

Cottage Homes in Czecho-Slovakia.

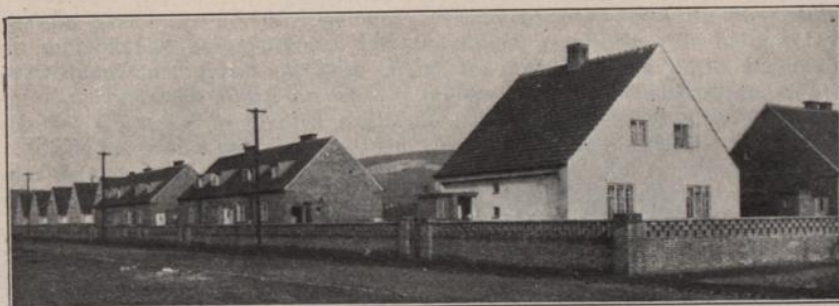
By Alois Kubicek, Architect.

The problem of the cottage home has been discussed at a number of international housing congresses but it has remained unsolved, at least so far as conditions prevailing in Central Europe are concerned. In Czecho-Slovakia the problem of building cottages is undergoing a process of change which for the observer is not without interest, and which is doubtless a testimony to the effect that conditions in the heart of Europe will improve with the coming generation. The Czecho-Slovakian Republic inherited from the ancient Austrian State a system of building regulations that had their effect on general opinions regarding various aspects of housing. Conditions in the area of the Republic, however, were never quite the same as in the rest of the former Empire, for Czecho-Slovakia was the most industrialised.

If the proverb that says "where dissatisfaction ceases there is no progress" is correct it is not difficult to understand why in a country where such a large number of different social problems are to be solved and there have been such changes, the housing question, so far as the problem of the cottage is concerned remains unsolved.

The solution of the problem is coming from the bottom rather than from the top, for the people in our country are not accustomed to living in large tenement buildings and the desire to live in a small family-house with a garden is more apparent than it was before the war. At the same time the bankers who contribute their share of capital for the construction of houses by giving mortgage credits to builders are seizing the opportunity to solve the problem by helping to provide cottages on a large scale in housing schemes consisting of cottages with gardens. They do this not only for the solution of the housing problem in an up-to-date way but because they believe that these schemes give a reliable security for the mortgage loans.

The former housing law (it has just expired and a new law is being prepared) was the result of a compromise and was based on the principle that the more dwelling rooms there were in a building the larger the state guarantees of interest and capital. In spite of this the result in family houses compares very favourably with that in new tenement houses. The total State guarantees of interest and capital for all types of dwellings since the war amounts to 3,050,000,000 Czech. Crowns. The total building costs for all types amounts to 4,616,000,000 Czech. Crowns. The results in building have been:—3,753 tenement buildings with 36,461 dwellings, 23,522 family houses with 26,431 dwellings. The Government granted these milliards to the solution of the housing problem, protected the tenants by special laws and reserved to itself the right to approve or disapprove the plans. All state-aided dwellings erected during the period following the Great War were designed so as to provide the dwelling rooms with direct light and air and the lobbies with direct light. In the



designs of site plans the new standards were much better than those before the War.

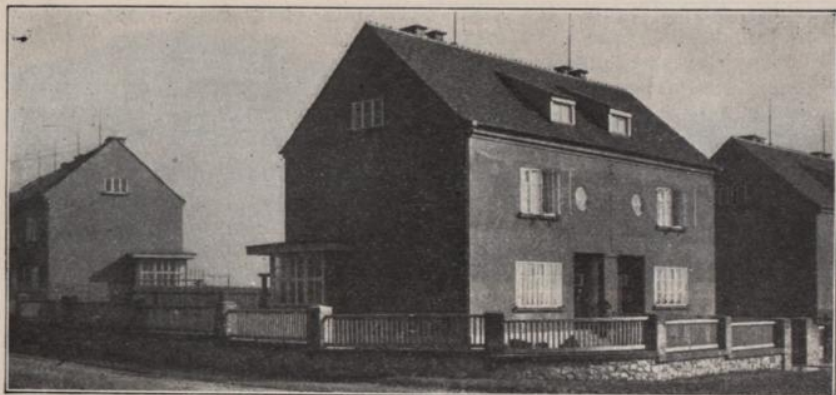
While state control was concentrated chiefly on the dwelling plans and the arrangement of the rooms, the regulations dealing with the site plans were also controlled to ensure good general development. The City of Prague, the capital of Czecho-Slovakia, applied in certain sections of its town plan the principle of open blocks. This meant an undoubted improvement though not a radical one.

