

February 14, 2017

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing to express my concern over the possible demolition of the former Transgas building in Prague, as well as my opinion of its architectural and thus, cultural value. This complex of buildings, and the micro-urban environment captured by them are important Prague jewels of the postwar era. They are not only the built heritage of another system, which happens to be as much part of Czech history as the Vinohrady neighborhood that the Transgas ensemble of buildings is situated in, but also an important Czech contribution to the body of global postwar architectural masterpieces.

Though they may be harder for some to love than the old town, precisely because of their symbolic historical meaning, their erasure will hardly change the fact of history, though it may erase all of its lessons. More importantly though, the formal invention by Ivo Loos and Jindřich Malátek, their cladding choices both for the atmofix-steel envelopes of the taller buildings and the unusual and subtle use of cobblestone on the more monolithic object are unique and inspired. This is Czech postwar architecture at its best. The futurism of the interior work in the complex is also of the highest value; though produced a bit later than the fuzzy chairs and glass meteor showers of the Ještěd tower, they speak of an inspired future orientation and technical excitement that visitors to Prague regularly enjoy in its iconic metro stations (to which incidentally most Prague citizens are nearly completely used to to the point of not noticing their superb design).

Eliminating these buildings would be equivalent to erasing Paul Rudolph's Yale Art and Architecture building, or Boston's Government Center, and for most historians of architecture either of those would be a crime. At a time when civilizational heritage is bombed out of existence in places like Aleppo and Baghdad, there are surely ways to preserve and revitalize this architecture and invite it to participate in the life of the city center anew.

Please do not hesitate to contact me for further explanation at miljacki@mit.edu.

Yours truly,
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