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### **From private to public: Le Corbusier and the House-Palace, 1926-1928.**

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School of Architecture and the Built Environment

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**From Private to Public:  
Le Corbusier & the House-Palace,  
1926 -1928**

CYNTHIA ANN POOLE

A thesis submitted according to the requirements  
of the University of Westminster  
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

October 1997

**ADDENDA TO THESIS**

**PART I**

•English Translation of *Une Maison - Un Palais*:

***A House - A Palace: in Search of an Architectural Unity***

**PART II**

- Competition drawings
- Plans of Assembly Hall Building [fr. Computer model]
- Still images from the Computer Model**
- About the Computer Reconstruction
- CD-Rom** of Computer-generated animations of reconstruction.

**PART III**

- Documents
  - The competition programme [extract]
  - Letters between Horta and the Secretary General
  - The Jury Report
  - Committee of Five First Report
  - Committee of Five Final Report
  - Letter from Secretariat to Le Corbusier



Le Corbusier

# A HOUSE - A PALACE

IN SEARCH OF AN ARCHITECTURAL UNITY

Translator's note:

The function of Le Corbusier's *Une maison - Un Palais* is presented as the French original is. The English translation of a passage on page 10 of the original is located on page 13 of this version. This is partly for comparative reasons, and partly to preserve the relationship of text and illustrations, which is of paramount importance here.

The function of the passage is to show that Le Corbusier's intentions are clear.

The copyright of the original text belongs to the Fondation Le Corbusier, as do the illustrations. In some instances, I have translated the picture captions, and my suggestions for improvements on the illustrations are red.

English Translation September 1997  
by  
Cynthia Poole



#### Translator's Note:

This translation of Le Corbusier's *Une Maison - Un Palais* is presented as the French original, ie., the English translation of a passage on page 10 of the original is located on page 10 in this version. This is partly for comparative purposes, and partly to preserve the relationship of text and illustrations, which is of paramount importance here.

The footnotes in the text are those of Le Corbusier; the endnotes are mine.

The copyright of the original text belongs to the Fondation Le Corbusier, as do the illustrations. In some instances I have translated the picture captions, and my translations are overprinted on the illustrations in red.



The reader should imagine himself to be in a conference hall- the Auditorium Maximum of the Ecole Polytechnique Federale of Zurich, or the Salle de la Residencia in Madrid. It is night; on the screen the images stream past; they appear precisely when required; the lecturer develops his thesis, which is linked to the images. In Zurich, he improvised from succinct notes. After this book was requested, in Madrid, he read. It is a difficult task, trying to hold an audience spellbound when reading a manuscript; good lectures are improvised. In Barcelona, sometimes improvising anew, the lecturer felt strongly that synchronising images and speech emphasised the appropriateness of terms and the precision of the idea.

Because of the layout of this book, the reader will find himself in the position of the audience for whom this lecture was devised.

A house, a palace...

This title might just as well have been : "THE INEVITABLE BIRTH OF ARCHITECTURE". Because architecture is an inevitable event springing up in a single instant of creation where the spirit, preoccupied with ensuring the solidity of the work, with satisfying requirements for comfort, finds itself elevated by a more lofty intention than simply that of serving, and it extends to the expression of those lyrical forces which impel us and give us pleasure.

- Indisputable fact which is inserted - is introduced, intervenes, and declares its presence - amongst mundane motives of a nature other than spiritual.



This lofty intention becomes, for us, today, a definition of architecture. Possibly in the past the term covered what was understood as the art of building houses, temples or palaces. But in these days, when the greater part of human activity is absorbed in the making of countless objects, architecture extends its effects over all this and goes beyond the house, the temple and the palace, overflows, springing up everywhere, like the phenomenon of crystallisation; in short, is there where an intention exists other than that of simply serving, to clarify the conception of the work.

And the truth that is architecture *collapses* at the moment when the high intention is no more than a fashion, a trick of the inspired diagram, an uncontrolled form, a lyrical representation without further contact with the true spirit which once gave birth to it. And here is the most vile state of the human spirit: the lie, pretension, pomposity.

The *moment of architecture* IS NO MORE in the dying, stinking product, the carrion of the *Academies*, blind curators of pre-machine epochs. Architecture is the result of the spirit of an age: it goes on ahead, following the law which controls the world.

And this usual concept of architecture: at this moment the young will not permit one to disturb it, by those who come and who, in open war with the Academy, wrestle over that which is called "architecture". Nauseated by the lies of Schools, driven by a fierce desire for purity, here they deny that which at the bottom of their hearts is their only and special passion.

...An *effusion*<sup>1</sup>, then, not a matter of the mediocre spirit, or of satisfying material needs.

And on one hand the bewitching stock of mummy-effusions, of corpse-effusions, of wax-doll-effusions.

And on the other, an immense propriety: we check this emotion which stirs us; a discipline: let us occupy ourselves with the reasonable problem; a fear: let us distrust the fairy-spirit which would drag us to the bottom of the waters of the lake.

Answer: *Serve well*. Serve well, but also serve the god which is within us.

Awaken the god which is within us, the true and profound joy of this world.

\*  
\*   \*



A house, a palace...

Truly, products of the same activity, a single product.

A house exists to serve ...what? Shelter, cold, heat, etc.? Is it not also for the satisfaction of the higher needs which exist in each of us? (sensitive men, it is precisely you who deny sensitivity).

What mechanism will trigger pleasure over and above the mundane? Harmony.

So this word appears to be vague!

Yet the phenomenon is simple: to combine exact quantities in precise relationships.

*Relationships.* Measure enough so that everything is there and so that the single capacity for perception of relationships characterises the spiritual values of men. We are surrounded by relationships; nature, human constructions, events, multiple relationships, innumerable. All of a sudden, everyone knows when to stop dead and, pointing out a relationship, to exclaim: "Look!" A poet!

For the mechanism of relationships to be effective, the proportions that they administer will be perceptible, legible.

And this, then, is the place of geometry.

Geometry, which in the midst of the apparently confused spectacle of nature, has established marvelous signs, of clarity, of expression, of spiritual structure, signs which are characteristic.

Geometry: human language.

Geometry: normal production of our mind and *inevitable* because, participating in a universal rhythm, we recognise that this rhythm is geometric: there are *characteristic* figures. Geometry, geometry! Now perhaps you mutter to yourself: "What! Those dry and unambiguous signs at the opposite extreme to poetry!" Élie Faure - a lyricist - asked me: "Why are the bridges so moving?" Because in the middle of the apparent incoherence of nature or in the cities of men, a bridge is a place of geometry, a place where real precision<sup>2</sup> reigns.

I complete the testimony; because in the apparent incoherence of nature and in the strength of the cities of men, a bridge is a place of geometry and geometry is a clear thing, without ambiguity, and the bridge is an act of will, and the geometric will demonstrated is a gesture of optimism; the ruler thinks clearly and geometrically; the defeated and the exhausted suffer the assertive splendour of geometry. Is not geometry, therefore, joy?

Here by the play of intentions more and more dedicated to the satisfaction of material functions, the spirit forsaking the higher regions where the absolute reigns, harmony emanates from

more and more complex forms; very supple connections reduce these, humanising them. The work, erected before you, is no longer outside your immediate grasp, great, severe<sup>3</sup> if necessary. - The Parthenon: it becomes tender and seductive; we approach it, it welcomes us; it no longer commands, it responds.

I have written<sup>4</sup> - that which the spirit may contemplate before it, at a distance, freed from corporeal shackles, instinctive, tends towards the most pure geometry: an optimistic creation of the spirit.

And also - that which touches our hearts, which is like an extension of our limbs, that which must serve our senses, becomes biological by normal adaption<sup>5</sup>.

Here, therefore, the decision which will determine the tenor of the work intervenes; this is the moment when the work will orient itself towards such and such a destiny.

Extension of our limbs, it descends to the utilitarian; it domesticates itself: a shoe, an armchair. And if, furthermore, re-enacting Prometheus, we create beings, organisms that one can call *living*, because they act on impulse, we achieve them by means of perfecting and by selection, as in biology; because the work is placed in particularly acute conditions of mechanical operation (production of precise actions): the airplane, the submarine or the air-ship.

Our joys are divided between these living beings created by us, virtually from our flesh and which we can caress with hand or eye (the airplane, the racing car, the boat) - paternal love - and those spiritual crystallisations, fruit of our meditations, which express disinterested intentions, games of our intellect, those sometimes prodigious fruits, where, by a minimum of implementation, by the implacable exactitude of a decision, the maximum vision pours forth, and by vision I mean *thought* (intercession of dignity).

But the problem is not in two, very clearly differentiated, solutions. Into everything that we touch, we breathe some of the passion which sustains us and the object of utility itself becomes for a time -before its use is outmoded- a *creation* in which our pride is written and our affection is embedded. Our world is filled with inspiring objects; the poet discovers in the age innumerable places where his sensibility explodes. We are, truly, a race of creators, and our rejoicings are healthy.

This is why, when the spirit decides to move away from brutally utilitarian contingencies in works that will be



dedicated to the gods, it requires its pleasure to be justified; that the event be developed before our eyes in all its clarity, so that the *architecture* should appear. And there, the word slips out! It demands that the *rules of play* should be clearly perceptible, I want to say that one can understand how, *in what way*, these things which move us are, so to speak, raised above themselves.

And it is beyond the brute physical sensation that arouses in us the thing considered, that this *reading of the work* enters, which is in truth the meaning of the word architecture. Dazzling, rich without limit, the intention becomes clear. And in the spirit of one who contemplates, step by step, the creative event is reconstituted. Admiration finds its foundations.

Here, in the twinkling of an eye, as it were, we are far away from bidets and from central heating, far away from the "machine for living in".

Not at all! On the contrary, we place ourselves at the very heart of the "machine for living in", if we yet believe that man has a heart and a head and that he *lives*<sup>6</sup> to do something.



Since the house is our shelter; it is an object which affects both the animal and the spiritual in us, because being within it, we are subject to its constraints. (It is the same as when in the valleys of the Alps, we are subject to the height of the summits; when on the sand of the beach, we are subject to the infinity of the sea's horizon).

And it is for this reason that today the problem of the dwelling fascinates a new society resistant from now on, to ancestral constraints, and which avidly seeks new rules capable of balancing the new tension which drives it.



This is fundamental to our nature:

to order;  
to ordain.

*To order*, to arrange, to dispose, to put in order.

"*God has ordered everything in the universe*", the dictionary informs us, in majestic terms.

*To ordain*, an act emanating from a supreme authority.

From our authority comes the normal.

From our carelessness<sup>7</sup> surges the abnormal, the pervasive and destructive abnormal; where will declines, it takes root and ravages.

This square is evidence of action; it possesses an inner force. It may be the plan of a house.

This irregular polygon is an uncontrolled event. If such is the plan of our house, it will be abnormal: from now on all that will be inscribed there - the construction, the dwelling within its walls, the general economy of the venture - will be abnormal. In general, this is the standard picture of the sites in our cities, the deplorable effect of unconcern, an economic and architectural disaster. The abnormal increases throughout the whole city and we allow it, and, in aiding the habit, we have become accustomed to deformation; we have acquired a tradition of the complicated. The complicated is in fact the arbitrary. We have allowed the arbitrary to live. Fashion is grafted onto our sickness: the fashion of complication, the taste for complication. And even in open country, if we erect a dwelling place, we conceive it under the sign of the arbitrary. And this third image, representing the agreed disorder, shows us *why the house has ceased to be a palace*.

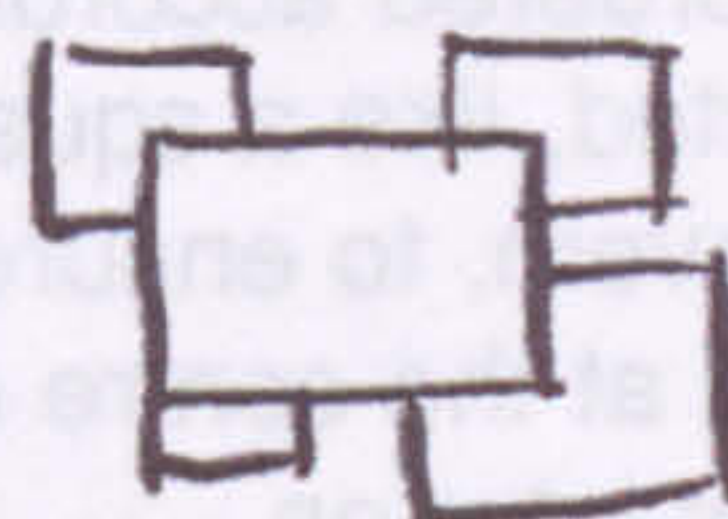


normal plan  
free

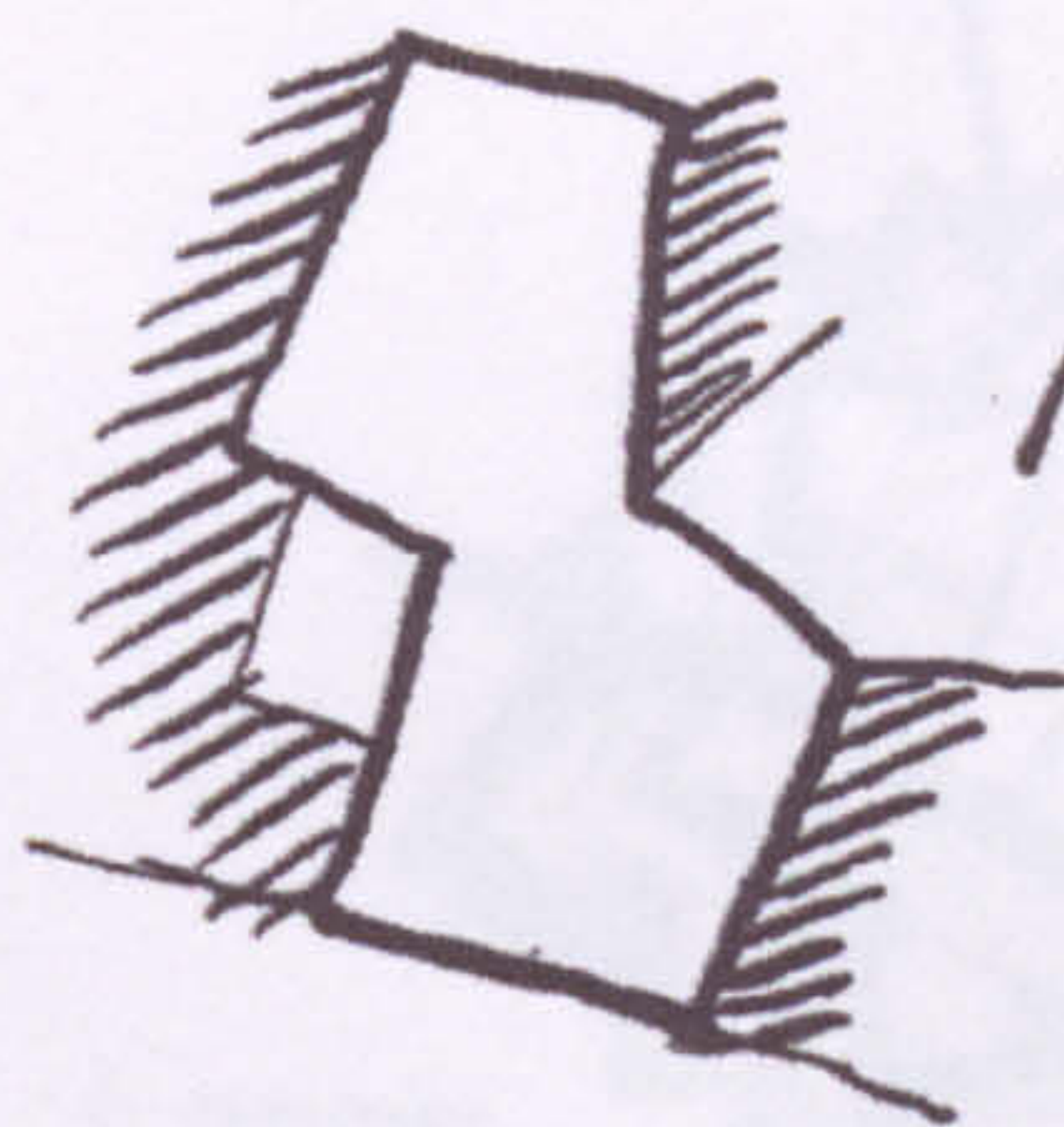


plan  
normal  
libre

and this tradition is  
rampant in open  
countryside



et cette tradition  
sevit en  
rare campagne



plan anormal  
(urbain)

il s'est forgé  
une tradition  
de compliqué,  
un art du  
compliqué

abnormal plan  
[urban]

It has forged a tradition  
of complication, an art  
of complication

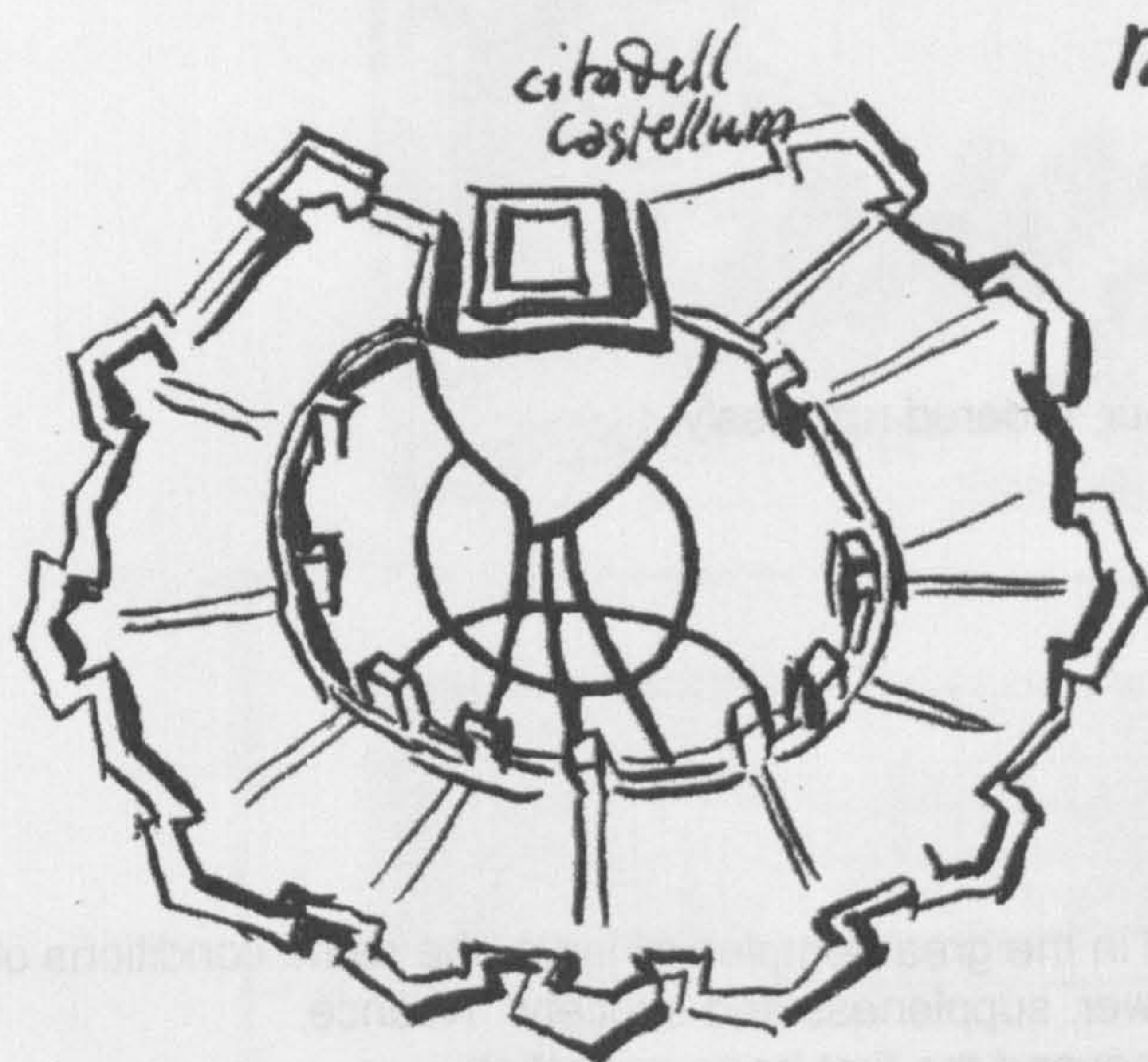


Under a sovereign spirit, the city is ordered.

All cities are ordered according to the confusion of the first crowd: crammed in as well as may be expected, like a squad around the fire of a bivouac. These days we regulate the city, we wish to govern, to ensure respect for order; we order<sup>6</sup>.

The confusion at the centre of the city is halted, it ceases to spread, but it remains, to poison the centuries later on.



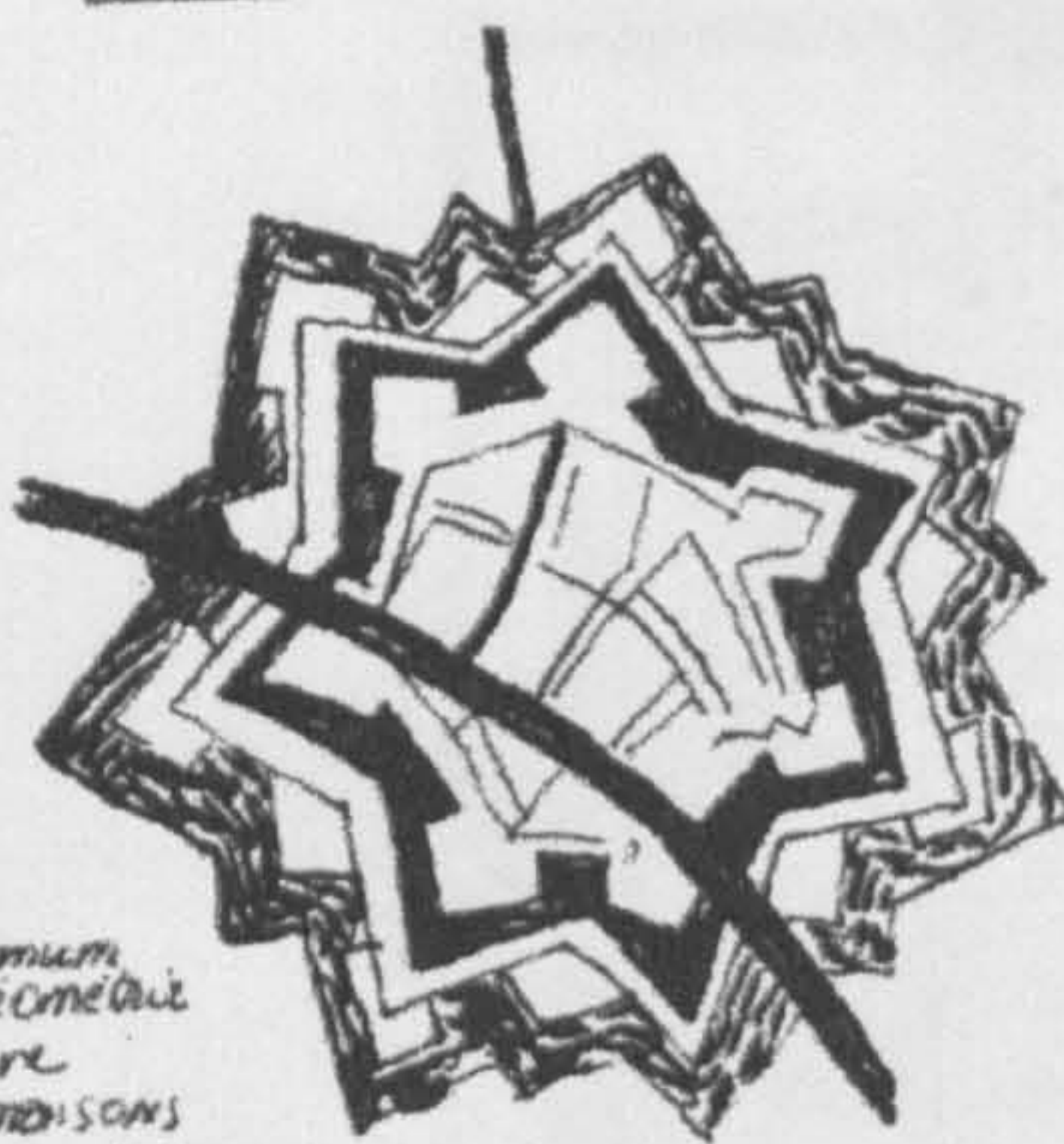


Mediolanum  
MILAN

d'après  
Mathieu  
Milan

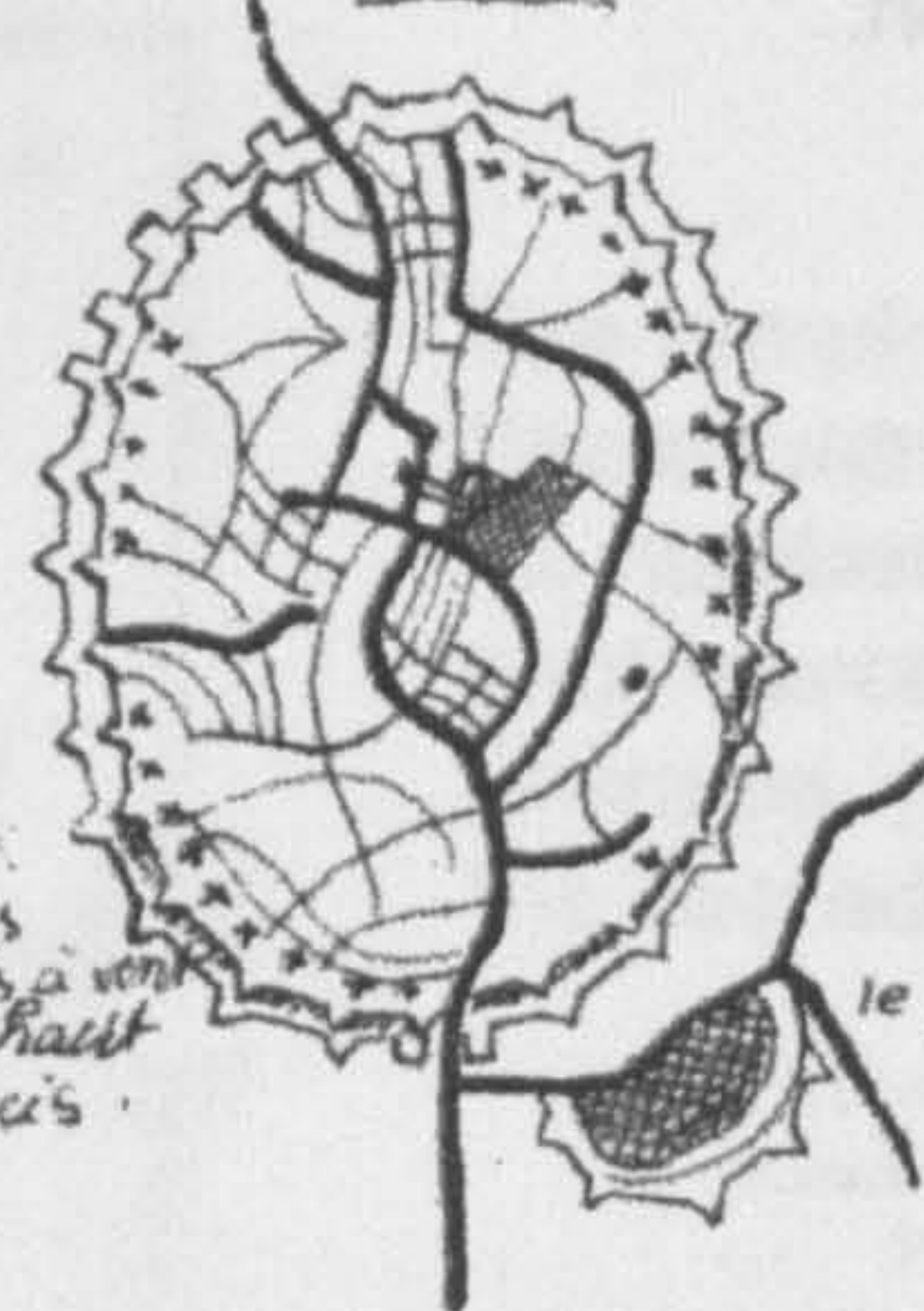
Milan.

DAMME



le summum  
de la géométrie  
militaire  
Et les maisons  
s'arrangent comme  
elles peuvent

GRUGES



tous les  
moulins à vent  
sur le flanc  
des granges

le port



In a variegated setting, the chinese erect a house, clear, lucid, precise: a regular event.

Rome, with iron vigour, ordered ruthlessly.

And here, expressed in the great temples of India, the same conditions of all architecture; order, hierarchy. Power. suppleness and subtlety. Nuance.

Intentions projected beyond the first brute sensation.

If the spirit loves to discern, to read what was intended, to comprehend the suggested play, thus nothing discourages it more than "dumb animal" solutions. Art is nuance; nuance is infinitely perceptible. And should the spirit finally believe itself to be satisfied, yet it will suddenly discover new intentions in the long-contemplated work. And the great architectural work, participant in the site which surrounds it, has never uttered its last word. Because the light changes and the seasons pass, and the young do not see what the old do, for the old have a soul which predisposes them differently to the young to things offered to their passion.

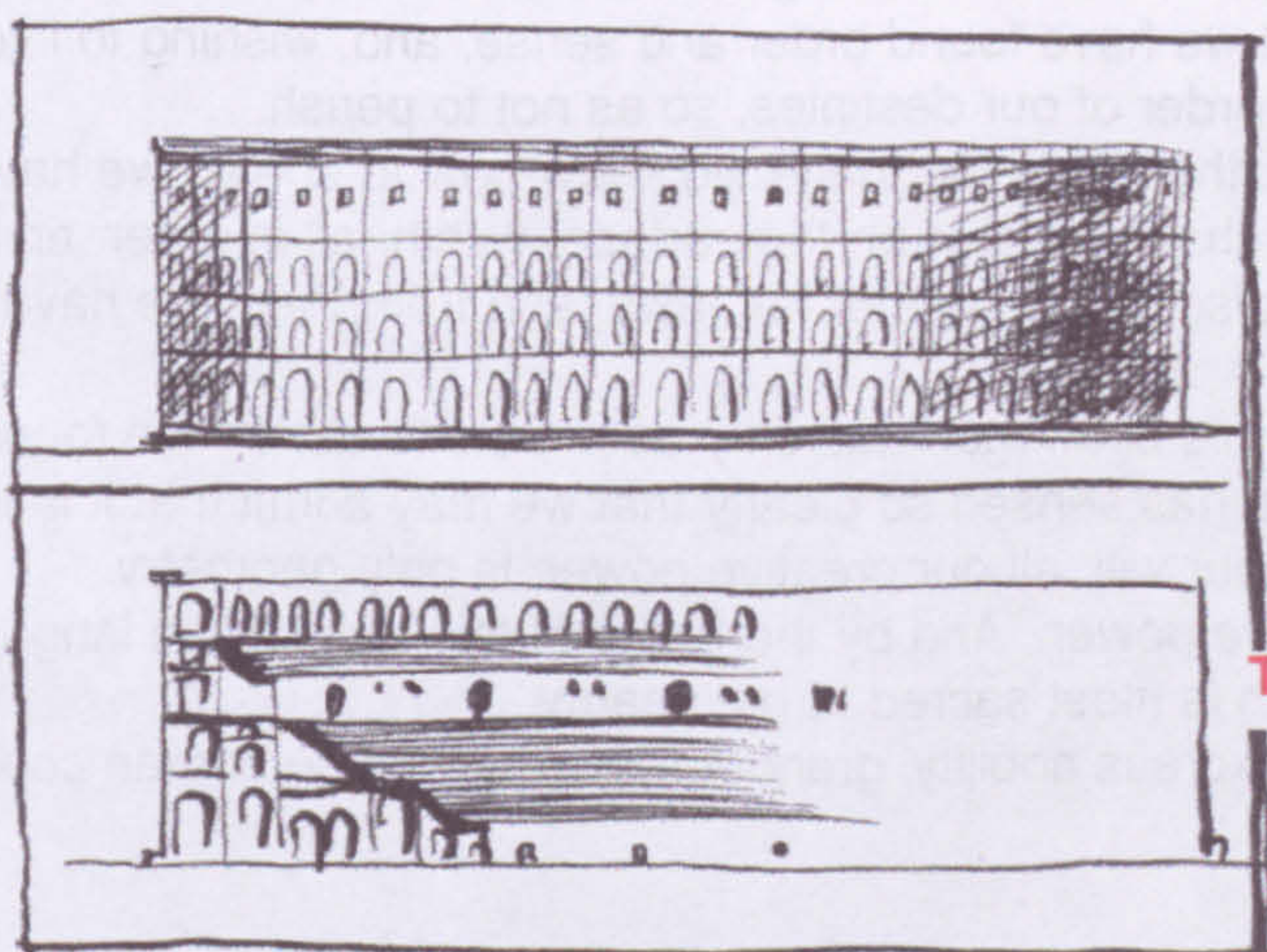
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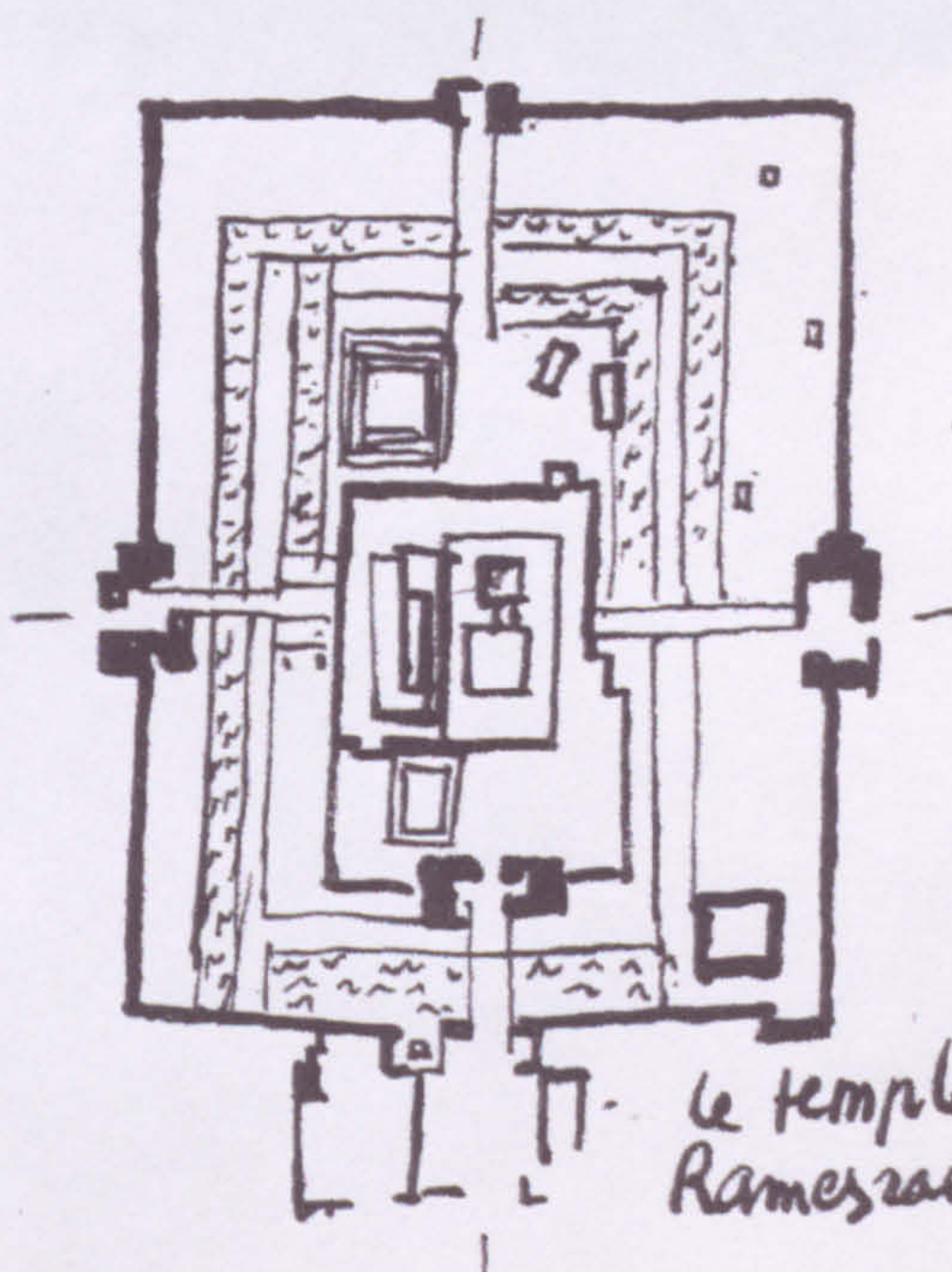
### The summer dwellings around Peking

Les résidences d'été aux environs de Pékin.



### The Coliseum

Le Colisée.



### The temple of Rameswaram. - a number of enclosures, avenues, porticos, the sacred pools

Le temple de Rameswaram.  
— Plusieurs enceintes, des allées, des portiques, les étangs sacrés.

Le temple de Rameswaram



What is to be done? We are born in the bosom of Nature.

Antagonistic, hostile to our initiatives, most justly indifferent, totally absorbed in her proper events which are but gales, tempests, burning desert, night and day, summer and winter, she implacably destroys our work, each hour, each day, each minute; she unmakes. There is no resting place, no respite from her voracity; favours are accorded to no-one.

We stand against her, to escape her grasp, trying to check her, attempting to dominate her. If she is the universe, then since the beginning we have wanted to create our own universe also. And we defend it: this is our daily labour.

Nevertheless we are sons of the earth and have called her earthmother.

And we love her, with our flesh which comes from her and with our spirit which lives only in her, limited to overwhelming tasks and without possible end, examining the mechanism for mastering her, searching for reasons to prop up our dignity and to try to put our minds at rest in conceiving the principle. Pathetic moments.

All that we know, can do, and see, thus, all that we experience, is no more than a function of her gigantic forces. Having considered her apparent chaos and the dead end of all her causes, yet we have found order and sense, and, wishing to live, we have accepted her order and the order of our destinies, so as not to perish.

Geometry, the single language we know how to speak, we have taken from nature because all is not chaos, except on the surface; within, all is order, an implacable order.

We have discerned some of her laws, and from them we have made geometry, our useful language.

And since his birth, man has only been able to act on the foundation of that geometry which he has sensed so clearly that we may admit that it is the thing itself which conditions us. All our will, all our creative power, is only geometry.

Our creative power. And by the terms of this truly divine language, we have elevated that which is most sacred to us: beauty.

Thus we express nobility, grandeur, majesty: those human concepts born of our spirit.



## UNE MAISON — UN PALAIS

13



Delphes.

**Delphi**



Dominating the chasms and valleys, at Delphi, these three stone dies, severe and pure testimonies, speak of the sublime.

It is therefore on geometry that temples and palaces are to be raised: in geometry the proofs of the will are to be found: power. Priests and tyrants, demonstrating their strength, established architecture on geometry.

Geometry: a clear spirit and the infinite mystery of combinations.

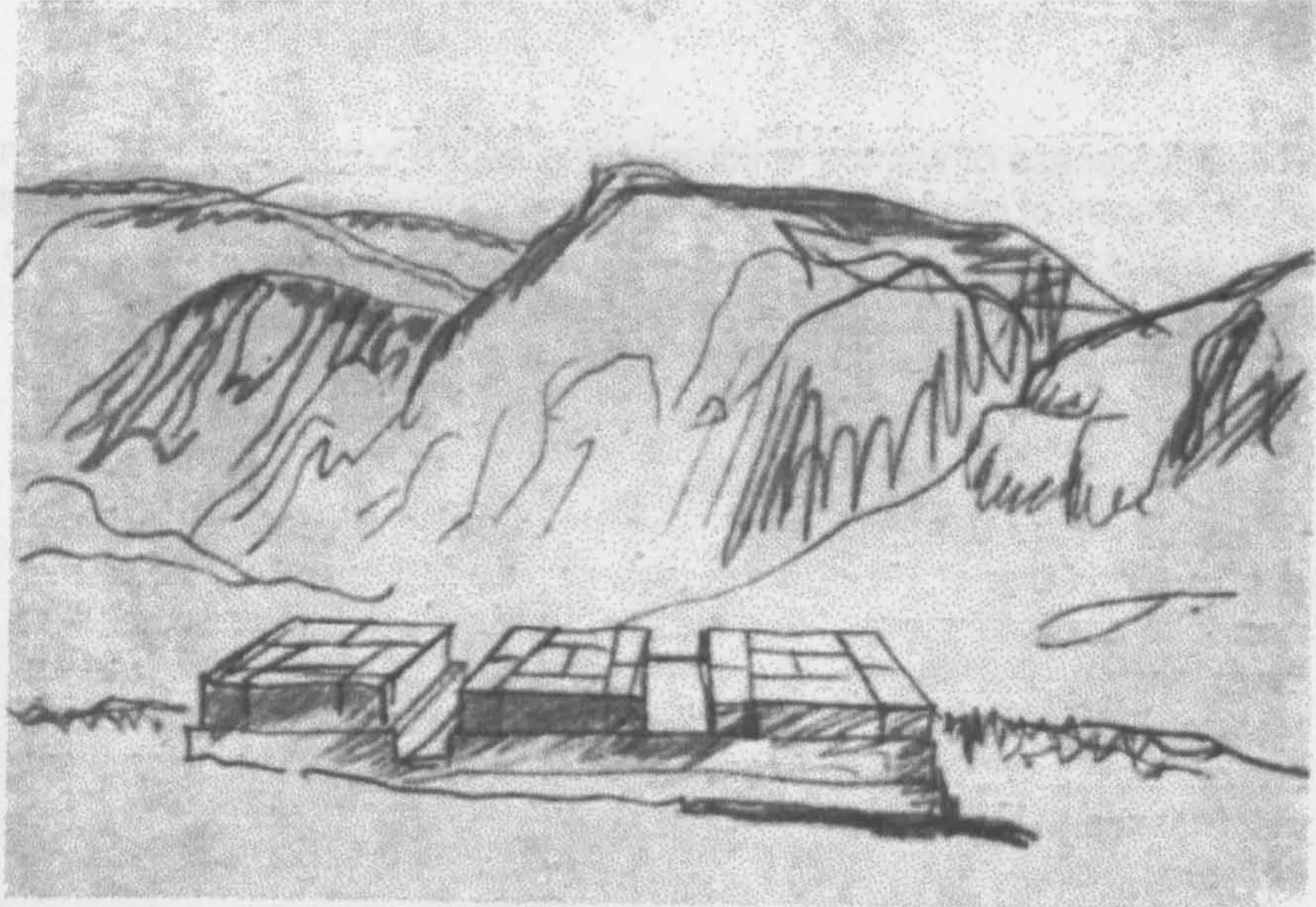
But already here are the symptoms of decadence; pomposity bloats this crystal, the intense relationships<sup>9</sup> collapse. The Measure is no more. The three dies of Delphi, sublime evocation, are buried beneath decoration and disorderly abundance.

The *measure collapses*.

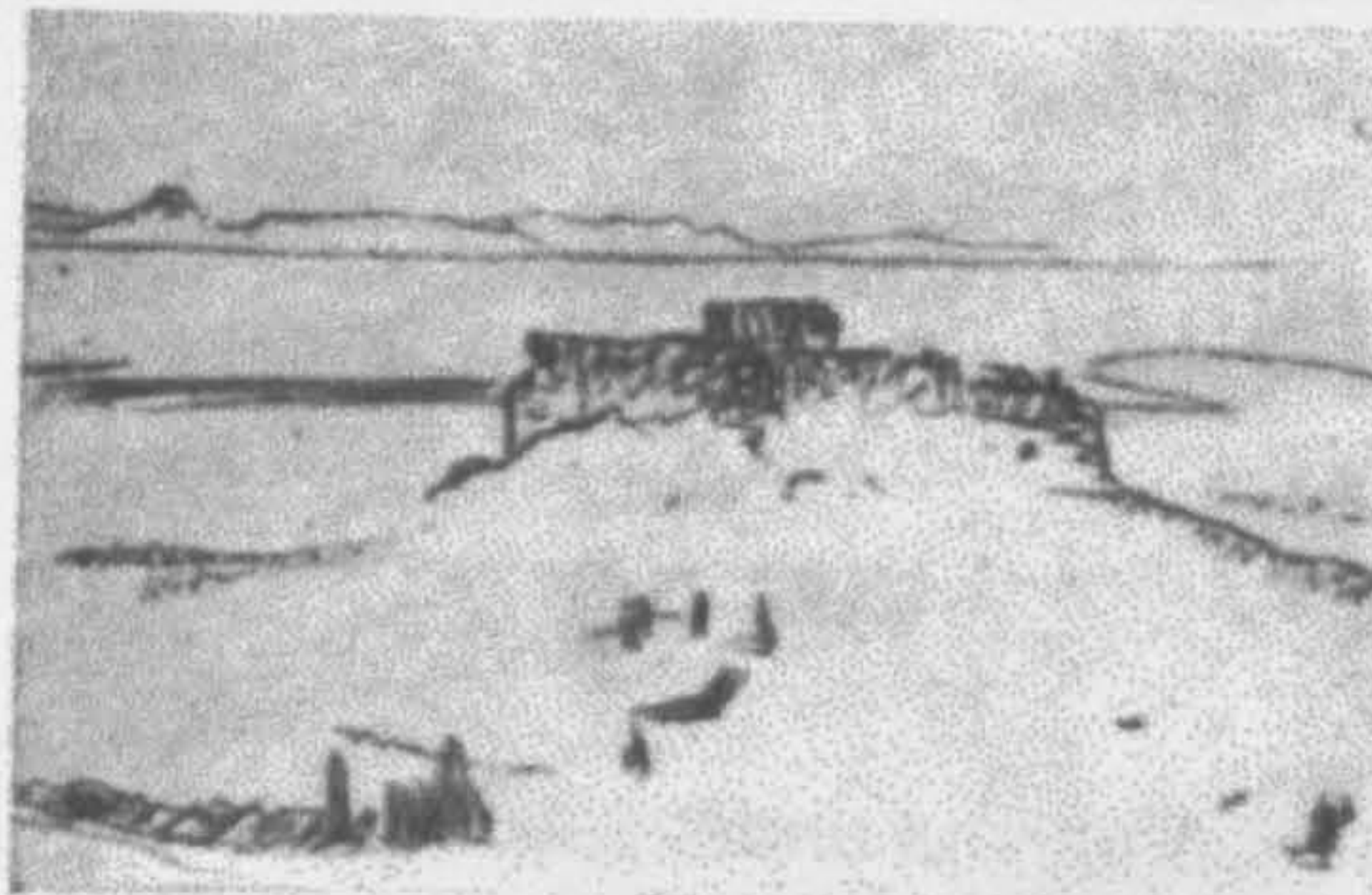
This word embraces everything which is dignified and noble.

Measure, very sign of the spirit.





Delphes.



Athènes.



Rome.  
Ile Tibère.



The licentiousness of wanton children<sup>10</sup> who aspire to the goal but have not gone through the long stages of conquest, here shamelessly amalgamated, are separate items of their cause, cadavers deprived of their source of life. (The Americans flounder, do not know the *here and now*, they have no experience; there they are thrown off balance by the old European cultures. Such propositions lack measure).

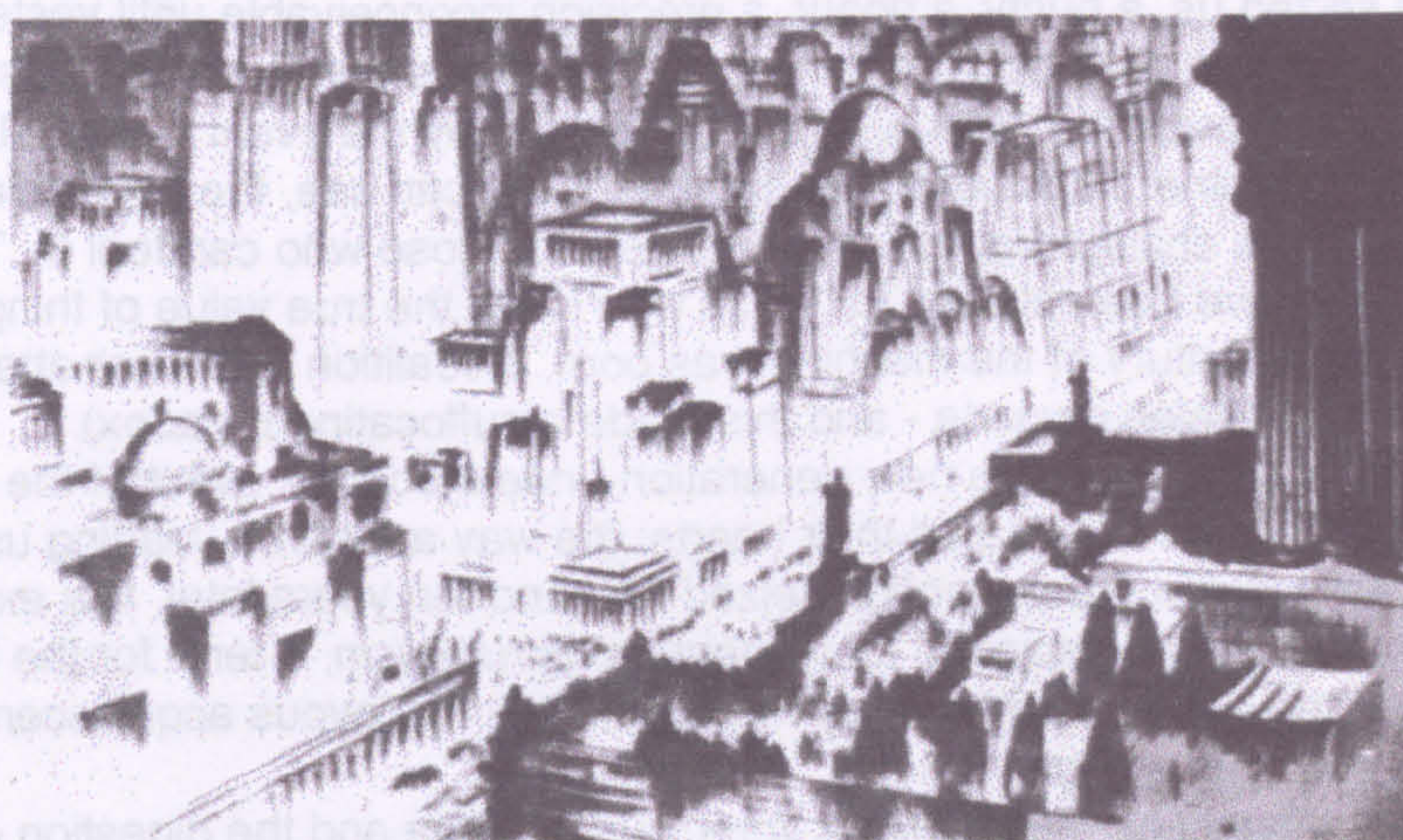
... this is to have seen Versailles without understanding...

\*  
\*   \*   \*

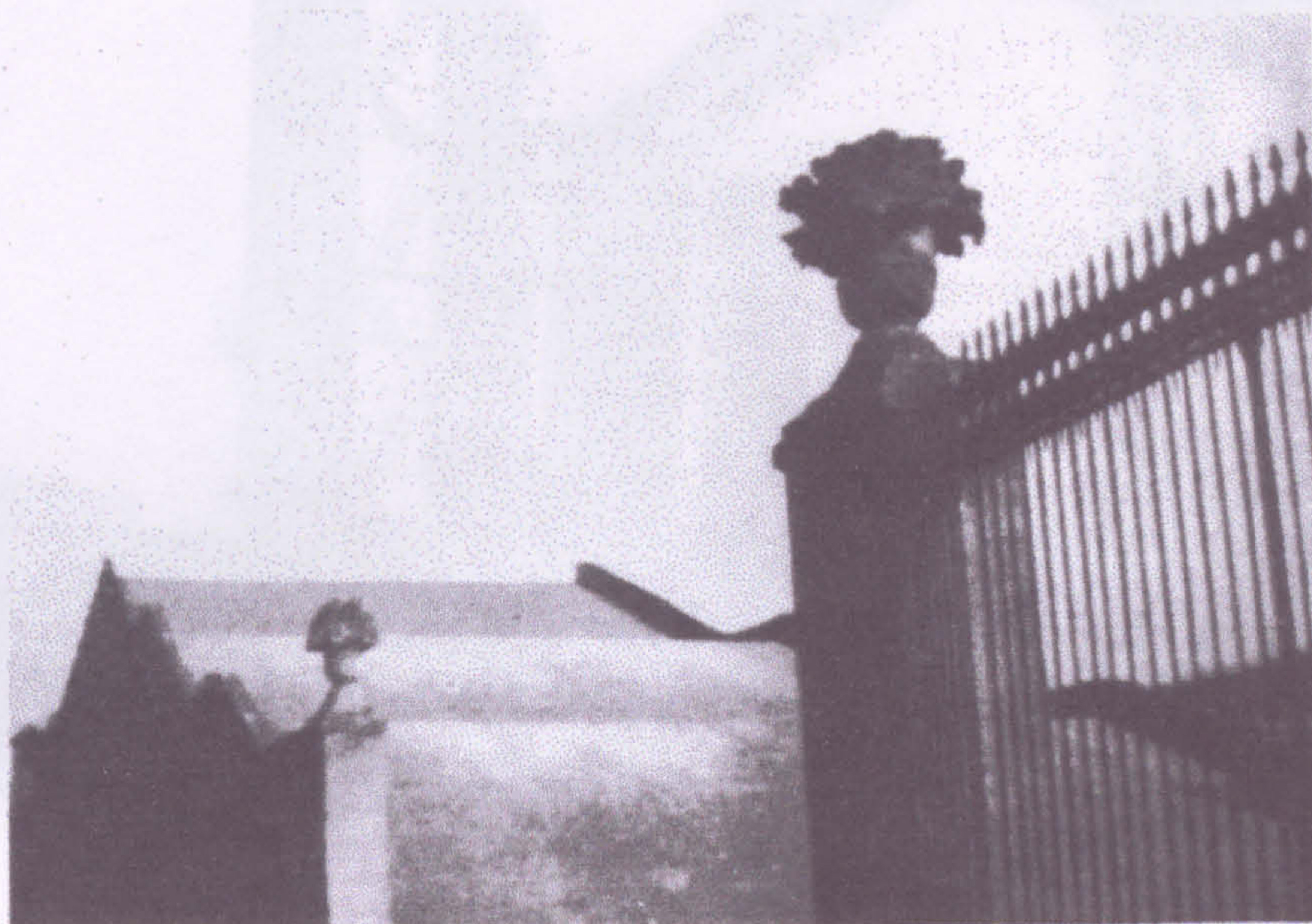


## UNE MAISON — UN PALAIS

17



Urbanisme américain.

**American town planning**

L'escalier des Cent Marches.

**Staircase of a hundred steps**



A new anxiety plagues us, we of the old Europe. The *machine*, with thundering rhythm, has thrown us violently into perhaps the most intense geometric event ever to have been lived through.

Having groaned under its weight, now we set ourselves to rights; we understand that we will start a new phase and that a new page of history is about to be written. A great emotion has seized us, a purity, a rigour, a precision inconceivable until yesterday, sharply controls our schemes; developing a pure spectacle before our eyes, rigorous, exact, for which we were not prepared. Our wills are dominated by the event which rolls from one consequence to another. Just after war, for those who can see, the spectacle<sup>11</sup> is shattered. The vital thread has changed direction completely for those who can feel it. The bridges back to the past have been burned for those who know the true value of things.

When the century of the machine was born, a coalition of *braves* attempted to oppose it (The Ruskinian crusade - and this made a suffocating paradox).

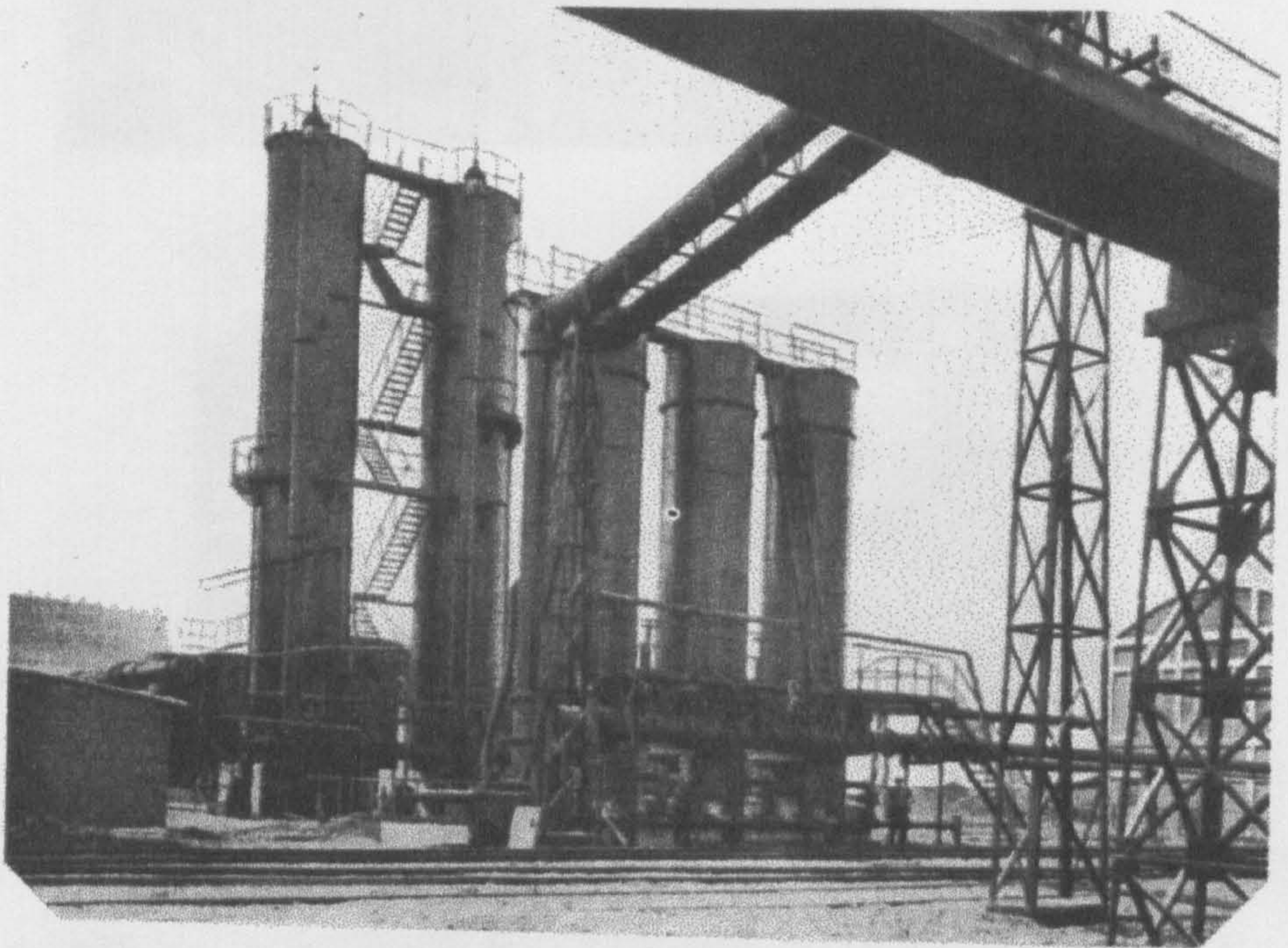
When, after the war, the new generation understood the event of the machine, a prescience of tomorrow illuminated their hearts: the way appeared, leading us to a conclusion. As I said: a great emotion seized us. And ten years later, this explosive form of the verdict was declared a spiritual movement: *constructivism*, a term for the less optimistic.

This is the joyous event of the machine: this is the joyous acquiescence of the young who come and *who go*.

Then - a bubbling over of joy, a voracious appetite and the digestion of a serpent; a style becomes established: constructivism. Where does the meaning of this vague word begin, where does it end? It is vague because it contains too much. It defines neither an aesthetic, nor a category of human production. It is, quite honestly, a word which belongs to the psychology of history, a generating word; wishing to indicate an optimism.



Here is a new spectacle. Are these works coherent? There is no yardstick for appreciating contemporary work; there is no formula which reveals the quality of work. For the rest, there is no formula in life. Everything is relative. And we have in us a desire which is a table of harmony. It wishes to the true work. Unsurprisingly is reached in the case of these works and they are recognized. When, how, at once, belatedly? There is no official time limit. A day comes when the work is recognized.





Here is a new spectacle. Are these works ephemeral? There is no yardstick for appreciating contemporary works; there is no formula which reveals the durability of works. For the rest, there is no formula in life. Everything is relationships. And we have in us a diapason which is a table of harmony. It vibrates to the true work. Unanimity is reached in the case of these works and they are recognised<sup>12</sup>. When, how, at once, belatedly? There is no official time limit. A day comes when the work is recognised.

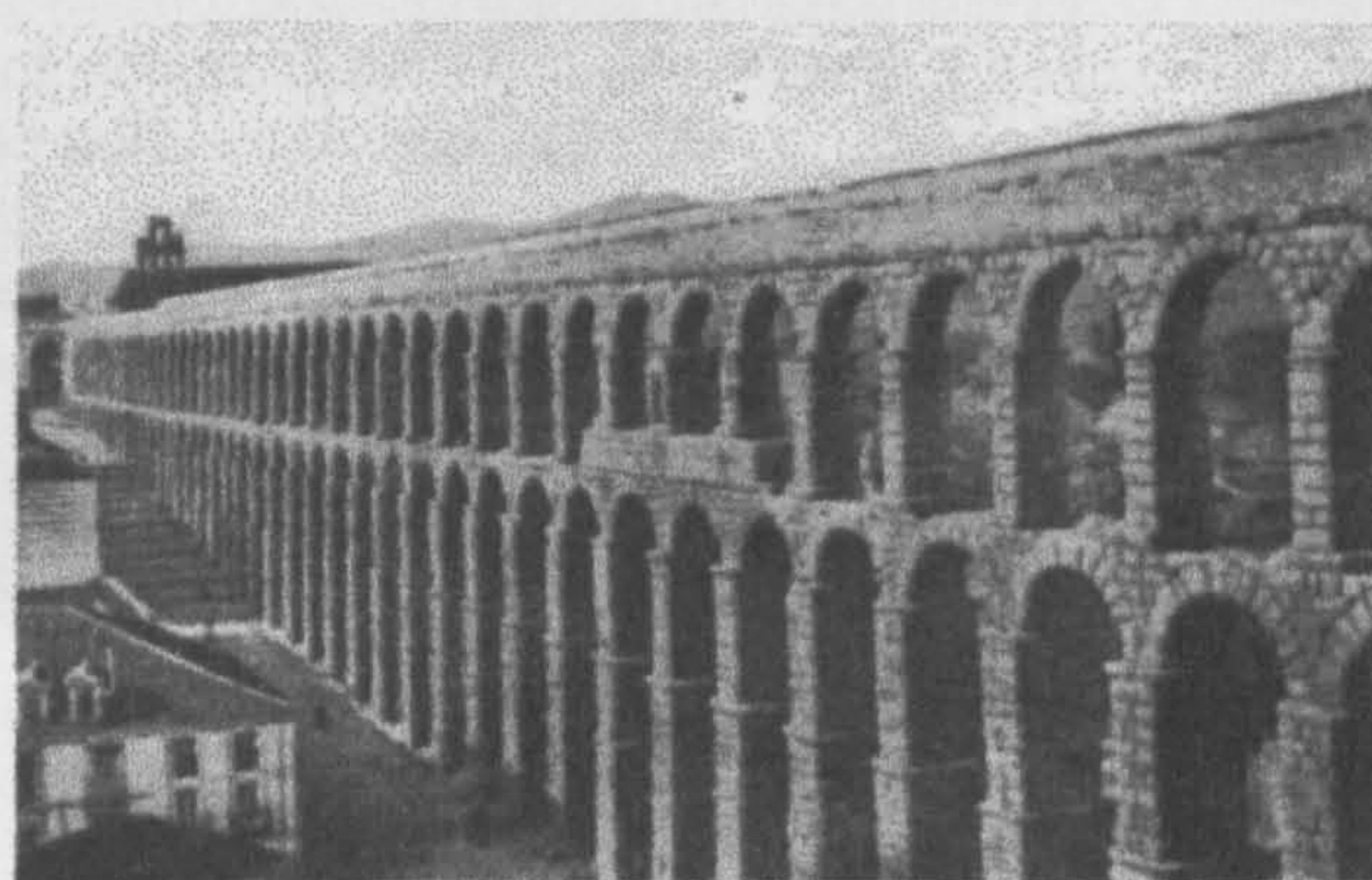
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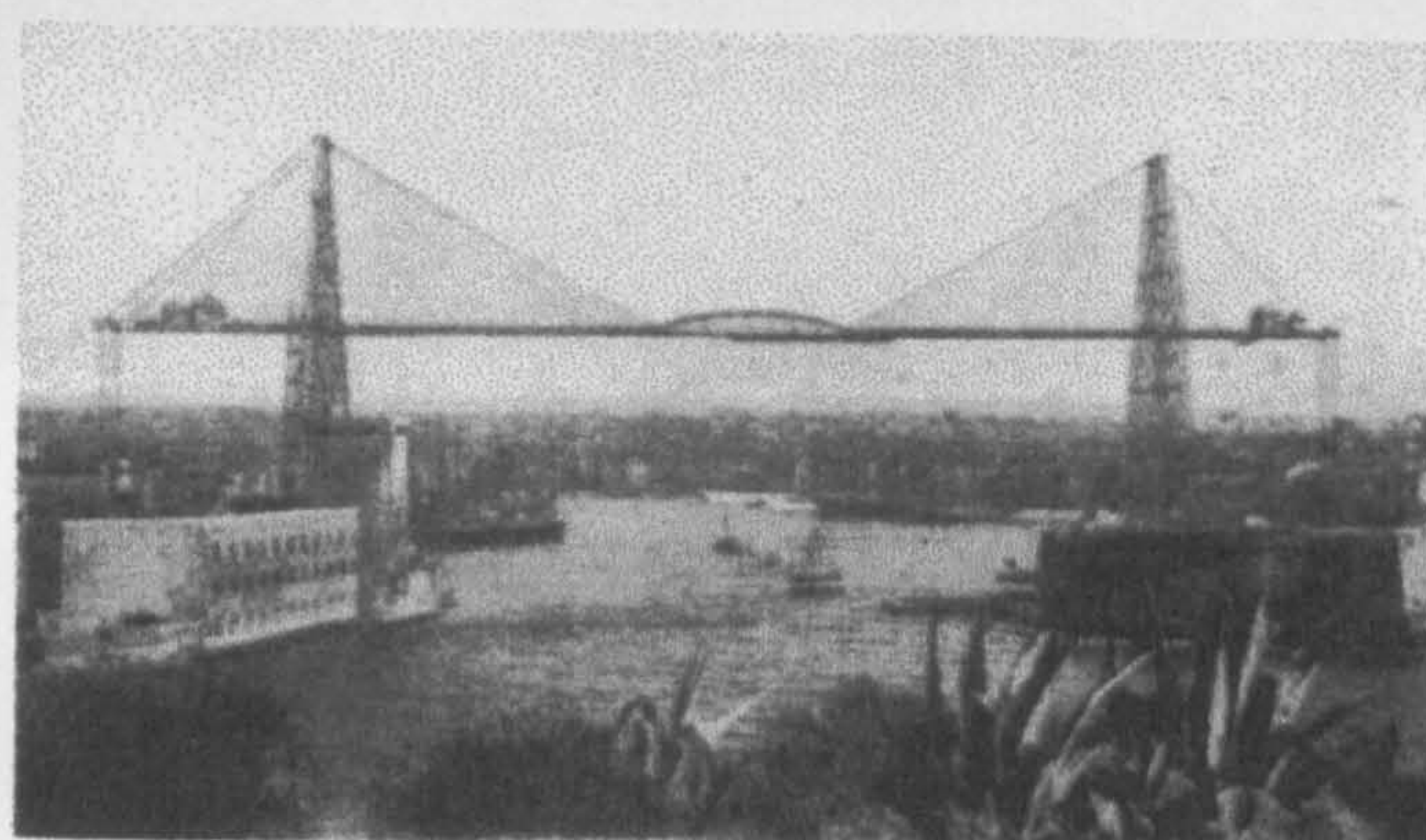
Viaduc de Cussac (Gironde).



Ségovie (romain).



Aqueduc du Gard.



Le transbordeur  
de Marseille.



Let us acknowledge the truth of La Palisse<sup>13</sup>: the eye measures only that which it sees. It does not see chaos, or rather, it sees badly in the chaos, in the muddle. And then without hesitating, it is caught by those things which have an aspect. All at once, we are seized, measuring, appreciating: a geometric phenomenon develops itself under our gaze: upright rocks like menhirs, the indupitable horizon of the sea, the meander of beaches. And by the magic of relationships we are transported to the land of visions.



## UNE MAISON — UN PALAIS

23



Bretagne.



Alpes.



Similarly in Istanbul, the day after a conflagration; the houses of the poor rise up like monuments in the smoking ruins.

If though, conditioned in our acts by the necessity for clarity, we will draw the enclosure where our house will be constructed *square*.

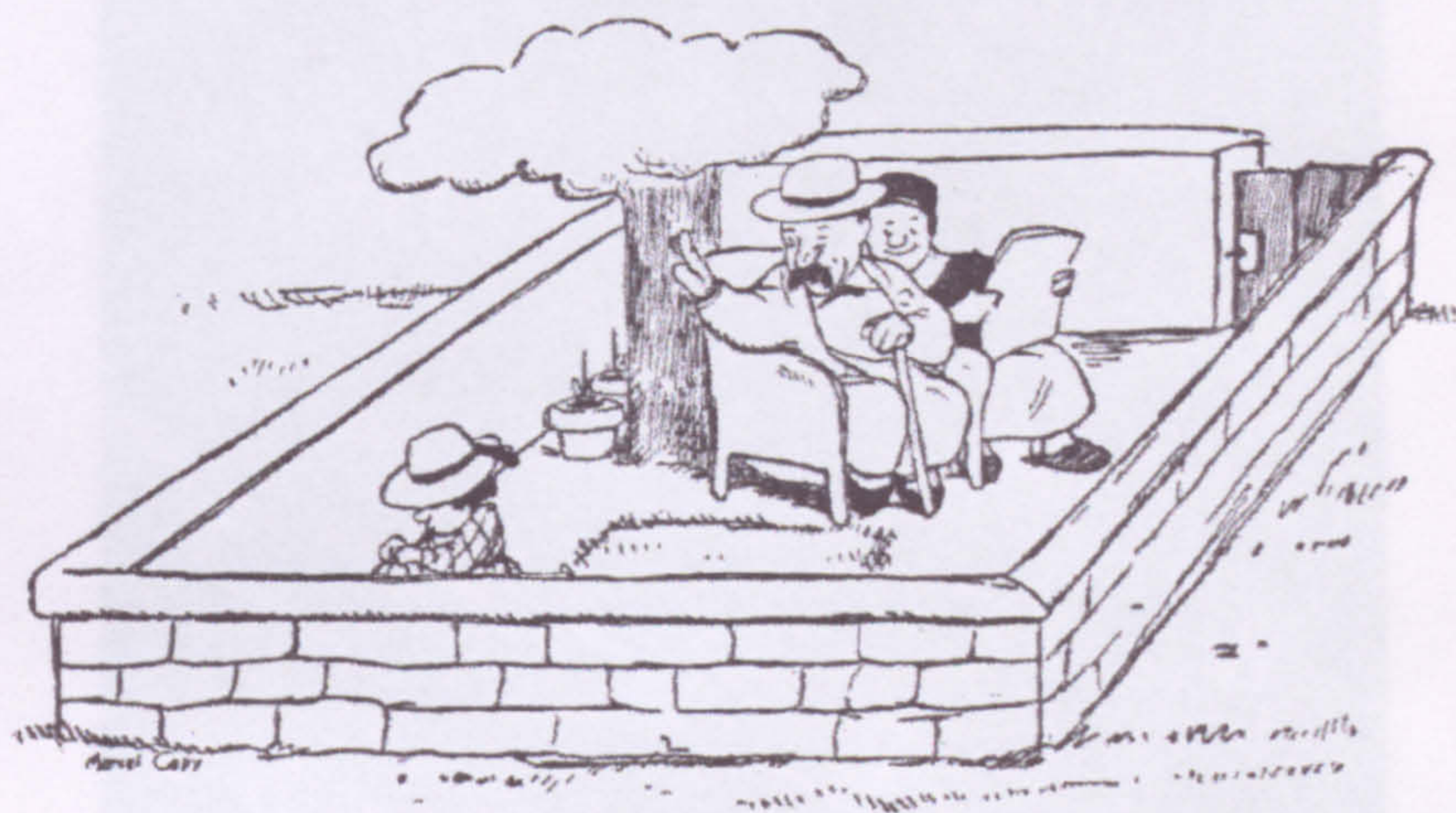
Everything is there.

This is our fate.



## UNE MAISON — UN PALAIS

25



## PROMENADE PRINTANIÈRE

— Si tu es bien sage... nous ferons le tour du jardin.

**SPRING PROMENADE**  
**-if you are very good... we will tour the garden**



Then in happy moments along the road, dazzling syntheses appear, satisfying our hearts and our spirits. In a stirring concert the explicit *natural* fact and the *human* fact, precise in explicit functions, sing the same law together. Joining in his work the forces and resistances of Nature, man has put his own creation in perfect harmony with her. In the perception of such harmonies are the ineffable hours of life. Can there be greater riches than such joys?





UNE MAISON — UN PALAIS



UNE MAISON.



The history of progress, which is a question of tools, and the history of culture, which is a question of spiritual architecture (architecture, putting in order, creating order) are both made in the passionate search for this harmony.

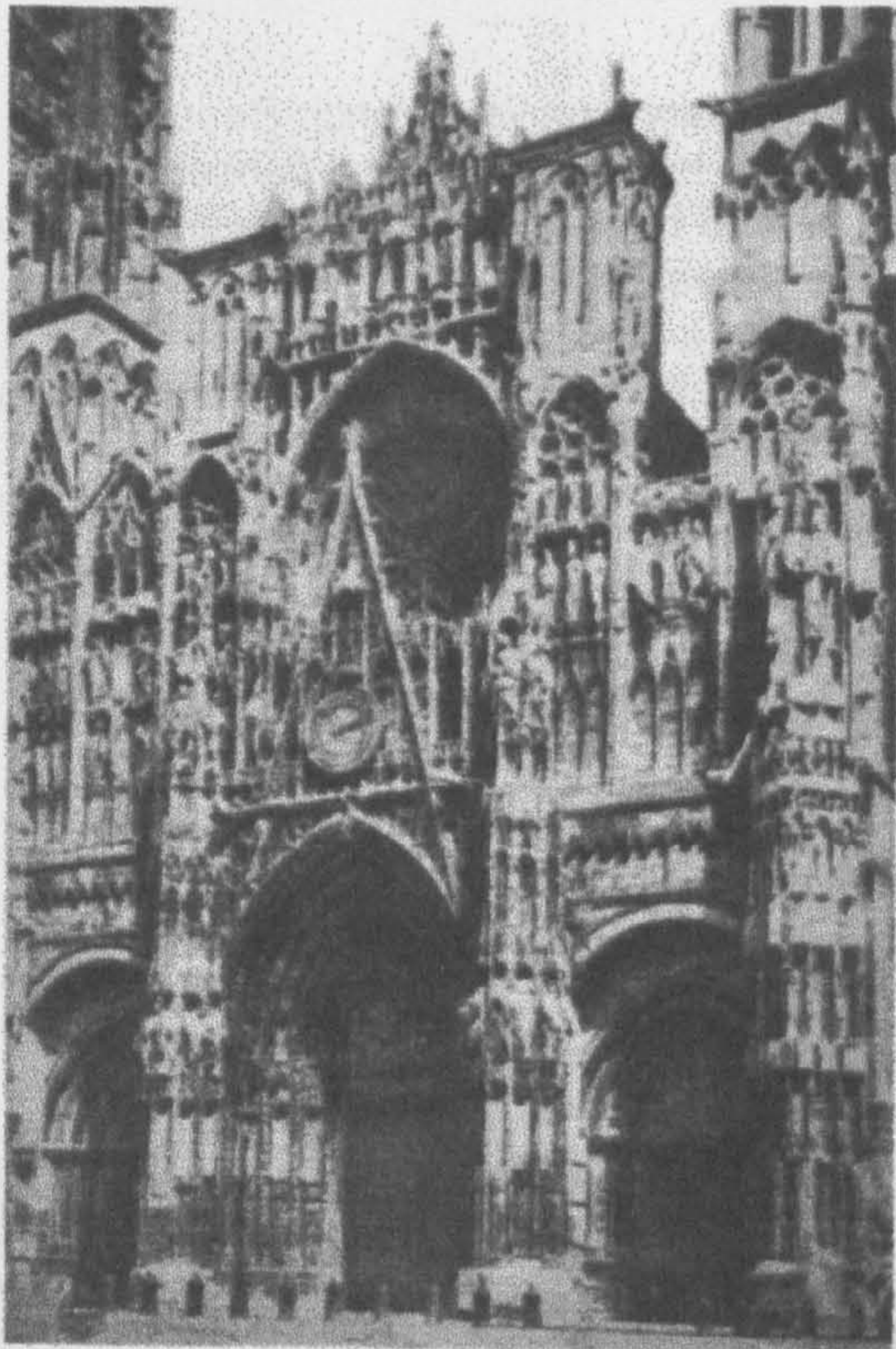
A tool is not efficient, does not function except at the moment when there is harmony among its parts. Previously limited to primary and individual functions, these join together as a whole and constitute an *organism*. That which is viable is organic.

It is after this *rational* and *essential* ordering, satisfying reason, that feeling may enter, which might have been thought superfluous if we had not - that which provokes our acts and guides our destinies, - a passion, the satisfaction of which is as imperative as the needs of our animal selves, - hunger or thirst.

As I said; it is in the manner of the ordering (meaning of *architecture*) that the moving moment of the work is inscribed and this is also an ordering, a kind of inevitable task, that each of us accomplishes in living his life, a task to which the most pure of us are attached, and also something which *cannot be faked*. A plague on ornament (that is to say, that whereby one may deceive or cheat others): the block, the group, the organisation, are all plain to us and bluntly, without concealment. That is creating; that is the phenomenon of creation, and there each of us plays his part.