A thorough-going appreciation of the need for a radical solution of the housing problem is shown in the state-aided enterprises for the construction of housing schemes for miners. These schemes are carried out by special funds obtained from sales of coal under state administration. A large number of schemes consist solely of cottage-houses with gardens.

In large cities earlier building activities had not attained such good results in cottage building as those being attained now through the considerable financial assistance granted by the state. This was not only due to the faults of the former legal measures issued to effect a completion of blocks that were already partially built up, but also because of the difficulty of getting land suitable for building purposes.

For the future it will be necessary to work out methods by which state-aided building activities can be used for the construction of complete detached garden cities outside of the existing towns. This problem must be considered in connection with the hitherto neglected technical organisation of family house production. Unfortunately the question of the reduction of building costs has not yet been thoroughly tackled. The cottage house is not recognised as a unit that can be standardised, for it is so much a matter for the individual, although the economy of building by mass production is well known.

Other factors are against the favourable solution of the cottage house question. There is, for instance, the old French opinion about town planning and the function of the street within the town scheme. This opinion has spread all over Central Europe and has become very familiar in all our provincial towns. The street has been considered the main question in town planning, and such matters as the interior of blocks, the home and the residential quarters have been considered as matters of a less important nature. The principle of freehold tenure of building land instead of leasehold also plays a considerable part in the problem of cottage or tenement. The family house problem therefore remains still unsolved and because of misunderstandings of the situation is left to be



developed in the future. It remains however an undoubted fact that life in the larger towns becomes more and more mechanical and that people are seeking an escape from it to where the family may be brought into closer contact with nature.

Summary.

In Czecho-Slovakia the problem of building cottages is undergoing a great change. The solution of the problem is coming from the bottom rather than from the top, for the desire to live in a small family house with a garden is more apparent than before the War. Moreover mortgage credits are being given for large-scale cottage housing schemes, not only because this is an up to date method of dealing with housing but because these cottages form a reliable security.

The housing law that has just expired was based on the principle that the more dwelling rooms there were in a building the larger the State guarantees. Despite this law there have been built 26,431 rooms in one-family houses as against 36,461 rooms in tenement houses. There has been a considerable improvement since the War in the planning of both the houses and the sites.

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Another factor against the favourable solution of the cottage house question is the old French opinion that the street is the main question in town planning while other important matters have been considered subsidiary.

Sommaire.

En Tcheco-Slovaquie le problème de la construction de cottages subit un grand changement. La solution du problème vient d'en bas plutôt que d'en haut, car le désir de vivre dans une petite maison familiale avec



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un jardin est plus apparent qu'avant la guerre. De plus, on accorde des prêts sur hypothèques pour des projets de construction de cottages sur une vaste échelle, non seulement parce que c'est une méthode moderne d'entreprendre des constructions, mais parce que ces cottages constituent une garantie sûre.

La loi sur l'habitation qui cesse justement d'être en vigueur était fondée sur le principe que plus il y avait de pièces habitables dans un bâtiment, plus les garanties de l'Etat étaient fortes.

En dépit de cette loi, 26,431 pièces avaient été bâties dans des maisons familiales contre 36,461 pièces dans des maisons à appartements. Il y a eu une amélioration considérable depuis la guerre dans l'établissement des plans de maisons et l'aménagement des sites.

Une juste appréciation de la nécessité d'une solution radicale du problème du logement est montrée dans les entreprises aidées par l'Etat pour la construction de logements pour mineurs. Ces plans sont exécutés grâce à des fonds spéciaux obtenus par la vente du charbon par l'administration de l'Etat. Un grand nombre de plans ne comportent que des cottages avec jardins.

Malheureusement la question de la réduction des frais de construction n'a pas encore été entièrement attaquée. Le cottage n'est pas reconnu comme une unité qui peut être standardisée, car c'est une question surtout individuelle, bien que l'économie obtenue par la production en masse soit bien connue.

