

# Plečnikovi spomeniki NOB / *Plečnik's Monuments to People's Liberation Struggle*

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## Plečnik in nova oblast

Danes večkrat naletimo na mnenje, da naš največji arhitekt Jože Plečnik kot veren katolik po drugi svetovni vojni ni bil po volji novi socialistični oblasti. Damjan Prelovšek v knjigi *Jože Plečnik: Arhitektura večnosti* zapiše: »V zadnjem desetletju življenja je arhitekt dočkal najtrša leta komunizma s stopnjevano gonjo proti Cerkvi.« Peter Krečič pa zadnje poglavje svoje knjige *Plečnik: Živeti za popolnost* naslavlja z »Umetnik, tujec v novem času«. Zato se čudimo, da je Plečnik sploh načrtoval spomenike NOB. Vendar določeni dokumenti kažejo, da stvari niso bile tako preproste in enoznačne.

Slovenski politiki so bili takoj po zmagi polni elana in ambicij o izgradnji nove države. Načrtovali so nov parlament in poglobitev železnic v Ljubljani, Prešernov spomenik v Vrbi in druge smeje projekte. V tem obdobju je bil Plečnik še vedno nesporno najuglednejši slovenski arhitekt, profesor in akademik. Podpiral ga je predvsem Ferdo Kozak, tedanji predsednik skupščine, za katerega družino je Plečnik že pred vojno zasnoval nekaj pohištva in nagrobnik na Žalah. Kozak je želel pritegniti Plečnika k državnim projektom in ga vzpostaviti kot arhitekta nove države, a leta 1948 je s sporom z infombranjem nastopila streznitev. Sovjeti so preklicali že odobrene kredite in vsi načrti so zastali. Po tej prvi krizi pa se je centralna oblast v Beogradu okrepila in se zavedela, da so največja nevarnost novi državi nacionalizmi posameznih jugoslovanskih narodov. Vsi projekti, ki so krepili narodovo zavest, so tako postali nezaželeni. Veliki spomenik Francetu Prešernu, ki so ga po Plečnikovih načrtih nameravali postaviti v Vrbi, nenadoma ni bil več primeren. Prenovljena knjižnica – NUK, ki so jo na Prešernov dan leta 1947 svečano odprli ob prisotnosti najvidnejših slovenskih politikov, je bila iz nacionalne kmalu degradirana v univerzitetno knjižnico. Tudi gradnja novega parlamenta je bila preklicana in prestavljena v boljše čase. Ko so se projekta pozneje ponovno lotili, pa je bil Plečnik že prestar, saj je leta 1952 dopolnil 80 let.

Da je imel Plečnik podporo najvišjih političnih veljakov, lahko sklepamo tudi po zapisnikih sej Univerzitetnega komiteja Komunistične partije Slovenije. Za sejo 28. novembra 1946 lahko preberemo: »Plečnikovi arhitekti so šli preko Ljudske mladine Slovenije in priredili brucovski večer z vsem starim dnevnim redom. Komunisti tega niso znali preprečiti.« V zapisniku s 4. decembra 1946 piše: »Aktiv komunistov misli, da je najbolje, da bi Plečnika upokojili, da bi s tem izginil na arhitekturi njegov magični vpliv, ki mu študentje zapadejo.« Po tem se je nekdo postavil Plečniku v

## Plečnik in and the new authorities

An opinion often encountered these days is that our greatest architect, Jože Plečnik, a practising Catholic, was not held in favour by the new socialist authorities after World War 2. In his book *Jože Plečnik: Arhitektura večnosti* (Jože Plečnik: *The Architecture of Eternity*), Damjan Prelovšek writes: "In the last decade of his life, the architect experienced the period of the most austere Communism marked with an increasingly aggressive anti-Church attitudes." Peter Krečič titled the final chapter of his book *Plečnik: Živeti za popolnost* (Plečnik: *Living for Perfection*) "The artist, a stranger in a new time". It is puzzling, therefore, that Plečnik designed monuments to *People's Liberation Struggle* (NOB) at all. Certain documents suggest, however, that matters were not so simple and singular.

Immediately after the victory, Slovene politicians were full of enthusiasm and ambition regarding the construction of the new state. In Ljubljana, they planned a new parliament building and a cut-and-cover for the railway; in Vrba, a monument to France Prešeren; as well as further audacious projects. In this period, Plečnik was still indisputably the most esteemed Slovene architect, professor and academic. His chief supporter was Ferdo Kozak, the then-president of the People's Assembly, for whose family Plečnik had designed some furniture and the tombstone at Žale cemetery already before the war. Kozak wanted to have Plečnik on board for various state projects and establish him as the architect to the new state, but the 1948 schism with the Soviet Union put an abrupt stop to these ideas as the Soviets reneged on the already approved loans and all plans were halted. After this first crisis, more power went to the central authorities in Belgrade, which recognised that the nationalisms of the individual Yugoslav peoples posed the greatest threat to the new state. Any project affirming ethnic consciousness was undesirable. The great monument to poet France Prešeren, which was to be erected in Vrba after Plečnik's designs, was suddenly deemed inappropriate. The renovated National University Library, whose grand opening was held on Prešeren Day in 1947 and attended by all the top Slovene politicians, was soon demoted to being only University Library. The construction of the new parliament building was also cancelled and postponed until a more favourable time. When the project was later revisited, Plečnik was already too old, having turned 80 in 1952.

