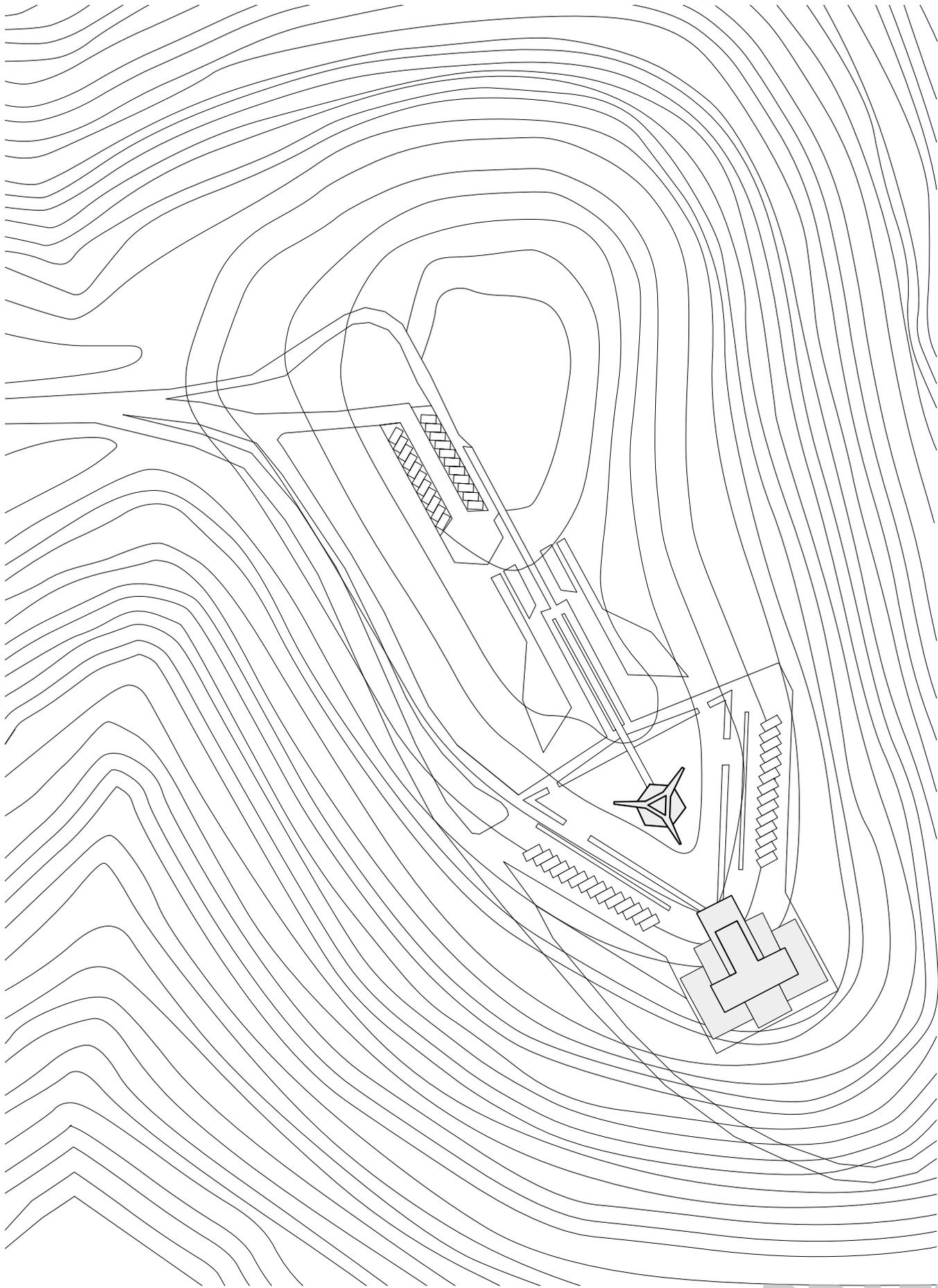
Longitudinal section

# Avala TV Tower



Floor plan of a panorama platform





## Avala TV Tower

### The Loss of a Symbol

Milan Rakocevic, Professor for Architecture at the University of Belgrade:

*“ I have very personal memories of the tower, as a look-out tower. I remember the night it was hit, as we live close nearby. From our balcony, we had a view of the Avala hill, crowned by the tower. Similar to the Bantiger Tower in Bern... In the night of detonation, my wife was catapulted from the bed into the air. I still remember it exactly, when I stepped onto the balcony the next morning, the tower was missing...”*



Before the attacks

The tower was destroyed during the NATO-bombings of April 29, 1999, at the time, the highest building to fall prey to such an attack. The goal had been to destroy the broadcaster RTS, yet this remained in tact and telecommunication, as well as the normal programming could continue. The consequence of the tower's destruction lay more in the damaged pride of the people of Belgrade and Serbia. With the destruction of the tower, the people of Belgrade lost their emblem, which is comparable to the Eiffel Tower of Paris.



After the attacks

## Avala TV Tower



Pictures of the destroyed tower



## **Reconstruction of a Symbol of Identity**

In comparison to other bombed buildings, the population had a much greater interest in the reconstruction of this monument. The reason for this is that the structure was not a political symbol, but a symbol of their own national identity. One recognizes this through the many forums and pages on the internet, as well as countless events and organizations, which collect money for the reconstruction of the tower.



Every year on the 29th of April, a ceremony for the towers reconstruction is taking place on the Avala Hill, organized by the Avala Fan Organization

The Avala Fan Organization, a non-political association, was founded directly after the destruction of the tower, counting 1500 members in its first year and 3000 in its second. Their goal is to collect money for the reconstruction of the tower and to awake an awareness of its destruction in the consciousness of people. Apparently contact also exists with foreign investors interested in reconstruction. Money is collected foremost through the sale of souvenirs, t-shirts, and collector cards. The organization also maintains contact with other associations in order to expand their range. If they ever collect the full sum, the reconstruction would be conducted exactly to the old plans and the ownership of the building would later be given over to the city.



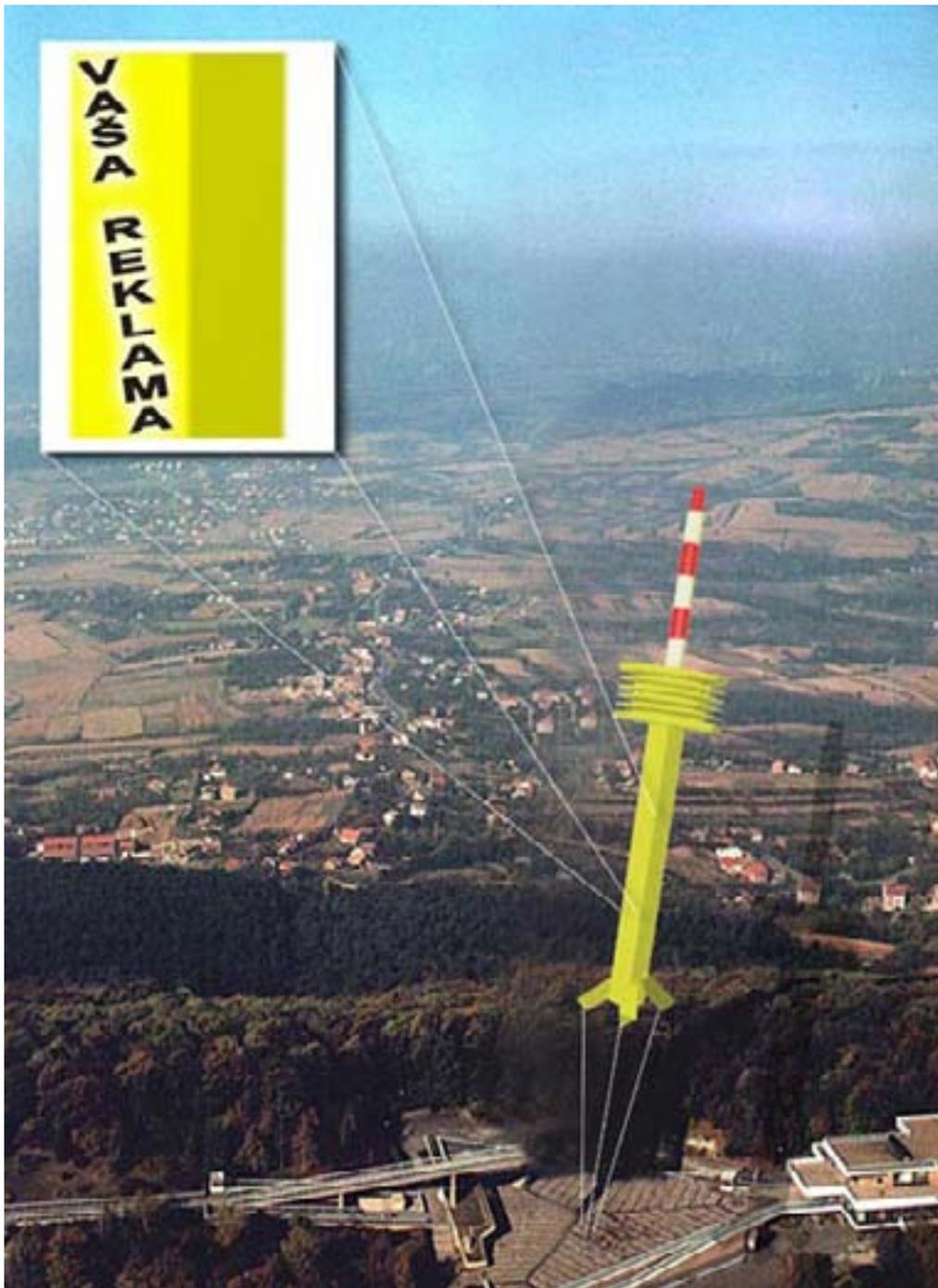
Dusan Certic, president of the Avala Fan Organization, Dragoslav Kostadinovic

## Avala TV Tower

In the year 2000, the firm SFECO from Shanghai, which had already invested in some projects in Belgrade, expressed interest in reconstructing the tower.

“First, we came to Yugoslavia to learn. Now we come back in order to pass on our knowledge” says Sen Cengjian, director of the European department of the company. Still, the reconstruction did not occur, and the firm withdrew from the project.

One of the first fund raising events was a tennis game between Ana Ivanovic and Novak Djokovic. On June 17, 2006 Ceca Raznatovic, a famous Serbian singer, held a concert of approximately 100,000 visitors, whose profits were to support the reconstruction project.



Initiative by the Avala Fan Organization



Ana Ivanovic and Novak Djokovic



Ceca Raznatovic, ad for her concert

## Avala TV Tower

The state's broadcaster, RTS, is also interested in the reconstruction of the tower and collects money via television commercials and other advertisements. Recently, the firm received a donation of 40,000 Euros from its daughter-firm, Siemens. On June 10, RTS raised 24,000 Euros in their last transmission.

The Ministry of Investments, Velimir Ilic, has recently declared that the reconstruction should begin within the next days, after all the documentation is complete. The site has already been cleared and the construction will cost between 4 and 6 million Euros, an additional 1.8 Million Euros is required for the project documentation. Though announcement gave rise to the question of if it would be wiser to invest the money in healthcare or schools, yet for its symbolic value, the tower is seen as a sound investment. Money collected in a transitions-fund, one fifth of the funds stemming from the population. The sum should be sufficient for the reconstruction. The tower is to be reconstructed along the old plans, but it is to be more modern and safe, while resuming its place as a magnet for a large number of visitors.

Surprisingly, from the beginning there was no communal aid fund. Acts of sabotage occurred on various occasions, which leads to the supposition that there are certain groups who see a conflict of interest. However, it appears as though the government and the broadcaster RTS will rebuild the tower.



RTS show on the 10th of June, 2006



Visitors taking a look on the ruins of the tower

**Avala TV Tower**







**BIGZ**  
**Beogradski izdavacko graficki zavod**  
**Belgrade Publishing and**  
**Graphic Institute**

1940

Arch. Dragisa Brasovan  
Bulevar Vojvode Misica 17

## From State Printing Press to BIGZ

The beginning of the state's printing press reaches back to the year 1831. Developed upon the initiative of the Count Milos, the printing press was responsible for privileged newspapers, calendars, religious books, and schoolbooks. The printing of the first Serbian newspaper followed shortly, coupled with a constant growth of the press, foremost after the foundation of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia.

For its hundred-year anniversary, the printing press (the fourth largest of Europe) decided to construct a new building, suited to its particular requirements. A competition was organized, which Dragisa Brasovan won in the year 1933. Only after the completion of the competition did one notice that the selected site (Kalenicevoj pijaci) was not particularly well suited. Elements of the future printing press were already visible in the competition entries. In the spring of 1935, the organization purchased a piece of land next to the steam mill, on the present Boulevard Vojvode Misica. The project was revised after the architect returned from a number of trips, foremost to Germany, in order to visit other printing presses and study of their use of the technology. Though the construction was set to begin a year later, problems resulting from the high water table resulted in delays. The building engineers were Zadgina from Belgrade and Kesel from Zagreb; the construction work was taken on by the firm „Josanica“.

The building was completed in 1940, as one of the largest modern buildings of Serbia and as a symbol for the printing press. Yet before the machinery could be installed, the Second World War began in Belgrade. After four years, the business could move into the building and take up the operation of the press. Under socialist Yugoslavia the state printing press was renamed, to „Jugostampa“ („Jugo-print“). With the union of three publishing houses („Omladina“, „Jugoslavija“ und „Rad“) the „Beogradski graficki zavod“ (Belgrade Grafic institute) was established in 1955. With increased publications, the firm renamed itself, in the 1980s, to „Beogradski izdavacko-graficki zavod“ (Belgrade Publication and Graphic institute), shorted to BIGZ.



BIGZ after completion in 1939

## The Architect Dragisa Brasovan

The 1930s mark a turning point in the work of the architect Dragisa Brasovan (1887-1965). While his early works were dominated by historical villas for the wealthy bourgeoisie, in the 1930s his work turns towards the modern movement and he is to become one of its most important advocates in the country. Brasovan's modern trilogy is made up of the state's printing agency, as well as the air force center in Zemun (1935) and the government Palace of the Danube region in Novi Sad (1936-1939), both of which fell prey to the NATO bombings of 1999.



Palace of the Danube-Region Parliament in Novi Sad, 1936-1939



Airforce Center in Zemun, 1935



The building in 1972

## Situation

The building is situated in a prominent position, unmistakable in the silhouette of the city. With its mass, it protrudes out of its environment. The highway bridge, constructed in the late 1960s, is located in close proximity to the west side of the building. To the north lies the Sava River, as well as the new exhibition grounds, constructed after the printing press. The BIGZ builds a form of industrial complex with the mill and brewery.

The building is made up of a sculptural volume. The height reaches from five to eleven stories and is thereby terraced on all sides. The last floors are constructed in the form of a small tower. The façade plays with horizontal and vertical elements of approximately 60 x 75 meters. In its footprint, the first floor is still a square, while the U-shaped upper floors build a courtyard.



The Highway-Bridge - View from the BIGZ-Terrace



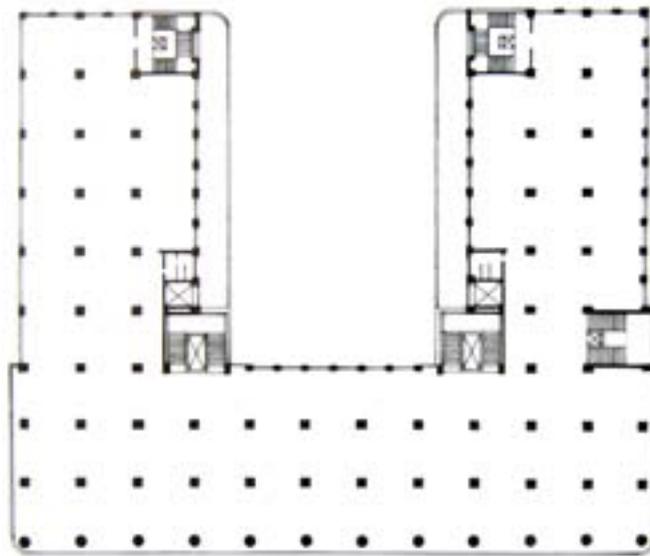
Situation



The new Fair-Ground, 1957 finished

## Structure

As the BIGZ was specially constructed for heavy printers, it possesses a massive skeleton structure of concrete columns in an interval of approximately 6.6 x 6.6 meters; these columns become progressively thinner on each floor. The building possesses a free plan allowing the free positioning of interior walls. The suggestion of a main entrance, by a canopy at the center of the building, along the boulevard, is in fact only a simple, side entrance. Of the five stairwells, that in the northwest is a representative, marble stair accessible through the entrance on the corner of the boulevard– J. Ristic Street.

