

**HISTORY OF ARCHITECTURE  
AND MONUMENT  
CONSERVATION**  
HISTORIA ARCHITEKTURY  
I KONSERWACJA ZABYTKÓW

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# RECONSTRUCTION OF MODERNIST RAILWAY BUILDINGS: THE EXAMPLE OF HAVÍŘOV STATION

PRZEBUDOWA MODERNISTYCZNYCH BUDYNKÓW KOLEJOWYCH  
NA PRZYKŁADZIE DWORCA HAVÍŘOV

## ABSTRACT

The article presents a reflection on the loss of historical and cultural heritage caused by the pursuit of energy efficiency reduction of buildings. The paper will present the post-war construction development in the Ostrava region, especially the completion of the railway network with the implementation of new railway stations. It is these stations, whose architecture refers to the success of the Czechoslovak Expo 58 pavilion in Brussels, that have faced increased interest in the last few years from conservators seeking to preserve these cultural assets for future generations. The author illustrates this with the example of the inappropriate reconstruction of the railway station in Havířov. The scientific method used is mainly the communication of the author's own activist experience in saving the railway station from demolition and his own observations during the recent reconstruction of this object. The response to the activities of the Důl architektury association was very topical at the time and led to the production of a documentary by Czech Television titled *Requiem for the Station* (Hollander, 2015) from the series *My Private War*.

**Keywords:** Czech Republic, architecture, railway station, Czechoslovakia, Havířov, Ostrava, culture heritage, Expo 1958 Brussels

## STRESZCZENIE

Tematem niniejszego artykułu jest refleksja na temat utraty historycznego i kulturowego dziedzictwa spowodowanej przez dążenie do zwiększania efektywności energetycznej budynków. W artykule zostaną przedstawione powojenne inwestycje w regionie Ostrawy, zwłaszcza ukończenie sieci kolejowej i realizacja nowych stacji kolejowych. Te właśnie stacje, których architektura nawiązuje do sukcesu czechosłowackiego pawilonu przygotowanego na Expo '58 w Brukseli, od kilku lat cieszyły się rosnącym zainteresowaniem wśród konserwatorów, chcących zachować ich walory kulturowe dla przyszłych pokoleń. Autor ilustruje kwestię utraty tych walorów na przykładzie niewłaściwej przebudowy stacji kolejowej w Hawierzowie. Metoda badawcza wykorzystana w artykule to głównie przedstawienie doświadczeń autora jako aktywisty zaangażowanego w ratowanie stacji kolejowej przed rozbiórką oraz własnych obserwacji podczas niedawnej przebudowy tego obiektu. Odpowiedź na działalność stowarzyszenia Důl architektury była wówczas bardzo żywa i doprowadziła do wyprodukowania przez Telewizję Czeską filmu dokumentalnego zatytułowanego *Requiem dla dworca* (Hollander, 2015) z serii *Moja prywatna wojna*.

**Słowa kluczowe:** Republika Czeska, architektura, dworzec kolejowy, Czechosłowacja, Hawierzów, Ostrawa, dziedzictwo kulturowe, Expo 1958 w Brukseli

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Experts' continued interest in buildings from the late 20th century in the Czech Republic proves that structures from this recent past has its rightful and inalienable place among monuments. Cultural monuments no longer include solely historic castles, chateaus, palaces, churches, or stone bridges, but also apartment buildings, hotels, office buildings, department stores, exhibition pavilions, railway stations and even boiler houses (Boiler Plant Olomouc). The quality of this post-war architecture often far exceeds that of contemporary architecture. Although the post-war architectural development in Czechoslovakia was in the spirit of Socialist Realism until the end of the 1950s, the architecture of the 1960s proved to be internationally comparable to works produced in capitalist countries. The reason for this quality is the fact that their architects were followers of the traditions of functional architecture. They either had first-hand experience from their own design practice between the wars, or studied under those who had it. This continuous dissemination of avant-garde ideas, practices, and experience from teacher to student was not disrupted even by the communist coup d'état in 1948.

### **Research design, methods, sources, literature and information**

The purpose of this article is to point out what has been happening around us in recent years due to the widespread efforts to reduce the energy consumption of post-war buildings. Access to European subsidies, combined with the technical obsolescence of buildings, has led to ill-considered building interventions that do not respect the quality of the original architecture. This is due to the persistent negative attitude of engineers towards this type of building stock and also to the desire to meet any brief. It is only the younger generation of architects, perhaps in comparison to the quality of contemporary engineering activity, that is aware of the potential loss of this type of cultural heritage. Various associations and societies have an indispensable role to play in saving this cultural heritage by taking an active role in the matter and drawing attention to the threats in an activist way.