Un autre facteur s'opposant à une solution favorable de la question du cottage est la vieille opinion française que la rue est le principal point à considérer dans l'aménagement des villes, tandis que d'autres questions importantes doivent être examinées auxiliairement.

Auszug.

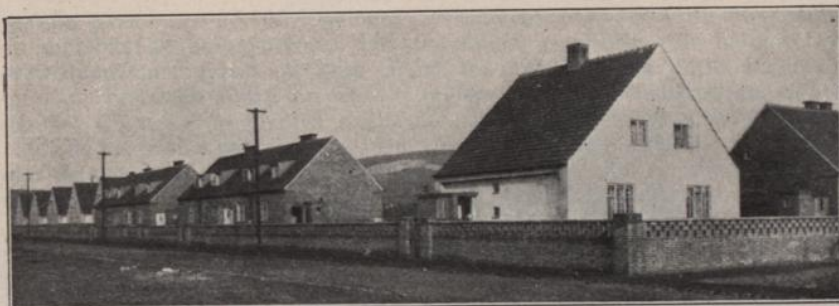
In der Tschechoslowakei unterliegt das Problem der Erbauung von Häusern einer großen Wandlung. Der Antrieb kommt mehr von unten als von oben, denn der Wunsch, in einem Einfamilienhaus zu leben, ist deutlicher sichtbar als vor dem Kriege. Überdies werden Hypothekarkredite für Cottageanlagen in großem Umfang gegeben, nicht nur, weil dies die moderne Methode des Wohnbaues ist, sondern auch, weil diese Anlagen eine greifbare Sicherheit geben.

Das eben abgelaufene Baugesetz war auf dem Prinzip aufgebaut, daß, je mehr Wohnräume in einem Hause sind, desto höher die Staatsgarantie sein muß. Trotzdem wurden 26.431 Wohnräume in Einfamilienhäusern gebaut gegen 36.451 im Hochbau. Seit dem Kriege ist eine beträchtliche Verbesserung im Plan und in der Bauweise der Häuser zu verzeichnen.

Eine weitgehende Anerkennung der Notwendigkeit einer radikalen Lösung des Hausproblems ist bei den staatlich subventionierten Hausbauten für Bergarbeiter vor sich gegangen. Diese Bauten werden mit Hilfe eines Spezialfonds geschaffen, der aus dem staatlichen Kohlenverkauf gespeist wird. Eine große Anzahl solcher Bauanlagen besteht nur aus Einfamilienhäusern mit Gärten.

Bedauerlicherweise ist die Frage der Herabdrückung der Baukosten nicht vollständig gelöst. Das Einfamilienhaus ist nicht als eine Einheit anerkannt, welche standardisiert werden kann, denn das Bauen ist mehr eine Angelegenheit des Individuums, obwohl die Ersparnis an Baukosten durch Massenerzeugung wohl bekannt ist.

Ein anderer Umstand, der die günstige Lösung des Hausbaues erschwert, ist die alte französische Ansicht, daß die Straße die Hauptsache bei der Anlage von Städten ist, während andere wichtige Fragen als weniger wichtig angesehen werden.



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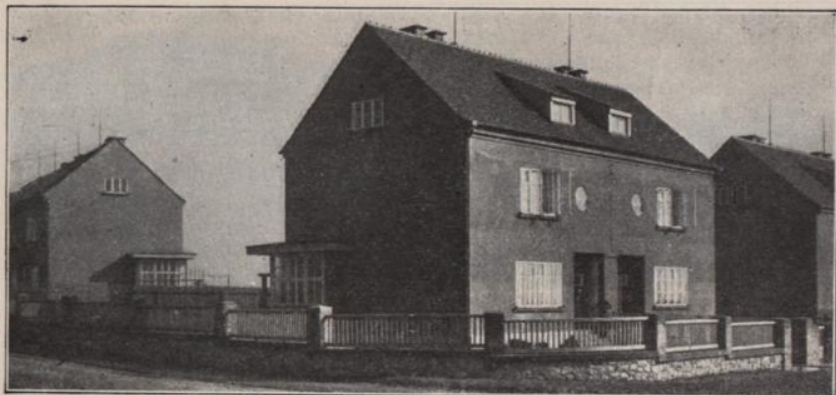
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