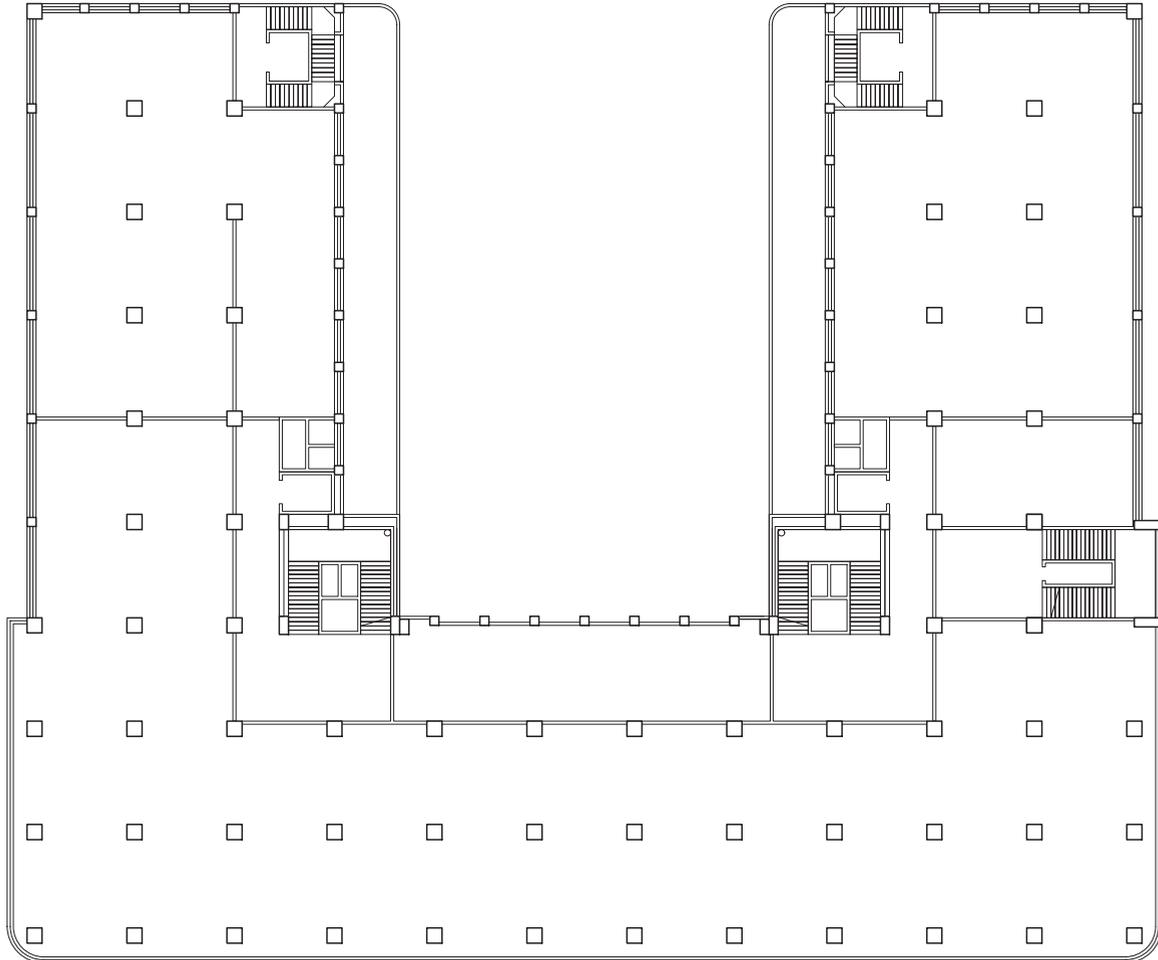


Main floor plan

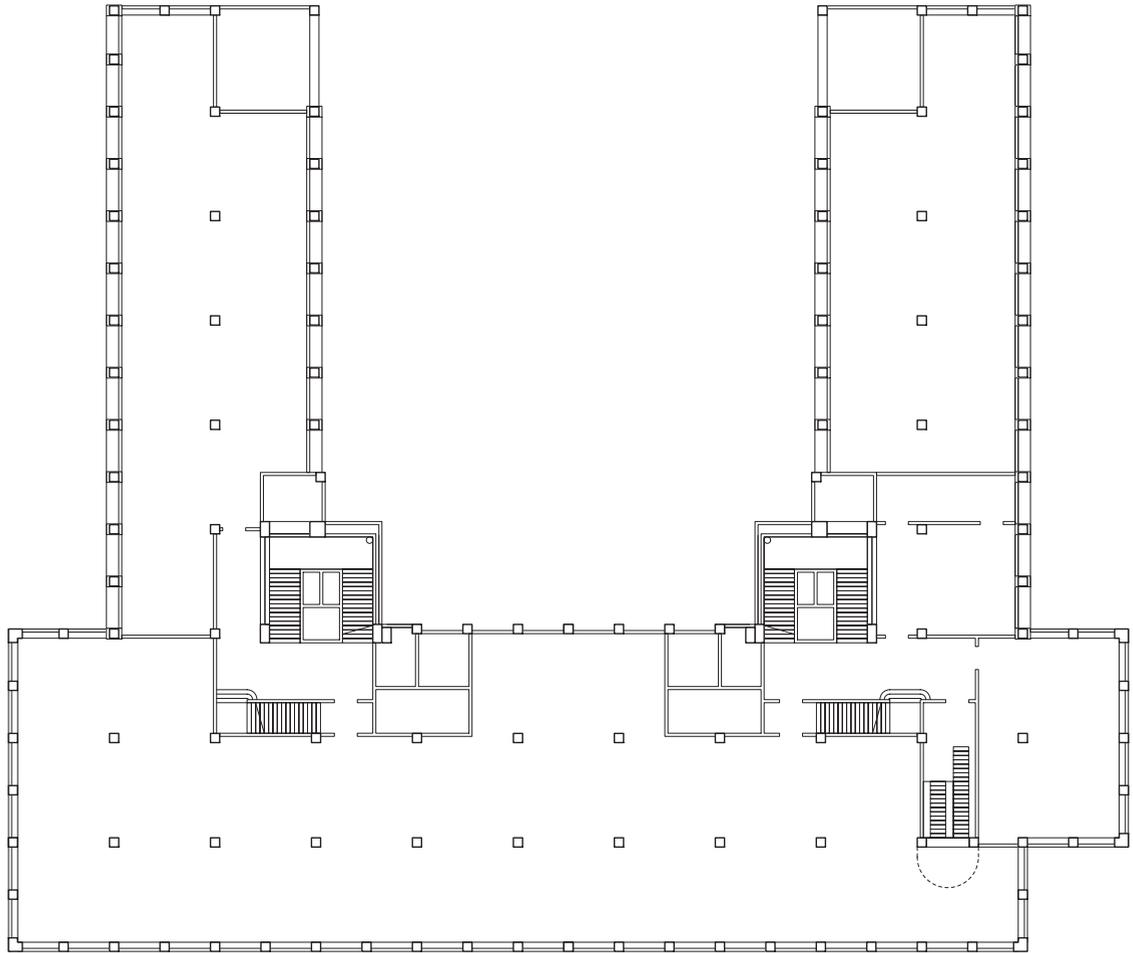
On the first five floors, the facade is removed slightly from the structural columns. The horizontal window bands are rounded at their corners. In the upper floors, one finds vertical windows in half the interval of the columns. This confrontation of vertical and horizontal elements is also apparent in Brasovan's early work. The darkly painted windows in the horizontal section imitate metal, though they are faced with wood.



Horizontal and vertical elements in the façade



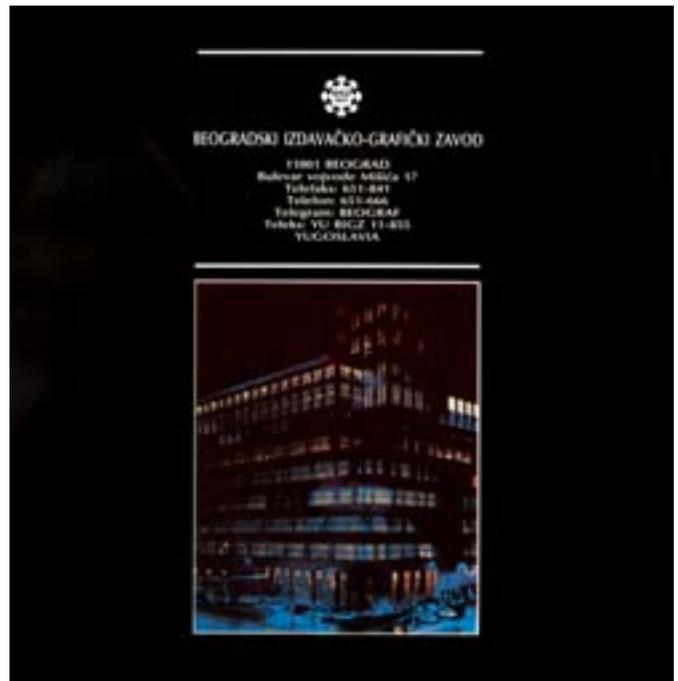
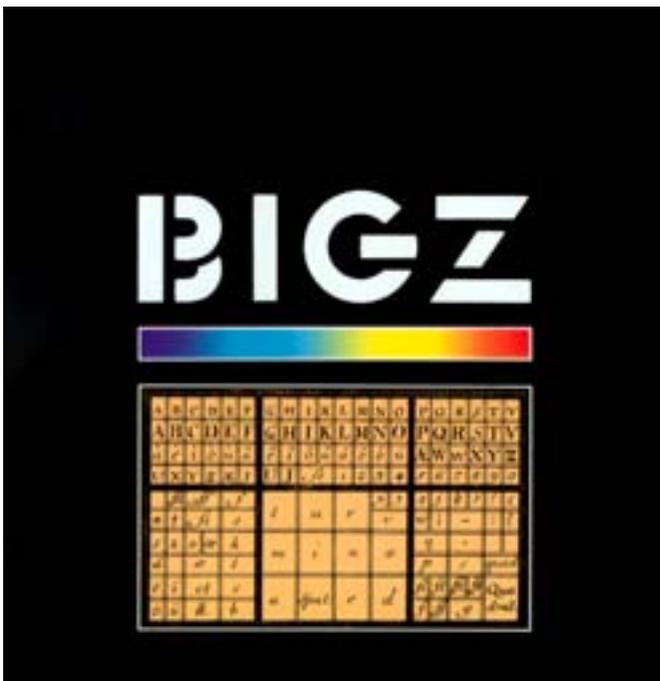
Floor plan, 1st floor, scale 1:500



Floor plan, 7th floor, scale 1:500

## Historical Preservation

As a singular structure, the building was placed under historical preservation by a notable, Serbian architect in 1992. Aside from its architectural and urban significance, the influence of the BIGZ on the culture and society of the country is emphasized. In order to uphold the urban impact of the building, the preservation specifies that no object constructed in the immediate vicinity may be higher than the BIGZ. An addition on the southern side, towards the brewery, is permitted and even desired, in order to close off the block. Neon signs and similar forms of advertisement are prohibited on the façade of the building and the horizontal window bands are protected in form, material, and color. In the interior, only the construction and vertical communication are placed under protected, dividing walls and materials may be altered at will. Should the function of a printing press disappear completely from the BIGZ (the name is also part of the preservation), it would be necessary to create a small museum to the history of the largest state, printing press, in order to awake awareness of its social service.



The Historical Preservation preserves the name BIGZ

*“ The BIGZ stands for modern Serbia...”  
Ksenja Petrovar, Sociology Professor*



The BIGZ's influence on society and culture get accentuated

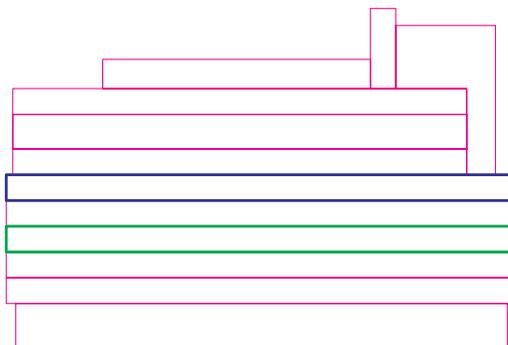
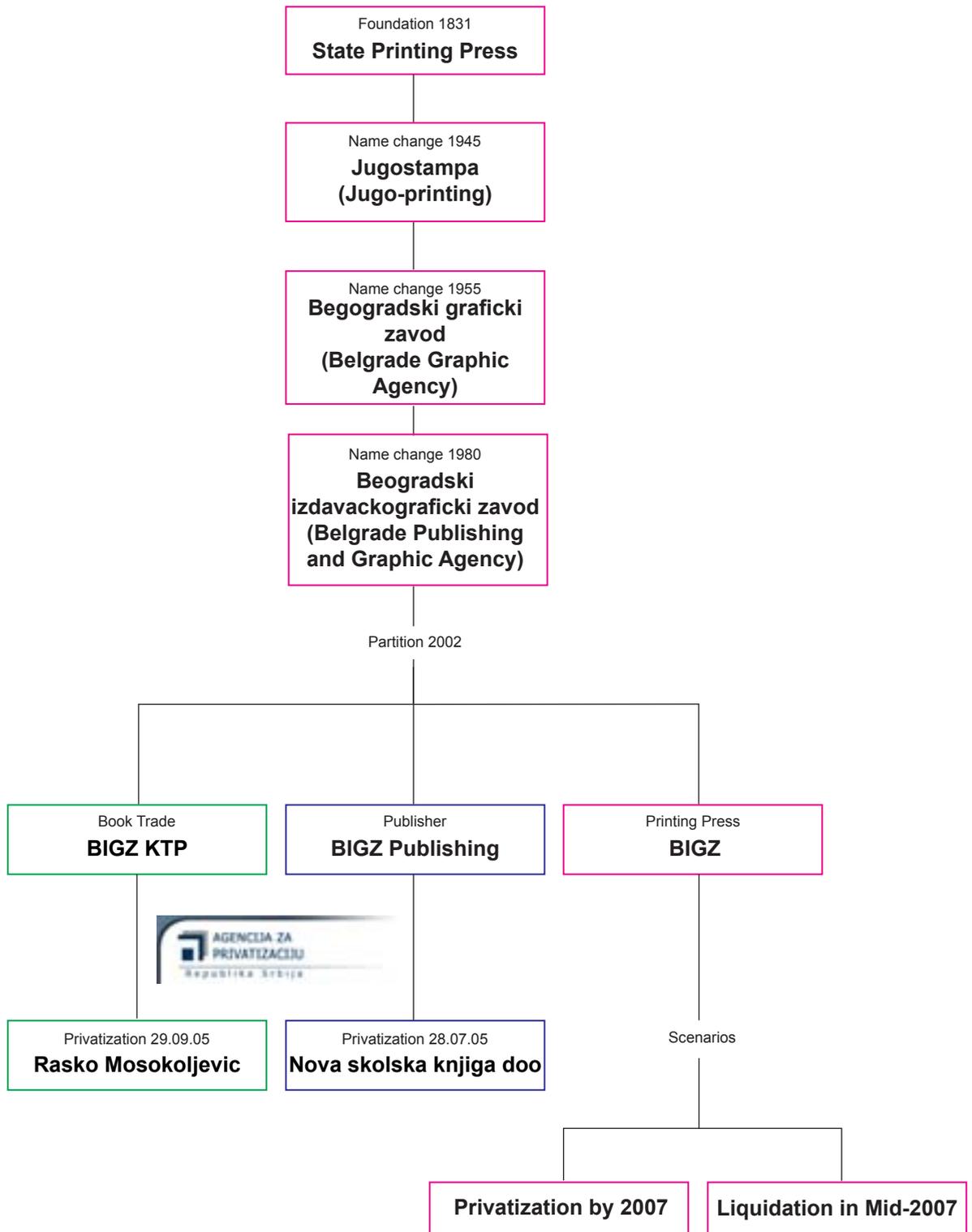
## Fragmentation

In the 1990s, the BIGZ experienced a crisis, which in part, continues to this day. Through the breakdown of Yugoslavia, the large market disappeared, private printing presses were founded and the aftermath of the UN-sanctions, and the there from resulting economic crisis, was felt. For instance, the number of published books sank from 250 to 30 per year. In 2002, the 'socially owned' business is partitioned into three sections, two of which were privatized last fall. With the purchase of "BIGZ Publishing," the Croatian firm „Nova skolska knjiga doo“ also receives a place in the building; they obtain the third floor. Today, the fifth floor is owned by Rasko Moskoljevic, the new owner of „BIGZ KTP“. The largest part of BIGZ still awaits privatization; the first two attempts having failed. The BIGZ still owns more than 23000 m<sup>2</sup>, or 82% of the building, and are responsible for its maintenance, for which the two renters pay.

Those responsible hold greatly differing opinions on why privatization has not yet taken place. The privatization agency sees the BIGZ as a problem case. The price is not the deciding factor, but the incomplete documentation. It can only be solved once the entire inventory has been taken; nobody wants to buy the cat in the bag.

The administrative office of the BIGZ however, looks critically on the practice of the privatization agency. The decision to sell the BIGZ in parts is seen as a mistake. On the market, the building is no longer attractive because parts of it have already been sold and potential buyers are thereby limited in their use of the structure. Furthermore, it is believed that the partial privatization did not follow the proper procedures. One part of the firm changed hands under its actual value.

Since February 2005, a new law regulates bankruptcy, stating that if a firm is not privatized by the first half of 2007, it will be liquidated. In Serbia, it is a common practice to drive scarecrow businesses into the ground so that they may later be purchased at knock-down prices. If this is the case with the BIGZ, we do not know.



Der dritte und fünfte Stock sind privatisiert

## Foreign Rentals as Survival Strategy

It is certain that the business has developed strategies in order to survive. The idea of renting out large, surplus spaces (a result of the shrinking graphic department) arose out of necessity. After positive experiences were made with a number of artists, famous names were targeted (for instance the DJ Marko Nastic), which acted as a form of catalyst for later renters. In the meantime, next to the printing agency, the BIGZ is inhabited by around 100 other businesses and artists. The rooms are rented at 5 euros/m<sup>2</sup>, per month, which is looked upon as a modest sum by the rental agency. Especially beloved are the smaller rooms, around 20m<sup>2</sup>, as they are the most affordable. For repairs, a portion of the rent may be waived. Renters are free in their use of the space, with the exception of two conditions: they may not remove any walls, and in the case of a privatization, the building must be vacated within one month. For this reason, it is unattractive for large institutions, who desire security, to rent space in the BIGZ.



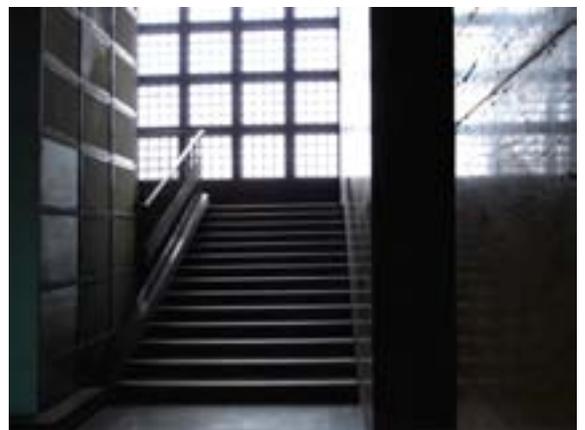
Vacant Rooms are rented to other firms and artists

## Administration

As a visitor, the reception in the entrance of the building is not exactly friendly, even as a potential renter or having arranged a meeting in advance. Having passed the security team of the vestibule, one passes into a foyer with wall-high mosaics. From this point, a large stairwell, of dark stone, leads up to the administrative offices and printing press. Business is conducted without computers or any knowledge of foreign languages.



BIGZ-Logo beside the entry door



Entry door

staircase

## Remnants of the Printing Press

Printing still takes place on three floors. One can easily imagine that little has changed since socialist times. The machines continue on their work and should they fall out of service, the personnel in blue coats intervene. There are printing things everywhere. The workers of the repair department are positively clobbered by the masses of paper. Employees are of middle to old age; it is likely that they experienced the better times of the printing press, as well as its time of crisis.