The method used is mainly the communication of the author's own activist experience in saving the railway station in Havířov from demolition and his own observations during the recent remodelling of this building. The active work of the association eventually prevented the demolition.

The author has long been dealing with the thoughtless destruction of post-war architecture in

the Czech Republic and has been collecting materials on this topic. The author of the article also refers to the available literature, especially trade journals of the time and recent publications dealing with the topic of post-war architecture.

## 2. ARCHITECTURE OF POST-WAR CZECHOSLOVAKIA

The period between 1945 and 1948, from the liberation by the Red Army to the communist coup d'état, was marked by the peaceful atmosphere of the staged democracy of Masaryk's First Republic. This period continuously built on the achievements of traditionalist and Functionalist avant-garde architecture.

After 1948, the desire to extend the expression of vassal status to art led to the copying of Soviet architecture. The so-called architecture of Socialist Realism was to be national in form and socialist in content (Strakoš, 2010). While in the Soviet Union it was inspired by the architecture of Imperial Classicism, the Czech Renaissance was chosen as the national style for the Czechoslovak environment. Entire cities were built in this style in the industrial areas of Czechoslovakia, especially in the region of Ostrava (e.g., Havířov, Poruba, Ostrov, Nová Dubnica).

This unfree period of architectural creation under Soviet doctrine began to end relatively early, namely already in 1955 (Strakoš, 2014, p. 95). Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev sharply criticized the overdecorated Stalinist architecture for being financially demanding. Until 1958, architecture in this country was in the spirit of Perret's Classicism. The success of the Czechoslovak pavilion at the World Expo was a positive milestone in architectural development. It started the era of the 1970s, which became quite a phenomenon in itself, especially in culture.

## 3. ARCHITECTURE OF STATION BUILDINGS

The first steam train from Vienna to Břeclav arrived in 1839. It did so on the occasion of the construction of Emperor Ferdinand's Northern Railway, which was to connect Austria with Western Galicia via Moravia (Schreier, 2004). In the following decades, the railway lines in the territory of the present-day Czech Republic grew into what is said to be the densest railway network in the whole of Europe. More than a century of railway transport led to major modifications and modernizations of station buildings after the Second World War. From the very beginning, station booking offices provided a range of

services — from accommodation to station restaurants, cloakrooms, lockers, baths, barber shops, post offices and small shops. This traditional concept of a heated public space, especially in winter, became an indispensable element of life in towns connected to the railway.

Post-war railway station projects in cities were mainly based on strategic sites which had been destroyed by wartime bombing. They typically occupied large areas with many buildings, substantial tracks, and — most importantly — impressive passenger halls. They remain distinctive landmarks for these areas today. In the beginning of the post-war era, their architecture was still based on traditional compositional principles. Through a synthesis of mass production and visual composition during the 1950s, the 1960s saw it evolve into lightweight modern forms (Štursa, 1973, p. 496). Post-war railway stations are characterized by a complex design of the station foreground, which included providing urban linkages to original urban structures. For example, in Cheb there was an effort to concentrate rail and road traffic in one place. The first modern transport terminals were created. The station platforms are usually connected to the station forecourt by pergolas allowing covered connections to road-based modes of transport.

Another trait shared by these projects are the artistic personalities of their respective architects. The architecture of Socialist Realism, which, among other things, had the task of educating a 'new' socialist individual, placed a particular emphasis on the political impact of interior decoration. At the same time, the design of transport building interiors faced difficulties in the form of spatial articulation and the uncompromising demand for a vast amount of signage, orientation boards and illuminated markings. These demands then led to the application of material and form simplicity and moderation in the presentation of artworks.

#### 4. STATIONS IN THE REGION

Since the end of the 18th century, the Ostrava region has been of interest to the state mainly because of the discovery of black coal (Vokřínek, 1996). The region began to develop especially dynamically in the 19th century, when a metallurgical plant for the refinement of iron ore was established in Vítkovice near the medieval town of Ostrava in 1828. The emerging agglomeration was a unique, complex system of heavy industry in the Austrian monarchy — combining industrial activity ranging from coal mining to steel production. The employment

opportunities it offered attracted new workers, especially from the agricultural areas of Halych. After the Second World War, Czechoslovakia began to focus greatly on heavy industry. The need for additional new labour concentrated the government's interest in this part of the country. In the spirit of Socialist Realism, new satellite housing estates were built south of Ostrava. The ensembles of Poruba, Bělský Les and Šumbark-Bludovice soon began to equal small towns in population. The Šumbark-Bludovice estate, which was declared an independent town in 1955, changed its name to Havířov. The overriding need to provide accommodation for the new workers arriving in Ostrava, at the time mostly from Slovakia, postponed addressing the matter of a complex traffic network to a later date (Strakoš, 2014, p. 137). The railway planned to build new stations or remodel older ones (Krejčířik, 1991, p. 203).