This phenomenon of creation, according to the state of individuals, of peoples, - in a word, of cultures - oscillates between the complicated and confused modalities of an already studious youthfulness and the exploding clarity of moments of apogee, oscillates between the tormented lineaments of a temporary powerlessness which is nothing but a painful stage,





Rouen.



and the sparkling crystal of mastery.

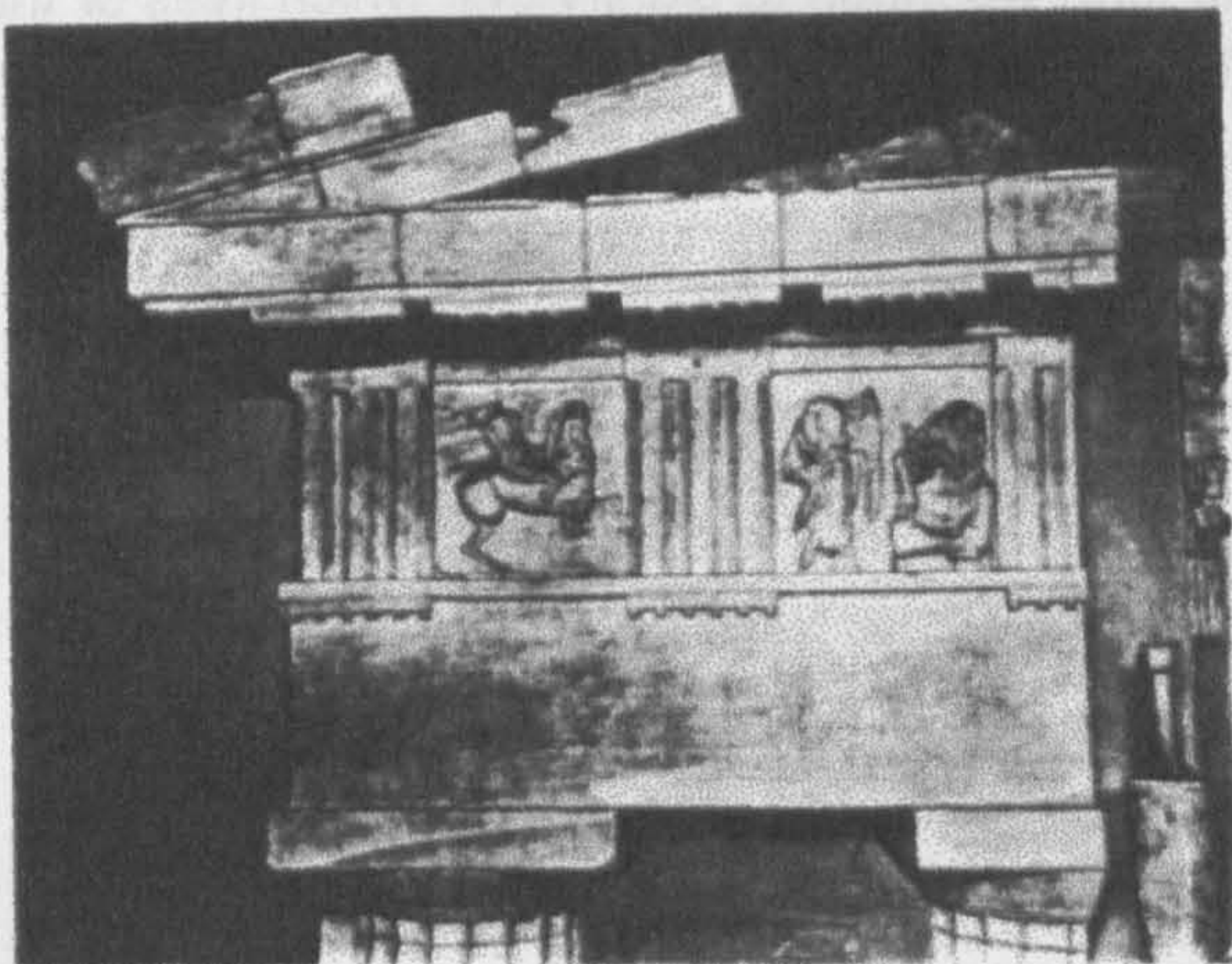
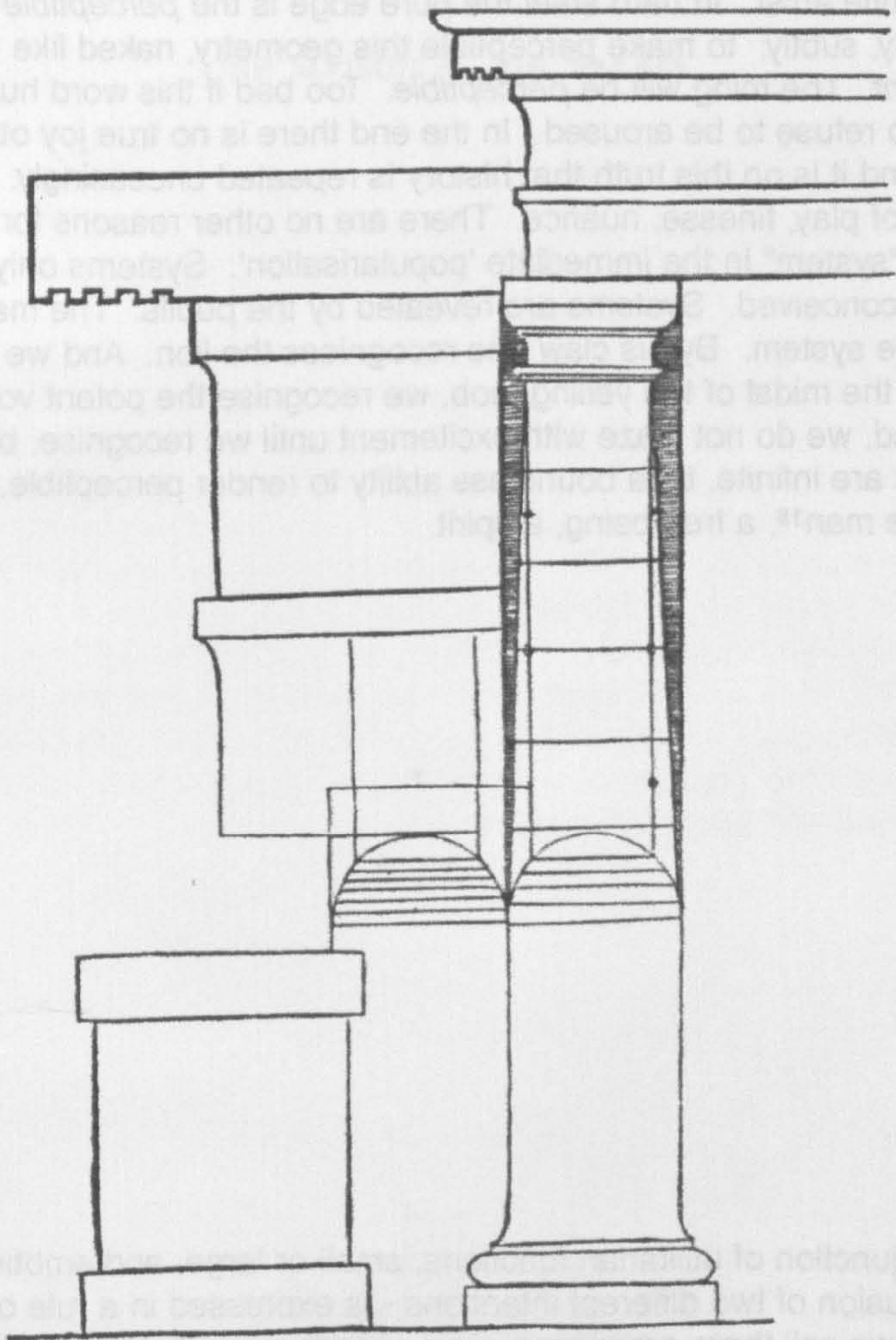
I see in the hour of the very dignified French Renaissance, the wild enthusiasm which seized men overwhelmed by the paradoxical consequences of flamboyant style, when the edition of Vitruvius, published by Jean Goujon, appeared. Beneath their gaze, this drawing labelled "doric" re-established the orthogonal. At last they turned back! Because they were bogged down, because they entered the night! And at a stroke, full light! What jubilation! Liberation is in this drawing; it brings tidings: the renaissance, the renaissance! The spirit perceives the full light.

Yet again there was a slow, confused development, but the French Renaissance, an explosion of elation, is full of joy.

For us, given a somewhat higher vantage point by archeological knowledge, this drawing by Vitruvius evokes the parthenon, a name which is today a rallying cry, and from which an equally potent light bursts forth; signifying that which is lawful, that which is full and potent, that which is pure and whole.

Made dynamic, severe, rigorous, exact by geometry, naked like Diogenes, but like him skilful, eloquent, subtle!







Let us speak of eloquence. The geometry of iron, in producing steel, the artist forms it, the skilful, subtle artist. In hard steel the pure edge is the *perceptible*<sup>15</sup> thing. The artist forms<sup>14</sup> it skilfully, subtly, to make perceptible this geometry, naked like Diogenes, which will become *eloquent*. The thing will be *perceptible*. Too bad if this word hurts the young generations who refuse to be aroused. In the end there is no true joy other than in the *quality of play* and it is on this truth that history is repeated unceasingly

Quality of play, finesse, nuance. There are no other reasons for living. All should become simply "system" in the immediate 'popularisation'. Systems only arise afterwards; they are not preconceived. Systems are revealed by the pupils. The master always escapes from the system. By his claw one recognises the lion. And we are not interested except when, in the midst of the yelling mob, we recognise the potent voice of the lion. We are not interested, we do not blaze with excitement until we recognise, by virtue of those phenomena that are infinite, by a boundless ability to render perceptible, a man, a brother, a master, - a noble man<sup>16</sup>, a free being, a spirit.

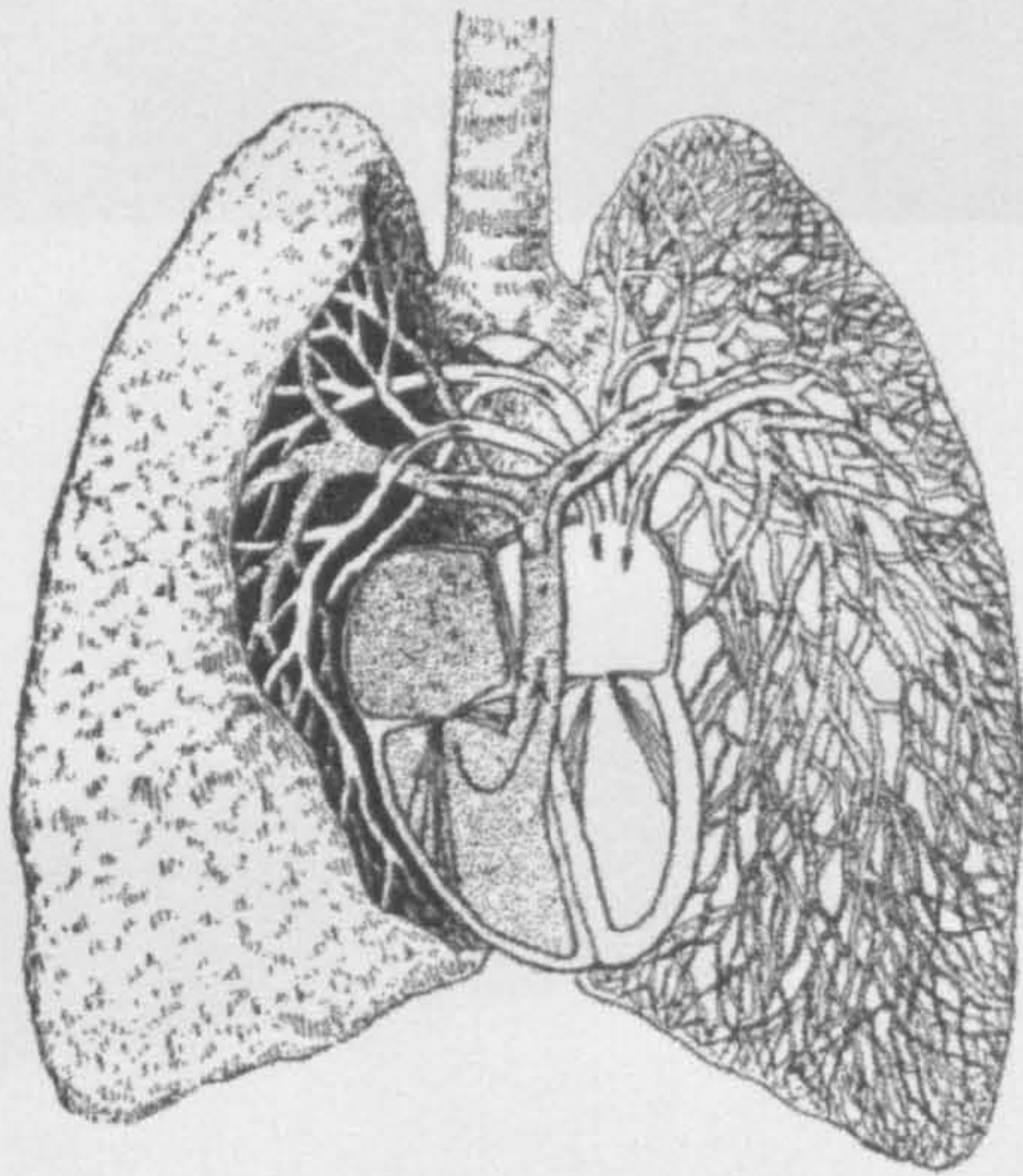
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This conjunction of utilitarian functions, small or large, and emotive potential either small or large - fusion of two different intentions - is expressed in a rule of co-ordination shown in things; we call them *organisms*. And everything in the functioning universe seems to be *organic*. By this term we mean to signify that which lives or that which is viable, and, applying it to the human work, we attach to it a sense of reverence.



found. Creation is a play of correspondences. It is there that all creation is motivated, there that its roots, its fraction, is to be lost of creator; this is the support which serves as a point of support for the leap. This ability to be "aware" because we understand is properly the most miraculous inclination as men of the machine age is to the ability to be "aware" because we understand. Inherent reactions deriving from the resistance of nature, of things, or of people. And our organism that we create, the intention manoeuvres between our constructive force and the And I am always returning to this: we wish to grasp the intention. And in every explicit, they are reasoning because they are revealed through their intention, they are perceptible. Between a fragment of a human mind and the world, there are our sensibilities.



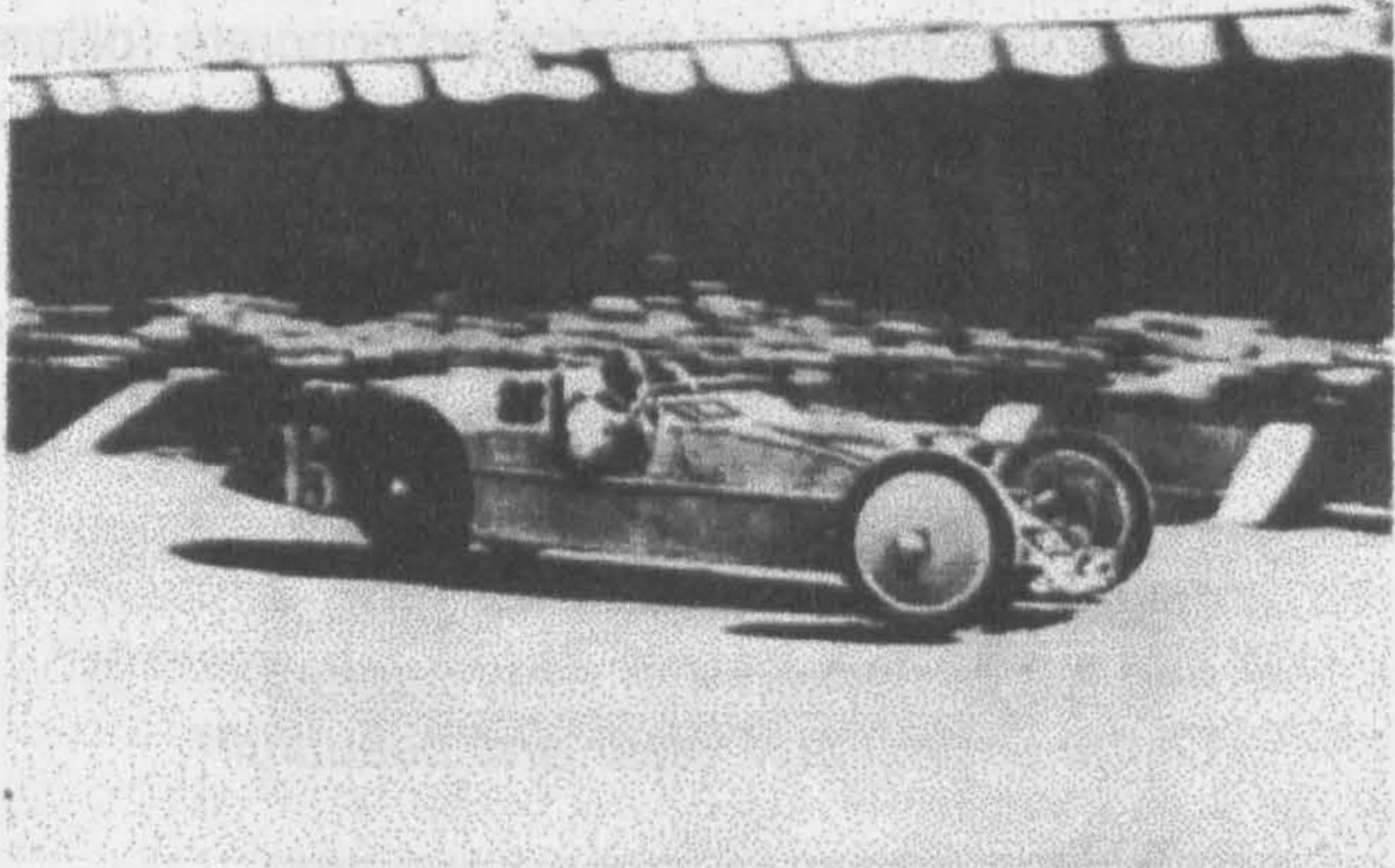


Between a thousand or a hundred thousand, these organisms snare our sensibilities because they are revealed in much greater purity than the others; they are perceptible, explicit; they are reassuring.

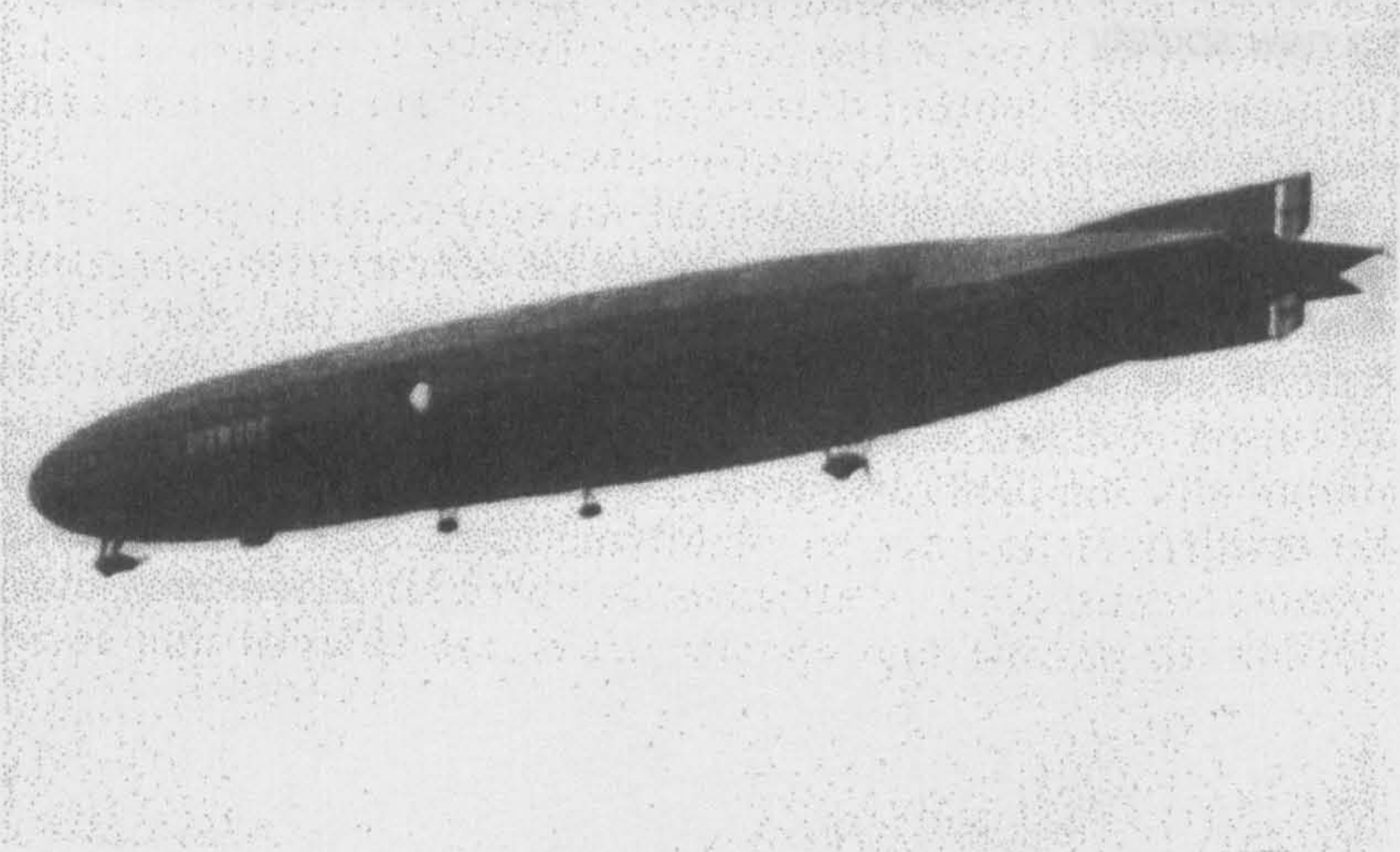
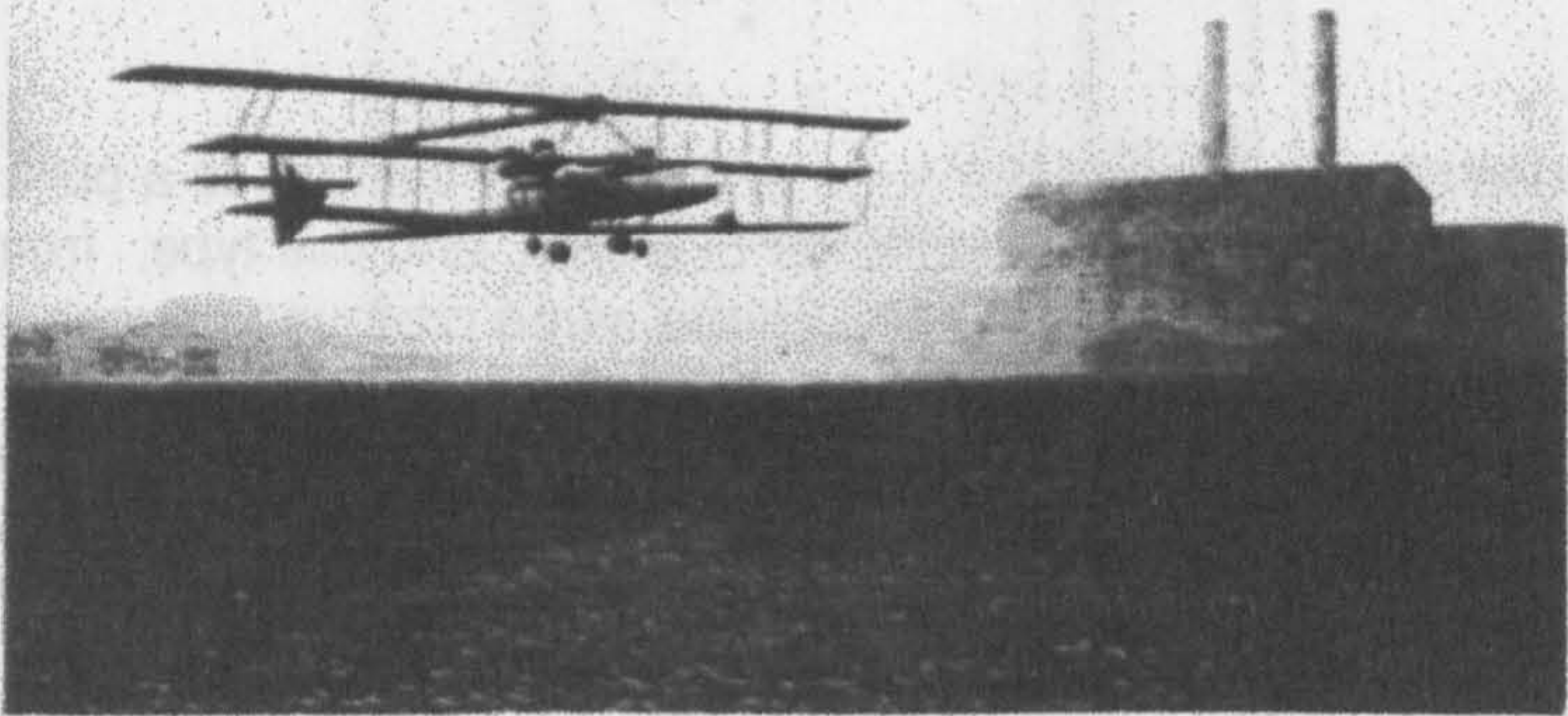
And I am always returning to this: we wish to grasp the intention. And in every organism that we create, this intention manoeuvres between our constructive force and the inherent reactions deriving from the resistance of nature, of things, or of people. And our inclination as men of the machine age is to the ability to be "aware" because we understand.

This ability to be "aware" because we understand is probably the most miraculous tool of creators; this is the springboard which serves as a point of support for the leap ahead. It is there that all creation is *motivated*, there that its roots, its tradition, is to be found. Creation is a play of consequences.





Voisin.





The plan and section that you see here are not images of an Egyptian temple or of a Roman house.

Here it is simply a matter of vats of wine in reinforced concrete. The struggle against resistances (leakage of liquids, their weight, the necessary circulation for the desired usage), - the possibilities so characteristic of reinforced concrete (pillars, ribs, slabs, etc.) have led to the building of a strangely life-like organism which is most capable of kindling the joys of architecture within us.

Here we have entered architecture: a house, a palace or a temple? I say this: we have entered architecture because at the base we read a clear organism

The poet of the Renaissance sang:

Time has loosed his cloak  
Of wind, cold and rain  
And it is bedecked with embroideries  
*Of the smiling sun, clear and beautiful?*

*Beautiful crowns smiling and clear.*

*Smiling* suggests the security and the serenity of control

The mastery is in the clarity:

Smiling, clear and beautiful.

This is almost an architectural programme for the house or for the palace.

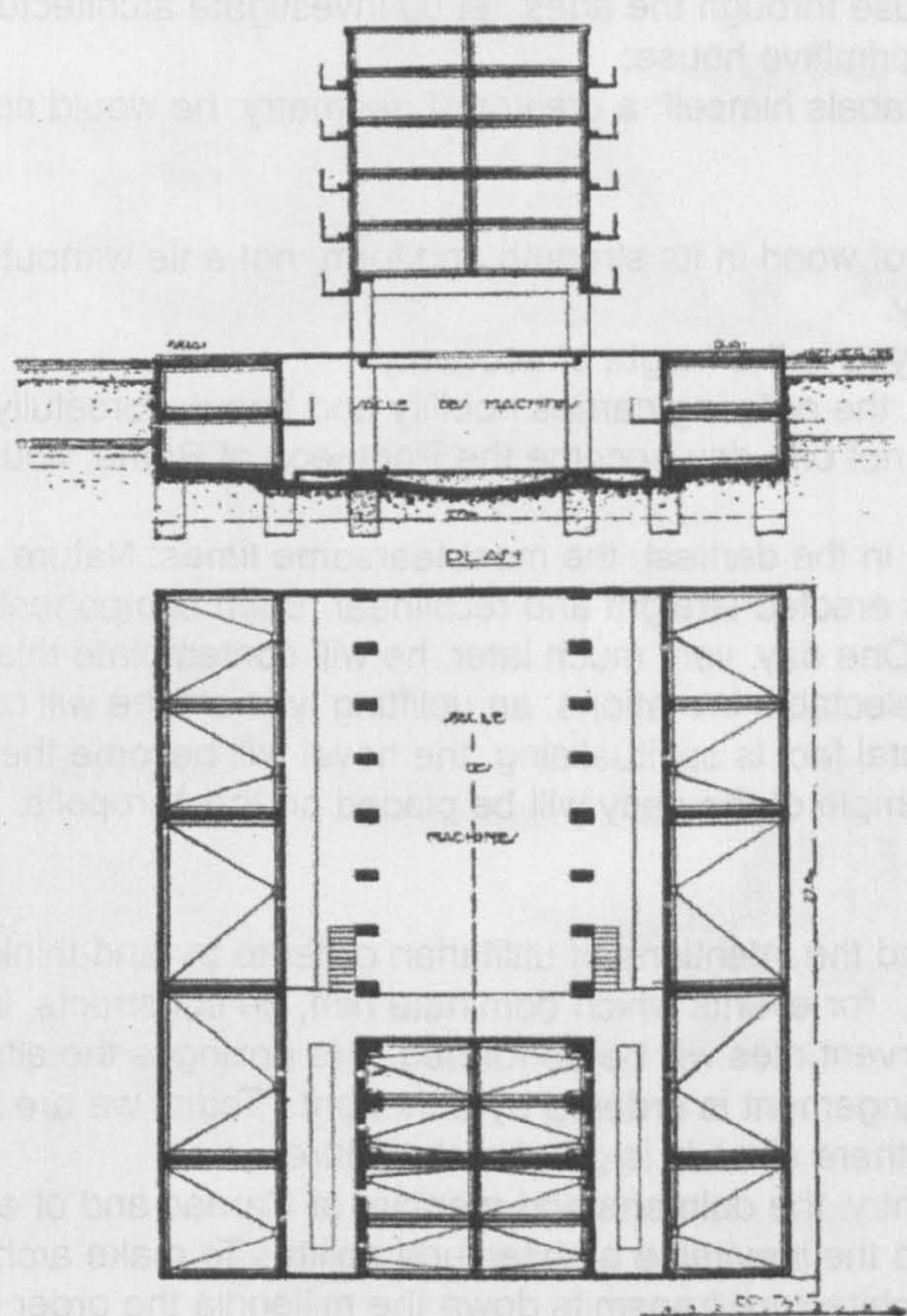
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The house of man, though the ages and in every climate, is a pure organism, so pure that it has always taken on the character of a type, and this type, from hovel to palace, is unique in the current of an epoch, based on the same profound causes, rational or sentimental.

The assertion is that the house is a type worth the pain of making in this period of incoherence where successive discoveries, innumerable, rapid, stunning even, of the 19th and 20th centuries have overturned the foundations of societies, disturbing our reason and our sensibilities and bringing us a cacophonous result where the dead and the living, ossified formulae and the most reckless views, are piled up, pell-mell. A certainty has come to us, seen in the awareness of our present situation and in the study of the past: a new epoch is there with a new society



UNE MAISON — UN PALAIS



Sainrapt et Brice.



and new men. And nothing of the past will ever *come back to life*. To build is to look forward and not backwards. And if we already perceive the direction of movement which carries us along, we are totally ignorant of the strange ends to which it will lead us.

With the house through the ages, let us investigate architecture

Here is the primitive house;

There man labels himself: a creator of geometry; he would not be able to act without geometry.

It is exact.

Not a piece of wood in its strength and form, not a tie without precise function.

Man is thrifty.

The house type is the height of economy.

In geometry, the ordering carries nobility and beauty forcefully.

Will this hut not one day become the Pantheon of Rome, house of gods?

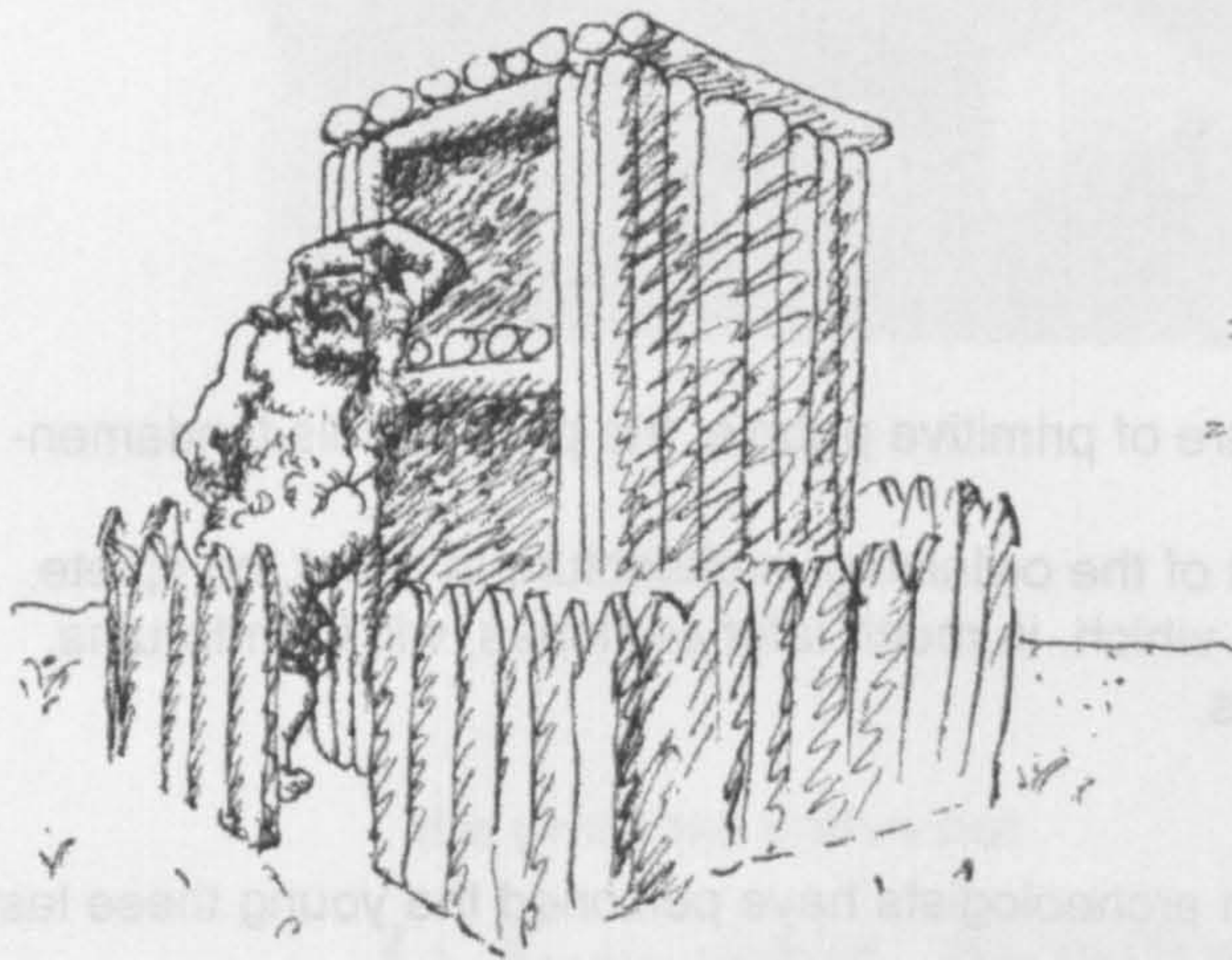
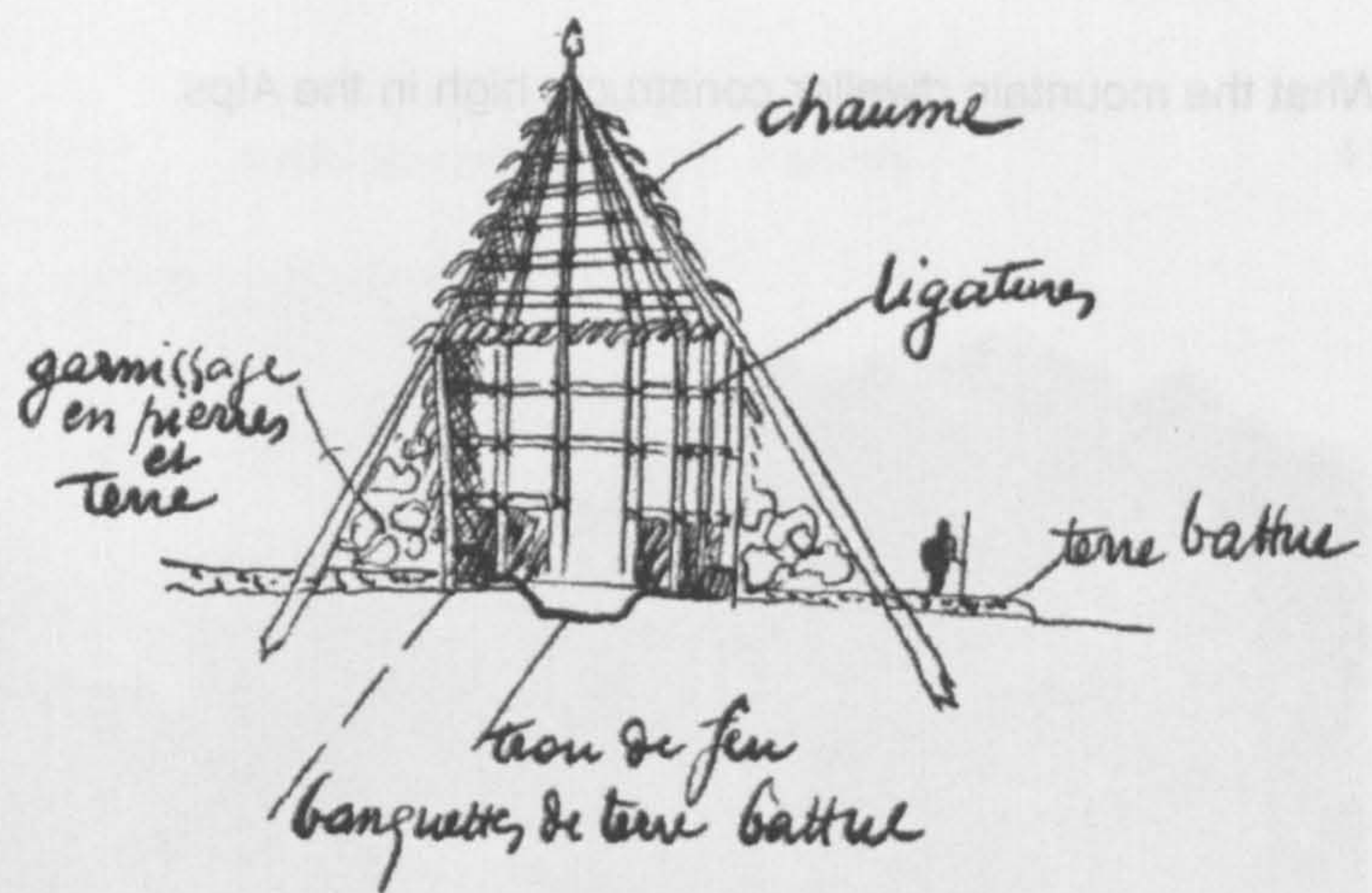
Here is man in the darkest, the most fearsome times: Nature stalks him<sup>18</sup>.

His house is erected straight and rectilinear. Each component of his structure has an architectural force. One day, very much later, he will contemplate this rustic tool and his spirit will perceive delectable invitations: an uplifting lyricism, he will conceive a symphonic counterpoint; the brutal fact is spiritualising, the hovel will become the materialisation of lofty intentions and the temple of the deity will be placed on the Acropolis.

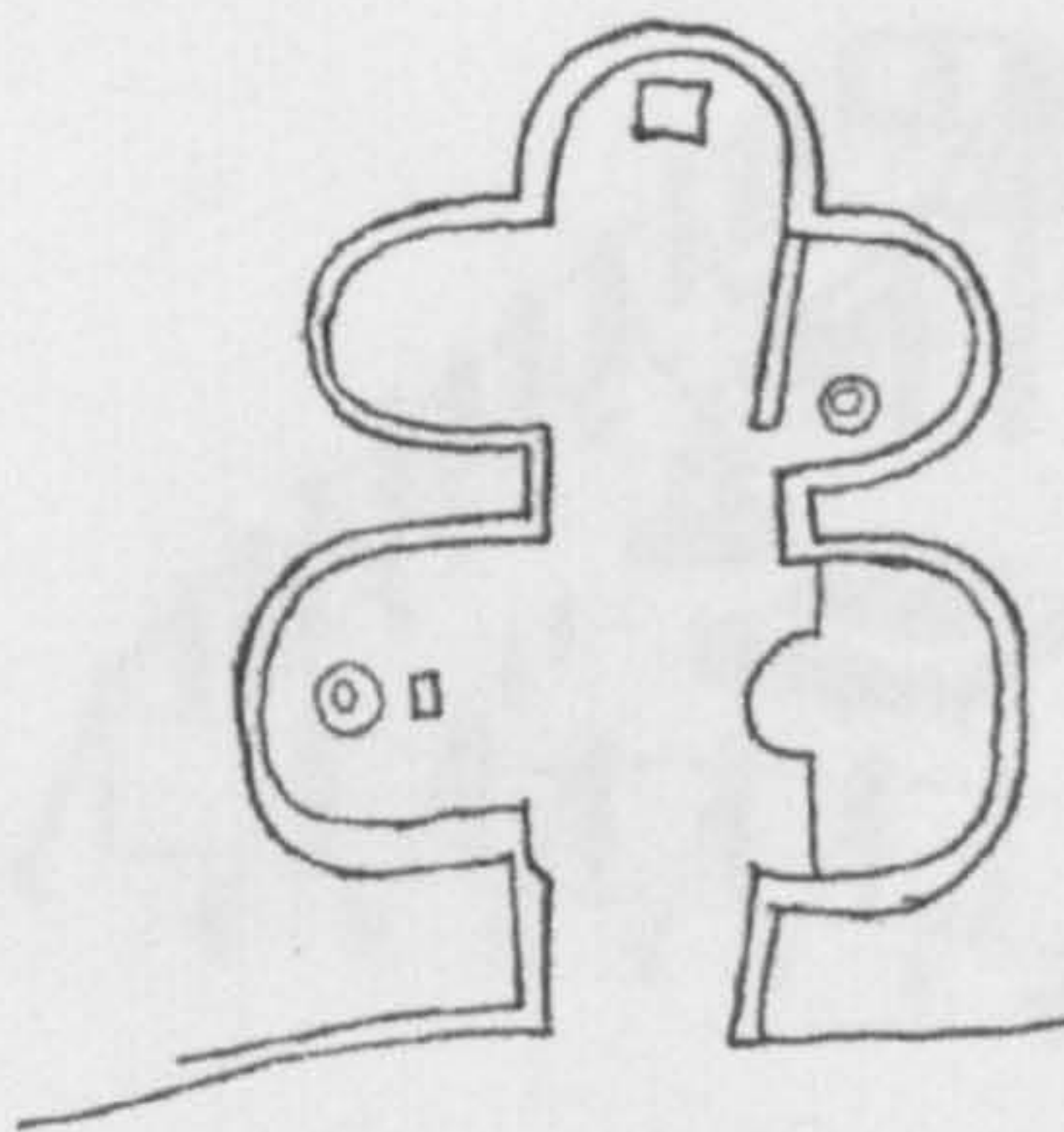
Going beyond the intentions of utilitarian order to try and think in the tumult of his still-dark conscience, for events which dominate him, he constructs, in cyclopean garb, enclosures where fervent rites will be performed. He arranges the altars, the sacrificial tables. And this arrangement is ordered by a thought. Today we are still disturbed by these active relationships; there already is great architecture.

In celtic country, the dolmens and menhirs of Carnac and of elsewhere bear witness, at a gigantic scale, to the inevitable architectural ability. To make architecture is to put in order; in this way, architecture transmits down the millennia the order of thought.

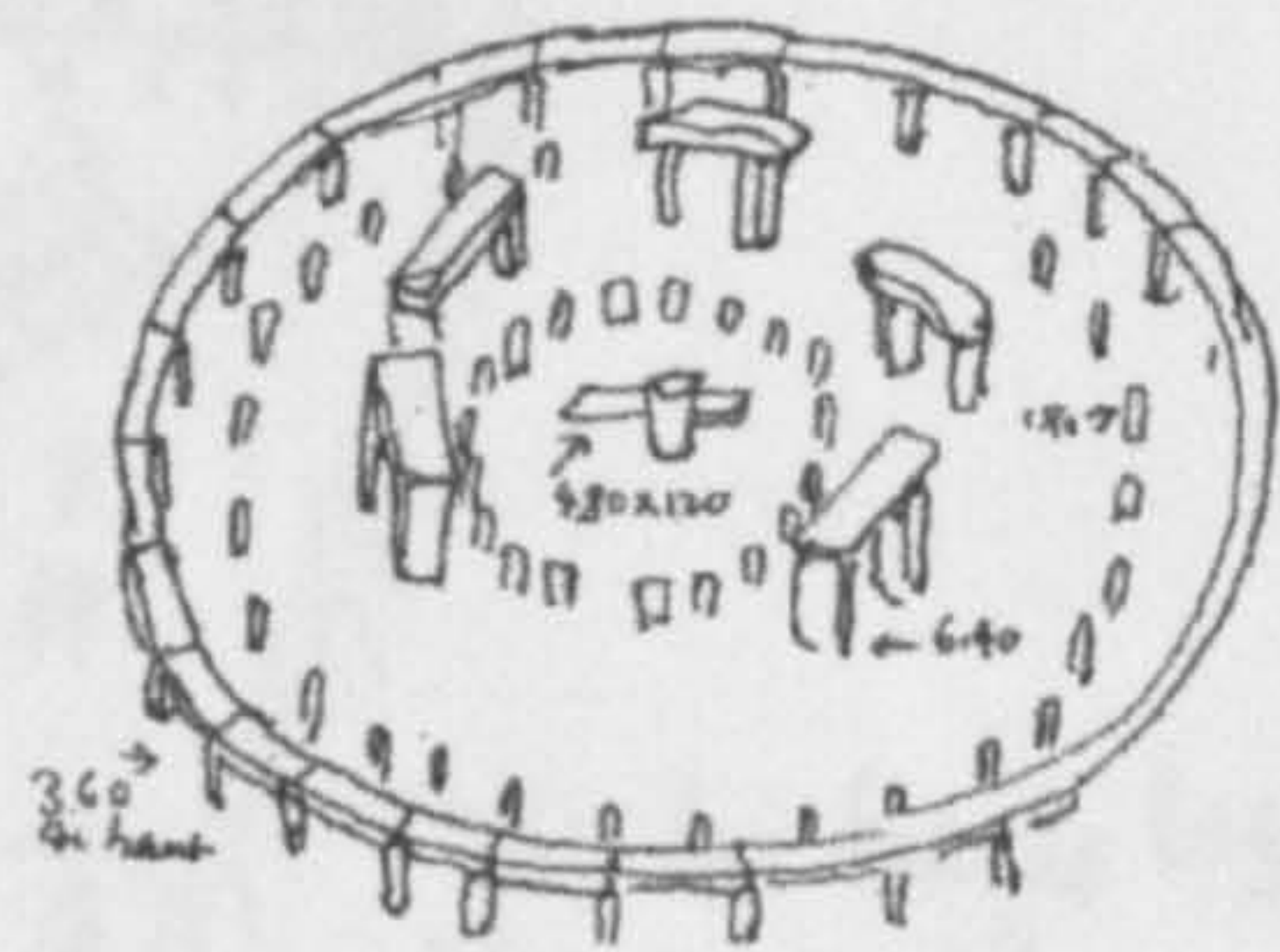




Huttes des Crannoïdes  
d'Irlande  
(Musée Mondial)



le gigantesco de l'île Gozzo  
phénico-cypriote  
âge du bronze  
en blocs considérables



Stonehenge  
Salisbury  
druidique



What the mountain dweller constructs high in the Alps.

It is a matter of the votive enclosure of primitive people, the proof of this fundamental function of ordaining is everywhere.

And I repeat again; in this product of the ordaining, architecture is latent, complete, totally, the clear and vigorous seed of that which, in much later centuries, will form forums, vestibules, halls, columns, facades, domes.

Architecture is there.

And it *is* there.

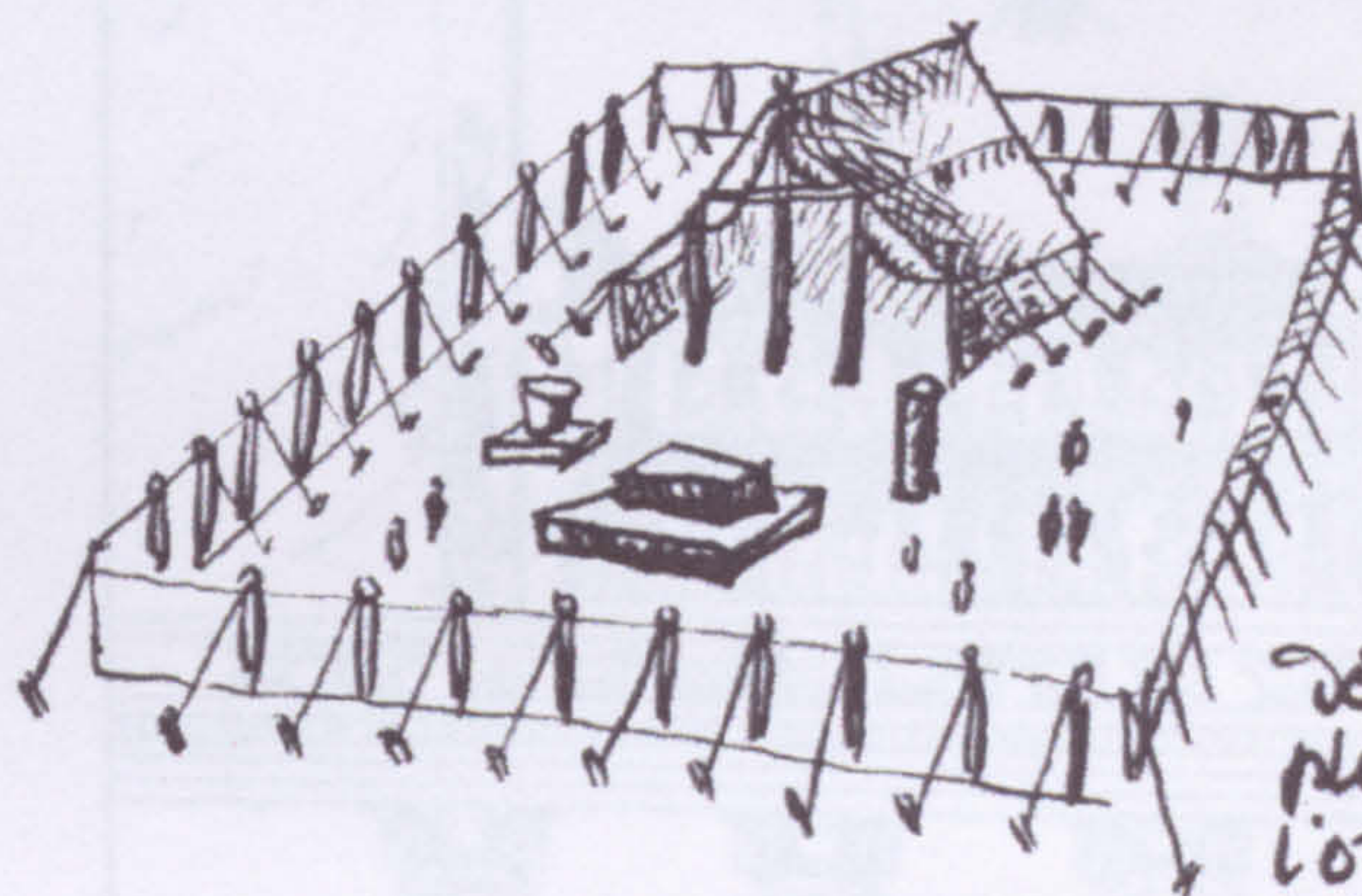
And *not* in the manuals with which archeologists have poisoned the young these last decades.





the primitive votive hut

La hutte votive primitive.



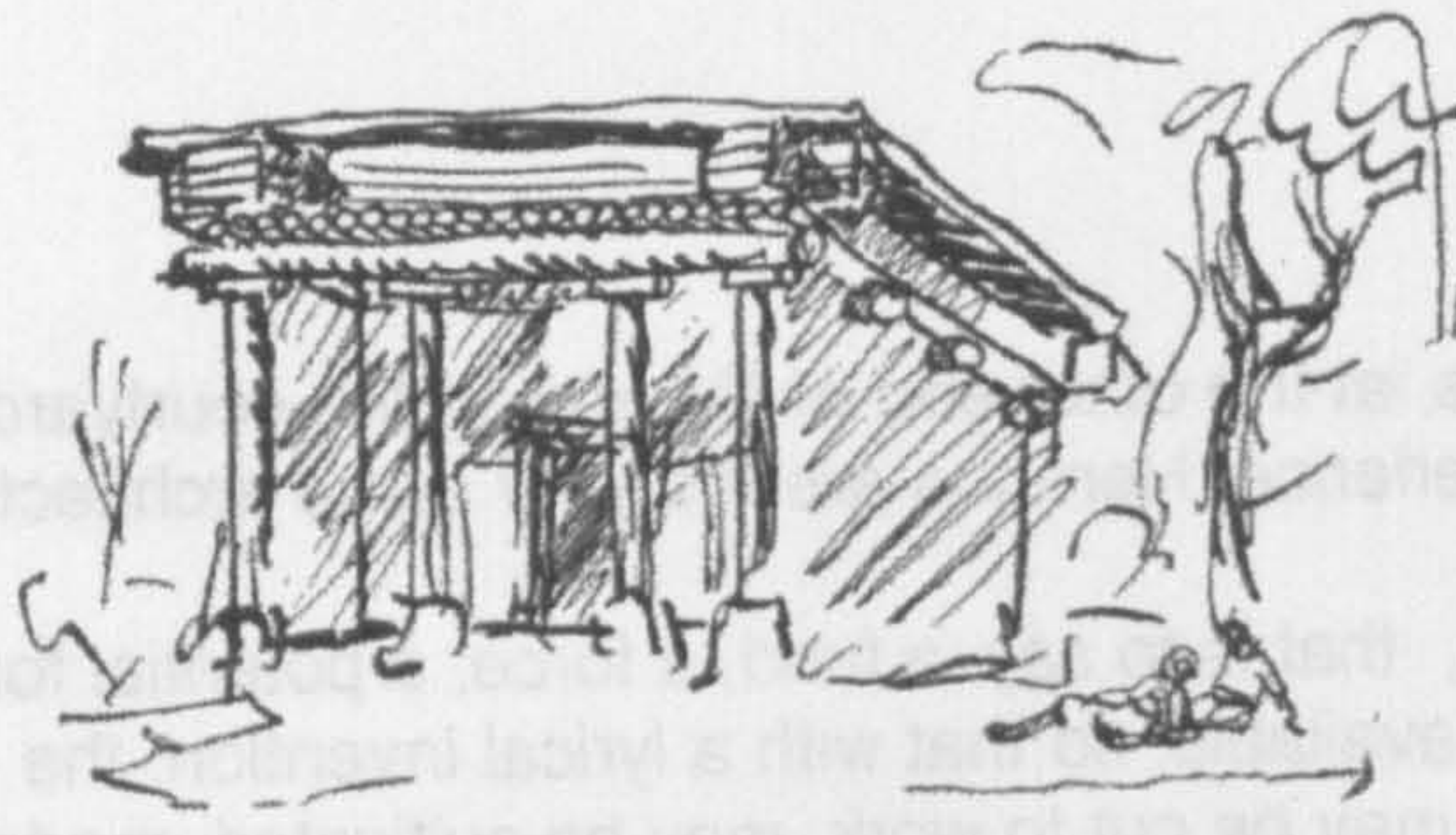
Dès les temps les  
plus reculés,  
l'ordonnance se  
présente infailli-  
blement à l'esprit

from the most distant  
times, organisation is  
invariably  
presented to the spirit



Look at the ancestral residences of the peasants of Mesopotamia. These humble houses of wood and cob reveal the celebrated splendours of Babylon and of Ninevah; they thrust our memory into the past; we rediscover those conquering and voracious kings who carried their artists with them in their retinues along the trails of Asia Minor, along with the war machines and the herds of slaves and prisoners; in this flower of Asia are the caryatids of the Erechthion.

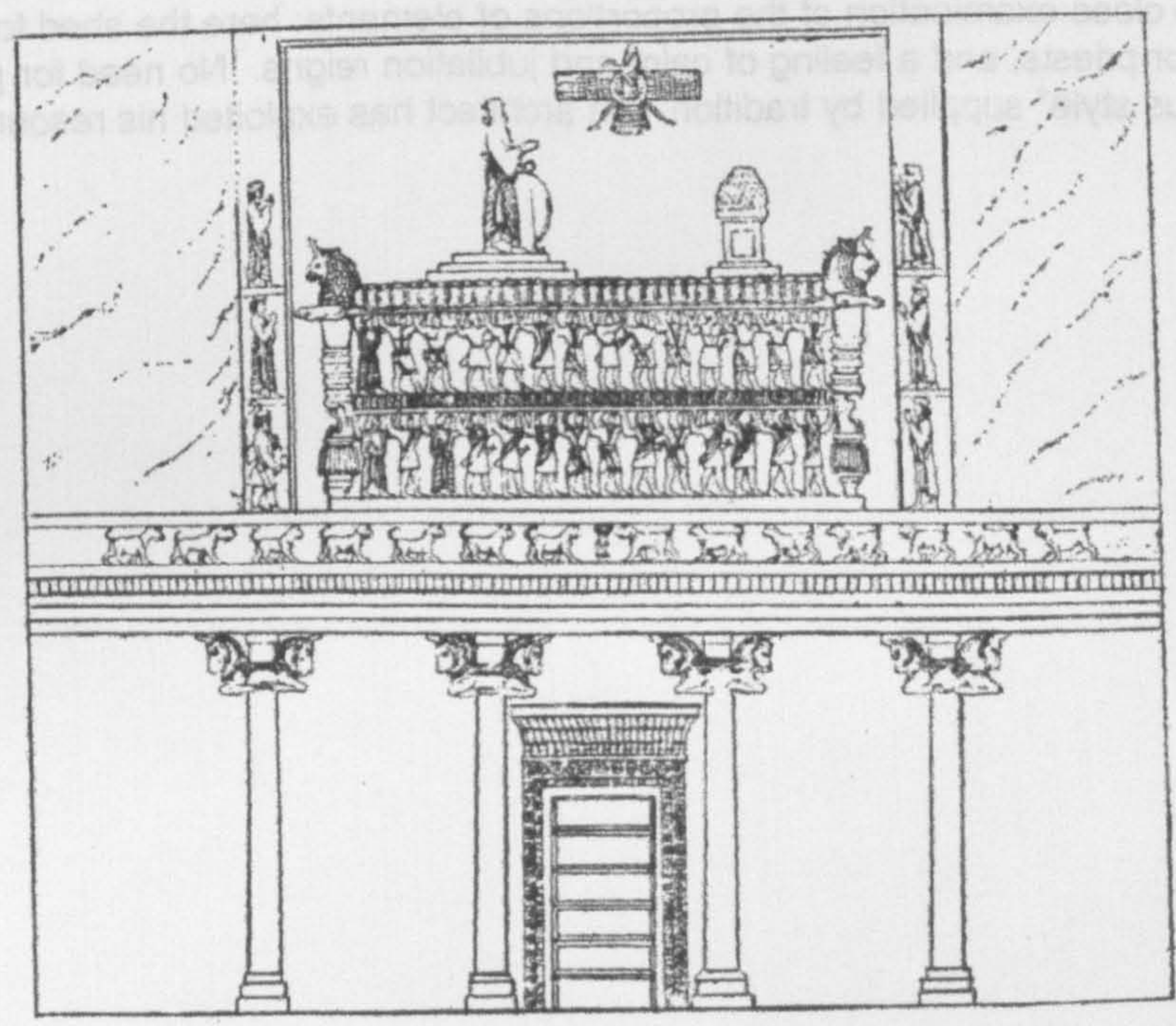




Habitat d'un paysan au  
bord du lac. (coup d'oeil)



Neuf de la cathédrale - Rouen.





Now, astride twenty centuries, at the other end of Europe, in the courtyard of a Brittany farm, we note the same experience. Here too are the very same architectural *resources*<sup>19</sup>.

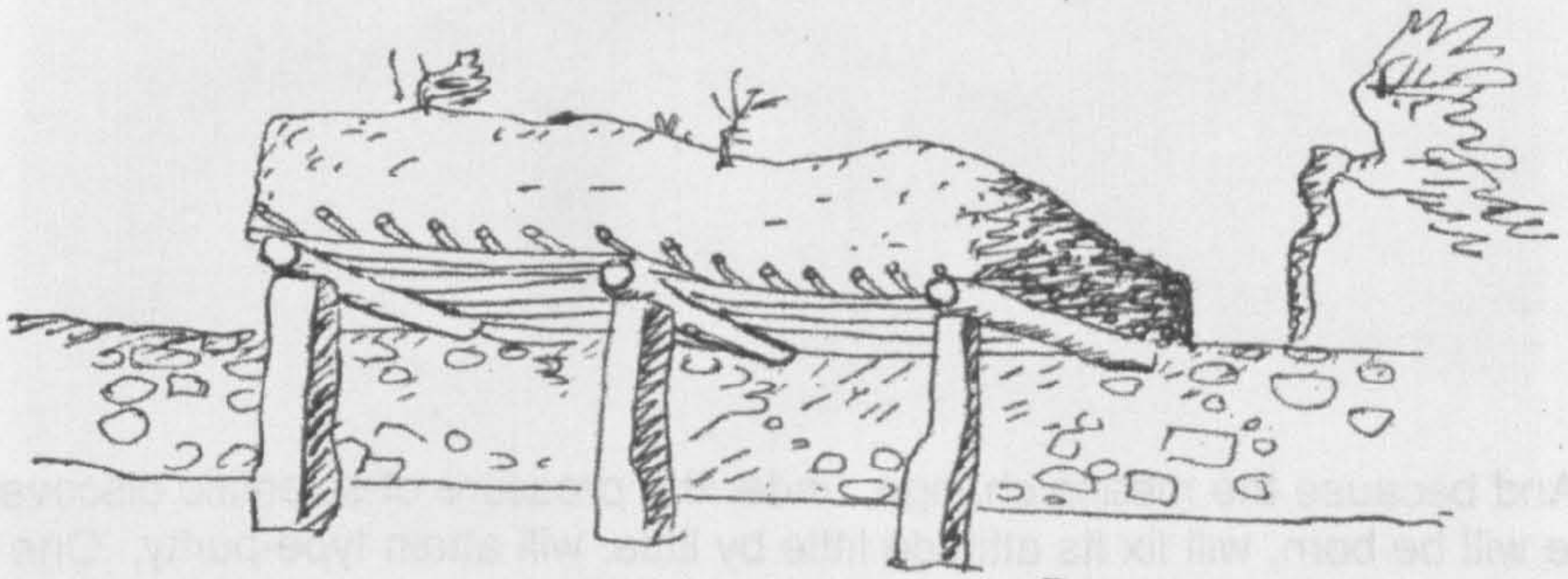
I say: *resources*. Resources, that is to say, a fund, a force, a potential for architecture; the elements are there, available, so that with a lyrical invention, the imagination of the artist creator, they may be put to work, may be cultivated, made to flower, made to shine in a splendid work, a firm, plump fruit from a high thought. Yet again, it must be that one day the spirit will understand and seize the powers in its hands. This was not yet the case here in Brittany.

A beautiful recent work, the nave of the church at Raincy, illustrates this experience. Auguste Perret, developer, builds docks at Casablanca in reinforced concrete, vast naves, warehouses for merchandise. Limitations pursue him; there are conditions of the strictest economy: reinforced concrete supplies him with the slender posts and the smooth "eggshell" vaults which are like lightly curved steel sheet: in place of enormous girders carrying a flat ceiling, a shell seven centimetres thick which will overcome its lateral pressures through a concrete ring. Some years later, Auguste Perret, architect, draws on his architectural reserves from Casablanca, and erects the nave of the church at Raincy. Nothing has changed in principle. But a categorical intention to elevate the work above utilitarian ends causes the close examination of the proportions of elements: here the shed for merchandise is a shed for priests, and a feeling of calm and jubilation reigns. No need for props indicating "religious style" supplied by tradition. An architect has exploited his resources.



UNE MAISON — UN PALAIS

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Ferme des 6  
Calvaires de  
Trégastel-Bourg



Thus in the Arcachon basin, an old Greek colony, this little house, charming and so pure, which has echoes of the Hellade has become a church, - house of man become house of God, by the single miracle of an intention, by the single miracle of an eloquent relationship between its masonry prisms.

The architectural fact expressed by geometry, rooted in profound standard (type) causes, needs and means, is elevated from the unconscious towards awareness.

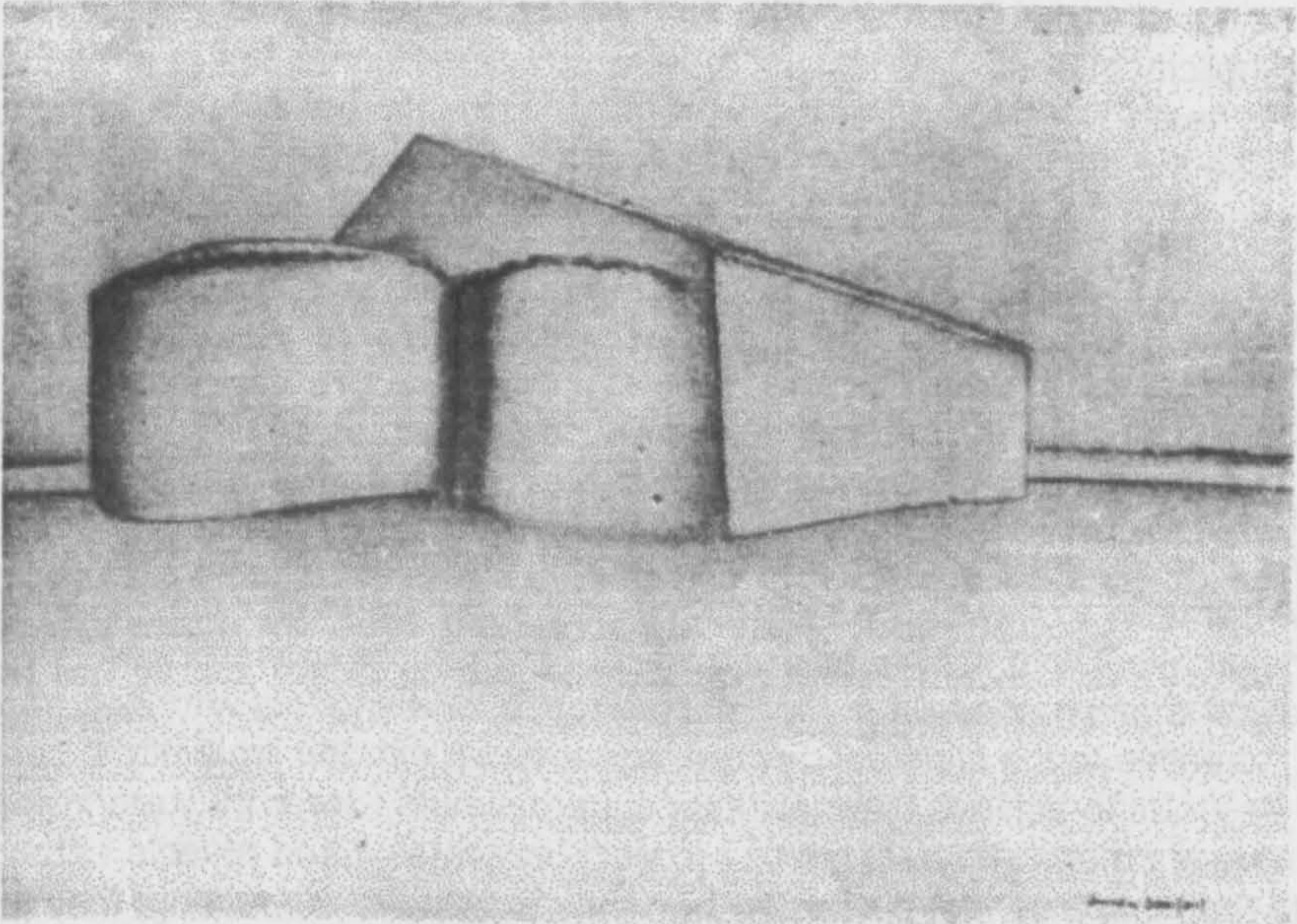
And because the means change, under the pressure of scientific discoveries, a new ensemble will be born, will fix its attitude little by little, will attain type-purity. One day in open Breton country, an Italian mason who understood reinforced concrete arrived. Along the seashore, in the village where the costumes and the hieratic attitude of people made one believe in Cromwell again, a new fact suddenly emerged, a new object was planted, much more efficient, more robust, a striking revolution. That too, had a potential for local architectural events.

Architecture is a tree from profound roots. In it, nothing is caprice; there is nothing besides the appearance of unforeseen events that might cause us to be accused of caprice. We are absent-minded, occupied by a thousand cares; when a new event seizes us, we prefer to think that it is spontaneous, incongruous, random, in the incoherence of present times. In architecture, there is a point of spontaneity, but a long, minute conditioning: types established with profound reasons, architectural resources, let us examine them attentively. It is from them that we will make a palace of our house.

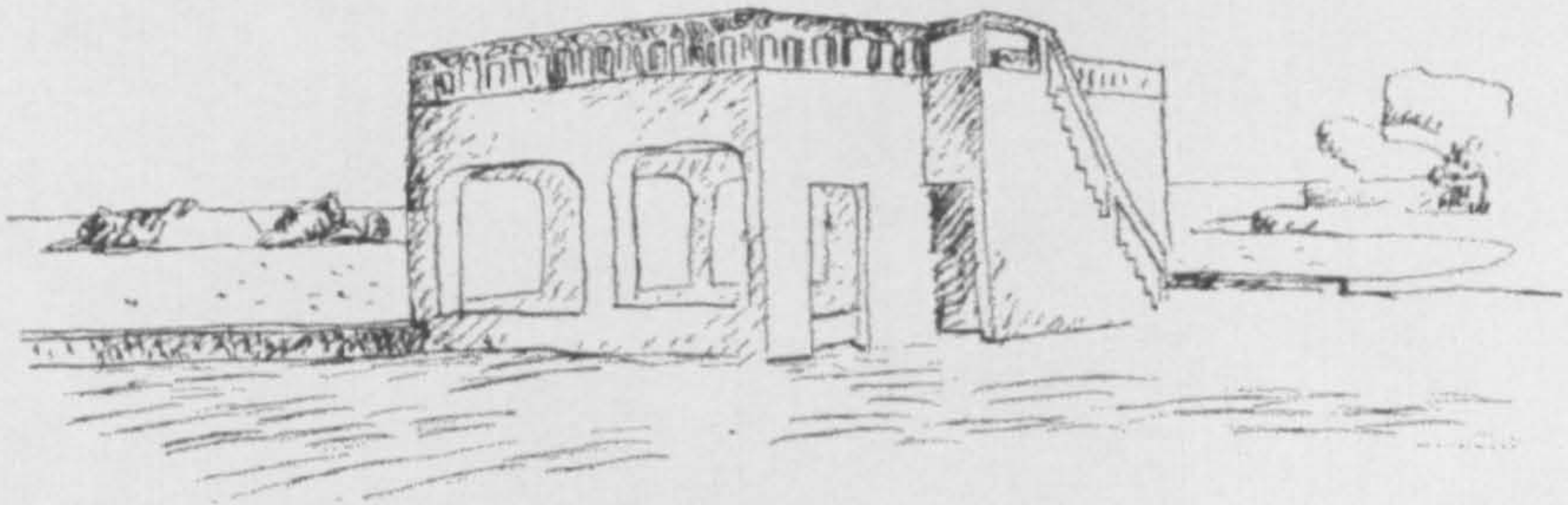


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Dessin d'Ozenfant.





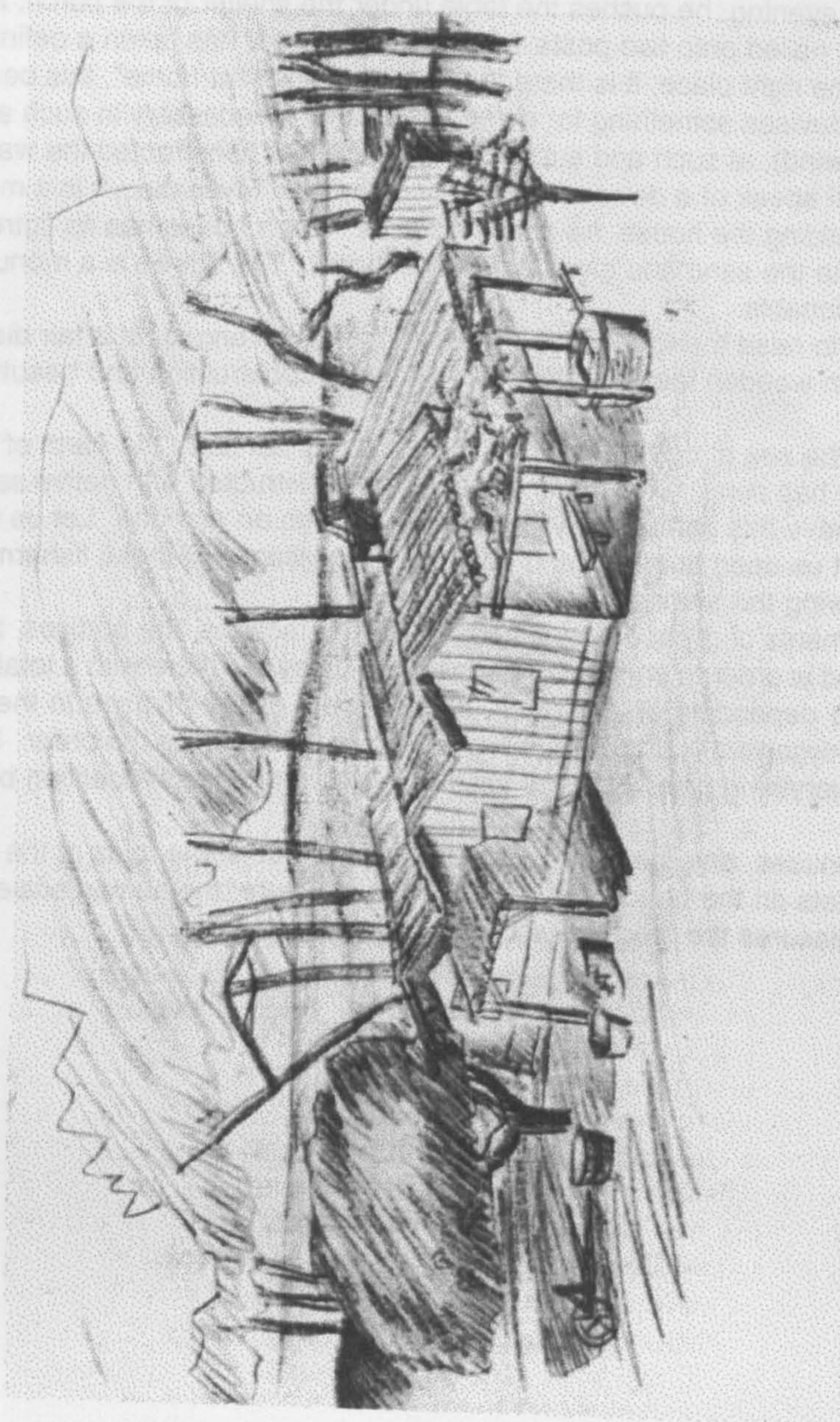
Let us investigate again, with our eyes wide open to the simplest paraphernalia of rural life today and allowing the apparent paradox, there we will find again and always, this house-palace, the synthetic product of the spirit and of the heart, which continues, even to the humming doors of the mechanical life, the eternal architectural fact

At the very doors of the mechanical life, that cause of the immense agitation which overwhelms us, after the Great War, the eternal architectural fact was rethought, humbly and in all the simplicity of normal conditions. Because the railway ended at the edge of the sands of the heath<sup>20</sup> that threatens the pine forest. This tongue of land<sup>21</sup> is isolated from the world because the railway ended; one of its flanks is battered by the quick-tempered and thieving ocean: the winds uproot everything, the dunes are nothing but a desert. The other flank is caressed by a quiet tide which flows through a gully into an interior basin. Isolation, separation from the world. The land itself is precarious: belonging to a single large landowner, the fishermen are there only by their hosts' tolerance. They cannot build stone houses founded on a soil which is not theirs. They only come here with the idea of sojourning. This precariousness puts them in the type condition of the housebuilder; they make themselves a hut, a *shelter*, nothing more, totally simple, totally plain. They achieve a pure programme which is entirely unencumbered by pretensions to history, to culture, to the taste of the day: from day to day they build a hut, a shelter, with the poor materials found round about. They make it with their hands and without great professional knowledge; a car comes, advice is given, the fruit of recent experience. Making this with their hands, they are, then, attentive to the slightest gesture, economical with the least effort, sensitive to all ingenuity, desirous to achieve the maximum by a minimum. Here they are truly in the type-condition of every man, who decides on his work, executes it and reflects. They are very attentive to the thing they make. To decide on the location of something, they turn around like a cat in a bedroom seeking its chosen place; they weigh up, calculate unconsciously, they find the point of balance, the centre of gravity. And in a harmonious cadence, intuition proposes and reason reasons. And they allow themselves to carry along a scrap of lyricism, very proper, very permissible, very natural, a lyricism altogether human, oh, entirely human! It is very simple, this lyricism issues spontaneously, without warning. It is in each of our acts since it is everything in us, our guide.



## UNE MAISON — UN PALAIS

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This fisherman: why should he not be a poet? Primitive man<sup>22</sup> is indeed a poet, very much so. He begins with the *hall*. And the pines of the forest are felled. The sun is strong: a visor is made above the eyes of the house. He has dug the well, installed its pulley; the place for the well was carefully chosen.

Then he considers his comfort: one or two bedrooms.

The first evening, he pushes the table under the shelter of the porch, in the open air. A bench- a plank nailed onto two posts driven into the sand- has taken a definite place. Ah, this bench is in the right place; it is there that one sits when "at home", this bench is a monument. He devises something for doing the washing, necessary in such a place (because of the wind); at such and such a distance he has constructed the washing copper; one might as well speak of a device from Knossos or from Mycenae. It is a monument.