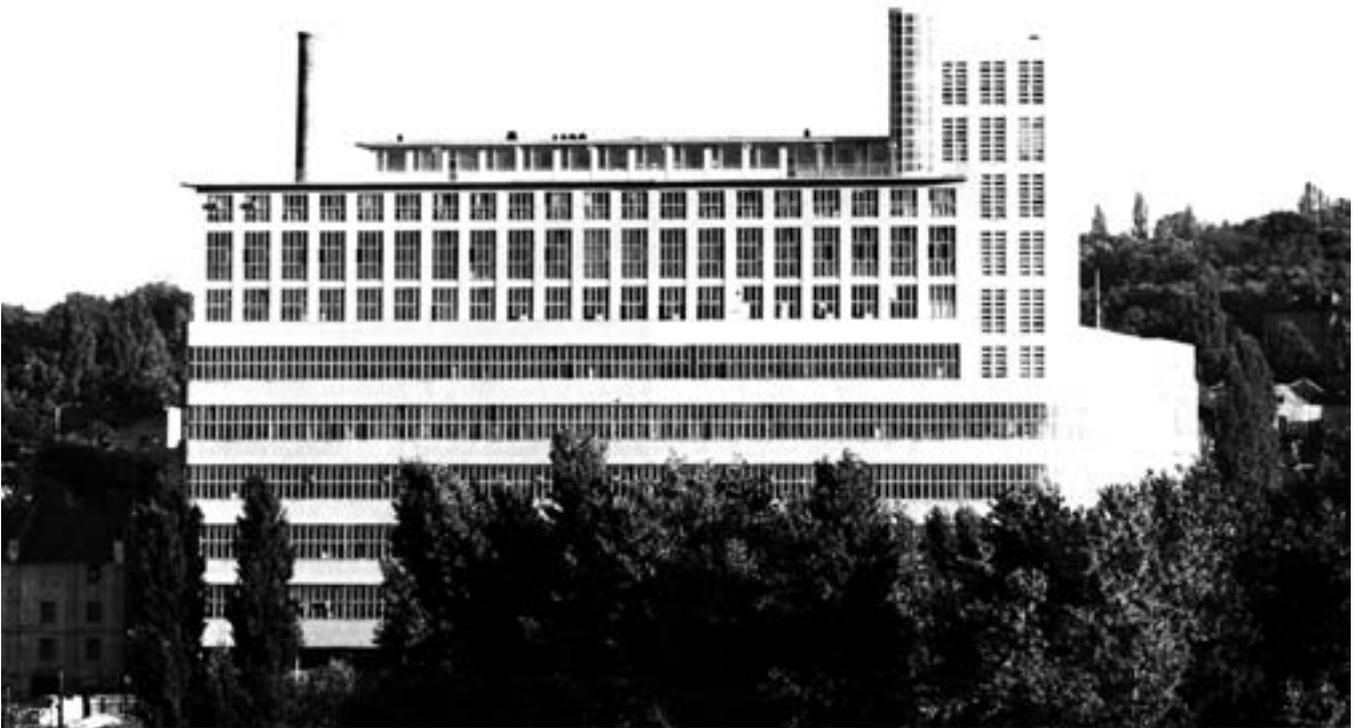
## The Colorful World of the Renters

It looks completely different on the sixth and seventh floors of the artists (musicians, painters, sculptors...). The space is a convergence of different worlds. Upon entering a room, one is continually surprised by something new. Each person has furnished their space according to their own wishes: no room is like another. When renters move out, they leave the rooms the way they are, in part, even with unwanted furniture, with which new renters must deal.



## Ageing

The once white building has become grey with the traces of time. The building appears used and no longer in the best condition, which, in the opinion of the youth and artists, is seen as cool and charming. However, some renovations are necessary: the plaster has partly come off the façade, there are places in which it rains into the building, and the installations (water, electricity and heat) must be renewed. The city has made promises to renovate the façade, yet nothing has been done; this work awaits a new owner. Historical preservation could also prevent a thrust of money generated through gigantic façade advertisements, as are often found in Belgrade.

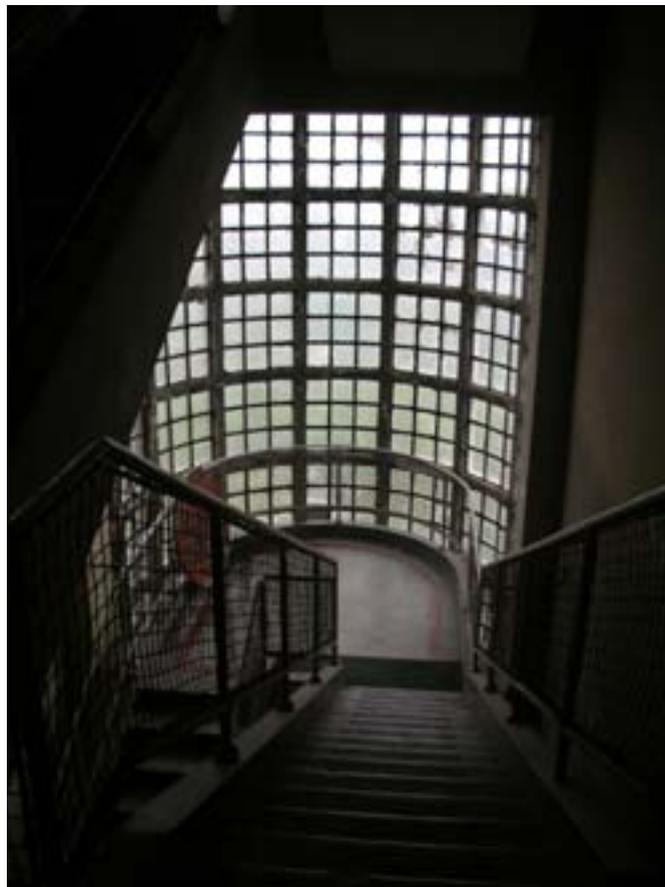


View from the Highway Bridge 1985

*“For me, the BIGZ was once the “white house”...”  
Milan Rakocevic, Architecture Professor*



View from the Highway Bridge 2006





## **Perspectives**

There are projects planned for the immediate area: the old mill is to be reconstructed and a shopping and trade center is to be developed. In its height, the project competes with that of BIGZ, which, according to historical protection, may not be weakened in its urban situation. Have the conditions specified by the historical preservation of the building lost their validity, now that the BIGZ has lost its former prominence?

If the BIGZ will be able to regain its former position or ultimately develop into a museum, will be revealed only after its sale. This is comparable to the question of whether its current union of different cultures will prove



**COMMERCIAL & TRADE CENTRE "OLD MILL" Belgrade**  
**POSLOVNO TRGOVACKI CENTAR "STARI MLIN" Beograd**

Project for te old mill

*“ It is still one of the nicest buildings of Belgrade.”  
Zika Sarajevic, BIGZ-Administration*



better times to come...







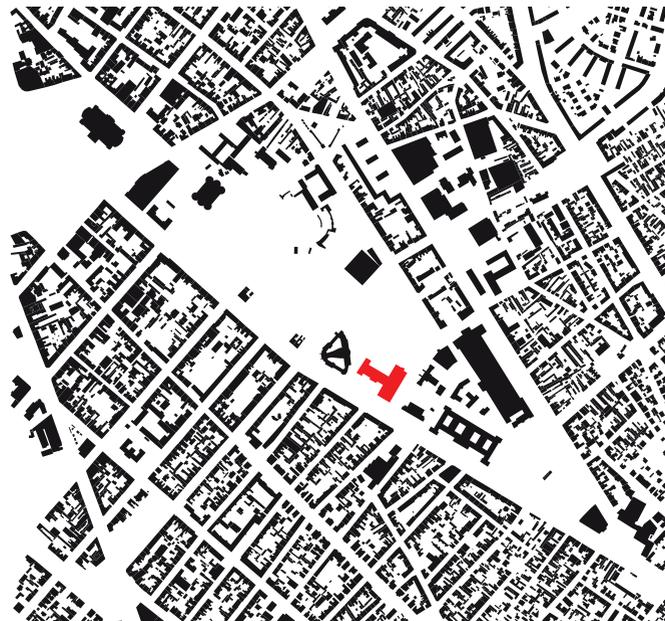
# **Hotel Metropol**

1957

Arch. Dragisa Brasovan  
Bulevar Kralja Aleksandra

## Situation

The building of the Hotel Metropol was completed in the year 1957. Designed by the architect Dragisa Brasovan, who, seventeen years earlier, had designed the building for the Belgrade Publishing and Graphic institution, BIGZ, the Hotel Metropol is characterized as a typical work of the last phase of the architect's career. It is located on the Boulevard Kralja Aleksandra (the former Boulevard revolucije), in a section of the western part of the city of Belgrade. The building is surrounded by Tasmajdan Park, in close proximity to the university, a church, and a sports facility. The generous, public green spaces of the park are actively used. Playgrounds, restaurants, and recreation facilities offer the hotel guests the simultaneous convenience of a central location and relaxation in the direct vicinity. In its volumetric form and façade, designed along modernist principals, the building distinguishes itself from the surrounding structures. In their proportion and appearance, the two main volumes bring to mind matchboxes. While a three storey, horizontal volume reaches all the way to the street, a second, eleven floor cube stands set back from the roadway and is bound to the afore lying structure on one of its short sides. On the other side of the building, stands a smaller, old structure. The open space arising from the position of the structures builds a generous entry situation and lends the building a public character.



Situation



# The Establishment of the Hotel

Originally, the building was conceived by the Youth Organization of Belgrade as a youth hostel and was later also constructed as such. The function is to be understood in conjunction with the neighboring university buildings, with which the hotel was to form a type of campus. Construction was begun in 1949, and the entire structure was completed before the building was recognized as too large for its intended function. Following this, differing suggestions were made for new function, for instance the establishment of a club and apartments for the parliament members of the time, though this remained only a speculation. The building stood empty until 1954. At the time, there were very few hotels in Belgrade. A luxury hotel was needed to meet the demands of the increasing number of international visitors attracted by the rising fame of Josep Broz Tito, the head of the socialist state in Yugoslavia. Efficient construction management and the generous financial backing of the state's purse enabled rapid construction. On August 22, 1957, the Hotel Metropol was opened and the „Hotel Metropol Organization“ was subsequently established.



Under construction, around 1960



Northern view from the Tasmajdan Park, 2006

## **The Hotel in the Time of Tito**

At the time of its opening, the hotel consisted of 247 rooms, which, in the next decades, were occupied by a large number of international celebrities, kings, presidents, and artists. The „First Meeting of Non-aligned Nations“ in the year 1961 marks the first high point of the hotel, where approximately 25 state heads from all continents gathered at the hotel. The hotel became a permanent fixture in the power hungry state apparatus of Yugoslavia. In addition to housing important guests and acting as the site of receptions and celebrations, the hotel also served to maintain and develop the valuable international connections of the socialist regime in an informal atmosphere.



Dining Room around 1970



The Members of the first Conference of the Block-Free States, 1961



Friendly meeting between Tito and Nehru, the founders of the Block-Free Movement



President Tito and Bourguiba at Dinner

## Hotel Metropol

Influential, were both the director of the hotel at the time, Jacov Sarenac (the director from 1957 to 1975, and later an initiator of the project Hotel Jugoslavija) as well as the charismatic president of the state, Josip Broz Tito. As one of the most respected exponents of the politics of the block free states, Tito assembled guests from varying disciplines and all parts of the world. These guests often assembled in the Hotel Metropol, which in addition to hotel rooms, also included a wealth of different spaces for such gatherings. The hotel's casino "Putnik" and the restaurant "Archiv", the large eating and banquet halls, as well as the conference rooms and hotel bar, were widely used and soon became known throughout the city.



above: President of Kenya, Kenyatta and Wife

below: Edward Kardelj in conversation with conference members



Foyer around 1960

## Hotel Metropol



The Casino „Putnik“ around 1980



Buffet around 1960



The restaurant „Arhiv“ around 1960



New Years Eve around 1960

## **The Hotel and its Mythos**

Legendary events, crowned by the attendance of such personalities as Louis Armstrong, Sophie Loren and Jawaharlal Nehru build the core of a mythos, which the hotel has retained to this day. Soon, the hotel could no longer accommodate the continually increasing number of guests. Though a union with the newly constructed Hotel Slavija in 1962 and the gigantic Hotel Jugoslavija in 1967 was sought to house the guests, the mythos of the Hotel Metropol remained unbroken.



Press Center around 1960



President Tito and Walter Ulbricht around 1960



Members of the Conference in 1961

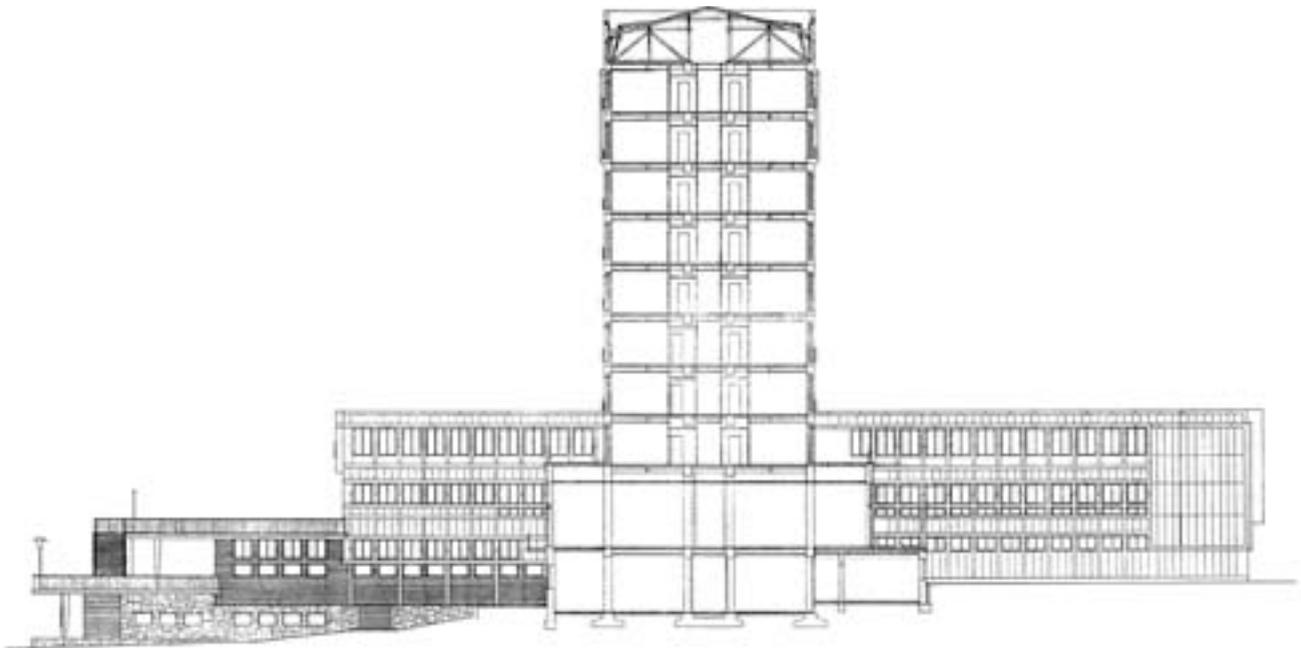


President Tito in conversation with Leonid Brezhnev, the General Secretary of the communist party of the USSR

## **The Premises**

The inner organization of rooms is very much determined by function. The primary structure of the high rise consists of four rows of columns; the rhythm of intervals is broken by the stairwells. The two lying, horizontal building parts are both of mixed construction.

The semi public rooms are located on the ground and basement levels, while guest rooms are arranged in the upper levels. The main entrance is located on the side of the boulevard, while the dining halls and the restaurant lie at the rear, oriented towards the park behind the hotel.