Minutes of the sessions of the University Committee of the Communist Party of Slovenia serve as another



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Sl. 1: Vabilo na proslavo Plečnikove 80-letnice. Vir: arhiv MGML.

Sl. 2: Preoblikovana zvezda na spominski plošči, posvečeni ustanovitvi glavnega poveljstva slovenskih partizanskih čet, v Šiški. Foto: Andrej Hrausky.

Fig. 1: Invitation to the celebration of Plečnik's 80th birthday. Source: Museum and Galleries of Ljubljana (MGML) archive  
Fig. 2: Metamorphosed star on the memorial plaque to the establishment of the High Command of Slovene Partisan units in Šiška. Photo: AH



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Sl. 3: Okrašena zvezda na spomeniku na Brezovici.

Foto: Andrej Hrausky.

Sl. 4: Interpretacija zvezde na spomeniku v Štepanja vasi.

Foto: Andrej Hrausky.

Sl. 5: Kroglja na natečajnem osnutku za Gutenbergov spomenik na Dunaju iz leta 1897. Vir: arhiv MGML.

**Fig. 3:** Decorated star on the monument in Brezovica. Photo: AH

**Fig. 4:** Interpretation of the star on the monument in Štepanja vas. Photo: AH

**Fig. 5:** Sphere on the competition draft for Gutenberg monument in Vienna, 1897. Source: MGML archive

bran, saj že v zapisniku seje 19. februarja 1947 bere-  
mo: »Glavni intrigant med profesorji je prof. Ravnikar,  
ki razdor neprestano pogloblja. Usmeriti je treba  
mnenje študentske partijske organizacije tako, da bo  
Mihevc postavljen za profesorja od Centralnega komi-  
teja in naj ga smatrajo kot takega.« Razumemo lahko,  
da je bil profesor Edo Mihevc postavljen po nalogu  
najvišjega partijskega vrha, da bi nevtraliziral Edvarda  
Ravnikarja in s tem branil Plečnika. To potrjuje tudi  
anekdota o tem, kako je Rajonski ljudski odbor Trnovo  
sklenil v Plečnikovo hišo naseliti družino brez stanova-  
nja, Mihevc pa si je nadel partizansko oficirsko unifor-  
mo in s pištolo prišel na odbor ter namero preprečil.  
Že 2. avgusta 1946 je Plečnik dobil pismo Akademije  
znanosti in umetnosti o stanovanjski zaščiti, ki jo ima  
kot akademik.

O naklonjenosti nove oblasti do Plečnika priča tudi  
odločba Akademije znanosti in umetnosti, v kateri  
mu predsednik France Kidrič sporoča, da mu bodo  
od 1. avgusta 1948 izplačevali stalno nagrado v višini  
5000 dinarjev. Dan prej pa je Plečnik dobil potrdilo  
Predsedstva vlade Ljudske republike Slovenije, da je  
upravičen do uporabe magazina v Gosposki ulici 7. V  
času, ko je vsega primanjkovalo in so bile glavne do-  
brine na karte, so se privilegiranci lahko oskrbovali v  
posebnih magazinih.

Leta 1949 je Plečnik kot prvi slovenski arhitekt<sup>1</sup> prejel  
Prešernovo nagrado, in sicer za projekt monumental-  
ne palače Ljudske skupščine LRS ter za vrsto spomeni-  
kov NOB pri nas, v Splitu in Kraljevu. Novembra 1950  
je Jože Potrč, minister za znanost in kulturo, podpisal  
odločbo, da se tovarišu Josipu Plečniku, takrat se je  
bližal svojem 79. rojstnemu dnevu, uslužbenko raz-  
merje podaljša, »ker je ustanovi kot izreden strokov-  
njak nujno potreben«. Julija 1951 je rektor Tehniške  
visoke šole Plečniku izdal odločbo, da se mu prizna  
poseben dodatek 1.020 dinarjev, ker izvaja »prekour-  
no visoko kvalitetno delo pri poučevanju predmeta  
Arhitekturno risanje in kompozicija«. 23. januarja  
1952 ob pol devetih je bila v filharmoniji proslava  
80-letnice Jožeta Plečnika. Slavnostna govornika sta  
bila predsednik skupščine LRS Ferdo Kozak in profesor  
Marjan Mušič. Istega dne ob pol dvanajstih so v slav-  
nostni dvorani Univerze v Ljubljani Plečniku podelili  
častni doktorat. Ne spomnim se, da bi bil še kateri slo-  
venski arhitekt za osemdeseti rojstni dan deležen take  
pozornosti. Februarja 1952 je Plečnik prejel še drugo  
Prešernovo nagrado, za »dosedanje delo na področju  
arhitekture«.