The reconstruction of the station in Ostrava-Svinov, which was to be connected to the housing estate under construction in Poruba — Nová Ostrava — by the elongated axis of Main Avenue, remained unimplemented. The plan remained on paper and the historicist building of the Svinov station was only puristically devalued in the 1970s. In 2005 it was restored in its original Renaissance Revival style.

The first station to be reconstructed was in Trinec. Conducted to a design by architect Josef Danda from 1953, the construction of a larger station was underway. The old 19th-century station was no longer suitable for post-war development. The architecture of the new building is based on the concept of the fading Socialist Realism. A six-storey tower with apartments became an indispensable landmark. This tower was demolished during the modernization and in 2016 it was replaced by a lower, glazed passenger hall. Josef Danda was an important designer of railway buildings. He significantly contributed to the design of post-war railway stations in Pardubice, Cheb and especially in Ostrava-Vítkovice.

The new station in Karviná was a more modest project. Its construction was prompted by the necessary relocation of the Košice–Bohumín railway line to a closer position to the newly built Karviná with the historic core of the medieval town of Fryštát. The station from 1960–1963 foreshadowed the era of Brussels-style<sup>1</sup> station buildings built in Ostrava in the following years.

<sup>1</sup> The Czechoslovak architecture of the late 1950s and early 1960s, inspired by the successful pavilion at the Expo 58 World Exhibition in Brussels, has been described as Brussels-style architecture. Architecture in this period finally broke free from Soviet doctrine and, after almost a decade, joined

The Vítkovice station by architect Josef Danda from 1963–1967 can be considered the first significant design influenced by the success at the 1958 World Expo in Brussels. It was built along a newly constructed railway line near the Vítkovice Ironworks and the planned Ostrava South Town for 150,000 inhabitants (Strakoš, 2014, p. 143). It was this undeveloped area that made it possible to create a large transport hub connecting train, bus, tram, and car traffic. It had the capacity to serve 7,000 passengers per hour. Its dominant feature is an elevated passenger hall formed on the first floor by a lightweight steel structure, which made it possible to bridge the large span and to richly illuminate the interior. Adjacent to the hall are lower service wings that differ in length. The southern facade of the passenger hall is purely Brussels-style and uses triangular motifs of sawblade-shaped glazing. High-quality and durable materials such as granite, travertine, glass, aluminium and ceramics are used in the interior. The station was opened in 1967 and, despite high expectations, its capacity was never fully utilized. The station was placed under statutory protection as a listed heritage building in 2020 (ill. 1, 2).

In order of construction, the next building of interest to be built was the station in Havířov from 1964–1969, which will be discussed in the following section. The last station to be built in the Ostrava region was the new station in Ostrava-Přívov, better known as Ostrava Main Station. It was designed by architects Lubor Lacina and Vlasta Douša in 1966–1974 and can be considered a representative of echoes of Brussels-style influence. It was conceived in a complex wedge-shaped layout at the junction of two railway lines. While the previously mentioned stations have their concourses located between the lower operating wings, the one at Ostrava Main Station is completely external and in a rotated position. The trapezoidal shape of the floor plan is followed by a long service wing terminated by a high-rise post office building. The station forecourt is covered by a large canopy, which has a large circular opening containing a fountain at its centre. The shelter is made up of sections that divide the forecourt into a trolleybus stop, a tram stop, and a taxi stop. The passenger hall, with a large waiting room on its first floor, opens towards the city with a vertically articulated facade that displays stained-glass windows

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the international stream of post-war world architecture. The Czechoslovak Brussels style typically featured the use of curved or triangular and diagonal shapes, glass, stone, metal and unusual colour combinations. This inspiring era was forcibly ended by the Soviet occupation in August 1968 (Strakoš, 2014).

with motifs from the history of Ostrava. Interestingly, the interior ceiling layout is in the form of triangles, which, in addition to covering the steel girders, hides the lighting and air-conditioning exhaust vents. As part of a modernization completed in 2013, the overall architectural expression of the building was significantly and negatively changed.

## 5. HAVÍŘOV RAILWAY STATION

The city of Havířov was built from the end of the war as one of the satellite settlements of industrial Ostrava. The settlement, which was built on the territory of the villages of Šenov, Šumbark and Bludovice, was not tied to the older urban-type buildings. It was its isolated location that predetermined the establishment of an independent town. The site for the town was chosen along an Imperial road<sup>2</sup> on a plateau free from noise or dust from industry. The town was not to be adversely affected by future mining either (Špaček, 1963, p. 159).