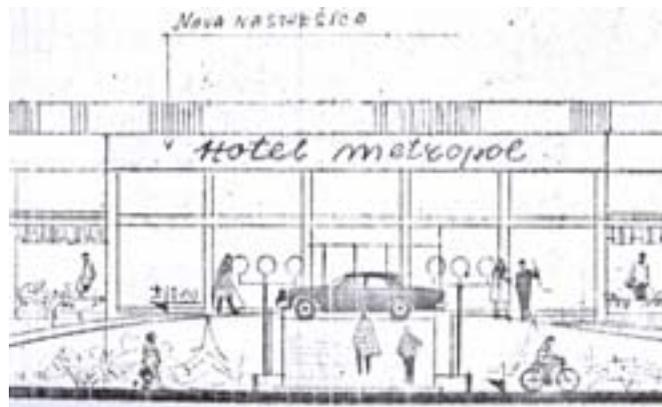
Section



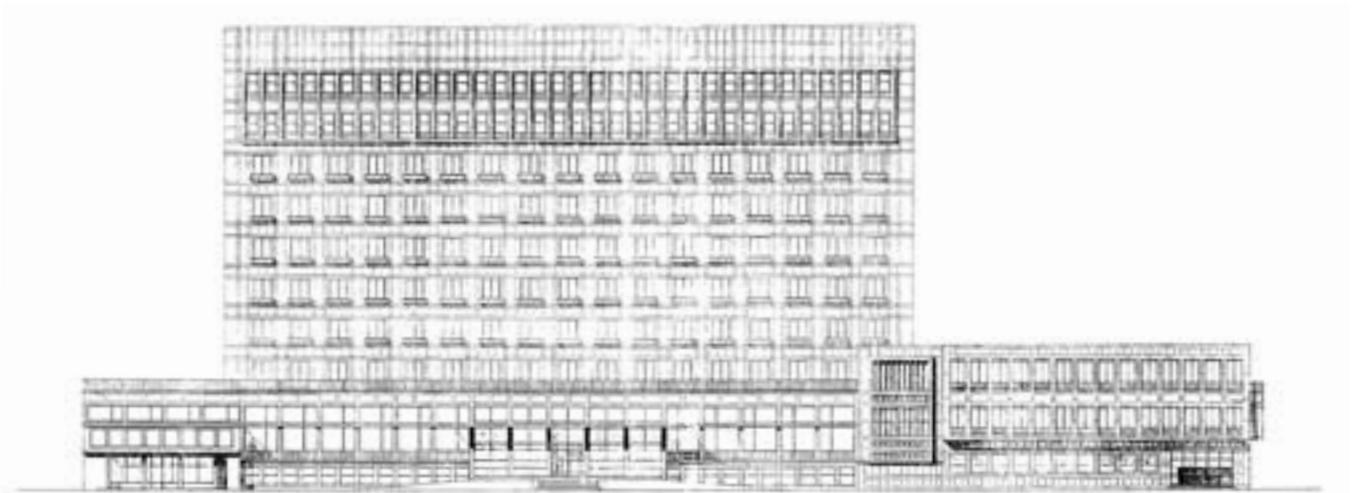
Hotel Bar around 1960

## The Semi-Public Rooms

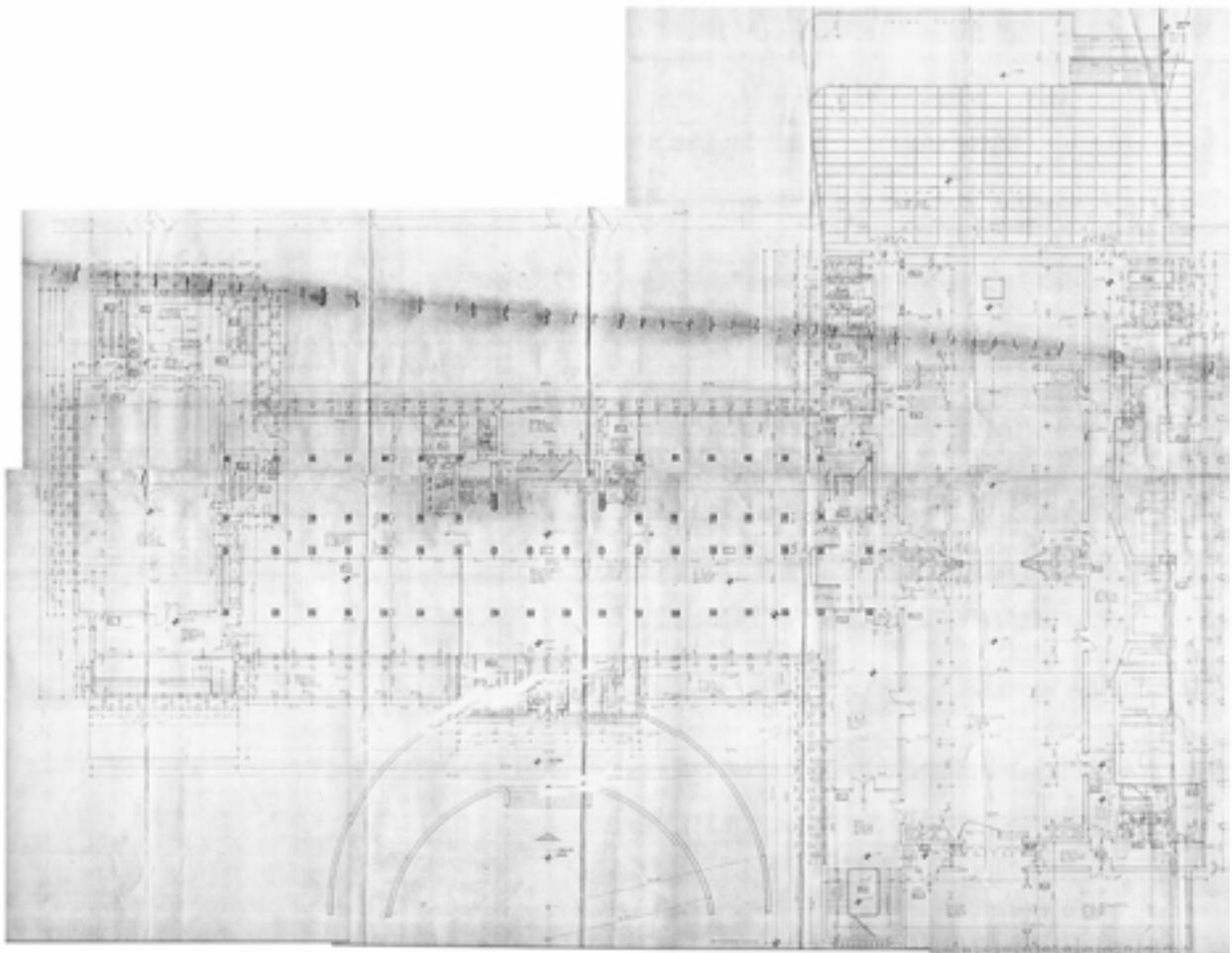
Entering the hotel through the main entrance, one arrives directly into a centrally located entrance hall. One reaches the upper floors via the stairwell, with a generous stair eye, lying at the extension of this room. The stairwell is flanked by two guest elevators. The reception is located on the right side of the foyer, through which one reaches a large reception room. Furnished with armchairs, coffee tables, and sofas, this room functions, together with the integrated bar, as a café, hotel bar, or a site for informal business transactions. For large events, the space is used as an entry hall. A stair connects the room to the higher lying dining spaces, as well as the conference rooms, located to the rear. The two dining halls can be combined into one, at will. On the north side of the dining hall, there is a direct connection to a large terrace. One now finds oneself in the second, low-lying volume of the building, which holds the administrative offices and service spaces and is inaccessible to guests. Should one pass through the left side of the entrance hall, the same plan is mirrored, leading through a multipurpose room and into the spaces of the former casino.



Sketch of the hotel entrance around 1954



South-East elevation



Main floor plan

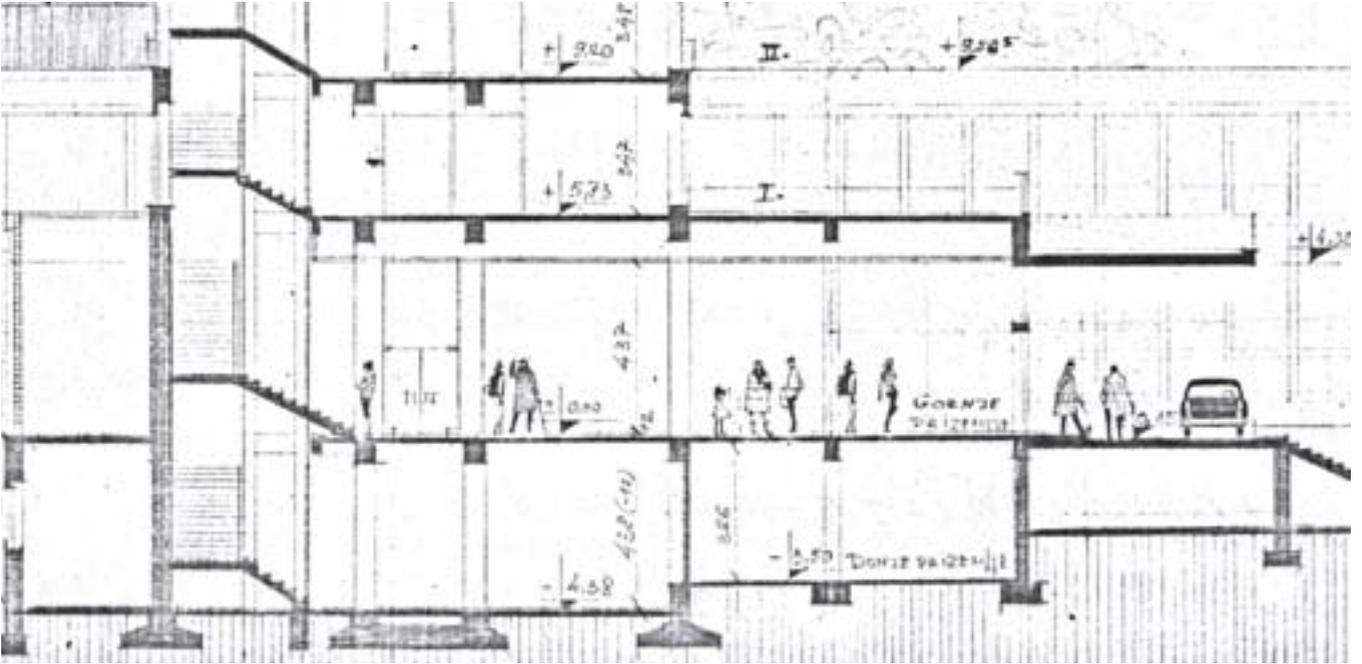
## Hotel Metropol



Hotel Entrance 2006



The Reception, 2006



Section Lobby



View from Lobby towards the Dining Room, 2006

## Hotel Metropol



Dining Room 2006



Dining Room and connected terrace 2006

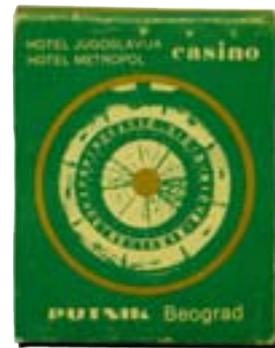


The Terrace, 2006



Meeting Room in the Additional Complex, 2006

## Hotel Metropol



The Casino „Putnik“ in the 70ies



The Rooms of the former Casino used as a meeting room, 2006



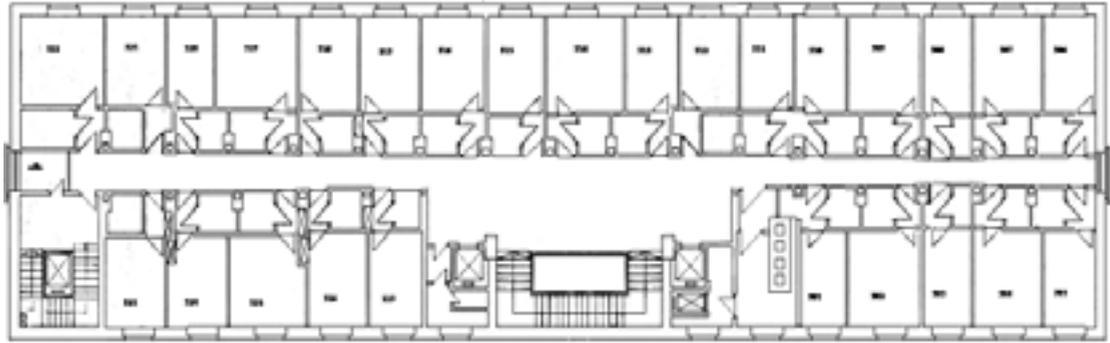
The former Casino, 2006

## **The Guest Areas**

The upper floors are organized simply. The circulation space is composed of one, long, narrow hallway along which the rooms are arranged, one after the other. With exception of the third level, each floor holds 27 rooms. The shifting of the vertical circulation to the north façade creates a vestibule in the area of the stair. A second stairwell, with its own elevator is located on the western end of the hallway. It's physical expression the building follows the architectural, construction, and formal principals of modernism. Characteristic, are the pure forms and refined materials of the façade, as well as the interior spaces of the foyer, halls, and the casino.



Main stairway, 2006



Ground floor of a regular floor



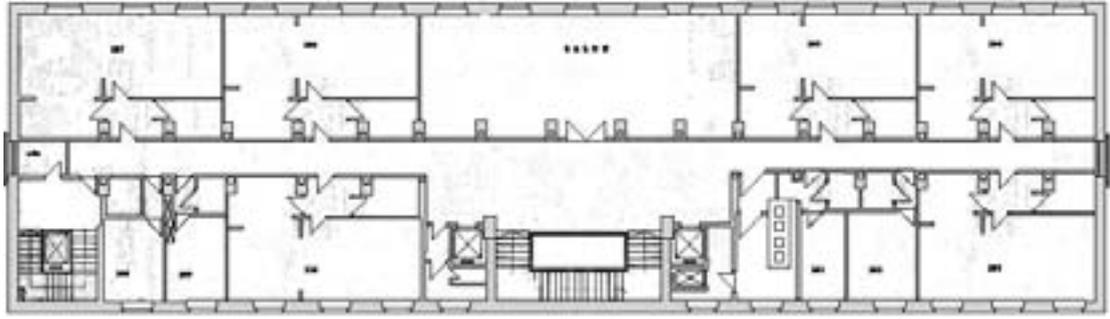
One of the anterooms next to the stairway. Here: in front of „Titos Room“, 2006

## **The Third Floor**

Six suites are located on the second floor, each made up of three times the size of a normal hotel room. The arrangement of all rooms however, follows the same principles. The bathrooms, more generously sized in the suites, lie towards the hallway. Instead of one, the suites have three windows per room, otherwise distinguished above all in the type of materials used and in their furnishings. In place of carpets, the suites have parquet floors and have their own sofa groups. A conference room, entitled 'Tito's room' is located in the area of the central stairwell, on the third floor. This room serves as a place for private businesses meetings.



„Titos Room“ around 1970



Floor plan, 3rd floor



View in one of the six suites 2006

## **The Guest Rooms**

The organization of the guest rooms is determined, above all, by functional considerations. The bathrooms are located along the hallway and equipped with their own bath, toilet, and sink, they offered every comfort expected of a luxury hotel at the time. Today, the services, above all in larger rooms, have been raised. Though the furniture, of dark wood, has agedly strongly, it still exudes the atmosphere of a luxury hotel.

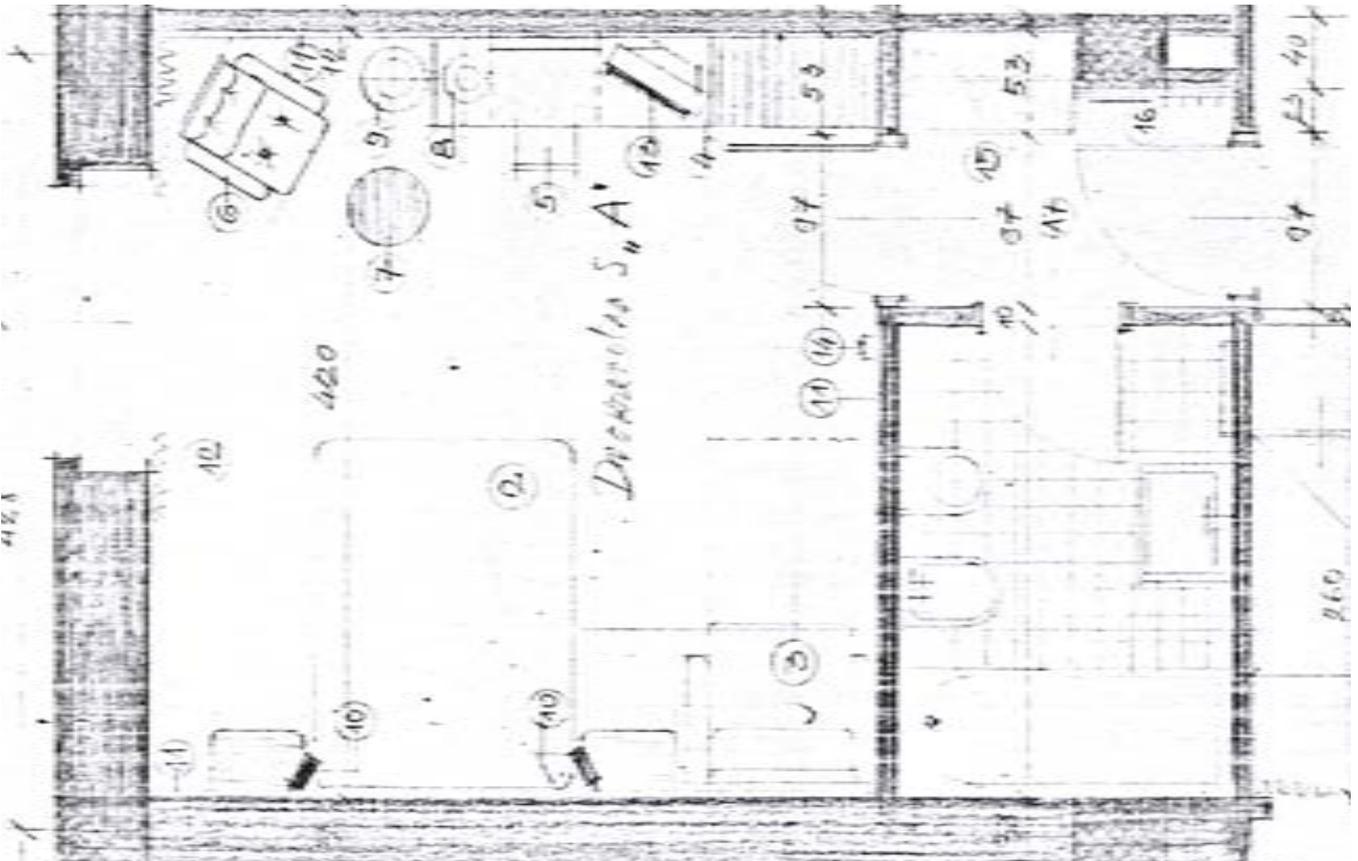


Bathroom, 2006

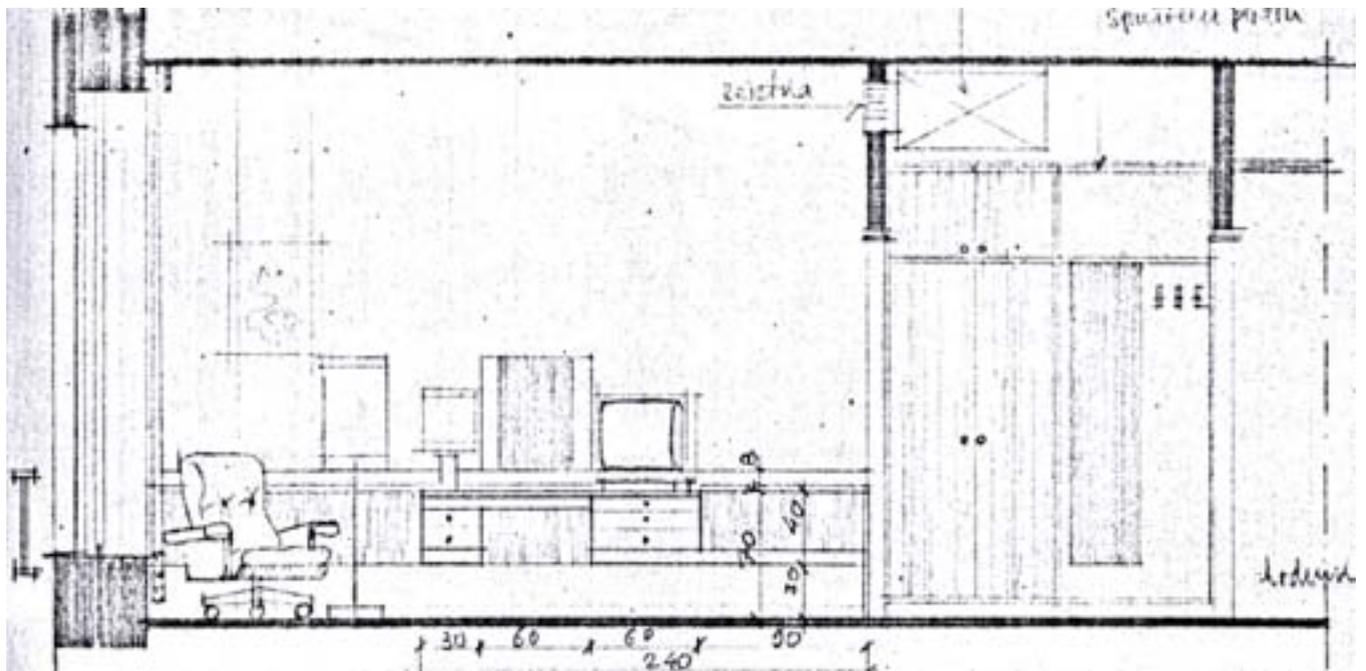


Double bedroom, 2006

# Hotel Metropol



Picture and plan of the interior design, 2006



Section and picture of the interior design, 2006

## **The Hotel During the 1990s**

The death of Tito, the breakup of Yugoslavia, and the end of socialism had a direct impact on the operation of the hotel. The city of Belgrade was no longer the capital of the large, former Yugoslavian empire, but 'only' the comparatively small state of the Republic of Serbia-Montenegro. This led to, if only indirectly, a change in clientele. With the increasing political tension and the outbreak of civil war in 1990, the hotel industry entered a major crisis, later strengthened through the sanctions imposed by Western nations. During this time, the hotel therefore stood empty on several occasions and the clientele was otherwise newly composed of primarily local guests. From 1980 to 1990, the average occupancy lay at 60 percent, of which 70 percent was made up of foreign guests. During the civil war, this quota sank dramatically; the percentage of international guests between 1990 and 2000 dropping to one tenth of the total clientele. Despite this crisis however, the hotel continued to profit from its mythos and again served as a meeting point for businessmen. According to the former director of the hotel, Slobodan Cerovic (Director of the Hotel from 1985 to 2000), the hotel was also well occupied during the war. In relation to this, the famous casino "Putnik" played an important role as it was well visited and generated an important portion of the hotel's revenue during this time. Slobodan Cerovic also spoke of the famous guests visiting the hotel during his time as hotel director. For instance, his friend Slobodan Milosevic is to have visited the hotel often, according to this former cultural minister and businessman.