1 Drugi arhitekt, ki je prejel Prešernovo nagrado, je bil leta 1959 Branko Simčič; nagrajen je bil za stavbo Gospodarskega razstavišča v Ljubljani.

indication that Plečnik enjoyed the support of the  
highest political dignitaries. An excerpt from the ses-  
sion held on 28th November 1946 reads: "Plečnik's  
architects ignored the People's Youth of Slovenia and  
organised an evening for freshmen with the old pro-  
gramme intact. The Communists did not find a way  
to prevent this." Minutes from 4th December 1946  
read thus: "The Communists' work group argues that  
Plečnik should be pensioned off in order to rid the ar-  
chitecture course of his magical influence, which the  
students tend to fall under." After that, someone  
stood up for Plečnik, considering the minutes from  
the session held on 19th February 1947: "The main  
stirrer among the lecturers is Prof. Ravnikar, who  
keeps exacerbating the rift. The opinion of the Stu-  
dent's Communist Party Organisation should be di-  
rected so as to have Mihevc installed as professor by  
the Central Committee, and him being regarded as  
such, too." This is to be understood in the sense that  
Professor Edo Mihevc was made professor by decree  
from the top Party echelon in order to neutralise Ed-  
vard Ravnikar and thereby come to Plečnik's defence.  
This is further confirmed by an anecdote when the  
District People's Committee of Trnovo decided that  
Plečnik's house should be used to put up a family  
without housing. Mihevc came to a session of the  
Committee wearing his Partisan uniform and carry-  
ing a pistol, preventing the scheme. Already on 2nd  
August 1946, Plečnik received a letter from the Acad-  
emy of Sciences and Arts regarding housing protec-  
tion pertaining to his being an academic.

The good will from the authorities enjoyed by Plečnik  
is further indicated by a decision adopted by the  
Academy of Arts and Sciences in which the Acad-  
emy's president France Kidrič communicates to Plečnik  
that he is to receive a standing consideration of 5,000  
Dinars starting on 1st August 1948. The previous day,  
Plečnik also received a certificate from the Presiden-  
cy of the Government of the People's Republic of Slo-  
venia allowing him to use the convenience store in 7  
Gosposka Street. In the times of general privation  
when key commodities were rationed, the privileged  
could get their supplies in special stores.

In 1949, as the first Slovene architect,<sup>1</sup> Plečnik re-  
ceived the Prešeren Prize for the monumental Peo-  
ple's Assembly palace project and a series of NOB  
monuments in Slovenia, Split, and Kraljevo. In No-  
vember 1950, Jože Potrč, Minister of Science and Cul-  
ture, signed a decision to "extend the employment  
status of comrade Plečnik Josip", who was then near-  
ing his 79th birthday, "as the institution is in critical  
need of his exceptional expert service". In July 1951,  
the rector of Technical College issued a decision  
awarding Plečnik a special bonus of 1,020 Dinars for  
performing "overtime work of great excellence in  
teaching Architectural Drawing and Composition".  
On 23rd January 1952 at 8.30 a.m., a celebration of  
Jože Plečnik's 80th anniversary was held in the Phil-  
harmonic Building, with formal addresses by presi-  
dent of the People's Assembly, Ferdo Kozak, and Pro-  
fessor Marjan Mušič. On the same day at 11.30 a.m.,

1 The second architect to receive the Prešeren Prize was Branko Simčič in 1959 in recognition of the Ljubljana Trade Fairground.

Zdi se mi primerno omeniti tudi to, da so Plečniku poslali tudi odločbo o upokojitvi s 30. junijem 1957 – ko bi bil star že 85 let. Že naslednjega dne, torej 1. julija 1957, naj bi ga zaposlila Slovenska akademija znanosti in umetnosti, »v dosedanjem nazivu in z dosedanjo temeljno ter dopolnitveno plačo«. Takrat je prejel 23.000 din temeljne plače in 12.000 din dopolnilne plače. To se ni zgodilo, saj je Plečnik umrl že prej, 7. januarja 1957. Vsi ti dokumenti kažejo bolj na to, da si je oblast z naročili, nagradami in privilegiji skušala pridobiti Plečnika na svojo stran, kot pa na to, da so ga zaradi politične neprimernosti potiskali v stran.

### Skrb za kakovost spomenikov

Takoj po koncu vojne so krajevni odbori pričeli kar tekrovati med seboj, kje vse bodo postavili spominska obeležja in spomenike NOB. Kmalu se je pokazalo, da bi mnogi delo zaupali lokalnim umetnikom in naivcem. Oblast se je tega zavedala in že septembra leta 1945 je narodnoosvobodilni odbor mesta Ljubljana imenoval komisijo za postavitev spomenikov padlim v narodnoosvobodilnem boju. Ta naj bi potrjevala osnutke spomenikov in skrbela za njihovo kakovost. Vanjo so bili imenovani književnik Fran Albreht (predsednik), kipar Boris Kalin, arhitekti Edo Mihevc, Boris Kobe, Jože Plečnik in Nikolaj Bežek ter Stane Mikuž, referent za varstvo spomenikov pri ministrstvu za prosveto. Kot običajno se je Plečnik vladno izognil tudi temu imenovanju: »Za to drago mi pozornost blagovoljite sprejeti najlepšo zahvalo, obenem pa tudi prošnjo, da me odvežete dolžnosti ustreči temu imenovanju. Obolela mi je neprijetno leva noga ...« Plečnik je iz komisije sicer izstopil, zato pa je na šoli s pomočjo svojih učencev pričel risati osnutke spomenikov NOB. Iz vse Slovenije so se v Ljubljano stekali predstavniki okrajnih odborov z osnutki in mnoge je komisija zavrnila. Kmalu pa se je razvedelo, da na šoli za arhitekturo profesor Plečnik izdeluje načrte, ki vedno dobijo soglasje sicer stroge komisije. In kar je bilo še posebej pomembno, profesor je načrte risal zastonj. Če so na šoli sprva risali načrte po naročilu, so sčasoma izdelali cel katalog projektov in krajevni odposlanci so lahko izbirali. V Litiji so med prebivalci izvedli celo anketo za izbor enega izmed treh osnutkov, ki so bili razstavljeni v izložbi v središču mesta. Tudi za Borovnico je Plečnik narisal tri osnutke, da je krajevni odbor lahko izbiral. Po sporu s Stalinom leta 1948 so kulturni vplivi sovjetskega socialističnega realizma postali nezaželeni. Takrat je vloga komisije za spomenike NOB postala še pomembnejša, saj je slednja pazila tudi na to, da je preprečevala sovjetski vpliv.