While building the house, he plants a figtree. Each house has its figtree, because the fig pushes into the sand and gives a dense shadow. The figtree is a monument and its place is unquestionable.

In order to raise the fowls off the ground, he has arranged, at a fair distance, a small kiosk in the air on wooden feet, and hutches, sound in construction and beautiful as the Lycian tombs.

So that the sea at certain equinoctial tides does not carry the earth of the vegetable garden away, he has surrounded it with a palissade constructed with native sagacity.

Let us leave this partial analysis there (I could go on and on). Let us think *architecture*. Let us open our eyes and see anew the villages of these fishermen with eyes fresh from reviewing the architecture of history.

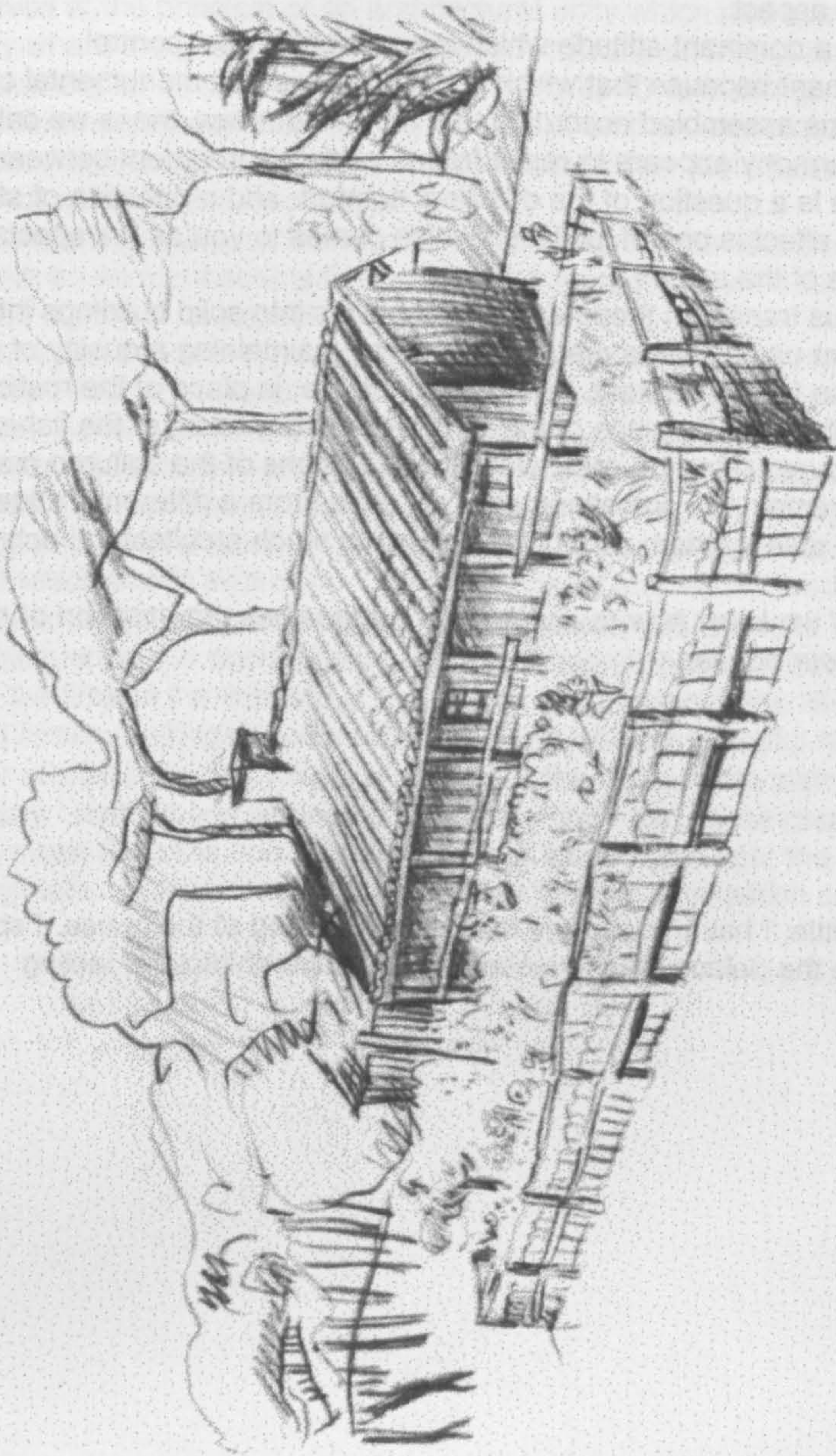
The elements of great orderings are there: the facades, the porticos, the monuments that one arranged in order to ennoble the ensemble. They are there with a total *truth*, one born of the other, one depending on the other, being linked, giving rhythm in the most effective conjunction. An organism is unfurled, is expressed, is presented in the order. Nothing is to be thrown back. Everything gels. Not one excess, a single needless repetition but total efficiency.

These houses, one hundred, five hundred, isolated in the folds of the pine forest or grouped in hamlets on the beach, have a common measure: the human scale. Everything is to scale; one measures the step, the shoulder, the head.



## UNE MAISON — UN PALAIS

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Maximum economy.

Maximum intensity.

One glorious day, having suddenly understood them, we exclaimed: "But these houses are palaces!"

And one characterises the palace, first of all, simply: a palace is a house striking in the dignity<sup>23</sup> of its aspect.

Dignity is a dominant attitude which issues from proper control.

It is dominant because that which constitutes it is of a monumental order.

Pure forms assembled according to a harmonious law, these we call monumental.

To me, harmony appears to result from a perfect agreement between cause and effect. The cause is a question of the dwelling: comfort; and a question of structure: the construction. The effect is one of jubilation which comes to you as the spectacle of a learned and elegant game of the spirit.

Brief: let us transform these ephemeral hovels into solid buildings intended for our contemporaries; let us achieve a metamorphosis by maintaining a quality of equivalent spirit. In place of the pine from the forest, reinforced concrete; in place of the rustic programme, the "machine for living in"; in place of the simple-minded lyricism of the fishermen who built these enduring houses after the great war, the aspirations of the cultured man. None of these hovels will remain but something else will arise, from a differently stated problem. Then, may we be able to attain so much fullness, so much architectural richness, such an architectural spirit.

*We too, if we know how to achieve the harmonious organisation of new givens, can make palaces of our houses.*

\*  
\*   \*  
\*

Little by little, I have voiced my thoughts: speaking of the house, I speak of the palace. I achieve the palace, by the incessant work of architectural feeling



which perturbs my spirit, stimulates it, incites it, uplifts it.

Because architecture is an undeniable event which springs up suddenly in a creative instant: where the spirit, anxious to ensure the solidity of the work, to fulfil the desire for comfort, is found to be uplifted by an intention higher than that of simply serving, and tending to manifest those lyrical forces which animate us and give us joy.

Thus I arrived at the principle of an architectural unity which has appeared at all the moments of history where the phenomenon of creation regularly unfolded, like a plant forming its roots, pushing up its stem and leaves, opening its flowers and giving its fruit. Until complete development has produced the fruit, that is, until an architectural system has been duly conditioned by the satisfying of numerous necessities, architectural *resources* are there like a seed, an architectural potential.

Come a sufficient lyricism, an enthusiastic creative force, the resources of this seed will cause it to bloom as an architectural flower. And the house-type will attain the palace: it will be striking in the dignity of its aspect.

So the house can become a palace, always. It is in the hands of the architects.

It may be that, suddenly, under the machinist blast, the collapse of all the means now in use will occur: no longer will anything of the palace-up-to-now, remain. As for the rest, the palace of our last decades, produced by the Academies, has hideously soiled the meaning of the term. This palace was nothing more than the image of a filthy pretension. It was not dignified by any healthy spirit, by any pure aim. The palace was nothing but a rotten stew around which they<sup>24</sup> swarmed. Our stomachs as men of the machine age can no longer assimilate a food so close to corruption. The academies led us to this choice, so absolute in its consequences: to decide between all the magnificent pure traditions which lasted up to about the time of the Institute in the chaste countryside of the Isle-de-France, forming the radiant crown of villages and small towns with all their beautiful houses, clean and pure, and their chateaux and churches which tell of the respectable state of a respectable hierarchy,- and the lies which are flaunted at the heart of the great city, covering with a treacherous mask the most healthy institutions of the modern age; the banks, the offices, the meeting halls, -our contemporary Boulevard Haussmann, which comes to a totally



indifferent end: the work of eunuchs; our *Cercle Militaire de Saint-Augustin*<sup>25</sup>, which by itself succeeds in scandalising the whole world. There we are on the very canker, life is below: the bank, the offices with their cabinets, their efficient furniture, their reinforced concrete skeleton, which was made to hold the building honestly, from top to bottom; death is above it; a stone mask, an absolutely useless stone mask, that was achieved by exhausting the quarry, *after the house was finished*. Then a wood-framed roof that one fixes onto the reinforced concrete that previously crowned the house. Then slates and dormer windows of zinc puffed out with ornaments that the kings used to use in stone, the kings, for reasons of state had to make an impression on the peasants. Domes to crown everything, refuges for rats and for mouldering files, while the most beautiful surface of the whole building on high, in the air, far from the noise and from the dust, could have been the roof garden. In a word, the reviled *credits*<sup>26</sup>, gold thrown from the windows for show. The truth that is architecture has become no more than a fashion, a turn of the schematic spirit, or a lyrical representation, without any further contact with the true vigour which had caused it to be born in the past. And this is the most vile state of the human spirit: falsehood, pretension, pomposity.

It was in the hands of the architect; he is bankrupt. He has plastered the flashy rags of the palace onto the house. The house has not become a palace.

Because of the collapse of all the old formulae under the blast of machinism.

Domain of the pawnshop, of rags!

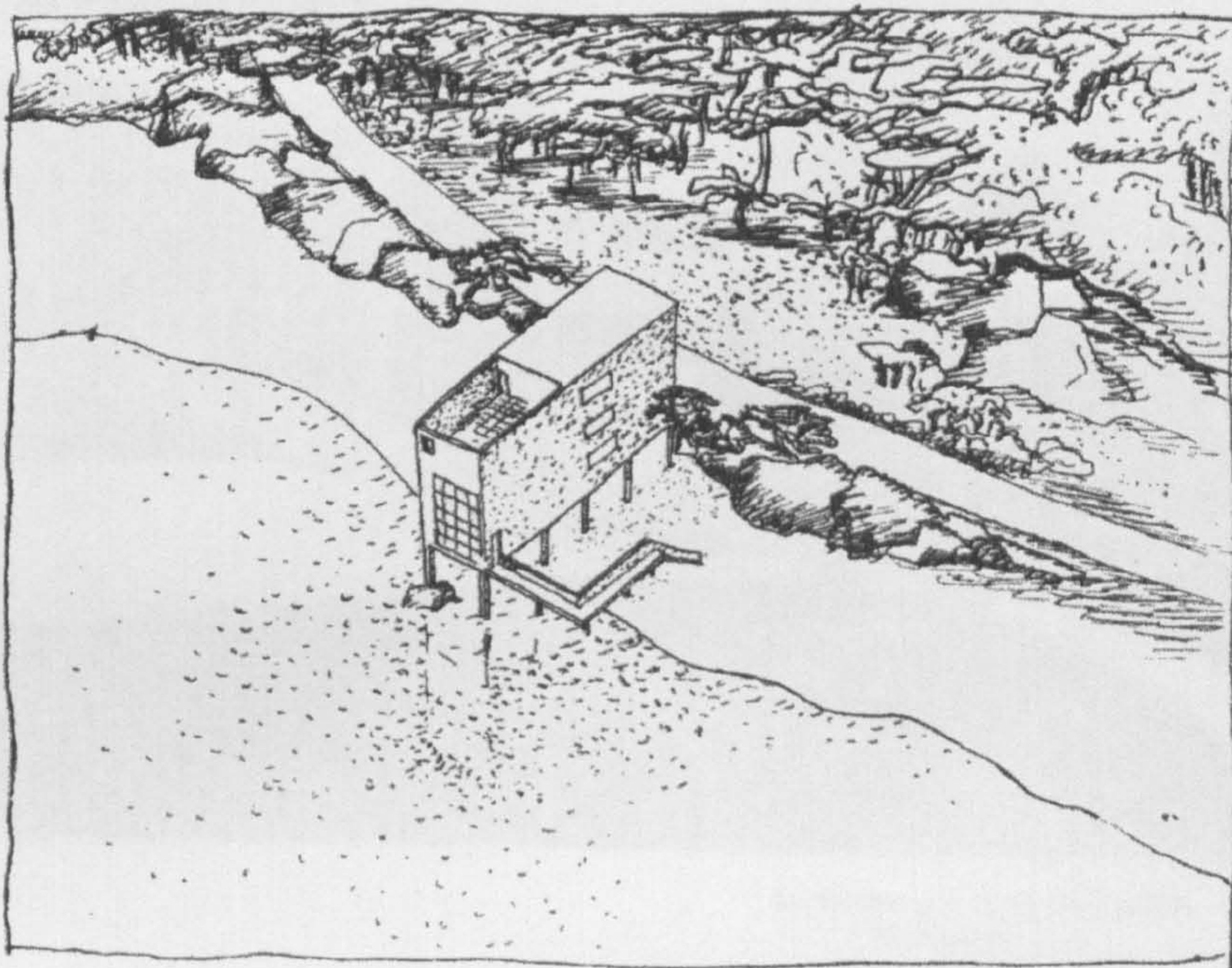
Susceptible, perhaps very, to the pursuit of the most pure traditions, here is the small, reinforced concrete house, rational, explicit, true as those true houses we examined.

True.



## UNE MAISON — UN PALAIS

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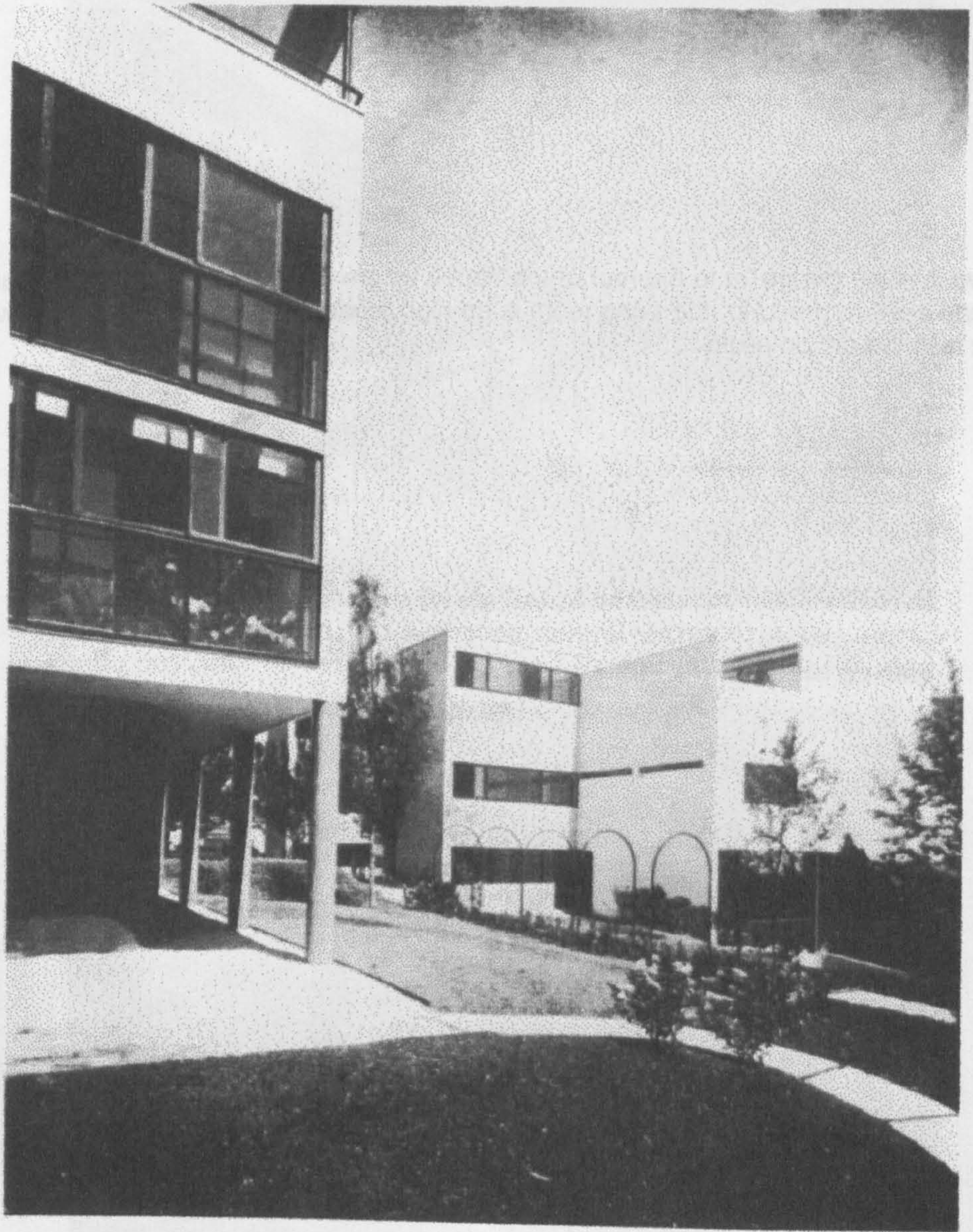


Côte d'Azur.



A house capable of more efficient operation than that bequeathed by our fathers: the mechanical spirit conceives of comfort and can





Le Corbusier et P. Jeanneret.  
Stuttgart.

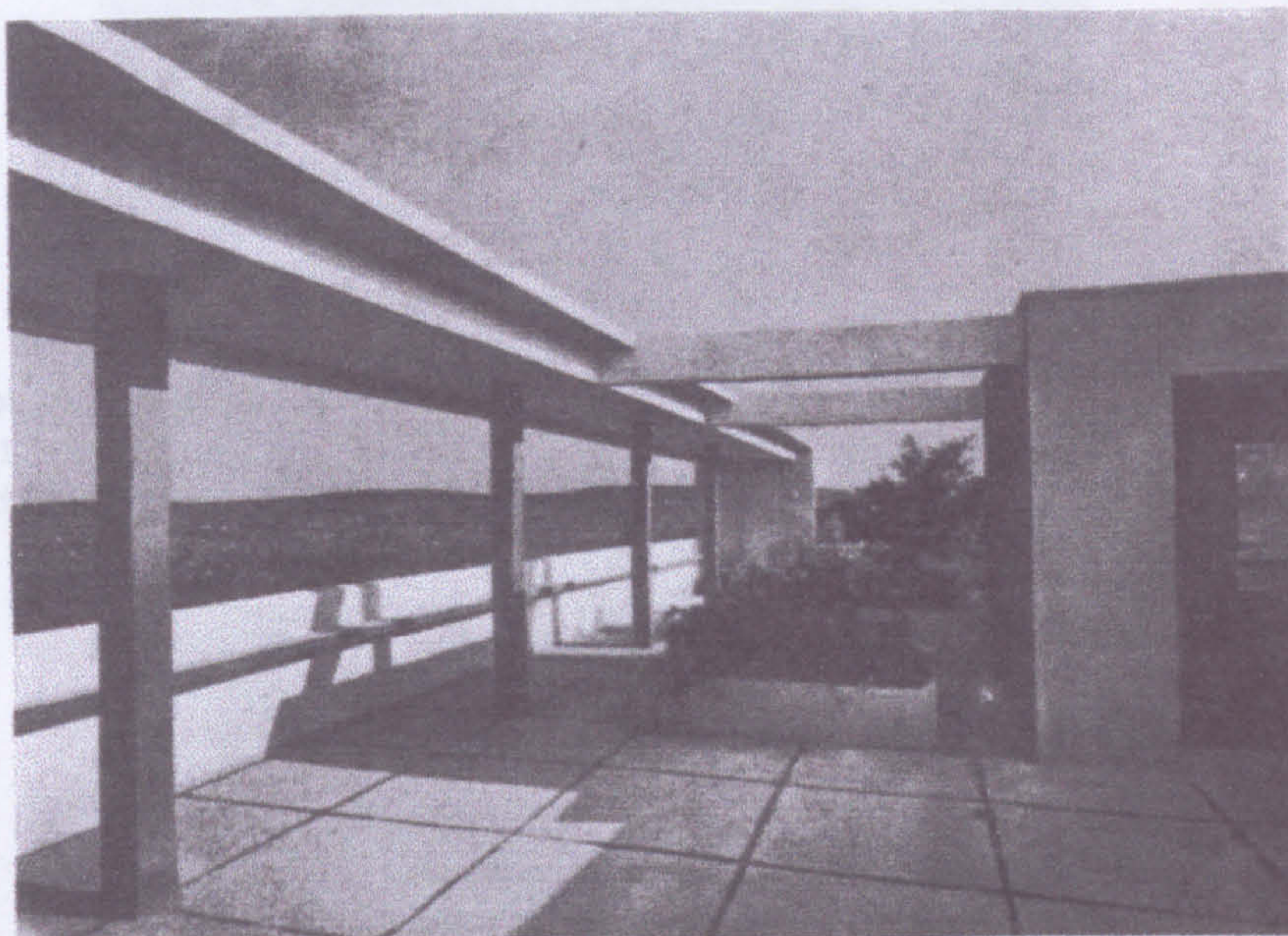


achieve it. One climbs up to the roof of the house where a garden is planted. The ancestral plan has been returned to: the living room is on high, near the roof garden, not below. The house is in the air, on pilotis,



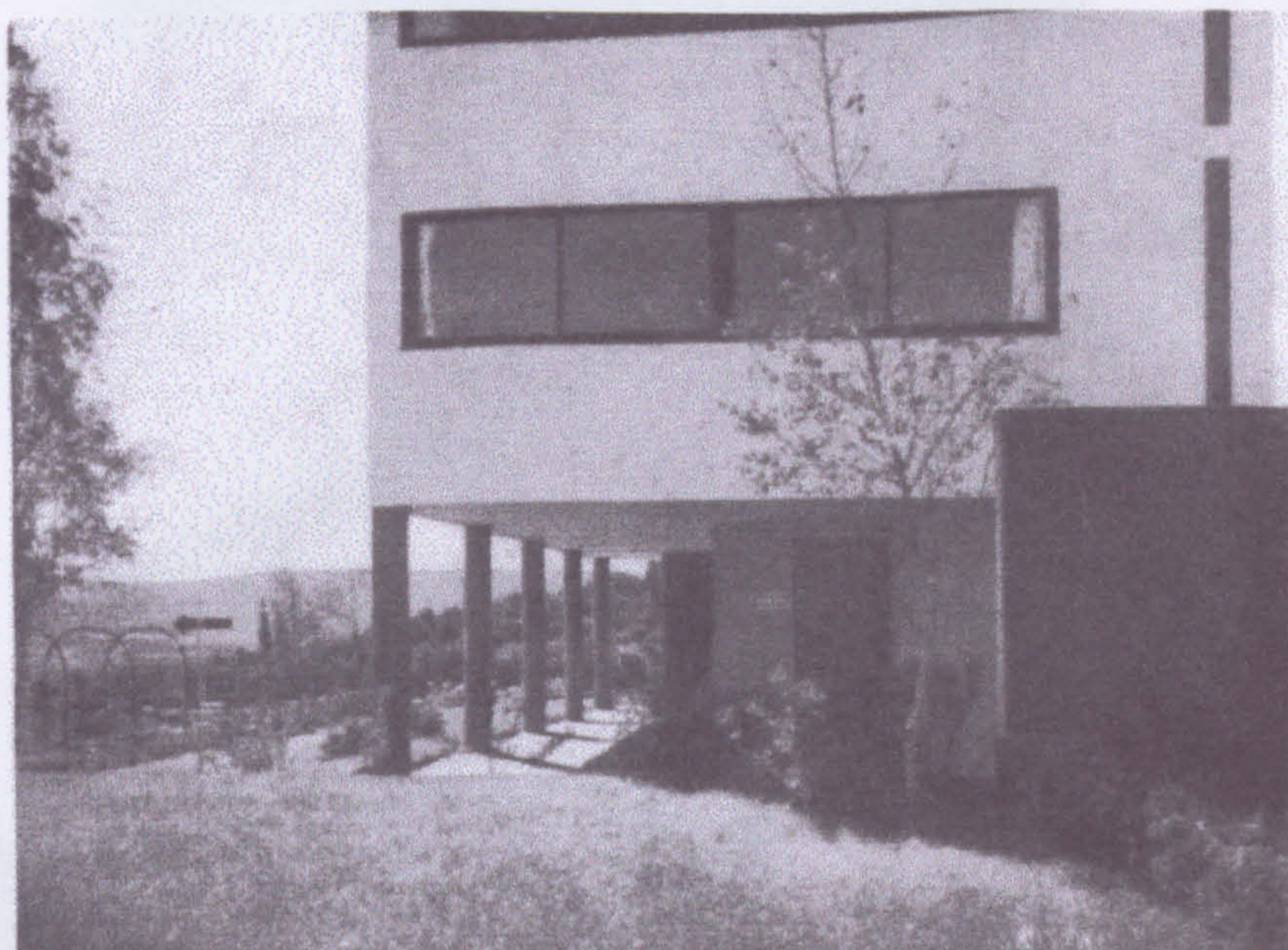
## UNE MAISON — UN PALAIS.

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L. C. et P. J., Stuttgart.

Un toit-jardin.  
**The roof garden**



L. C. et P. J., Stuttgart.

Les pilotis sous la maison.  
**The pilotis under the house**

UNE MAISON.

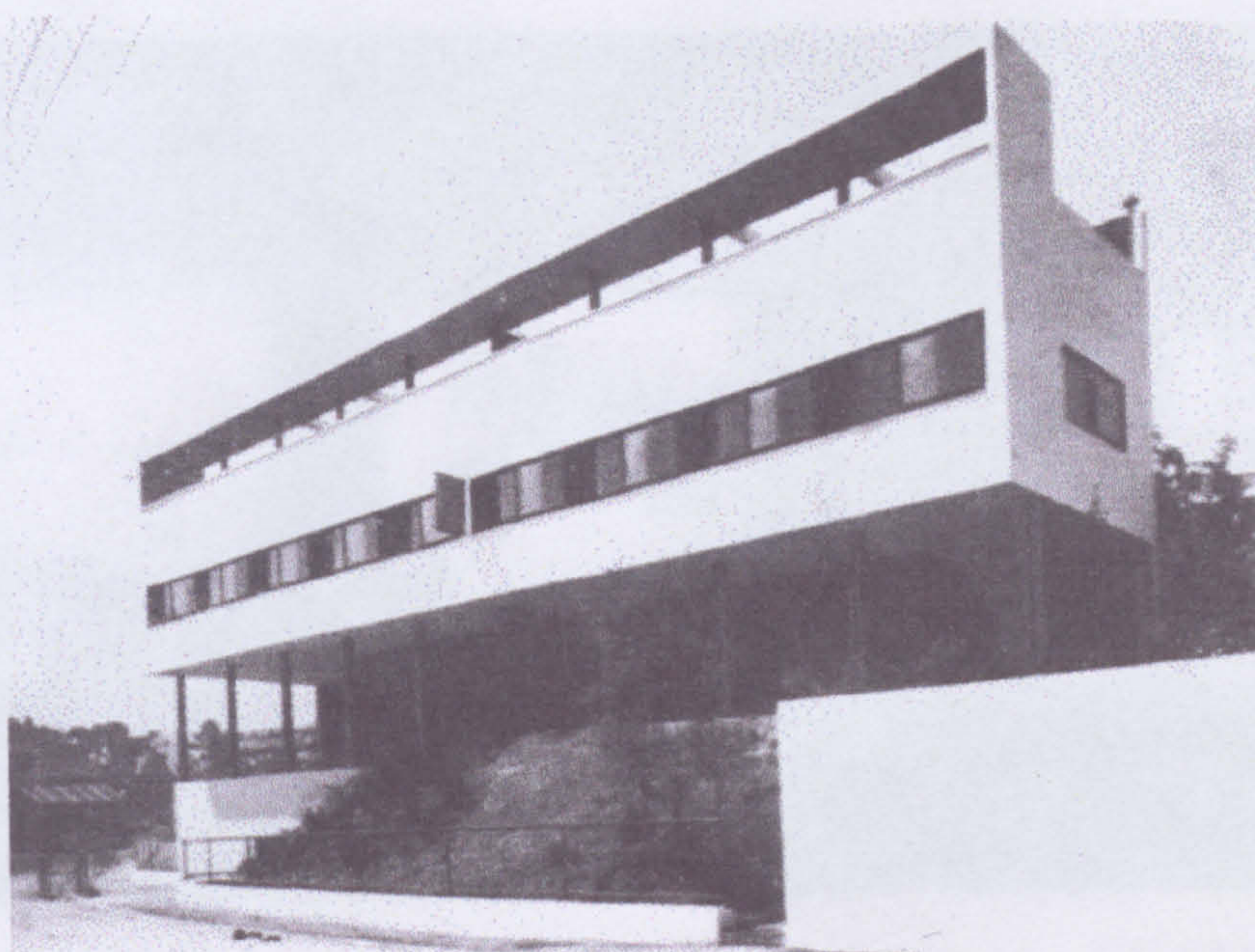


removed from the soil, more healthy. Light is everywhere, because reinforced concrete has given us, with the *free plan*, the *free facade*: the windows are free, they always touch the lateral walls and these act as reflectors. Now there is a new call for light in the house and this is a great triumph.





L. C. et P. J.  
Stuttgart.



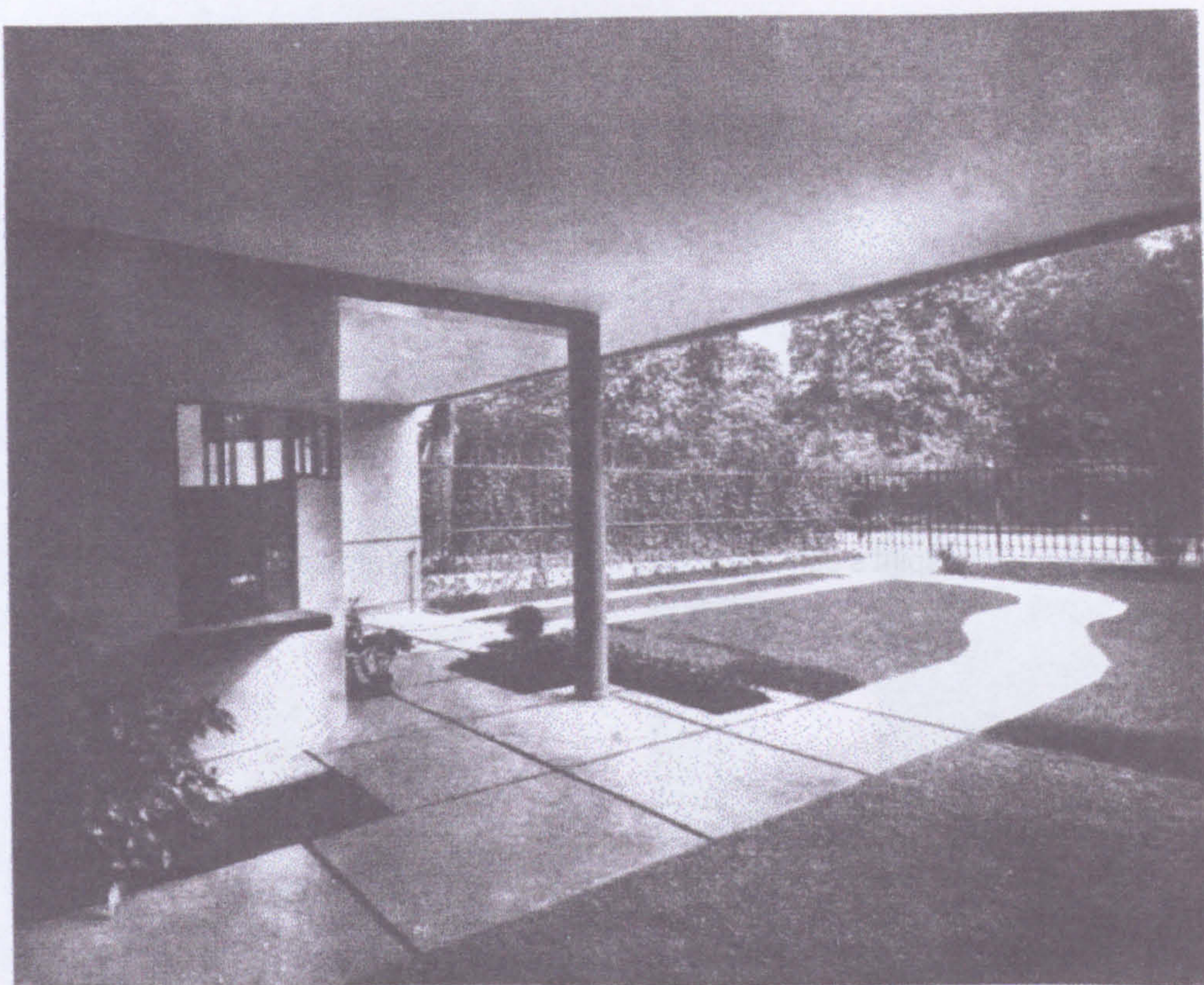
L. C. et P. J. Stuttgart.  
La façade ne porte plus la maison. Son unique fonction : un fournisseur de lumière.

**The facade no longer carries the house.  
Its unique function: a supplier of light.**



A spirit careful to observe, to consider, a spirit tending to express the quintessence,  
leads reinforced concrete step by step towards

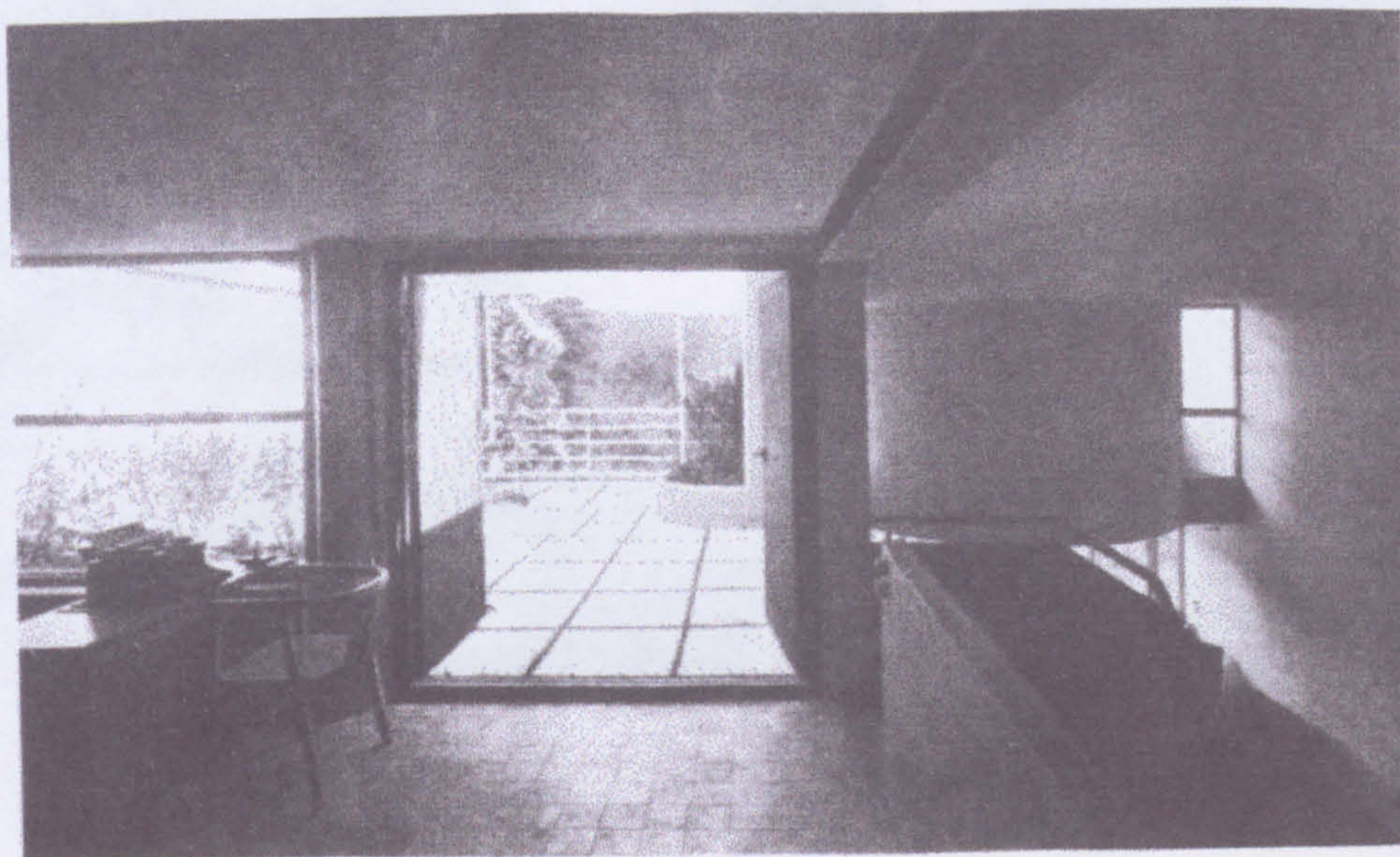




L. C. et P. J.

On entre sous la maison.

**We enter beneath the house**



L. C. et P. J.

De la bibliothèque on passe sur le toit-jardin.

Boulogne-sur-Seine.

**From the library we move to the roof garden**



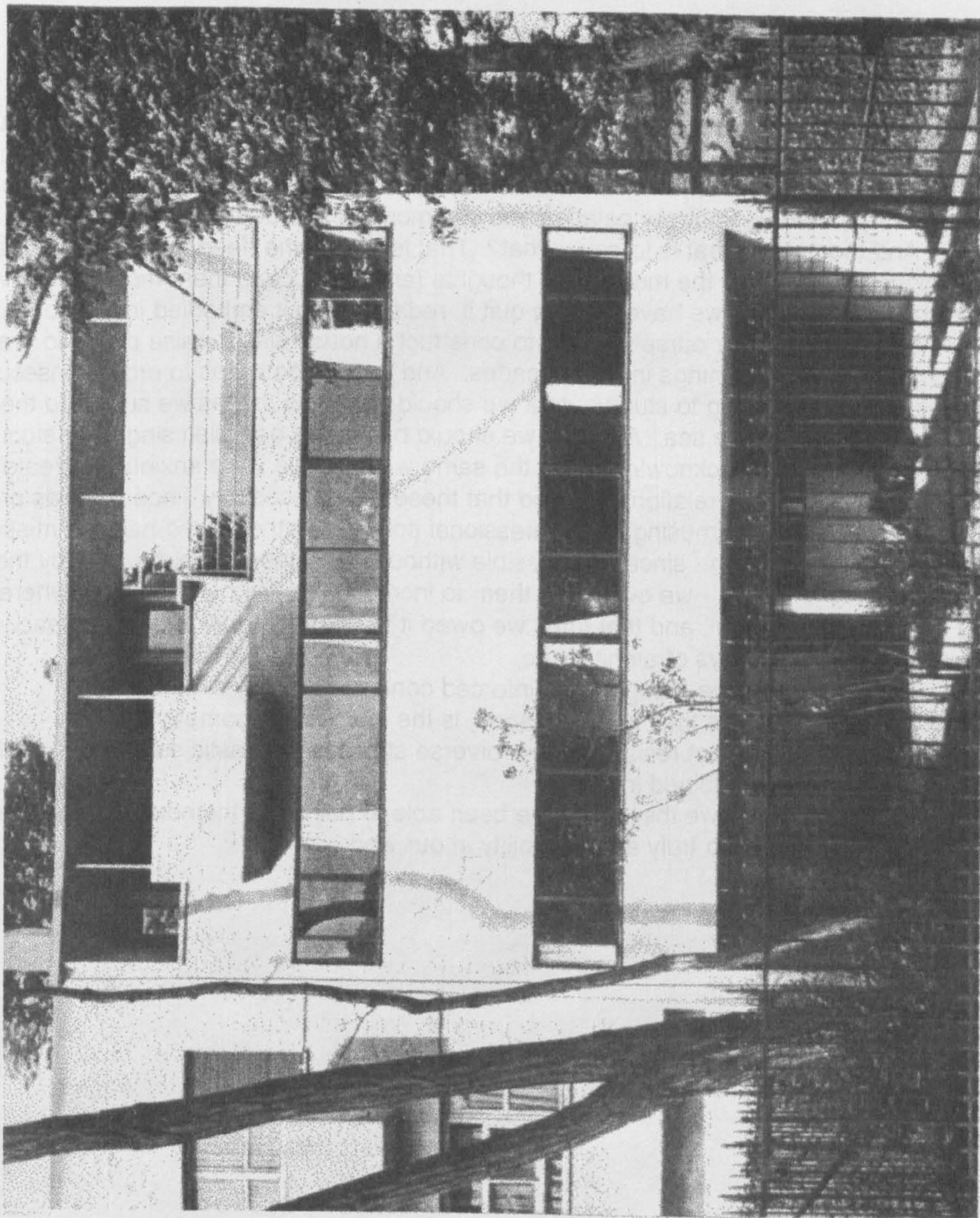
the most noble destinies of architecture. With this new material, everything is turned  
upside down. At the spirit's command, the house becomes a palace.





## UNE MAISON — UN PALAIS

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Ladies, gentlemen, have I been able to make you feel the inevitable architectural doing which is in our every scheme when we are not subjected to the mortal shackles of Academies?

\*  
\*   \*  
\*

I have been able to collaborate in these last years jointly with these my illustrious colleagues, in researches on the establishment of a contemporary architectural style.

And one day I wrote: Bless this difficult age, this post-war poverty, which, finally, has uprooted us from our palaces and summoned us to deal with our houses<sup>27</sup>.

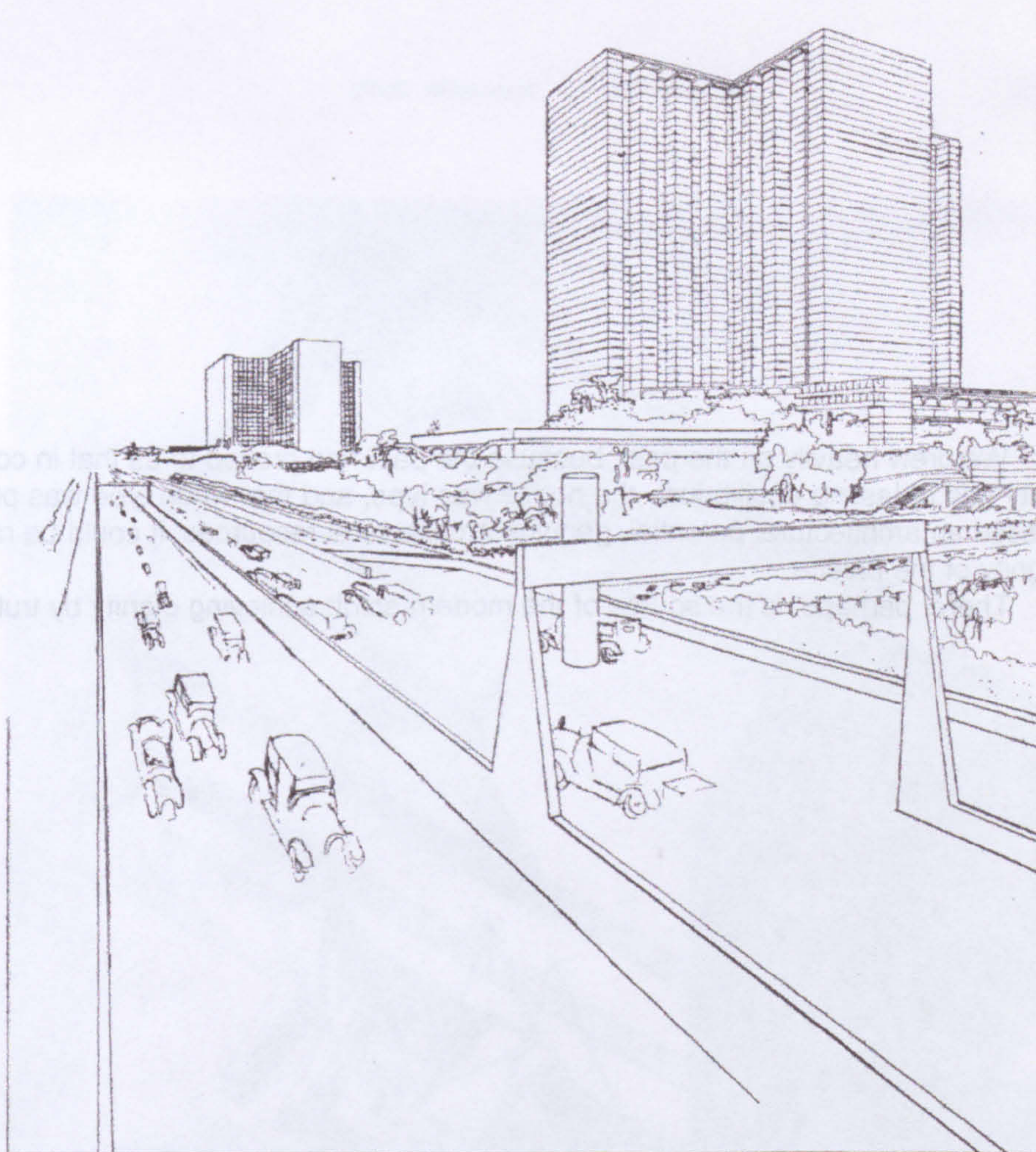
And the palace, that is to say - what? That is to say, the need to be raised always to the highest, to achieve the most noble thoughts (and to succeed there more or less well, well or badly, is agreed), we have, having quit it, rediscovered it embodied in the house.

We have seen for ourselves that to construct a house was to raise posts, to erect partitions, to arrange openings in solid facades. And that inside it was to order consecutive volumes which were going to stun us, that we should submit to this as we submit to the lofty peaks or the infinity of the sea. And that we should be able to establish singularly eloquent relationships. We have acknowledged in the same way that we were anxious to create these singularly eloquent relationships and that these were necessary since this was properly architecture. And that, musing with professional honesty on those who had commissioned this house, we owed them - since it is possible without supplementary outlay and by the single miracle of the spirit - we owed it to them to increase the yield of the house where they were to live to a maximum, and that thus, we owed it to them to gratify elevated pleasures, to gratify them with the joys of architecture.

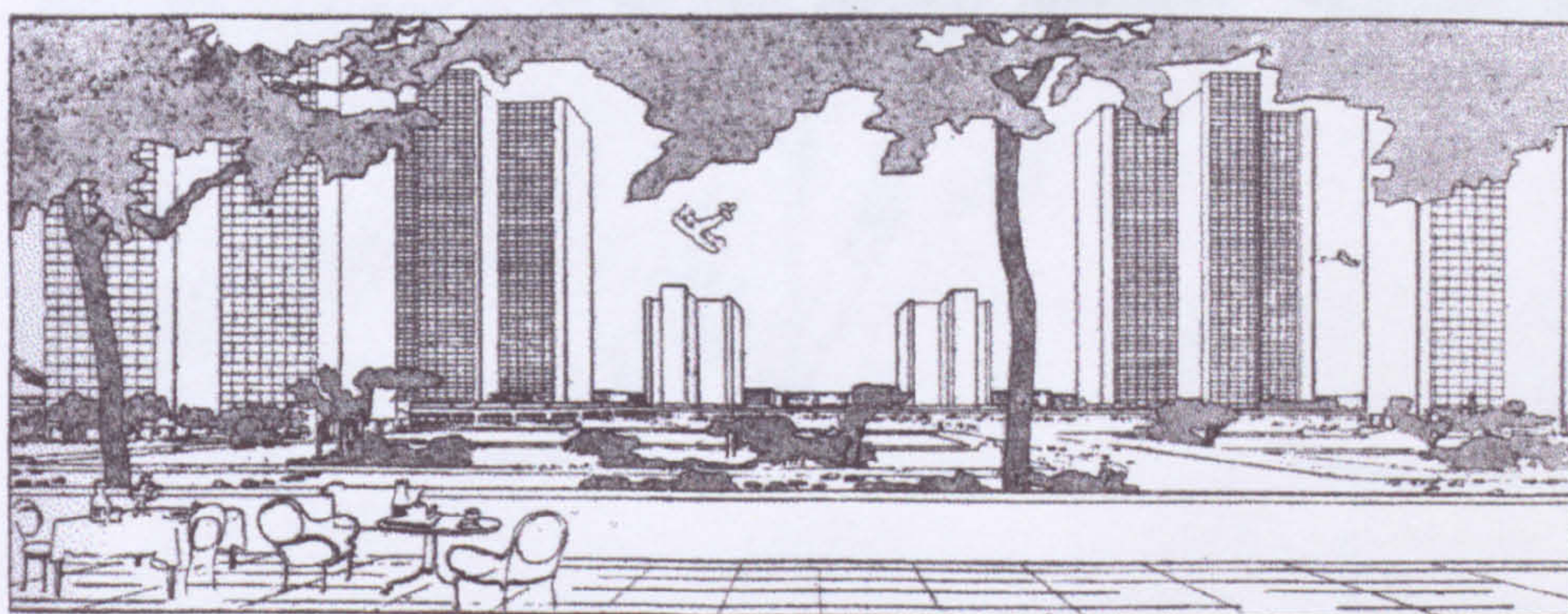
Modern times have brought us reinforced concrete. Happy circumstance! Reinforced concrete, more than in all the ages, is the triumph of geometry; it is the calculation suggesting exact resistances for diverse stresses. A plastic sentiment and the spirit of economy are combined in it.

Now, the palace: we think we have been able to put it into the house, the spirit of the palace in the house, to truly evoke nobility in our work.





**L.C. The motorway, restaurants in the parks, business in the skyscrapers**



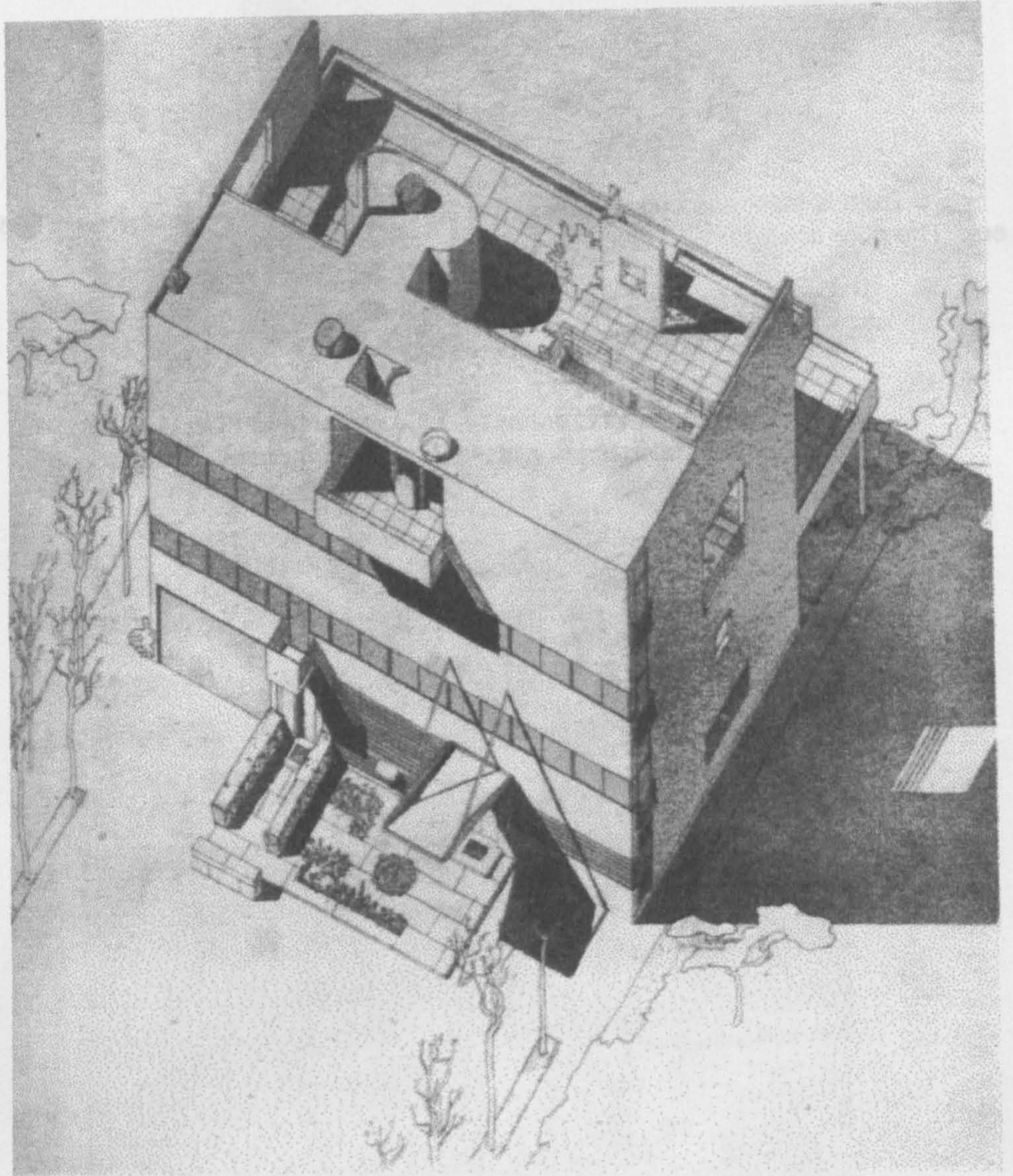
**The railway stations below ground; the airport on top of the station; 5% of the surface built up, 95% of the surface navigable or planted. Population density four times greater than in the overpopulated districts of Paris**



We drew heavily on the past, because the past had proved to us that in conditions of clarity and of lasting equilibrium, the house was type, and that when type was pure it possessed an architectural potential, genuine architectural resources; it could be raised to the dignity of the palace.

There, perhaps, is the source of the modern spirit: achieving dignity by truth.





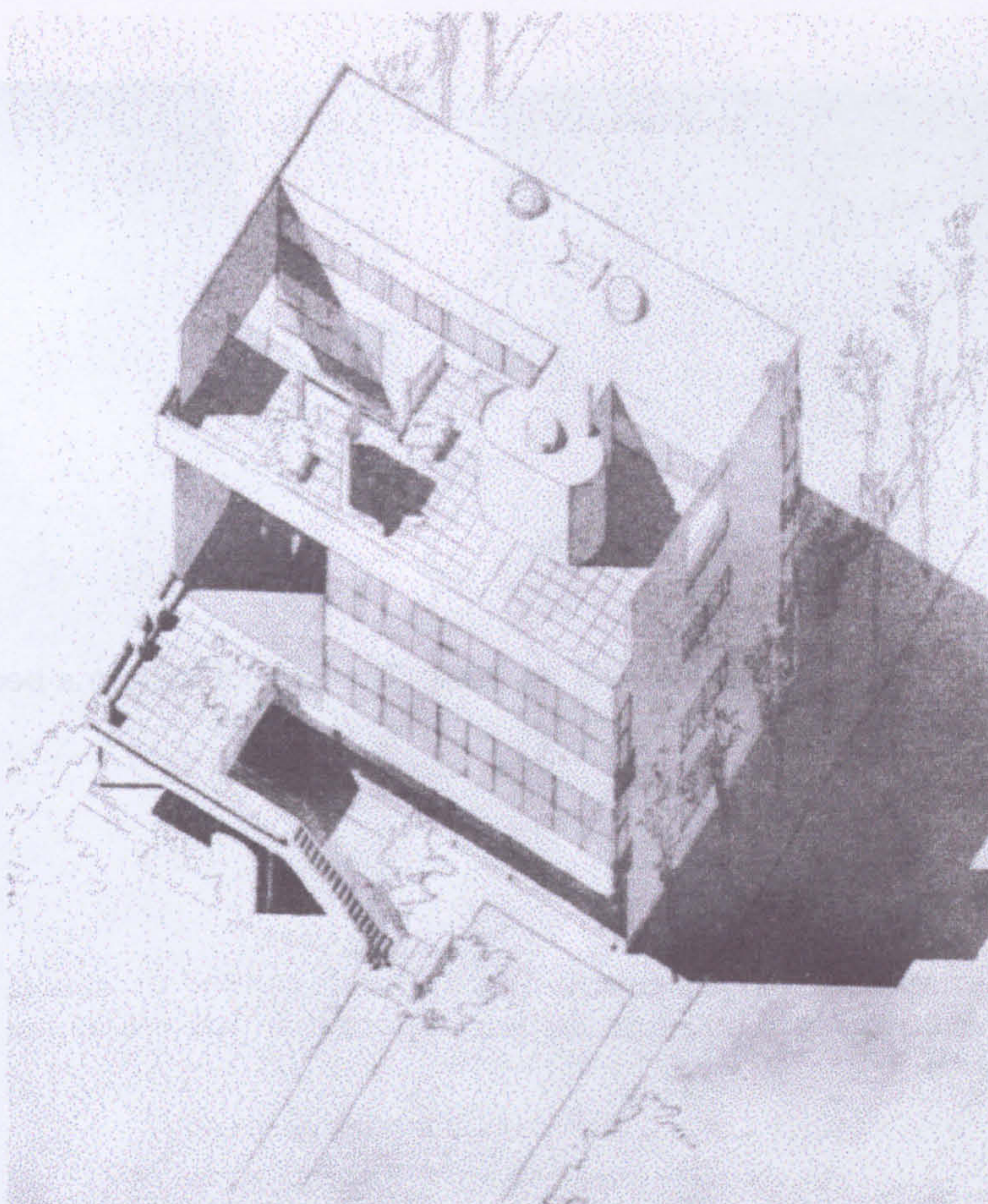
Le Corbusier et P. Jeanneret.

Villa à Garches.



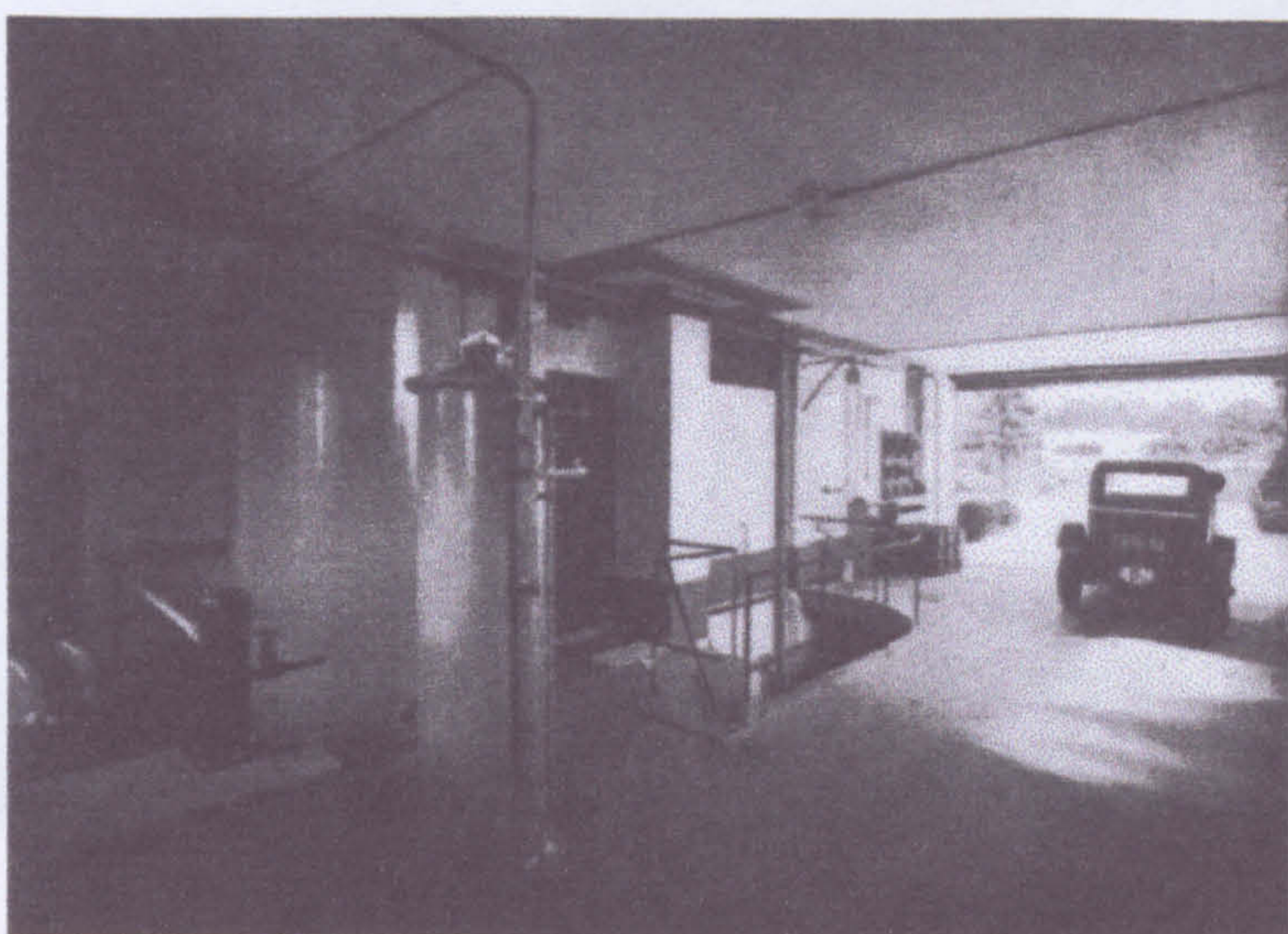
Truth is stark and cutting. From the constraints of contingent forces, freedom flows. The pure solution





L. C. et P. J.

Garches.



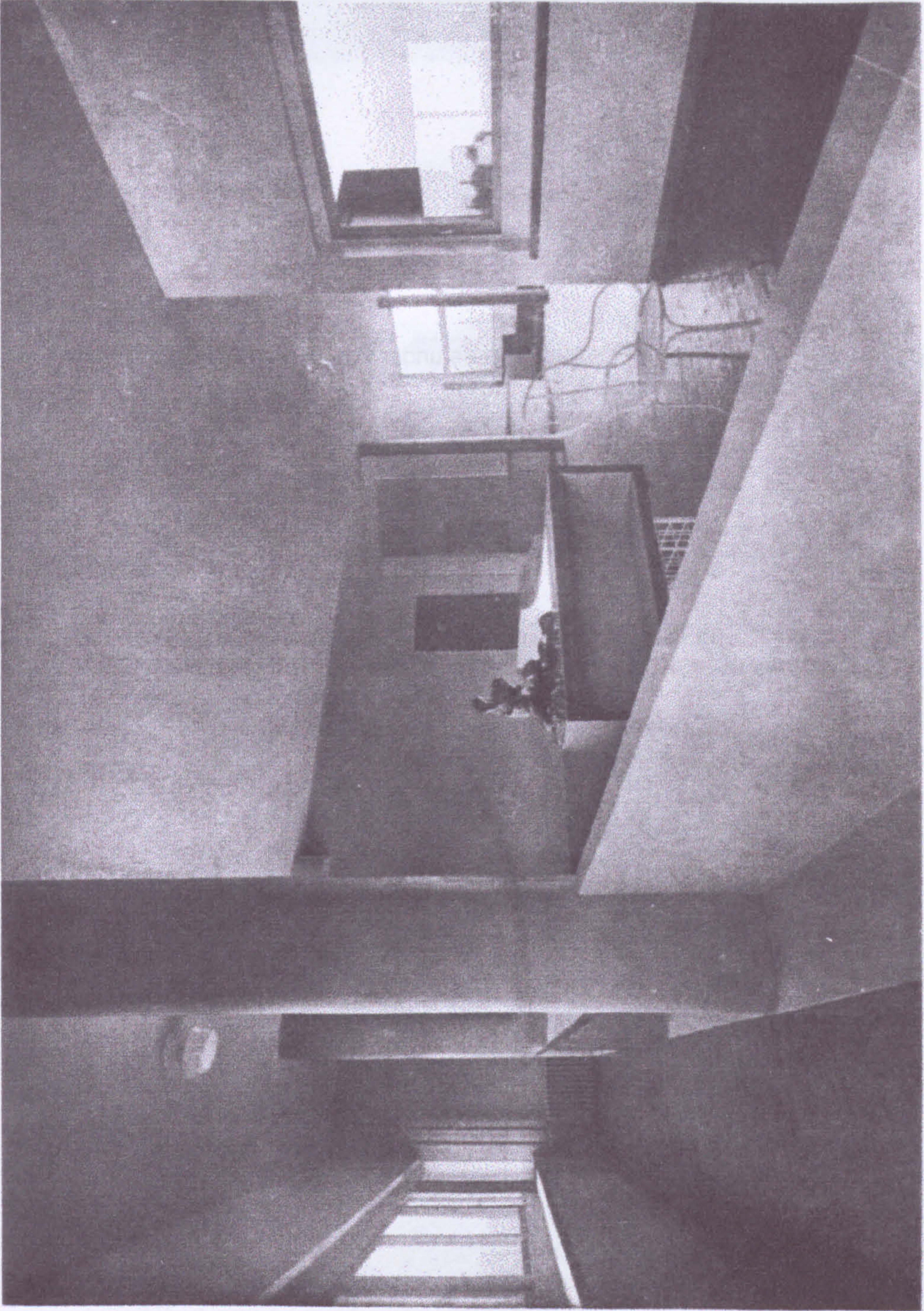
L. C. et P. J.

**The car enters the house.**



concentrated by constraints appears like a crystal. The rules of the game become apparent, the game is won. And





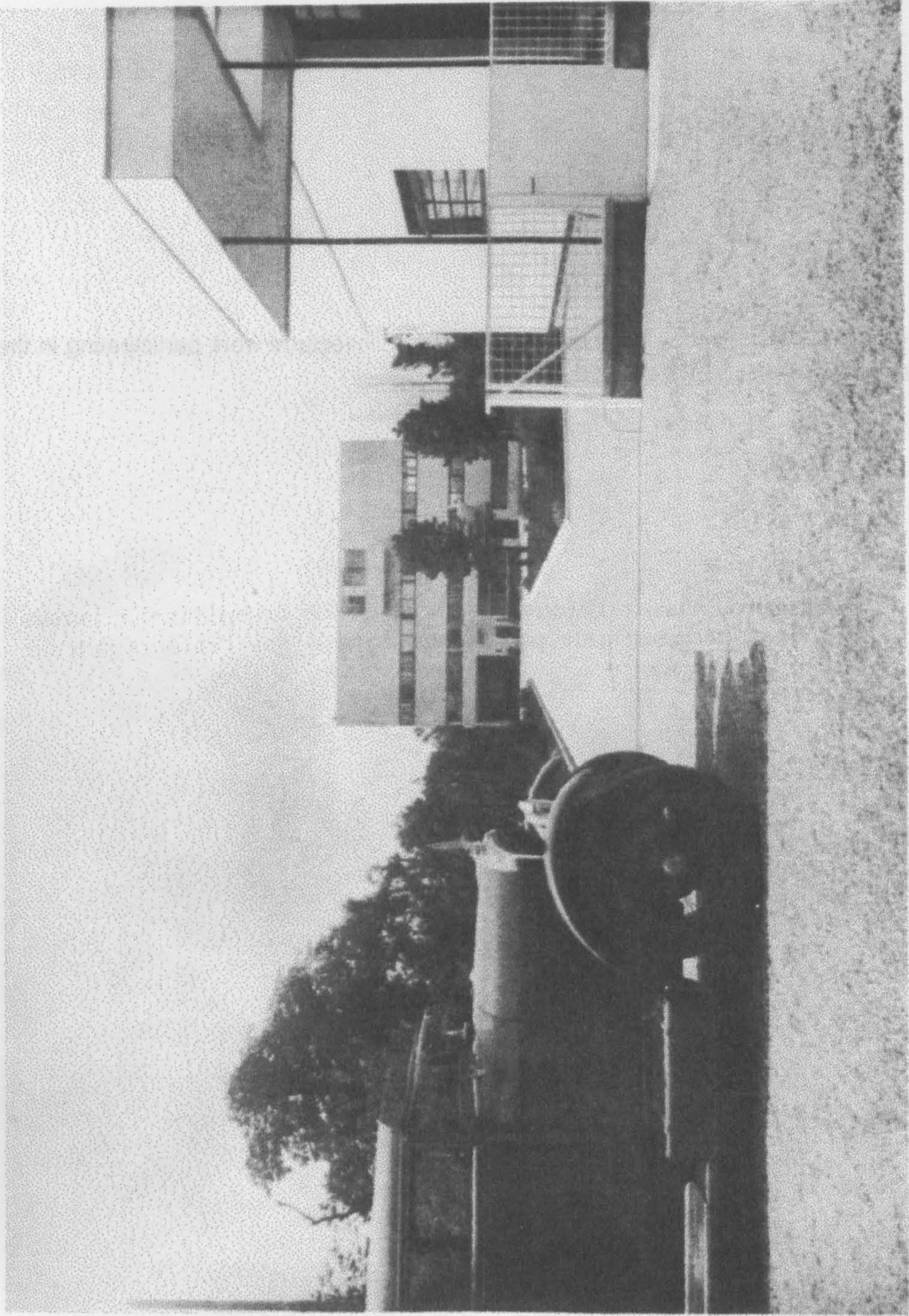
L. C. et P. J.

*The house is a machine for living in.*



one grasps that this box, smooth and taut, flexes under the pressure of multiple intentions;  
there we find the infinitely perceptible;





UNE MAISON.

Villa à Garches, L'entrée.

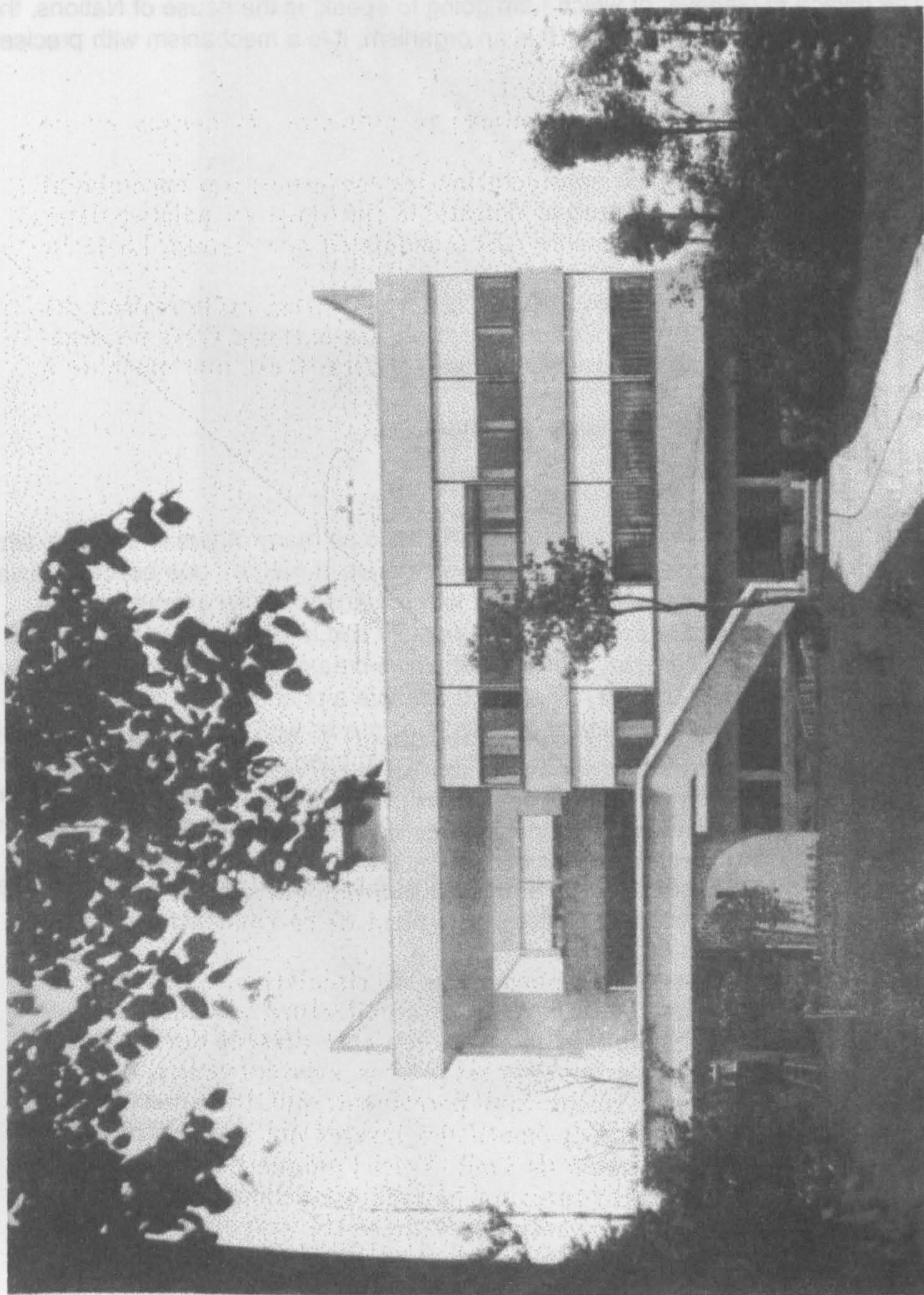
L. C. et P. J.



sated, yet we will discover new intentions. And the architectural work participating in the site which surrounds it has never uttered its last word.







Villa à Garches. Côté jardin.

L. C. et P. J.



My lecture is ended; I can say: *the house is a palace*.

But taking into consideration the confusion which encumbers the spirit in a ghastly misunderstanding (I dream of the palace-palace), I must repeat again: *And the palace is a house*. It remains for me to demonstrate this.

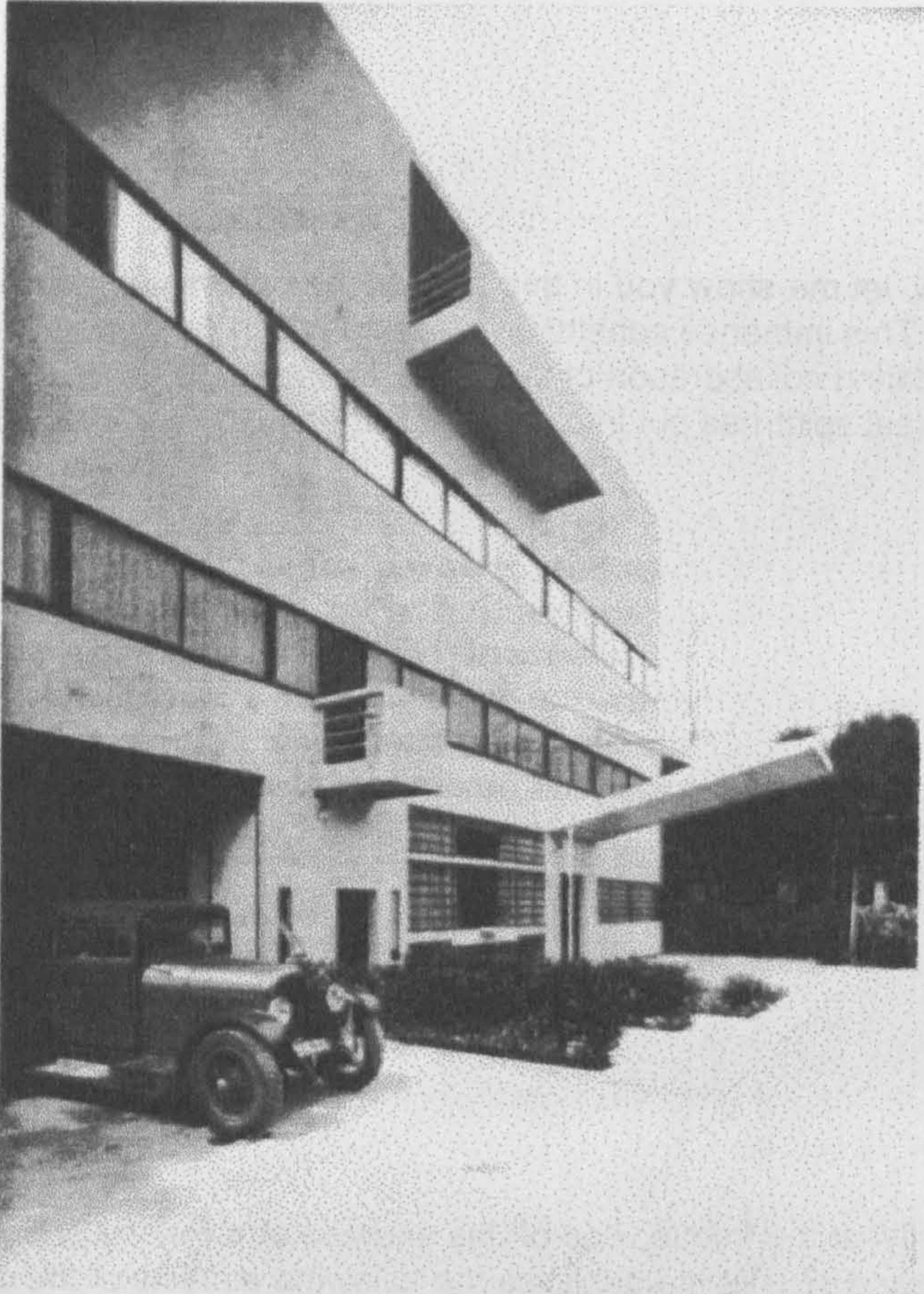
The palace at Geneva, of which I am going to speak, is the house of Nations, the house of the administration of Nations. It is an organism, it is a mechanism with precise ends. It is a machine for living in.

So my lecture will continue.....