The first railway station in Šumbark was built in 1910. However, its capacity was soon exceeded, and a new station was built a short distance away. While it served its purpose until the end of the 1960s, it was replaced by a new station built nearby. This building still stands today. The need for a new station was necessitated by an increase in the capacity of the marshalling yard, which connected to three sidings. The management of such traffic, coupled with the increasing population of the new town, led to the decision to build a third, modern high-capacity railway station (ill. 3).

Architect Josef Hrejsemnou placed the new station near the transport hub. The problem of the multidirectional road intersection was solved by a large roundabout. Until recently, the central point of this roundabout featured a steel sculpture of a bunch of flowers referencing the annual festival — Havířov in Flowers. This junction includes a turnoff to the new railway station building on its north side.

The railway station was designed to create a formal gateway to the youngest city of Czechoslovakia. From the track side, the new station appears to be a single-storey building. Its true size is obscured from the observer due to the track embankment. This allows the island platforms to pass from the underpass on one level directly into the passenger hall. Such an arrangement is not found in previously discussed

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<sup>2</sup> The term 'Imperial road' is a designation for roads that were built from the 18th century onwards. They formed the basic road network in the Austrian Empire and extended the already existing network of medieval provincial routes (Veselý, 2021).

cases. It is the use of the terrain break in favour of a direct internal road that makes the Havířov station very comfortable for passengers.

The station is made up of three parts — the main concourse is asymmetrically incorporated between two lower side wings. The shorter, two-storey eastern wing is used for catering. It contains the kitchen for the restaurant and the buffet. The longer, two-storey western wing contains the station's administration and operational and transport facilities. This asymmetrical arrangement is harmoniously balanced at its end by the perpendicularly set mass of the staff quarters projecting in front of the face of the south facade. The dormitory is relieved on the ground floor by a columned arcade and rises above the roof of the west wing by one storey. The plastered facades of both wings are designed with a regular rhythm of window axes featuring identical rectangular windows. This utilitarian design of the facades on the side wings is offset by the richer expression of the passenger hall. The dynamically shaped prism, up to 12 m high, is formed by two side gable walls and two butterfly roofs. The outermost gable walls are clad in sandstone and marble panels. They are angled from base to roof. With this simple shape, Hrejsemnou achieved a significantly more dynamic form. Towards the city, the hall opens via a regular, vertical grid of glazed zig-zagging facades facing south. Its regularity is broken by the accentuated entrance of a cantilevered openwork awning. Here too the architect attempted balance — the awning is balanced on the other side of the glazed facade by a plastered, square clock face. On the eastern wall, a neon sign spelling 'Havířov' is placed in typical typography (ill. 4).

The forecourt area with public transport stops is formed by a piazzetta divided into a regular square grid of asphalt surfaces. Originally, the green areas were bordered by low concrete walls. On the eastern side, where the shorter wing is situated, a pair of tall flagpoles help to balance the entire form. These are designed as pylons made of steel profiles. The space in the middle of the piazzetta was reserved for a dynamically shaped concrete sculpture by Brutalist sculptor Václav Uruba. The shape of the sculpture, with arms pointing to different sides, was intended to represent a Directional Figure, a human figure or even a cactus (Ivánek, 2014, p. 18). The sculpture, with its organic roots, stood out with its dynamic shape against the orthogonal grid of the glazed facade. It was removed from the site in 2014. The high-rise building is an unforgettable compositional element of the whole area, and complements the horizontal of the station buildings with a vertical component. The

residential building, intended for railway employees, is located on the axis of Main Avenue. The dynamic combination of the horizontal and vertical is a motif widely used in the architecture of the 1960s (ill. 5).

The influence of the Brussels style is much more evident in the interior design of the passenger hall and its details. The main rectangular space concentrates the various functions of the transport terminal — on the ground floor there are ticket offices, luggage storage, a newspaper shop, post office, toilets, and a buffet. The first floor, which is connected to the ground floor by a single, diagonally placed staircase, is intended mostly for relaxation. From the cantilevered gallery, apart from the entrance to the hairdressing salon, one could enter the restaurant or the cultural space via a shared cloakroom. A relaxing flower gallery forms a separate section. The motif of the flower gallery was very widely used in post-war railway stations. Plants in the interior of public buildings provided a pleasant environment. The overall concept of the hall corresponds to the complexity of the station design. The hall is clad in stone tiles — a marble two-tone paving matches the reversible interlocking ceiling, cast in concrete moulds. This, as with the previous stations, covers the steel roof trusses. The soffit also incorporates the exhausts for the air conditioning and lighting. The walls were clad in travertine. On the ground floor, it is broken by a row of passenger ticket counter windows, in front of which there are marble luggage tables. On the west wall is a large mosaic with a dove motif by eminent cut-glass artist Vladimír Kopecký. The eastern gable wall has a rough plaster interior with a series of zig-zagging niches. Usage of the triangular motif, whether in the form of the plan of the diagonally placed staircase or the triangular, diagonally placed door handles, refers to Brussels-style features. Hrejsemnou succeeded in working with colour to illusively lighten the large mass of the passenger hall. The use of a dark marble plinth strip gives the impression that the whole mass levitates above the floor. Similarly, the original grey colour of the upstairs walls, which contrast with the bright white ceiling, makes the openwork ceiling appear to float above the entire space. The artist used a similar contrast for the staircase railings and the gallery. The upper part of the railing, which consists of a white steel profile, is supported by a set of dark vertical bars. The upper part of the balustrade is also fitted with a pleasant oak handrail. In the overall concept, the distinctive white line of the handrail stands out, while the dark bars are barely visible. The monumental complexity of the design, the quality of the architectural elements and fine detailing prove that this is an exceptional building (Strakoš, 2014, p. 152).