Plečnik was awarded a honorary doctorate in the ceremonial hall of the University of Ljubljana. I don't recall any other Slovene architect receiving such attention for his 80th birthday. In February 1952, Plečnik was awarded his second Prešeren Prize for "the body of work to date in the field of architecture". It seems appropriate to mention that Plečnik was sent a notice of retirement effective on 30th June 1957 - when he would be 85 years old. The very next day, on 1st July 1957, he was to be employed by Slovene Academy of Sciences and Arts "in the current title with the current basic salary and bonuses". At the time, he was earning 23,000 Dinars basic salary with a 12,000 Dinar bonus. This never happened as Plečnik died earlier, on 7th January 1957. All these documents suggest that the authorities tried to win Plečnik over with commissions, prizes, and privileges rather than to sideline him due to him being politically unsuitable.

### Concern for the quality of the monuments

Immediately after the end of the war, district committees tried to outdo one another as to where they would erect NOB memorials and monuments. It soon transpired that many were going to seek commissions from local or naive artists. The authorities were aware of this and as early as September 1945, the City People's Liberation Council of the City of Ljubljana appointed a committee for the erection of monuments to the casualties of NOB. It was to approve the drafts for the monuments and assure their quality. The appointees were author Franc Albreht as chair, with members: sculptor Boris Kalin, and architects Edo Mihevc, Boris Kobe, Jože Plečnik, Nikolaj Bežek, with Stane Mikuž, officer for the protection of monuments at the Ministry of Education. Typically for Plečnik, he respectfully declined the nomination: "You are kindly requested to accept my utmost gratitude for the much appreciated recognition, however I must ask you to be relieved of the duty to honour this nomination. I have been inopportunately indisposed due to my bad left leg." Though he resigned from the committee, Plečnik began to prepare drafts of NOB monuments at the school together with his students. Representatives of district committees flocked to Ljubljana from far and wide, presenting their own drafts, and many were rejected by the commission. Soon, word got round that at the school of architecture, Professor Plečnik is creating designs which are invariably approved by the otherwise very strict committee. And what was particularly important, the professor was making these designs free of charge. At first, the school took commissions for designs but eventually, they produced an entire catalogue of projects and the district emissaries were able to choose among them. In Litija, a survey was made among the population who had a choice between three drafts which were exhibited in a window in the centre of the town. Plečnik also produced three drafts for Borovnica for the district committee to take their pick. After the break with Stalin in 1948, cultural influences from Soviet socialist realism became undesirable. The role of the committee for NOB monuments grew even more important with the responsibility for preventing Soviet influence.



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Sl. 6: Prvi načrt za spomenik padlim v prvi svetovni vojni v Breznici. Vir: NUK.

Sl. 7: Nerealizirani načrt za spomenik NOB v Cerknem. Vir: arhiv MGML.

Fig. 6: Original draft for the monument to casualties of WW1 in Breznica. Source: National University Library

Fig. 7: Unrealised design for a NOB monument in Cerkno. Source: MGML archive



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Sl. 8: Kroglo na spomeniku v Trnovem podpirajo zvezde.  
Foto: Andrej Hrausky.

Sl. 9: Motiv stebra na stebri pri spomeniku v Litiji.  
Foto: Andrej Hrausky.

Fig. 8: The sphere in the Trnovo monument is supported by stars.  
Photo: AH

Fig. 9: Motif of a column on top of a column in the monument in Litija. Photo: AH

Po Plečnikovih načrtih je bilo zgrajenih 21 spomenikov NOB: v Bizoviku (1950–1952), na Bregu pri Borovnici (1951), Brezovici (1949–1951), v Črni pri Mežici (1952), na Golem nad Igom (1951), v Zgornjih Gorjah pri Bledu (1951), v Laškem (1951), Litiji (1950–1951), Mežici (1952), Novem mestu (1956), Polhovem Gradcu (1950–1952), Radečah (1952), Ribnem pri Bledu (1946–1947), Selški dolini (1949–1950), Sevnici (1958),<sup>2</sup> Srpenici (1950–1951), Sv. Trojici v Slovenskih goricah (1950), Štepanji vasi (1949–1950), Trnovem (1951–1954), Veliki Bučni vasi (1950–1951) in Vipavi (1950–1952). V ta okvir bi lahko uvrstili tudi spomenik Osvobodilni fronti pred Vidmarjevo vilo v Rožni dolini (1951) in spominsko ploščo, posvečeno ustanovitvi glavnega poveljstva slovenskih partizanskih čet, v Šiški (1949–1953).