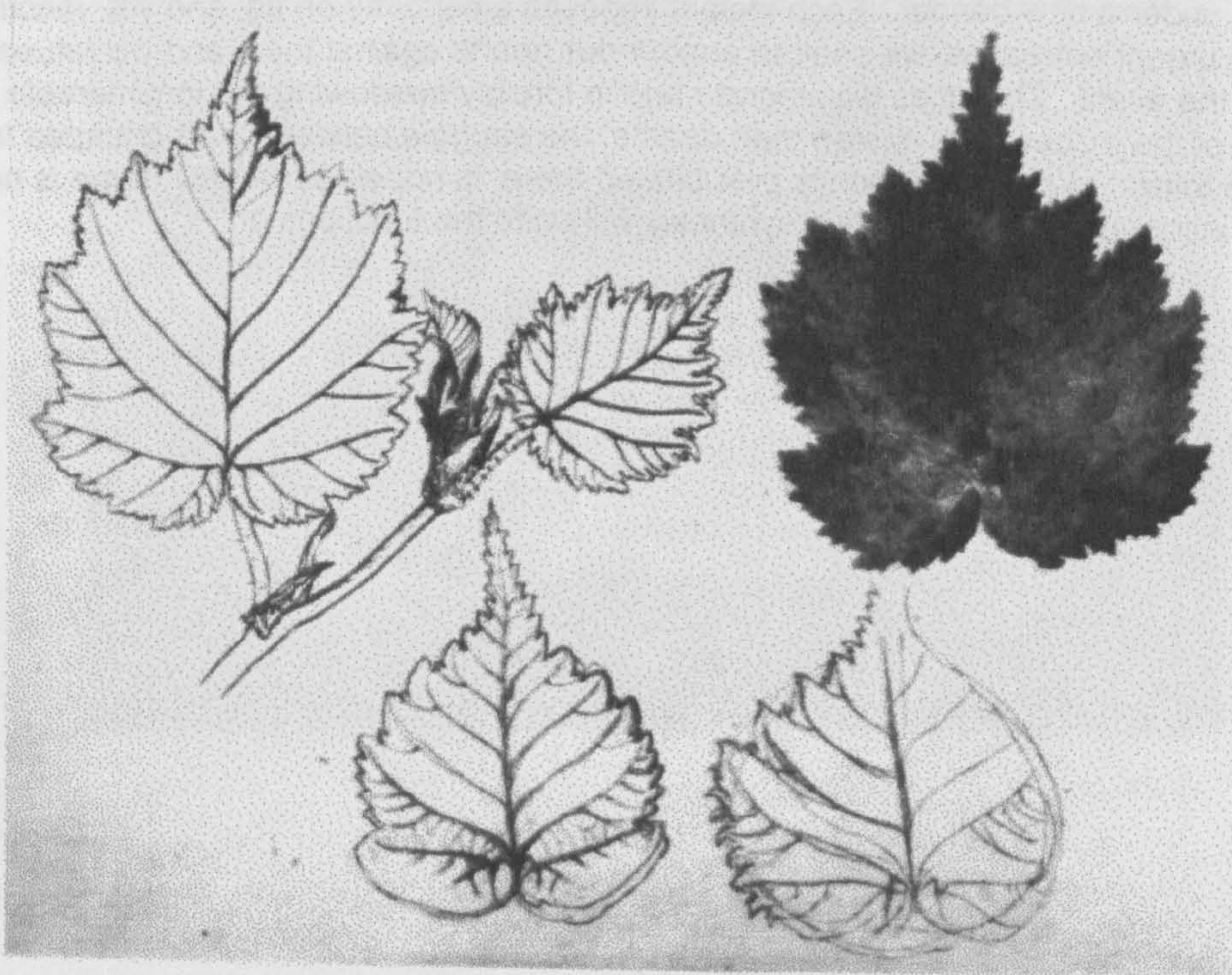
Look at this twig of lime; in drawing this leaf (and so many others in the days when I used to occupy myself thus, diligently studying the marvels of nature), one becomes aware of something that is a clear organisation, of that which, harmoniously, without hurt nor rupture, born from within, is stretched out, flows limpidly and is stopped by an edge, that limit of contour which is its character, that contour which creates a visage entirely filled with its essence, presented to the exterior. There you observe a phenomenon of circulation, expression of its vital functions. Everything, in architecture as well, is a question of circulation. Let us not forget that: we should always keep this in mind: a man standing, his eyes at 1m.70, watching, seeing, perceiving, transmitting to the intellectual and emotional mechanism, images which enter by the admirable machinery of the eye. Here is a unique yardstick for the things of architecture; a man is standing, watching and enduring the adventurous courses of your pencil tracing plans and sections - these plans and sections which only exist because men will be subject to their effect.





L. G. et P. J.

Garches.





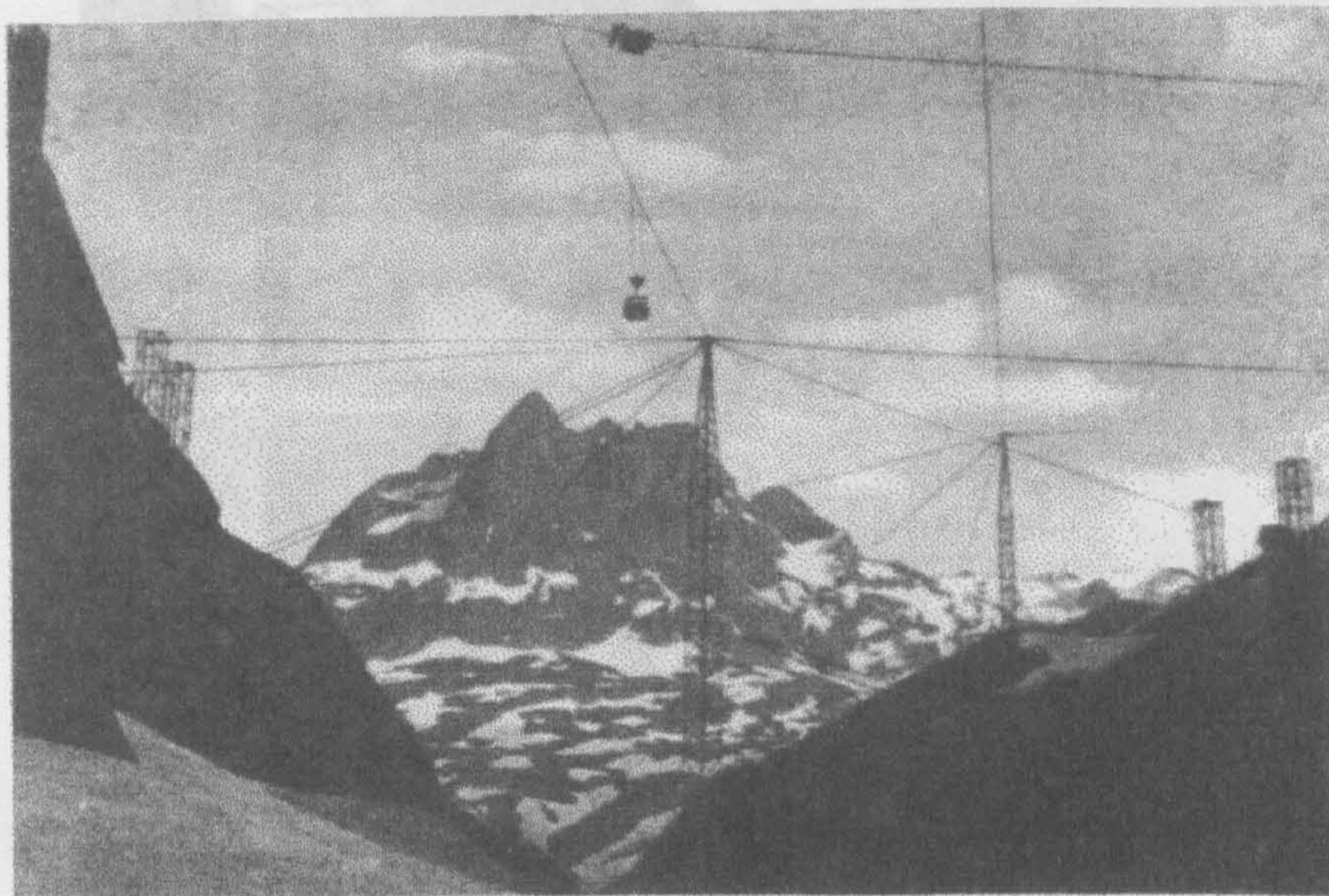
And now, let me show you in this picture, the preliminary works for the construction of a great dam. This immense constructive event is taking shape right in the heart of the Alps, with the untiring collaboration of ingenuity, audacity and of a gigantic mechanisation where the universal spirit has put into our hands means incomparable to everything else in recorded history.

And finally, at the frontispiece of this analysis of a Palace of Nations which will be erected in the year 1928, let me publicise the following aspects of the gigantic city: coldly it discloses to us the results of calculation established by statistics; it is an imminent reality. We act under a new banner. Each instant imposes a certainty on us; and yet, reacting against urgent entreaties, we seek to armour our hearts against them and we refuse to accept the event. The cities disintegrate and in forcibly swallowing the innumerable new organs of the modern life, hasten their deaths; the struggle between their cramped frames and the torrent of new life which is precipitated there, is hopeless. A new frame is necessary for our initiatives. Only a creative synthesis will unite the functions of



UNE MAISON — UN PALAIS

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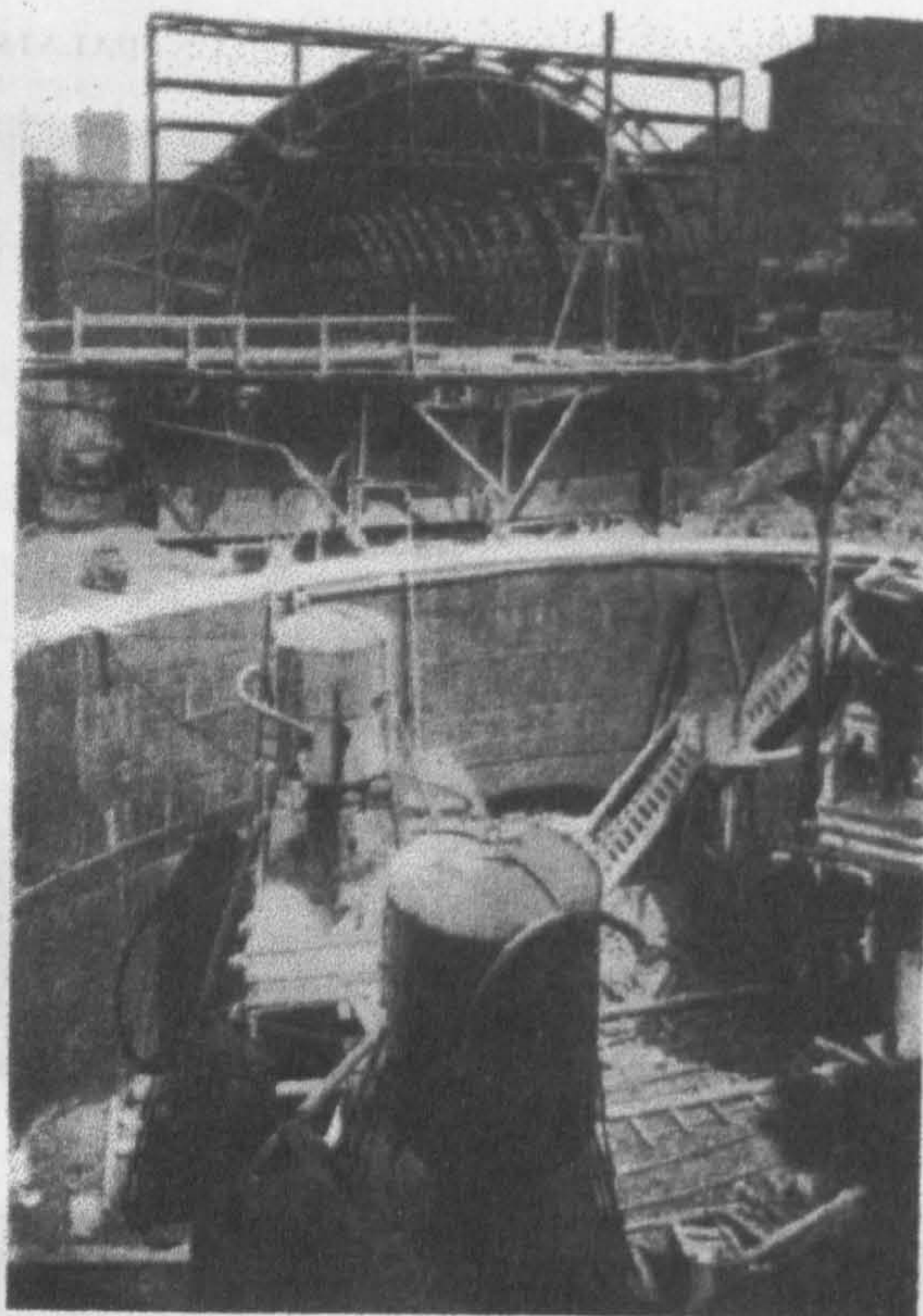


Barrage de Barberine.

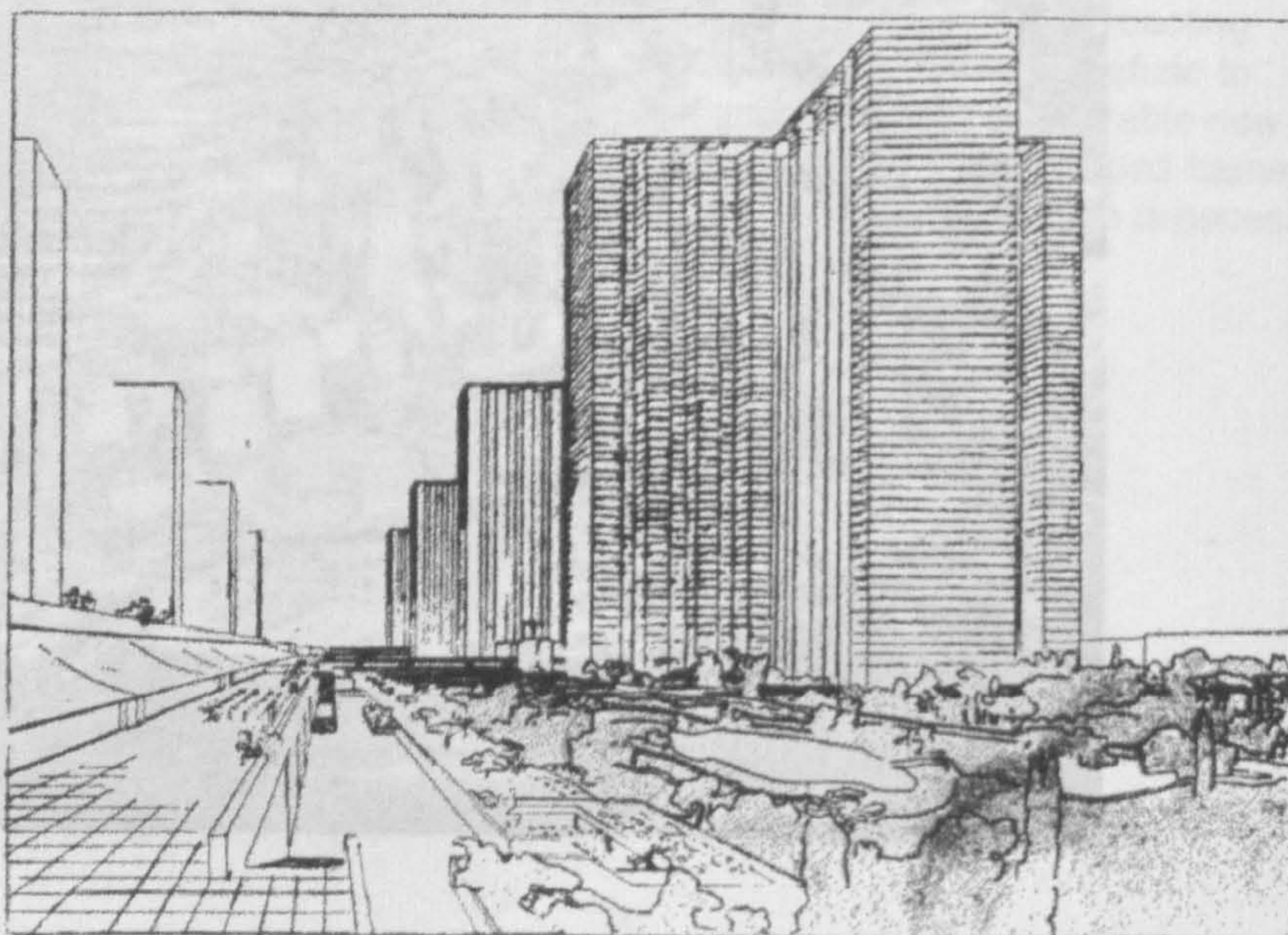


New-York.



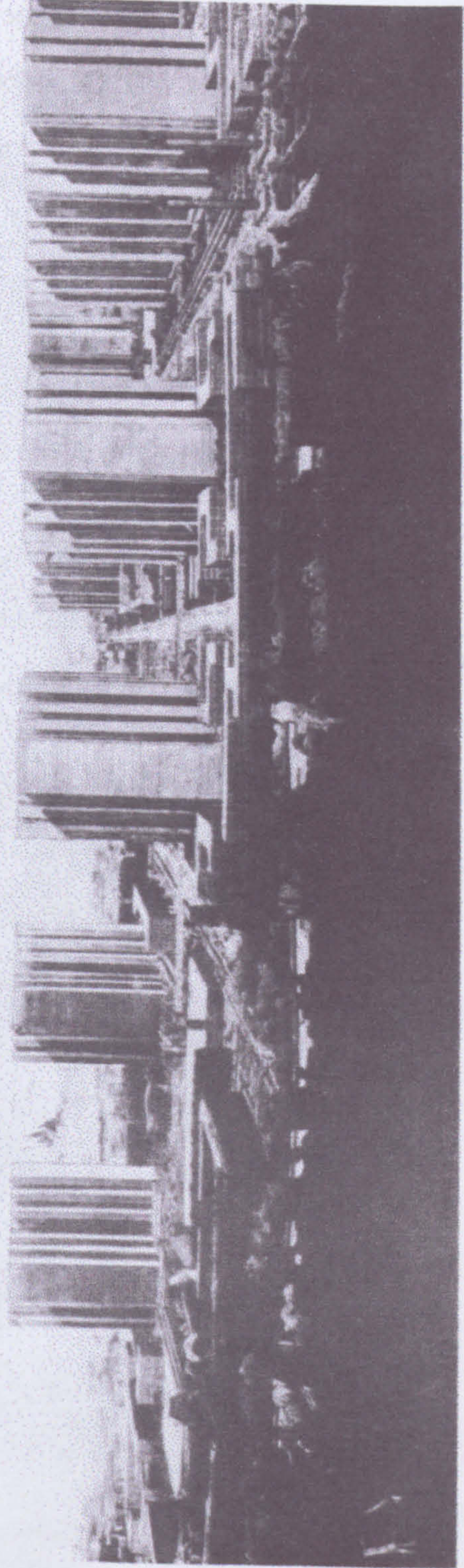


Les travaux du  
métro à Paris,  
1907.



L. C. : « Une ville contemporaine, » 1922.





**The Plan "Voisin" for Paris, 1925 [Exposition des Arts Decoratifs]. In the foreground, the Seine and the historic past of the city**



serving with those of delighting; *the house is a palace*. Such is the current debate; we can make of the house, a palace. And by the urgency of the principle of unity, *the palace will be a house*.

The international architectural competition for the construction of the Palace of Nations was the occasion of a great experience.

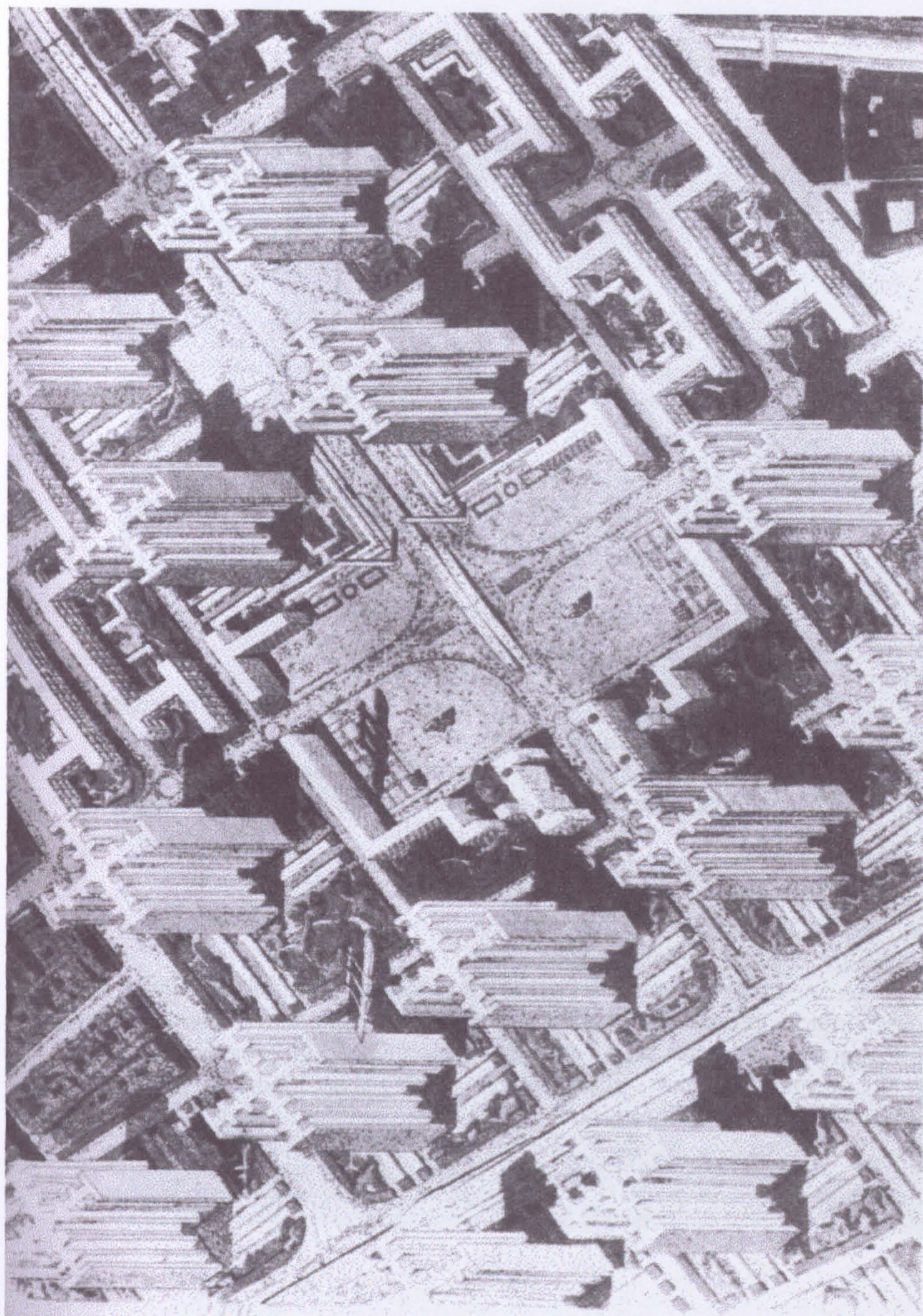
Our pleasure has been in treating our Palace of Nations as we have treated our houses. Because not envisaging a single instant of that seductive grandiloquence which might have brought us the mediocrities' approval, we became absorbed, animated by a spirit of great and sincere modesty, in achieving a viable organism. We analysed the functions and we have established unquestionable element types, inevitably producing an efficient work. Carried by a passion developed during the very course of this descent into analysis, little by little, we co-ordinated, then ordered. And all at once, the concept of the ensemble is imposed, a building is revealed capable perhaps, of awakening one day, if by chance it should be realised, the joys of architecture. These pleasures are in the skilful, correct, and magnificent play of forms in light<sup>26</sup>. They are in the relation of cause and effect which discovers the intention, which unveils the game of the spirit, which shows the rules of the game without ambiguity. In this they are *simple*, obvious, like a hard and shining crystal locking in compressed forces. They are there in a measure which determines an attitude of dignity.

We are not at a carnival where upstarts romp. Clear intentions and pure thought are demanded of us.

Are not this clarity and this purity the sign of modern times? And are they not also the very sign of that new institution which, in Geneva, must respond to the hope of new societies?

\*  
\*   \*   \*





**Saint-Denis and the Porte Saint-Martin. This project for a business city at the centre of Paris accommodates a quadrupled population; the buildings (60 floors) covers only 5% of the surface; 95% is reserved for circulation and for plantings (See "The City of Tomorrow", Esprit Nouveau collection, crès et Cie).**



However high the throne,  
 however soft the seat,  
 one is never seated but  
 on his arse  
 [MONTAIGNE]

The Problem :

*A Site*

A group of buildings forming a *required basic arrangement*, that may be extended and linked to the recently completed International Labour Organisation (BIT) which is located 300 metres beyond our present boundary.

*Offices*, Five hundred offices.

*A Great Hall* for 2600 people, organ of sight and of hearing.

*Circulation*, an acute circulation problem..

*Structure*, a structure utilising all the resources of modern science, the one route that should enable us to reach the predetermined goal.

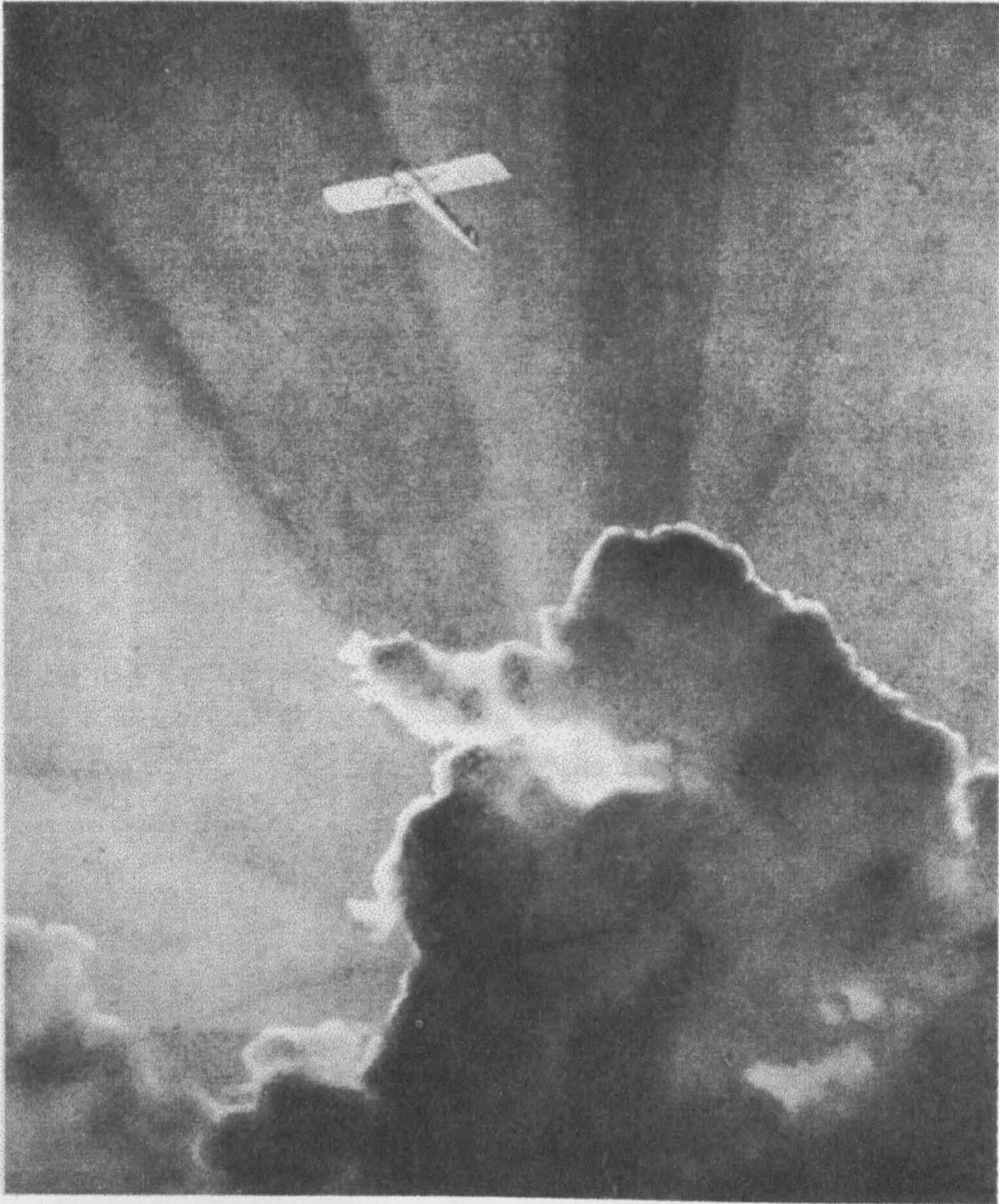
*An aesthetic*, that is, that system of ordering, those mathematical relationships, that quality of the spirit where purity is achieved by measure, and individual creative power expresses force. Not one tension, a menacing harshness. "*Smiling, clear and beautiful*"; we said this was truly an architectural programme.

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\*   \*  
\*



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## A SITE

It is all powerful: a place of magnificent forests and of green grass mirrored in the sparkling water of the lake. So, in front, the fan of the Alps opens, behind is the horizontal barrier of the Jura. The lake spreads its smooth surface: its line against the Savoie bank is a pure horizontal which gives to the Alps their respective heights. We observe on the left that Geneva





**The mature woodland crowning the site**



**The prospect towards the lake**

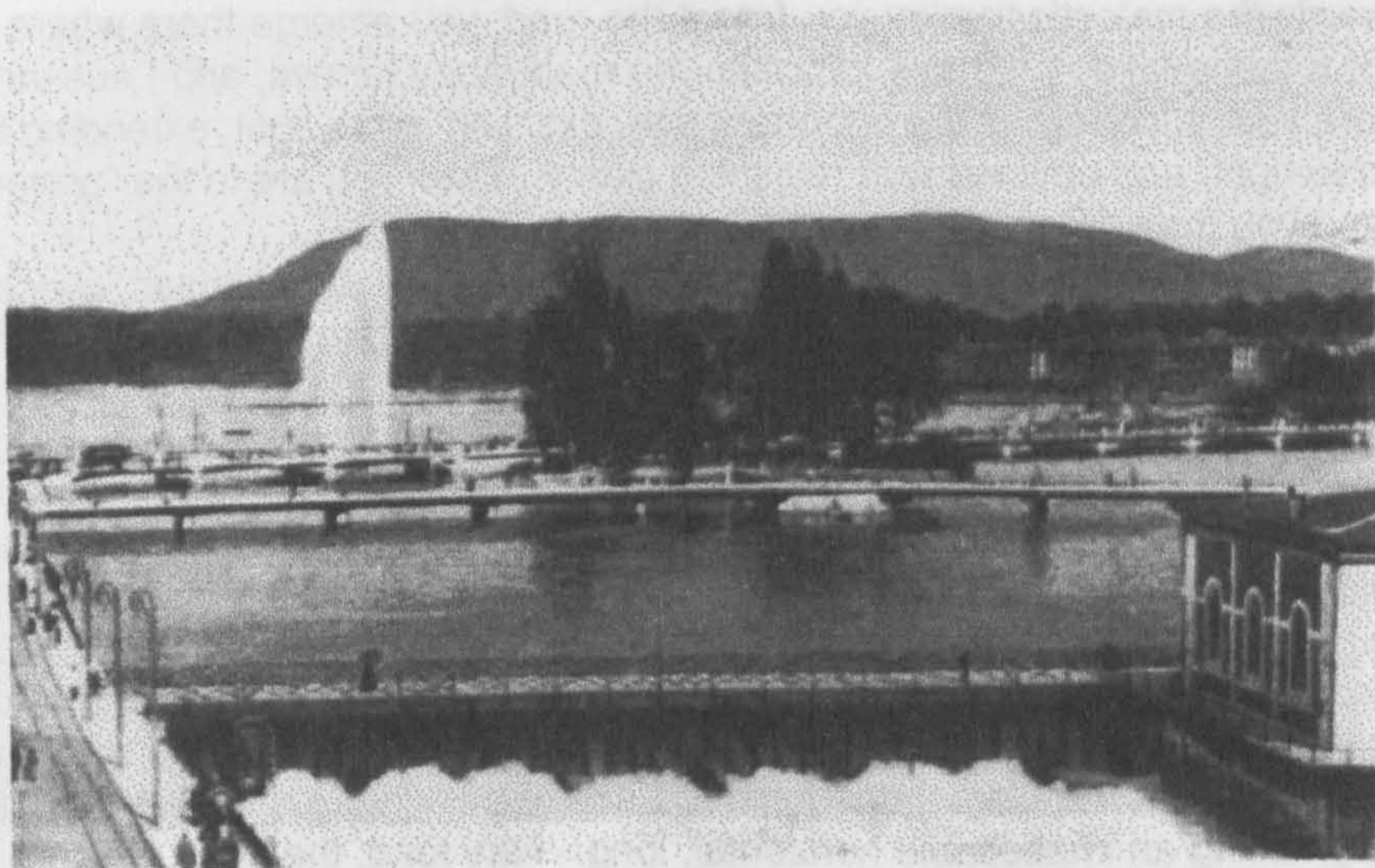


with its quays, its jetty, its lines of houses regularly pierced by windows extends itself in continuous horizontals, renewed, spread everywhere. Above Geneva, the Saleve raises an outcrop all striped with long, parallel bands of rock. There is no doubt of the dominance of the *horizontal*: the diapason.

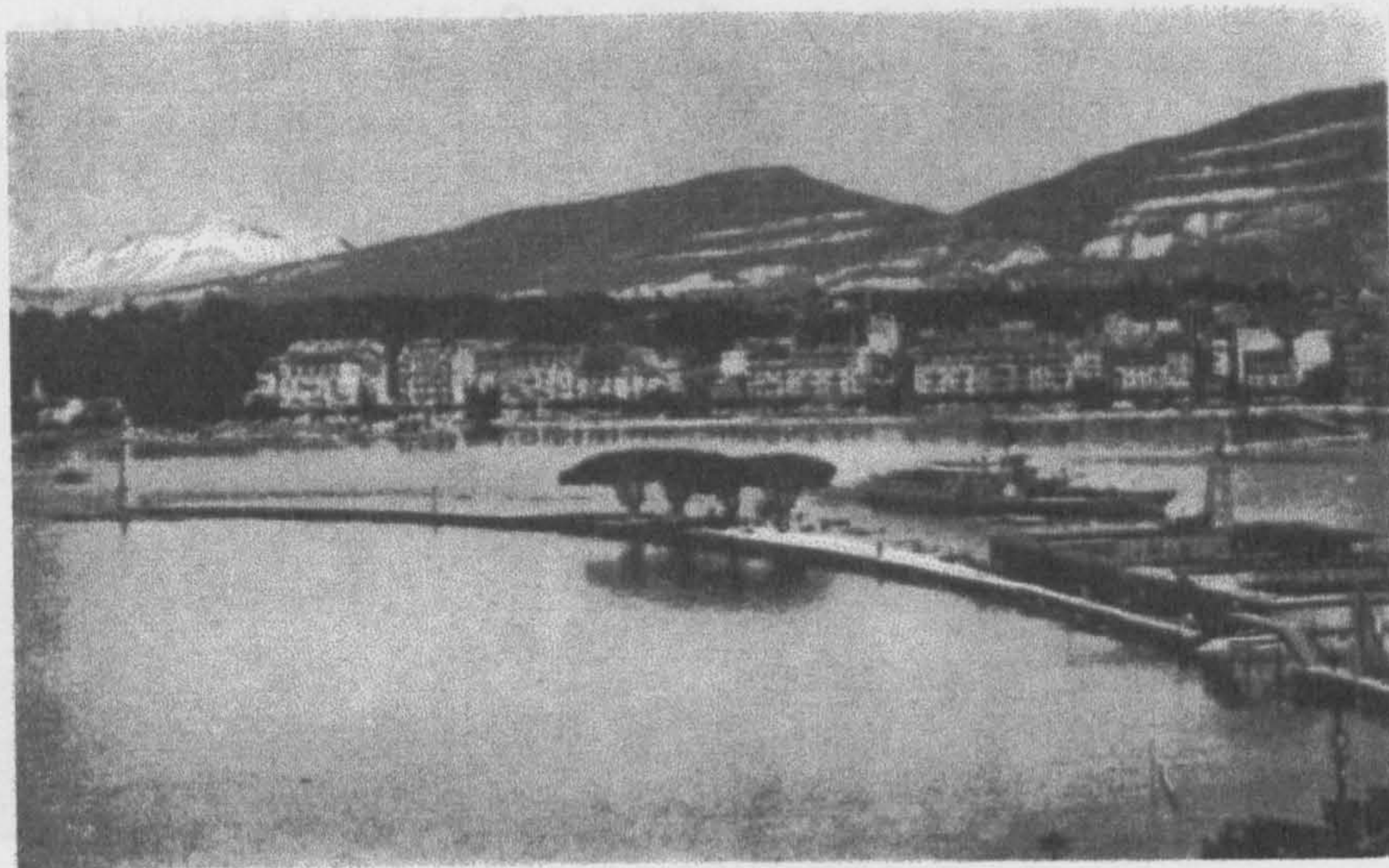


## UNE MAISON — UN PALAIS

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Les ponts de Genève.



Genève : le môle, les rochers du Salève.



Our site is bordered above by the Lausanne-Geneva road, noisy, hemmed in by speculative buildings, made airless by their facades, and by factories and workshops: a degrading proximity. But since a magnificent group of tall trees crowns the park at the edge of this route, we will keep the grove, the access roads to the palace will pass through it, traced in the turf beneath the trees. Thus, you leave the road; you thrust yourself into the grove towards the majestic trunks; you forget the road; you emerge there where the land slopes down to the lake; you have forgotten the road, and Geneva, and Lausanne, because there before you, suddenly, is the important site, dazzling in the light, extending before you, to left and to right, and outlined with ravishing clarity. Then you are in the "promised land" of nations, and you may dream of generous acts. Who knows?

Here our buildings take shape, and not grouped as a single mass, concentrated, isolated; they start to insinuate themselves into the site, delicate and elongated, facing those enchanted views on all sides.

We are at the edge of the slope, the lawns fall away towards the lake. We fix here, our point zero, the single level of all our buildings.

This zero datum continues, far to the right, in the various wings of the secretariat, the furthest of these wings extends to the Lausanne road, and, like the road itself, is also at level zero. But on the Geneva side, we have achieved this zero level above the sloping lawns by continuing it on concrete pilotis, which, thrust down as they go along, as the land falls. Our building is therefore in the air on pilotis, which may be as much as 9 metres high. All our office levels are regularly superimposed above this datum, then we have terminated them on high using an impeccable horizontal, long - very long, the main plank of the composition. We have pursued this horizontal throughout the roof terrace of the great hall. And here we are at this point overhanging sheer to the lake, dominating the entire site in unquestionable majesty. Imagine on this immense terrace, the throngs of the General Assembly of Nations, gathered from the four corners of the earth, coming after the work sessions *simply to see*. *To see* is enough here. Such a belvedere facing such a site exists nowhere else in the world. To see such things predisposes the soul. So it is with the soul of the diplomat.

For, this costing nothing, the hall was pushed forward to the lake and placed on the cape. There, a precise intention: the pavilion of the president of the Assembly, grand headquarters of these annual assizes,

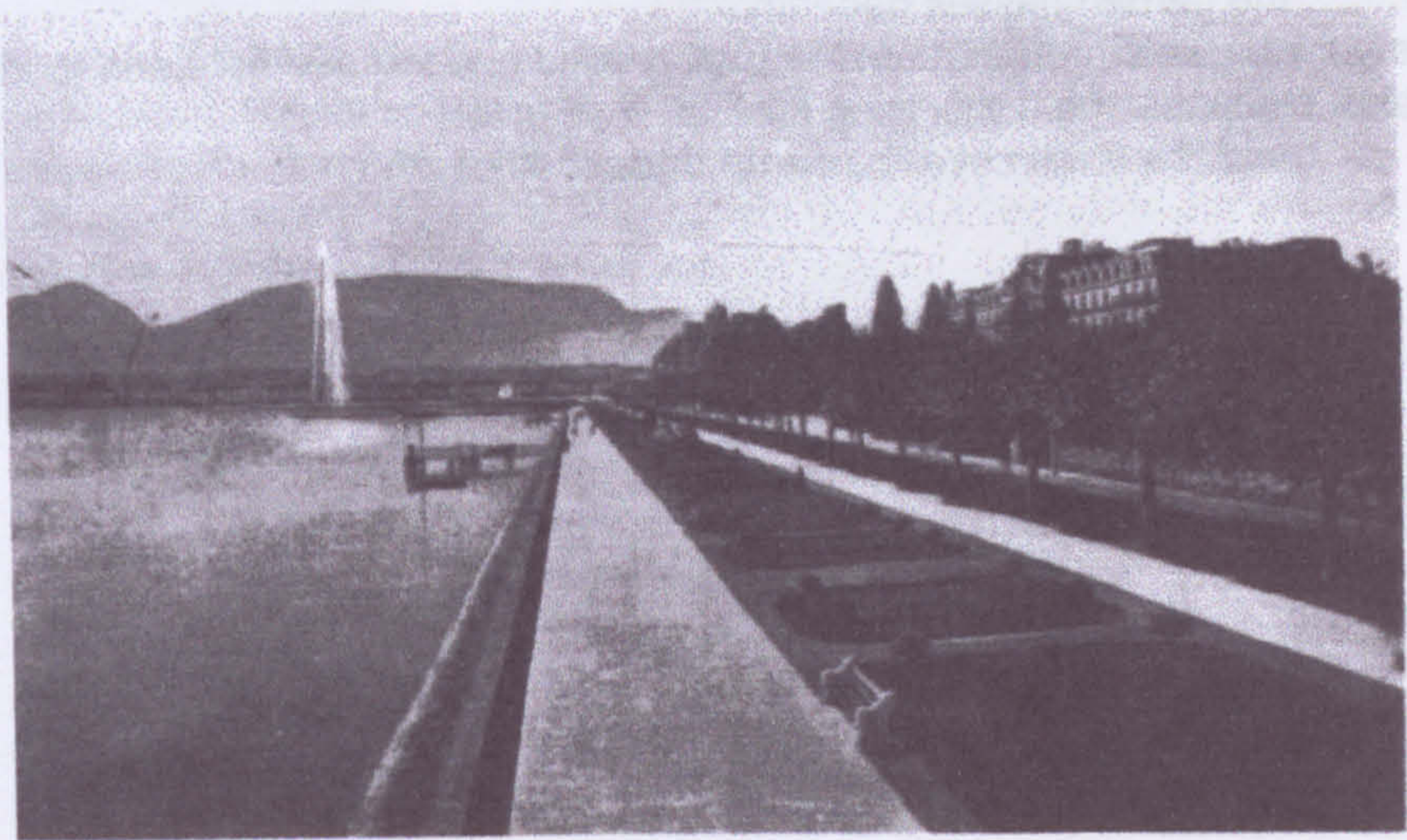


## UNE MAISON — UN PALAIS

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Genève : les ponts, l'île Rousseau, le Mont Blanc.



Geneva: Quai Wilson, which takes us to the new palace  
[Hotel National on the right]



is displayed on high by its pilotis, concrete posts faced with polished granite, - columns, as an academician might say. These columns bathe in a small harbour, and stairs descend to the water. One can reach the president's suite by water (the water taxis of Geneva are charming); or by car, arriving beneath the pavilion, where a staircase is to be found.

The great hall is not perched on open pilotis. Using the slope of the terrain, we have formed the large storerooms that were asked for. More than that, by a tilted slab pitched counter to that laid on the soil, we have, in a restricted height, at no cost, doubled the area of these storerooms.

Beneath the detached pilotis of the secretariat we have organised the one-way automobile circulation, creating, beneath these cost-free shelters, open garages for a hundred cars, and closed garages for 25 cars; garages for motorcycles and for mopeds. The circulation route is developed in these open spaces: the height is useful, the light passes through. And one can imagine this: the magnificent lawns extending in such a fashion that they appear to continue beneath the secretariat. There is no longer a *rear* to the house: light, view, vistas abound. We have not erected *any heavy basement wall*. None. Very costly, these heavy walls. Their gigantic shadows used to make the rear of the house full of shadows. Our equidistant pilotis support and distribute the load of the building better than walls would. The skyscrapers of Manhattan are also raised on steel pilotis, but later enclosed with walls, merely for show.

Note that we have not excavated the ground at all, except for the boiler room. Excavation is terribly expensive.

No excavations.

No basement walls.

A considerable economy is achieved and we draw closer to the imposed cost limit. Nevertheless, what a quantity of ink has been made to flow by these pilotis! People think that a palace, to be dignified, must have the basements of a fortress.

Here: the sunlight passes beneath.

the garden passes beneath.

the view passes through; from the high ground one will see here and there, beneath the secretariat buildings, the scintillating lake;

and there will never be damp or dark offices<sup>29</sup>.



Such an arrangement of buildings is a *pastoral conception*. We understood the site perfectly; we are far from the city; here is the lake, trees, plains, mountains, immense horizons. One could not contemplate an urban concept - the Forum, the Piazza de San Marco, the Place de L'Opera, etc, where the successions of streets, of squares, the masses of diverse buildings can support cupolas or domes crowning pyramidal compositions. With us, solidity was not located in cyclopaen basements; it was on high, in the heavens, in the perfect line of the one and only horizontal.

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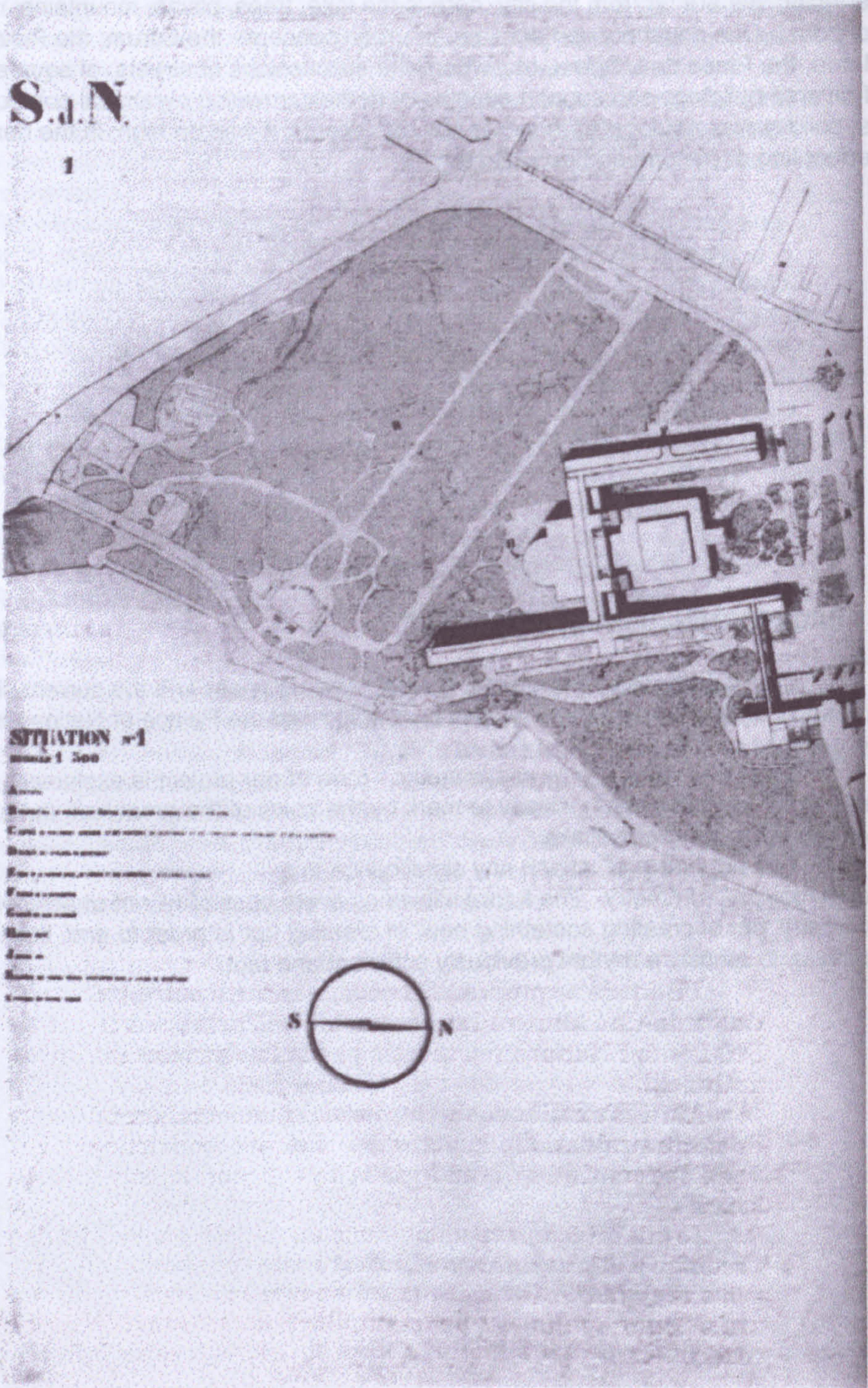
## A PREDETERMINED BASIC ENSEMBLE

One day the Barton property, lying between our site and the current site of the Bureau International du Travail, will be purchased and the Palace of Nations will be linked to the services of BIT.

Thus the - temporarily assymmetric - form of our project is explained. This is the basis of the decision taken initially to mark by the bows of the great hall, the cape made by the land thrusting into the lake.

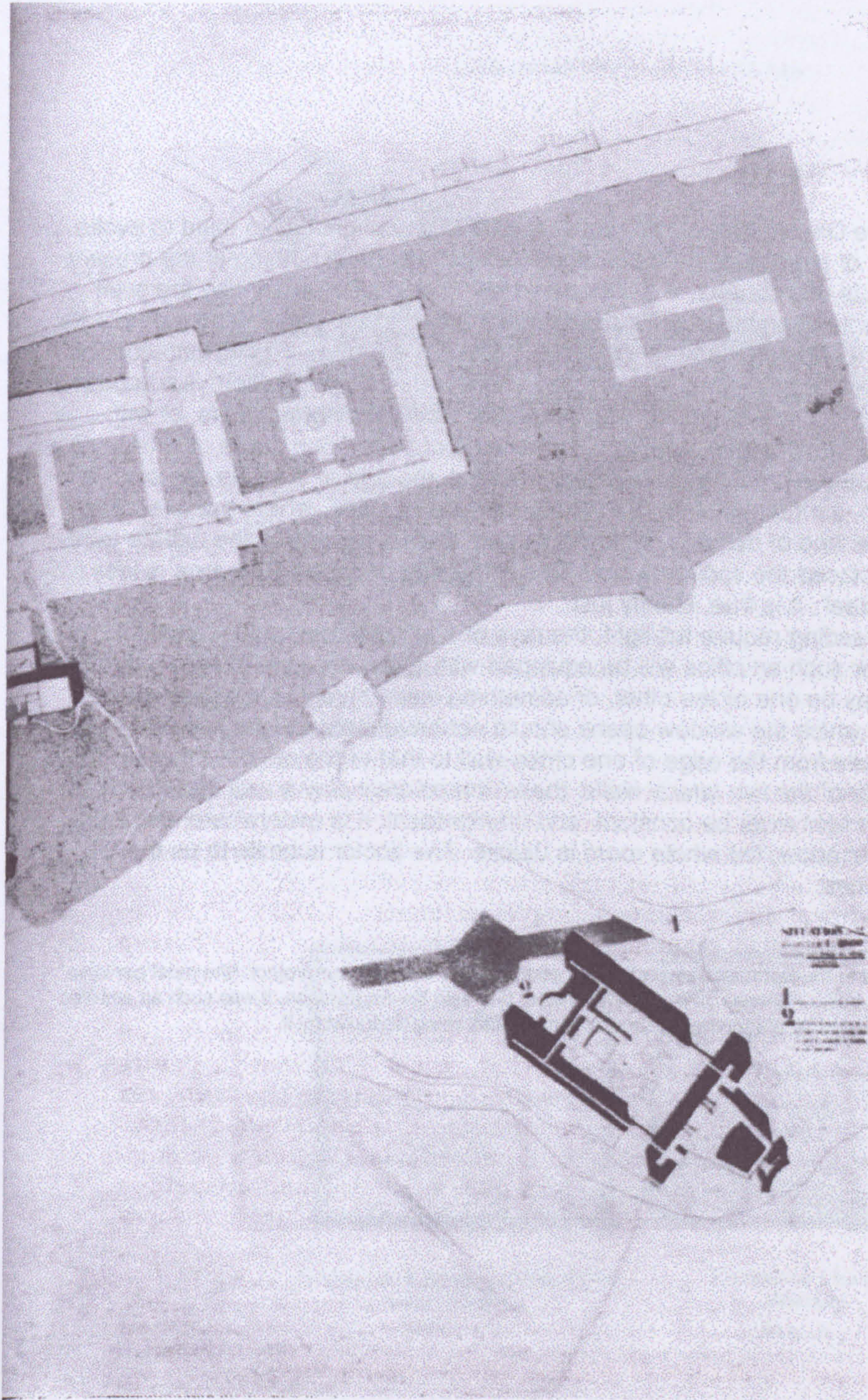
I do not however, attach any significance to a "schoolboyish" symmetry. The future allows us every possibility, not of achieving a symmetry, but of creating something new, of creating not *in order to end*, but *in order to continue*, to amplify a rhythm previously sufficient and taut.





The park Monrepos.  
One sees dotted at B, our proposal for the extension in a straight line of quai Wilson (to the left, outside the picture) to the route de Lausanne.





Here, at a smaller scale a possible variant, using the same compositional elements.



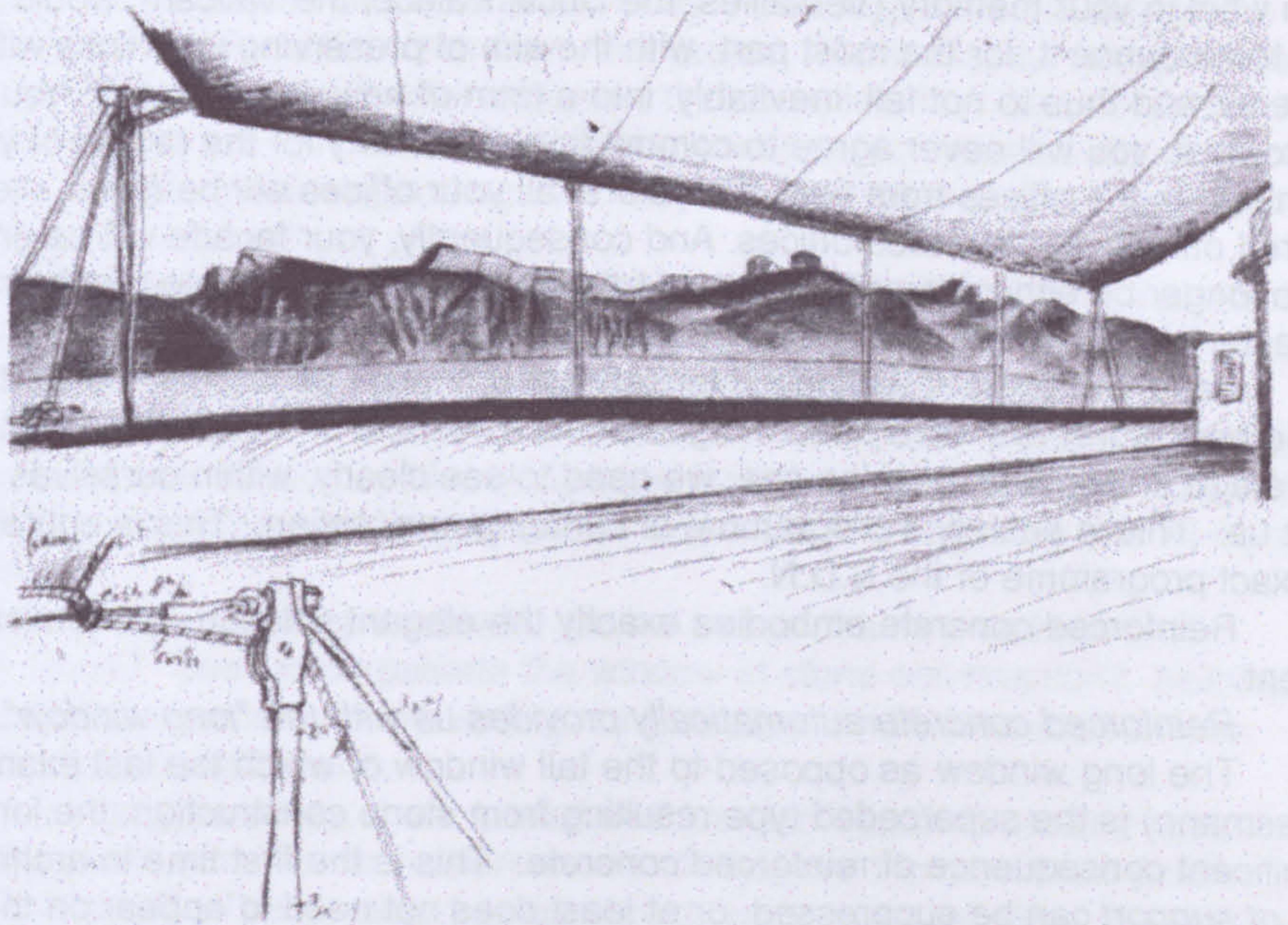
## THE OFFICES

Versailles, the Doge's Palace, the Vatican, all that you might call to mind to evoke clearly the splendour of bygone days, are dubbed 'palace', yet have nothing of the present programme. Palace, in this context, is a little *perverse*(1), because, in pointing the spirit towards ancient aspects of architecture, it risks the uprooting of the problem posed from its legitimate solutions. It is hardly a matter of offices here, it is a matter of administration, of one administration. And the building, which today shelters this administration, is composed of numerous rooms, which are equipped with a reading table, with some chairs, or with one or many typing tables. In an office, one works on sheets of paper, one reads or writes. One may effectively sum up the present era by remarking that, the age of steel having set the entire world in motion, an intense state of interdependence resulted, where the effect is a fantastic game of offer and of demand, which is written; it is on paper that the debate takes place. Paper has replaced the spoken word. This is the *age of paper*! The term is less lyrical than 'the age of steel'. It is true, bluntly just.

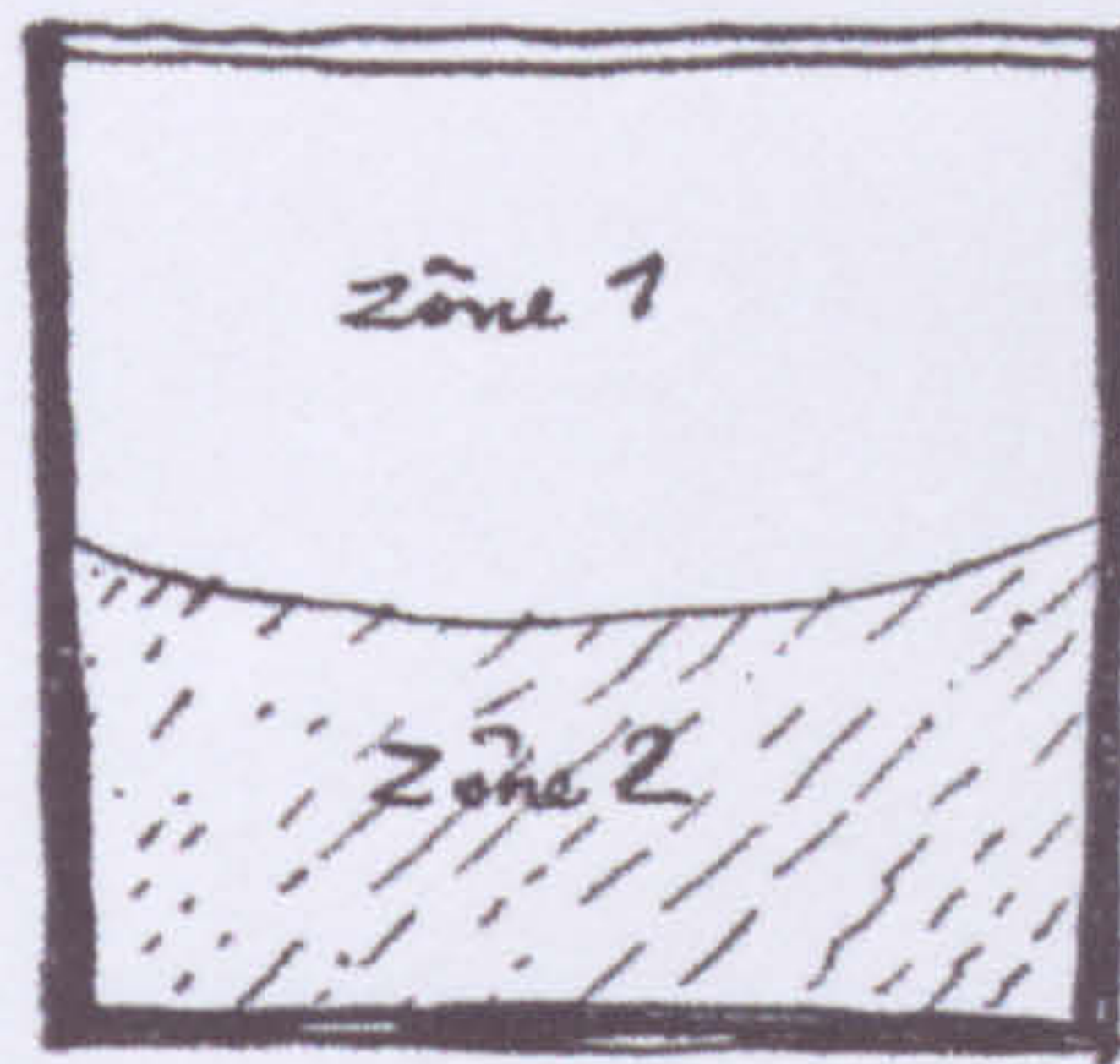
Writing and reading require full light, the rays of a constant and adequate light. You do not know if such or such an office will be equipped with a reading desk or with five tables with typewriters: it may be one or the other, or something else entirely. Only this remains constant: the wall on which the window opens should not have piers, or shadowed corners. The window should rule from the edge of one cross-wall to that of the other. *If the windows touch one or the other of the two lateral walls, these immediately play a role as reflectors, diffusers of light.* The light must be constant, and omnipresent; it is everywhere, there are no longer corners of shadow; the whole room is usable. The doctor submits to us the following two lighting schemes:

(1) I return here to the word used by an English gentleman to describe our project: "the most perverse moment in architecture..." (AR). Perverse,... we were perverse, but, said the Englishman, it was such an architecture that if rigorously supported by numerous reasons, one might risk being seduced by it.

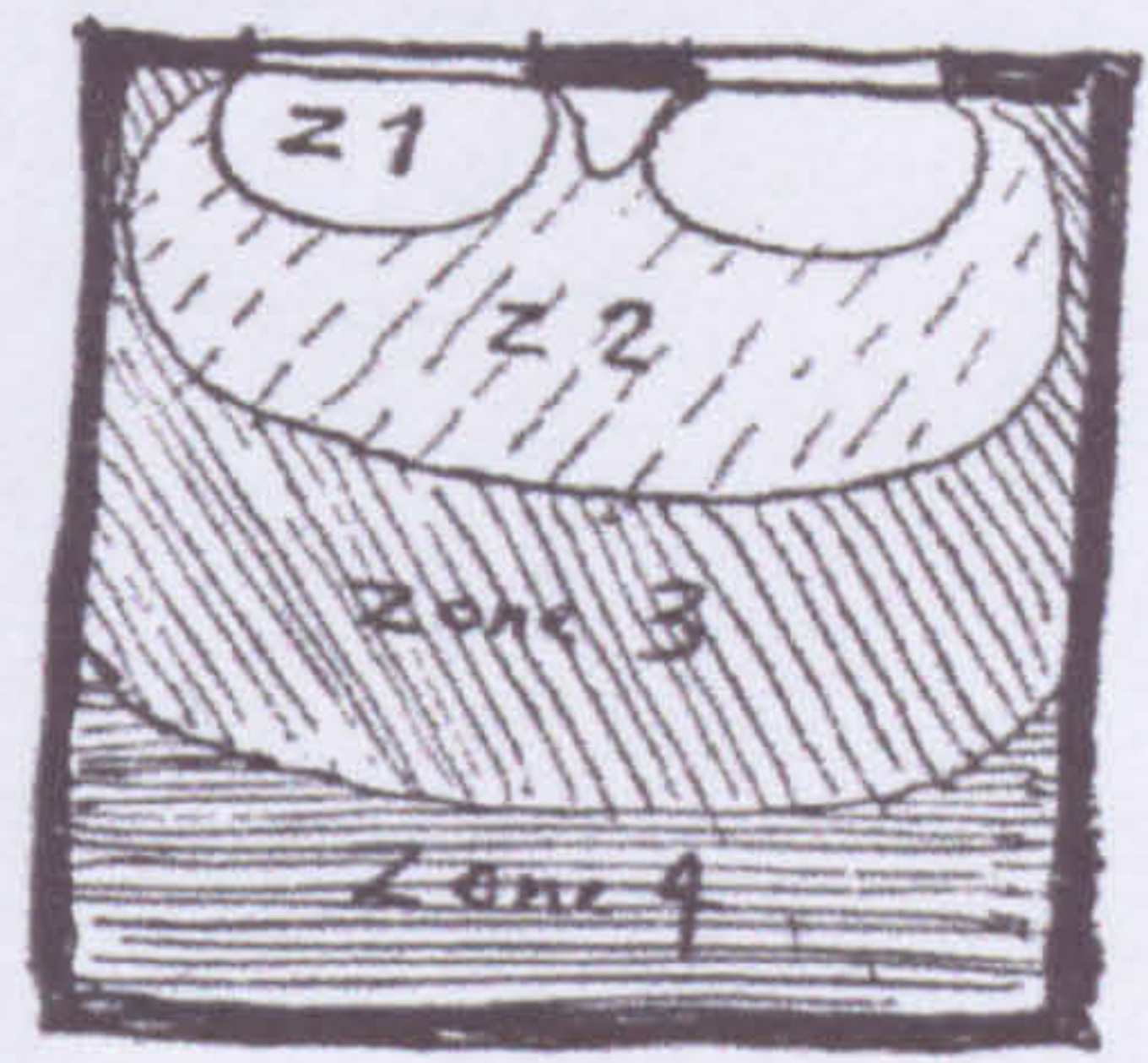




**This promenade on one of the water taxis of Geneva confirms with respect to the panorama, the principle of the long window.**



Fenêtre « en longueur » contiguë aux murs latéraux.  
(Pièce A.)



Fenêtres en « hauteur » classiques.  
(Pièce B.)

**The glazed surface is equal in each of the two rooms.**



The comparison is telling. Proof? If you were to take a photograph in room A, your exposure time would be *four times* shorter than if you used room B. Is the argument convincing? You will admit then, that the office-type most useful to everyone, *is that equipped with a long window, stretching from one wall to the other*. And if this office is 'type'<sup>20</sup>, that is to say, effective, perfect, can you, cowardly, return to academic formulae which whirl in your memory (Versailles, the Ducal Palace, the Vatican), would you agree then, to renounce it, for the most part, with the aim of preserving your links with the Academy, and thus to not fall, inevitably, into a form of new architecture? You will not be able to do it; you will never agree to commit this dishonesty for the regard of your client, who commissions the offices from you. Therefore, all your offices will be *types*, - ten offices, a hundred offices, five hundred offices. And consequently, your facade will be entirely new and will no longer be either Versailles or the Vatican. But will you dare to run the risk of this elementary requirement imposed by your integrity?

I add that present feelings, intensely current, push us to seek the light. Sedentary people henceforth, we have need of light: at the threshold of completely new tasks, new at each stage of this new machine age, we need to see clearly, within ourselves as round about us. This is entirely a programme of contemporary action. This is entirely, particularly, the exact programme of the S.D.N.

Reinforced concrete embodies exactly the elegant solution, economical and totally efficient.

*Reinforced concrete automatically provides us with the "long window".*

The long window as opposed to the tall window of which the last example (Hausmann) is the superceded type resulting from stone construction; the long window, magnificent consequence of reinforced concrete. This is the first time in architecture that the *point of support* can be suppressed, or at least does not need to appear on the facade. *But two architectural systems, fundamentally dissimilar, follow from two systems of windows.* Would you hesitate before the efficient "long window", because it endows us with a new architecture?

Reinforced concrete carries the solution to its completion: the window glass will touch the slender partition which separates two offices. Therefore there will be no posts or piers on the facade where the dividing walls of the offices meet it.



Reinforced concrete, with the *fenetre en longueur*, has brought the *free facade*, that is to say, that the entirely machine-made sliding-window elements, one behind the other, may be added alongside one another indefinitely, *without obvious points of support*.

Here, at the Secretariat, we require the lengths of the office floors to be 180 metres. Our windows will extend 180 metres, without intermediate support, without any interruption.

This is why: the reinforced concrete pilotis rising from the ground will extend the height of the building, set back 1.25 metres from the facade. More exactly, the reinforced concrete floor slabs for each level will extend beyond the posts and form balconies of 1.25m; on the edge of these balconies will be set the lightweight walls which support the windows; the windows will be carried on this supporting wall, they will abut the ceiling. And this will be repeated on each level.

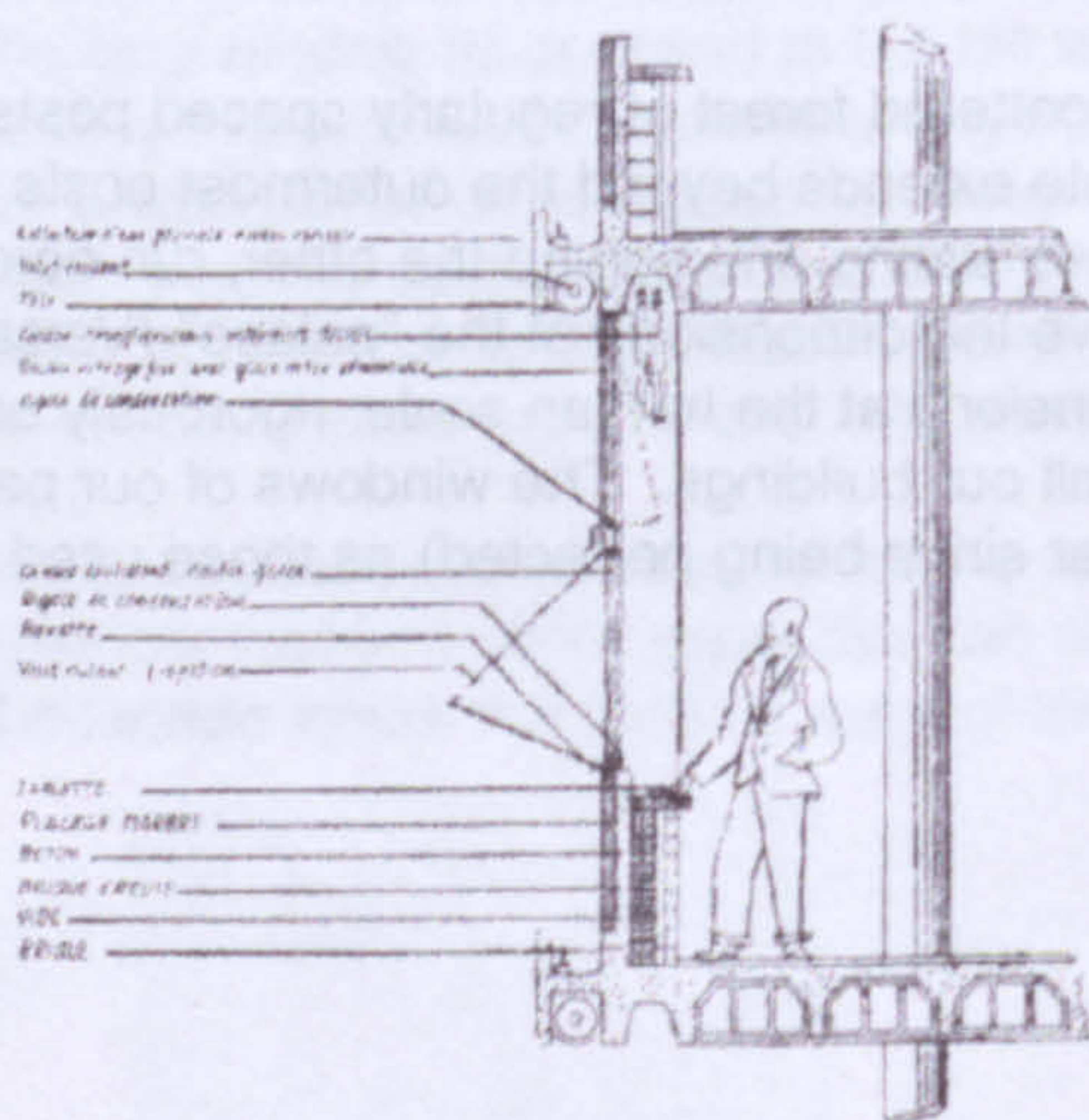
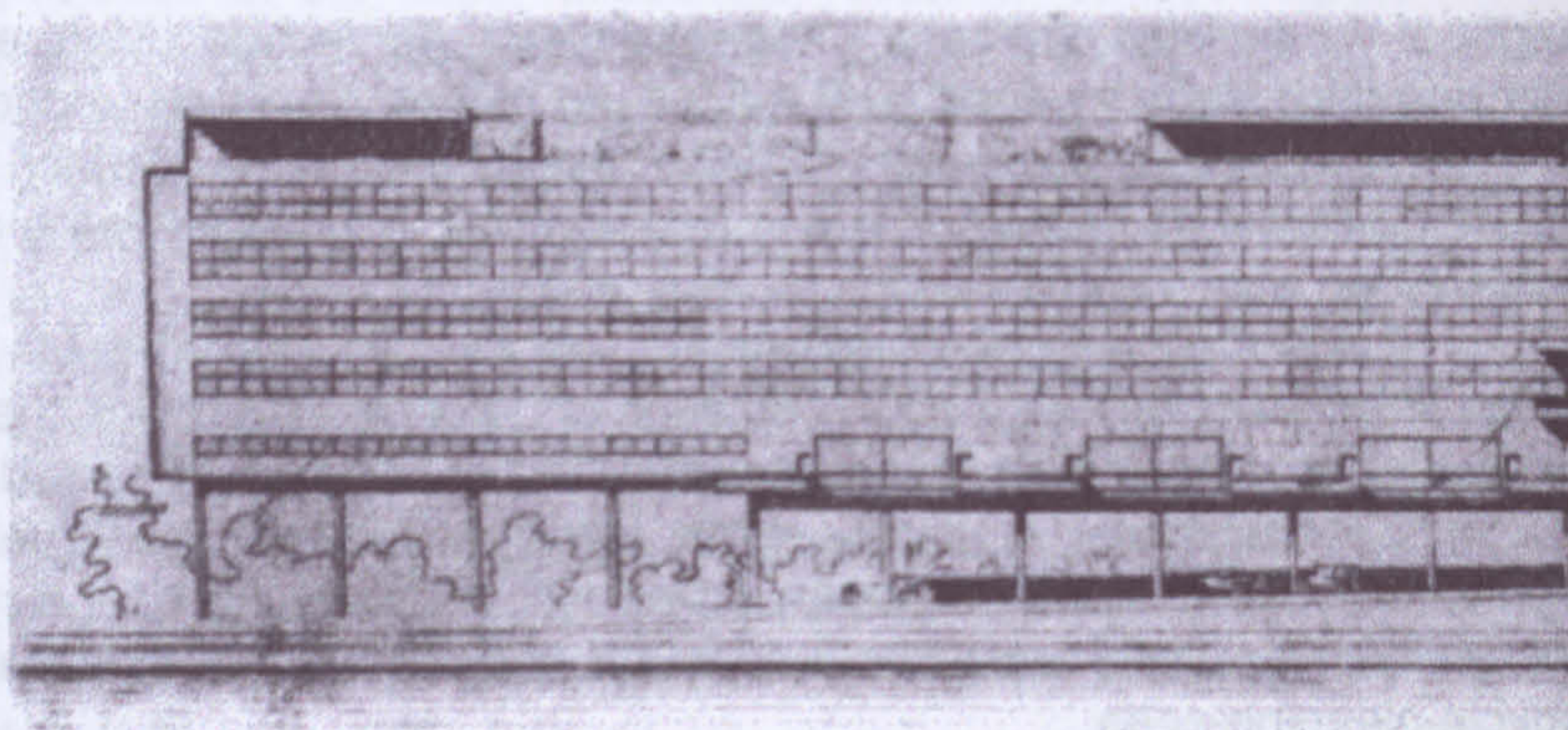
Since the winter winds blowing off the lake are very cold, the casing for the wooden rolling shutter will be found on the exterior, and not on the interior; the shutter is completely external: the gales can blow, the windows remain hermetically sealed.

Such windows, so much for windows, they become the actual climate control of an architecture. To clean the windows, a little rolling cage built like a bicycle allows the cleaners to work effectively and without endangering their lives. Each level possesses its own bicycle-cleaning-cage.

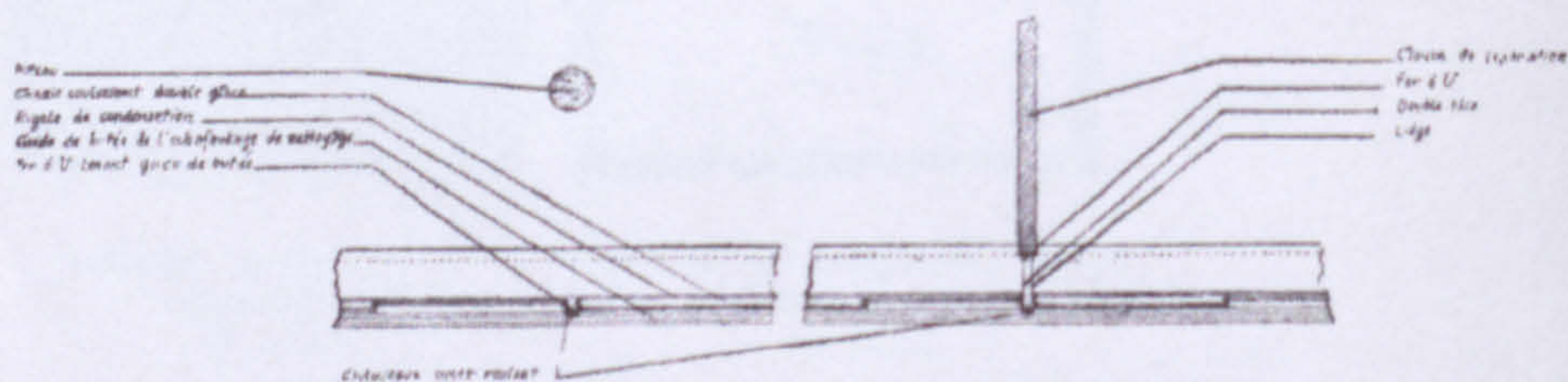
So, the free facade, the long window<sup>31</sup>, are the bases of a new architectural aesthetic. Do we revolt? Seek to perpetuate the window of stone construction? Nothing can hold out against the superiority of the sliding, long window. And a new architecture asserts itself with unquestionable laws.