## 6. THE TRAFFIC TERMINAL AND THE FORMATION OF THE ASSOCIATION

The political return to democracy in 1989 created a euphoria in society and a desire for private enterprise. State-owned companies were privatized and it soon became clear that with open borders it was difficult to remain competitive. The maintenance of large station buildings became more expensive and the owner of the buildings, the Czech Railways, sought additional revenue opportunities in renting vacant spaces to private sector entities. The passenger hall of the Havířov railway station was transformed into an improvised department store in the 1990s. It became filled with built-in shops, the cultural room was used as a casino and the flower gallery became a carpet shop. The diversity of the items for sale was also evident in the text banners that covered the entire south facade of the station. This wild era of the 1990s quickly passed, followed by the expansion of foreign supermarkets, causing the station to once again become empty. Due to the decline of coal mining, the mines that were connected to the station by sidings gradually disappeared. The modern grain mill in Šenov, which was also connected to the station by a siding, also disappeared. This was associated with the gradual reduction in the number of workers needed by the rail company. Rising fare prices and a decline in job opportunities in the area led to a reduction in the number of commuters. The station no longer served as many passengers as it used to. It was difficult to attract serious tenants to the morally depleted premises to maintain the essential services of the station. Very soon the Czech Post left the station, and the surviving buffet and restaurant disappeared. The premises originally used as waiting rooms were permanently closed to passengers. The originally busy station became a large and empty unheated waiting room without the usual services.

In 2004, the Czech Republic joined the European Union, which opened the possibility of drawing funds for the modernization and renovation of these buildings. At that time, buildings built after the war were up to sixty years old. They were technically and, above all, morally beyond the limits of acceptable sustainability. Financial support led to a wave of building alterations and thermal retrofitting, which almost always resulted in an inappropriate change in architectural expression. The station buildings in question were no exception. The old buildings, which were listed heritage sites by virtue of their age, received quality care and regained their appearance, usually in a historically appropriate style. However, the modern buildings were insulated and

their colours were insensitively changed to reflect the current trend of pastel shades. The railway station in Havířov nevertheless went unnoticed. Except for minor interventions, it still remained in its original form. In the 2000s, a transport terminal boom came to the Czech Republic. The connection of rail and bus transport, as we know it from many other cities, was never implemented in Havířov. A separate bus station, architecturally very successful, was built at the other end of the city. Moving it closer to the railway was debated several times. In 2010, representatives of the city and the Czech Railways met to again review the proposal of a transport terminal co-funded by the European Union.

Due to high heating costs and the difficulty to maintain the currently unused building, the possibility of demolition and building a smaller energy-efficient building was considered for the first time (Běčák, 2010). In 2011, the City Council decided instead to build a modern transport terminal.

The first proposal to be presented was by the Brno-based Velehradský architectural studio, published in June 2011 (Běčák, 2011). The designs that preserved the existing hall were eliminated in favour of a design that only preserved the west wing with the addition of a smaller terminal hall, which was ultimately selected for the next phase. The proposed design respected the city's request to connect the station with the Šumbark district by means of an overpassing footbridge. The proposal did not envisage underpasses in the study, and therefore it necessitated redundantly high levels to reach the overpass. The published design study did not deal with the layout, but only with the volumetric design. The architecture presented was fully contemporary, with an elegant glazed facade. The publication of this plan in the media provoked a response from disgruntled citizens who found the demolition of a relatively young building pointless and wasteful. Young architects Lucie Chytilová, Adam Guzdek and Marek Obtulovič, who were local to the area, founded the Důl architektury civic association, which set out its main goal to save this important example of Brussels-style architecture in Havířov (Famfulíková, 2011). They started a petition that was soon signed by disgruntled people from all over the Czech Republic and abroad.