Some, however, tell the story differently. They speak of terrorists and the mafia, who are said to have settled in the hotel and of the murder of the famous Mafioso Zoran Stevanovic on 30 August 1996 in the Hotel Metropol. There are also rumors, which maintain that the terrorist Sanchez „Carlos“ Ramirez was arrested in the Hotel Metropol. The time during the war thereby remains relatively unclear.

## **The Hotel since 2000**

The building has stood under official, historical preservation since 1997. Among other things, the protection includes the following elements: the exterior; the horizontal and vertical structure, as well as the construction and decorative elements of the architecture; original materials and functional character; a ban on additions to or on the structure, as well as the on the division of interior spaces; the exclusive use of the building as a hotel, and finally no new construction may occur on the surrounding exterior spaces which would endanger or weaken the volumetric form of the monument or its environment.



Lobby, 2006

**Hotel Metropol**





# The Formation of the Hotel Metropol

The economic crisis, which brought with it the war, is felt to this day. The Hotel Metropol was degraded from a 5-star luxury to a 3-star, average hotel. According to the “Dunav Insurance Company”, who owned the building after 1997, the hotel could stabilize at 47 to 50 percent efficiency. The “Dunav Insurance Company” is a state-run business, whose daughter firm, “Dunav Tourist” is responsible for the management of the hotel. In the last two years, the hotel has therefore had two managers who have been responsible for the operation of the hotel. It was their job to raise the standard of the hotel and sell it at a good price, in which they ultimately succeeded.

## Ownership Conditions-Privatization

Under the socialist regime, the Hotel Metropol was organized cooperatively: owned by each person to his or her share. The building was owned by the „Hotel Metropol Organization“, which grew, step by step, after 1957 with the construction of the Hotel Slavija in 1962 and the Hotel Jugoslavija in 1967. Beginning with the 247 beds of the Hotel Metropol, the business was able to expand by a factor of more than six, to 1920 beds within 25 years. In the year 1988, the business was transformed into the first joint-stock corporation of Belgrade. Eleven years later, at the time of the breakup of the communist states, the business was purchased by the state-run agency, the “Dunav Insurance Company”. After a failed attempt to sell the building in the spring of 2006, the hotel was recently sold for 27.4 Million Euros to a Greek hotel chain. The limited interest of international investors in the hotel can be attributed to the question of land ownership, which continues to remain unsolved. Before the socialist wave of dispossession the property belonged to a Jewish family who, in theory, could lay claim to the property under the proper change of legislation.



Hotel Metropol, since 1957



Hotel Slavija, since 1962



Hotel Jugoslavija, since 1967

# Hotel Metropol

**1957: THE HOTEL METROPOL ORGANIZATION IS FOUNDED WITH THE OPENING OF THE HOTEL METROPOL.**



**1962: THE HOTEL METROPOL ORGANIZATION EXPANDS WITH THE COMPLETION OF THE HOTEL SLAVIJA**



**SEVERAL HONORS FOR THE SUCCESSFUL HOTEL ORGANIZATION.**

**1957: THE RESTAURANT ARHIV AND THE CASINO PUTNIK ARE OPENED WITHIN THE HOTEL.**

**1967: THE HOTEL METROPOL ORGANIZATION GROWS THROUGH THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE HOTEL JUGOSLAVIJA AND THE RESTAURANT VINOGRADI.  
1988 THE BUSINESS BECOMES THE FIRST JOINT-STOCK CORPORATION OF BELGRADE**



**HOTEL SLAVIJA IS SOLD TO JAT**

**FEBRUARY 2006 : HOTEL JUGOSLAVIJA IS SOLD**

**1999: DUNAV INSURANCE COMPANY BUYS THE METROPOL ORGANIZATION**



**MAY 2006: A GREEK HOTEL CHAIN PURCHASES THE METROPOL**



## **Changes Behind the Scene**

The primary structure of the building has been retained since its original construction, while individual, small-scale changes were carried out. Photographs of the entry hall show that the reception was erected, in its current position, only at a later point in time. Though the furnishings are partly original, renovations were also carried out according to Slobodan Cerovic, who, after he became director of the hotel in 1985, renovated all the guest rooms. On December 19, 2002, the entire upper floor was destroyed in a fire resulting from a short-circuit of electrical wires. The former wood construction was thereafter replaced by steel, but the damaged rooms were left to their own fate. Today, this floor is closed off.



The Hotel Metropol Staff, 2006



The Steel-skeleton replaces the burnt down structure. The radiators in the several rooms are still recognizable, 2006



Technical support, 2006

Each part of the building used to fulfill a particular function in the management of the hotel, be it nightclub, casino, hair salon, garage, or restaurant. Today, a number of these parts of the hotel have become independent. The nightclub Roxy functions independent of the hotel, while the garage has been turned into a workshop. The casino is closed, conference rooms are rented by businessmen and stores have established themselves in portions of the front structure. Parts of the basement level have been transformed into offices. The hotel thereby contains a multitude of uses, which are not directly perceivable by the guests of the hotel.

## Future Outlook, Conflicts

One can only speculate on the future of the Hotel Metropol. How does one operate with the rich, history of the famous hotel? Should it be conserved or should one attempt a new start? The questions of land ownership are unclear and directly coupled with the development of the constitutional state. Similarly, the question of historical preservation belongs within the realm of legal discussion. In theory, the legal protection is clearly defined. However, the new owner intends a comprehensive renovation of the building in order to transform it back into a luxury hotel. The strength of historical preservation and the adherence to its intentions is yet to be shown.



Temporary uses, 2006



„Titos room“, 2006



The former garage works as a car-service today, 2006



Temporary use: electronic-devices shop, 2006



**DRAFT**

© ETH Studio Basel



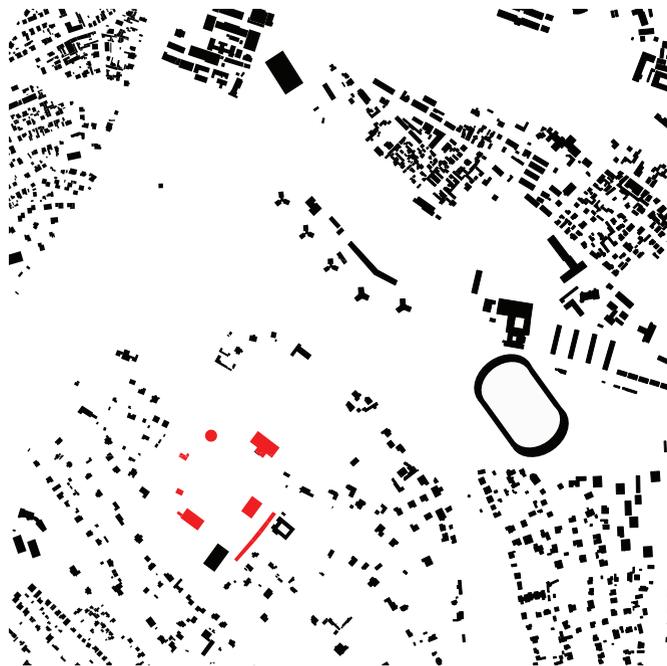


# **Ex - Memorial Centre**

Bulevar Knez Aleksandra Karadjordjevica

## Ex - Memorial Centre **Situation**

The complex of the Ex-Memorial Center is located in Dedinje, a villa sector lying to the south of the city of Belgrade. The dense population of trees in the area and the neighboring forest, to the west, give the area the character of a city park. The property of the Memorial Center lies on a lightly inclined hill, oriented towards the north. The main entrance is located on the northern Bulevar Knez Aleksandra Karadjordjevica (formerly the Bulevar Oktobarske Revolucije), a four-lane highway. To the south, the complex is accessed over a local road.



Situation



North view of the Muesum of May 25th

## Formation of the Memorial Center

Towards the end of the year 1944, Josip Broz Tito, 52-years old at the time, took up residence on the Uzicka Street number 15, where he was to remain until his death in 1980. Having achieved his fame as partisan leader, he became president of the „Anti-Fascist Council of National Liberation of Yugoslavia“. Taking power over Yugoslavia in the same year, Tito stood in a promising position and at the same time, at the beginning of his exceptional political career. Parallel to his political ascension, the complex „Josip Broz Tito Memorial Centre“ developed throughout the following 53 years. As a constantly expanding conglomerate, the center impressively shows the gapless blossoming of Yugoslavia and its primary personality, Tito, all the way up to his death and the following collapse of the socialist state. The following text shall show the chronological build up of the complex through its most important phases of development. Beginning with the existing structures in the year 1945, the structural expansion is divided into three, main stages.



Josip Broz Tito

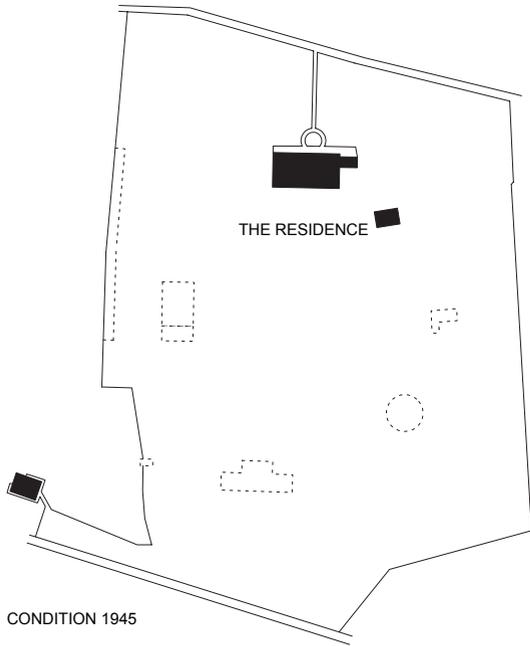
- 1 Residence
- 2 Museum of may 25th
- 3 The old Museum
- 4 Hunting Lodge
- 5 "House of Flowers"
- 6 "Memorial Collection"



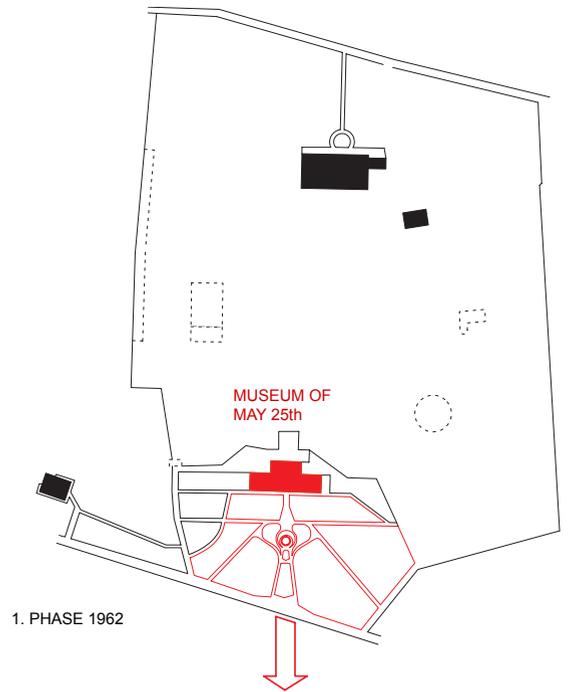
Situation plan 1991



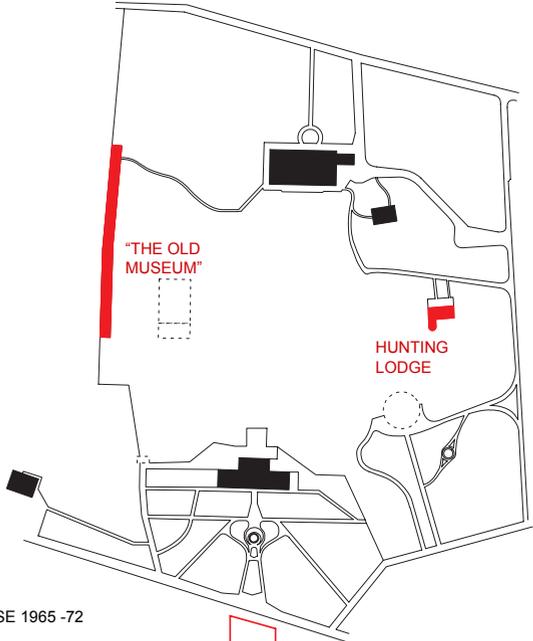
# Ex - Memorial Centre    Formation of the Memorial Center



A TYPICAL RESIDENCE IN DEDINJE -  
A HIGH CLASS BORROUGH

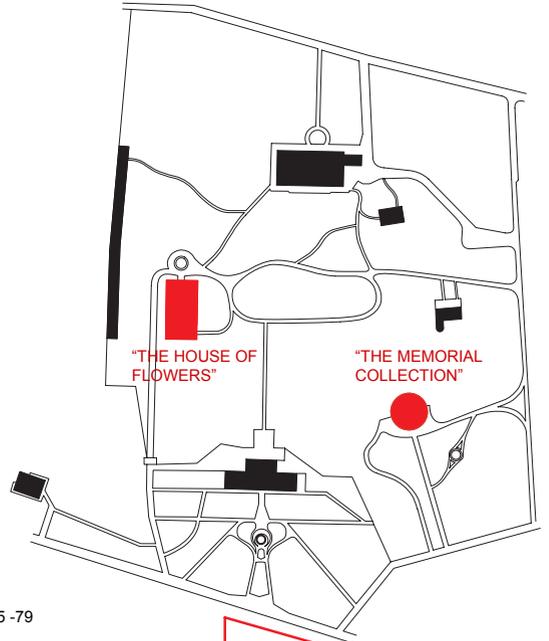


A SEMI-PRIVATE INSTITUTION IS  
BEING INSTALLED ON THE PROPERTY



2. PHASE 1965 -72

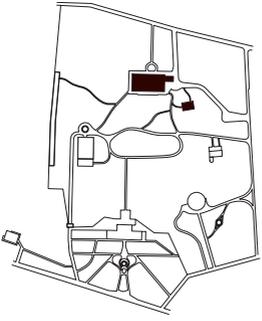
REPRESENTATION



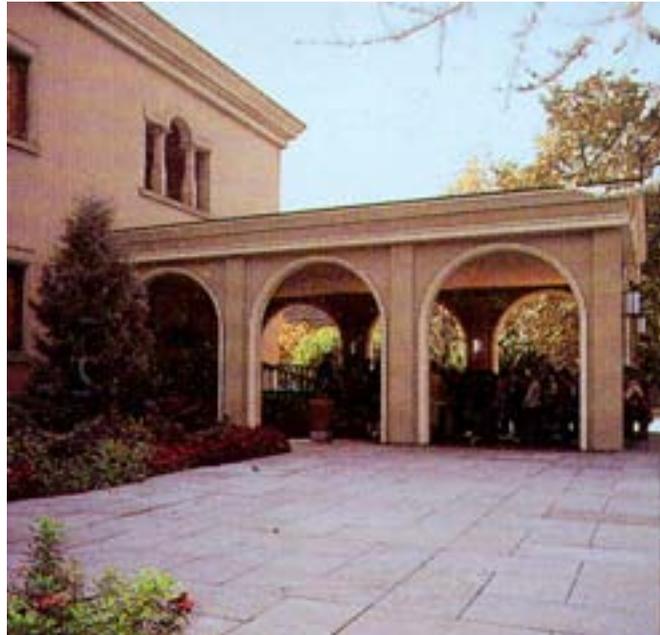
3. PHASE 1975 -79

THE WHOLE PROPERTY HAS BECOME A MONUMENT AND A PUBLIC MEMORIAL

## Ex - Memorial Centre **The Residence**



When the building originally became the new home of Tito in 1944, and later his official residence, the residence retained a character typical to the villas of the Dedinje quarter. It stood in a gigantic, park-like garden together with other structures, which most likely served the maintenance of the property. Over the years, the residence underwent many alterations and gradually lost the character typically to the Dedinje-villa. The current building entails a generous spatial program, of which the center is formed by the large entrance hall and the grand salon. These two rooms, among other functions, were used for public receptions and events. The building also houses the private library of Tito, with around 14000 books, countless paintings and further gifts from his sympathizers.