#### Spomenik kot preseganje časa

Plečnik je arhitekturo pojmoval kot tisto umetnost, ki je, odkar se je človek zavedel svoje minljivosti, simbolno presegala čas. Zanj je bila architectura perennis (kar je tudi naslov njegove knjige iz leta 1941), simbolno sporočilo prihodnjim rodovom. Pri Ottu Wagnerju na Dunaju so bile še vedno aktualne misli Gottfrieda Semperja. Njegova teorija o menjavi materialov uči, da so bili nekoč antični templji leseni, pozneje pa so les zaradi trajnosti zamenjali s kamnom. Vendar so oblike lesnih zvez, ki so bile nekoč potrebne, prenesli v kamen, čeprav v novem gradivu niso bile potrebne – ostale so kot simbolni okras. Lesena gradnja ni bila trajna, zato pa je bila bolj prilagodljiva različnim načinom uporabe, kamnite stavbe pa so bile trajnejše, a manj fleksibilne. Tako je simbolna vrednost objekta

Twenty-one NOB monuments were built based on Plečnik's designs: Bizovik (1950-1952), Breg pri Borovnici (1951), Brezovica (1949-51), Črna near Mežica (1952), Golo above Ig (1951), Zgornje Gorje near Bled (1951), Laško (1951), Litija (1950-51), Mežica (1952), Novo mesto (1956), Polhov Gradec (1950-52), Radeče (1952), Ribno near Bled (1946-47), Selška Valley (1949-50), Sevnica (1958),<sup>2</sup> Srpenica (1950-51), Sv. Trojica v Slovenskih Goricah (1950), Štepanja vas (1949-50), Trnovo (1951-54), Velika Bučna vas (1950-51), and Vipava (1950-52). The monument to the Liberation Front in front of Vidmar House in Rožna dolina (1951) and the memorial plaque to the establishment of the High Command of Slovene Partisan units in Šiška (1949-53) can also be included in this context.

#### A monument as a means of transcending time

Plečnik considered architecture as the art which, ever since people became aware of their transience, symbolically transcended time. For him, architectura perennis (the title of his 1941 book) was a symbolic message to future generations. At Otto Wagner's in Vienna, the ideas of Gottfried Semper were still au courant. His theory on material swap states that ancient temples were once made of timber, which was later replaced with stone for greater permanence. Yet the shapes of wooden joints, which used to be necessary, were carried over to stone even though the new building material did not require them - they remained as symbolic decoration. Timber construction was not permanent, but it was more adaptable to different uses, while stone buildings were more permanent but less flexible. In this way, the symbolic value of a building eventually overshadowed its functionality. Yet Plečnik was also concerned whether his architecture would be comprehensible to everyone, not only to experts, both at the time of its creation as well as later. Perennial architecture (architectura perennis) must speak with a perennial language familiar to everyone. He once said to his students: "Concerning architecture, here's how it is: we speak

2 Kot avtor spomenika je naveden Vladimir Braco Mušič, ne glede na to, da Plečnikov arhiv hrani skice, načrte in fotografijo modela. V pismu Stanetu Komanu na Zvezo združenj borcev in udeležencev NOB Slovenije z 20. oktobra 1997 Mušič trdi: »Plečniku nekateri pripisujejo tudi spomenik NOB pred železniško postajo v Sevnici. To ne drži. Kiparski in dekorativni del spomenika je izdelal kipar Pengov (menda res po posvetu s Plečnikom), arhitekturni del in postavitev pa sem naredil jaz po naročilu občine ...«

2 Vladimir Braco Mušič is stated as the monument's author despite the fact that Plečnik's Archive is in possession of the drawings, blueprints, and a photograph of the scale model. In his letter to Stane Koman at the League of Associations of Veterans of the National Liberation War of Slovenia of 20th October 1997, Mušič claims: "The NOB monument in front of the railway station in Sevnica is also attributed to Plečnik by some. This is not the case. The sculptural and decorative parts of the monument were made by sculptor Pengov (though apparently after having discussed it with Plečnik), while the architecture and the siting were done by myself at the request from the municipality."

sčasoma prevladala nad njegovo funkcionalnostjo. Vendar je Plečnika skrbelo tudi, ali bo njegova arhitektura razumljiva vsem, ne le poznavalcem, tako ob času svojega nastanka kot tudi pozneje. Večna arhitektura (*architectura perennis*) mora govoriti z večnim, vsem znanim jezikom. Svojim učencem je nekoč rekel: »Kar se tiče arhitekture, je pa tako: mi govorimo in se izražamo kakor kmetje pred tisoč in dva tisoč leti. Uporabljamo iste izraze. Tu ni originalnosti.« Zato je treba pri Plečnikovi arhitekturi razumeti, da ne gre za nekakšen klasični slog, ampak za arhitekturni jezik iz osnovnih arhitekturnih elementov: stebra, loka, piramide, obeliska itd., ki so vsem razumljivi. Če še danes razumemo in občudujemo tisočletja staro arhitekturo Egipta, Grčije in Rima, bo tudi naša arhitektura večno razumljiva, če bomo uporabili enake elemente. Pomembno pri Plečniku je, da poleg izraza občudujemo tudi izvirnost, s katero se je loteval posameznih nalog. V zgodovini arhitekture vse prepogosto vidimo enake zasnove, ki so le preoblečene v različne arhitekturne sloge, v skladu s časom, v katerem so nastale. Pri Plečniku pa je ravno obratno, govorica je večna, zasnove pa so nove.