The office building becomes, then, a scattered forest of regularly spaced posts. Every three metres a slab of reinforced concrete extends beyond the outermost posts, forming a kind of balcony<sup>32</sup>. The glazing, frames sliding one behind the other, run across all faces of the building. These frames do not have the dimensions of the "palace" (Versailles or the Procuraties<sup>33</sup>); they have standard dimensions at the human scale, rigorously established and controlled for the past ten years in all our buildings. The windows of our palace have the same frames (patented for over a year since being perfected) as those used in



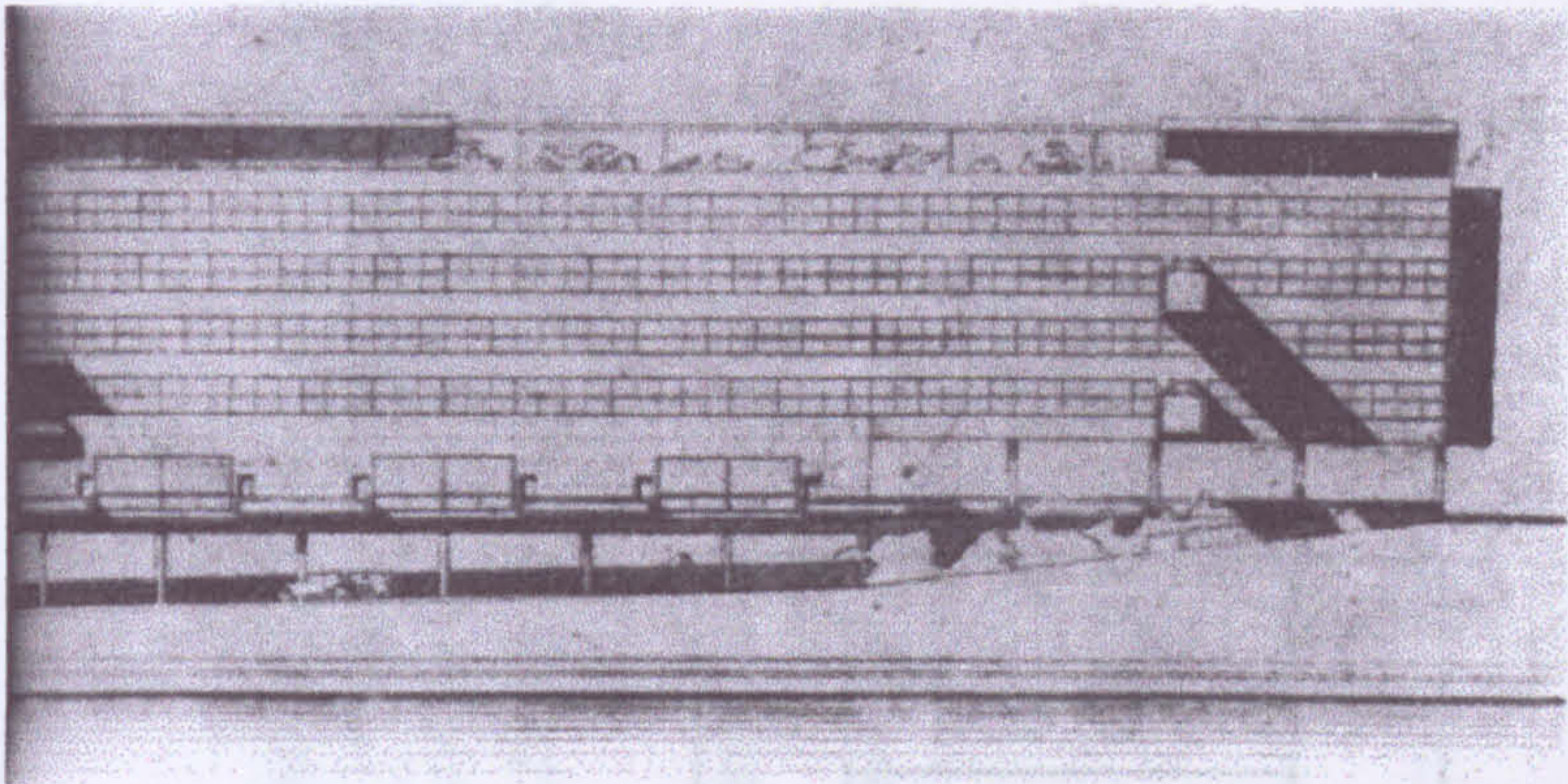


The facade no longer carries the floors; it is carried on the floor slabs. The structural posts are 1m.25 in from the facade. The facade is entirely free. The windows are continuous, without any interruption. Each room achieves the theoretical illumination, perfect. The windows slide laterally. (Patent L.C. & P.J., used by the Saint-Gobain factories.

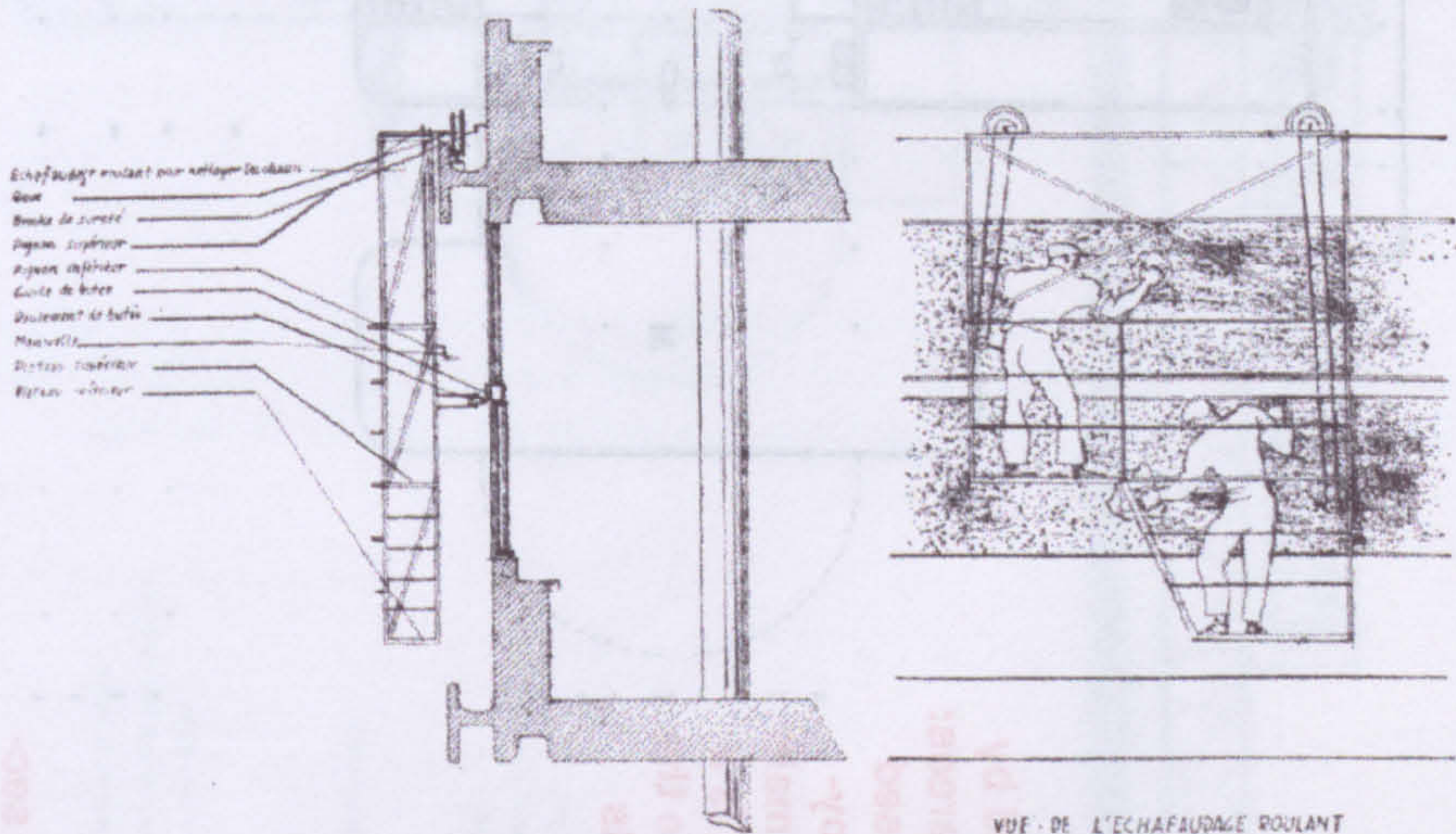
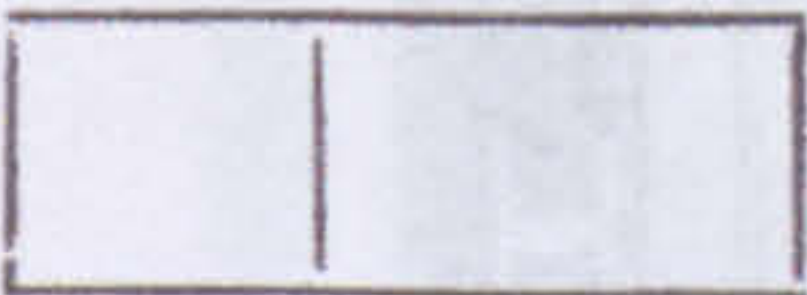


## PLAN



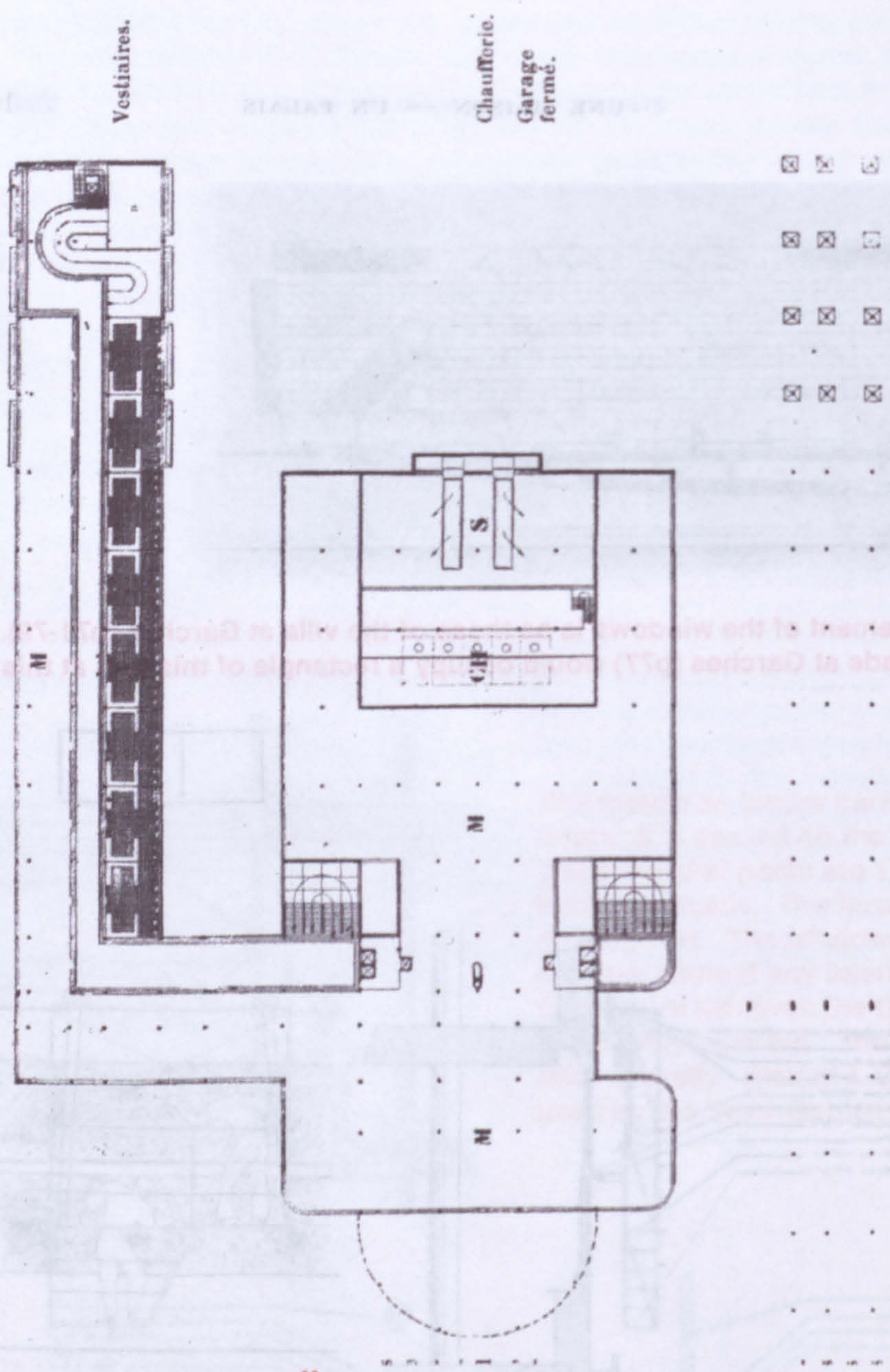


The arrangement of the windows is as those of the villa at Garches (p71-79). The garden facade at Garches (p77) would occupy a rectangle of this size at this scale:



The "passerelle-bicyclette" for cleaning the windows. The solution for the windows (concrete frame, sliding windows, external rolling shutters) is a pure, technical solution. It supports a pure, aesthetic solution.



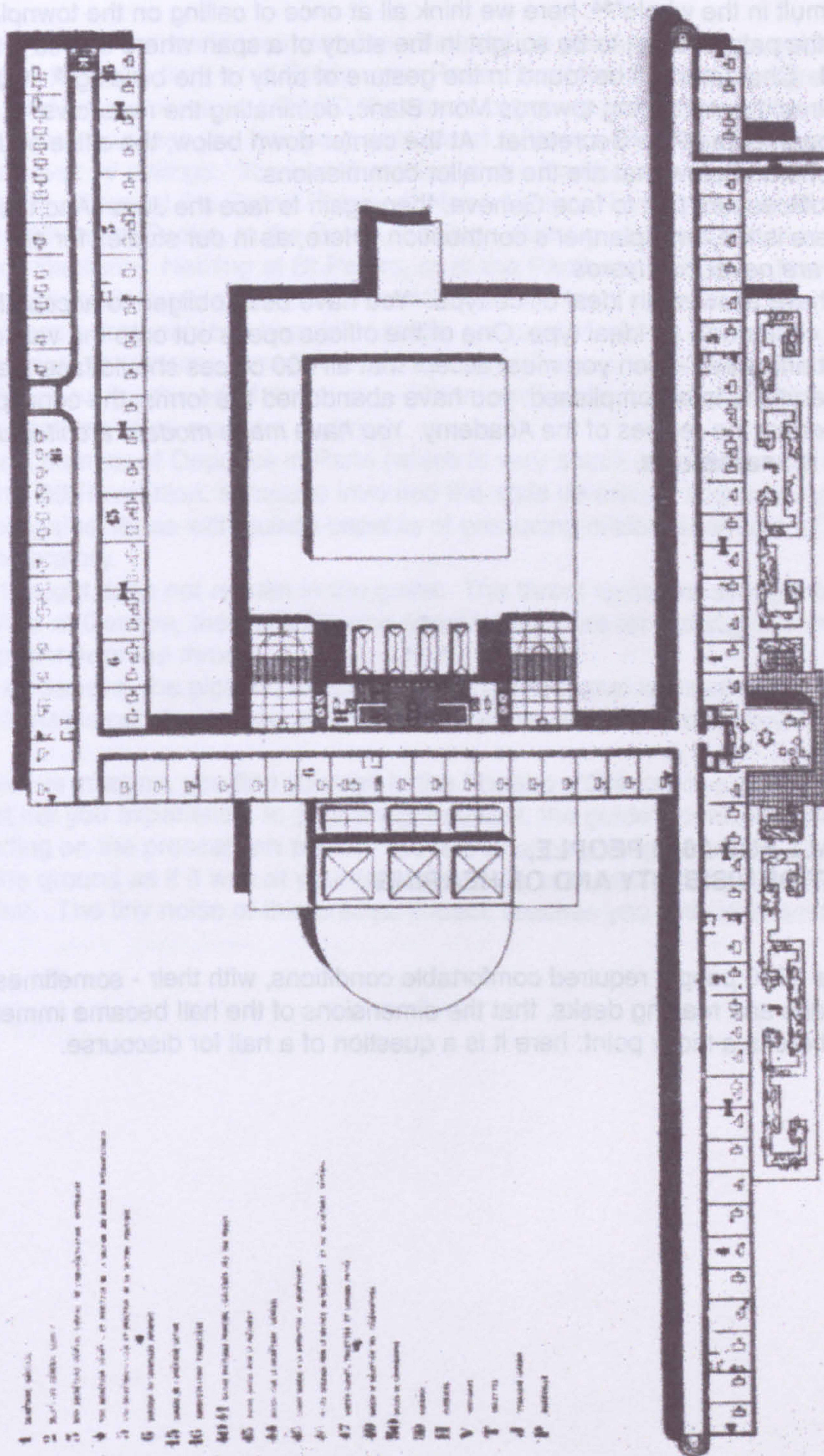


The soil is only touched by the buildings in these areas: the services, the enclosed garages, and the employees' cloakrooms. The main body of the secretariat is a 4, 6, 8, 10 metres above the ground, according to its slope.

Here: the pilotis of the secretariat which supply the open (but covered) garage without expense, for a hun-



1. Entrée principale
2. Entrée secondaire
3. Entrée tertiaire
4. Entrée quaternaire
5. Entrée quinaire
6. Entrée sextaire
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8. Entrée octaire
9. Entrée nonaire
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13. Entrée tridécnaire
14. Entrée tétradécnaire
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18. Entrée octadécnaire
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20. Entrée viginti-naire
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24. Entrée sexagenaire
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# SECRETARIAT 14' EME

Secretary-General's salon, opening onto the garden-terrace over the Small Commissions' suites.



our villas, our commercial buildings, our workers' housing, our apartment blocks. This fact is very important. I repeat: the long window, in contrast to the window of Haussmann, establishes a new architecture. And this *uniformity* is a precious element of *unity*. "Unity in the detail, tumult in the whole"<sup>34</sup>, here we think all at once of calling on the townplanner. The character of the palace is not to be sought in the study of a span where sacred "canons" are to be applied. Character will be found in the gesture of unity of the building<sup>35</sup>. Ours extends over 180 metres, frontal, facing towards Mont Blanc, dominating the meadows. It houses all the large departments of the Secretariat. At the center down below, the office of the Secretary-General. Below that are the smaller commissions.

The offices turn first to face Geneva, then again to face the Jura. And there is no courtyard. Here is the town planner's contribution. Here, as in our studies for city plans (1922) *there are never courtyards*.

You have allowed an ideal office-type. You have been obliged to accept that the 500 offices might conform to an ideal type. One of the offices opens out onto the vast open spaces - light and view; - then you must accept that all 500 offices should face the light and the view. Everything is accomplished: you have abandoned the forms, the concepts, the habits, the means, the recipes of the Academy. *You have made modern architecture* and your position is unassailable.

\*  
\* \*

## **A GREAT HALL FOR 2600 PEOPLE, INSTRUMENT OF VISIBILITY AND OF HEARING**

These 2600 people required comfortable conditions, with their - sometimes very large - armchairs and reading desks, that the dimensions of the hall became immense.

Now here is a tricky point: here it is a question of a hall for discourse.



It is a question of discussions, of intercourse between peoples from the four corners of the earth, speaking different languages, understanding one another with difficulty, and debating not philosophical points detached from current affairs, but discussing peace or war for the world.

Recall your own experiences: you have listened on pleasure trips, to guides who explained things to you in Italy, or in Spain, or in Paris, never mind where, the great works of architecture. And you have *never* HEARD the words of your guide, beneath the vaults of these art sanctuaries, unless you had your ears glued to them. *One hears nothing in vast aisles covered over by ceilings.* You heard nothing at the Pantheon in Paris, at Saint-Sulpice, at the Invalides, at the Grand Palais, at Notre-Dame. Nor anything at St Marks in Venice, at St Anthony at Padua, in the Dome at Milan. Nothing at all at St Marie-des Fleurs, in the Florence Baptistery. Nothing at St Peters, or at the Pantheon in Rome. Nothing except a *murmur*. Innumerable jumbled echoes, innumerable swarming reverberations. *A murmur.*

And if you were unable to hear your guide, perhaps you have sometimes tried to listen to a discussion, to sermons beneath these vaults: perhaps a hundred people of all the throng have followed the thread of discourse. Others will have understood snatches, and the remainder nothing at all except a murmur.

In the Chamber of Deputies in Paris (which is very small) one hears very badly. Then, after the '89 Revolution, someone invented the *style de tribune* and each age has had its great nightingales: those with gullets capable of producing oratorical effects. Thus one is able to rule by oratory.

The thought does not remain in the gullet. The throat lacks the strength to control everything. And at Geneva, theoretically, one should plan more for a *thought from the head* than for a *thought from the throat*.

And at Geneva, the gigantic dimensions of the hall signal to us an irreparable disaster, if this hall is constructed according to the means, recipes, and canons of the Academy.

Yet, let us imagine, you find yourself in the Theatre d'Orange one day. From way up in the highest tier you experience, to your enlightenment, the guide's demonstration for his visitors: standing on the proscenium platform he lets a farthing drop; you hear the impact of the coin on the ground as if it was at your feet. In a pure and precise way, the guide says to you: "the point". The tiny noise of this precise impact, reaches you with all exactitude.



He speaks, all the time down there below, on the stage; you hear clearly. If he sings, truly you are dumbstruck.

It is because the Théâtre d'Orange does not have a ceiling. And it is also because its stage walls, its materials and the arrangement of tiers follow the orders of an anatomical diagram.

Today we know this :

1. That the ancients knew the scientific laws of acoustics.
2. That since antiquity up to now, these laws have been more or less, totally ignored, or, at least the means of applying them to roofed auditoria (with vaults, cupolas, barrel vaults, flat roofs etc).

Consequently: the ancient theatres appear miraculous to us. They are though, only an expression of ingenious and rigorous working drawings (blueprints). All the auditoria of the modern epoch are strangers to the laws of acoustics.

And again, the ancient theatre, benefiting from a clement climate, avoided the greatest difficulty: the ceiling. The auditoria of the modern era raised in more severe climates were subject to the constraint of the ceiling.

The roof, then, had two consequences.

The first: deplorable acoustics. The second: construction difficulties, structural engineering statics, which absorbed the whole effort of its builders. The question was limited to a problem of statics: and this is the *whole* aim of the Gothic cathedral and the Renaissance dome or basilica. A problem of statics.

Now, we have to introduce the laws of acoustics into an order which could not be more static (the law of gravity with all its consequences for vertical systems, stabilising buttresses, etc) but in an order which is biological, rather, *and where the formal consequences bear no relation to those of a static system*. In antiquity: no ceiling, no static system.

Today : the obligatory ceiling; the static system, but then disagreeable consequences for acoustic phenomena. It is a matter of the conception of an organic acoustic system to allow hearing at the same time as the conception of a static system to support the ceiling. And it is a matter of introducing these systems to one another and of achieving a union ensuring both static and acoustic solutions.

But if the Modern Age, has, in a thousand years, invented diverse structural systems, if since iron and reinforced concrete, the scientific calculations of the 19th and 20th centuries have brought a fabulous power for static realisation,



by contrast, we have remained, until recently, without a truly scientific understanding of acoustic laws.

These laws are simple, comprehensible even to children, as the laws of the earth are simple. What is not simple, is to discover them, to formulate them, and to make a complete system.

All Gustave Lyon's recent work has been to this end.

Sound is a spherical wave. Take, for example, a soap bubble, tinted red. It swells more and more. Whatever redness it possesses, is given by only a small quantity of pigment which remains unchanged when it has become very large. Suppose that, swelling immensely, the strong red of the small bubble has become a shade of rose so pale that it is scarcely perceptible. Now, allowing that this red represents the loudness of a sound and put your ear to the small bubble: you will hear a very loud noise (dark red); put your ear to the large bubble, and you will hear a noise so faint that you will perceive it with difficulty. And to reiterate: the surface of contact of your eardrum applied to the surface of the (small) dark red bubble, is in contact with much of its substance (a loud noise). Your eardrum applied to the surface of the (large) pale rose-coloured bubble, is in contact with only a miniscule part of its substance (a small sound).

Conclusion: in normal circumstances, the eardrum does not receive more than an infinitesimal portion of emitted sound from this broadcast (the spherical wave), so infinitesimal that at *eleven metres*, the human voice is no longer heard *via a direct wave*, by the human ear(1).

What may be done?

The sphere of the wave is like a billiard ball; it ricochets from every surface that it encounters, following the angle of incidence; exactly like a billiard ball. There are four cushions against which the billiard ball ricochets, and the player who aims at two other balls often hits them by combining precisely the effects of the cushions (ricochet of the ball according to the angle of incidence). The sound-sphere, expanding in space, collides suddenly with a vertical wall and ricochets according to the angle of incidence; this ricochet produces a new sphere projected like a missile in the direction of incidence (sphere which will expand, will ricochet etc., and of which an infinitesimal part, the pale rose surface), will touch your eardrum at one moment.

(1) Certain animals have much more sensitive ears than ours; likewise certain savages in the heart of Africa who hear things that the European colonists cannot.



The vertical wall that the first sphere collided with becomes an emitter in its turn (and so on). But soon after the first sphere has hit, a lateral wall: ricochet, new sphere, new arrival at your eardrum (always paler and paler rose-pink). Here is the first sphere which collides now with the ceiling: ricochet, new sphere; new arrival at your eardrum. Now it hits the basement wall: ricochet, new sphere, new arrival at your eardrum. It will touch one after the other; as it goes along it swells and disperses in proportion to its initial force, at *innumerable* points on the walls, below, laterally, on the ceiling, the ground, etc. This is an immense emission with a *single* origin, and the effect is of indefinite multiplication, growing weaker and weaker. And all these spheres (paler and paler rose) travel to your eardrum. The original emission that your eardrum was not able to absorb, since it was not pressed to the mouth of the orator, has become gigantic, where all the innumerable points of the surfaces of the hall become emitters. Innumerable emitters causing a multiplication of the innumerable sound spheres. And your eardrum is there, amongst these assailants which make contact with it millions of times, inordinately weakened, but nevertheless innumerable. And that is how the sound emitted is carried to your ear.

But will such a throng of noises not reach your ear very late? Because each ricochet represents a path travelled, and sound (experiment confirms it) covers 340 metres per second.

Experiment has established another fact which interests us: the human ear only differentiates between sounds when their arrivals at the human eardrum are separated by a delay of a *fifteenth of a second*. All the sounds reaching our eardrum(s) within the space of a fifteenth of a second, *are perceived as a single sound*: thus, of millions of sound spheres which make contact with our eardrums in under a fifteenth of a second, *only a single sound is distinguished by us*. Now, a fifteenth of a second represents (at a rate of 340 metres a second) a distance covered of about 22 metres. Result: in this hall in which all the ceiling surfaces, the ground, the walls, the columns, the seats, etc., emit, by reflection, innumerable sound spheres resulting from the initial sphere emitted by the orator, one can, by drawing exact diagrams, trace in pencil the courses taken by these ricocheting spheres, according to the angle of incidence. And locating the orator, putting a listener in some part of the hall, one can reconstruct an exact picture of events: on the one hand, the



paths C1, C2, C3, C4 etc., travelled by the spheres which ricochet and finally reach the listener, on the other hand, the direct wave reaching the listener. We add up the portions of the path travelled by C1 initially: this might be, for example,  $11\text{m}+15\text{m}+7\text{m}+9\text{m}=42\text{m}$ . You measure the single path of the direct wave; this might be, for example, 23 metres. Subtracting 23 metres from 42 metres = 19 metres, you conclude: the ear will only register the direct wave and the wave C1 as a single sound. And all goes well. Perform the same operation on C2; this might be for example  $25\text{m}+10\text{m}+14\text{m}+21\text{m}=70\text{m}$ . The direct wave is 23 metres,  $70\text{m}-23\text{m}=47\text{m}$ , you conclude: the ear will perceive *two sounds*, one initially which has covered 23 metres; the other much delayed which has necessarily covered 70. And nothing will work, because here is the *delayed wave*, cause of commotion<sup>36</sup>. Now the process is repeated for C3, C4, C5 etc. It will give you good results and bad results.

And the process is repeated for a second listener placed elsewhere, for a third listener, etc. Your diagram covers the traits of two colours, the reds, for example, which are good (difference in paths travelled less than 22 metres); the blues, for example, which are bad (difference in paths travelled greater than 22 metres).

It is necessary to make a decision: since your hall is already built and since it reflects waves which accomplish the aims pursued and others which arrive too late, you will have to *correct* the hall. How?

On smooth surfaces the sound wave ricochets. So, in the exact place where one of the ricochets (blues) gives you a delayed wave, put a material that is not smooth, but absorbent (flannelette felting for example). The interfering wave sinks into the felting, it is absorbed, annihilated; it will not ricochet anymore and will not reach the listener's ear: it is cancelled. Repeat the procedure. *You will have killed all interference.*

You can also kill the interference by piercing a hole in the area where the wave ricocheted: in future it will pass through this hole, sinking into structures outside the hall, it will not return. This is the second method.

It is worth remembering that we saw that the *direct wave* only carried to us an imperceptible sound<sup>37</sup> (very pale rose). And that we noticed that the noise emitted had become appreciable in its force by the interaction of millions of secondary waves



reflected by the surfaces of the hall.

Then, watch out for this:

To kill at birth the delayed waves, hecklers, cause of commotion, we will apply felt-ing, we will bore holes. The hall will be *corrected*. And all the waves that we have obliterated will not reach the ear of the listeners. And the listener will have a pure hearing, but *weakened*. Weakened to what extent? Weakened, by a quarter, by a half, by three-quarters. And in the depths of our hall one will hear with difficulty. And if the hall is immense, the majority of listeners will not hear a reedy, imperceptible voice.

Because you forget one thing: that this hall - I have spoken of it most highly - has been constructed following a static system (laws of gravity, structure) or following an academic system (law of ostentation). And it is here that the situation becomes tense: your ceiling is your friend or your enemy; your lateral walls are your friends or your enemies; your floor is your friend or your enemy. And the wall which stands behind the orator can be your best friend or your worst enemy. It is useful to know which it truly is.

Well, the academic halls, or those resulting from a static system, do not take into account that the walls, the ceilings, the floors are *enemies*: St Peters in Rome, the Pantheon of Rome or that of Paris, Notre Dame de Paris, the audience hall of the Pope's Chateau at Avignon, a large proportion of the amphitheatres of the university, nearly all the halls of parliament and finally, 360 of 377 projects for the Palace of Nations at Geneva, offer to acoustics only *enemy surfaces*. We have been able to determine experimentally that nothing can be heard there, or that one would hear badly. From the simple view of plans and sections of the great halls of Assembly of the Palace at Geneva, one knows that *nothing will be heard there*.

Let us remember this well: *every hall may be corrected*.

And let us remember this too: a corrected hall supplies a pure acoustic, but this acoustic may be reduced (by the truncation of the greater part of reflected waves) almost to zero.

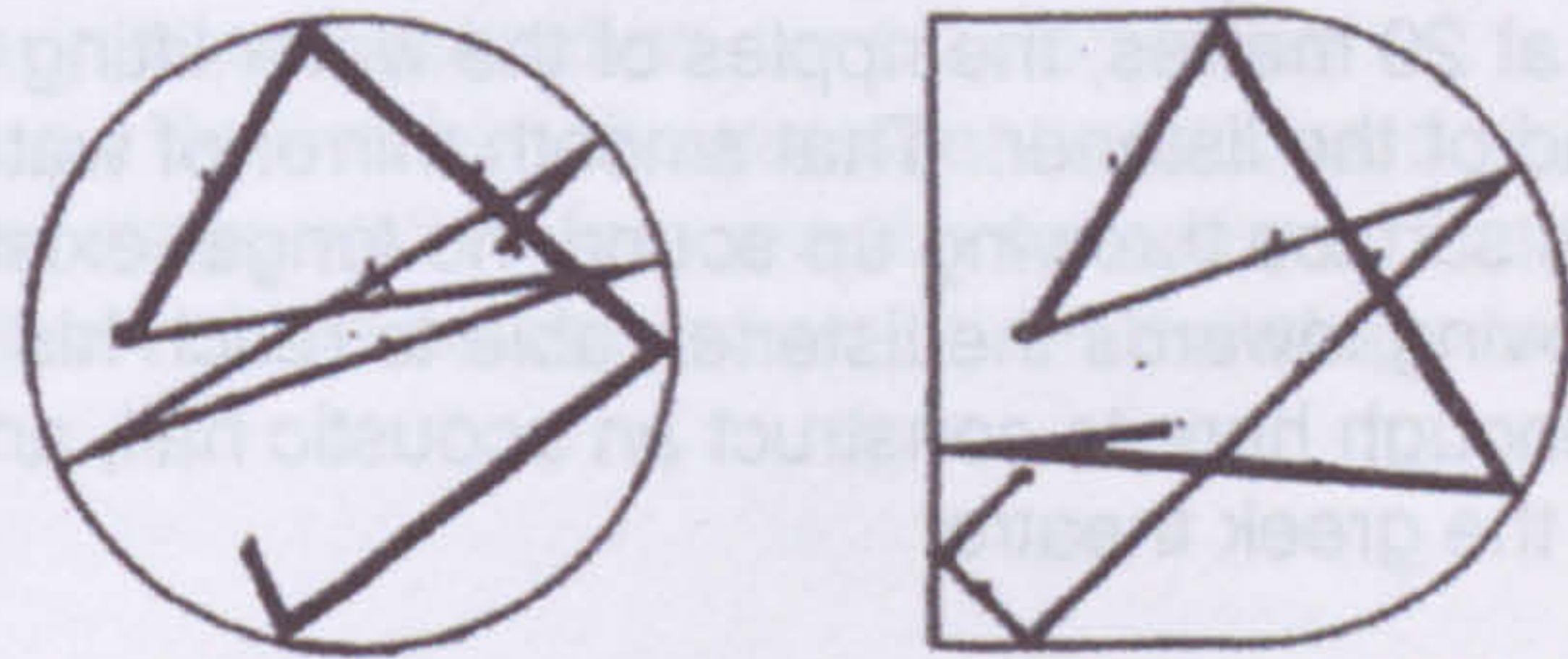
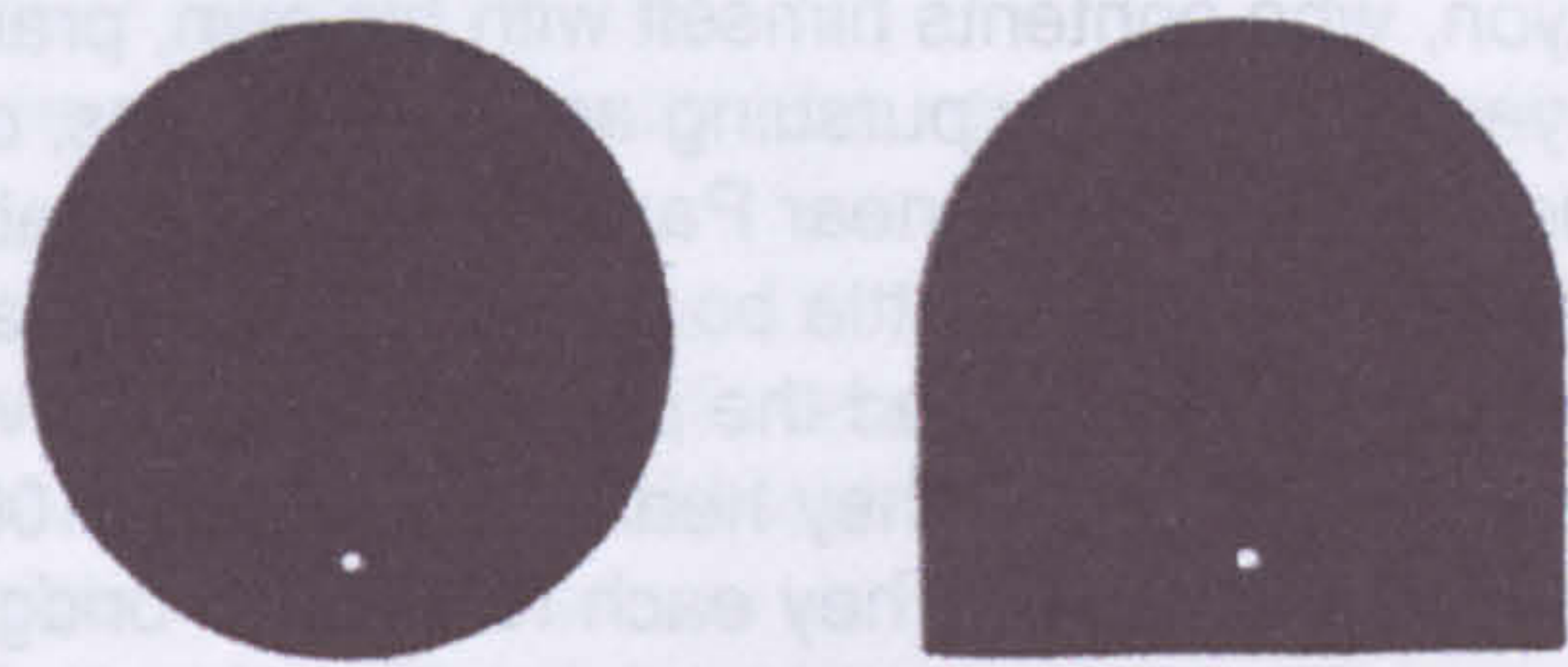
*And here then is the problem.* An acoustic hall is intended to allow the listeners to hear.

Here is an *enormous* truth for which the architectural consequences are a *true revolution* in every sense of the word until accepted for conference halls.

Because, taking up acoustic theory again with its *positive*,



## 2 salles de format anti acoustique



ONDES LARGES INDÉPENDANT RÉFLEXION  
RÉFLEXION RÉFLEXION



LES ONDES ET RÉFLEXION ANTI-ÉCHO ET L'ÉCHO ET L'ÉCHO ET L'ÉCHO  
ICI, LE PLAFOND MULTIPLE LES ONDES RÉFLEXION. ON PEUT VOIR LE PLAFOND : ON CRÉER  
DANS ON S'OPPOSE LA RÉFLEXION ET L'ÉCHO ET L'ÉCHO ET L'ÉCHO  
LES PLACES D'ÉCHO ET L'ÉCHO

The innumerable ricochets of the sound waves create a commotion, whether the hall is ten metres in diameter or a hundred metres. The ceiling, flat or domed, causes the most complete interference.



rather than with its negative givens, you may reason in this way:

1. The direct wave arrives so weakened that at 11 metres it is perceived with difficulty.
2. The sound emitted reaches the reflecting surfaces only by an intermediary.
3. The reflection of waves follows the laws of incidence.
4. Having reached the listener's ear (its destination) a wave must not be able to continue on its course. It must be absorbed.

Let us clarify again this one point: during the summer of 1927 following the verdict of the competition jury, multiple and contradictory opinions were expressed by "John Citizen<sup>38</sup>" on the subject of acoustics. Never had the problem been so acute, so urgent; never was confusion so great. These errors served as sticks to beat us with, and there was no-one calmly taking stock. Thus a learned physician announced that sound could not travel, with sufficient force, beyond 30 metres (Our hall is 70m long); that the sound would not be able to sustain a volume greater than 20.000 cubic metre (our hall is of 40.000), etc.

M. Gustave Lyon, who contents himself with his own, practical experience; who has spent twenty or thirty years, doggedly pursuing acoustic studies, once took advantage of a magnificent moonlit night on the Seine near Paris. The air was absolutely still; the water was as smooth as a mirror. He took a little boat and went upstream; his friend took another and went downstream. One of them read the paper in a normal voice; the boats moved away from one another. At 50 metres, they heard perfectly; at 100 metres, also, at 200 metres also, the same at 500 metres. They each reached a bridge; their two positions were 1500 metres apart; the reading of the newspaper was audible from one bridge to the other!

They returned.

At 100 metres apart, a Zephyr arose, wrinkling the surface of the water like crumpled silk paper. They did not hear each other anymore! At 50 metres, they could not hear each other. Nor at 20 metres; the ripples of the water lifting the sound waves into the air well above the head of the listener. That smooth mirror of water, immense refractive plane, each point of its surface throwing up sound, no longer existed. And there were no more sound waves moving towards the listener, able to reach his ear.

And there is enough here to construct an acoustic hall, and for us to explain the miraculous triumph of the greek theatre.



The greek theatre includes a stage, the orator is placed there; he speaks.

His voice issues as a sphere (sound wave).

As fast as the sphere inflates itself, the eardrums of the listeners come into contact with a miniscule fragment of this sphere (direct hearing).

Behind the orator is a stage wall. This wall is vertical. The sphere of emission strikes all the innumerable points of its surface. In its turn, the wall emits by ricochet spheres which rebound as legion towards the listeners' ears.

In front of the orator, at his feet, is the smooth floor of the orchestra. The direct sound sphere emitted by the orator strikes the floor of the orchestra, ricochets according to the angle of incidence as innumerable new spheres which leave obliquely and wash against all the tiers of the amphitheatre.

Only the sky covers the theatre; all the innumerable spheres which begin to fill the air of the theatre, impinge upon the ears of the listeners, continue their interaction, and *escape* to the sky: they *will never return*.

If one suspends a canopy there above the theatre, the canopy *absorbs* the sound waves. They will never return.

The greek theater does not have a ceiling.(1) It has a reflector wall. All the waves are projected towards the listeners. They never return.

Let us construct the hall of the Palace of Nations according to the useful principles of acoustics.

We have positioned the orator. The listeners occupy places ranged according to the requirements of the programme, and they are placed in conditions of excellent visibility. In plan, in section, the goal sought is expressed: these are the various planes which are developed on the floor of the hall, the aisles and the galleries. These planes must be *showered*, regularly, equitably, in equal quantities, by sound waves.

The orator is in position. Behind him the president's tribune dominates, and behind the president, the rear wall, the stage wall. *Here are the reflectors*. The tribune of the president receives the first impact of the sound sphere; then the stage wall.

(1) Having had occasion to speak in numerous conference halls in the great cities of Europe, in nearly all of these halls, I have found behind the speaker, not a reflector wall, but a magnificent velour curtain, very decorative, and effectively absorbing most of the voice; the glass and the carafe provided, are mute witnesses of the exhaustion offered thus graciously to the invited speaker, whose voice they hasten to smother in a concern for decorative show.



By successive experiments, we divide the mass of our listeners into three groups.

The first group (the delegates who entirely occupy the stalls in the hall) may be *showered* via the reflective effects of tribune and stage wall. *We will not allow the lateral walls of the hall to enter into the play of the immediate reflection.* And to obtain this essential result, we curve the face of the president's tribune and the stage wall, in such a fashion that the sphere issuing from the orator's mouth strikes the curved surfaces which return (according to the incidence) the discharge of refracted waves according to a radiating path which will never strike the lateral walls. Then the surface of the tribune and the stage wall will operate a barrage, *showering* the stalls and aisles, *exploiting* a maximum spherical sector of the sound sphere emitted by the orator. Let us use again the metaphor of colour: the tribune, very near to the sound source, and having a limited surface, makes use of a portion which is intensely red. Thus it acts with great efficiency. The stage wall, which is more remote, makes use of a dark-rose portion; but, being vast, also acts efficiently.

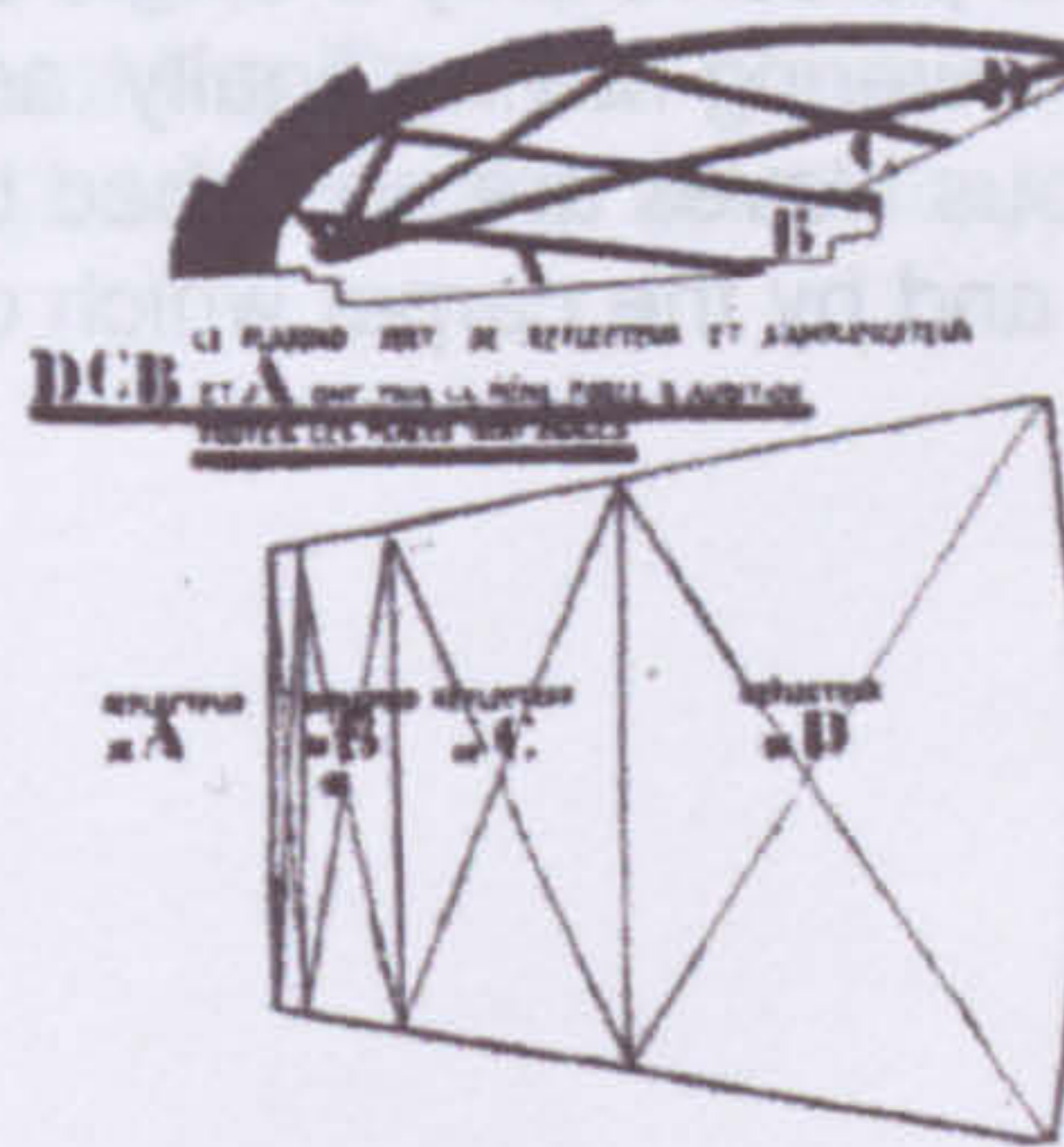
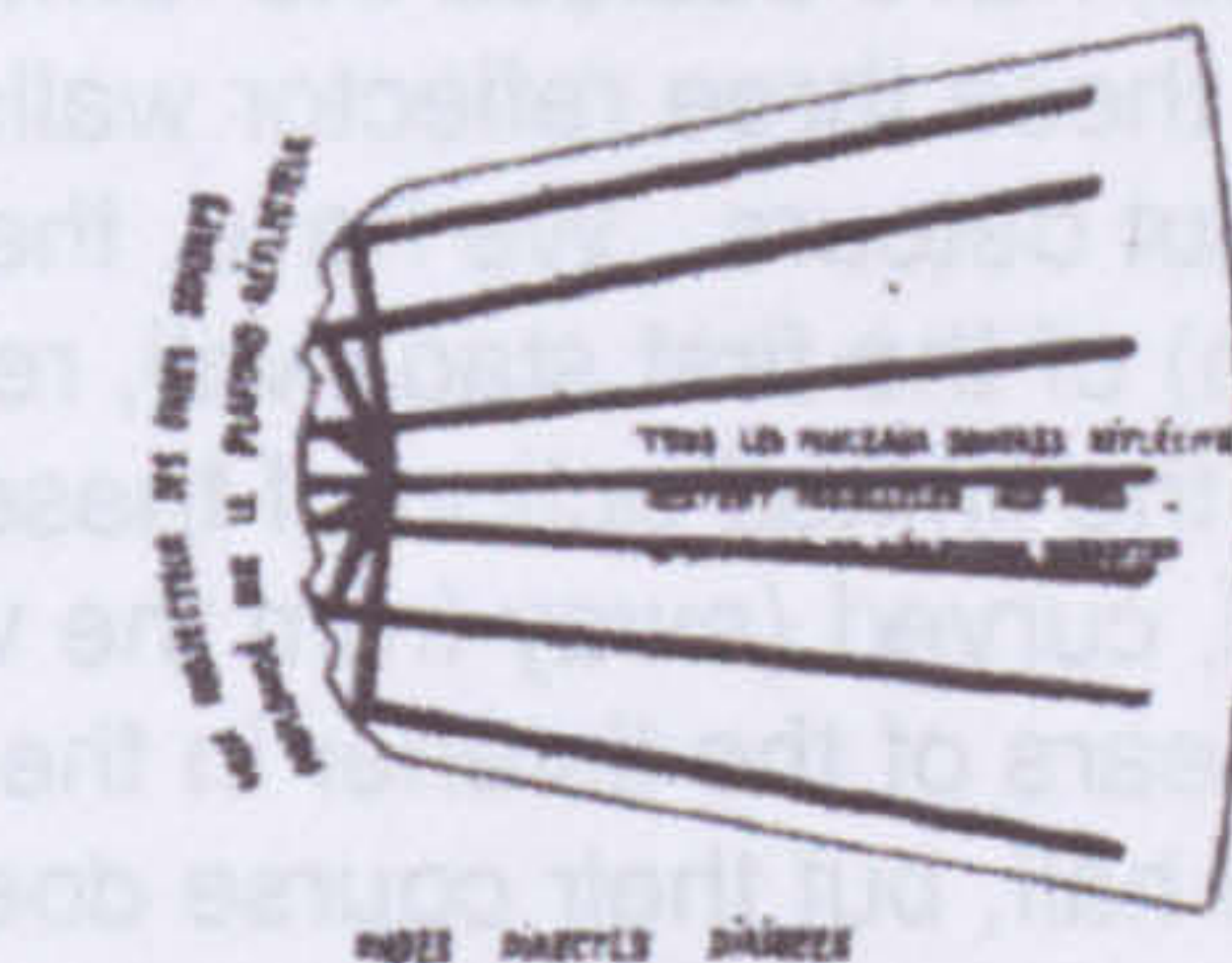
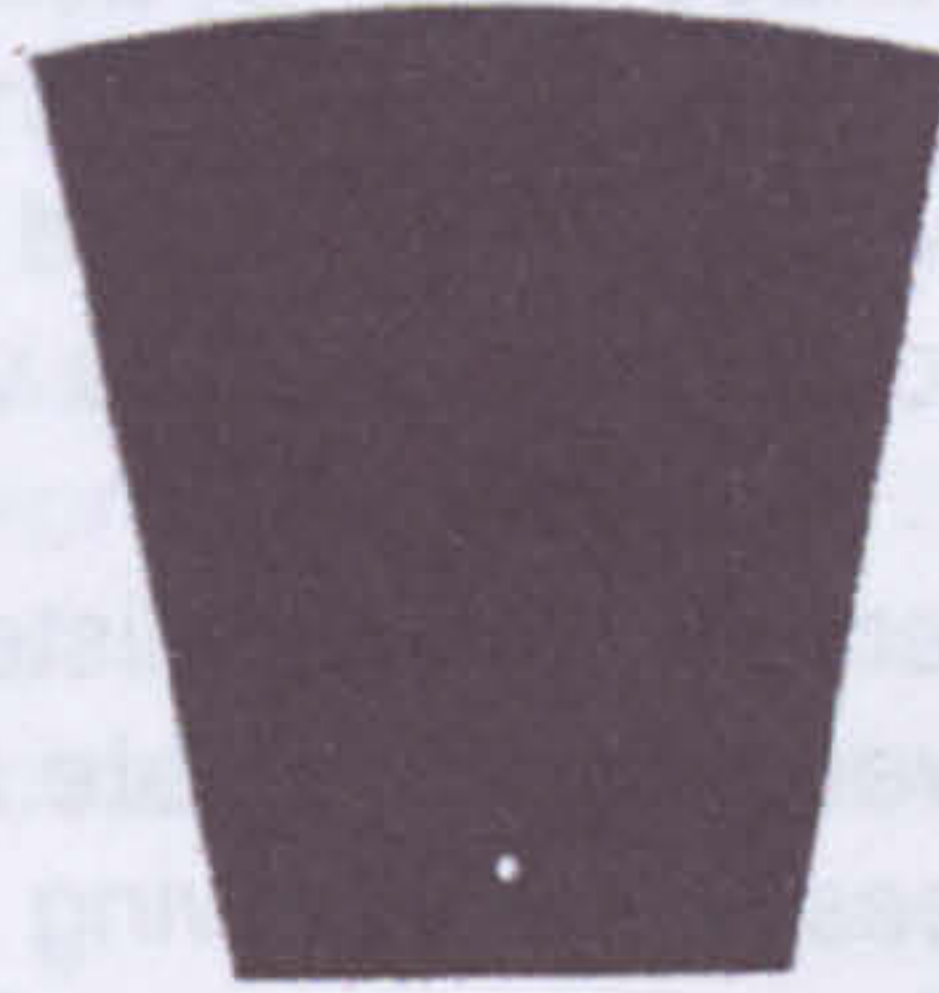
Having brought our tribune and stage wall into play, and having used them to spray the stalls, we would then be deprived of artillery. But here: above the stage wall we will install a new stage wall, which will, in its turn, bombard the gallery of the invited guests and diplomats; and in addition, the journalists' gallery situated above. This new stage wall, instead of being vertical will curve forwards, overhanging in such a fashion that the wave emitted by the orator, coming to strike it at a certain angle, ricochets according to the law of incidence, exactly in the direction required. This second stage wall which is so strongly curved, is far from the orator. It will make contact with a *rose-coloured* surface of the orator's spherical wave. Its ammunition, if one may put it so, is in a feeble strength; but this second stagewall will also be *much larger* than the first, so that its rose-shaded spray will be so abundant, that eventually the addressees - guests, diplomats, journalists - receive a shower of equivalent coloration to that administered to the delegates.

There remains the public (1000 people), seated very far away and in a situation which would be hopeless in an ordinary hall.

No other means except in the creation, for the benefit of this public, of a third stagewall destined to shower them in conditions equivalent to those which have saturated the stalls and the first gallery. Where should this third stagewall be placed? After the others, above, next to the second.



## salle de format favorable à l'acoustique



The form of the hall, especially that of the reflector wall behind the orator, directs the waves in resonant beams straight into the ears of the listeners, without ricochet, or delay; the reflector wall continues as a ceiling to the far ends of the hall.



We incline it thus and curve it inwards in such a manner that the sphere of emission of the orator may come to strike it, then to ricochet exactly as we intended. It is very far from the orator, this outlandish stage wall which becomes a ceiling; it will receive the impact of a spherical sector equivalent to that received by the two preceding ones, but its ammunition will be very pale rose, so pale that we must multiply considerably the points which constitute its surface. The operation is performed in such a fashion then, that this very pale rose infinitely multiplied will spray the eardrums of the recipients with an intensity equivalent to that received by the other listeners.

In this way in each point of the hall, acoustics will be equivalent. Now there is a result! But what is more interesting is that we have arranged the orator, the tribune and the three stagewalls with the intention - realised here - of using, of exploiting, the greater part of the sound sphere emitted by the speaker, of exploiting the intensity of the emission, and this intensity (a perfect red when emitted) we have dispersed throughout the confines of the hall, in a sufficient density of rose, which corresponds to the volume normally found in a discussion between two negotiators.

Then in this *immense* hall, where the furthest listeners are 70 metres from the orator, one will be able to chat, to converse, to elaborate ideas with the certainty that everyone will hear. And thus, the necessity for bellowing orators is ended, the eloquence of the tribune is finished. At least the nations may be *heard*.

These three stagewalls, superimposed and enlarged according to a progression given by the square of the distance, have decided the *form* of the hall. The form of the hall is determined by the sequence of these three reflector walls. The waves advance as a barrage, as a spray, directly, without detours. We have, theoretically, cancelled the ceiling. We have, by the curvature (in plan) of the first stagewall, reduced the lateral walls to silence. Pardon! Let us eliminate for ever the limited action of these lateral walls. They are not aligned vertically; they are bowed, curved (away from the vertical) over the stalls: when the sound waves, having touched the ears of the listener in the stalls, come to hit them, they will ricochet anew from the floor of the hall; but their course does not exceed 22 metres those of the waves of spraying. The ear will perceive only a single sound.

This bombardment, this showering having finally achieved its objective (the ears of the listeners) any henceforth perilous waves are absorbed by the clothes of the company, by the felt which covers the lecterns, and by the carpet which covers the



floors completely. There are solitary waves which escape anew and might disturb: those which strike the bald heads gleaming here and there in the midst of the August assembly: a harmless threat.

We have not finished with acoustics. The initial sphere (dark red), which ricochets from surfaces that it hits leaves weakened or reinforced according to the acoustic properties of the material that it hits. [Thus a violin in felt or in stone or linoleum, or rubber will not resonate]. So the three superimposed walls will not be in heavy masonry, nor in thickened and felted materials; they will be in plaster, strong, dry, resonant, and very thin: a resonance chamber.

They will be as smooth as possible, so that the ricochet of the wave will be clean and precise.

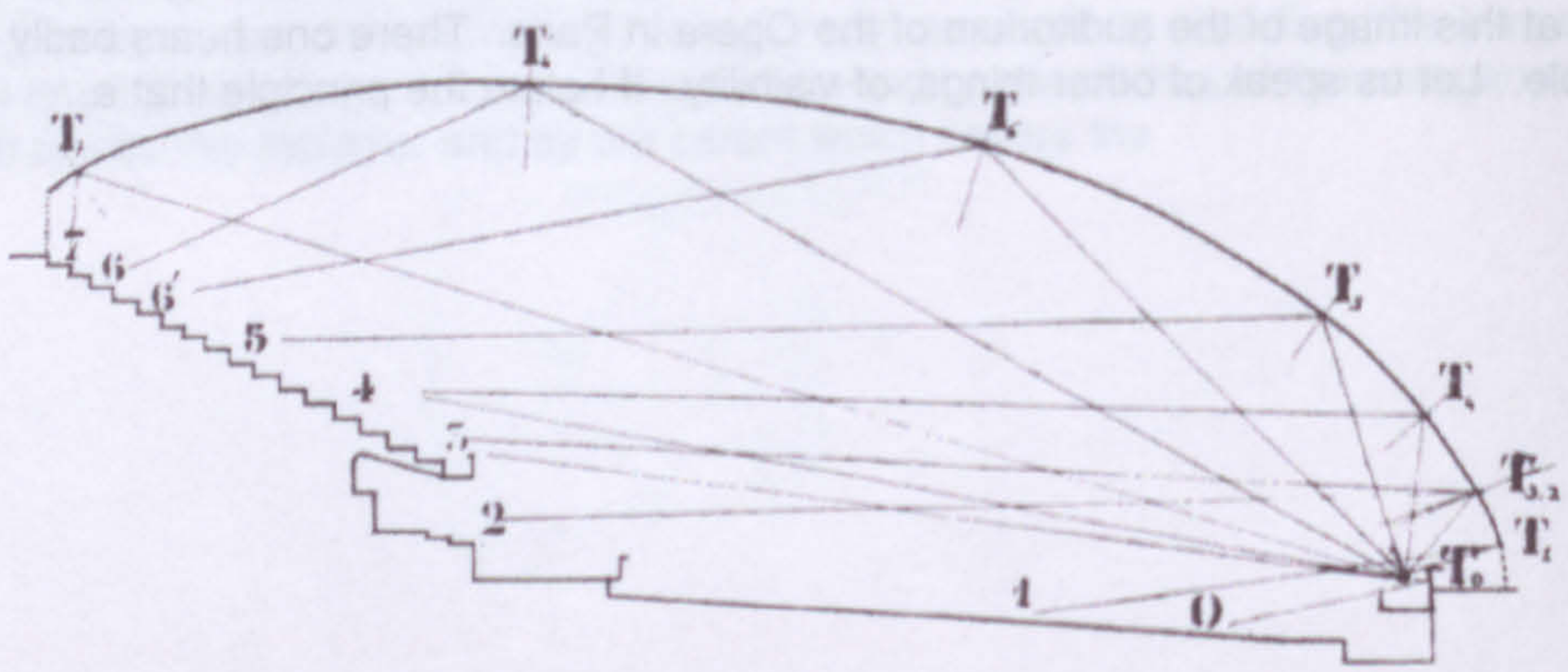
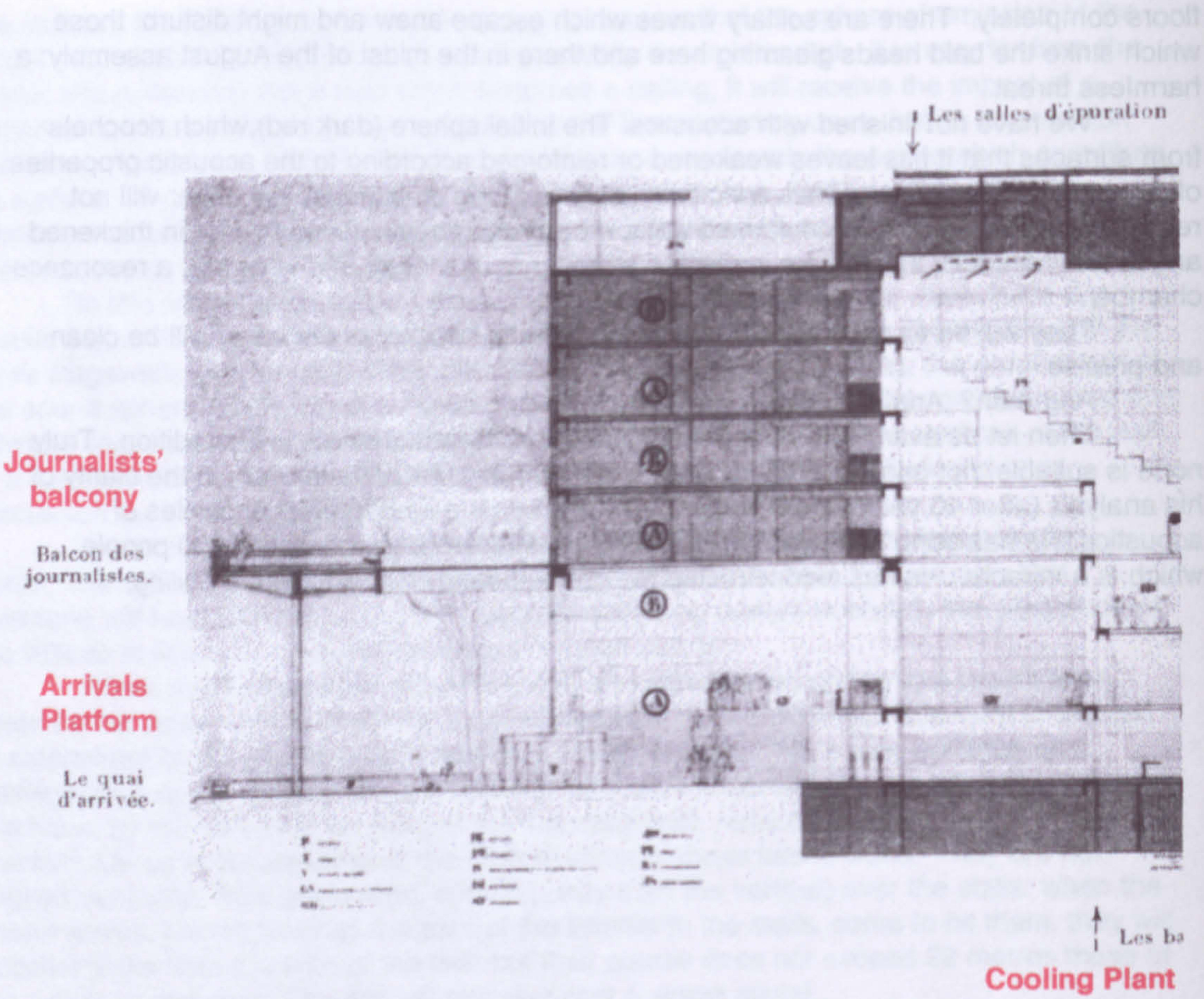
And then? And then?

Then let us examine a little in this spirit the halls bequeathed us by tradition. Truly, none is suitable, not one. Everything is completely new. M. Gustave Lyon, in the clarity of his analysis (after 40 years of dedication) has given us the fundamental principles of acoustics. He has done more than that: he has constructed a vast hall for 3000 people which is a miracle. He has reconstructed the greek theatre, *this time with a ceiling*.

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Look at this image of the auditorium of the Opera in Paris. There one hears badly, it is notable. Let us speak of other things, of visibility. If I state the principle that a





Theoretical outline of the wall-ceiling reflector, the positions of the speaker and of the tiers being fixed.

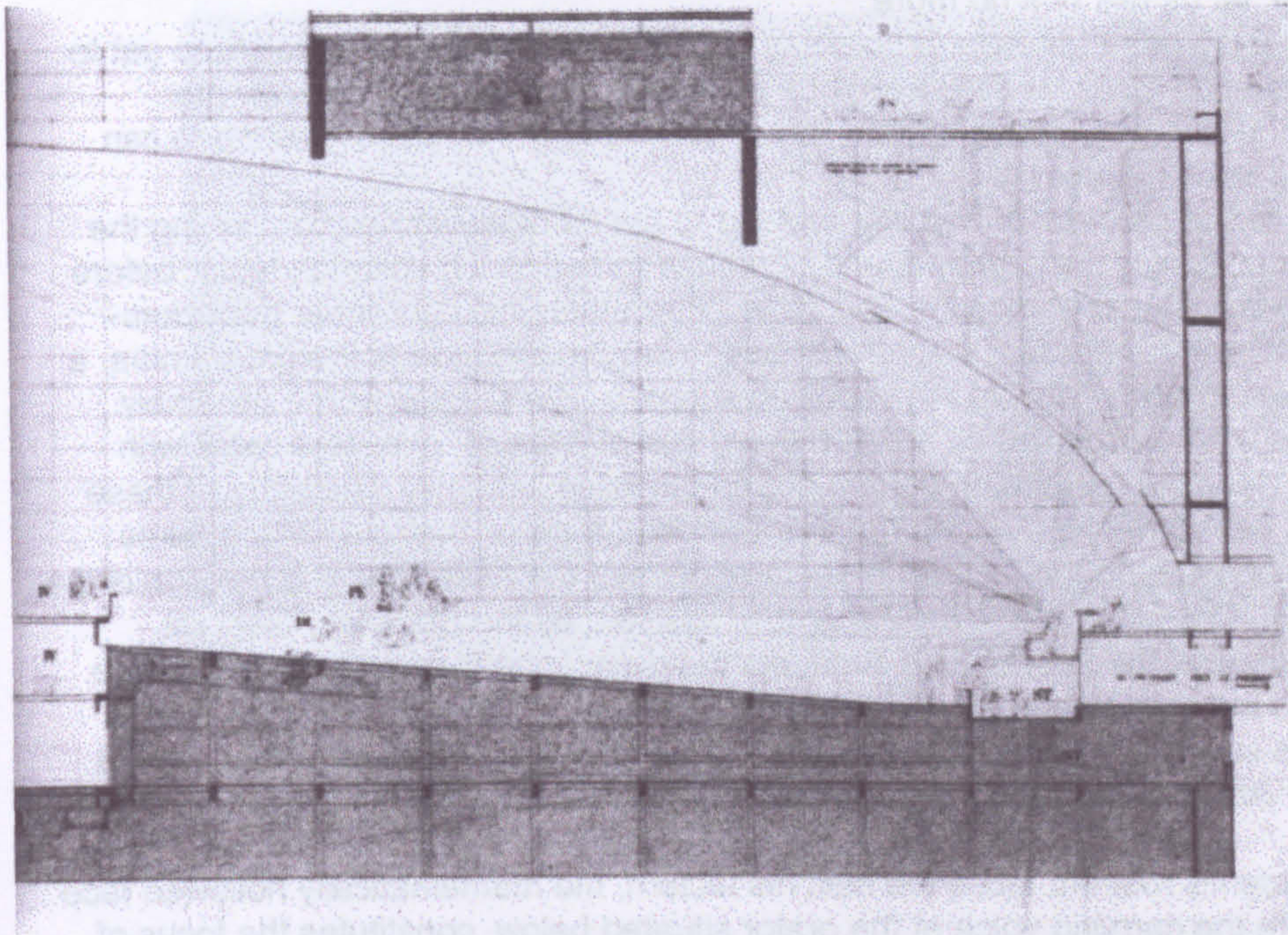
The wall-ceiling (up to its last centimetre) is exploited as a reflector and projects the waves (according to the angle of incidence) towards the listeners' ears.

The distance between the speaker T0 and the listener T7 is 70metres.

This wall-ceiling curvature has nothing at all to do with the laws of structure.



tion de l'air de la salle.



The hanging gardens dominating the lake

The arched, half-bridge spanning 70metres

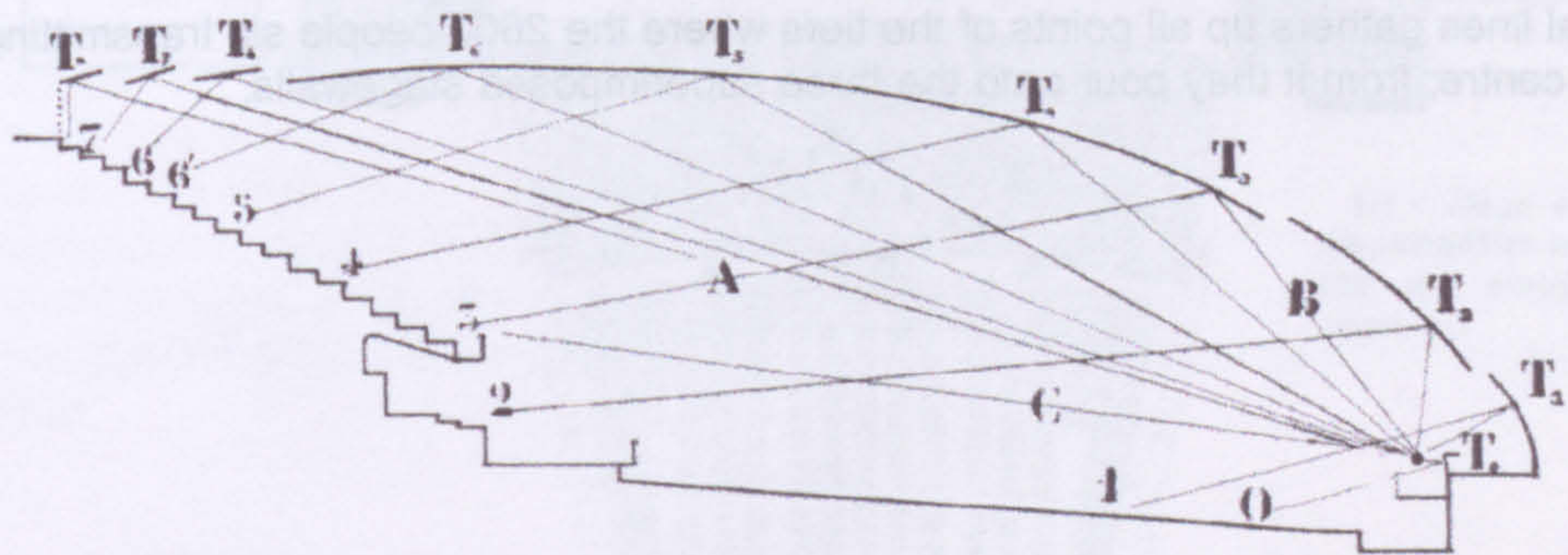
Below: the suspended shell of the wall-ceiling sound-wave reflector

The President's entrance

Lobbies leading to the President's pavilion

négociateurs.

↑ Delegates' entry into the hall



$$(A+B) - C < 22 \text{ m}$$

The theoretical curvature of the wall-ceiling having been obtained (working drawing at left) the curve is divided into various parts, and these elements are lowered in such a way that the total height of the hall corresponds to that of the building as determined by the heights of the levels of the Commissions' wings. In short, the same curvature is maintained (same reflection of waves) but the height of the hall is reduced by about 6 metres.



theatre is made to allow those present to see the stage, I have to say: the auditorium of the Opera is a nonsense. Sophisticates have retorted: "Pardon me, but it was conceived to allow spectators to make eyes at one another, to allow the manifestations of high culture, to constitute a dazzling mosaic of décolletés and costumes: the spectacle is in the auditorium". That's as may be, let us talk of it no more.

In Geneva we had to solve a problem of visibility. The unrepentant desire to get to the root of the question made us say: everyone must see well. Being young, we are acquainted with the "pauper's place" in the halls of great cities, that place where one can see nothing. And we remember it.

If I analyse the problem of visibility, I intend to get rid of all worries concerning the structure and the acoustics beforehand, and I demand to hear each voice perfectly, before me, to be comfortably seated *facing* the spectacle. From that, this curvilinear trapezium-form. An initial division is imposed which must be the very expression of the programme, a division which must, by itself, set up the imposing scenario of a session of the Assembly.

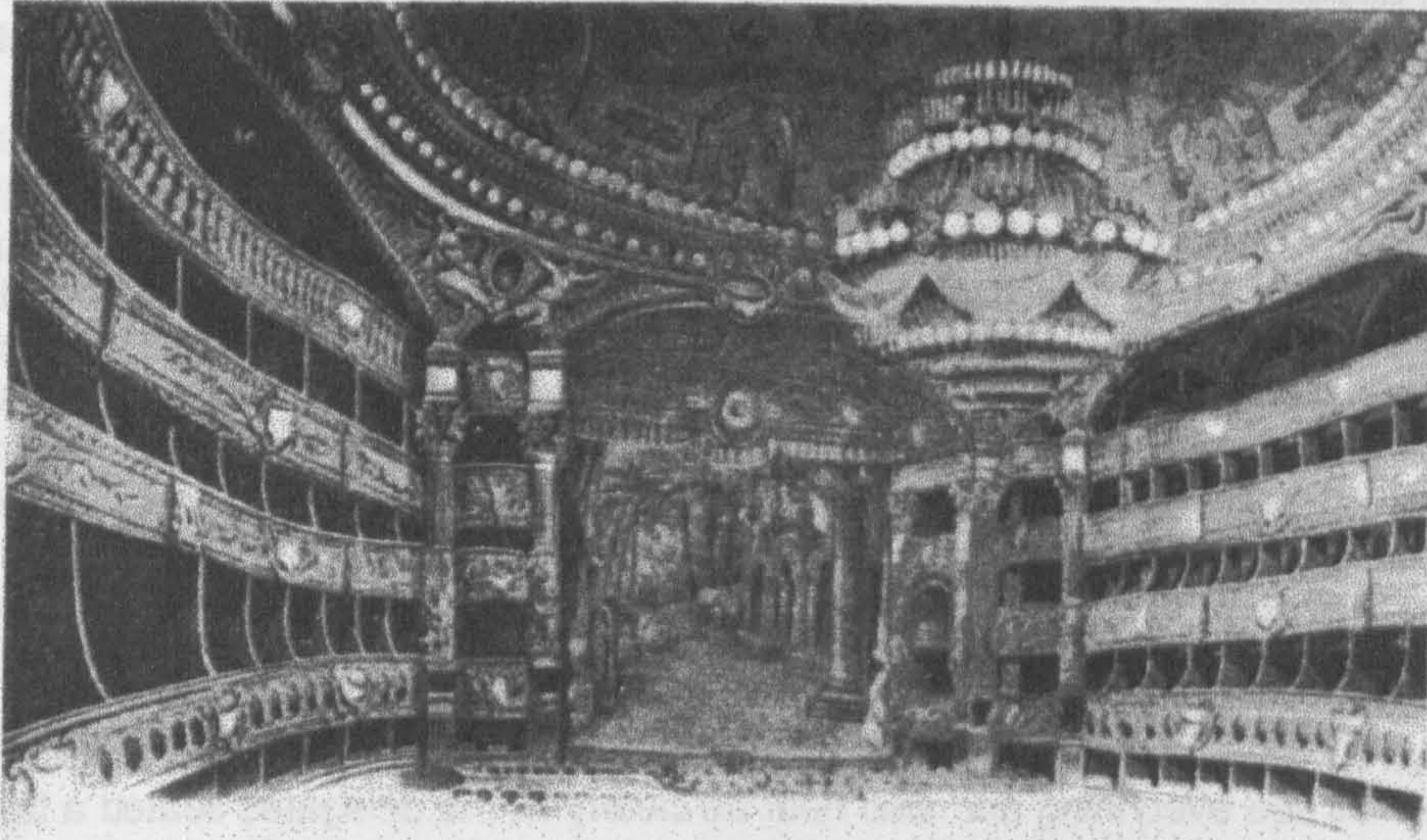
The stalls will be occupied by the 400 delegates of Nations, ministers come with weighty dossiers, their contents to be spread out on the large lecterns. The entry of these leading lights will be made to left and to right from below the stalls; the route which takes them there also continues to the pavilion of the president of the Assembly; this pavilion is the G.H.Q. of Nations. The president of the Assembly, assisted by the Secretary General, directs the operations of the session. He conducts the debate, he faces the assembly. He himself enters, on the axis of the hall, facing them, at a point which is the focus of the composition. The sudden arrival of the chief of the assembly, escorted by his retinue, is a solemn moment. And it is the simple force of the architecture which lends this act its grandeur.