## 7. FIGHT FOR THE STATION

The association tried to show that if there was support, it would be possible to revive the station again with small interventions (Důl architektury, 2012–2016). For example, it organized a staged performance by an Ostrava theatre company in the defunct



station restaurant. Hundreds of curious spectators came to the event, eager to see the long-inaccessible station premises again (ill. 6–7). The original founding members of the civic association were gradually joined by other people who wanted to support the rescue of the station. They came up with new ideas on how to revive the station. The cultural week of the ‘The station is alive!’ action, which occupied the entire second floor of the passenger hall, became a major and significant event. An impromptu café with refreshments, a relaxation corner and lecture rooms were created. As part of this event, a workshop for architecture students was held to show how the area around the station could be adapted and what new functions could be created at the station (ill. 8–9). The City of Havířov, for example, had long sought to support increased employment for its residents by creating a business incubator on the site of the now defunct Dukla Mine. The association pointed out the senselessness of the plan to relegate these active young people to the outskirts of the city. It proposed to use the empty office wing of the station instead. A good address with the advantage of connections to rail and road infrastructure were a bonus. In addition, a greater accumulation of people in the area would encourage the establishment and retention of, for example, a good restaurant. The final architectural study was created on the basis of the cheapest offer of the design teams contacted to prepare the technical design. The proposal by Ostrava-based KOHL architects, published in July 2012 (Famfulíková, 2012), offered a very cost-effective solution. Unlike the first proposal by the Brno studio, no new building would be created, but the Brussels-style hall would disappear without replacement. The presented visualizations were particularly interesting due to the modern roofing of the forecourt area with a textile membrane. This spectacular element was so dominant that you couldn’t even see what the station itself looked like. The new terminal was to be created by modifying the transport part of the west wing of the station. The area of the concourse was to be reduced from the original 900 m<sup>2</sup> to an unacceptable 150 m<sup>2</sup>.

The civic association has been wrongly accused of trying to abuse the possibility of declaring the station a cultural monument only to have the entire investment project thwarted. However, this is not true. A few months before the first media reports about the plan to build a transport terminal, the author of this article had asked the National Heritage Institute to look into the proposal to list the station as a cultural monument (Guzdek, 2011). Even then, as an architecture student, the author was aware that this was an important example of Czechoslovak

architecture. The administrative proceedings eventually lasted several years. By law, the Ministry of Culture had to invite all interested parties to comment on the proposal. Some authorities objected to the proposal on the grounds, for example, that it was pointless to declare the cracked asphalt surface in front of the station a monument. The first negative decision was issued in the summer of 2012. The same happened in a review procedure in 2013. The reopening of the case in 2014 made it possible to establish the designer of the extensive mosaic (Gavendová, 2014, p. 101–106). It is worth remembering that important bodies such as the National Heritage Institute and the Czech Chamber of Architects were on the side of protecting the station. On the other side were the Czech Railways and the City of Havířov. The years of effort by the young architects were finally crowned with a rejection decision that same year. This was inappropriately justified, for example, by the fact that considerable financial resources had already been invested during the preparatory work and that declaring the station a cultural monument would cause significant financial damage. Officials from the Ministry of Culture, which establishes the National Heritage Institute, did not take into account that the demolition could result in the loss of valuable cultural heritage that they must protect by law. During the entire time the Ministry of Culture had been discussing possibly declaring the building a listed monument, its owner was legally obligated to look after it as if it were already a cultural monument (Zákon České národní rady o státní památkové péči, 1987, §3). It was therefore a matter of protecting the structure from deliberate destruction. Even though the Czech Railways, as the owner of the building, and the City of Havířov, as the owner of the forecourt area, were still preparing for the project over the years, they eventually withdrew from their joint project for time-related reasons (Běčák, 2014). They were afraid of the risk that they would not be able to invest the European Union subsidies in time. This was a triumph for the civic association, which succeeded in preserving the station for future generations.

## 8. WHAT NEXT?

After the rejection of the plan to demolish the station, a reasonable debate between the young architects and representatives of the city and Czech Railways could take place. Havířov wanted to repair the station forecourt (Běčák, 2015). The new owner of the building, the Railway Administration, was not about to give up on the idea of getting rid of the oversized

and wasteful building. Negotiations reached a point where the city undertook to use the original passenger hall for the needs of the city, and the Railway Administration would build a smaller passenger facility to a previously prepared design. The station would thus be preserved in its complete and undiminished form.

This unfortunate model, where the passenger hall does not serve its purpose and is offered for other functions, is planned to be used in the case of the revival of the railway station in Ostrava-Vítkovice (*Diskuze Co dál s vítkovickým nádražím?*, 2020). It is greatly unfortunate that there is no interest in finding ways to make beautiful spaces accessible to passengers, while also finding other suitable additional functions for them. After all, this is an indoor public space. After the reconstruction of Havířov station, passengers will be relegated to the west wing, where they will be crowded into a small check-in hall. The original ticket hall will be empty for the time being. Its future content is to be cultural and sports socials. The interesting interior will thus be accessible only to a select few who subscribe to these activities. The railway station in Ostrava-Vítkovice is now a cultural monument. It should be noted that it was already declared a monument in 2010. After four months, the owner appealed against the decision and the monument protection was revoked again (Strakoš, 2014, p. 160). The declaration as a cultural monument is therefore certainly not a status that is definitive and that ensures permanent protection. However, in the case of building alterations, there is a good chance that the construction work will be carried out under the supervision of the conservation authority and that the result could turn out well.