Plečnik se je imel za umetnika, ki služi svojemu narodu. Bil je izbran, da gre v svet, in ko se je vrnil, je svoje znanje razdajal domovini. Po vrnitvi v domovino je živel od plače na šoli, vse svoje projekte pa je izdeloval zastoj. Njegov edini pogoj je bil, da so morali naročniki natančno slediti njegovim zamislim. Za svoje delo je zahteval popolno svobodo in je zelo pazil, da se ni zblizal z nobeno politično opcijo in vero. Le tako mu je uspevalo, da je lahko delal v Avstro-Ogrski, na Češkem, v kraljevini Jugoslaviji, med okupacijo in tudi v socializmu. Bil je celo tako dosleden, da je zavračal tudi strokovni izpit za samostojnega projektanta. Marca 1925 je ministrstvo za gradnje v Beogradu izdalo dopis dekanom tehničnih šol, da morajo imeti profesorji strokovni izpit, če želijo projektirati za naročnike zunaj šole. Plečnik je dekanu, ki mu je posredoval dopis, odgovoril: »Ako nočem zakrneti, moram se pečati z arhitekturo tudi mimo šole – kajti to storiti sem dolžan kot učitelj ... Ako se komu moja arhitektura dopade, darujem mu jo – če se mi zdi to vredno. More z njo narediti kar hoče – tudi izvršiti če hoče in po komur hoče. Izjavljam da pod nobenimi pogoji ne jemljem zanj kakršno koli plačilo. V slučaju, da tudi tako darovanje arhitekture ni pripustno brez posebne dovoljenja, pripravljen sem drage volje opustiti to, ter se nadalje pečati z arhitekturo edinole v prid lastni mapi ali pa tujini.«

*and express ourselves like peasants did one and two thousand years ago. We use the same expressions. There is no originality here." This is why it is important to understand that Plečnik's architecture is not about some sort of a classical style but rather an architectural language composed of basic architectural elements, the column, the arch, the pyramid, the obelisk, etc., understandable to everyone. If to this day, the architecture of Egypt, Greece, and Rome is understood and admired, our architecture will also be perennially understandable if the same elements are used. With Plečnik, it is important to admire not only his expression but also the originality with which he tackled various tasks. In the history of architecture, it's all too often that the same designs are dressed up in different architectural styles corresponding to the time in which they were created. With Plečnik, it's exactly the opposite: the language is perennial while the designs are new.*

*Plečnik saw himself as an artist serving his nation. He was chosen to see the world and when he returned, he disseminated his knowledge in his native land. After coming back to his native land, he lived off the salary at the college and he did all his projects free of charge. The only condition was that the investors strictly followed his ideas. He demanded absolute freedom for his work and he was very careful not to align with any political side or religion. This was the only way that made it possible for him to work in Austria-Hungary, Bohemia, the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, during the occupation, and also under socialism. He was principled to the point that he refused to take the state exam for independent designers. In March 1925, the Ministry of Construction in Belgrade issued a circular to the deans of technical schools that the teachers must pass a state exam to be allowed to make designs for investors outside the school. Plečnik's reply to the dean, who forwarded him the circular, was as follows: "If I am not to go stale, I have to work in architecture also outside the school - because this is my duty as a teacher. If someone likes my architecture, it is my gift to them - if I care to give it. They can do whatever they choose with it - even build it if they choose, by however they choose. I hereby state that I take no payment for my architecture under any circumstance. In the case such gifting of architecture is not allowed without a special permit, I'm perfectly happy to stop doing it and continue to work in architecture solely for my portfolio, or abroad."*



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Sl. 10: Spomenik NOB v Radečah v obliki obeliska nima zvezde niti seznama žrtev. Foto: Andrej Hrausky.

Sl. 11: Spomenik NOB v Črni pri Mežici v obliki vaškega vodnjaka. Vir: arhiv MGML.

Fig. 10: NOB monument in Radeče shaped as an obelisk features no star and no list of casualties. Photo: AH

Fig. 11: NOB monument in Črna near Mežica shaped as a village water well. Source: MGML archive



12

### Kreativni pristop

Plečnik je, kot večina arhitektov, hotel predvsem načrtovati. Sam je zapisal: ».../K/ temu me sili duševni nagon – prav kakor žene natura cvetlico, da zeleni in cvete dokler ji je usojeno sploh živeti.« Zato ni kazal nobenih predsodkov glede načrtovanja spomenikov padlim za novo oblast. Nasprotno, kot veren človek je čutil globoko pieteto do tistih, ki so dali svoje življenje za domovino. In spomeniki, ki naj bi večno pričali o žrtvovanju za domovino, so bili zanj prvovrstna naloga.