The president's rostrum faces the hall; his lectern, the mathematically hollowed face of which will create the carrying voice of the orator situated below, constitutes the focus of the hall; it is there that an acute design should have indicated, by contour, by curve and by material the primary generator of the hall. Let us recall the directives of the acoustic trace which has determined the hall: here is the geometrical place which, in a network of mathematical lines gathers up all points of the tiers where the 2600 people sit, transmitting them to this centre, from it they pour onto the three superimposed stagewalls,



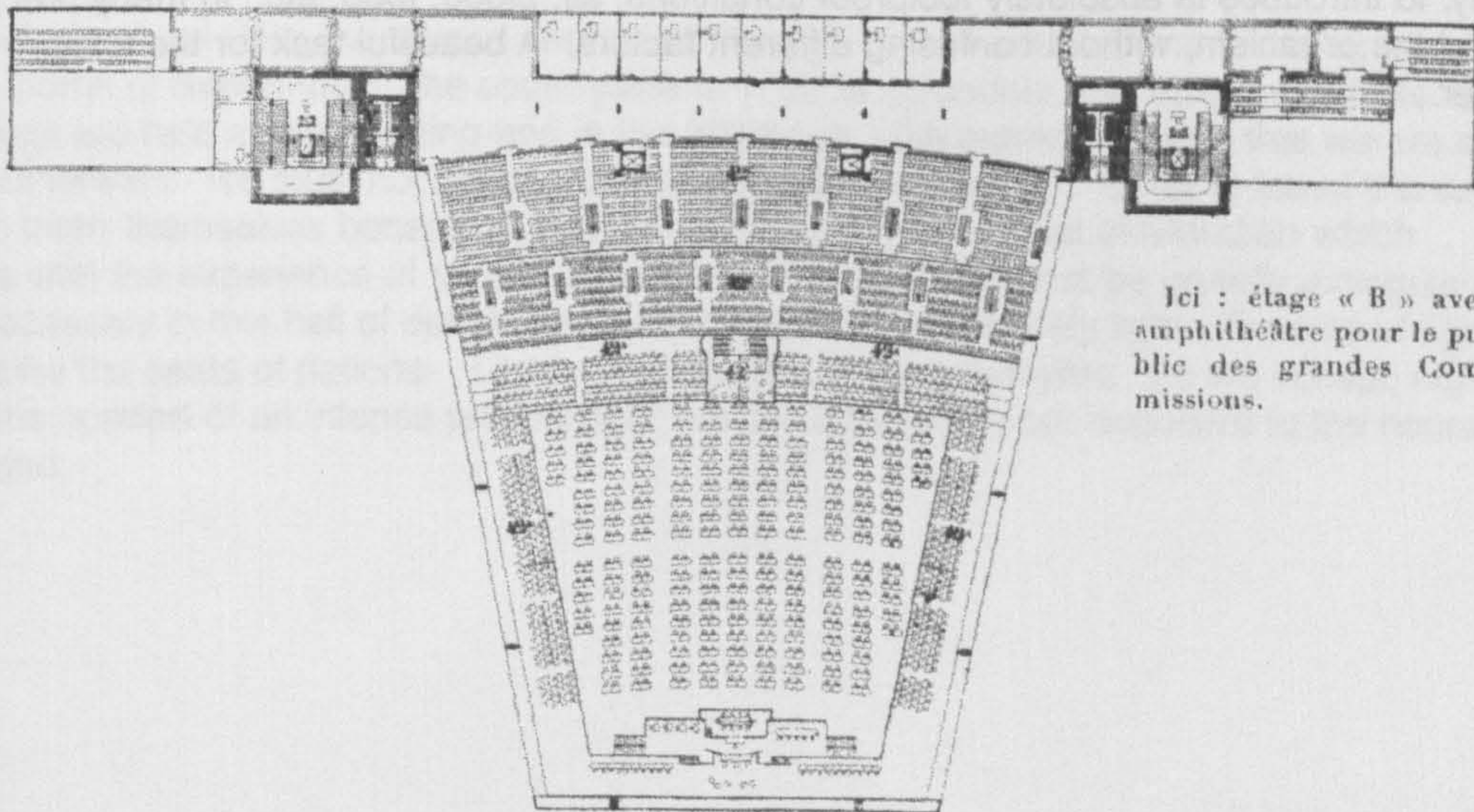
## UNE MAISON — UN PALAIS

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Charles Garnier.

L'Opéra de Paris.



Ici : étage « B » avec  
amphithéâtre pour le pu-  
blic des grandes Com-  
missions.

Plan général des sièges des auditeurs (2.600 auditeurs).



which retransmit them unfailingly to their points of origin, the listeners. Each course is a truly mathematical entity: each point is irreparably final.

To left and to right of the stalls, we have raised in galleries those termed the "personnel"; four hundred in number. They are secretaries, colleagues, attachés to ministers, assistants. It will be useful for them to see both their chief and the orator at once.

Facing the orator and the tribune of the presidency, we have laid out the diplomats' gallery and the double box for the guests of the president and secretary general.

There is the crown of the complex of the assembly.

Then, another thing: apart from the assembly, there are two external factors, one of which is particularly important: the journalists. 600 journalists given perfect visibility and the best acoustic conditions. These people must see everything, hear everything; installations of seats and lecterns devised for the greatest convenience. This mass of world informers must be able to circulate easily, never disturbing the work of the assembly; they leave to telegraph, or to hurry to the Information section of the Secretariat, linked directly (by one of the covered bridges). There must be salons, lobbies, where press colleagues can usefully make enquiries among themselves. And finally, the other external factor, that denoted "the public", those thousand people who represent, ideologically, universal suffrage and the citizen who governs. Let us allow it! Here, they are no longer in the pauper's place, but within reach of the whole spectacle; every place exactly as good as another. And it is their amphitheatre which will be sprayed by the third stage wall, immense sound reflector. Up there, they will see everything and also hear as clearly as the delegates seated a few steps from the orator (the proof of that has since been effected in the Salle Pleyel). Passages connect them to lobbies intended for them.

And we will see further how we have regulated the circulation of the various categories of assistants, so different in their functions, how we have achieved an automatic order by impeccable classification. This was an almost anatomical case: it was necessary, literally, to introduce in absolutely foolproof conditions, air, blood, food, etc., in many precise parts of the organism, without confusing different factors. A beautiful task for the town planner.



Having meticulously arranged the different categories of listeners in their respective galleries, according to the required classification and the necessity for perfect visibility; a straightforward relief-model of the surface occupied has resulted. This surface corresponds precisely to the arrangement of the listeners' eardrums; *this characteristic model - for diverse plans - is, as we have seen, the determinant of the acoustic form of the hall*: it is necessary to calculate this carefully: having accepted this model, and set the orator in his place, the diagram gives its result: the ceiling of the hall.

Now this true balance, joining in one and the same envelope the necessities of visibility, of ordering by category, of internal circulation, of hearing, of lighting, and finally of structure (stability of the work), this true balance apparent here with a simplicity that none of the other halls in the competition has achieved at all, has not been obtained without a series of successive experiments.

And if it was possible to achieve it harmoniously, that is because each of these elements: classification of those present, visibility, circulation, hearing, lighting, structure, was analyzed at the root, resolved for oneself, and incorporated in the whole at the single point where the *solution* was to be achieved; the solution exists only in total simplicity and in total efficiency.

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\* \*

## LIGHTING THE HALL

We thought about this: the annual session of the S.D.N. unfolds in Geneva during the delicious month of September. The countryside is in all its splendour, the light is exquisite. The meetings are held in the morning and in the afternoon. We cannot - seeing that we are able to do otherwise - we must not oblige these 3000 people come from so far to leave the sun and to interr themselves beneath the lamplight of a blind hall. That exhilaration which comes with the experience of so many natural harmonies, need not be brutally extinguished. It is necessary in this hall of debates to feel the benefits of the lively light. Torrents of light will bathe the seats of nations. Light is the key to our vital rythms. So we accept, night falls, the comfort of an intense artifical light; we are affected by our exposure to the hours of sunshine.



Think of your impressions of a journey in the metro; remember how, after going through a tunnel, you greet the reappearing sun. We have therefore come to the conclusion that the two lateral walls which contain the trapezoid of our hall should be built in slabs of glass instead of opaque rubble. But I must explain the construction of our hall so that you understand.

Acoustics have lead us to imagine an organism that I described as 'biological' (a term more figurative than exact) to contrast it with the static system imposed on the builder by the laws of gravity.

The ceiling of this hall spans 70 metres. One might imagine covering such a void by various cupolas; rigged for the most part, stuffed with scrap metal, because stone, the one and only material could not succeed there. And this cupola would be raised (let us say, majestically) on a site where the principle is a *horizontal* one. Contradiction and impropriety. We wanted to plant gardens on the roof of our hall.

So we imagined the simplest system that might be dreamed of: two half-arches of a bridge, the base of which, supported behind the tribune on the foundation of the lakeside wall, should be articulated, and where the apex should alight on top of reinforced concrete piers, braced for the different levels of the wing of commissions, on steel rollers which would neutralise the effects of expansion. Across these two arched cantilevers, three portal frames with their joints supported on the foundations of the lateral walls and subdividing the surface of our roof terrace into usable sections where restaurants, terraces, gardens, will be installed.

And it is here that the static solution participates in the synchronization of the whole. The necessary and sufficient form of the arch *is precisely the envelope of the "biological" form of our ceiling in the hall* (our three superimposed stage walls). This is what had to be invented. The chief engineer who is at present calculating the extraordinary cupola of the hall of Anthroposophes in Dornach, (knowing the question well, because his problem gave him a particularly severe headache) said to me, during my recent visit to his building site: "Your section (structure of the hall) is a masterpiece of simplicity; who is the engineer who gave you the principle?" I answered him: "Common sense has given wings to our ingenuity, and as we thought not at all of "academy" nor of "modern art", the solution suggested itself, entirely simply".



**Here the arch rolls on bearings (expansion).**

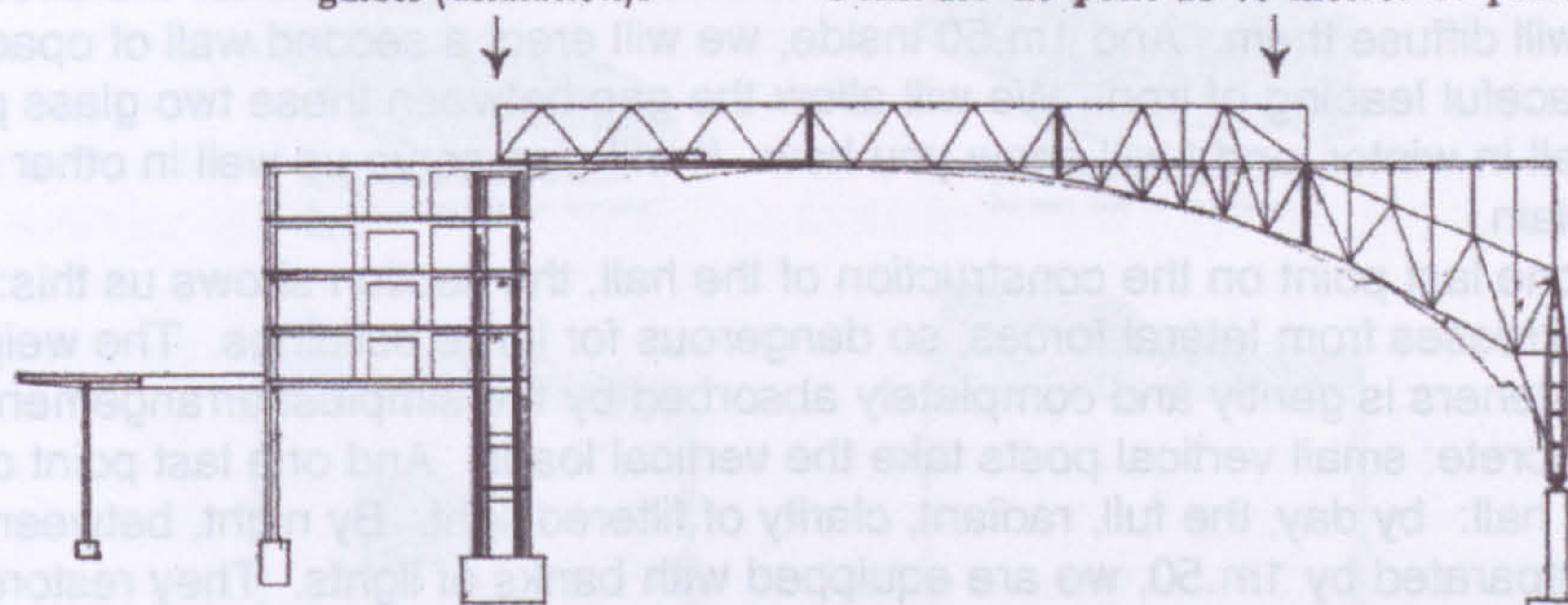
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**Half-arch bridge spanning 70 metres**

Ici l'arc roule sur des galets (dilatation).

Demi-arc de pont de 70 mètres de portée.

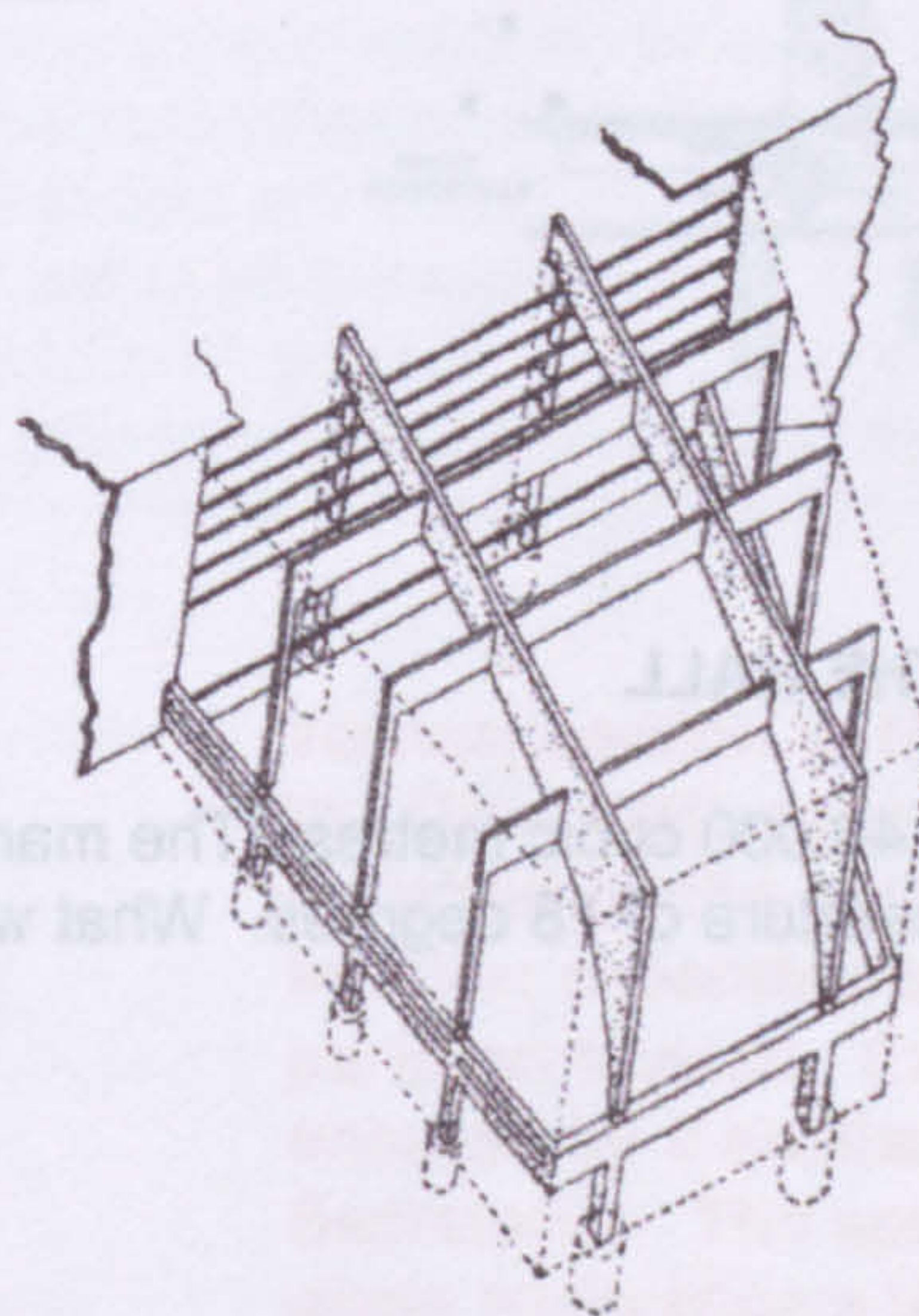


Les deux piles de béton (contreventées par les étages de l'aile des Commissions).

La naissance de l'arc est à articulation.

**The two concrete piers braced by the floors of the Commissions' wing.**

**The foot of the arch is articulated.**



**Above the immense hall is a roof garden with restaurant. Two half-arches braced by three transverse portal frames constitute the structure. The eight support points below are articulated. The two support points above roll on bearings.**



So this immense hall is covered without one centimetre of material being wasted. This is a real definition of economy. Our hall ceiling is a thin film of plaster and tow, 2 to 3 centimetres thick. Our lateral walls are free, they carry nothing but themselves. We will make them in large slabs of glass cast on sand; and we will have their external faces polished like mirrors; they will gleam in the countryside, they will shine with reflections of light. They will be smooth and brilliant. Their translucent mass will splinter the direct rays of the sun and will diffuse them. And 1m.50 inside, we will erect a second wall of opaque glass, in a graceful leading of iron. We will allow the gap between these two glass partitions to heat our hall in winter, and I will show you how. It will also serve us well in other contexts, as I shall explain.

And one last point on the construction of the hall, the section shows us this: that there are no stresses from lateral forces, so dangerous for large buildings. The weighty load of the 2600 listeners is gently and completely absorbed by the simplest arrangement of reinforced concrete: small vertical posts take the vertical loads. And one last point on the lighting of our hall: by day, the full, radiant, clarity of filtered light. By night, between the two glass walls, separated by 1m.50, we are equipped with banks of lights. They restore the daylight at a lesser intensity. They are controlled by a central board. And, should one so desire, this central board could be linked to the orator's tribune; he could use the crescendo and decrescendo of light at his whim: a light-organ at his disposal. The streams of light could inundate the listeners at his pleasure, a strong, physiological sensation from which no-one would be immune. But here again is the eloquence of the tribune, and perhaps one would prefer to cut the contact between electric board and orator!

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**HEATING AND VENTILATING THE HALL**

The internal volume of the hall is 40.000 cubic metres. The manager of the hall accommodates his guest by setting a temperature of 18 degrees. What will happen to him after one, or two, or four hours?



Scintillating lighting

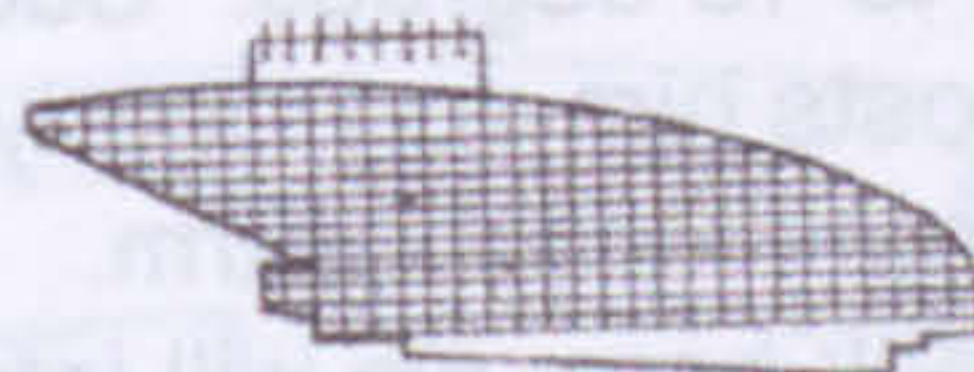
éclairage étincelant

de jour

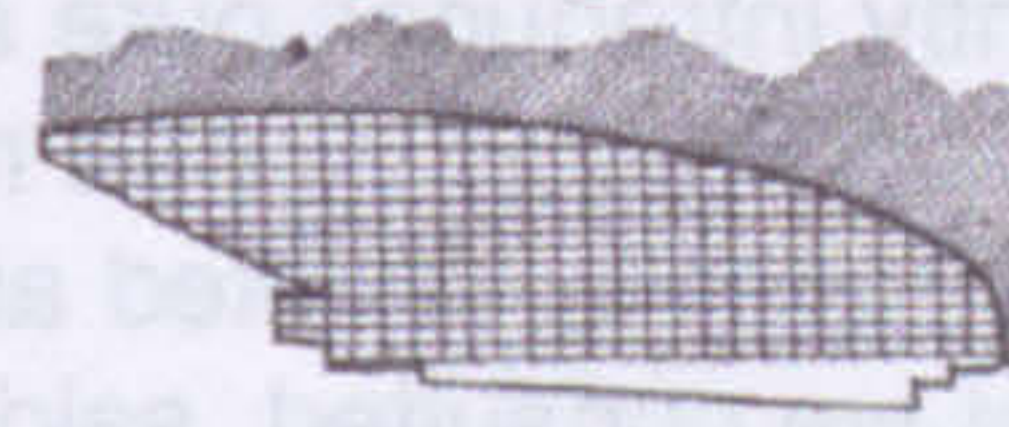
By Day

de nuit

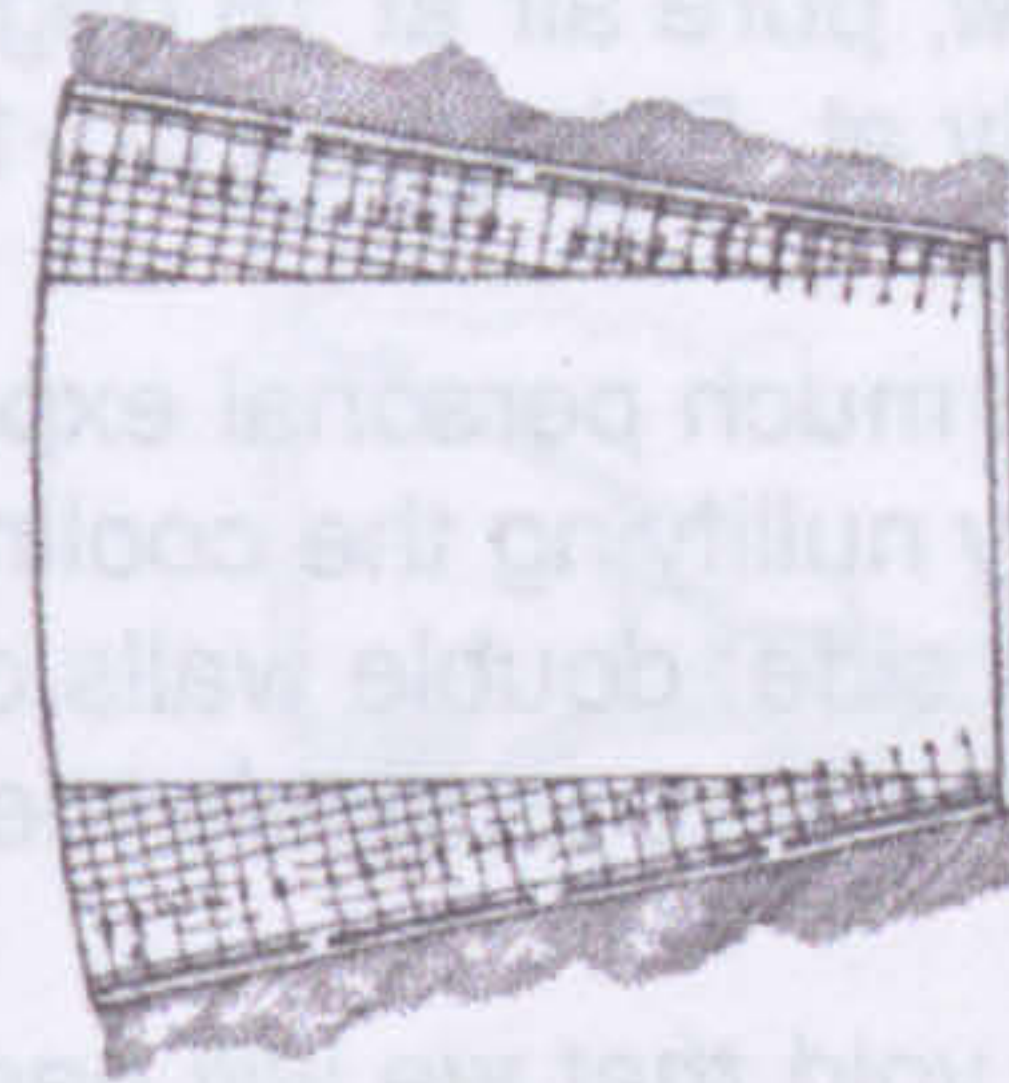
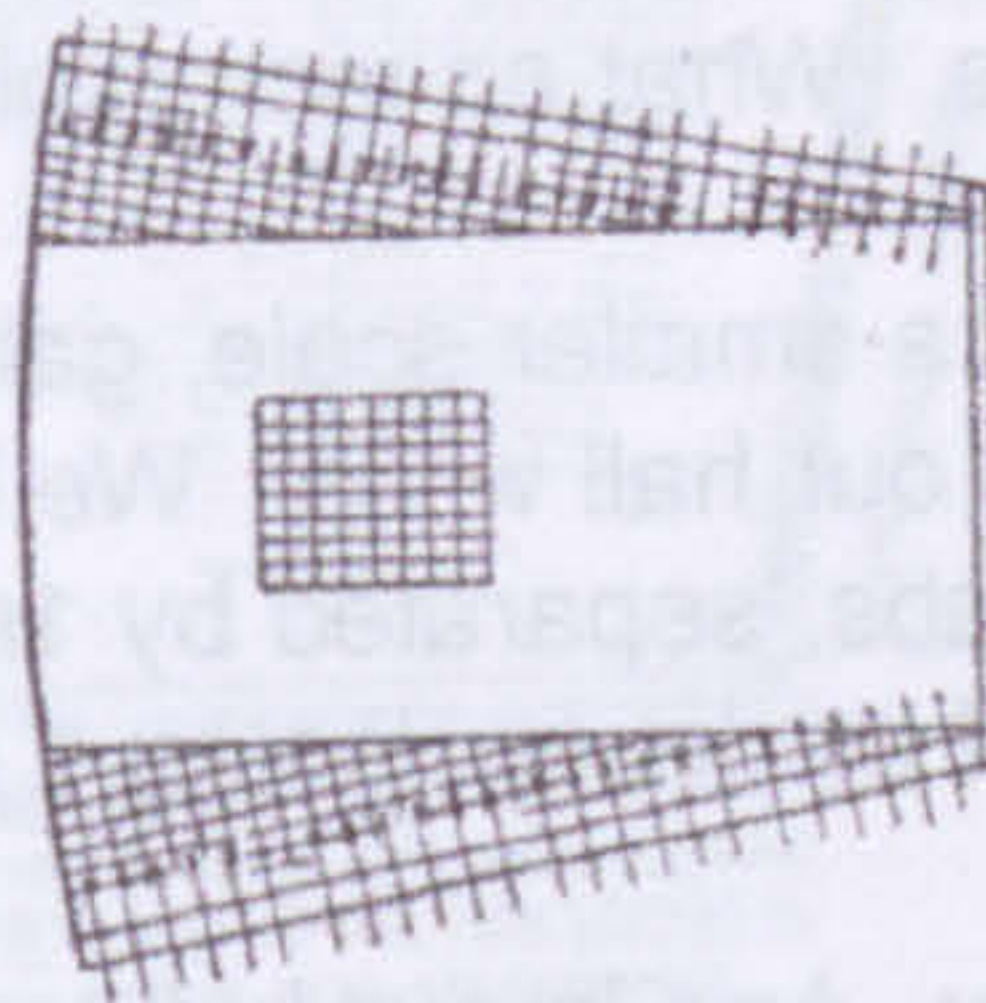
By Night



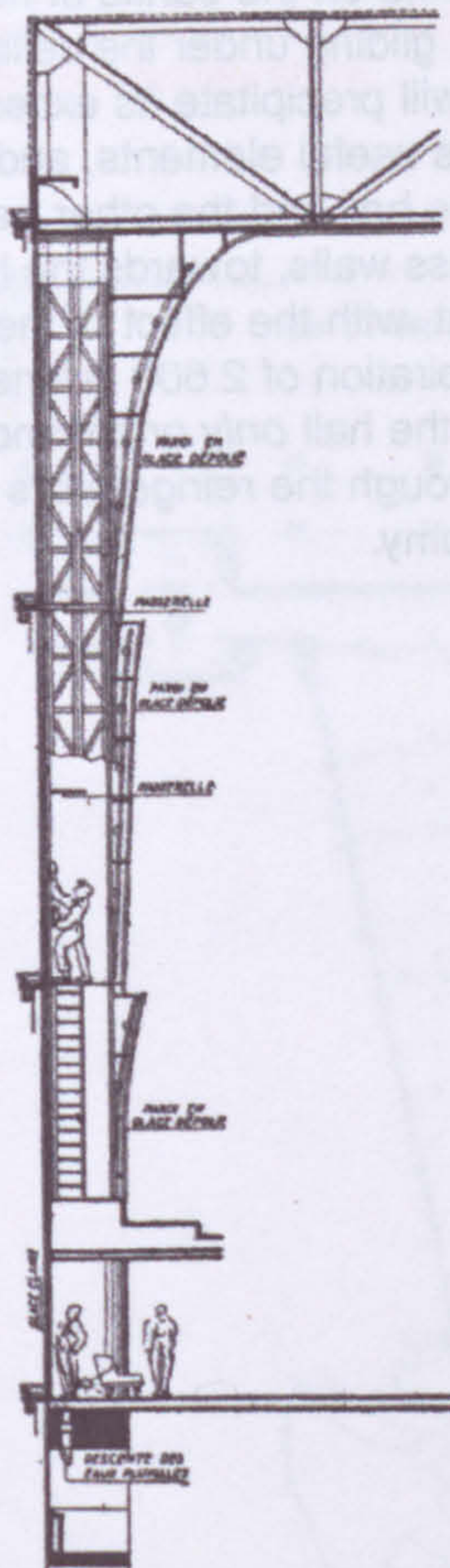
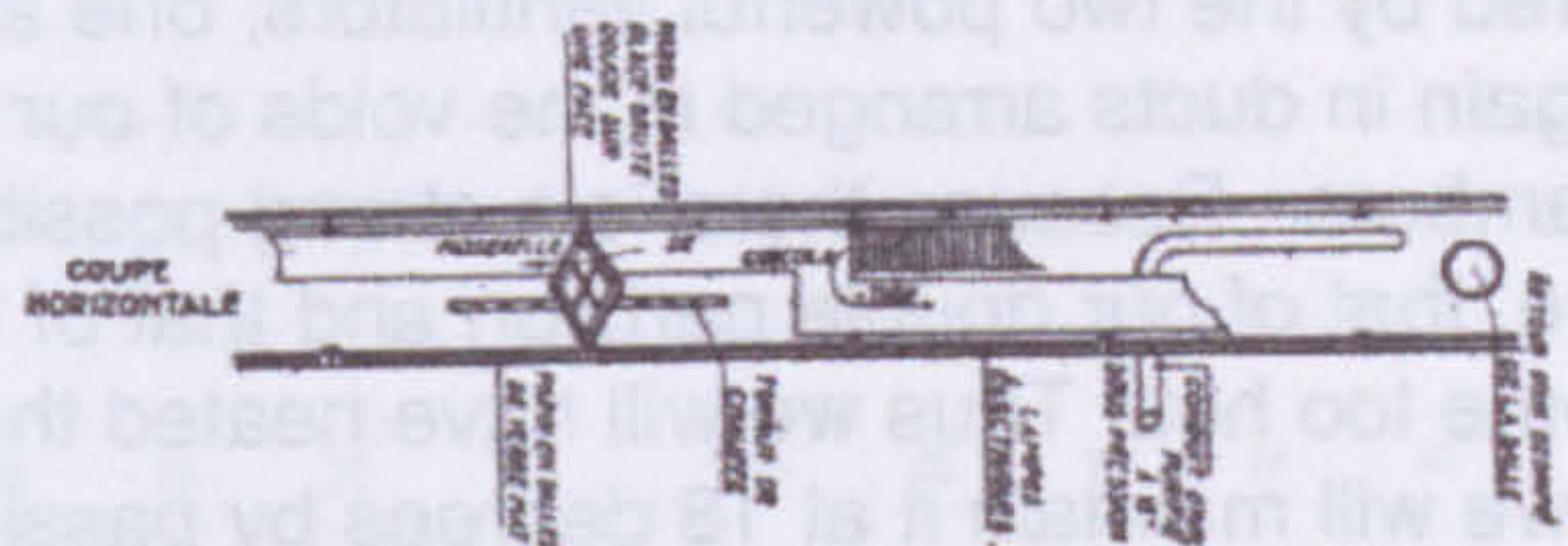
DOUBLE MEMBRANE ISOLANTE EN PAILLES  
DE VERRRE A L'EXTÉRIEUR GLACE BRUTE POUR  
L'INTÉRIEUR



A L'INTÉRIEUR, GLACE DÉCOUPE LUMINEUSE  
ÉLECTRIQUE ENTRE LES DEUX MEMBRANES



Horizontal section of the double wall  
of the Great Hall.



Vertical section of the double membrane of the Great Hall, external wall of glass slabs polished on the exterior, sanded on the interior; separated by 1m.50, second glass partition frosted, External cleaning is ensured by a similar system to that of the Secretariat. The space between the two glass walls allows the accommodation of vertical and horizontal services, ventilation shafts, the placing of electrical galleries; it is this space which is superheated, the hall itself is not.



The crowd release via their lungs a mass of air heated at 37 degrees, an air-mass loaded with water vapour and carbonic acid. By the end of the session, it will become so hot and so humid that one will stifle, especially in the higher parts of the hall.

A conscientious manager, by appropriate ventilation, lifts this polluted air, expels it to the outside; he constantly introduces pure air, heated to 18 degrees. Such conscientiousness in his duties as a good manager costs him very dearly and he would prefer to leave his clientele in its polluted air, really warm, far too warm. Technicians for very large buildings that we consulted, said to us: "Look here, we will introduce into your hall, pure air at 18 degrees and, with ventilators we will expel it all in three quarters of an hour and introduce new, pure air at 18 degrees. The pure air taken in at the exterior may be at 0 degrees, or equally at -5 degrees or -10 degrees. What an incredible consumption of coal will be required!

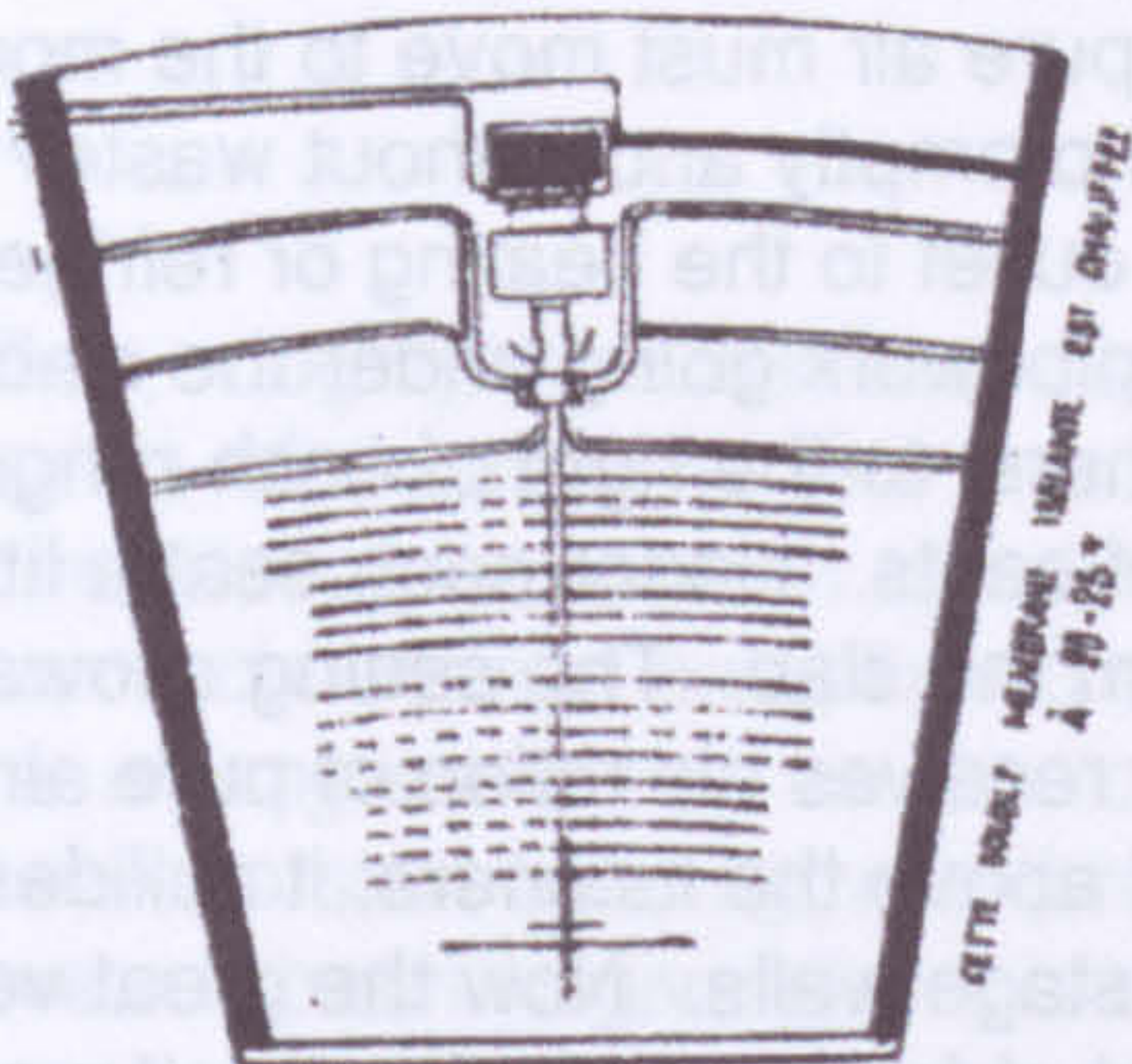
We have (from much personal experience at a smaller scale, gained previously in a cold country) started by nullifying the cooling force of our hall walls. We have shown, above, that we have, on either side, double walls of glass slabs, separated by 1m.50 from each other; our wall to the lake was a double membrane of bricks enclosing a constant void of 1m.50.

It is the 1m.50 void *that we will heat intensely*. And in our hall we will introduce air at 18 degrees. This air will be from outside, heated a first time on the banks of heaters; then it will go in of its own accord, by the law of densities, rising, gliding under the ceiling of the hall towards the places where jets of potassium hydroxide will precipitate its excess of carbonic acid, where oxygentators will have reconstituted its useful elements, and, always manoeuvred by the two powerful ventilators, one above the hall and the other below, it will descend again in ducts arranged in the voids of our two glass walls, towards the heating or *cooling* chambers. Because there is a strong possibility that, with the effect of the external temperature, that of our double partition and that of the respiration of 2.600 listeners, this air might become too hot. Thus we will have heated the air of the hall *only once* and, thereafter, we will maintain it at 18 degrees by passing it through the refrigerators or the heaters, and we will return it to the hall. Tremendous economy.



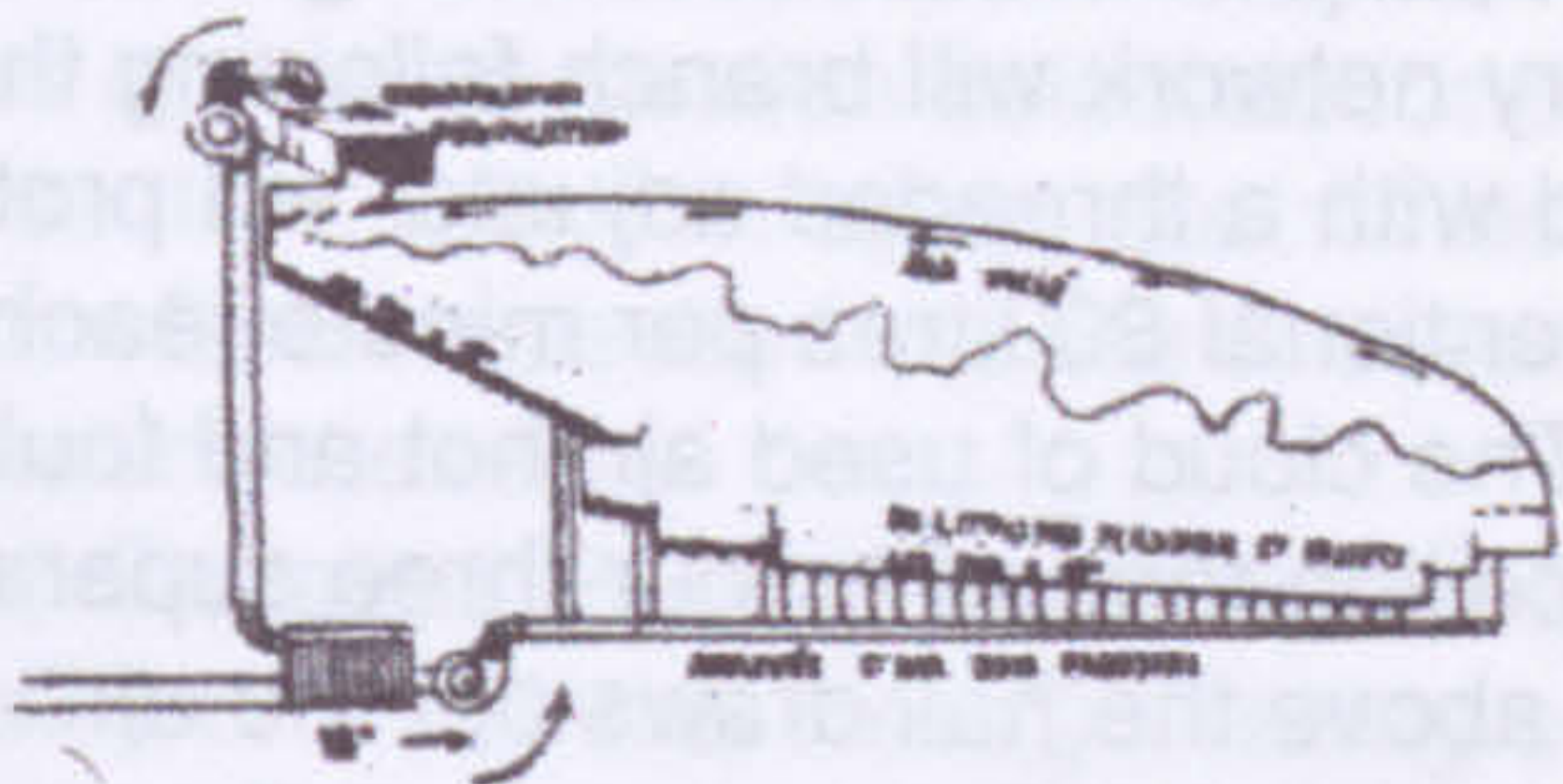
# chauffage

PAR LE PROCÉDÉ DE « L' AÉRATION PONCTUELLE »



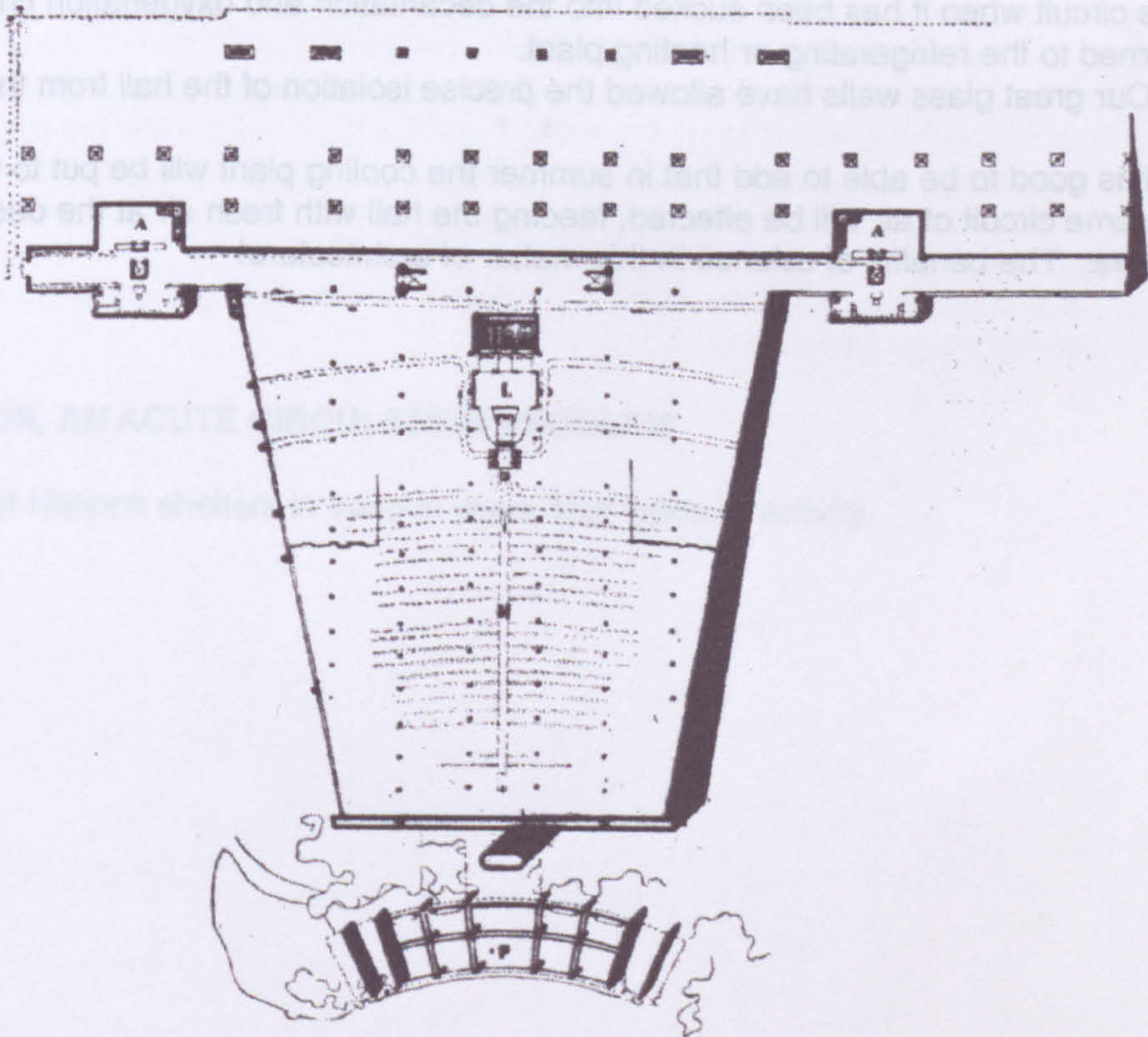
CHACUN ALIMENTÉ PAR UN JEU DE 80 LITRES D'EAU PURIFIÉE-CHAUDE À 15° (HIVER) ET ÉCARTÉE EN BATTERIE DE RECHAUFFEMENT OU DE RÉFRIGÉRATION.

Here we see the arrangement of the distribution of purified air, at a constant temperature.



- 1° LES CHAUFFES DE 1°20 DES 2 GRANDES MEMBRANES ISOLANTES SONT CHAUFFES À 20-25° (CUBE RESTREINT) ;
- 2° L' AÉRATION PONCTUELLE NE TRAITE PLUS QUE DE L' AIR EN CONSTANTE PURIFICATION, N' AIENT PLUS BESOIN D'ÊTRE CHAUFFÉ - ÉCONOMIE CONSIDÉRABLE DE COMBUSTIBLE -

Here we see the arrangement of upper and lower ventilators which maintain the air circulation; one sees the cloud of used air sucked into the purification and reconstitution chambers; below, one sees the heating or cooling plant and its



Plan of the storerooms under the Great Hall.



Our friend, M. Gustave Lyon, has suggested to us, for the distribution of air, his method, called *aeration ponctuelle*.

The principle: at the level of his mouth, each listener absorbs about 80 litres of air per minute. This air must be pure, and at 18 degrees. As soon as it has been exhaled, that is, as soon as it is above the heads of the listeners, it is of no further interest. Therefore during the entire duration of a session, 80 litres of pure air must move to the mouth-level of each listener. How is the operation to be achieved promptly and without waste?

We will introduce a drying ventilator at the outlet to the heating or refrigerating banks under the hall, which will be coupled to an arterial pipework going under the slabs of stalls and tiers, perpendicular to the ranges of seats. There, to the right of each range, a secondary network will branch following the lines of seats. Under each seat a little outlet equipped with a threaded adjuster will protrude from the slab. The setting allows a flow of the conventional 80 litres per minute; each listener receives his ration of pure air.

The cloud of used air, hot and foul, is lifted above the listeners; it collides with the inclined ceiling formed by our three superimposed stage walls. Now the great ventilator installed above the hall draws out the air: the cloud of foul air, following the favourable inclination of the ceiling surges into the purification and mixing chambers of which we have spoken, having passed through the openings in the sort of sound-baffle formed at the top of our third stage wall (these sound-baffles are really a subterfuge employed with the object of lifting the curve of the third stage wall, which might have swooped too low: this line achieved by juxtaposed sections is the same which we have permitted, in horizontal section to avoid a too-pronounced concavity of the foundation wall of the presidential tribune).

Thus the purified air injected into the hall by the first ventilator has accomplished a complete circuit when it has been sucked into the decantation and oxygenation chambers and returned to the refrigerating or heating plant.

Our great glass walls have allowed the precise isolation of the hall from the external cold.

It is good to be able to add that in summer the cooling plant will be put to work and that the same circuit of air will be effected, feeding the hall with fresh air at the desired temperature. The benefits of science in this matter of architecture!



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Here then, roughly demonstrated, is the general concept of our hall, instrument of visibility, of hearing, of circulation. The structural characteristics, acoustics, the systems of heating and of ventilation have been clearly explained in a large section coloured for clarity.

When an architect has established a similar section, one can agree *that it has been considered from all angles*: it is an anatomical section. Such a section means this: tomorrow one should be able to start building, everything has been foreseen.

We have not been forgiven for this section, at Geneva! "Engineers," they wrote; "these people are incapable of conceiving of the nobility of a palace, the high calling of the work envisaged!" We were the *only ones* (with the exception of one or two projects) out of 14 kilometres of plans, to have thus expressed in a single, revealing section the tasks to which we were sincerely compelled. The sections of the other projects presented the presumed decoration of the hall, plasters, marbles and gilding. It was precisely that which interested the S.D.N.!

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## **CIRCULATION, AN ACUTE CIRCULATION PROBLEM**

The Palace of Nations shelters in various ways, four types of activity.



An everyday activity: the *General Secretariat* with the *library*

An intermittent activity: the *Small Commissions without public admission* and the *Large Commissions with public admission*

A quarterly activity: the *Council of Nations*

An annual activity: the *General Assembly of Nations*

Each of these activities establishes precise points of contact, requires airtight boundaries.

If one does not define them with great rigor, there will be the same confusion as at the Hall of the Reformation or of the Secretariat at the Hôtel National<sup>39</sup>.

At certain times, for example, at the general session in September, the activity is at a peak. All delegations are in Geneva.

Each delegation includes a secretarial staff, more-or-less eminent colleagues, career diplomats, the great men of the world. All of them meet each other at certain moments to spar or to agree terms. Then, a number of questions are examined in the commissions; finally, the army of secretaries and of typists, come in a body, must be able to work in the totally secure conditions.

During this time, the Secretariat pursues its everyday work.

The library is open to everyone.

Therefore, five hundred employees of the Secretariat enter - our building<sup>40</sup> - via the furthest wing near the road to Lausanne, descending by ramps to their cloakrooms, reaching their offices by the two large groups of staircases and lifts, arranged in the transverse wing of the secretariat. Their bicycles and motorcycles have found a handy garage under this wing of the building.

Here are the heads of various departments, persons of importance. They cross the mature forest; under a peristyle, where the view is magnificent, they find the great entrance hall of the Secretariat from which open the small Commissions, the library, the post room. Visitors have taken the same route. The cars have reached this 70 metre platform which borders the peristyle; then continuing on a one-way route, they have descended along this road passing under the transverse wing of the Secretariat. They have found to the left, under the pilotis, the open garage for 100 cars required in the brief; to the right, under the library, the closed one for 25 cars.



**Zip**

5

(1P) 00000000000000000000  
 (1Q) 00000000000000000000  
 (1R) 00000000000000000000  
 (1S) 00000000000000000000  
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 (1V) 00000000000000000000  
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 (1Z) 00000000000000000000

## Bicycle Garages

**Closed garage for 25 cars under the pilotis. Motorcycle garage**

**Open garage for  
100 cars under the  
pilots.  
(One-way system.)**

## Ramp up

## Boiler rooms

## Ramp down

SECRETARAT PLAN DES GARAGES

Le sol n'est nullement affouillé. Mais la déclivité du terrain a fourni la solution de la circulation à sens unique et des garages.

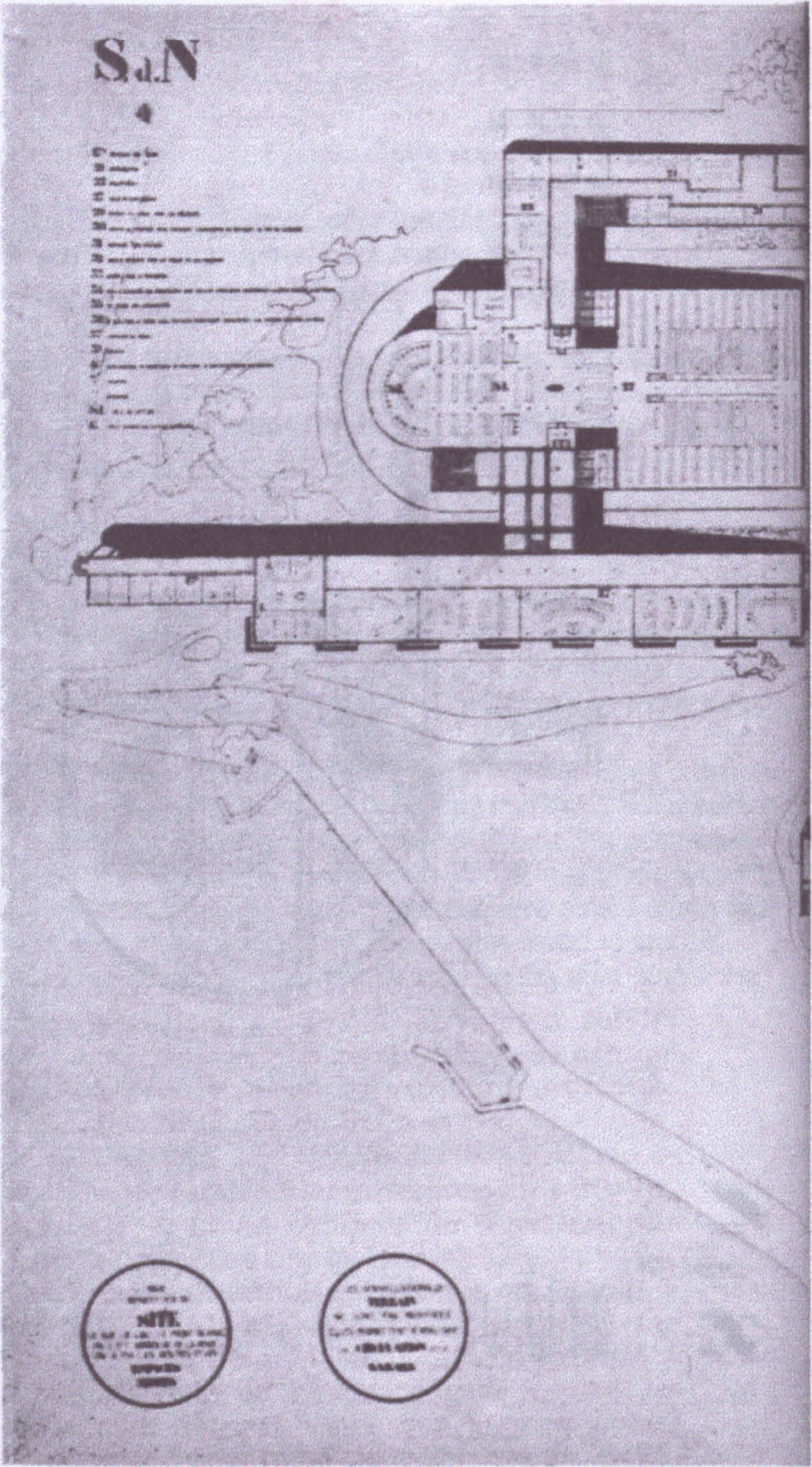
Le tout est en pleine lumière dans un site paysagiste.



**Dispatch**  
L'expédition.

**The Library**  
La bibliothèque.

**The Small Commissions**  
**[Closed to the Public]**  
Les Petites Commissions (sans public).

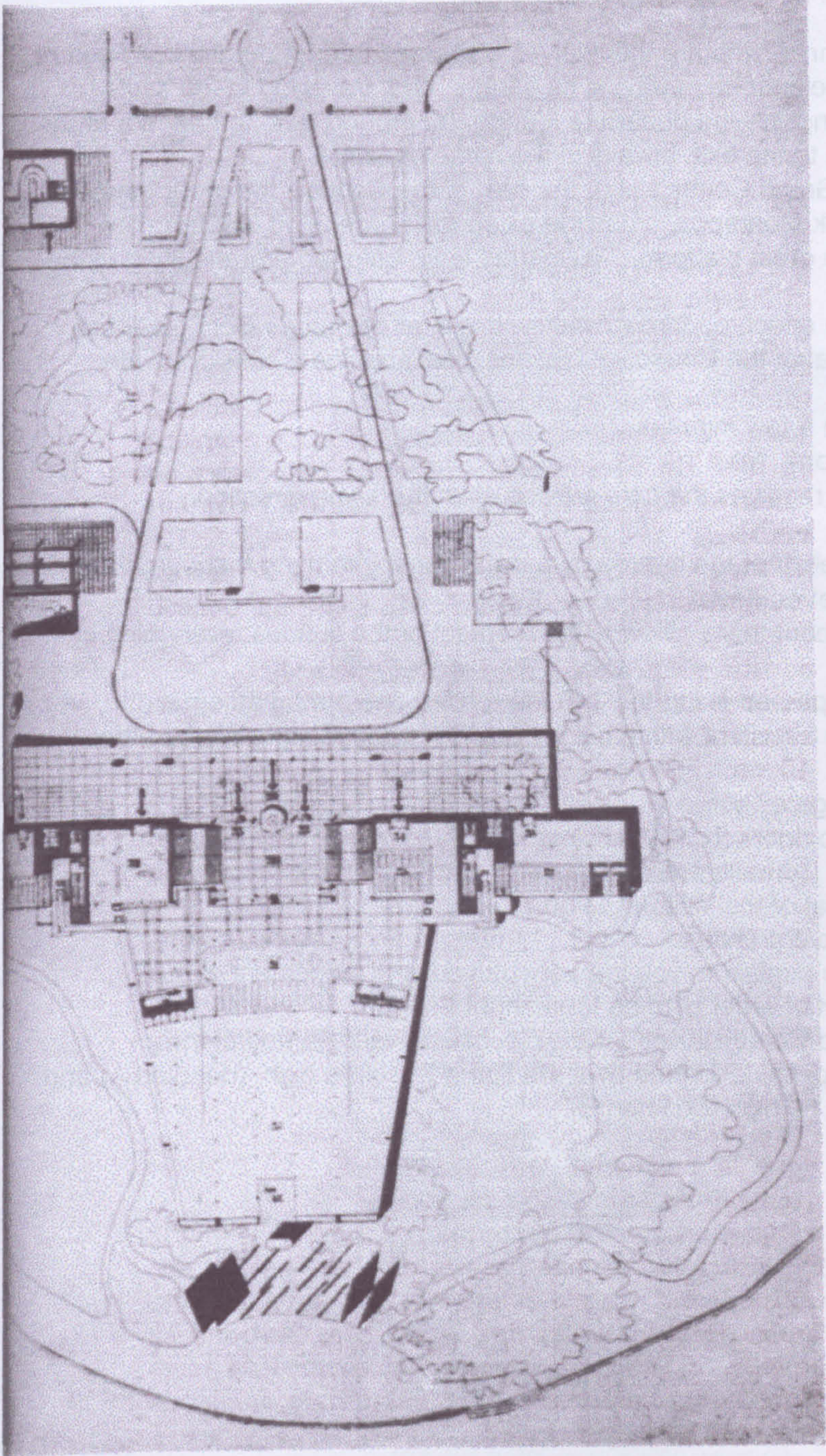


Plan général

**General ground level plan.**  
**(The shadows emphasise the slope of the ground, of which a great deal has been made).**



**The Lausanne Road**



**The upper wood and the imposed one-way circulation**

**The arrival platform of the Secretariat**

**The arrival platform of the Great Hall with its seven entrances**

**The vestibules and cloakrooms [direct access, bright light]. Each is served by its own stair which leads the audience to their respective places in the hall**

**The Stores**

**The pilotis of the President's pavilion and its exclusive stair**

beau du sol.  
du sol dont il a été tiré parti.)



Those returning to the city follow the route, pass again under the other end of the transverse block, climb the slight slope and, always without junctions or intersections find themselves on the Lausanne road.

Visitors, or top personnel, who are themselves dispersed throughout the buildings of the Secretariat, call a car by telephone. Leaving its garage, and, travelling in the same direction, the car will park alongside the departure lounge, (at ground level, at the foot of the stairs and lifts), then continue to the exit, always in the same direction.

The seat of a public Grand Commission, the seat of the Council: the great men of this world, arriving via the park Monrepos, cross the extended gardens on foot from the Secretariat, and approach the great platform, 140 metres long, before the grand wing of the Assembly Hall building.

This wing contains, in effect, on three 7 metre-levels, all the Large Commissions open to the public and the seat of the Council of Nations. But imagine a session of the General Assembly.

2.600 people arrive in a few minutes.

Indescribable confusion? No.

A 140-metre platform receives the cars arriving all in the same direction.

This platform is roofed at a height of ten metres by a great canopy forming the journalists' balcony. The platform is 7 metres deep.

The throng can mill about there. Now is the moment of the curious, everything is mixed up there.

Now, seven doors dispersed along the 140 metres will operate an automatic marshalling<sup>4</sup>. You equip each assistant with a colour card corresponding to each of the doors.

At the centre the delegates surge in.

To left and to right two doors for the personnel.

Beyond to the left the journalists' entrance.

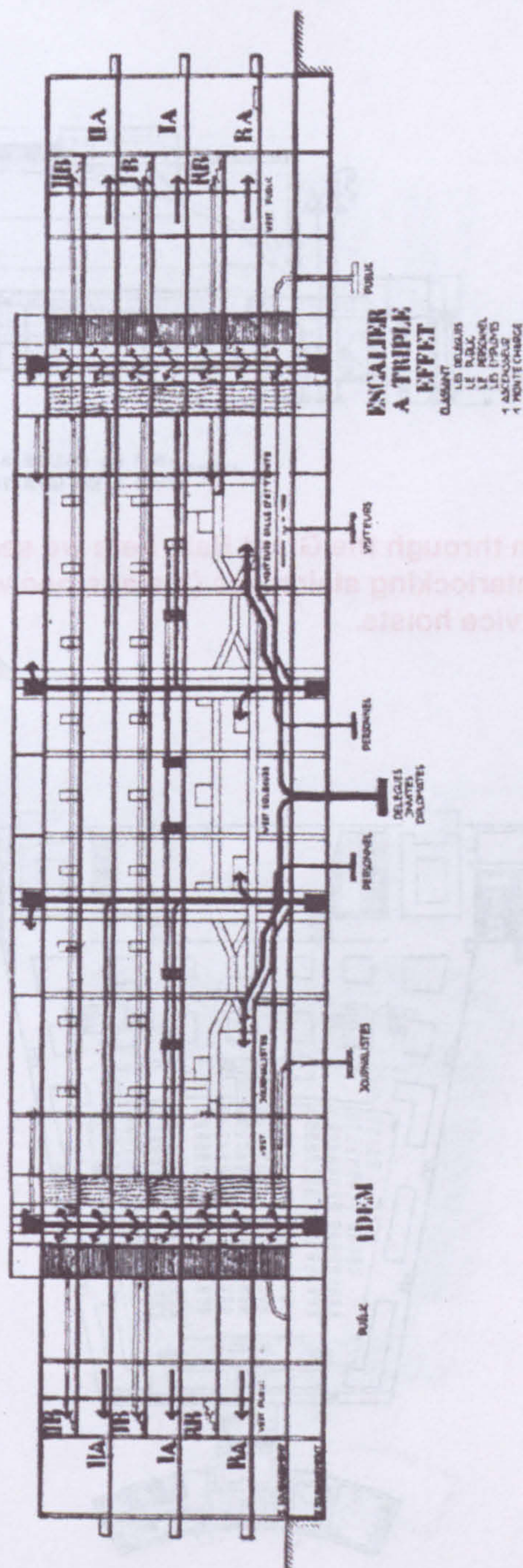
Beyond to the right that of the visitors' salon.

At each end the public entrances.

Now it is necessary to explain to you the very particular arrangement of our staircases, because the secret of order is to be found right there.

The wing of the Grand Commissions, of the Council of Nations, and of the vestibules off which the hall opens, is formed by three floors 7 metres high. (denoted A) and subdivided into half-levels 3m.50 high (denoted B).

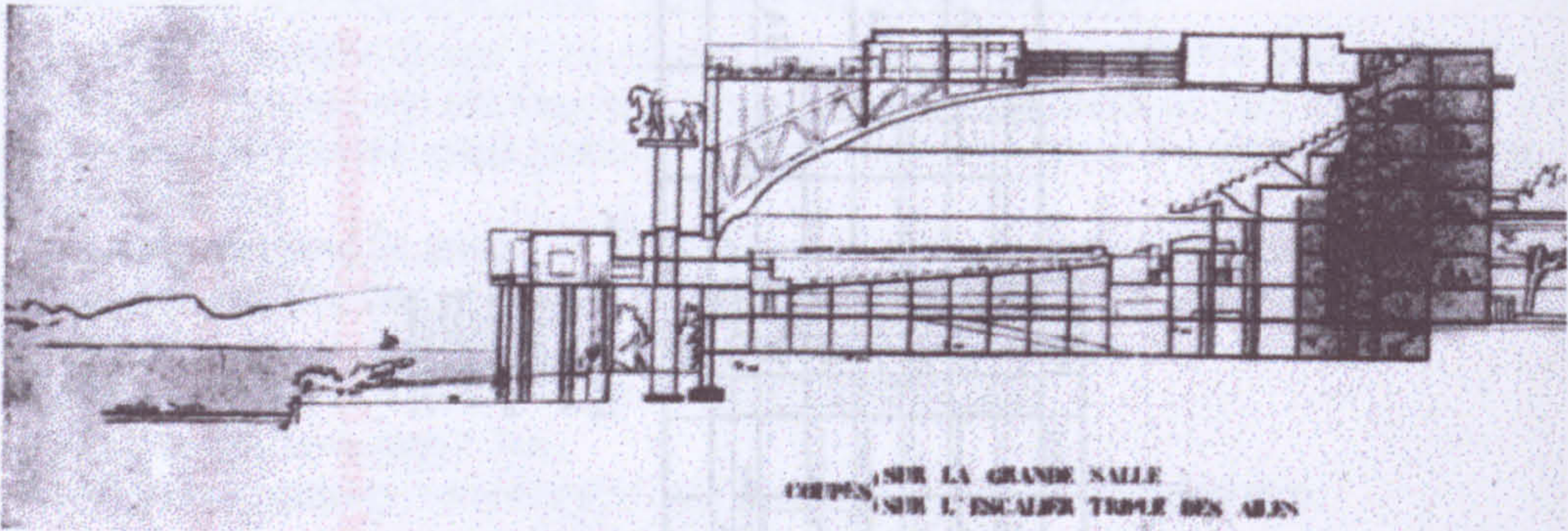




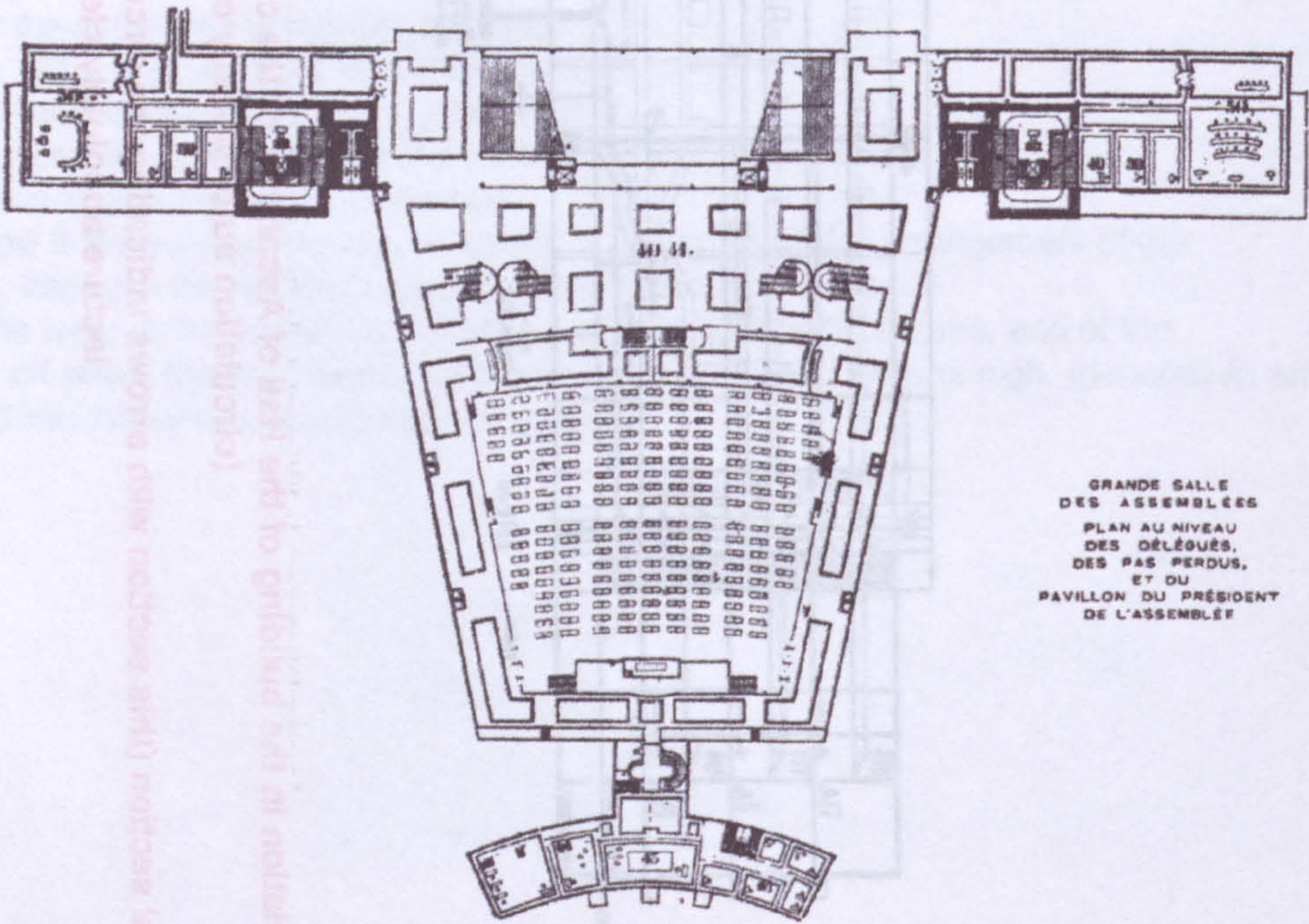
**The circulation in the building of the Hall of Assembly, of the council of Nations, of the Grand Commissions (circulation automatically classified).**

**Vertical section (this section with arrows indicating the circulation was rendered in colour, making the lecture absolutely clear).**





Longitudinal section through the Great Hall; here we see the course of one of the two groups of interlocking staircases (3 stairs one within the other) and the two lifts and service hoists.

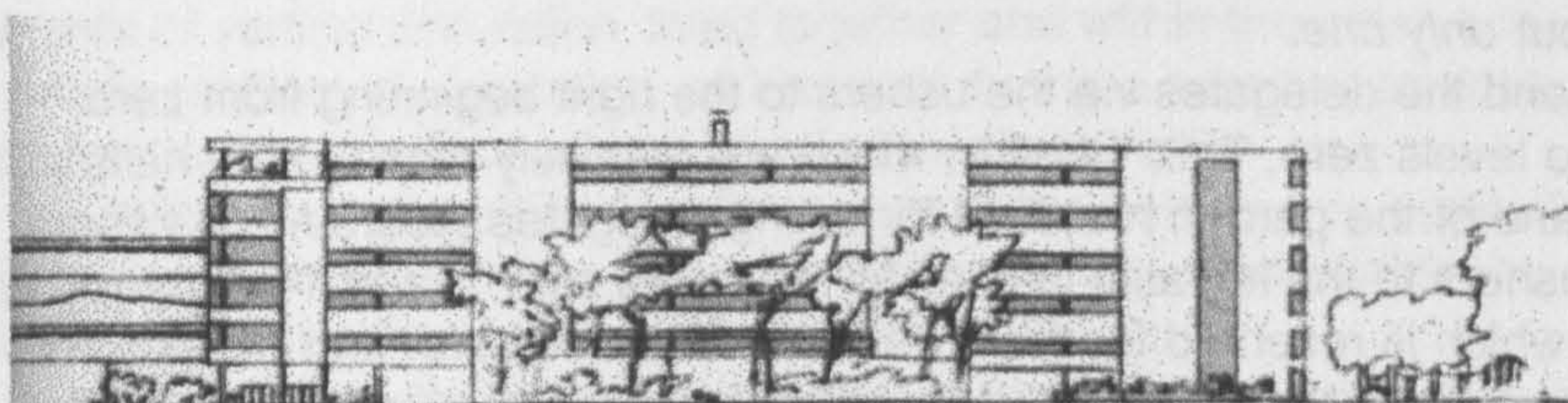


GRANDE SALLE  
DES ASSEMBLÉES  
PLAN AU NIVEAU  
DES DÉLÉGUÉS,  
DES PAS PERDUS,  
ET DU  
PAVILLON DU PRÉSIDENT  
DE L'ASSEMBLÉE

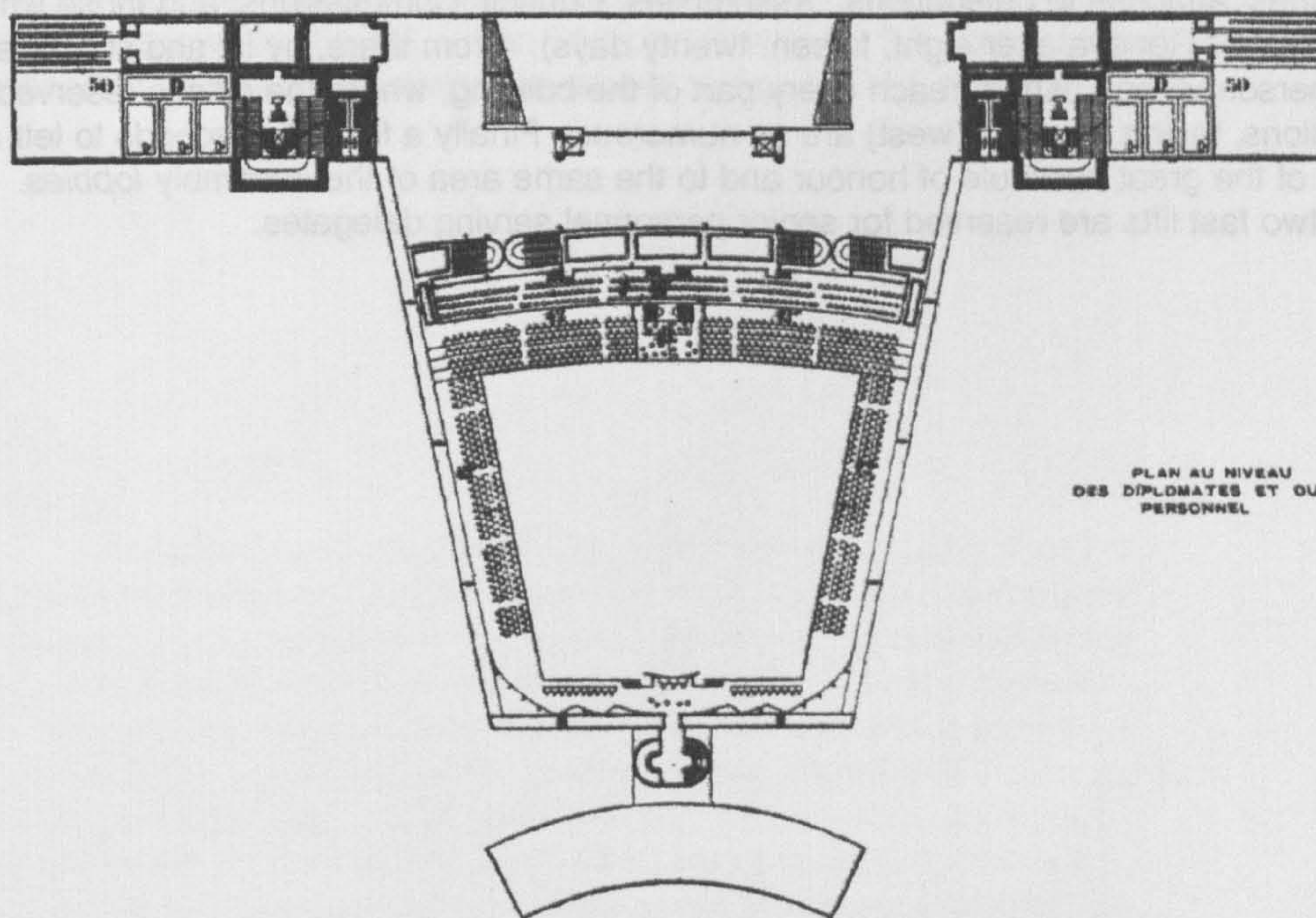


## UNE MAISON — UN PALAIS

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FACADE NORD SEPTENTRIONAL

PLAN AU NIVEAU  
DES DIPLOMATES ET DU  
PERSONNEL



Vast staircases in two flights each 7 metres long and three metres wide rise 7 metres a time! But beneath these enormous heights, I can insert a second stair, exactly the same, where the first flight will serve first 3m.50 and the two following, 7 metres again, each time.

On one hand, I serve the levels zero, 7m., 14m., 21m., on the other, the levels 3,50, 10,50, 17,50. And these two stairs are fitted together one within the other; they do not occupy two stairwells but *only one*.

If therefore, I send the delegates via the ushers to the right beginning from zero, they will have access to levels zero, 7m., 14., 21., which are precisely those of the halls of Council Commissions and of the garden reserved for sitting delegates (floors A). If I send the journalists via the ushers to the left also leading to the levels zero, 7 and 14, they will be able to reach the level which is reserved for them (at 7 metres); and zero, and 14; like the rest at 7 (at the extreme ends of their lobbies), if the usher allows it, they will be able to make contact with all the delegates to commissions, Council, and to the Assembly.