## 9. A TRULY SUCCESSFUL REALISATION?

The intention of the overhaul, which has been underway since 2019, is primarily to reduce energy consumption. In post-war projects until the mid-1970s, the building's economy was not a priority. A turnaround came after the Oil Shock in 1973 (Volek, 2002). Seminar projects by students from the Czech Technical University in Prague showed that by using a suitable ventilation system, insulating the roof and replacing the glazed south facade, acceptable savings could be achieved in the passenger hall (Důl architektury, 2012–2013).

The side utilitarian wings were fitted with new insulation and the windowpanes were replaced.

From a heritage aspect it is not correct that the colour scheme has been changed from the original white to the now-fashionable anthracite. The stone-faced gable walls have been cleaned up, making the white marble front band stand out. The south glazed facade was completely replaced with a new one with insulating glass. However, the detail of the original aluminium mouldings that framed the windows with a silver outline has been lost. Similarly, the silver aluminium handrails have also disappeared. In order to eliminate thermal bridges, the original brick dial was moved forward from the plane of the glazed facade (ill. 10–14).

The dial details are now flattened into an unconvincing form. The most obvious change that has significantly altered the appearance of the station is the disproportionate increase in the thickness of the upper peak of the counter roof. This was done despite the fact that the entire roof structure was removed and an acceptable structural thickness could have been retained. Failure to respect the original proportions by the designing architect can lead to an unconvincing restoration of a cultural asset in conservation.

## 10. CONCLUSION

The author's experience from the rescue of the Havířov railway station invites a discussion on whether we have the right to approach the works of the past so hastily and recklessly. The cultural losses we suffer because of political decisions have long-lasting consequences. Let us recall the demolition of the Prague-Těšnov railway station in 1985 (ČTK, 2015). It was carried out quickly and instead of a valuable Renaissance Revival building, it is now a grassy area. For some buildings, a new function was sought for decades, often for centuries (Strakoš, 2014, p. 160). At the present time, we cannot imagine that these objects would not have been saved by our predecessors. They are monument assets and national heritage treasures, which even foreign tourists come to see. It is understandable that post-war buildings have yet to define their place in the history of architecture, but if we do not give them the chance and time, we will erase this part of our history. Let's think about whether the pursuit of actual profit, of black numbers, is the most important thing for our society. Our lives are an insignificant fraction in human history. So let us leave a positive message to future generations about our existence and advanced culture.



Ill. 1. Ostrava-Vitkovice railway station (probably 1970s).  
Source: archive of the Důl architektury association, photo by P. Sikula.

Il. 1. Stacja Ostrava-Vitkovice (prawdopodobnie w latach 70. XX wieku).

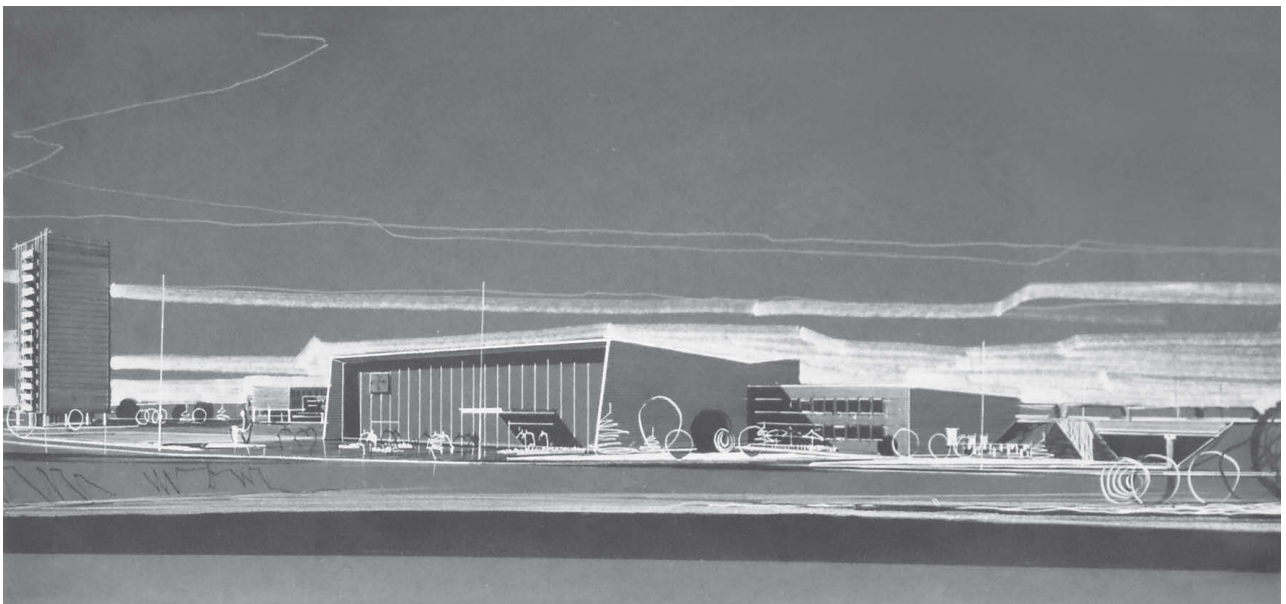
Źródło: archiwum stowarzyszenia Důl architektury, fot. P. Sikula.