Za tedanje spomenike NOB so bile značilne plastike z motivi partizana z bombo, v jurišu in podobno. Ti spomeniki so morda še bolj kot žrtve slavili novo oblast in novi simboli so bili močno poudarjeni. Pri Plečniku je bilo drugače – uporabljal je svoj jezik klasičnih elementov, zvezdo kot simbol nove dobe pa je izpuščal ali pa jo je podredil kompoziciji. Polovica njegovih spomenikov NOB zvezde sploh nima, ponekod so jo dodali naročniki sami. V Litiji so nekoliko nerodno na vrh stebra pritrtili štiri rdeče zvezde iz pločevine, česar Plečnik sam ne bi nikoli naredil. Pri spomeniku za Sv. Trojico v Slovenskih goricah je Plečnik na vrhu predvidel goloba kot simbol miru. Ker pa se je pobudnik postavitve spomenika pisal Golob, so ga zamenjali z zvezdo. Večkrat je Plečnik zvezdo preoblikoval in ji s tem odvzel del političnega sporočila. Na plošči v spomin ustanovitve glavnega poveljstva slovenskih partizanskih čet v Šiški je Plečnik v zvezdo namestil figure, ki jo skoraj v celoti prekrijejo. Po njegovi skici je zvezdo oblikovala njegova učenka Vladimira Bratuž, ki je študirala tudi kiparstvo. Na spomeniku NOB na Brezovici je kamnito zvezdo obdal z bogatim kovaškim okrasjem, ki v celotni kompoziciji prevladuje. V Štepanji vasi je zvezda, narejena iz bogato okrašenega kovanega železa, postavljena na kamnit pentagram. Tudi v Trnovem je zvezda podrejena osnovnemu motivu, krogli, ki jo podpirajo štiri manjše zvezde.

Krogla se kot motiv pojavlja v več Plečnikovih načrtih za različne spomenike. Že leta 1897 sta si s kiparjem Othmarjem Schimkowitzem s Fabianijem delila prvo nagrado na natečaju za Gutenbergov spomenik na Dunaju. Glavni motiv je krogla, ki ponazarja svet. Spomenik ni bil izveden, saj so ga zgradili po Fabianijevem načrtu. Motiv krogle je Plečnik ponovno uporabil pri načrtu za spomenik padlim v prvi svetovni vojni v Breznici iz leta 1928. Tudi ta ni bil izveden, saj so zaradi nesporazuma kamne napačno narezali, in Plečnik je moral narediti nov načrt, brez krogle; ta je

### A creative approach

Plečnik, like most architects, wanted above all to design. In his own words, "I'm compelled to do it by my psychological instinct - just like nature compels a flower to grow leaves and blossom as long as it is given to live." This is why he had no compunction about designing monuments to the victims for the new authorities. On the contrary, as a religious person, he felt deep reverence for those who gave their lives for their country. And he considered the monuments, which were to act as perennial reminders of the sacrifice for one's native land, as a first-rate challenge.

NOB monuments of that time were typically sculptures featuring a charging Partisan with a bomb and similar motifs. The monuments seemed to pay tribute to the new authorities even more than to the victims, and the new symbols featured very prominently. With Plečnik, it was different - he used his language of classical elements, as for the five-point star, the symbol of the new era, he either omitted it or subordinated it to the rest of the composition. Half of his NOB monuments don't even feature the star; in places, it was added by the investors themselves. In Litija, they attached four red stars made of sheet metal to the top of the column in a somewhat clumsy way, something Plečnik would never do himself. In Sv. Trojica v Slovenskih Goricah, Plečnik envisaged a dove, the symbol of peace, at the top of the monument, but since the surname of the initiator of the monument's erection was Golob ("Dove"), it was replaced by a star. In several instances, Plečnik metamorphosed the star and thus diminished its political message somewhat.

On the memorial plaque to the establishment of the High Command of Slovene Partisan units in Šiška, Plečnik placed figures into the star, almost completely obscuring it. The star was designed after his sketch by his student Vladimira Bratuž, who also studied sculpture. On the NOB monument in Brezovica, he garnished the stone star with a rich forged-iron decoration, which dominates the composition. In Štepanja vas, the star is made of richly decorated wrought iron and placed on a stone pentacle. In Trnovo, the star is also subordinate to the basic motif, the sphere, which is supported by four smaller stars.

The sphere appears as a motive in several Plečnik's designs for various monuments. As early as in 1897, he shared the first prize with sculptor Othmar Schimkowitz and Maks Fabiani in the competition for Gutenberg monument in Vienna. The main motif is a sphere representing the world. The monument was not realised as it was Fabiani's design which ended up being built. The sphere motif was used by Plečnik again in the design for the monument to casualties of WW1 in Breznica from 1928. This monument was also not realised; due to a misunderstanding, the stone was cut wrong and Plečnik had to make a new design not featuring a sphere, which was ultimately realised in 1931. In 1951, he used a sphere in the design for a NOB monument in Cerkno. Once again, the monument was not realised, and he used the design as a basis for the monument in Trnovo.



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Sl. 12: Večpomenska simbolika spomenika na Gorjah pri Bledu. Foto: Andrej Hrausky.

Sl. 13: Spomenik NOB v Laškem lahko razumemo tudi kot oltar z večno lučjo in križem. Foto: Andrej Hrausky.

Fig. 12: Multi-layered symbolism of the monument in Gorje near Bled. Photo: AH

Fig. 13: NOB monument in Laško may also be understood as an altar with a sanctuary lamp and cross. Photo: AH

bil leta 1931 tudi izveden. Leta 1951 je kroglo uporabil pri načrtu za spomenik NOB v Cerknem. Ker tudi ta ni bil izveden, mu je načrt služil kot osnova za spomenik v Trnovem.

Tudi pri drugih spomenikih je Plečnik izhajal iz svojih preteklih projektov. Spomenik v obliki obeliska v Radečah je podoben spomeniku Ilirskim provincam v Ljubljani iz leta 1929. Na njem sta bronasta portreta Napoleona in slovenske deklice, spomenik v Radečah pa vključuje štiri bronaste glave, dve ženski in dve moški, ki jih je oblikoval Vladimir Stoviček. Spomenik je nenavaden tudi po tem, da na njem ni nobenega socialističnega simbola, ne naslova, niti seznama žrtev. Da gre za spomenik NOB, lahko sklepamo le po verzih Karla Destovnika - Kajuha. Motiv stebra na stebri, ki ga poznamo z Marijinega znamenja na Levstikovem trgu v Ljubljani iz leta 1938, je Plečnik uporabil tudi pri spomeniku v Litiji.