If I send the public via the flight serving the levels 3.5, 10.5, 17.5, it will reach at 3.5, a vast balcony giving onto the spectacle of the Assembly lobbies (there it will not be able to go), at 10.5, the lower vestibule and at 17.5 the upper vestibule giving onto the lobbies of the amphitheatre reserved for it.

Look now at the plan, at the interior of this vast double-action staircase which saves its own space exactly once; you will see that other order of the stair. That one opens onto all the levels, 3m50 apart, one after the other. It is guarded at each floor by an usher; its arrival landing is at each floor corresponding to that of the great lift, which also descends to the vast sub-basement stores. There, down below, on each side of the building, are the vestibules for the junior personnel who entered at left and right of the grand wing (typists, secretaries, attachés to delegations: Assemblies, Council, Commissions, and those who will only leave for Geneva after eight, fifteen, twenty days). From there, by lift and stair, these junior personnel and ushers reach every part of the building, where the offices reserved for delegations, facing the Jura (west) are so numerous. Finally a fast lift descends to left and to right of the great vestibule of honour and to the same area of the Assembly *lobbies*. These two fast lifts are reserved for senior personnel serving delegates.



This high-ranked staff - diplomats, technical advisers - assists the delegate of each nation, and in a military fashion; it extends from the hall to all points of the building, to wherever messages must be transmitted.

In this way, therefore, the plan (which conceals from us one of the double-action great stairs) and the section (which clearly shows us both) reveal on both sides of the wing of the building a network of vertical communications grouped on a *single vertical axis and controlled at each floor by only a single usher*, five elements of circulation; thus, *ten elements of vertical circulation*, fitted together one within the other, telescoped, and giving to the whole problem of circulation, so complex during a session, an automatic order, obligatory, enforced, dispensing with all manual control<sup>42</sup>.

We are convinced that for the needs of the palace, this - one of the fundamental conditions of good operation, had to be resolved thus. And from an "architectural" point of view, this may be called an elegant solution.

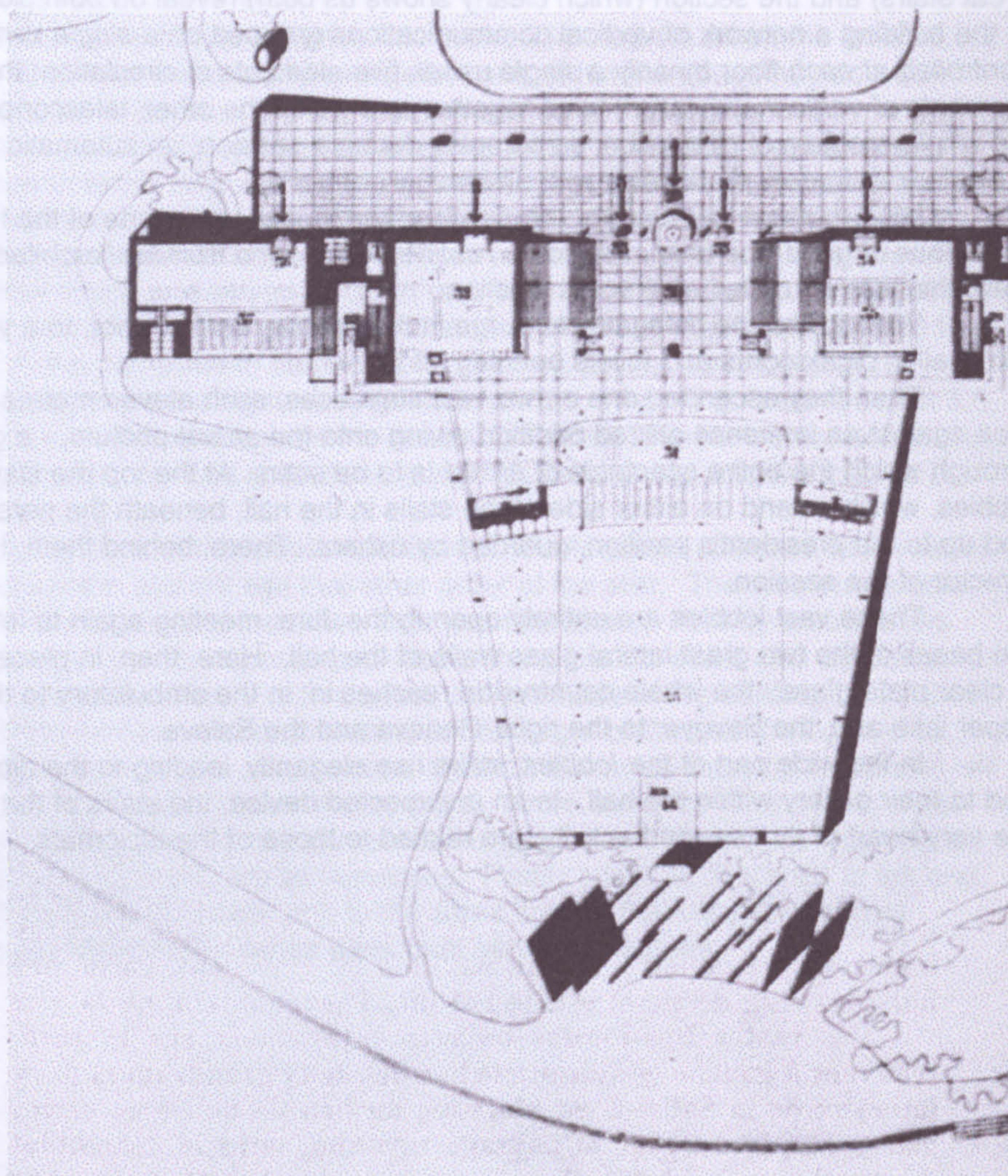
We allowed the delegates to surge in through the central door, to a vast vestibule with well-lit cloakrooms and toilets opening off it.

Then they ascended one of two vast staircases, each eleven metres wide, face to face against an immense glazed partition giving onto the arrival podium, - a glass wall through which the entire spectacle of arrival is to be seen. At the top the stairs open onto lobbies, which extend on either side of the stalls in the hall, beneath the personnel galleries and up to the president's pavilion, guarded by ushers. There, behind them, is, as I said, the director of the session.

These vast lobbies are entirely open to the Jura, meeting again to left and to right the bases of the two great lateral glass walls of the hall. Here, then, in place of glass slabs, is clear plate-glass: the whole countryside reaches in; in the ambulatory to the left, are the upper lake and the Savoye; to the right, Geneva and the Saleve.

In the wide part of the *lobbies*, stairs rise elegantly, leading to the diplomats' balcony and to their gallery within the hall. In an unexpected device, the stairs of the personnel, at the very heart of its assigned activity, are related to those of the diplomats.





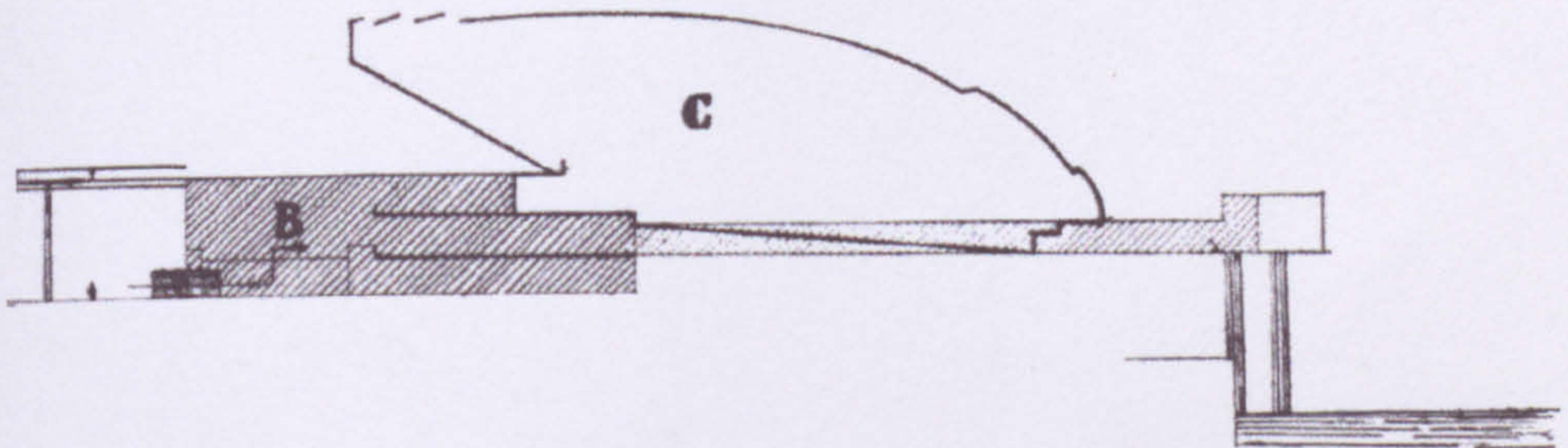
**J'a** attach a fundamental architectural importance to this little diagrammatic section. It shows, from A to C, the varied architectural sensations experienced by the visitor: a cadence of successive volumes from the quai and the canopy which protects it, the entrance drum, the vestibule and the lobbies, the president's pavilion, and finally, the great hall. The play of light most powerfully intervenes: one passes from the view of the Jura (at the quai) to that of the lake (lobbies) to end with the soft but total clarity of the great hall resulting from the glass walls, not transparent, but translucent. And the level of the lake plays a prominent architectural role here.





**These seven categories of listener are segregated automatically: without hesitation, without disturbance, without questions; each will reach his allocated place.**

**Past the drum (29), the delegates enter a vast architectural system, not circuitous, without curves, without detours. Everything is open, in bright light, a forum.**





The Secretary General, sitting at the very centre of the Secretariat, is linked to the president's pavilion by a covered bridge thrown across at the same level.

Finally, a second covered bridge makes contact between journalists from foreign lands and the Information Section of the Secretariat.

Here, succinctly explained, is the solution we provided for the circulation; in classifying everything, we have given freedom of movement to everyone through order.

## **AN AESTHETIC**

That is to say, this system of organising, of ranking, of disposing, of putting in order, this act emanating from the will, these mathematical relationships, this quality of the spirit, which in itself leads to purity, and through individual creative force, expresses a coherent whole, an entirety. Not one tension, one



threatening brutality born of the desire to impose, to attain some Assyrian monumentality, - obsessive fear which affects a portion of those who react summarily against the flourishes of Academies. *Smiling, clear and beautiful*: we said that there was here truly an architectural programme.

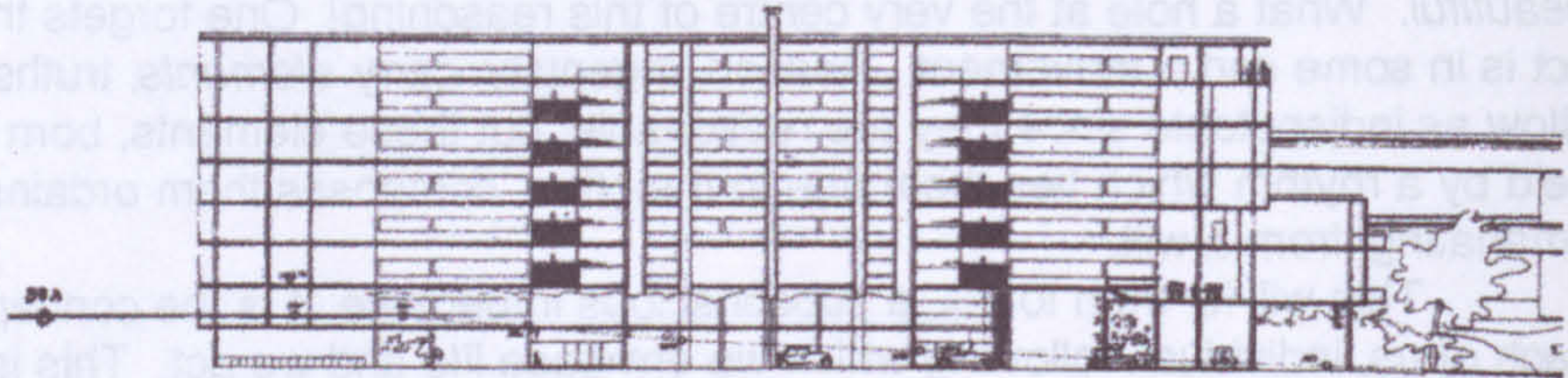
There is an attitude today, among the most gifted of the young, of denying the very point of aesthetics (I have said this from the start). They intend to act with purity in limiting themselves to the severe study of useful functions, and again our downfall is in that, a pure phraseology, which has previously thoroughly deluded generations: *that which is useful is beautiful*. What a hole at the very centre of this reasoning! One forgets that every human act is in some sort a movement. Reason, ingenuity, carry *elements*, truths that one may allow as indisputable since they are reasonable; but these elements, born of analysis, are held by a rhythm which ties them one to the other, composes them ordains them, an act emanating from a will.

This will is, truth to tell, a subconscious imperative; it is the concept particular to each of us, individual, following which we envisage life and we act. This is what leads us. Do you imagine that we are not be lead? Would you imagine that our single reason might be fixed? If the only reason were fixed, we would live in an exact agreement of cause and effect which should long since have led humanity to one end. We are animated by passion. Each his own. Union of the inescapable- passion and the incontestable- reason, is often difficult. These two elements, which constitute the chemistry of the work, enter in strongly diverse proportions, and sometimes their combination produces a strange offspring, unexpected, impressive, breathtaking, which extracts approval, provokes applause and unites men in admiration: this is the work of art, made with those elements employed by each in his turn, but which in such a happy conjunction, is, in an exceptionally large dose, disturbing to us, we are moved, provoking unanimous support.

There is in aesthetics then, a factor which determines the immortality of the work and which assures us that there will always be the possibility of immortal works suddenly appearing: *this is the individual*.

Individuals can, at one moment, provoke this unanimous support; its expression in the common output will effectively systematise<sup>43</sup> the existing formulae in the provocative work: an aesthetic is then "grammatised", is petrified. It is certain that whatever is at the origin of this systematisation had itself created a

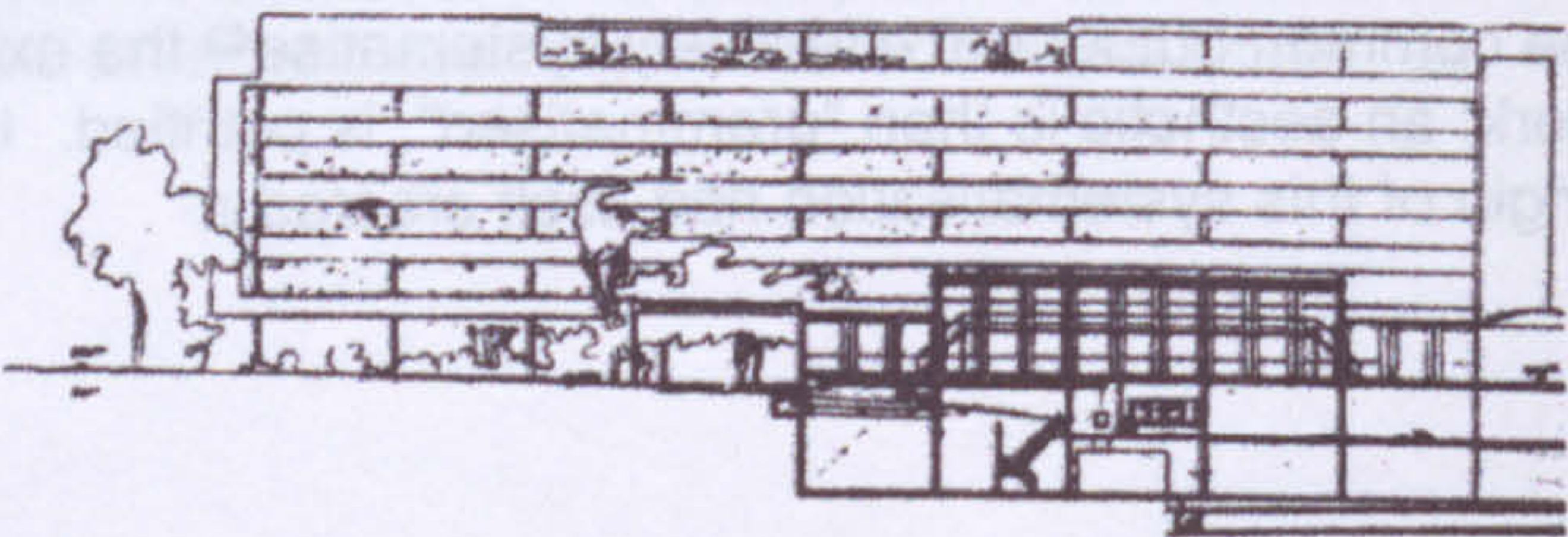




SECTION ESCALIERS DU SECRÉTARIAT

The pilotis of the Secretariat

The vaults beneath the building for the one-way circulation.



Le portique du Secrétariat au niveau zéro.

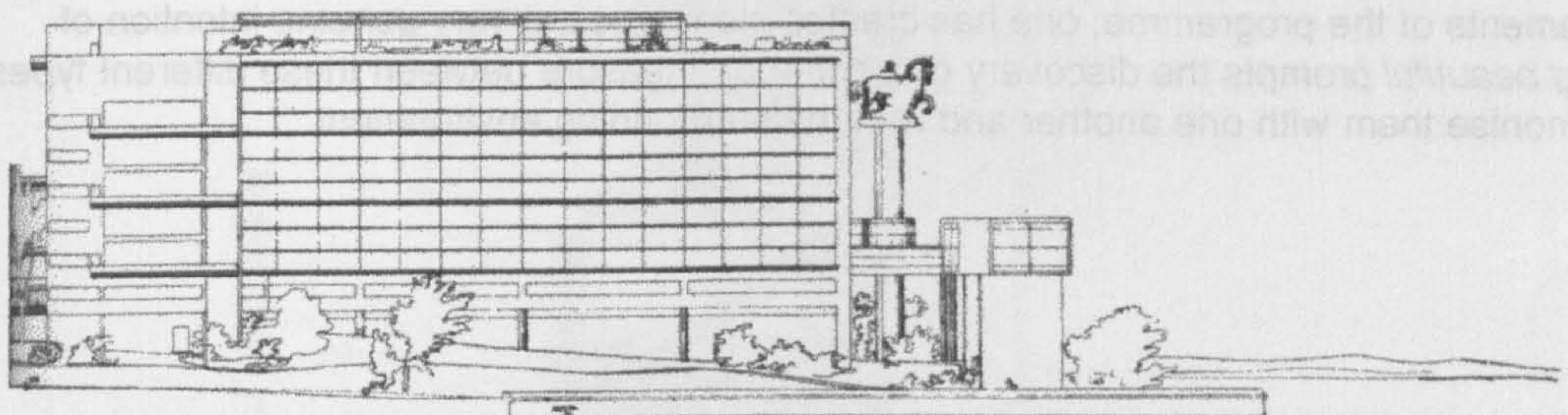
The portico of the Secretariat at level zero

SECTION COUPÉE DU SECRÉTARIAT

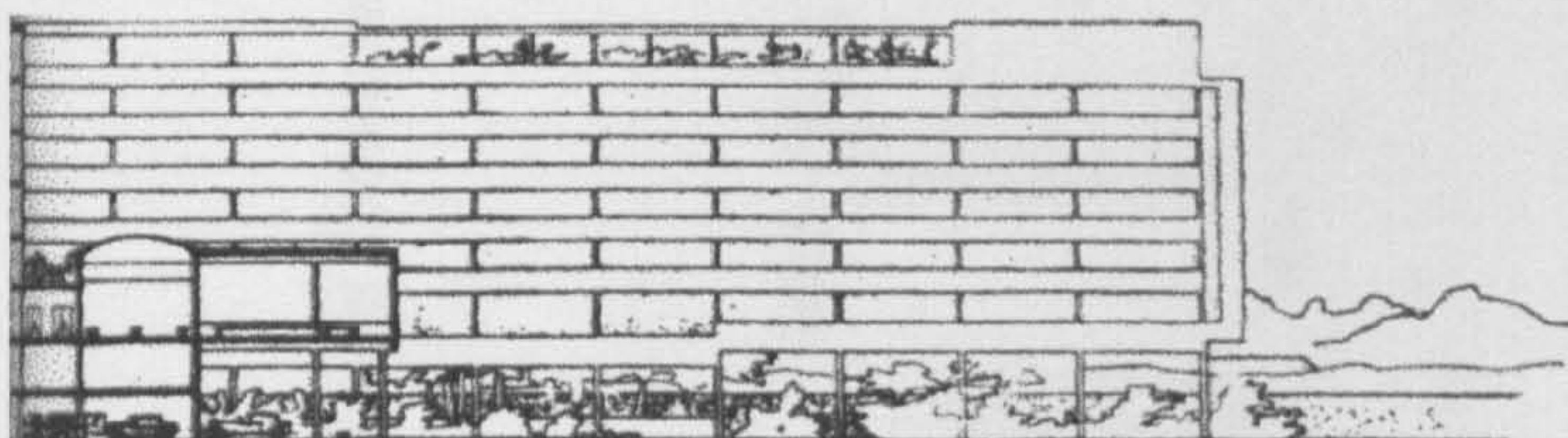


UNE MAISON — UN PALAIS

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MAISON N°1 GRANDE SALLE



Les piloris du Secrétariat.

MAISON N°1 GRANDE SALLE

LES PILORIS DU TERRAIN  
N°1  
LES PILORIS DU TERRAIN  
N°1  
LES PILORIS DU TERRAIN  
N°1



method. What was this method, other than a knowledge of technical means, a perception of the spiritual dominants animating the epoch, a crystallisation of a maximum of chosen elements, effective, having great potential, with a minimum of implementation of materials and of plastic means?

Smiling, clear and beautiful.

Making light of the difficulties because one has thoroughly resolved the technical requirements of the programme; one has created clear types; a very genuine intention of *making beautiful* prompts the discovery of a common measure between these different types to harmonise them with one another and with the surrounding environment.

These common factors.

We have understood that the site implied the horizontal:  
a conclusion of a lyrical order.



UNE MAISON.

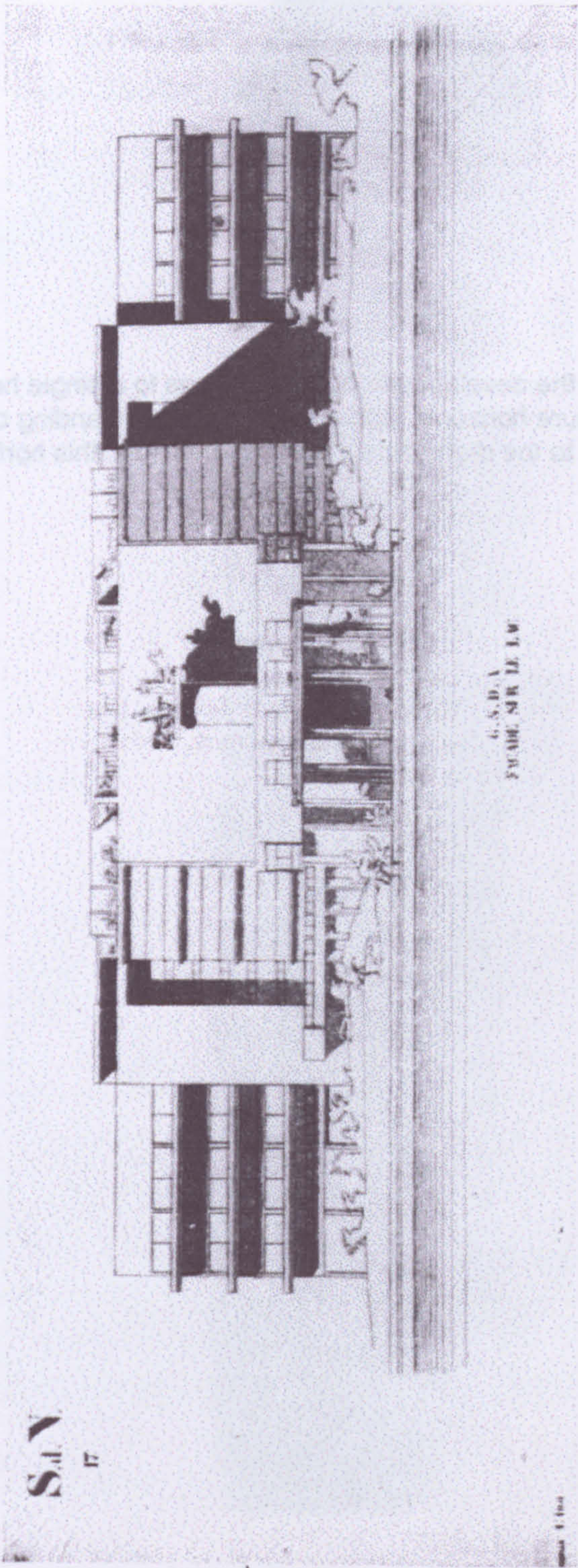
One above the other, the great wing of Grand Commissions and of the Council of Nations

Vertical circulation

Vertical circulation

The Belvedere; the roof garden

The facade on the lake is diminished so as not to crowd the site. In front, with all elegance, the pavilion of the President of the Assembly





We have taken the development of our buildings to a single horizontal climax<sup>44</sup>, smooth and pure; this pure horizontal above all, sometimes standing out against the sky, sometimes giving scale to the mountains which rise behind it, this horizontal was a conclusion of a lyrical order.



## The Jura



The palace is inserted into the site, light, without any desire to play the fortress. Because it is better for the Nations to impose spiritually than by brutality or pedantry.

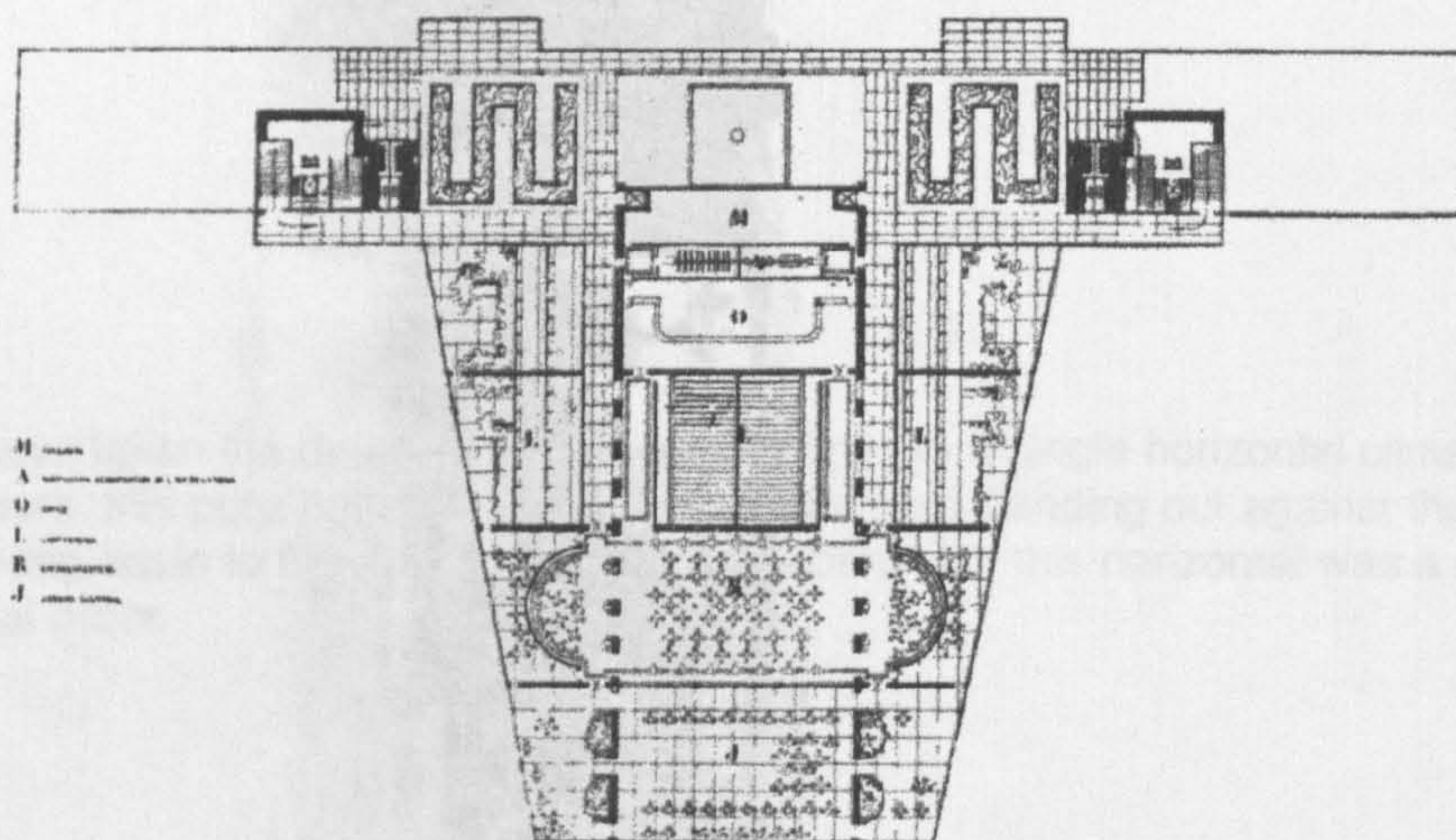
The Secretariat in the air on its pilotis

The pavilion of the President of the Assembly (its pilotis are plunged in to a little pool).



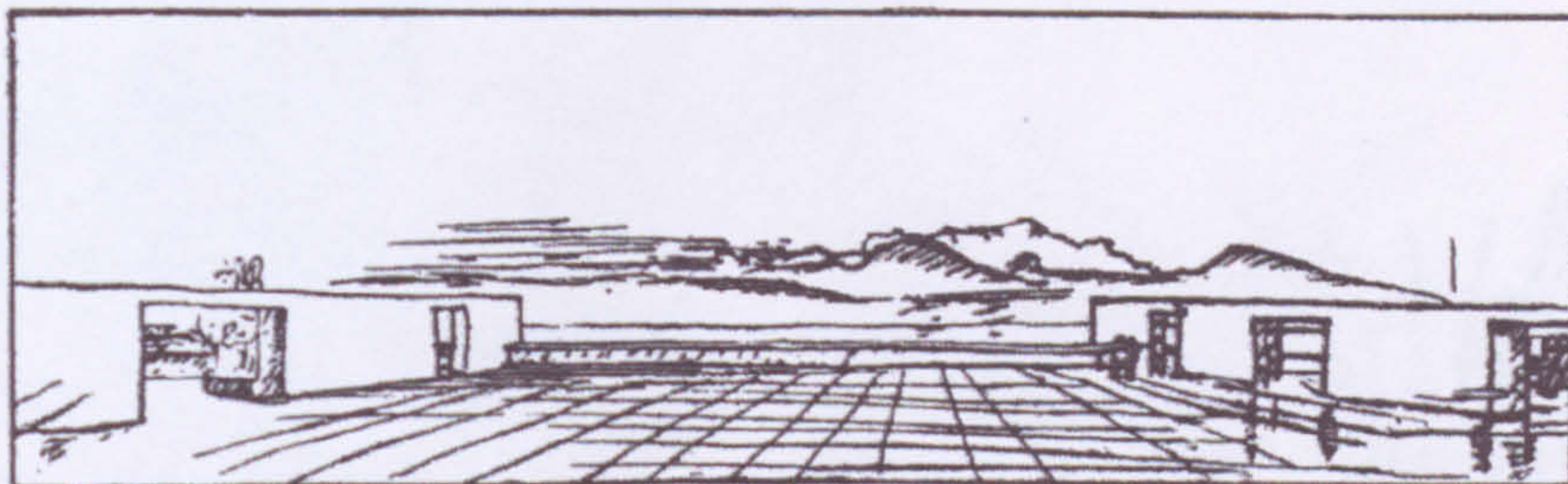
## UNE MAISON — UN PALAIS

Jardins suspendus, vue sur la chaîne du Jura.

GRANDE SALLE DES ASSEMBLÉES  
TOITUREPromenoir : vue sur Genève  
et le Salève.Salle des rafraîchissements.  
Jardin-belvédère.  
En face : le Mont Blanc.Promenoir : vue sur le  
haut lac.

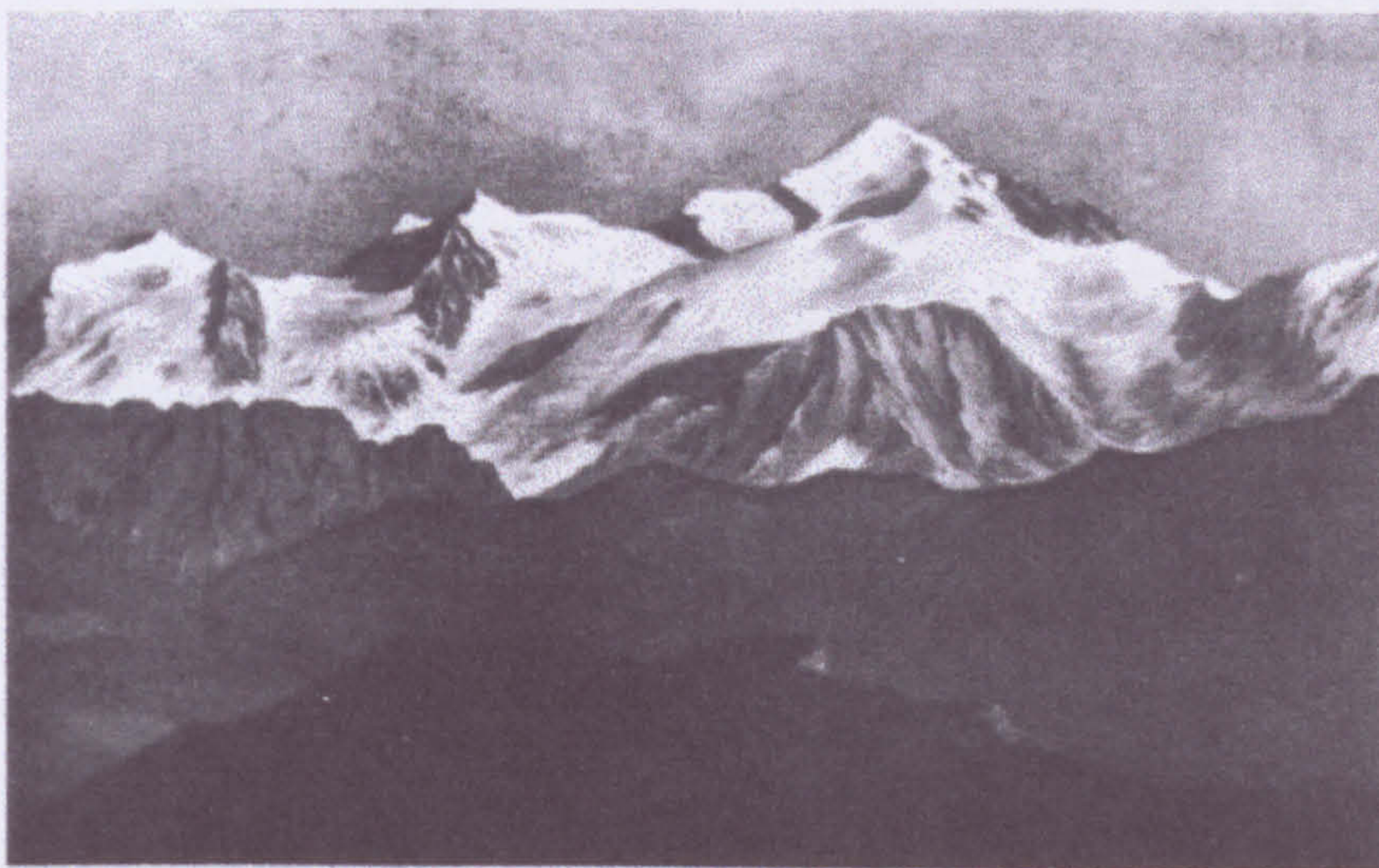
Ordering the whole composition so that it ended with the reunion of men on high, on an immense belvedere, facing a famous landscape, where at times the most hardened hearts might perhaps be open to such emotion, was a poetic intention.





**Great Hall of Assembly: roof with restuarants, gardens, promenades.**

Here, all on high, on an immense roof garden, hatreds can cease and "never has the great architectural work, participant of the site which surrounds it, uttered its last word. Because the light changes and the seasons pass, and the young do not see what the old do, for the old have a soul which predisposes them differently to things offered to their passion..."(p10).

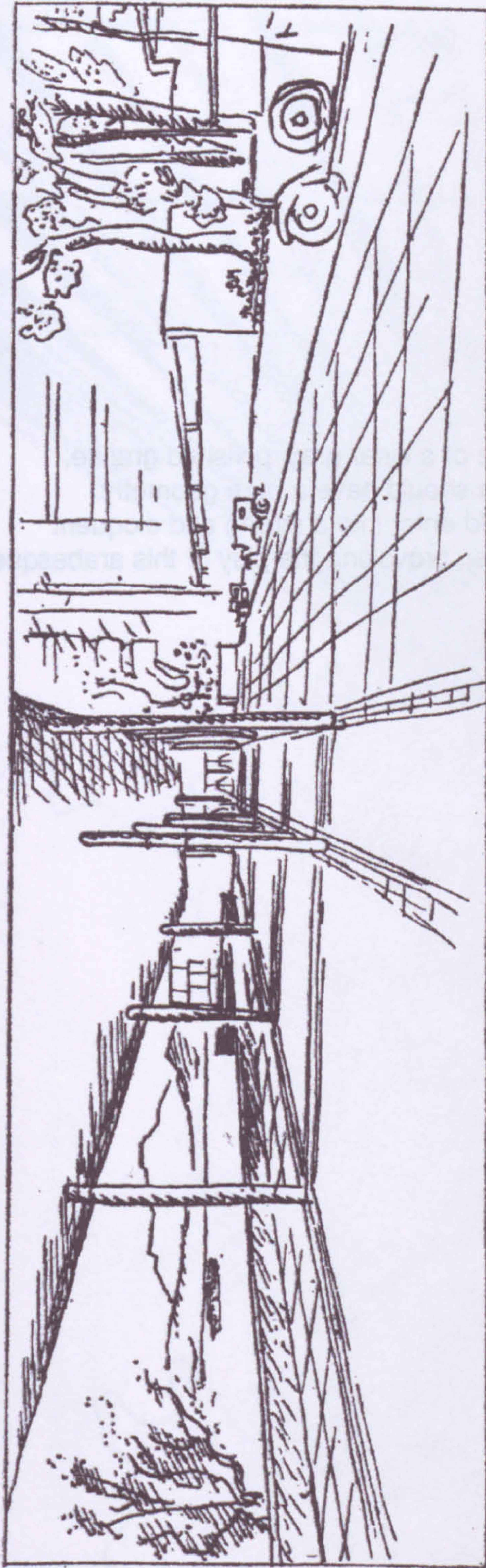


**Above the roof garden, the tête-à-tête**



Making the countryside, the lawns, the flowers, the trees flow through the buildings; this strategy (the pilotis) which has the effect of making the light explode under the buildings where an opaque shadow might have brought gloom and where a basement might have destroyed the feeling of space - this *theory of light*, basis of our architecture, is for bathing the heart, for warming it, for cheering it; an intention beyond the strictly utilitarian.





The portico and the entrance quay of the Secretariat. The whole landscape appears.

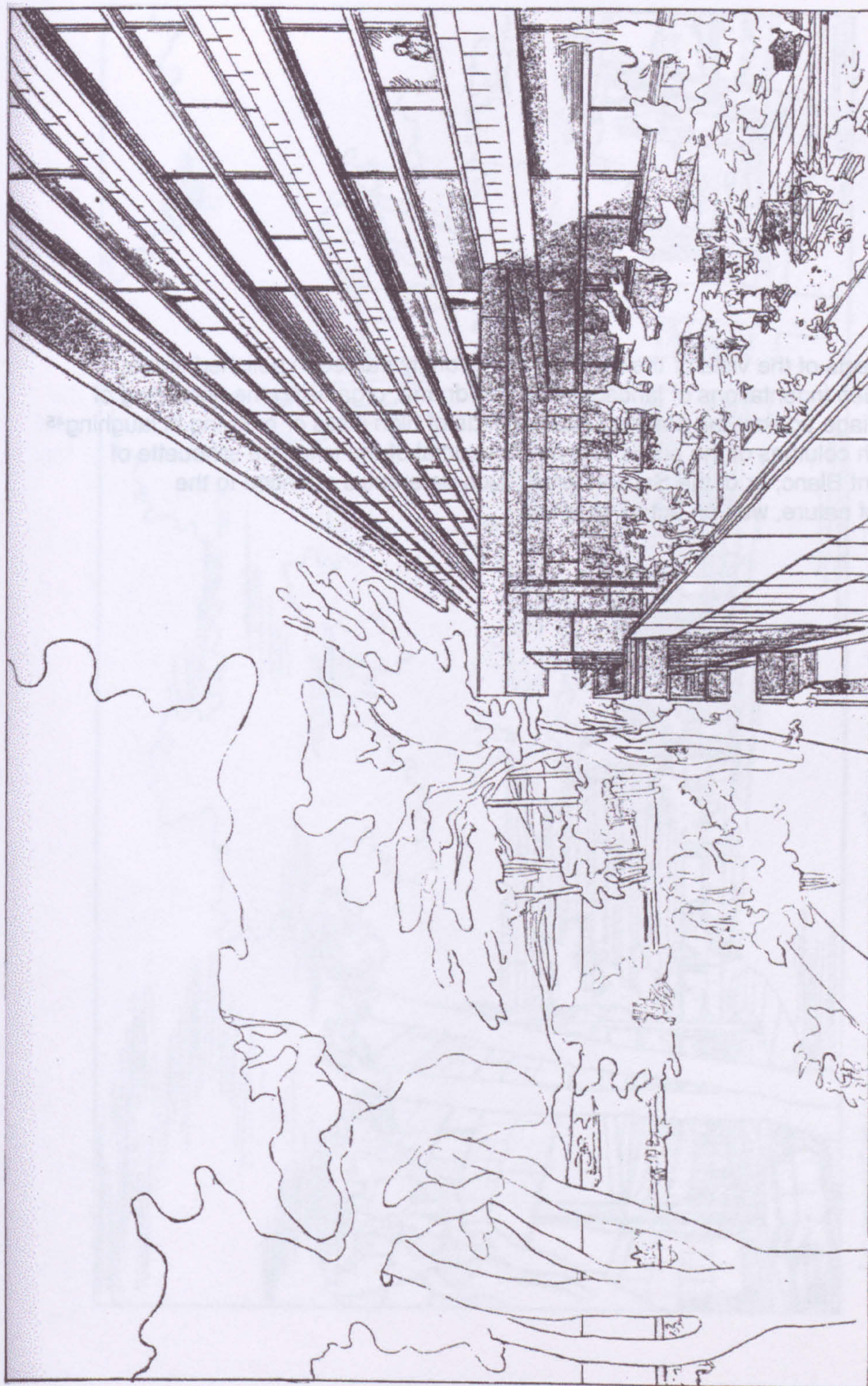


The Great Hall of Assembly



Deciding that these huge buildings should be of a clear grey, polished granite; gleaming, smooth, brilliant; that their enveloping form should have a pure geometry. Deciding that this geometry - sign of the spirit - should enter into a strong and eloquent symphony with the vast arabesque of the countryside; provoking the play of this arabesque with precision; planning in each part





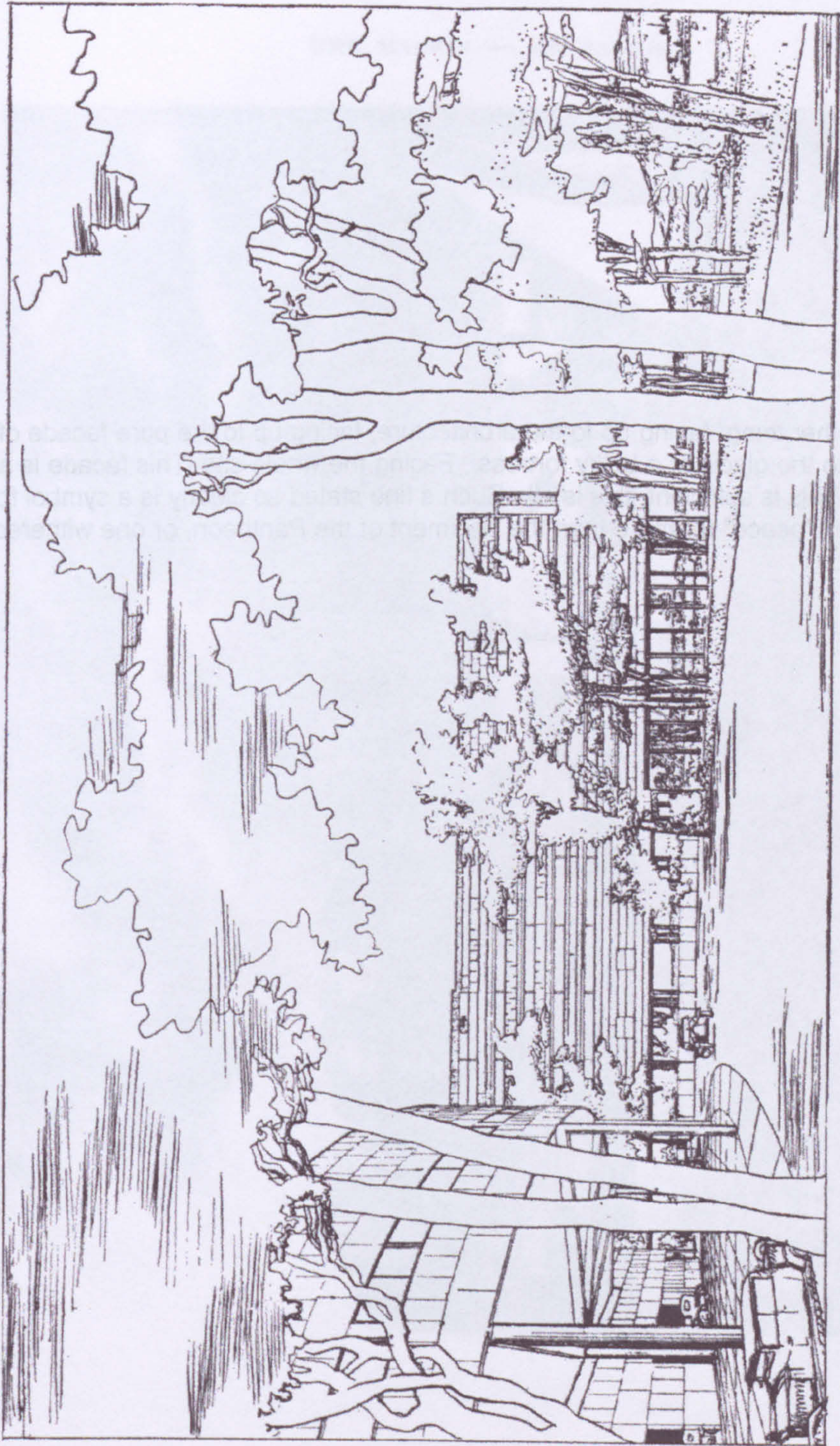
**The Main facade of the Secretariat**

**At the centre, the pavilion of the Secretary-General giving onto hanging gardens above the Small Commissions. Each office of these important sections is completely open to the magnificent site. On the roof, the restaurant and garden for the personnel. The wall facings are of polished granite. The windows are glazed by Saint-Gobain. And this we costed at only 12 1/2 million francs! "This is a factory," they said to us, "this is not architecture!"**



unexpected effects of the vista of the countryside, strongly framed in polished stone; producing sudden indentations of landscape, a true drama; organising the spreading of shrubs or of foliage against the planned backgrounds of high walls or merging in laughing<sup>45</sup> concert the high columns of the pilotis with the horizontal of the lake, the silhouette of Geneva, of Mont Blanc, or of the Saleve, every such deferential attention to the consideration of nature, was an act of worship.



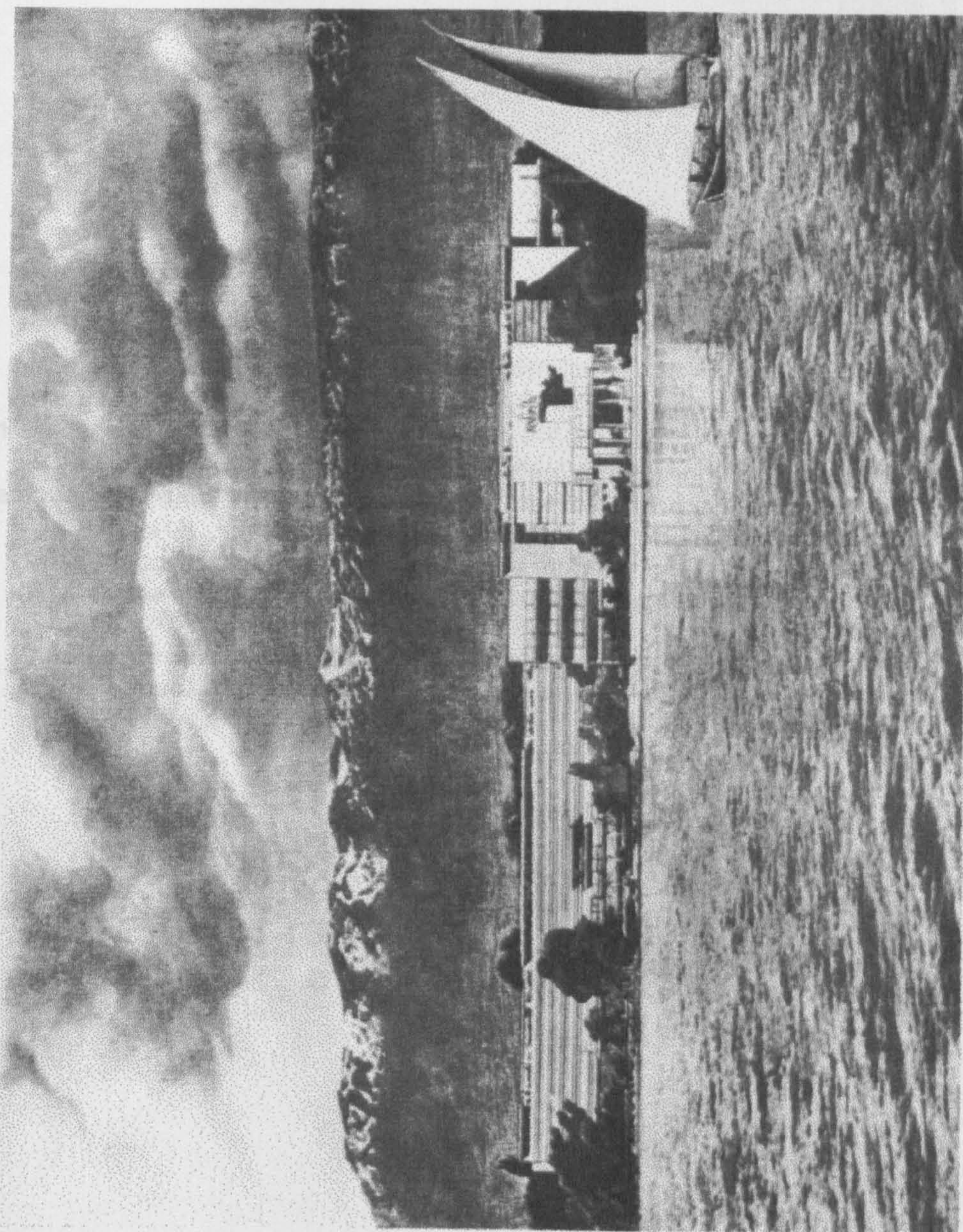


**The closed garages.....** The open garages under the pilotis..... **Geneva and the Salève.....**  
**Polished granite and Saint -Gobain Glass.** The High Secretariat said, "we will not work above cars."  
**And they have skewered us with our pilotis!**



And another thing: facing up to the architecture; facing up to the pure facade of the edifice, and not to the glacis of a bulky fortress. Facing the whole site. This facade is a pure line, horizontal. This is sufficient, this is all. Such a line stated so clearly is a symbol for the S.D.N.; it signifies "peace" far more than the pediment of the Pantheon, or one withered antique colonnade.





La vue du Lac.



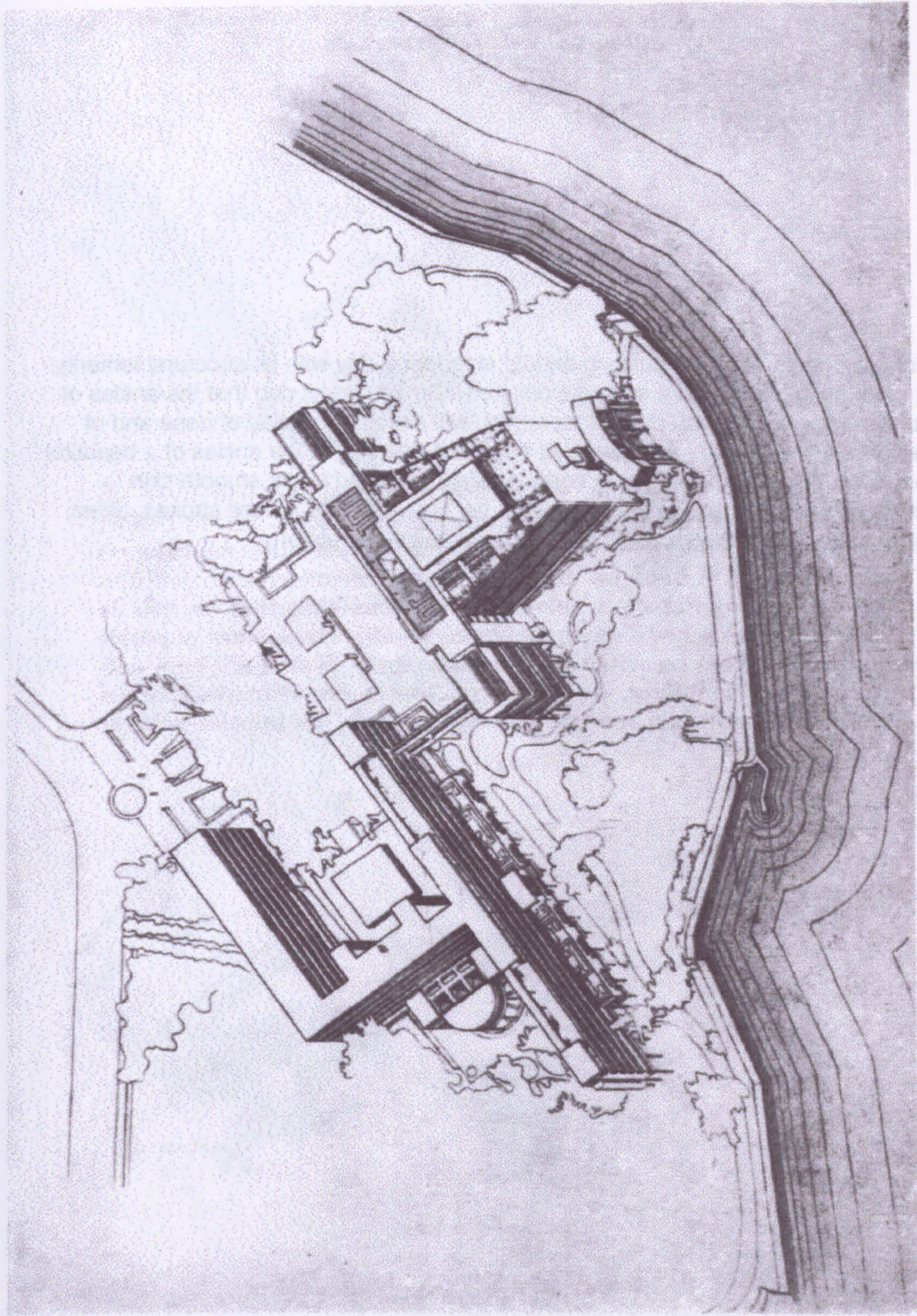
This aesthetic is at the same time an expression of honesty.

Honesty, firstly, because a pure "interior" categorical, sane, efficient, useful, is expressed in its entirety on the exterior: here are the offices, there the halls of the Commissions, there the great hall, there the lobbies, and everywhere the corridors which receive an abundance of light. Before entering the building, one knows its organs.

Honesty, because all is light: there is no gloomy corner, not a single one, *not a single region* which may not be flooded with light.



La  
haute  
futaie.



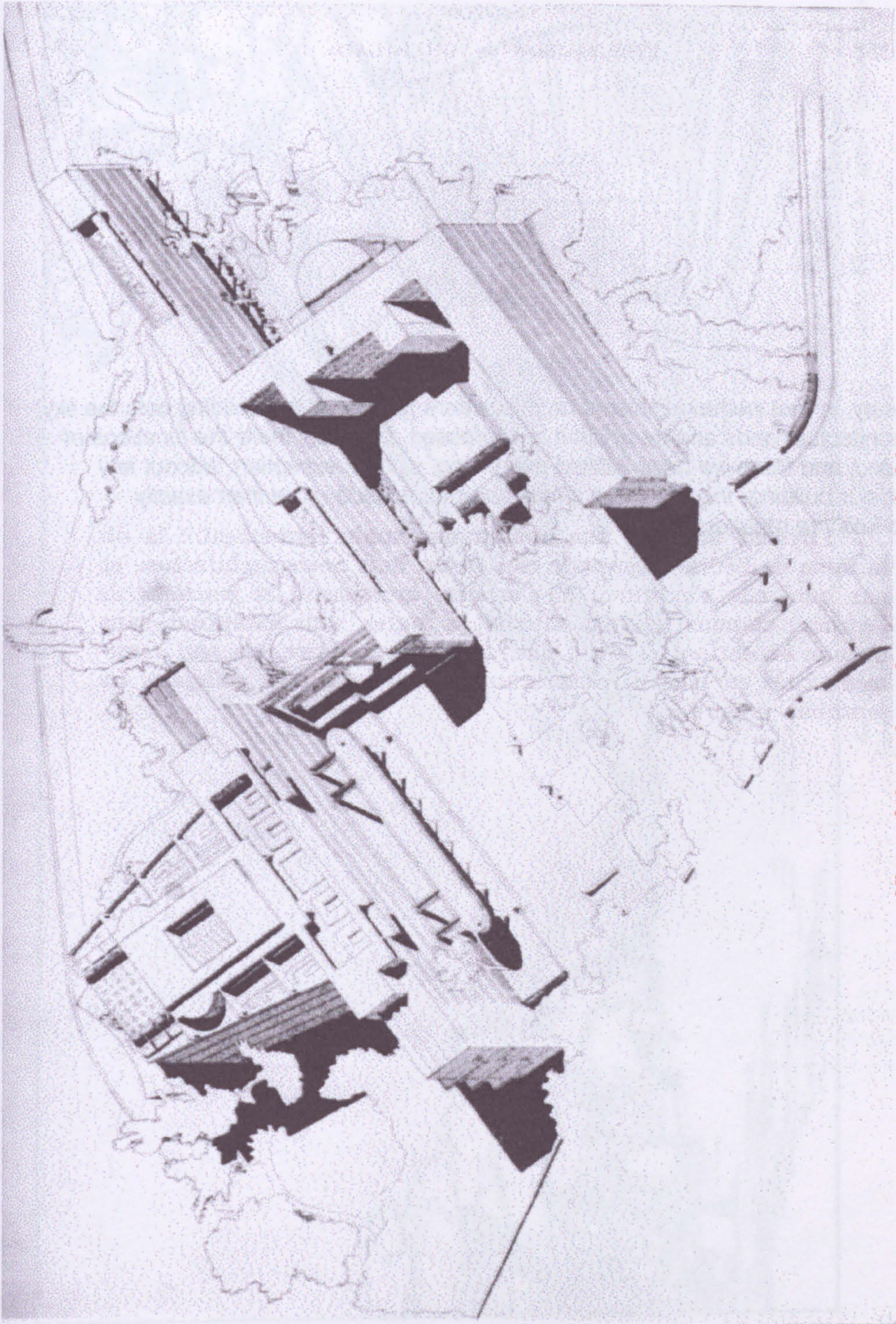
Les  
pelouses.

The lawns.....  
..... The upper lake  
The palace is in the grass amongst the foliage; the facade of the hall and the President's pavilion  
before the lake.



Honesty, because, if the building should stand for a day with its structural temerity, you could mark each place where stresses occurred. Do you find it odd that the ankles of the chamois are slender? If you dissect them, you will encounter a play of bone and of tendons which will dazzle you. Are you puzzled by the delicacy of the ankles of a beautiful woman, on which her strong and ample body is safely balanced? Her smooth skin displeases you? The neatness of her eyelids, of her lips, all those severe strokes, direct, acute, which make her beauty, and her style, do you call those poverty?



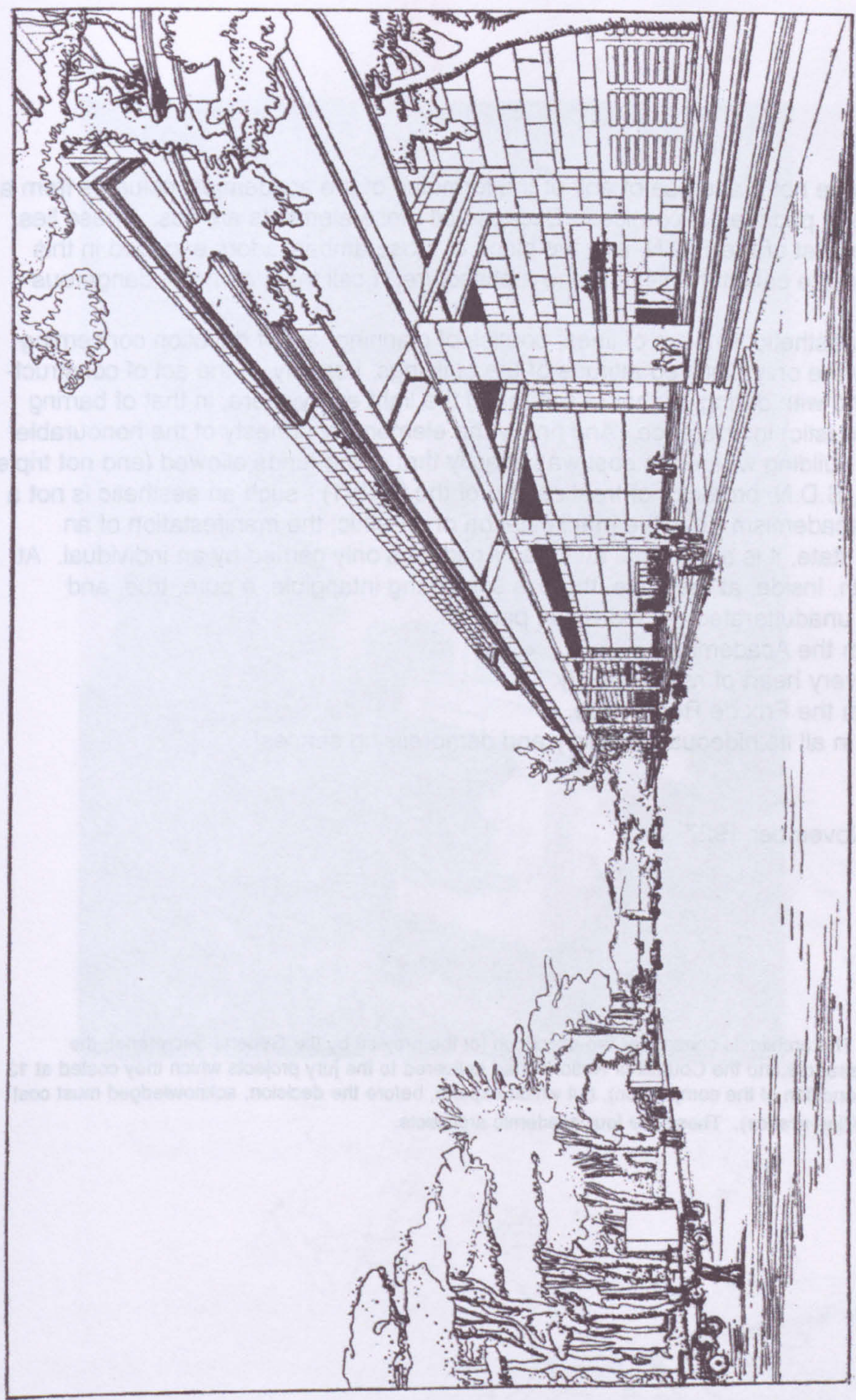


View of the palace, Lausanne road side.  
At the entrance, the upper woods. The Secretariat faces towards Mont Blanc; the library overlooks Parc Monrepos, and only the front of the hall and the pavilion dominate the lake. The roof garden-restaurant is a belvedere.



Honesty, in that we have insisted on this: where the line of the building cuts the sky, where our architecture ends and by which it is expressed, *precisely there the functions of the building end*; and there we have fulfilled everything, without exception, without any exception. In our building, *there is not a single cubic centimetre more than exactly necessary to fulfil the required functions*.





Le quai d'accès de la Grande Salle ; la marquise servant de grand promenoir aux journalistes, Revêtement général de granit poli.

**The access quay to the Great Hall; the canopy serving as grand promenade for journalists. General facings of polished granite.**



So we have not made use of any of the formulae of the academies: columns from a catalogue, pilasters, pediments, cornices. Because all these elements are lies. These lies, at the High Secretariat of the S.D.N. and the place of those ambassadors engaged in this architectural affair, are called the flesh of the architecture. I call them carrion - dangerous flesh.

Such an aesthetic: lyricism of lines, poetics of planning, act of devotion concerning nature, to face by the only dignified attitude of the buildings, honesty, in the act of constructing honourably and with daring, in that of scattering the light everywhere, in that of barring the way to all (acoustic) interference. And finally the elementary honesty of the honourable man: to design a building where the cost was exactly that of the funds allowed (and not triple nor quadruple, O, S.D.N. protector of treaties and of the law!)(1) - such an aesthetic is not a manifestation of academism. It is the manifestation of an ethic; the manifestation of an individual mental state, it is a personal attitude. An idea is only carried by an individual. At the origin, beneath, inside, at the base, there is something intangible, a pure, true, and inalienable thing, unadulterated, an individual passion.

We are far from the Academies!

We are at the very heart of *responsibility*.

We are far from the Prix de Rome here,

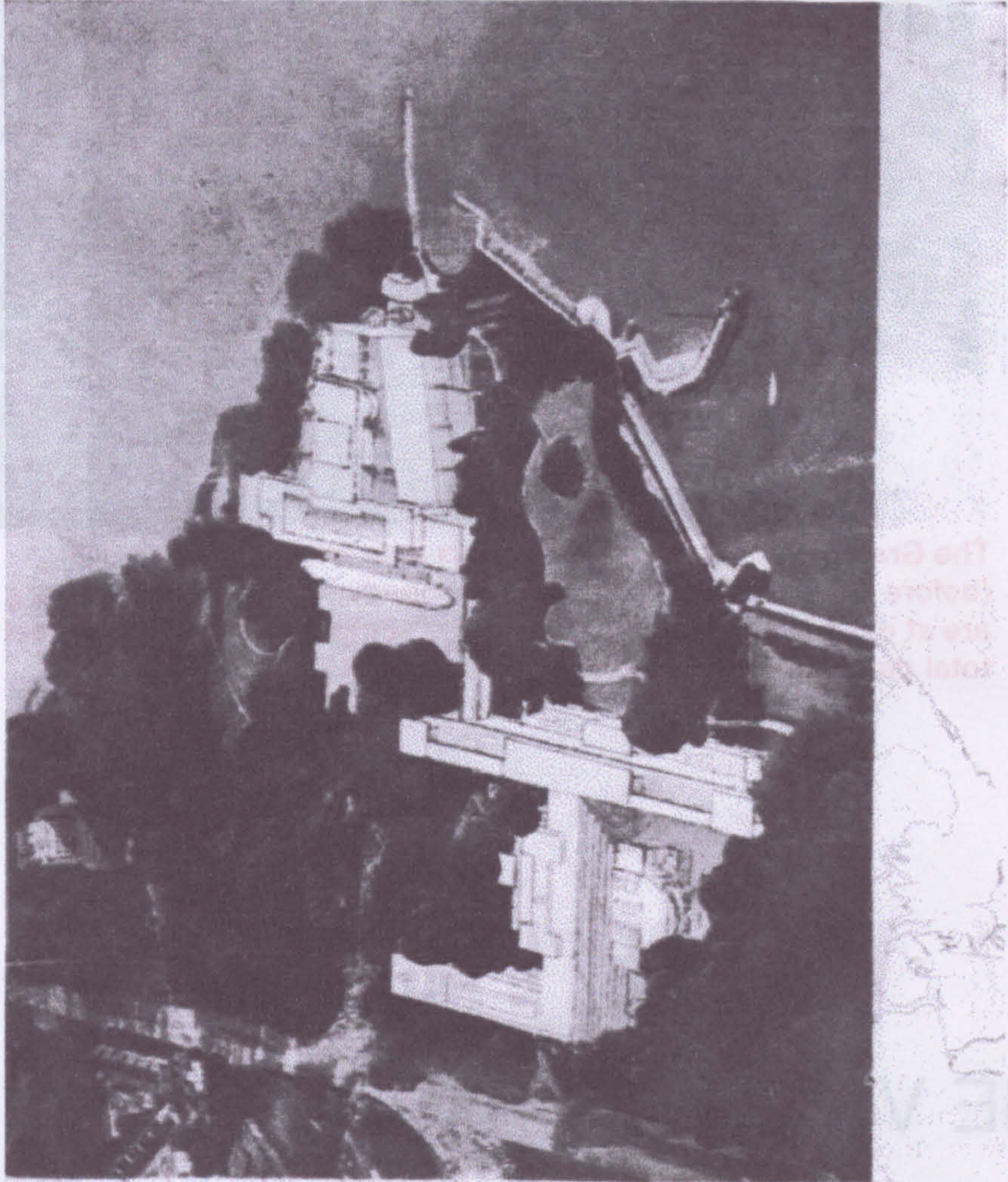
from "palace", in all its hideous, cowardly and demoralising senses!

November 1927

(1) (In the last hour). The architects chosen for the execution [of the project] by the General Secretariat, the Commission of Ambassadors, and the Council of Nations, had delivered to the jury projects which they costed at 13 million francs (basic condition of the competition), but which experts, before the decision, acknowledged must cost 27, 35, 45, and 50, million (francs). These are four academic architects.

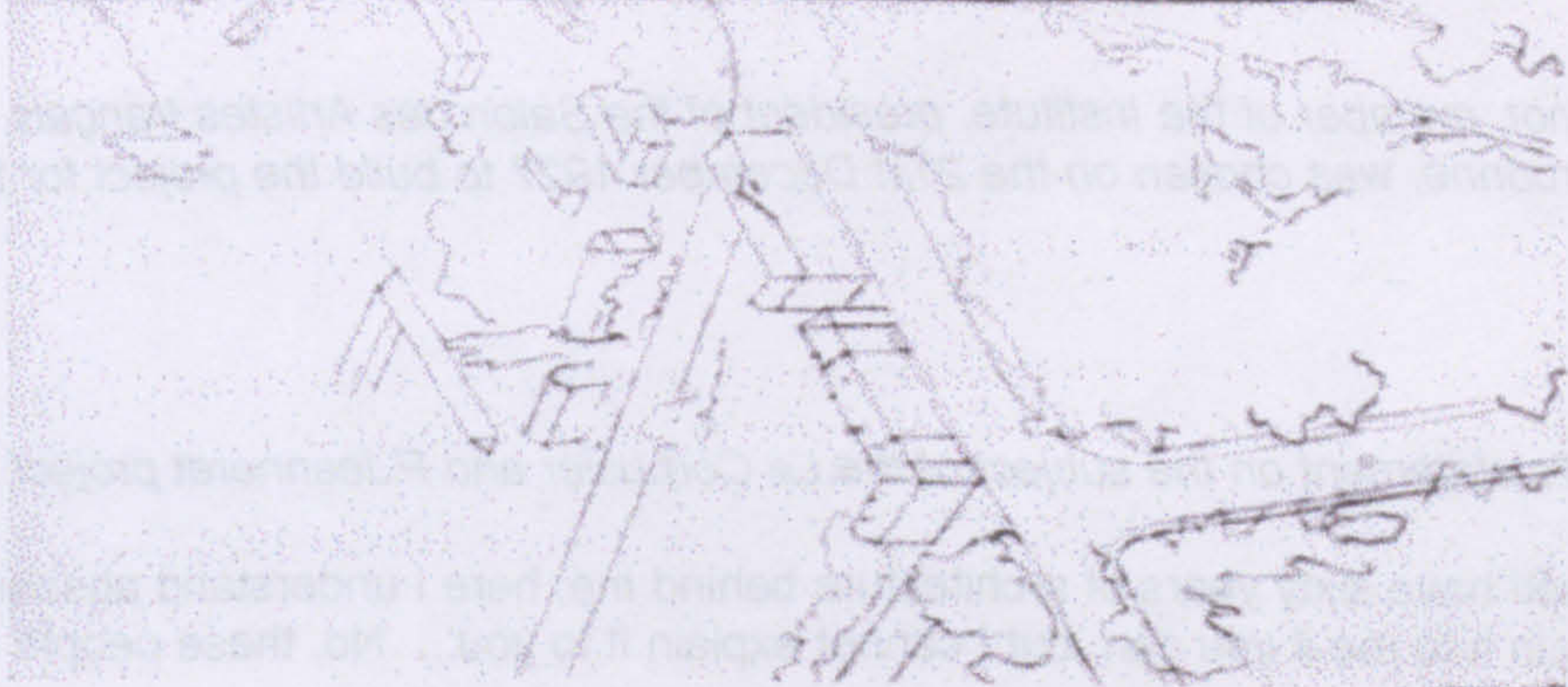


The president's  
little harbour



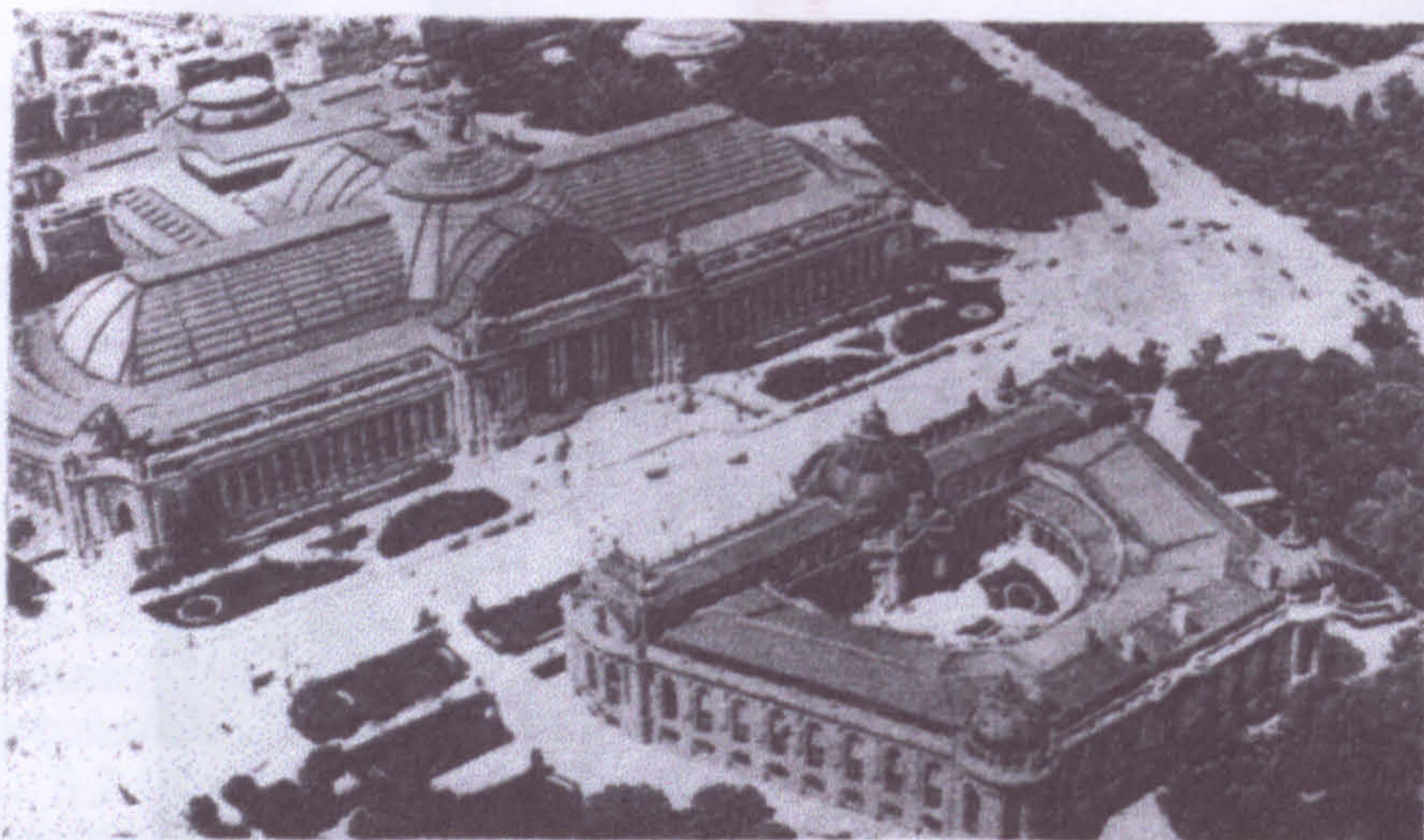
The palace is inserted into the landscape without disturbing it. (And they -the academy- say that the site is too small to hold the palace!!!).

Our proposal for extending the Lausanne road in a straight line to meet Quai Wilson, across Parc Monrepos.



Los Angeles January 1958





**The Grand-Palais, built for the Beaux-Arts exhibitions in 1900 (before flying)... Only the dirigibles, Spads, Goliaths and Fokkers are at ease there. As for painting and sculpture, there is the most total defiance of good sense: it is calamitous!**

## THE VOICE OF THE ACADEMY

*M.Nénot, member of the Institute, president of the Salon des Artistes français, architect of the Sorbonne, was chosen on the 21st December 1927 to build the project for the palace.*

*Nénot's statement on the subject of the Le Corbusier and P.Jeanneret project.*

"I myself have sixty years of architecture behind me; here I understand absolutely nothing. Explain it to me if you can, but I cannot explain it to you... No, these people are barbarians."