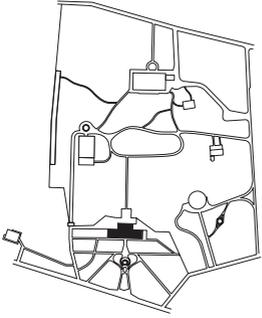


Entrance of the residence around 1990



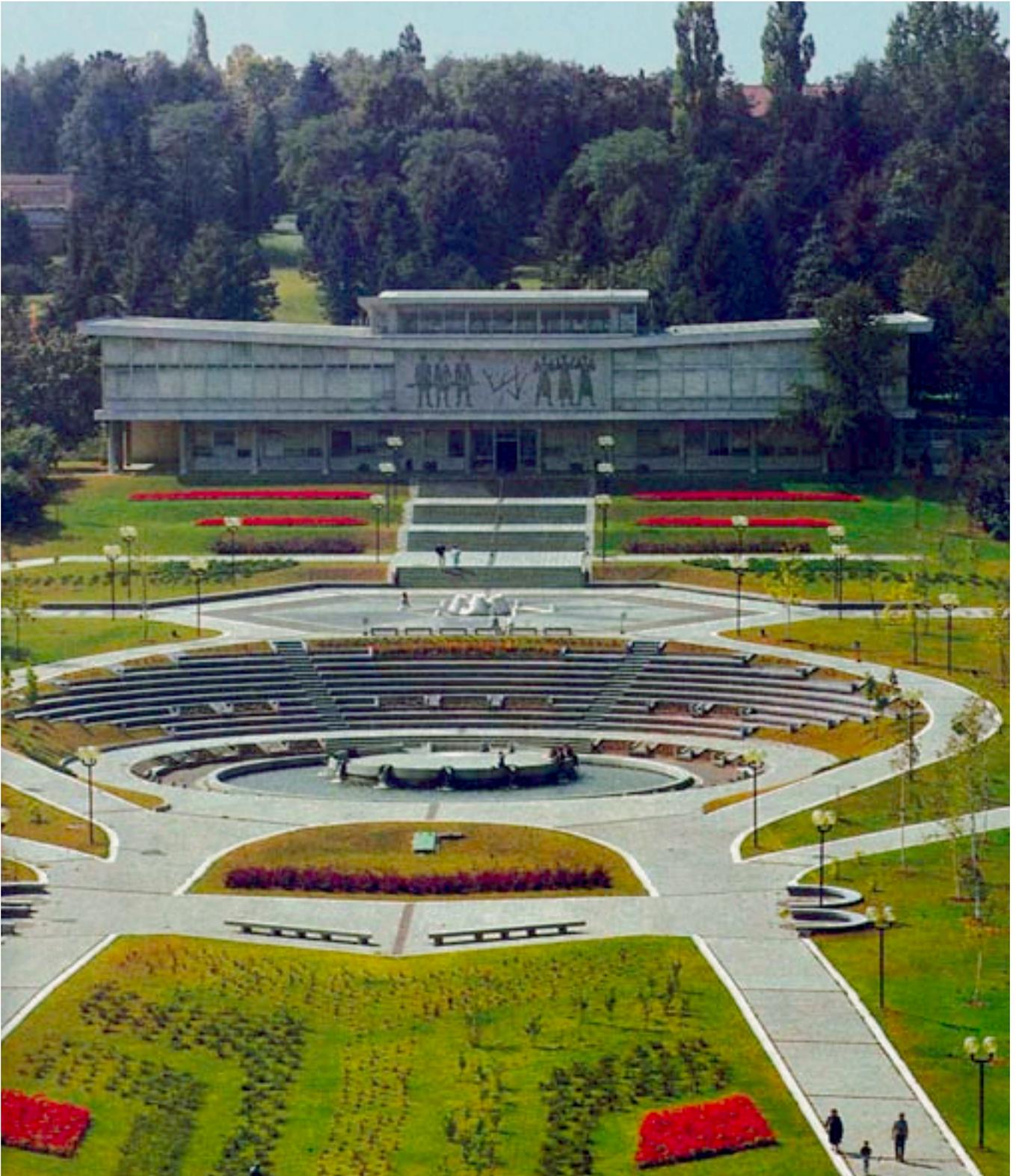
The residence was President Josip Broz Tito's home and the Official Residence of the Presidents, 1990

## First Construction Phase – The Museum of May 25th



The first construction phase took place in the year 1962. In the interim, Tito and his followers had managed, in part with brutal repression, to transform Yugoslavia into a socialist state while simultaneously remaining independent of Russian control. In 1953, Tito takes over the position as president of state and pursues his strategies of block-free politics. Next to the heads of state of Egypt and India, Gamal Abdel Nasser and Jawaharlal Nehru, Tito therewith becomes one of the protagonists of the politics of block-freedom. Through his personal charisma and equality minded politics, Tito achieves great, international renown. His prominence explains the countless gifts from all over the world, which soon overwhelm the storage space of the residence. For the occasion of Josip Broz Tito's seventieth birthday, the city of Belgrade therefore decides to construct a museum with the purpose of publicly displaying Tito's gifts. The museum is designed by the architect Mihajlo Jankovic and completed in 1962. Two aspects are interesting: on the one hand, it is the first building in Belgrade with the specific function of a museum, on the other, the building is designed to meet the requirements of a state structure, representative of the nation of Yugoslavia. These conditions throw new light on the building and offer an explanation for its monumentality.

Constructed on a hill, the symmetrical building appears larger than it actually is. The pompously designed access route, along a symmetrical axis, further underscores this impression. One climbs several, large stairs, passes by cascade-like plateaus, wide stairs, fountains, benches, a small amphitheater and a large green space. The composition of exterior space succeeds in forging an atmosphere of admiration and respect for an authoritarian personality, thereby fulfilling a part of the original concept.

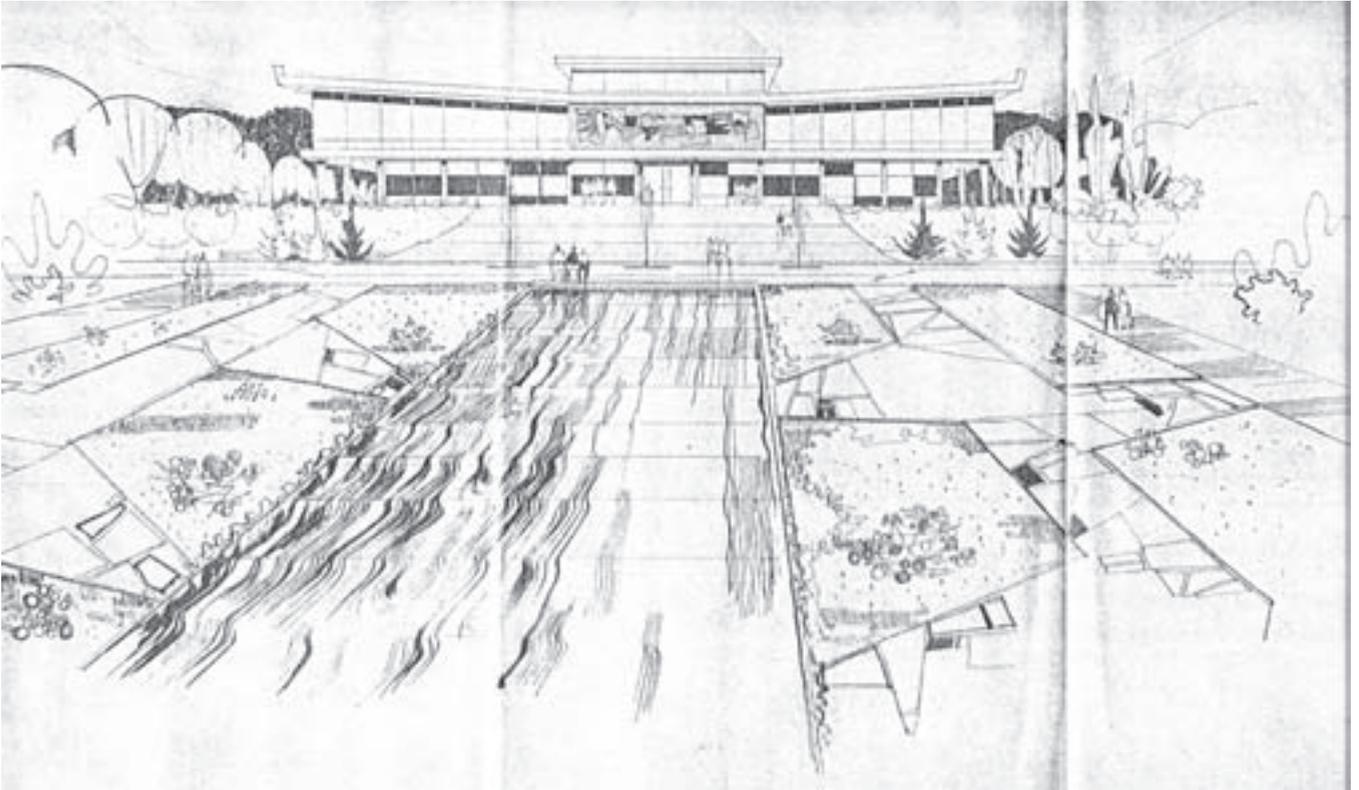


The Landscape Architecture in front of the Museum of May 25th, 1970

## Ex - Memorial Centre



Pupils at an excursion around 1980



Design sketch around 1960



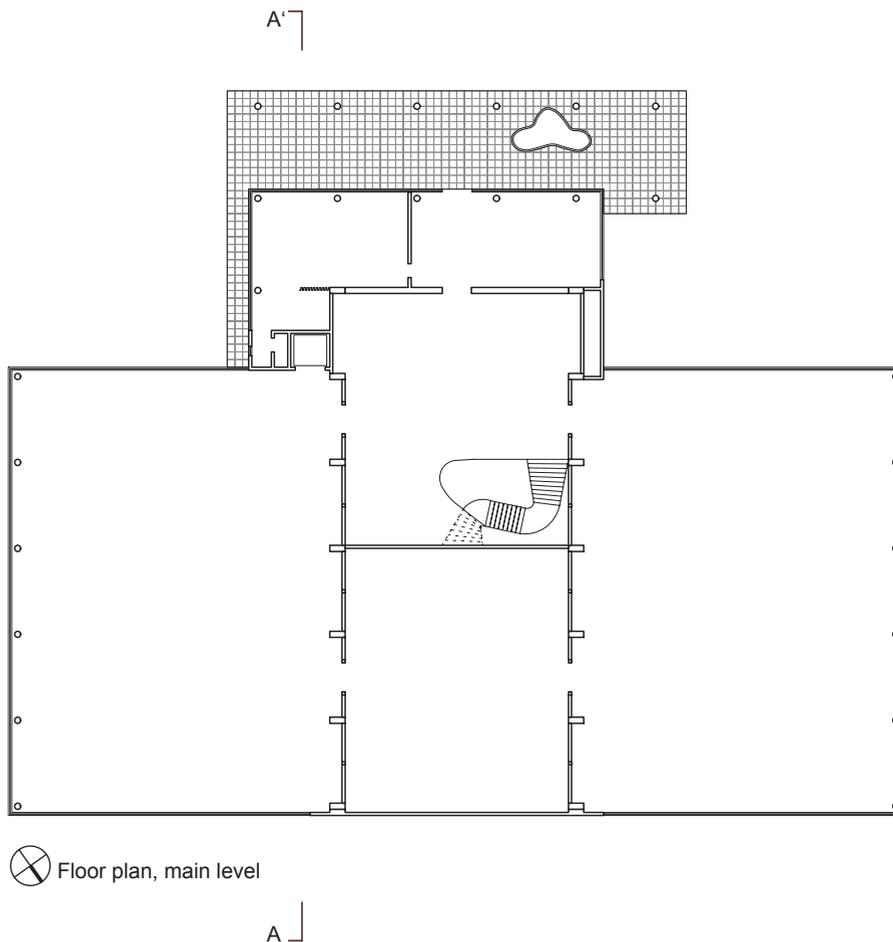
Northern view of the museum after completion

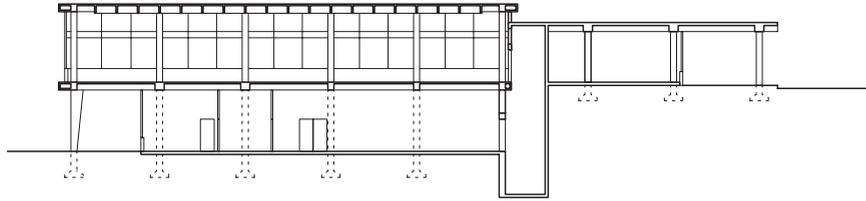


Northern view, 2006

## Ex - Memorial Centre **The Museum Building**

The building is composed of a reinforced concrete structure. The ground floor contains foyer, lecture hall, and side rooms. The entrance is in the middle, while the second floor is accessed through a curved stair. Two large exhibition spaces are located both to the right and left, connected by a smaller space with a skylight. The upper floor is extensively glazed. The exterior appearance of the structure is dominated by the massive columns of the entry, the butterfly-like roof, and the large mosaic composition directly above the entrance. While the architectural concept suits the ideological framework of its period of development, the formal architectural language follows the spirit of the "International Style" of the 1960s. Henceforth, the countless gifts made to Tito are displayed in the "Museum 25th of May" named after Tito's birthday.





Section AA'



Entrance with centered stairway, Titos Limousine, 2006

## Ex - Memorial Centre

The 25th of May was also named the “day of youth”. This has its origin in the establishment, in the year 1945, of a national relay race of the youth, in honor of Tito. On the occasion of his 53rd birthday and in celebration of the “ first spring of freedom”, the relay batons were carried throughout the land and finally given over to Tito. On each of his subsequent birthdays, this tradition was repeated until, today, the collection of the museum holds approximately 20'000 batons.

The construction of the museum can be seen as a turning point. An object of public character is added to the previously private complex. To this day, the structure acts as a guide to the further development of the complex, as well as to the increasingly strong personality-cult surrounding the person of Josip Broz Tito.



Stairway on the second floor, 2006

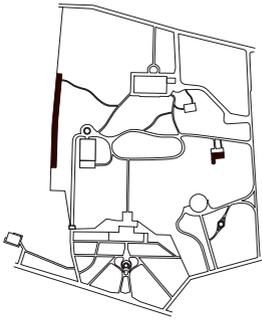


Exposition hall, 2006



Exposition hall

## Second Building Phase- The Old Museum and the Hunting Lodge



The construction of further buildings on the property followed shortly. In 1965, the building, known to this day as “The Old Museum” was erected as storage for further gifts and later also as an exhibition space. In honor of his 80th birthday, the Socialist Republic of Yugoslavia also constructs a hunting lodge for Tito, in which to house, and later exhibit, his hunting trophies.



Inside the hunting lodge, 1980

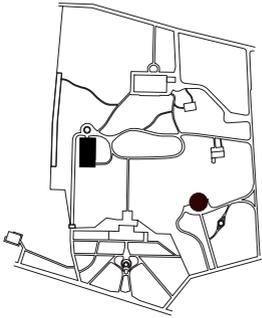


The hunting lodges as a present of the Communist Republic of Slovenia around 1980



Entrance to the old museum

## Third Construction Phase- “The House of Flowers” and “The Memorial Collection”



In 1975, the construction of the „House of Flowers“ follows, as a winter garden with integrated rooms for rest. Finally, in 1979, „The Memorial Collection“ building is constructed as the last expansion of the complex. Though originally intended as a new residence for Tito, his serious illness and subsequent death in 1980 precludes this use of the building. The „House of Flowers“ is therefore refitted into his mausoleum, where his grave is publicly accessible to this day. The death of Tito brought to a close an important era in the history of Yugoslavia, also ending the continuous growth of the „Josip Broz Tito Memorial Centre“.



The residence „The Memorial Collection“



The „House of Flowers“, Titos Mausoleum, 2006



Honor Gard at Tito's Grave, 1990

## Ex - Memorial Centre **Historical Preservation**

Already in 1982, the institution of the „Memorial Center“ was founded to preserve the memory of Josip Broz Tito and study his life and works. This institution was one of the few from Tito's time to survive the political overturn after his death. In 1992, integrated into Milosevic's regime, the institute offered suggestions to the treatment of the complex. Though built in the honor of one person, the center was to serve as a place to get to know the nation of Yugoslavia. The entire complex, including all its artworks was to be protected as documentation of the Yugoslav people and represent not only the person of Tito, but also the state of Yugoslavia. Having served as president since 1989, Milosevic's hunger for power also led him to desire equal standing with the memory of Tito. In 1997, Milosevic therefore moved into „The Memorial Collection“, originally projected as Tito's residence.

The suggestions of the institute were later implemented, and since 1992, the complex (formerly known as „The Josip Broz Memorial Centre“) has lain under historical protection. The protective measures, which are relatively easy to enforce, concern two primary areas: on the one hand, the protection of the characteristic historical continuity of the entire complex, and secondly, the protection and exhibition of its countless gifts and works of art. In part, these measures have been carried out: the residence was transformed into a museum and has since been open to the public.

The momentous time of the downfall of Yugoslavia under the regime of Milosevic, and the subsequent civil war also has direct consequences on the Memorial Center. The former home of Tito becomes a target of the NATO-bombings of 1999, and, as international war criminal, Milosevic is arrested in his residence within the Memorial Center on April 1, 2001 and delivered to the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia in The Hague, shortly afterwards. Milosevic dies during the proceedings, on March 11, 2006.



„ComradeTito, we swear to you, never to leave your path“

## Ex - Memorial Centre **The Complex in the Year 2006**

At the moment, two buildings are open to the public: the mausoleum of Tito in the „House of Flowers“ draws pilgrims and tourists from all over the world, while the „Museum 25th of May“ is used primarily by the Museum of Yugoslavia. Two times a year, each May and October, the museum is given over to the City of Belgrade as a location for temporary exhibitions. During our first visit, two limousines from Tito's times were displayed in the ground floor, while the upper floors housed an exhibition of Chinese coins. We had an interesting conversation with Ana Panic, who works as art historian and curator for the Museum of Yugoslavia. She told us of the part of the complex barred since the time of the NATO-bombings in 1999. This section is surrounded by walls and inaccessible to the public. Even the Museum, which must request permission of the government to access its storage spaces within the walls, is affected by the barrier. According to Ana Panic, this permission is not always granted. The condition of the bombed residence building of Tito is unknown; Ana Panic gives us no further information. Most likely, this building is still strongly damaged. Ana also tells us of the funerary ceremonies for Milosevic in March of this year. On March 16, 2006 Milosevic's former party, the SPS, organized to have his body brought into the museum so that his followers would have a chance to bid farewell for the last time. The party issued a directive for museum employees to clear the space and stay home from work that day. Though normally receiving a stable amount of visitors, the museum is not accustomed to masses, with the exception of the day of Tito's birth and his death, the 25th and 4th of May, the two days of the year on which countless sympathizers still visit.



Ana Panic, Art-Historian and Curator for the Museum of Jugoslavija



Crowds at Milosevic's funeral on March 16th, 2006

## Ex - Memorial Centre **The 25 May 2006**

We had the opportunity to visit the complex on the 25th of May, on the occasion of Tito's birthday. We had already heard that on this day of the year the complex regularly receives a great number of visitors in honor of the former head of state.

Yet, upon our arrival, we were somewhat disappointed: there were no large crowds in sight. A few souvenir salesmen attempted to sell their wares with little success, as evidenced by their bored expressions. So many journalists were present, that at times it seemed they might even make up the majority of onlookers. The day proceeds calmly: there is no official address or similar speech, tells us an overseer. Finally, we come across the old guard of Tito's followers: with flags and many words they declare their allegiance. - Then the quiet old man who has brought a multitude of items to sell: books, postcards, souvenirs and much more.