Ill. 2. Ostrava-Privoz railway station (probably 1970s).  
Source: archive of the Důl architektury association, photo by P. Sikula.

Il. 2. Stacja Ostrava-Privoz (prawdopodobnie w latach 70. XX wieku).

Źródło: archiwum stowarzyszenia Důl architektury, fot. P. Sikula.



Ill. 3. Drawing of the railway station in Havířov (around 1964).

Source: SOkA Karviná, archive collection of J. Hrejsemnou.

Il. 3. Rysunek stacji kolejowej w Hawierzowie (ok. 1964).

Źródło: SOkA Karviná, kolekcja archiwalna J. Hrejsemnou.



III. 4. Piazzetta in front of the railway station with a concrete sculpture (probably in the 1970s).

Source: archive of the Důl architektury association, author unknown.

II. 4. Placyk przed stacją kolejową z betonową rzeźbą (prawdopodobnie w latach 70. XX wieku).

Źródło: archiwum stowarzyszenia Důl architektury, autor nieznan.



III. 5. Interior of Havířov railway station (probably in the 1970s).

Source: archive of the Důl architektury association, photo by P. Sikula.

II. 5. Wnętrze stacji kolejowej Hawierzów (prawdopodobnie w latach 70. XX wieku).

Źródło: archiwum stowarzyszenia Důl architektury, fot. P. Sikula.



III. 6. Cleaning the gallery before the theatre performance (2012).  
Source: archive of the Důl architektury association.

II. 6. Sprzątanie galerii przed przedstawieniem teatralnym (2012).  
Źródło: archiwum stowarzyszenia Důl architektury.



III. 7. Theatre performance of the Ostrava ensemble (2012).  
Source: archive of the Důl architektury association.

II. 7. Przedstawienie teatralne zespołu z Ostrawy (2012).  
Źródło: archiwum stowarzyszenia Důl architektury.



III. 8. 'The station is alive!' — events for children (2013).  
Source: archive of the Důl architektury association.

II. 8. „Stacja żyje!” — wydarzenia dla dzieci (2013).  
Źródło: archiwum stowarzyszenia Důl architektury.



III. 9. 'The station is alive!' — architecture students at work (2013).  
Source: archive of the Důl architektury association.

II. 9. „Stacja żyje!” — Studenci architektury przy pracy (2013).  
Źródło: archiwum stowarzyszenia Důl architektury.



III. 10. Remodeling — without glass facade (2020).  
Source: archive of the Důl architektury association.

II. 10. Przebudowa — bez szklanej fasady (2020).  
Źródło: archiwum stowarzyszenia Důl architektury.



III. 11. Remodeling — without glass facade from the interior (2020).  
Source: archive of the Důl architektury association.

II. 11. Przebudowa — bez szklanej fasady, od strony wnętrza (2020).  
Źródło: archiwum stowarzyszenia Důl architektury.



Ill. 12. Remodeling — non-proportional thickness of the roof face (2020).

Source: archive of the Důl architektury association.

Il. 12. Przebudowa — nieproporcjonalna grubość bocznej lica dachu (2020).

Źródło: archiwum stowarzyszenia Důl architektury.



Ill. 13. Final look — clean but blunt (2021).

Source: archive of the Důl architektury association.

Il. 13. Ostateczny wygląd — czysty, lecz stępiony (2021).

Źródło: archiwum stowarzyszenia Důl architektury.



Ill. 14. Comparison — clock face before (1990s) and after remodeling (2021).

Source: archive of the Důl architektury association.

Il. 14. Porównanie — tarcza zegara przed (lata 90. XX wieku) i po przebudowie (2021).

Źródło: archiwum stowarzyszenia Důl architektury.

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