Plečnik je spomenike oblikoval tudi kot vodnjake. Tak je spomenik Osvobodilni fronti v Rožni dolini, iz katerega voda sicer nikoli ni tekla, ponazarja pa sedem curkov, ki se zlivajo v enoten vodni slap. Spomenik v Črni pri Mežici je oblikovan kot vaški vodnjak, kjer se voda preliva iz ene posode v drugo. Zasnovo je arhitekt pozneje uporabil tudi za izhodišče vodnjaka na Rožnovenskem stopnišču v Kranju, ki je bil postavljen v letih 1954/55.

Na svojstven način je Plečnik motiv zvezde uporabil pri spomeniku na Gorjah pri Bledu. Zvezda je izrezana iz okrogle kamnite plošče, v njej pa sedi žalostna partizanska mati. Simbolika je tu večpomenska, saj motiv zvezde lahko razumemo tudi kot rozeto gotske katedrale, partizansko mater pa kot Marijo. S podvajanjem simbolike je Plečnik želel še povečati nagovor svoje arhitekture. Tisti, ki je ne razume na en način, si lahko izbere alternativnega. Tudi spomenik v Laškem lahko razumemo na več načinov. Tudi tu je kompozicija sestavljena iz osnovnih arhitekturnih elementov, kocke, kvadra, stebra, trikotnika itd. Vendar lahko celoto razumemo tudi kot oltar z večno lučjo, steber s kvadrom in zvezdo pa je oblikovan kot križ.

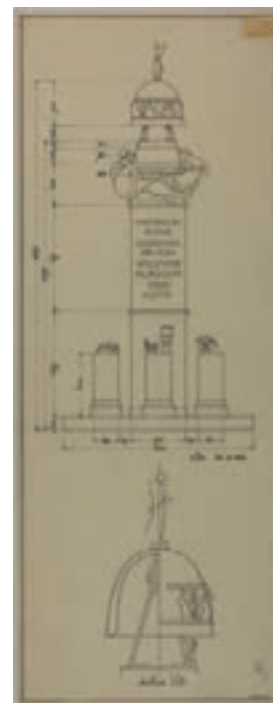
Plečnikovi načrti za spomenike NOB so pomemben del njegovega iskanja novih izraznih oblik na področju arhitekture spomina. Ni jih mogoče obravnavati ločeno, saj se zamisli ponavljajo in razvijajo tudi v drugih njegovih načrtih. Zaradi univerzalnosti svojih sporočil – pri čemer se je Plečnik izogibal tedaj običajni politični simboliki – ti spomeniki toliko lažje kljubujejo času.

*Plečnik quoted from his past projects also when designing other monuments. The obelisk-like monument in Radeče is similar to the monument to Illyrian Provinces in Ljubljana from 1929. The latter features bronze portraits of Napoleon and a Slovene girl, while the one in Radeče features four bronze heads, two female and two male, designed by Vladimir Stoviček. The monument is unusual in that it contains no socialist symbol, no title, and no list of victims. The only clue that this is a NOB monument is provided by Karl Destovnik Kajuh's poetry. The motif of a column atop of another column, seen in the Marian column in Levstikov Square, Ljubljana, from 1938, was reused by Plečnik in the monument in Litija.*

*Plečnik designed some monuments as water features, such as the monument to Liberation Front in Rožna Dolina, which never actually had water run through it, but was to represent seven streams which flow together to form a single waterfall. The monument in Črna near Mežica is designed as a village water well in which the water flows from one vessel to another. This design later served Plečnik as a starting point for St Mary of the Rosary church steps in Kranj, made in 1954/55.*

*In his unique way, Plečnik used the star motif in the monument in Gorje near Bled. The star is cut out of a circular stone slab and features a despondent Partisan mother sitting in it. There are several meanings to the symbolism as the star motif may also be understood as a rosette of a Gothic cathedral, and the Partisan mother as Mary. By means of the two-fold symbolism, Plečnik wished to enhance the engagement of his architecture; anyone who fails to understand it in one way has an alternative choice. The monument in Laško may also be understood in several ways. Here, the composition is again made up of basic architectural elements, the cube, the cuboid, the column, the triangle etc. Yet the whole may also be understood as an altar with a sanctuary lamp, while the column with the cuboid and the star is shaped like a cross.*

*Plečnik's designs for NOB monuments represent an important part of his quest for new ways of expression in the field of the architecture of memory. They cannot be discussed on their own since the ideas reappear and develop also in his other designs. Owing to the universality of their message - Plečnik having given a wide berth to the typical political symbolism of the day - these monuments have had little difficulty standing the test of time.*



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Sl. 14: Plečnikov načrt za spomenik v Sevnici iz aprila 1956. Vir: arhiv MGML.

Sl. 15: Spomenik NOB v Sevnici. Foto: Andrej Hrausky.

Fig. 14: Plečnik's design for the monument in Sevnica from April 1956. Source: MGML archive

Fig. 15: NOB monument in Sevnica. Photo: AH