Visitors on Tito's birthday on May 25th, 2006



„Dear comrade Tito - Happy Birthday!“

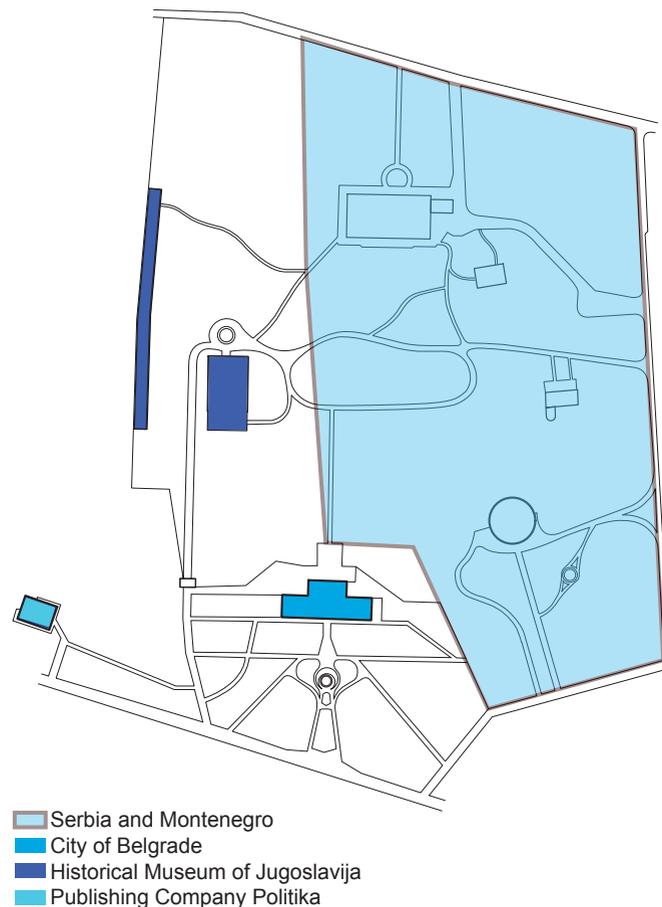


Souvenirs on May 25th, 2006

## Ex - Memorial Centre **The Conditions of Ownership**

Today, the conditions of ownership are complicated. The eight buildings of the complex are owned by four different parties; the part lying behind the walls is owned by the state, today still Serbia-Montenegro, the House of Flowers and the Old Museum belong to the Museum of Yugoslavia, the Museum 25th of May to the city of Belgrade, and finally the Museum 4th of July to the publishing firm, Politika. In addition to this, there is also the question of land ownership, which concerns one parcel of land, which became state's property during the process of dispossession, occurring with the establishment of socialist Yugoslavia. According to Prof. Rakocevic, the land was originally owned by a family by the name of Savcic, a man who now lives in Sion, in Switzerland.

At the moment, what will occur with the section of the complex behind the walls is still unclear. However, many factors point to the continued expansion of the center's museum character. There are voices, which proclaim the propitious future of the complex as a destination for tourists and as a beloved place for excursions.





The area behind the walls, 2006



**DRAFT**

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# **Military Headquarters 1963**

Arch. Nikola Dobrovic

Crossroad Kneza Milosa / Nemanjina

## **The Beginning of the State's Secretary for National Defense**

After the break from the Soviet Union in 1948, the young, socialist state of Yugoslavia began its search for a national identity. A new identity was sought to give expression to the political changeover. In 1954, after the end of the financial crisis, the opportunity to create a new, Yugoslav identity was seen in the new construction of the State Secretary for National Defense, for one of the largest armies of Europe.



The State Secretary for the Department of Defense after completion in 1963

The centrally located land parcels, owned by the army since the middle of the 19th century, at the crossing of Kneza Milosa and Nemanjina Street, stood empty at the time: the former military buildings of the royal Yugoslav army had been bombed in 1941. It was therefore only logical for the new secretary to be planned in this location. It was traditional for further army and governmental buildings, as well as embassies to be located in close proximity.

Nikola Dobrovic (1897-1967) emerged as the victor of a competition of nine teams. He was a famous architect of the European avant-garde, known for his modernism buildings of the 1930s. He had spent the past 20 years foremost in urban planning, building nothing. His last work (the only work of Dobrovic in Belgrade) became his masterpiece.



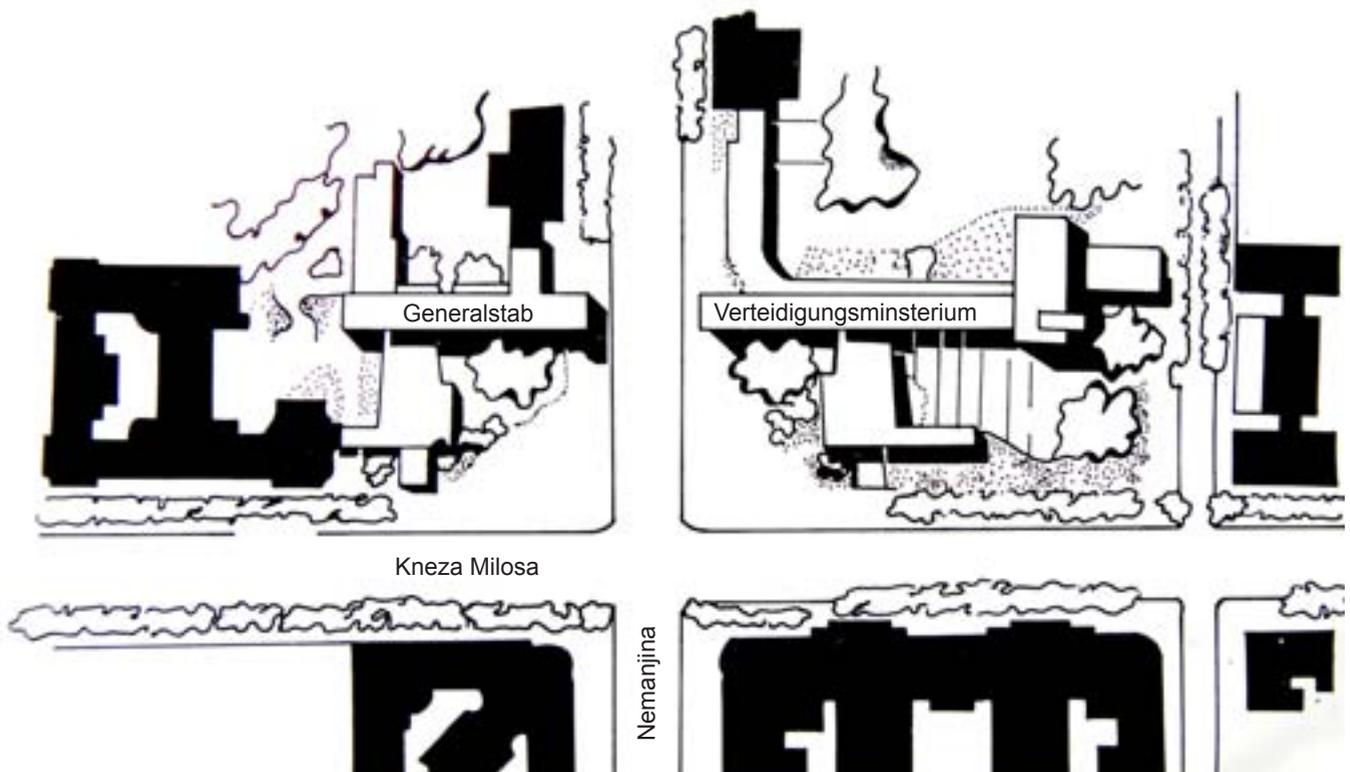
Front, on the right: In WW II destroyed military building on the site of the actual Department

## Situation

The building was completed in 1963, first the Military Headquarters, then the larger defense ministry. The architect did not remain on through to completion, withdrawing from the project due to differences with the clients, before the ministry was completed. It was completed along his plans of a scale of 1:100.

The ensemble strongly contrasts its neoclassical surroundings. It connects the two, separated parcels with a long, narrow volume and reaches, from one side to the other, a length of 250 meters. The smaller building, on the Knez Milosa 35, builds the Military Headquarters of the Yugoslavian army, while the larger building on the number 37, was to house the defense ministry. Both possessed a similar entrance pavilion, though the ministry is most imposing through the addition of a tower to its structure as a further urban accent. Originally, this tower was only to be ten stories high, but grew continually to eighteen levels. As all the buildings of the two blocks were owned by the army, they were connected to one another. Thereby, for instance, the new Military Headquarters was connected with the older one (Kneza Milosa 33) via a gangway. With the placement of the buildings, Dobrovic also optimized the intersection of the two streets, widening the street in the south.

0 1 2 3 4 5 10



The ensemble is in strong contrast to the neo-classicism neighbourhood

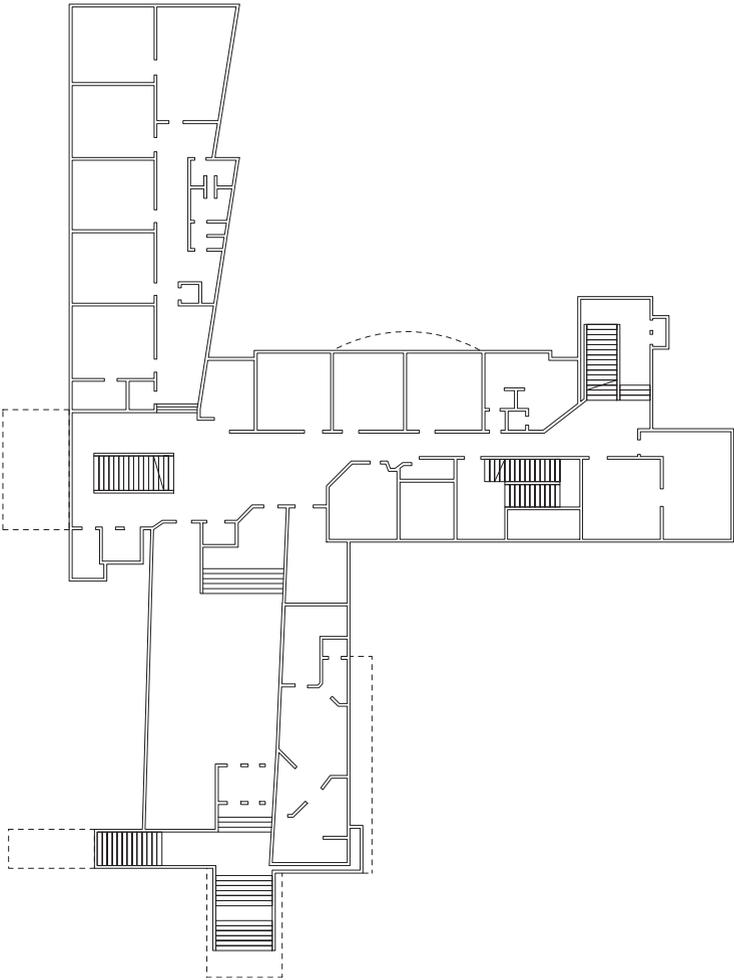


Situation

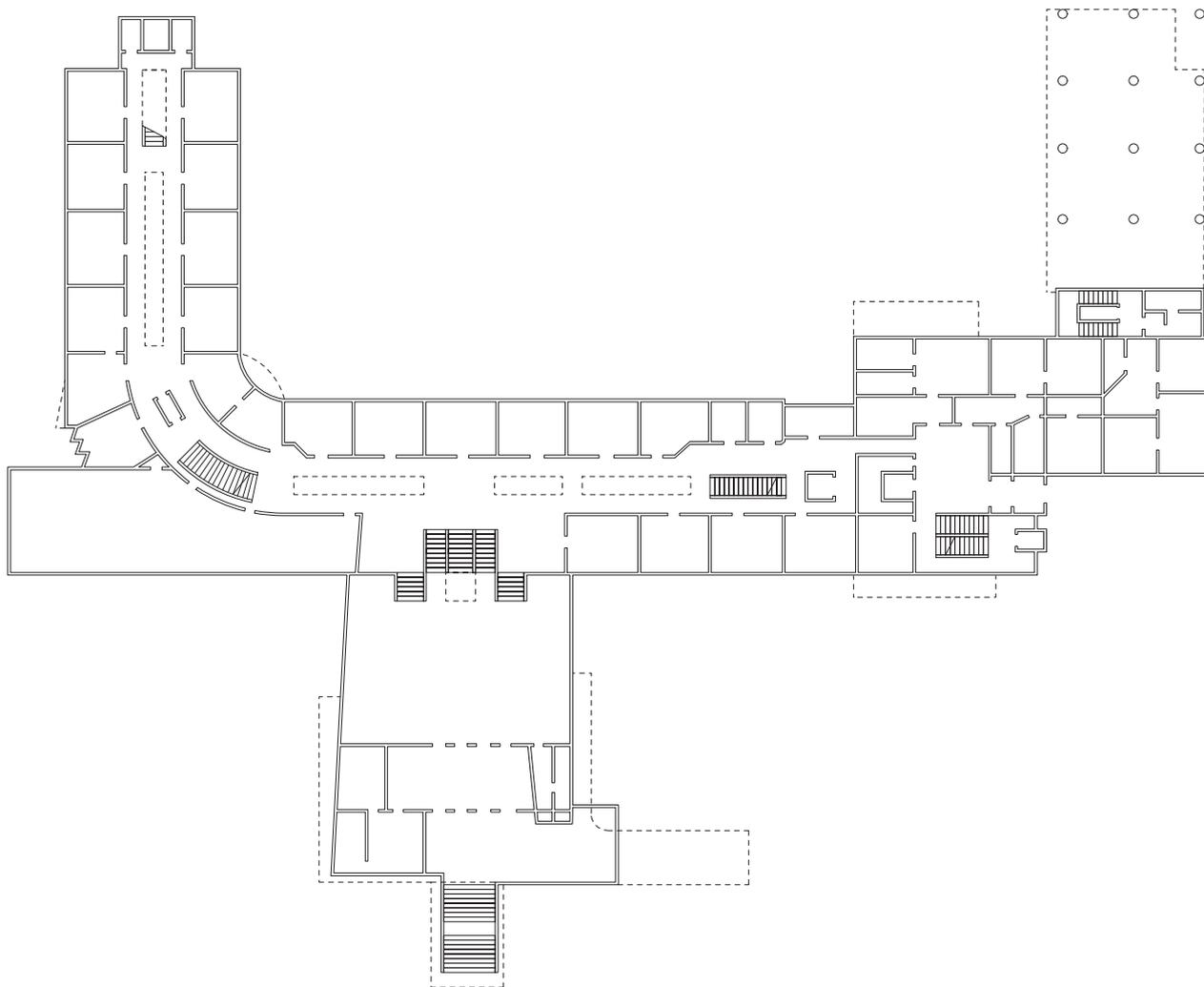


The architect Nikola Dobrovic left the project before its completion

**Military  
Head Quarter**



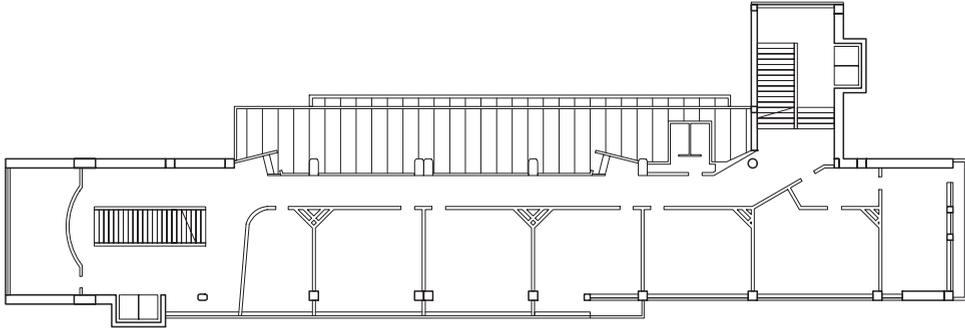
Main floor plan



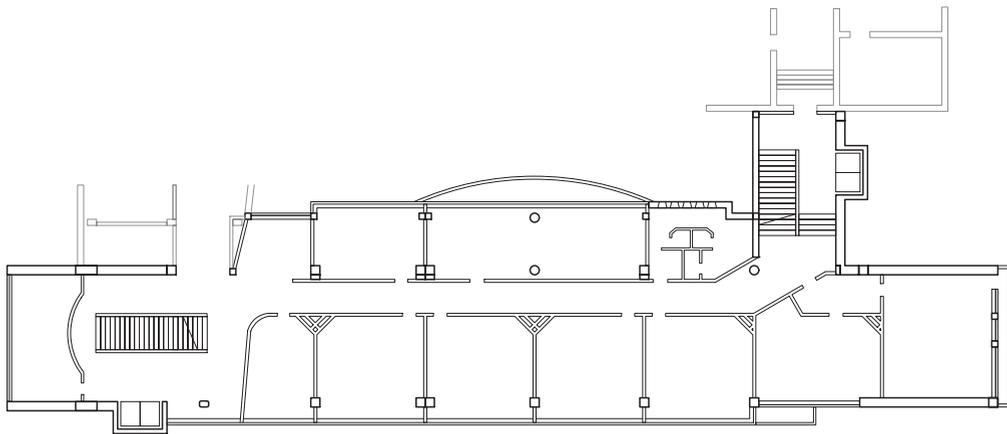
**Military  
Head Quarter**



The stretched volume of the Military Head Quarter along the Nemanjina



Floor plan, 7th floor 1:500



Floor plan, 4th floor 1:500

## **Façade**

Two different types of stone were utilized in the façade: coarsely structured red stone in a size of 25 x 25cm, for the load bearing walls, and smooth, white surfaces. Dobrovic named this a fusion of warm (Wright) and cold (Le Corbusier) spatial tones. As Dobrovic left the project early, the stone profiles of the windows of the 'red façade' of the defense ministry were eliminated, leading to a slight asymmetry between the two buildings.



Two different types of stones were used to cover the façade

*“ In their radicalism, materiality, and plasticity, the buildings are witness to the freedom architects enjoyed at the time.”*

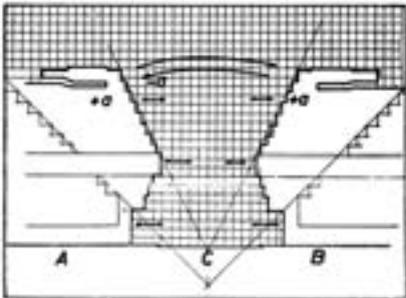
*Ksenija Petovar, Sociology Professor*



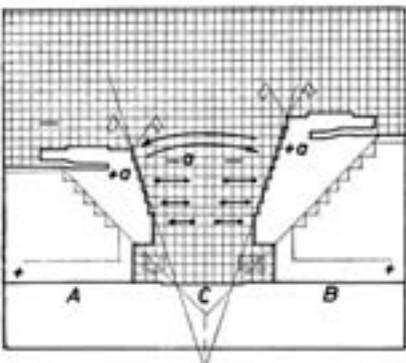
The windows of the «red Façade» are different on the two buildings

# The Interstitial Space

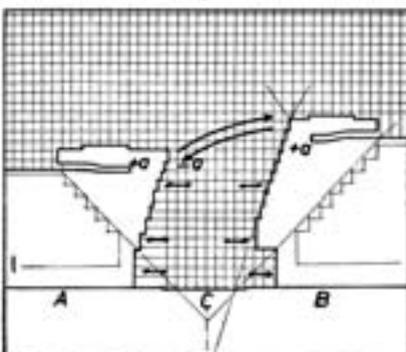
The space between the two buildings (along the Nemanjina Street) made up the symbolic central point of the new identity of Yugoslavia. With his 'chasm', Dobrovic referred to the Sutjeska offensive, which represents the turning point for the Yugoslav Army during the Second World War. He describes that parts of the Sutjeska Mountain were removed and brought to the capital city. He entitled this urban symbol „Sutjeska Plaza“ and believed that every large city of Yugoslavia should have one. In the competition, the architect suggested various, different sections: symmetrical, asymmetrical, and extravagant. In this, he took his inspiration from the French philosopher Bergson. "The transformation of forms from a state of static balance to a dynamic impulse" was to be expressed through these forms. The symmetrical cascade was selected as the final solution due to financial considerations. The interstitial space is experienced by the residents of Belgrade, on their way from the railway station to the Slavija Plaza.



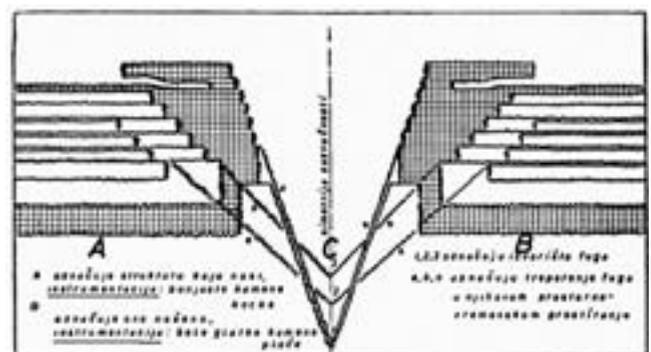
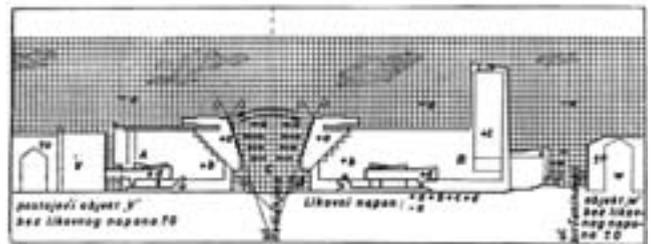
symmetric



asymmetric



extravagant



The jury voted for the symmetric design



The Cascades of the Military Head Quarter, view from Nemanjina-Road

## **Bombings**

With the fragmentation of Yugoslavia, the military symbol became too great for the army of Serbia-Montenegro, though it still continued to be used by the military. As seat of Milosevic's war machinery, the complex became a target of the NATO-bombings, twice in the spring of 1999. Next to those planned by Dobrovic, further vacant spaces were thereby created. At this time, the buildings, as well as the gas station in the courtyard had been abandoned. The bombings thereby achieved the destruction of an urban symbol within the cityscape of Belgrade. The high-rise withstood the attack and is still used today. In both parts, the cascades were bombed, thereby destroying the symbolic characteristic of the complex. In the Military Headquarters building, the courtyard wing was completely destroyed, while the entrance was only partly damaged. Additionally, a large hole was created through multiple floors. In the Ministry, the pavilion and the garage of the courtyard were destroyed and the building was damaged. Under an army commission, the degree of damaged was measured by the Serbian Institute for Materials in the same year.



The Ministry of Defense on April 30st in 1999



The day after the attacks seven years later

For the past seven years, the complex has stood as it did after the first days of the bombings. Nature has taken control of the area and trees grow everywhere. Among the objects damaged by the bombings, the complex has become a memorial to the war like no other. This is related both to its symbolic nature, as well as its central location. It has become obligatory for every tourist to visit these army structures, to take photographs and perhaps also to encounter, first-hand the impact of a bombing on the center of a city. Photography was prohibited in the early years, though one is no longer prevented from it today. It is in the interest of the army to show and prove that the NATO-bombings were a mistake and therefore only beneficial when photos of the destruction are circulated. These photos are also regularly used by local, nationalistic political parties in order to win elections. The buildings are under strong surveillance and it is still dangerous to linger in or around the ruins. For instance, due to security measures a scaffold is located along the sidewalk of Nemanjina street, though this does not awake a great deal of trust.

There have been initiatives to make something of this seven year old, temporary situation. As the entrance pavilions are set back from the street, suggestions were made for the construction of stores and kiosks along the Knez Milosa. This was not allowed.



Since the bombing, nothing has been done. The site is still secured

## **Historical Preservation**

For a long time nothing happened, which was almost unbelievable considering the favorable, central location of the buildings. Apparently, the different interest groups were in disagreement and stalled one another. This also explains why, in such a corrupt system, the buildings were not sold, demolished and developed into faceless, speculative construction projects. Instead, the complex was placed under historical preservation last year. These laws state that the buildings should be restored to their condition before the bombings. Concretely, this means a restoration and reconstruction of their exterior appearance; the interior is not protected. On the one hand, this may be intended to leave the buildings open to different functions, on the other, the unknown plays an important factor: only a small part of the population knew the structures from the inside. As with the majority of structures under historical preservation, no object may be constructed in the neighboring environment, which would weaken the urban prominence of the complex.



The unknown and secured interior



During the establishment of historical protection, the preservation agency profited from the initial work of Bojan Kovacevic and took on his text. The architect and current director of the city museum of Belgrade published a book entitled “The Architecture of the Military Headquarter” in 2001. Kovacevic had begun the book during his master’s thesis in 1992, at which time the army had already offered its cooperation. The reason for this was that, at the time, the army was associated only with the civil war and hoped to improve its public image through the book. Plans and photos of the interior were therefore released to the public. The book was finished shortly before the bombings and later received an addendum. Today, the author believes that his book serves as “guardian of the authentic condition of the buildings”. Without the book, it would be difficult to remember the complex in its original state. For Kovacevic, the history of Belgrade is one of permanent reconstruction, and he therefore hopes to see the army complex rebuilt. He is only interested in the architecture and therefore disassociates the buildings from any further symbolism. He sees the question of Yugoslav identity as over interpreted and forced, even though Dobrovic expressed himself positively on the matter.

Five years ago, the army wanted to clear out the property, but Kovacevic successfully prevented this, as plans of the original project were incomplete. The current structure must be measured in order to make its exact reconstruction possible. To this day, this has not yet occurred.

*“ Today, the book serves as guardian of the authentic condition of the buildings”*

*Bojan Kovacevic, Author*

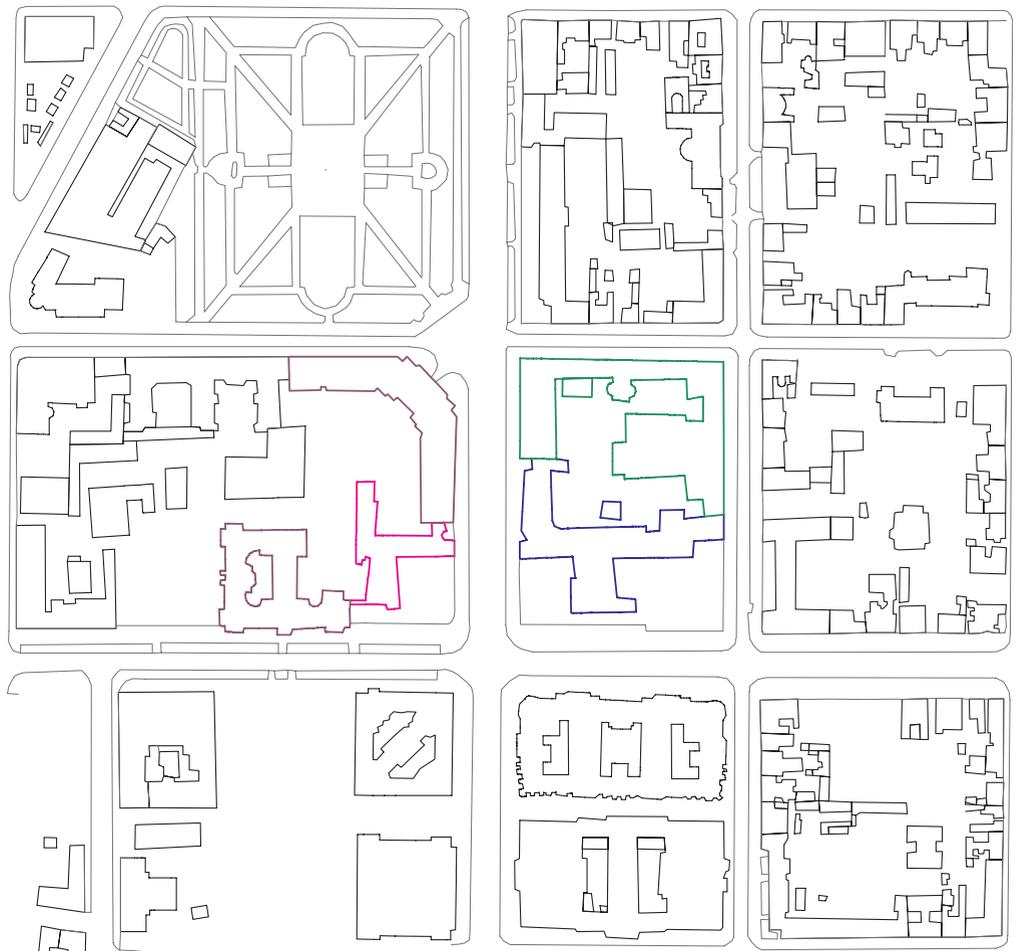


## **Perspectives**

What does the future of the buildings look like today? The results of a referendum in May of this year indicate that Serbian and Montenegro will, from now on, go their separate ways. This means a further shrinking of the army. The division of military objects already occurred several years ago: all military objects located on the territory of a republic, are owned by that republic. Consequently, the republic of Serbia is the owner of the military center. As historical preservation has stipulated a reconstruction of the center, the question arises if the army has both the funds and interest for a reconstruction. In speaking with army members, there was no question of their remaining in the complex. However, it is known that, at the moment, the army must save in all areas. For instance, the recruitment service period shrinks continually due to the shortage of funds. For this reason, the likelihood that the building will be sold is high. From the standpoint of historical preservationists, the establishment of public uses such as, cultural institutions, shopping, or a hotel would be most beneficial. However with this, the problem is money. Will an investor be found who is willing to pay for the expensive reconstruction?

For Bojan Kovacevic, the future is completely clear. As in all of Europe, the defense ministry is located in the center of the city, while the professional military of the army headquarters is located in the exterior, the same will also occur in Belgrade. According to him, the army will retain the smaller building and sell the larger, with the tower. He sees a hotel as the best option, due to the connection with the airport, yet predicts problems with the building's installations and parking. In terms of its urban character, he believes that the buildings would continue to act as an ensemble, despite differing owners and functions. Yet some problems might arise, when, for instance, lights burn in one building during the night while in the other they do not. According to him, the decisive question is how the building should be sold: for a knockdown price in its current condition, or already renovated? He has suggested that the government sell a third army structure in order to finance the reconstruction of the building. Incidentally, it was decided in April of this year that the city museum, of which Kovacevic is the director, will move into the army building on the same block as the current Defense Ministry.

- Ministry of Defense
- Military buildings
- Museum of the City of Belgrade
- Hotel



Future utilization after the plans of Bojan Kovacevic, author of the book and director of the museum

## **Reconstruction**

Belgrade appears nearly unified in reference to the reconstruction; voices are rarely raised in opposition. It is interesting to note however, that Dobrovic's Military Headquarter would never have come into existence had the military structures of the 19th century been reconstructed after the Second World War. Should the reconstruction be successful today, it would surely act as a catalyst for further renovations and investments through the entire country. It would be an unbelievably strong symbol (also for the damaged national pride of Serbia), if this project were successful and lucrative. The reconstruction would be a symbol similar to, and perhaps even stronger than, the Usce Tower, the former headquarters of the Central Committee of the Communist Party. But if and when the reconstruction will occur, and what exactly the reconstructed monument will symbolize, is still unknown.

*" The history of Belgrade is one of permanent reconstruction, for this reason the buildings must be rebuilt."*

*Bojan Kovacevic, Author*

*" I do not understand why it is protected or why it should be reconstructed."*

*Milan Rakocevic, Architecture Professor*



Will there be investors to rebuild Dobrovic's Military Head Quarter?



**Military  
Head Quarter**





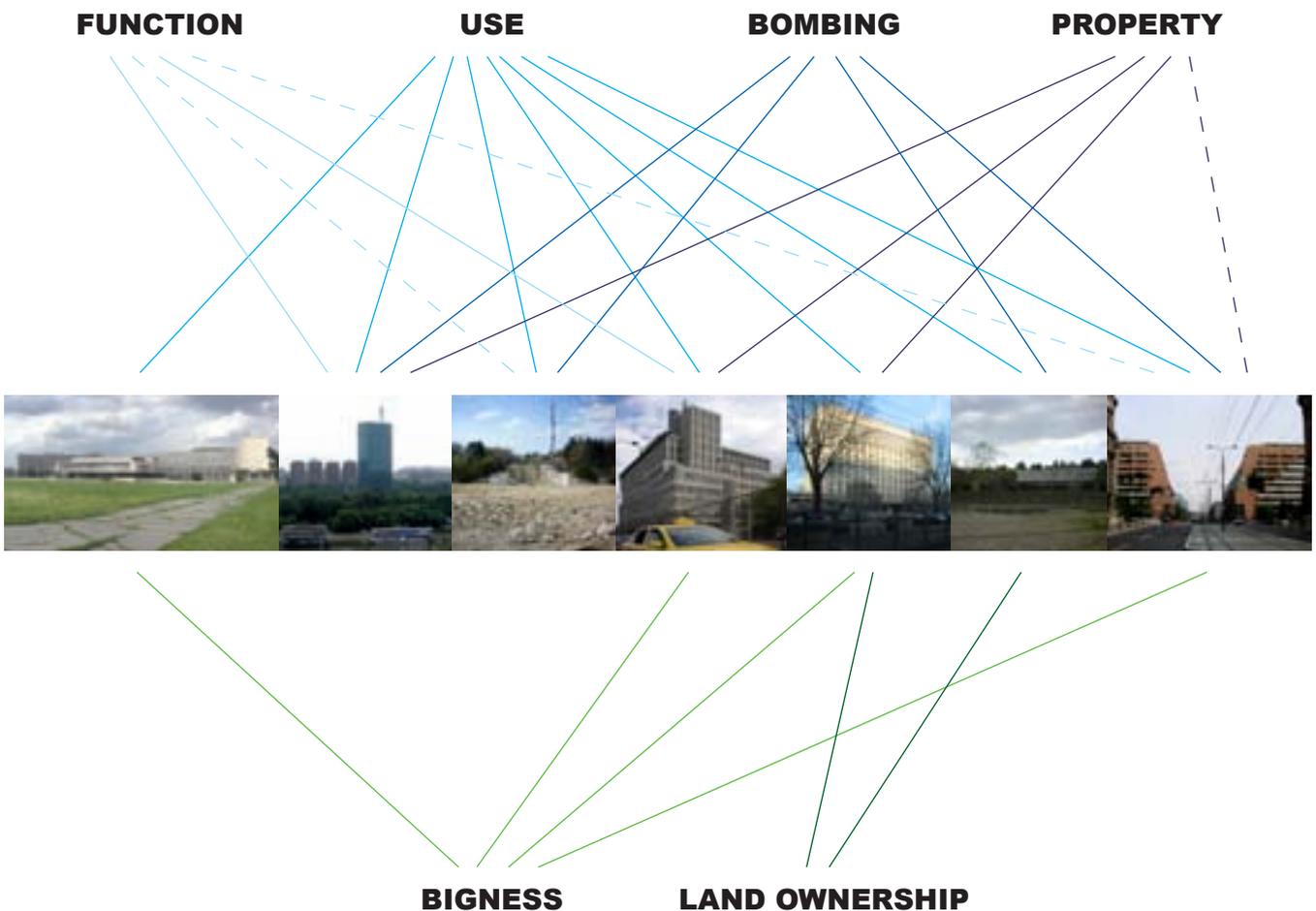


## Conclusions

## Conclusions

The analysis of the transformation process undergone by objects conceived for socialist Yugoslavia has shown that in light of changing context and ideology, each building has gone its own, separate way. The only similarity is that with the disappearance of the nation of Yugoslavia, all of the buildings have lost their original value and purpose; the governmental palace lost its state, the CK Tower the Yugoslav, Communist Party; the Military Headquarters the Yugoslav Army; the BIGZ its market; the Hotel Metropol its status; the Avala Tower is transformed from a Yugoslav to a Serbian Symbol; and finally the complex of the 25th of May is dedicated to a head of state, without a state.

## TRANSFORMATION



## SPECIFIC PROBLEMS

**DRAFT**

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With the loss of their original purpose, these objects became too large to be properly utilized. On the one hand, political structures such as the Military Headquarters or the palace, and on the other, businesses such as the BIGZ or the Hotel Metropol, experience the consequences of a reduced market.

In part, a change in the function of the structures also occurred. The tower of the communist party has been transformed into a conventional office high-rise; the once state owned printing press has come to house various different renters; the Military Headquarter is also on its way to a new function; and should the Avala Tower be rebuilt, it will no longer serve as a television tower. Only in the Hotel Metropol can one assume that the structure will retain its function as a hotel. If this is thanks to the official conditions of its historical preservation, or to its mythos as a hotel, remains open to speculation. Once again, the question of ownership plays an important role. The privatization process stipulates that all state property should be sold by the year 2007. One can therefore assume, that all buildings not used by state institutions have undergone this process or stand close before it.

The CK Tower, for instance, has undergone a successful privatization. After the bombings, the CK Tower was sold and reconstructed, thereby becoming a symbol of progress. The Hotel Metropol was privatized only a short while ago, and it remains to be shown if this privatization will help the hotel regain its previous, luxury status. The largest part of the BIGZ still awaits privatization and in one year, 2007 at the latest, we will find out if the business is capable of making the leap, or if it will be liquidated. The Military Headquarter has not yet undergone an official initiative towards privatization, but many factors point to the likelihood of such an action.

On the other hand, the question of land ownership poses a large problem. The people dispossessed during socialism have emerged and begun to increase their demands. This has occurred for instance with the Hotel Metropol, as well as with the Museum within the 25th of May Complex. Laws regulating this situation are still lacking and the government thereby continues to own and lease out (in contrast to buildings which are owned) all buildable land within the state. The ambiguities surrounding ownership conditions have given fright, above all, to foreign investors and have thereby served to hinder economic growth.

All questions of ownership possess a form of ambiguity, which lack transparency. These legal grey-zones also create profitable soil for corruption and power plays on the part of investors, proprietors, owners and institutions. Development may thereby come to a halt and create a form of stagnation such as that experienced by the Military Headquarters.

## **Conclusions**

The glorious times of Tito and the Yugoslavian past do not seem to build a focal point within Belgrade today. The understanding of buildings is linked, above all, to their role in recent history. In this, the NATO-bombings of 1999 act as a key moment, impacting all members of the population. The affected objects (the Military Headquarters, the CK and the Avala Tower) were transformed from socialist, Yugoslavian monuments into monuments of the bombings. A successful reconstruction would help heal these wounds. The widespread echo for the reconstruction of the Avala Tower, as well as the evident pride in the new Usce Tower may also be understood in this context. Aside from reconstruction, there is no other option.

One can also conclude that a shared consciousness of the cityscape and the monument will redevelop only with a stabilization of the political, legal, and economic situation. Today, the debate over historical preservation remains a luxury.