*Les Annales, January 1928.*

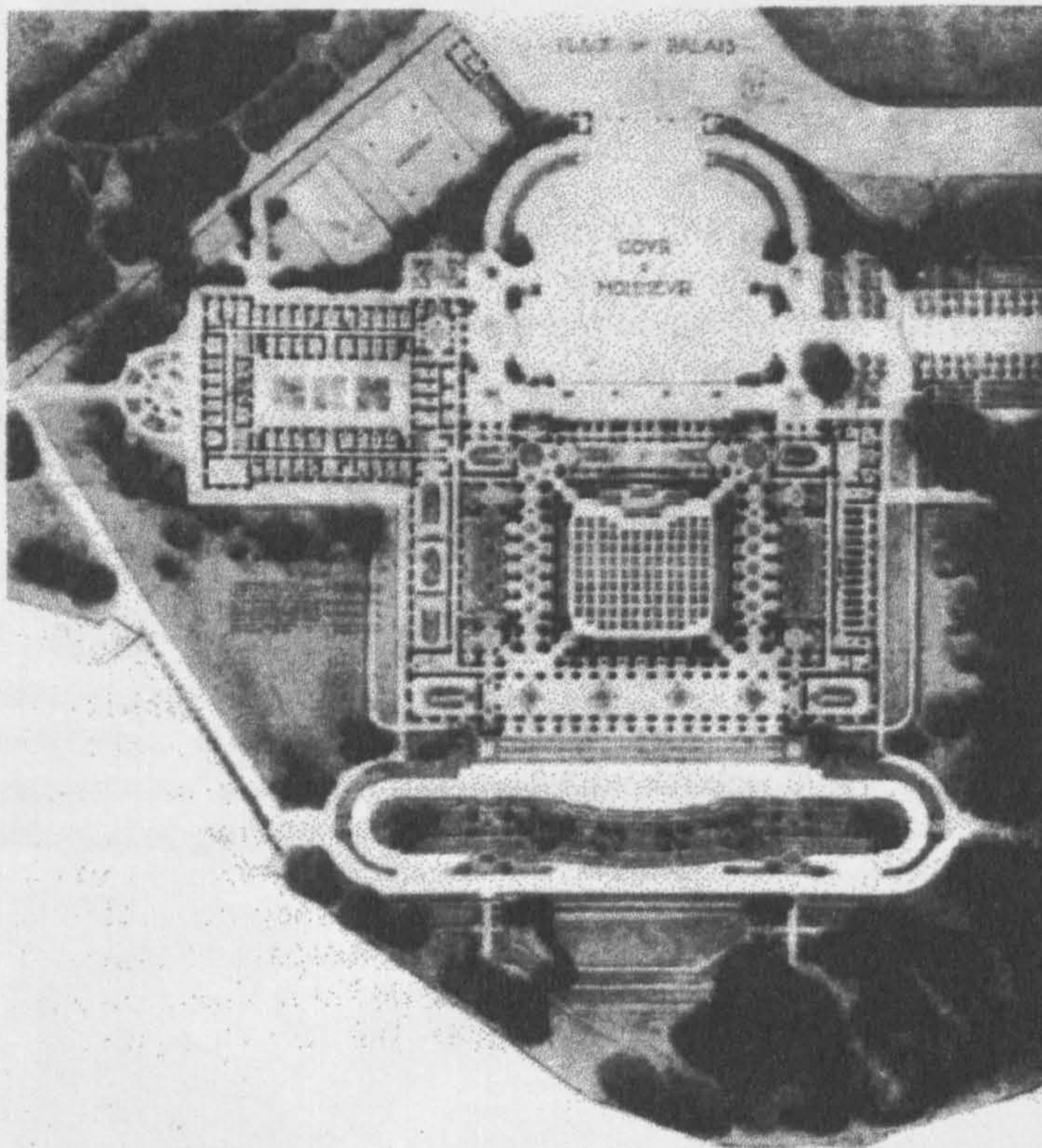


*Interview with M.Nénot (Intransigeant, 18th January, 1928)*

"I am happy simply for art," M.Nénot said to us gaily this morning; "*The goal of the French team, when it was in the running, was to hold Barbarism in check.* What we call Barbarism is a certain architecture, or more exactly, a certain anti-architecture which has been causing an uproar for some years now in Eastern and Northern Europe, no less horrible than the "Coup de Fouet" style<sup>46</sup> which happily we have crushed over the last twenty years. It denies all the belles époques of history, and insults common sense and good taste in every way. *It is defeated, and all is well.*



Le projet NÉNOT (Paris) et FLÉGENHEIMER (Genève) désigné comme base pour l'exécution du Palais.



Le plan à rez-de-chaussée.



La vue du lac.



1. Offices of the Secretariat around an internal court (complaint of the Committee of 5).
2. Anti-acoustic hall.
3. Internal and external circulation insufficient (complaint of the Committee of 5).
4. Four galleries\* instead of one. (Committee of 5)
5. The commissions are scattered (Committee of 5)
6. Confusion between the services of the Secretariat and those of the Assembly (Committee of 5)
7. Insufficient vertical circulation (Committee of 5).
8. The upper woods in the park are obliterated.
9. How, then, are the services of the president of the General Assembly accommodated?

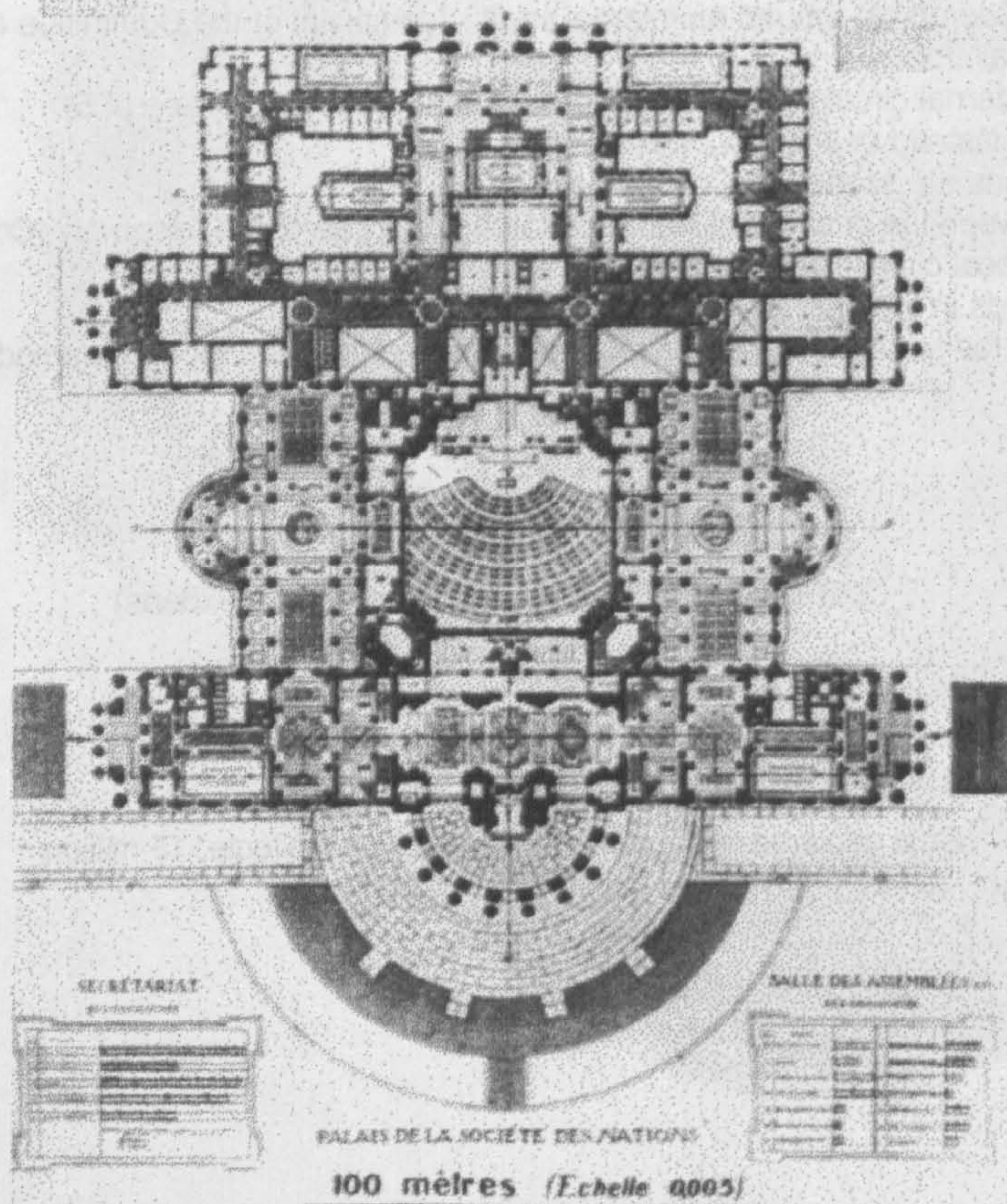
Cost: 27 million Swiss Francs (quoting the experts)  
(135 million French Francs).

Cost declared in the competition by the architects: 13 million  
(65 million French Francs).

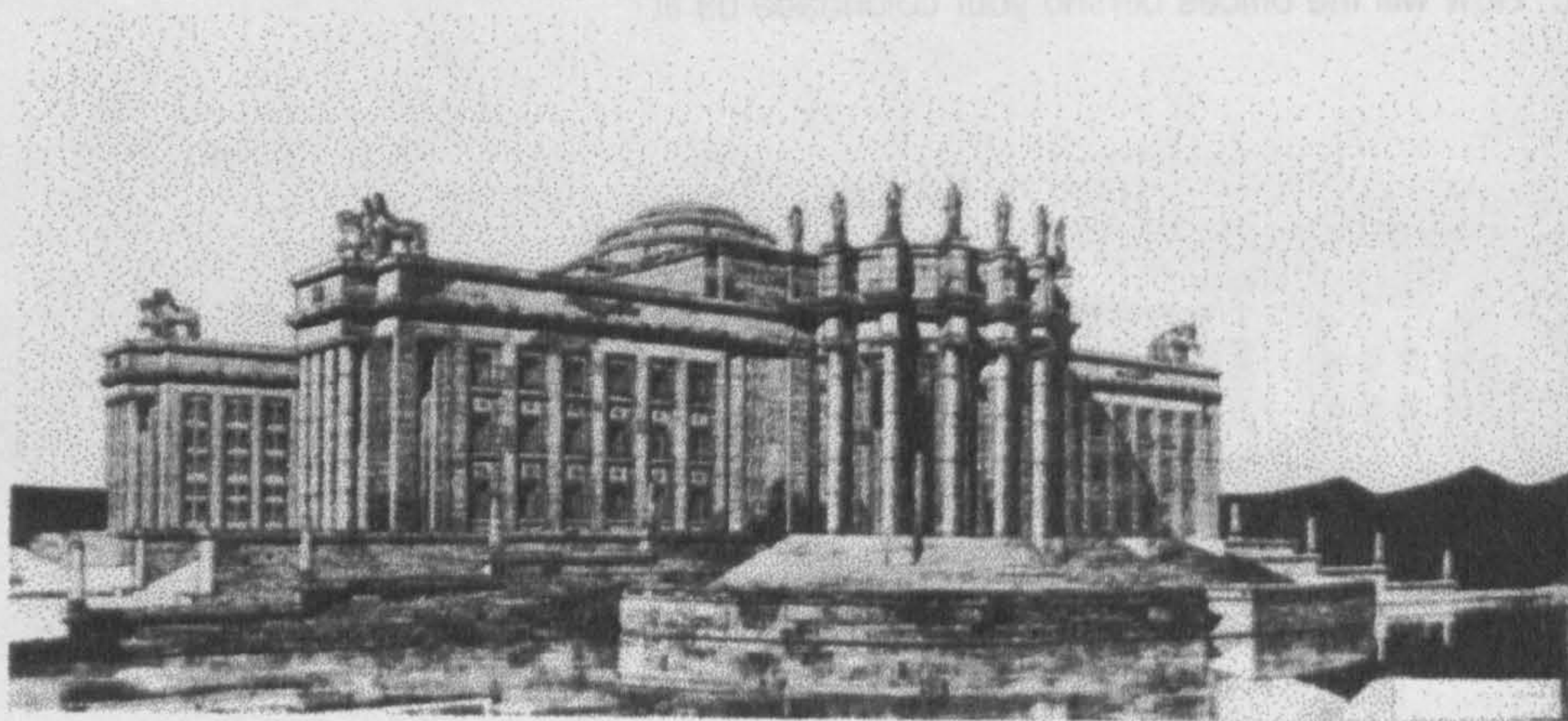
Our columns carried only one thing: the entire Secretariat (see pages 94, 104, etc). We have been condemned for precisely that reason! But the *committee of 5 ambassadors* (only) asked M.Nénot: "How will the offices behind your colonnade be lit?"



Le projet de MM. BROGGI, VACCARO, FRANZI (Rome), architectes désignés pour collaborer avec M. NÉNOT.



Le plan à rez-de-chaussée.



La vue du lac.



1. Nine internal courts for the working halls.
2. Anti-acoustic hall.
3. Where is the internal circulation?
4. Three galleries\*
5. The Commissions are scattered.
6. The vertical circulation?
7. the entire park has been obliterated.

Cost reckoned by the experts:

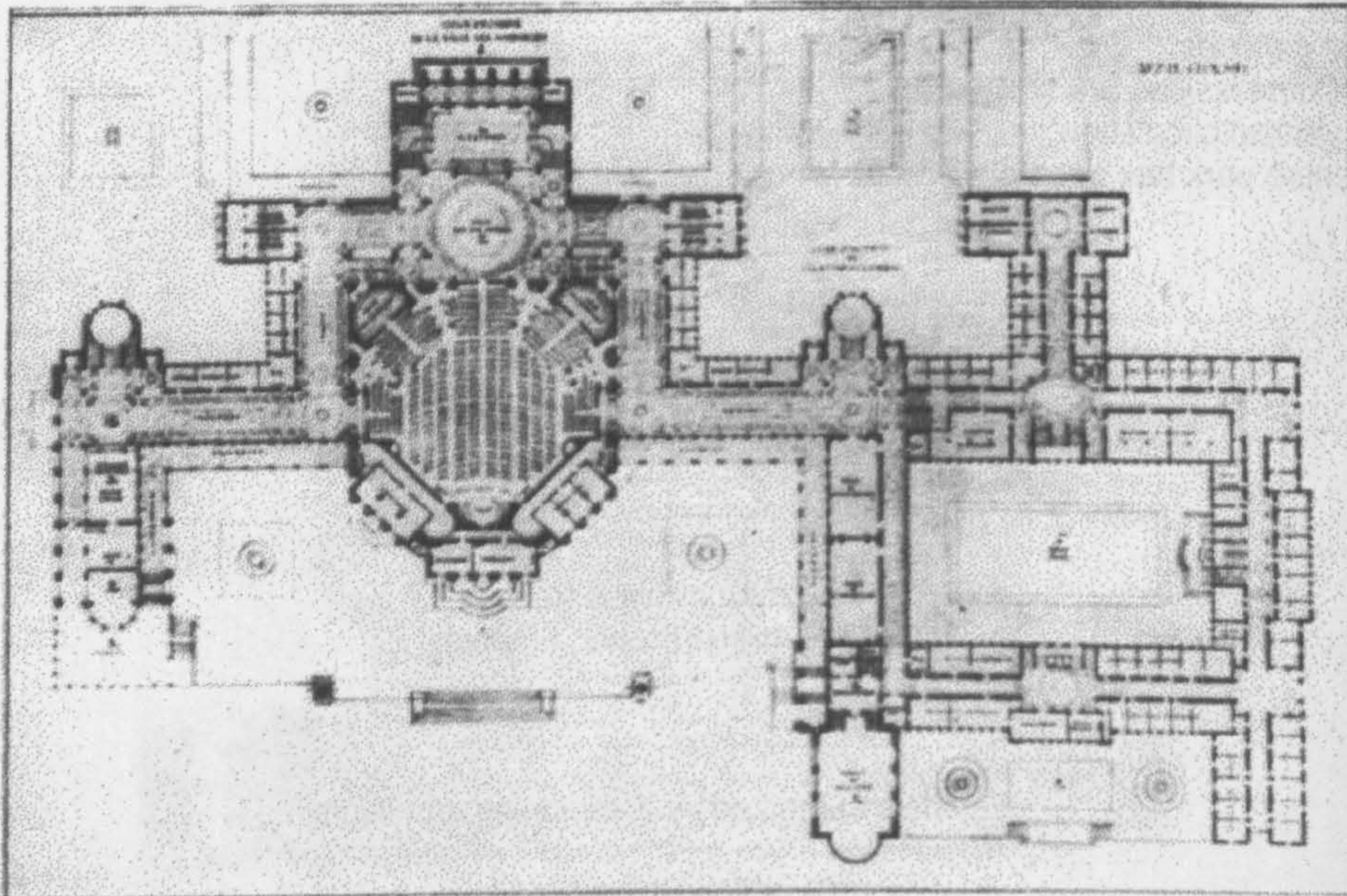
40 million Swiss francs  
(200 million French Francs)

Estimate submitted by the winning architects:

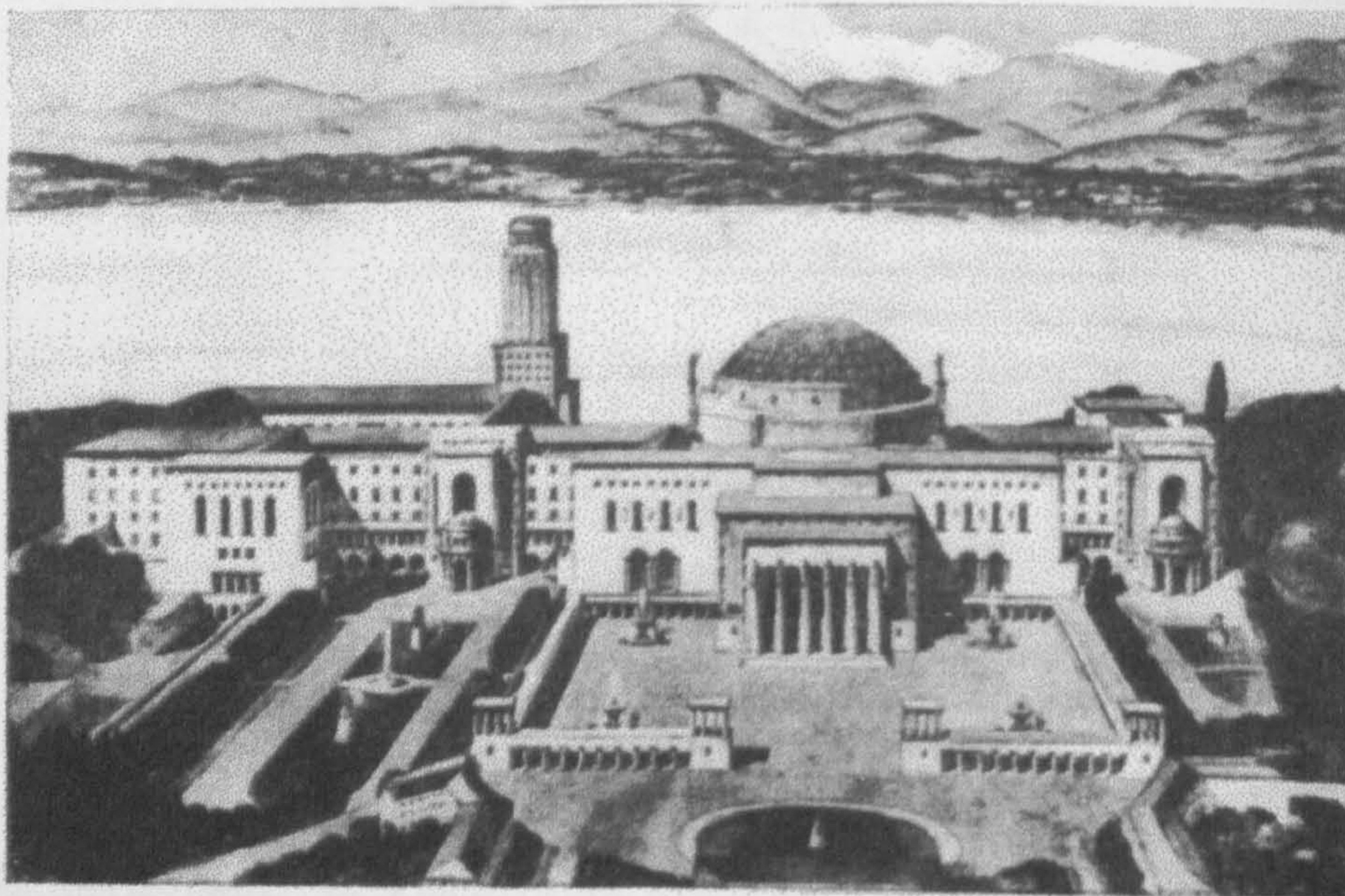
13 million Swiss Francs  
(65 million French Francs).



Projet de M. VAGO (Italie-Hongrie), architecte désigné pour collaborer avec M. NÉNOT.



Plan à rez-de-chaussée.



Vue contre le lac.



1. Anti-acoustic hall
2. The park is devastated.

Cost reckoned by the experts;

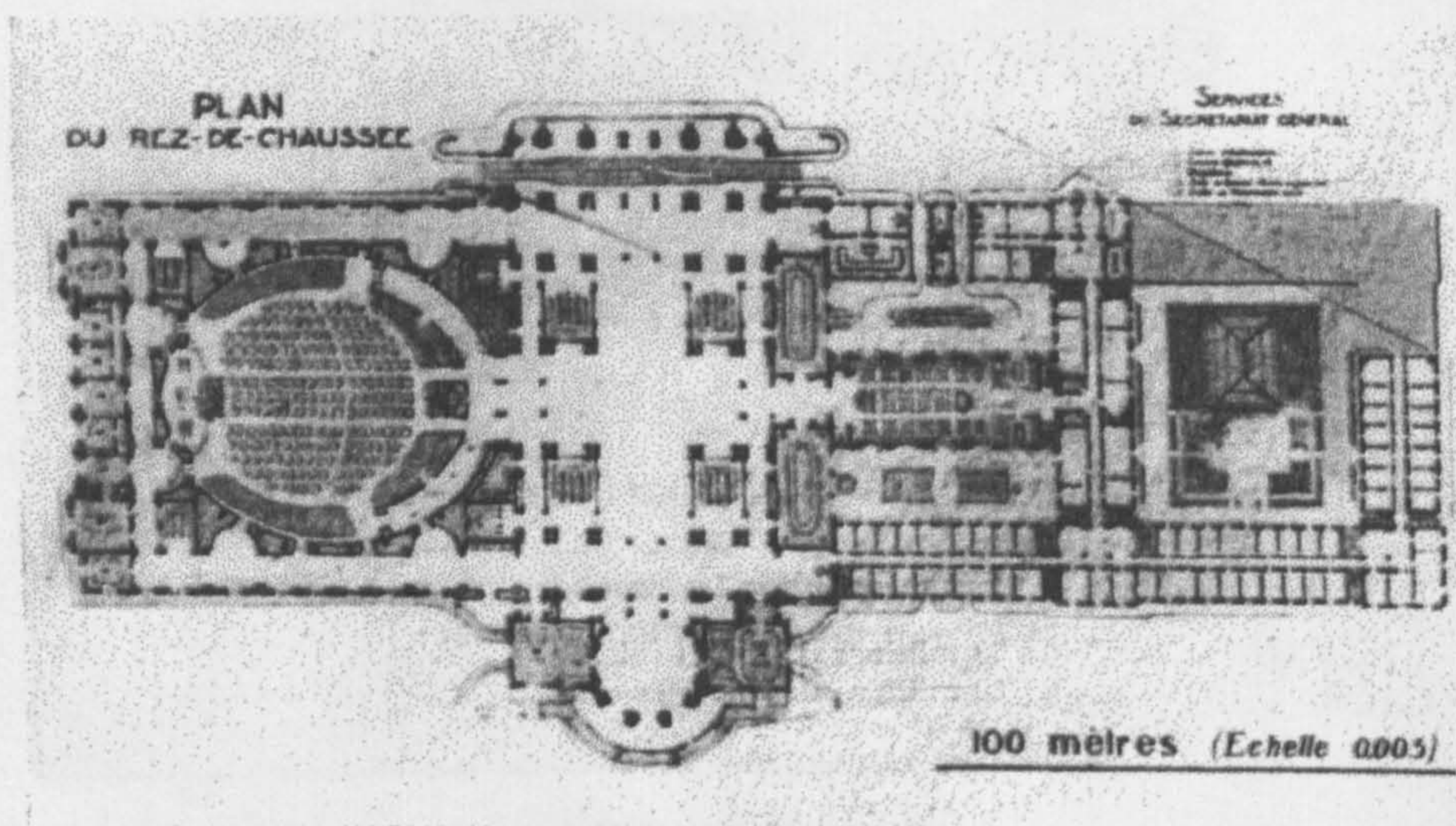
30 million Swiss francs  
(150 million French francs)

Estimate submitted by the architect;

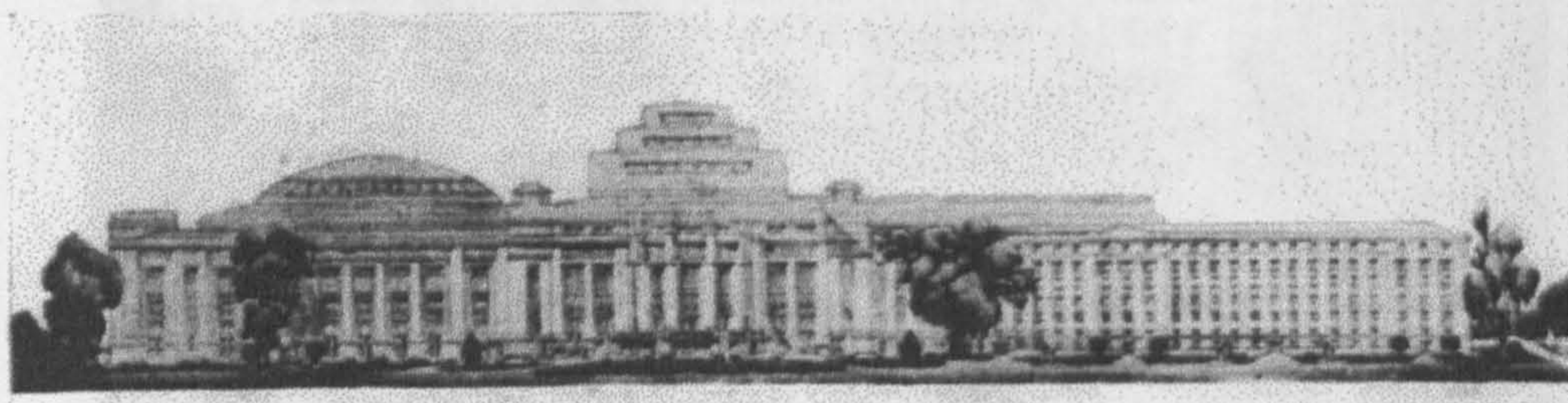
13 million Swiss francs  
(65 million French francs)



Projet de M. Camille LEFEBVRE (Paris), architecte désigné pour collaborer avec M. NÉNOT.



Plan à rez-de-chaussée.



Vue du lac.



1. Anti-acoustic hall
2. The building does not fit on the site (grey part to the right).
3. Circulation: how will the 2600 people attending the General Assembly disembark at the porte cochère? (The cars stop, one at a time, while the others wait).
4. The Grand Commissions are scattered; they open onto narrow internal courts.

cost reckoned by the experts:

50 million Swiss Francs  
250 million French francs

Estimate submitted by the architect:

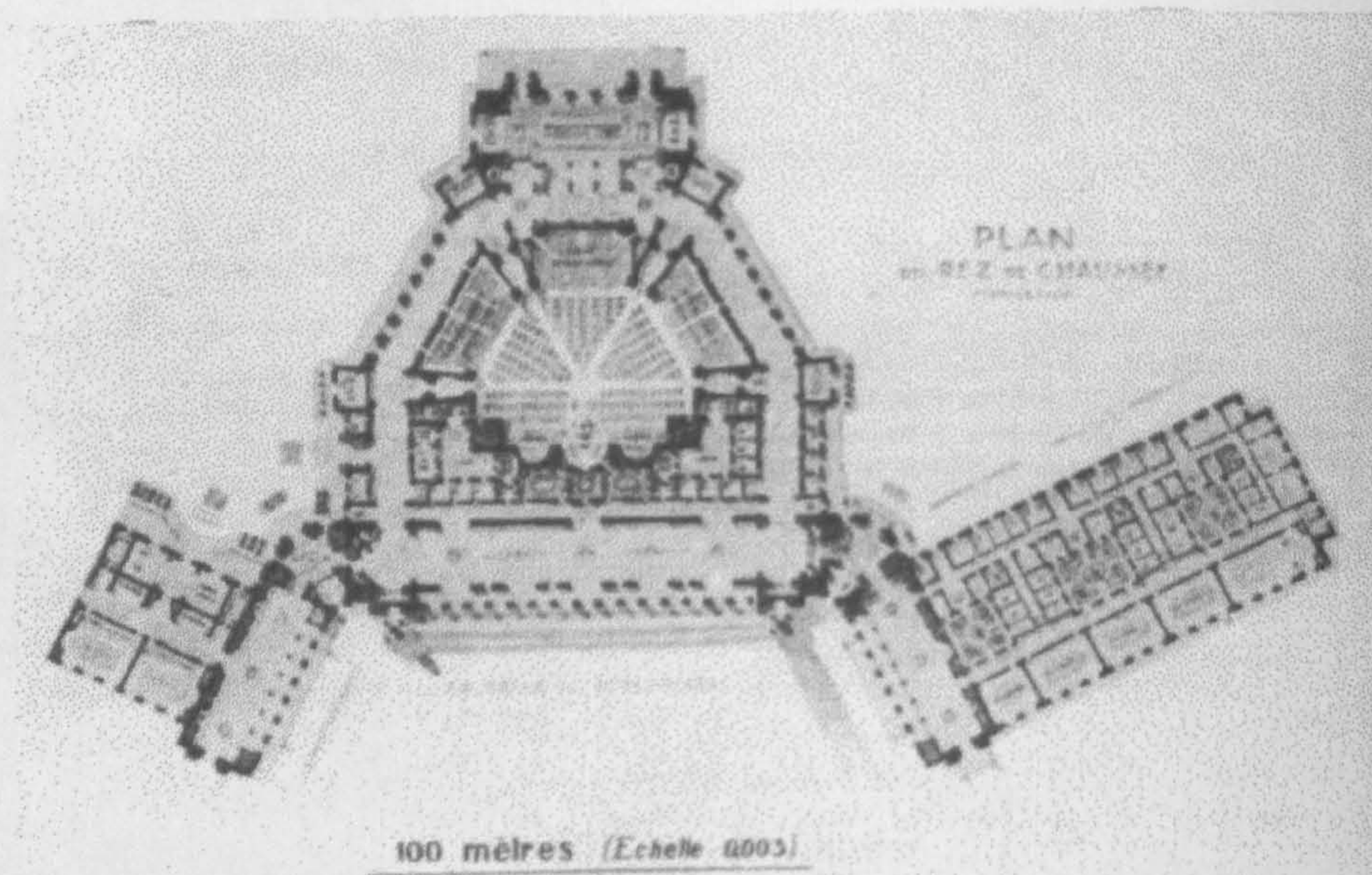
13 million Swiss Francs  
(65 million French francs).

**NOTE:** *competition regulation* **INSTITUTED** by the S.D.N:

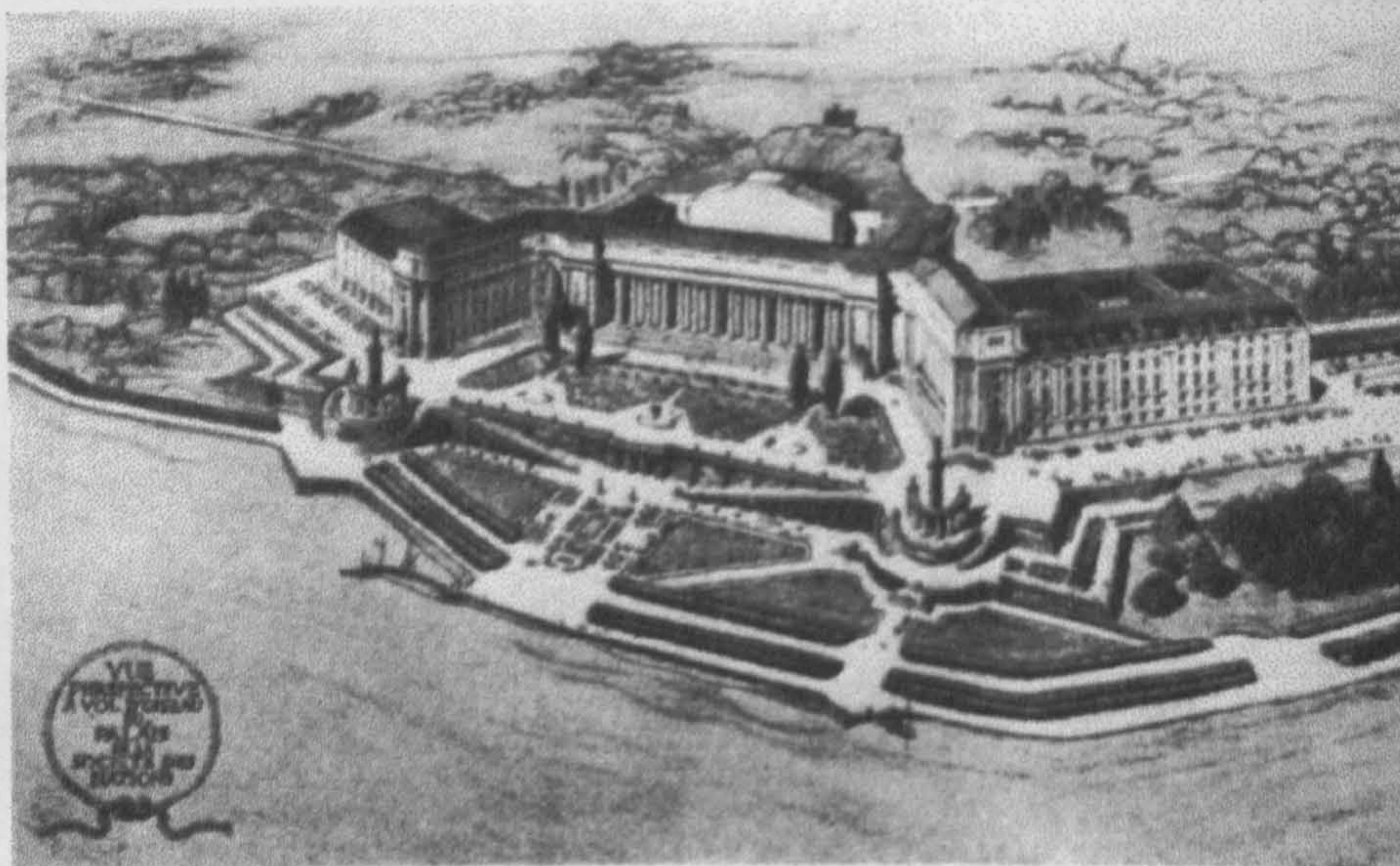
**"The cost of construction, including the architect's fees, should in no case exceed the total sum of 13 million Swiss Francs... no award will be made in respect of any design... if the Jury is of the opinion that the cost of executing such plan would exceed the amount indicated."**



Projet de M. LABRO (Paris), n'a pas été désigné pour collaborer avec M. NÉNOT.



Plan à rez-de-chaussée.



Vue du lac.



He values the pains of study in this layout (with the small courtyards of the commercial block) where the offices fan out.

And the arrangement of the seats in the Great Hall, visibility, acoustics.

By contrast, all these small courtyards have elaborate parterres... which will never sprout in the depths of their black pits.

Cost reckoned by the Experts  
43 million Swiss Francs  
215 million French francs

Estimate submitted by the architect:

13 million Swiss Francs  
65 million French francs

\*M.Labro, the fifth "academic" of the laureates, has not been attached to M.Nénot because he is his pupil, the director of his studio at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts and the direct collaborator of M.Lemaresquier, juror for the competition (producer of the scene in the 63rd session of the jury) who awarded him a prize for this project himself.

NOTE: *the competition rules* state that participation is forbidden to persons associated with, or employed by a member of the jury.



The jury of the competition revealed its verdict, rigged in the 63rd session by one of the classic manoeuvres in such a case.

In place of a first prize which was voted by the relative majority (the four modern jurors, MM. H.P.Berlage, Joseph Hoffmann, Karl Moser, Tengbom), nine equal first prizes were established.

The League of Nations then having recovered its brief from its jury, entrusted the decision to five ambassadors, the appointment of whom was determined on the sole grounds that none of them represented a country having a prize-winner in its ranks.

This serious technical question was then handled in the following manner:

## **LEAGUE OF NATIONS**

### **CONSTRUCTION OF AN ASSEMBLY HALL, A NEW SECRETARIAT BUILDING AND OF A LIBRARY**

#### **REPORT SUBMITTED TO THE COUNCIL BY THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE RESOLUTION OF ASSEMBLY OF 26TH SEPTEMBER 1927**

*As the Council will recall, a special committee was appointed by the Assembly, consisting of M.Adatchi (Japan), president, MM.Osuský (Czechoslovakia), Politis (Greece), Urutia (Columbia) and of Sir Edward Hilton Young (British Empire), to study all the questions relating to the new buildings, and to choose a project.*

*As a consequence of this examination, the committee has asked the Secretariat for supplementary information of a strictly technical kind.*

*At the session held from 19th to 22nd December 1927, the committee proceeded to study these two reports and has also examined a report prepared by the Swiss experts appointed by the federal and Geneva governments. This report has been communicated to the committee by the federal and Cantonal authorities.*

*Having appraised all this documentation and studied the various aspects of the question and having chosen a project from among the nine prizewinners, the committee considered that, in using the power granted it by the resolution of Assembly of suggesting changes, it should be inspired, in view of these changes, by other projects, and consequently, to suggest to the authors of the chosen project, a collaboration with the authors of other projects to establish a revised plan, and also for its construction.*

*Thus the committee has arrived, unanimously, at the following conclusions:-*

*1. The project which, in its opinion, satisfied most of the requirements of a practical and aesthetic order, was that bearing the number 387 and of which the authors were MM. H.P.Nénot and J.Flegenheimer.*



2. Nevertheless, this project presented certain disadvantages which the committee judged it important to remedy. The drawbacks concern the following points:

Relative siting of the hall of Assembly and Secretariat building.  
 Siting of the library;  
 Placement of various services pertaining to the Secretariat in the Hall of Assembly building.  
 Inadequate depots and stores.  
 Inadequate garage and parking facilities for cars,  
 Dimensions of some stairs and lifts;  
 Dimensions or location of Halls of Commissions and of the Council Hall;  
 Modifications to be made to vestibules of various categories;  
 Lighting and general arrangement of the Great Hall;  
 Simplification of the galleries and vestibules surrounding the Great Hall;  
 Inadequate dimensions of certain offices;  
 Arrangement of the kitchen and the offices annexed to the Refreshments Hall;  
 Simplification of the external architecture and harmonisation of the secondary facades of the Assembly Hall and of the Secretariat with the principal facade seen from the lake;  
 Lighting of the halls behind the colonnade;  
 Enlargement of the entrance vestibule to the Secretariat;  
 Lighting of various corridors and the forms of some offices, notably those situated in the corners of the Secretariat building which were of an irregular form and inconvenient.

*The result of the architects' study was submitted to the committee at the time of its 5th session (2nd & 3rd March 1928), accompanied by an explanatory note in which the architects indicated the modifications which were made in response to the desires expressed by the committee, as well as those of which the usefulness became evident as a result of the collective study which they have undertaken.*

*The committee emphasises that the most important modification which figures in the revised project consists in the suppression of the closed court of the Secretariat, which allows it to participate to the greatest possible extent in the beauty of the site.*

*The committee has been unanimous in approving the modified plan, because it corresponds in a general fashion to the needs of the Society of Nations.*

*The authors of the chosen project and their collaborators have been in disagreement on three points, on the subject of which they have asked the committee to decide.*

*These three points are as follows:*



### 1. Hall of Assembly.

*The authors of the chosen project believe it necessary to preserve the square form of the Hall of Assembly originally developed by them.*

*By contrast, their collaborators are of the opinion that it is preferable to adopt a round or oval form.*

### 2. Facade

*The same disagreement exists with respect to the facade which is most suitable, in the revised plan, for the buildings to be constructed.*

*The authors of the chosen project wish to ensure, for the facade of the Hall of Assembly, the greatest possible likeness to the facade they originally proposed.*

*The collaborating architects reckon that there is a place for a new facade study without any such constraints.*

*On these three points the committee has reached the following decision:*

*1. Having studied attentively the argument developed by both sides, the committee has very clearly decided in favour of an oval or round form, which it considers will respond to most of the needs for which this hall is destined.*

*2. As for the facade, the committee judges that the elements of the chosen project preserved in the revised plan are no longer in harmony with the new composition of the general plan. Consequently, it decides to give the architects complete freedom to plan for a new study for the facade, without necessarily being obliged to preserve the architectural motifs of the chosen plan.*

\*  
\*   \*

During the ten months which elapsed between this verdict of the *five ambassadors* and that of the jury, the question of the palace has been in the news in every country. Great debates of a technical kind in the professional world. Most particularly the question of acoustics is touched on by specialists and the S.d.N. is not unaware of this. But a ghastly confusion reigns in Geneva. The *fourteen kilometres* of plans *have been stored in cases for a long time*. Each project consists of thirty or forty metres of plans. Contrarily, the S.d.N. has edited an *album* of the competition without delay; only the winning projects have been reproduced, but in a very characteristic manner: neither *plans nor sections* (this is too boring!) but *only perspectives displaying the facades and a single plan of the ground floor (in each case)*.

Therefore we take issue with the General Assembly over the illustrations.

Then I suggested to M.Loucheur, who was sitting on the Council: "That the



*Committee of Five*, which is not a professional body, summon each of the nine winning architects; put a piece of chalk in his hand, and say to him: Here is a blackboard; do you wish to explain your project, its general economy, its circulation, its classifications, its acoustics, its cost, its construction methods, etc."

M.Loucheur replied to me: "Here is the first intelligent idea in all the bedlam of the competition. I will see to it."

Alas, it was not to be.

\*  
\*   \*   \*

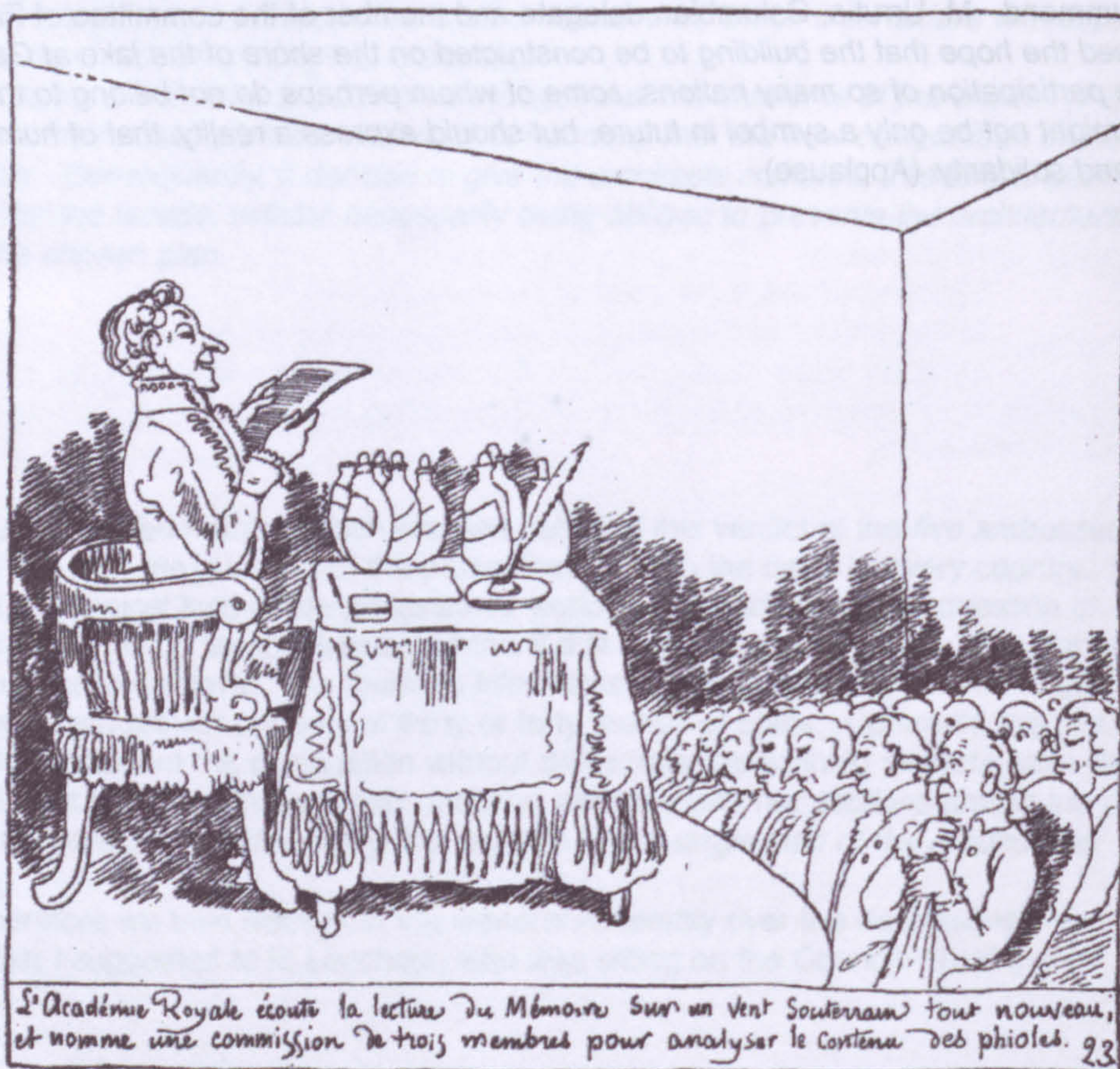
On the fifth of March 1928, then, the report of the five ambassadors was accepted by the Council of Nations after a discussion between MM.Briand, Scialoja, Adatchi and Sir Eric Drummond. M. Urrutia, Columbian delegate and member of the committee of Five, *expressed the hope that the building to be constructed on the shore of the lake at Geneva with the participation of so many nations, some of whom perhaps do not belong to the S.d.N., might not be only a symbol in future, but should express a reality, that of human peace and solidarity.* (Applause).

\*  
\*   \*   \*



**A precedent... around 1830.  
(Drawing by F. Topper (a  
Genevois),  
"Story of M. Pensil")**

Un précédent... autour de 1830.  
(Dessin de F. Töpfer (Genevois),  
« Histoire de M. Pensil »).



**The Royal Academy listens to the Memorial lecture on an entirely new subteranean wind, and appoints a commission of three members to analyse the contents of the vials.**





The commission proceeds to analyse the contents.

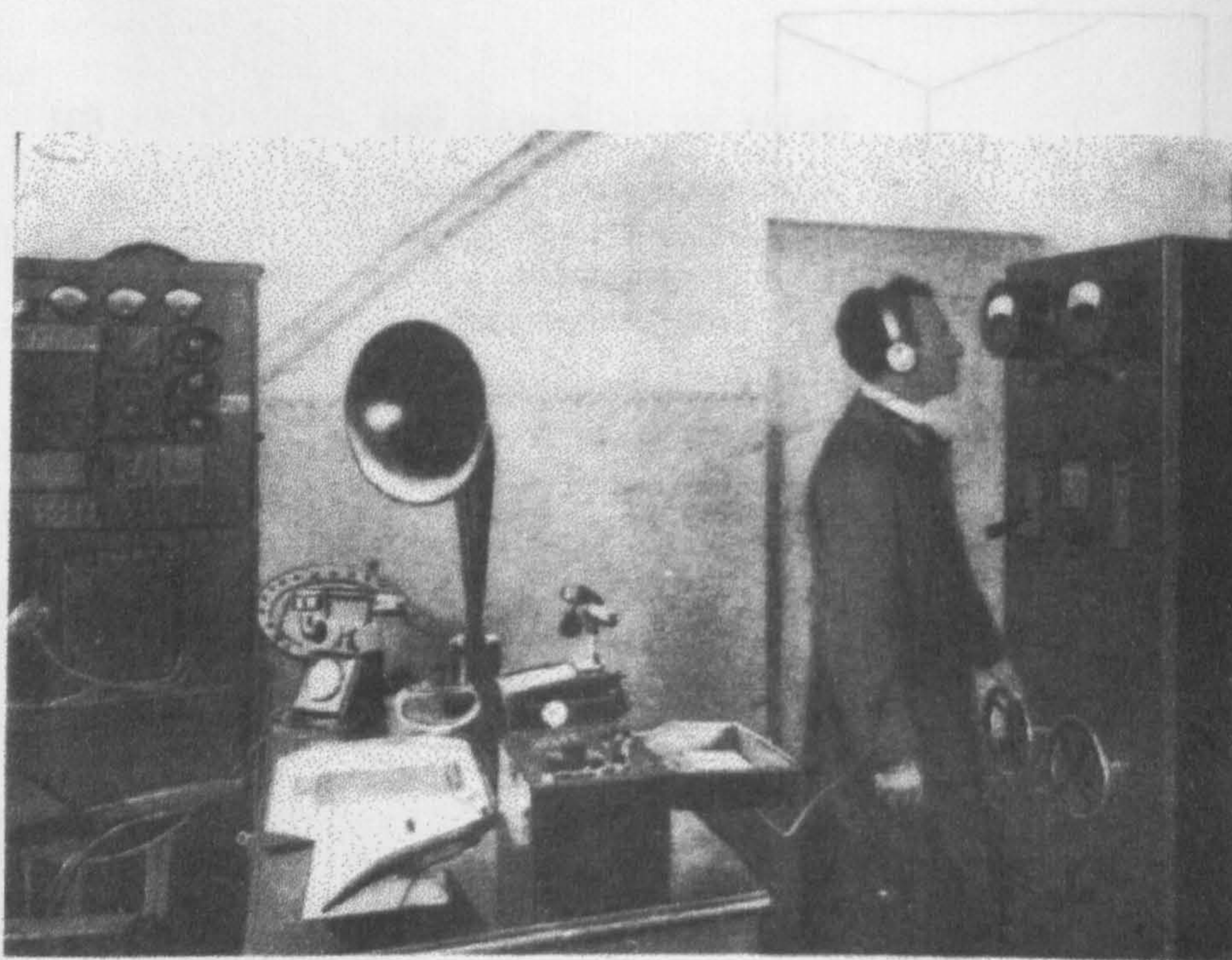


On releasing the gas, there is an atrocious smell



And very lively explanations





## VOICES FROM THE TOMB

From what appeared, to *sensitive* beings, the social upheaval provoked by machinism, voices made to be heard, -a long time ago! 1816; 1849; 1878; 1889... Words in the desert? Not as much as that!

Because the entire world follows its destiny, and today, the prophetic words are fact.(1)

(1) Here are some fundamental documents recovered from libraries by M.Giedion who is about to publish a significant book: *Bauen in Frankreich, XIX und XX Jahrhunderte*, published by Biermann u. Klinkhardt, Berlin.



**1816. RONDELET :** "Speech for the opening of L'Ecole spéciale d'architecture."  
(Jean Rondelet 1743-1829, pupil of Soufflot, the architect of the Panthéon.)

One of the principal causes which renders our manner of building so costly, is the inexperience of those who have neglected the study of construction in order to devote themselves exclusively to decoration.

The essential goal of architecture is to construct solid buildings, there employing the correct quantity of the chosen material, implemented with art and economy.

**1849. JOBARD,** director of the Museum of Belgian Industry.

Great architectonic revolutions have always followed great social revolutions.

A new architecture, a new style, which extricates us from the sterility and from the servility of the copy, this is what each demands.

As it is in great geological epochs, so in great architectural epochs: a new race of plants or of animals appears only after the disappearance of the old...

It will be the same in architecture: our ancient stone-engraving pontiff-race will have to pass away like those mastodons and plesiosaurs to make room for the new species of iron-worker artists who will not retain any of the traditional prejudice of the old school...

Every thinker might take the trouble today to cast a glance at his past, and recall the reception accorded to his projects, his proposals, his inventions, and to his ideas, the most exact, the most useful, the most generous; he will see that *all have nevertheless been ridiculed and buried by the men of power and their henchmen of the press of the high lists.*

By their example, the legislator, the financier, the magistrate and the whole class of self-satisfied men proceeded as a single man to the smothering of new truths and to the systematic throat-cutting of all the inventions...

Glass is called to play a great role in iron and steel architecture; instead of those thick walls pierced by great holes which diminish solidity and safety, our houses will be studied with elegant and numerous openings which will render them permeable to light. These omniform openings, garnished with thick glasses, single or double, translucent or frosted, white or coloured as desired, will have a magical effect internally during the day and externally during the night through the play of light...



**1878. DAVIOUD, architect of the Trocadero**

Agreement will not become real, complete, fruitful, until the day that the architect and the engineer, the artist and the scientist will be merged in the same person...

A multiplicity of understanding, far from harming the development of the art as those narrow and routine spirits insist, is, on the contrary, the necessary condition for this development...

But prejudice is tenacious. We have lived for a long time, for centuries, foolishly persuaded that art is a kind of entity distinct from all other forms of human intelligence, absolutely independent, having its source and the unique elements of its development in the fantastic and capricious imagination of the artist himself.

**1889. Anatole DE BAUDET**

Our age gives us the elements of a creative force, and like the Greek and the Gothic, we must possess a modern aesthetice and not content ourselves with proceeding like those secondary ages, in applying to unrelated structures a decoration of orders and forms borrowed from the past.

Today, the social and scientific transformation is made, the new programmes are well defined, art must be transformed. After forty years progress has been made in construction and in certain practical solutions, but the artistic question remains in its entirety.

Also, for a long time now, the influence of the architect has been weakened and the engineer, the modern man par excellence, tends to take his place.

The harm comes from this: that the architect has lingered over the application of forms, instead of playing a vital part by modernising his solutions; he has accepted the role of decorator.

**1889. OCTAVE MIRBEAU (Le Figaro)**

While art searches for intimism or lingers with old formulas, at a standstill, embarrassed and timid, its gaze turned again towards the past, industry marches to the fore, explores the unknown, conquering forms. This is characteristic, industry is nearer to modern beauty than art.

It is not in the studios of painters and sculptors that the revolution so often predicted and so much desired, is prepared, but in the factories. Forms arise under the harsh hammer of the manufacturers of iron. Neither Bramante nor Michelangelo would build St Peters in Rome nowadays, but M.Dutert (architect of the Galerie des Machines 1889) and M.Eiffel. These two colossal embryos- the Galerie des Machines and the tower, are going to leave a splendid art and one which is lacking in our century: architecture!



1889. VIOLLET LE DUC

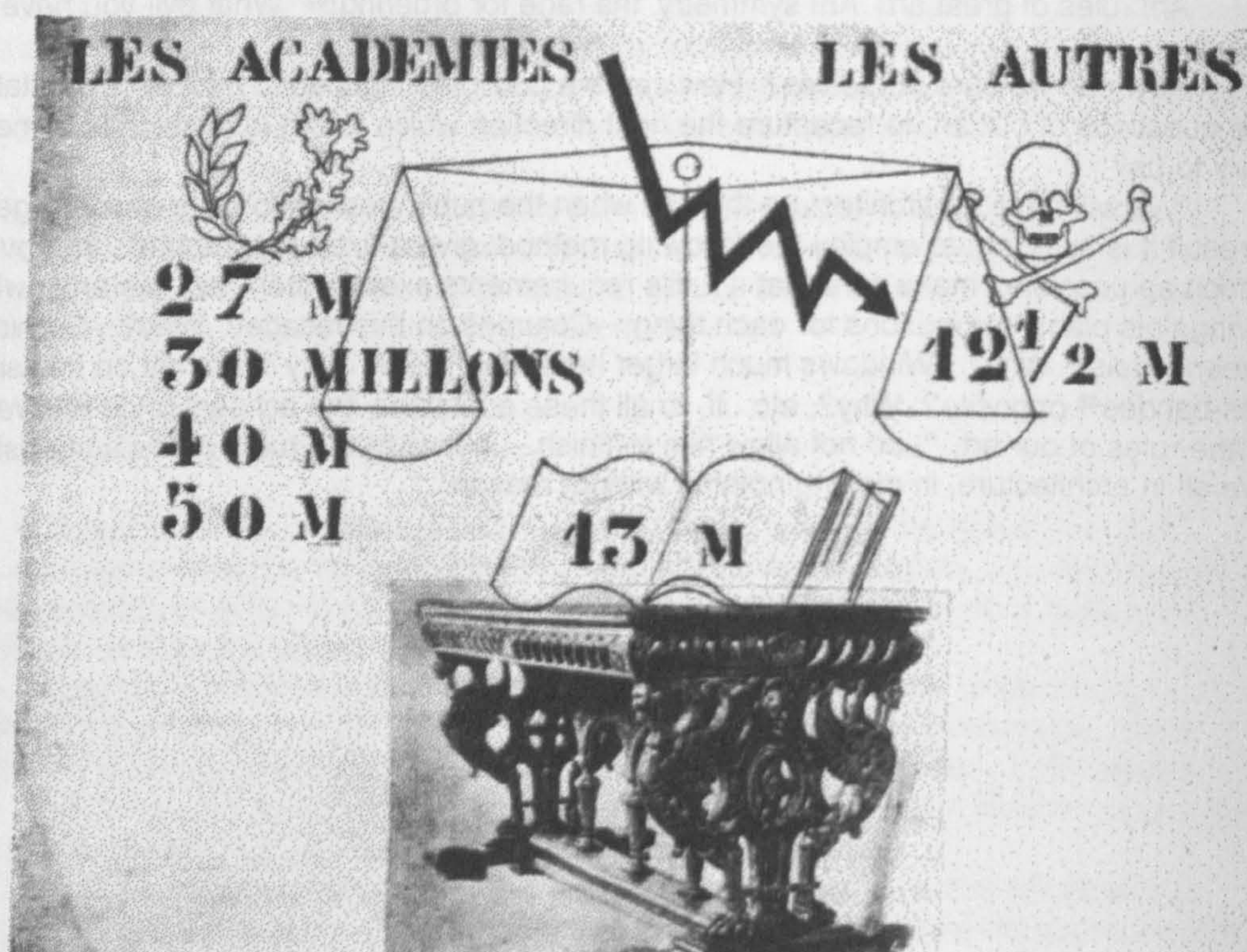
Ah! rules of great art! Ah! symmetry, the rage for ordering!<sup>47</sup> What evil you have done us!

How can we cure ourselves? How can the public be induced to intervene profitably in the questions of our art, to recapture the right direction which is lost and which is so necessary to us?

"We will have an architecture the day when the public wishes to have one. To get this result it is sufficient to employ the following method: give a fixed programme, improve it as much as possible, make sure that it fulfils requirements exactly, then ask the artist when he brings his plans, for reasons for each thing. -Columns on this facade? Why? -Cornices between levels? Why? -Windows much larger here than there? Why? -Arches on this side, plates-bandes<sup>48</sup> opposite? Why?, etc. If, to all these questions, the architect once answers you "the rules of our art...", do not allow him to finish..., because the rules of the art consist above all in architecture, in making nothing without reason..."

. . . . .  
. . . . .  
. . . . .





## THE WAY OF THE S.D.N.

*I have undertaken the publication of the following documents which appear as a plea pro domo, for a compelling reason; the battle over the palace has been one of extreme violence; it has inflamed opinion. We were at a turning point: epoch which kills or new era? The epoch which kills - the Academies - have acted with force, a twilight burst. The Academies, tactically, were at the centre, listened to by governments which fed and protected them. Public opinion was disseminated in all countries; it showed itself, but it was not listened to at all. The diplomatic world holds firmly to gilded panelling (ever since then). The Governmental powers of the Republics and of constitutional kingdoms wish to rely on such splendours.*

*The reason for these documents, at the end of this book which deal with the question entirely disinterestedly, is to reveal that, in high places, a sense of progress is at times so... peculiar<sup>49</sup>, that so total is the confusion on the subject of the spirit of tradition, that law, simple law, is no longer law and that above all, passion is blinding.*



## Document 1<sup>50</sup>

*From the 1st to the 21st June 1928, Galerie Georges Bernheim, 109 Faubourg Saint-Honoré, exhibition of the project for the Palace of Nations by Le Corbusier and P. Jeanneret.*

### WHAT THE PUBLIC DO NOT KNOW ABOUT THE PROJECT FOR THE PALACE OF NATIONS BY LE CORBUSIER AND P. JEANNERET

**May 1927.** -By a relative majority, the jury of *professionals* choose this project for the first prize and to be built (out of 377 projects which represented some 14 kilometres of drawings).

**At the 63rd session** of the jury, M. Lesmaresquier (French juror assigned by the Academy) *threw out this project using the pretext that it had been reproduced by mechanical means* (instead of being hand-drawn in ink).

Nine equal prizes were then awarded, each juror selecting a winner. Result: an incongruous mixture of five academic and four modern projects - reflecting the exact composition of the jury.

**June 1927.** -Public exhibition of the projects, at Geneva. General interest is concentrated on this project by L.C. and P.J. because it represents the modern spirit (innumerable articles in newspapers and magazines).

**September 1927.** -General Assembly of Nations. Dramatic turn of events. The Assembly decides, prior to all choice, to raise the allocated budget by 50%. Protests by the professional associations against this *breach of contract*. *Thus the struggle begins between the Academy and the modern spirit.*

Only the project by L.C. and P.J. did not exceed the allowed budget of 13 million French francs (condition *sine qua non* of the competition).

The four academic projects cost 27 million, 40 million, 45 million, 50 million; their authors claimed 13 million, but experts have denounced this lie. The new budget (19 1/2), finally raised to 24 million, will allow consideration of the academic projects.

The arbitrary reigns: five *ambassadors* are charged by the Assembly of Nations with choosing the project for construction *according to a precise mandate*, cost of the construction and functional efficiency.

*The technical experts consulted* by the the ambassadors selected the project of L.C. and P.J. : the czechoslovakian expert, the Swiss federal government expert, the Geneva government expert.

**27 December 1927.** -the *ambassadors* do not select a *project* but an *architect*: M. Nénot, member of the institute and president of the Salon des Artistes Français (27 million) and attached to him three academic collaborators: MM. Broggi (Italian) 40m., Vago Italo-Hungarian) 35m., Lefebvre (French) 50m.

World protest against this second breach of contract: by the professional associations of Switzerland, Czechoslovakia, Holland, France, Sweden, Denmark, Germany, Austria, etc.;

The most renowned technical personalities in France, Germany, America, Scandinavia, Switzerland, etc.,



Appeal by the chiefs of the Redressement Français, to the world elite;

Innumerable admonishments<sup>51</sup> addressed to the S.D.N. by the world press and in journals.

L.C. and P.J. send to the S.D.N. council a request drawn up by M. Prudhomme, advocate to the Court, professor of Law, *demanding the nullification of the verdict of the ambassadors*. This request limits its arguments to flagrant *offences of a purely legal order*, committed by the S.D.N. in the affair of the palace.

5 March 1928. -the *Council of Nations* meets. The petition<sup>52</sup> addressed to it is not delivered by Sir Eric Drummond, Secretary General of the S.D.N. (25 copies of the petition, printed on 30 pages, sent as advised).

The Council confirms the decision of the ambassadors: *four architectural practices are charged with producing the definitive plan for the palace according to a brief which has nothing in common with the competition projects of these four studios. On the contrary, the new programme is directly inspired by the project by L.C. and P.J.* One of the ambassadors declared: "The project of L.C. and P.J. will be very useful to us in the construction of the new palace."

The *Secretary-General* has not thought it expedient to indicate receipt of the petition from M. Prudhomme. This is sent again to the council of Nations for the June session.

However, one month later, in response to a letter registered by M. Prudhomme, the general Secretariat at Geneva informed him that the S.D.N. takes cognisance only of the affairs of nations and not those of individuals(!).

The petition was the first legal case brought against the S.D.N. since its foundation. No jurisdiction exists which may judge the S.D.N., supreme organ of human justice. This case arouses a lively interest in judicial circles. What could the sequel be to such a petition?

One personality, confused about the affair of the competition, right from the beginning, has declared: "This competition was fixed from the beginning; the Academy was selected for the building works; the competition was only a front. Further, national ambitions are being violently displayed, they have settled on the compromise of four architects to satisfy political appetites. They have selected the country and the architects of the Academy, *and not one of the projects of the competition*. (The farce of the competition has cost the 377 entrants more than 20 million francs!). In important articles the great world press has labeled the manoeuvre: "The Palace Scandal".

The projects have never been discussed objectively, *except by the jury of professionals* and afterwards by the experts. Because the projects (each consisting of 30 to 40 metres of plans) were in cases.

They have, behind the screen of brief press releases, made a secret diplomacy: 4 academic architects are selected; 4 modern architects are excluded. The fifth academic architect (M. Labro) could not decently be admitted, as a consequence of his relations with M. Lemareshquier, architect of the Nouveau Cercle Militaire de Paris, competition juror, and author of that incident (63rd session of the jury) which allowed the academy to triumph thereafter, and the Modern spirit to be vanquished.

The exhibition of the project of L.C. and P.J. will allow those interested in the architectural question to study this project for the palace, of which so much has been said, and which people, in a manner of speaking, have never seen.



**Document 2**

*A.M. TCHENG LOH,  
Chinese Ambassador in Paris,  
President of Council of the League of Nations*

*Mr President,*

*I have the honour to present, in the name of my clients, MM. Le Corbusier and P. Jeanneret, the enclosed request which they address to the Council of the League of Nations, to whom the decision taken by the committee responsible in accordance with the resolution of the Assembly, on 26th September 1927, for choosing a project for the construction of the building of the League of Nations in Geneva, must be submitted for ratification.*

*I respectfully urge you to please refer this petition to the council before it takes a decision on the subject of the proposal which will be presented to it by the committee. My clients remain at the disposal of the council to present to it any clarifications that might be thought necessary.*

*I remain, Mr President, sir....*

*André PRUDHOMME,  
Advocate to the Paris Court,  
Full Professor of the Law Faculty,  
3, rue George-Ville, Paris (XVIth)*



**PETITION**  
**addressed to the PRESIDENT**  
**and to the Honorable MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL**  
**of the LEAGUE OF NATIONS**  
**by MM.LE CORBUSIER and P.JEANNERET**

The undersigned, Le Corbusier and P.Jeanneret, architects in Paris, holders of a prize in the competition opened for the construction in Geneva of a building for the League of Nations, respectfully petition the President and the honorable members of the Council of the League of Nations, not to ratify the decision of the 22nd December 1927, taken by the committee entrusted, according to the 26th September 1927 resolution of Assembly, to choose from among the winning projects of the competition, the one which satisfied most requirements of a practical and aesthetic order.

They respectfully direct the Council's attention to the following demonstration of the grounds of their petition, based on considerations of fact and on the following law:

I

*1. The competition programme*

In the month of March 1926, an extraordinary Assembly of the League of Nations decided to open a competition for the choice of a project with a view to constructing a palace for the League of Nations by the shores of Lake Geneva. A jury composed of nine members assisted by nine deputies, chosen from among the greatest architects in Europe, was entrusted with:

- a) developing the competition programme;
- b) examining the projects and choose those which might best answer the requirements of the programme and which might be considered most satisfactory from a practical and artistic point of view;
- c) determining prizewinners and commendations;
- d) deciding whether the competition had produced results which permitted any recommendation to build a project;
- e) producing a report which would be published and communicated to all the member states of the League of Nations by the Secretary General;
- f) ensuring the anonymity of the competition<sup>1\*</sup>.

On the 17th April 1926, the programme and rules for the competition were published. The candidates were asked to conceive a monument in a pure style, with harmonious lines, grouping in a practical manner all the essential organisms necessary for the functioning of the League of Nations, integrating them into the grand and beautiful setting offered by the position chosen on the shores of the lake, facing the Mont Blanc Massif.<sup>2\*</sup>

It was specified that the cost of construction, including the architects' fees, should in no case exceed the overall sum of 13 million Swiss Francs. This price was to include all general installations<sup>3\*</sup>. No award would be made in respect of any project if it was incomplete, if it had not satisfied the conditions of the programme, or if the jury was of the opinion that the cost of construction had exceeded the amount indicated<sup>4\*</sup>.

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1\* Programme, p28

2\* Programme, p7

3\* Programme, p16

4\* Programme, p22



The programme envisaged that a sum of 165.000 Swiss Francs "will be placed at the Jury's disposal for awards in respect of those designs which it considers the best."<sup>5\*</sup> It foresaw the distribution of 140.000 Swiss Francs between eight competitors as follows: a first prize of 30,000 francs, two second prizes of 25.000 francs each, a third prize of 20.000 francs, fourth and fifth prizes of 15.000 francs each, sixth and seventh prizes of 5000 francs each. The remaining 25.000 francs were at the jury's disposal to be distributed as honorable mentions of 2.500 francs or less, to the best of the projects which had not won prizes. It was foreseen that if certain prizes were not awarded, the sums involved would be distributed as supplementary awards<sup>6\*</sup>.

Finally, the Programme and Rules of the competition, an example of which was delivered to each competitor, contained a clause phrased as follows<sup>7\*</sup>:

"Competitors enter on the understanding that they accept the conditions of the present Programme and Rules."

The Programme and Rules were, then, the law of the competition, for the jury as much as for the competitors.

It was after reading these documents and in consideration of the conditions thus set, that the undersigned architects decided to compete and to dedicate all the resources of time and money that such a decision involved.

## 2. The Le Corbusier-Jeanneret Project

The problem to be resolved was difficult enough. Above all, there was the matter of respecting the site where the palace was to be erected, of using the vistas offered, and of preserving the greatest possible number of its natural ornaments, notably its magnificent, hundred-year-old trees; the buildings and the site had to form a harmonious whole. For the rest, it was necessary - the programme made it obligatory - to conceive of a palace consisting of two principal parts which might be arranged in separate buildings, linked by galleries or porches, or grouped within a single building: one portion intended for the great hall of Assembly, for the council Hall and its dependencies, and the other for the services of the General Secretariat<sup>8\*</sup>. The great Hall of Assembly had to accommodate over 2.600 people; the part reserved for the General Secretariat had to contain offices for nearly 500 functionaries.

It was necessary therefore, to envisage an extensive ensemble of buildings, the assemblage of which, because of the different functions of the two principle parts, presented a real difficulty: a sessional great hall and its dependencies was to be juxtaposed with very extensive offices. These two parts were difficult to balance, and there was a risk of conveying a composite character in the ensemble.

Finally, it was necessary, in spite of the extent of the buildings and the number of installations necessary, to remain strictly within a set financial limit, all the while achieving an aesthetic, practical and modern work<sup>9\*</sup>.

The undersigned foresaw these difficulties and they are conscious of not leaving anything unsolved. At the root, their conception is a pastoral one in which the marvellous Bartholoni park site is entirely preserved. On this initial concept rests a technical concept comprising two separate buildings, but linked together: first, an instrument of everyday work, the building of the General Secretariat, a veritable assemblage of offices, where

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5\* p26 of the programme

6\* *ibid.*

7\* p23 of the programme

8\* p9 of the programme

9\* p7 of the programme



each office must receive the maximum light, and be served as rapidly as possible; then, within the wing of Council and of Public Commissions, the great Hall of Assembly, instrument of hearing and vision: its enormous proportions made it particularly difficult to resolve satisfactorily, and the undersigned have resolved the acoustic problem by relying on the work undertaken by M. Gustave Lyon for the construction of the Salle Pleyel. On the roofs, terraced gardens have been laid out so that the exceptional views may be enjoyed.

Finally, the financial problem was tackled and resolved, firstly, thanks to the structural system adopted which utilises the latest gifts of science, secondly, thanks to the simplicity of the lines of the facades and to the choice of materials. Alone of all the competitors, the undersigned produced a complete and detailed quotation, which was later confirmed by the production of the calculations and construction studies worked out by MM. Terner and Chopard, the well-known firm of Zurich engineers. This quotation gave a total expenditure of 12.750.000 Swiss Francs.

The whole of the project constitutes a personal work, mindful of the character proper to a twentieth century architectural work destined for an institution representing the spirit of new times and entirely oriented towards the future.

It is in these conditions and with the consciousness of having done everything possible to satisfy the requirements which were imposed, that the undersigned submitted their project and quotation, before the 27th January, 1927, as specified in the competition rules.

### 3. Examination by the Jury

377 projects were submitted. The deliberations of the jury were long; lasting for 64 sessions. What happened in those sessions? What different opinions were ventured, what solutions were weighed in the balance? No official document answers these questions. Undoubtedly the jury has lodged a report; the minutes of these sessions must necessarily be kept. But the secret is jealously guarded! To satisfy in form clause (e) on page 28 of the programme which foresaw the publication of the report, a copy of the jury's report described in the letter of dispatch as 'interim' was sent to the winning competitors. But this report is so sparse and so uninformative that we are persuaded that it is nothing but a summary, deliberately throwing a veil over the discussions preceeding its adoption, and that its neutral and laconic character was imposed by the necessity of smoothing over any dissent and achieving the unanimity mentioned therein.

In these conditions, the interested parties are reduced to reporting the indiscretions and undenied rumours which have surfaced in the press. If one can believe *L'Europe Nouvelle*, a most reputable organ, and very sympathetic to the League of Nations, "in the 63rd session, project no. 273 (Le Corbusier and Jeanneret) was one of the most highly thought of, and recommended above all others to the attention of the Council. Throughout the the deliberations, which were extraordinarily laborious, the project of Le Corbusier was the single one which constantly united the votes of four of the distinguished architects sitting on the jury."<sup>10\*</sup>

What happened then? *L'Europe Nouvelle* adds:

"In these conditions the victory of Le Corbusier and Pierre Jeanneret was scarcely in doubt. At the last moment they were struck by an improvised obstacle. Someone discovered a rule which appeared to have forbidden the use of mechanical reproduction of the plans submitted to the jury"<sup>11\*</sup>.

So, the drawings of Le Corbusier and Jeanneret, drawn in ink like all the others, were *reproduced* for greater clarity, by means of a printing press. This fact made an impression on some

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10\* *L'Europe Nouvelle*, 17th September 1927. According to an article by M. Hoffmann in *Bauzeitung* it was a matter of himself, of M. Moser, M. Tengbom, and M. Berlage.

11\* It is a question of the following phrase on page 20 of the programme: "*Plans must be drawn and filled in (pochés) with Indian ink.*"



jurors. From then on, it became difficult to maintain the leading position of the Le Corbusier project, and as none of the others stood out, the jury got out of the affair by ranking as equal the nine models which appeared to it to be the best... One might ask if it is permissible that such a valuable project should be thus held back for reasons which had nothing to do with architecture, and also whether the jury did not have a *duty* to make a choice."<sup>12\*</sup>

The undersigned are not aware if things really happened in such a way. In any case, they are able to draw attention to the fact that the programme contains no prohibition against the use of mechanical reproduction which might serve as a pretext for their defeat. It simply said, "Plans must be drawn and filled in (*pochés*) with Indian ink." We observed this rule; but not having encountered any strictures on the matter of modes of reproduction, believed ourselves able to make use of the printing press for greater neatness, and also to make the production of drawings - on drawing boards - easier. Had we encountered a prohibition relating to the use of a procedure of this sort, we would have observed it. We are proud to say that we have attended to the smallest requirement of the programme given us, far more scrupulously and rigorously than most other competitors. Feelings of honour and of professional dignity compelled us not to retreat before any difficulty, however slight, without trying to overcome it.

Moreover, if the prohibition on mechanical means had existed, and if it had constituted an eliminating clause, the offence committed by them in this respect would necessarily have brought about the exclusion of the undersigned from the competition. The fact that the jury did not insist on this suggests that it did not have the importance so much desired by some jurors.

Besides, an exclusion founded on so slight an infraction would be difficult to understand, given that the greater portion of the competition projects infringed a fundamental clause of the programme which bore all the hallmarks of an eliminatory requirement. They did not take any account of the limit of 13 million Swiss Francs set as the building costs for the programme. The jury report acknowledged this in these terms:

"The Jury... was reluctantly compelled to realise that its work was made difficult by the fact that a considerable proportion of the competitors had not adhered strictly enough to the material conditions required by the programme and rules."<sup>13\*</sup>

That not all the winning projects escape in this respect, is a fact which must ultimately be brought to light, as we will see.

In reality there is reason to believe that our project was, above all, victim of an antagonism based on different aesthetic conceptions, supported passionately by certain members of the jury.

#### 4. The decision of the Jury

However that may be, the jury, finding it impossible to unite and produce an absolute majority for a specific project, decided to conclude the proceedings with a statement of incompetence. It decided *unanimously* that "the results of the competition did not justify it in recommending any one of the plans for execution."<sup>14\*</sup>

Equally, it decided not to award any of the prizes foreseen in the programme. But, by a somewhat contradictory resolution, which, as we shall show, exceeded its powers, awarded nine equal prizes of 12.000 francs, replacing the eight, graded prizes announced to the competitors on the 17th April, 1926, and further, nine honorable mentions, first class, of 3.800 francs, and nine honorable mentions, second class, of 2.500 francs. The nine first prizes were no.s 117 (Broggi); 143 (Lefebvre); 273 (Le Corbusier and Jeanneret); 298 (Pulitz); 328 (Labro); 322 (Fahrenkamp); 387 (Nenot and Flegenheimer) and 431 (Vago).

The result of the competition was announced to the competitors by a letter from the Secretary General of the League of Nations on 5th May 1927, with an 'interim' example of the jury's report, and announced that the question of the follow-up to this report would be put before the next assembly of the League of Nations.

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12\* *L'Europe Nouvelle*, 17th September 1927

13\* Jury's Report, p2, annex no.2

14\* *ibid*



### 5. The effect of the Jury's decision

The jury's decision raised a storm of protest. There and then, on the 27th June 1927, the Union of Italian architects issued a very sharp complaint, from which the *Schweizerische Bauzeitung* of 10th December 1927 quotes the following passage: "And must everything rest thus without appeal? I have too much confidence in the justness of the directors of the League of Nations to believe it, and it is for this reason that I address myself to you, Mr Secretary General, Sir, that the means to correct a decision so contrary to all justice might finally be found."

The undersigned should also have been able to make a formal protest against a decision which had wronged them more than anyone, considering the care put into their work, including preliminary studies for construction, and given that they were put on the same footing as those competitors who had not observed the fundamental clause limiting the cost of the project to 13 million.

Effectively, the greater number of the winning competitors contented themselves with merely stating pefunctionarily that the cost of their project was 13 million.

Then, the inaccuracy of these declarations, which did not have to escape the jury's notice, became obvious at the end of June, during the public exhibition of the projects. The review *Cahiers d'Art* (1927, no.7-8, p4) has this to say on the subject:

"During the public exhibition, it was seen as somewhat strange, that projects affecting *double the specified volume*, could be so cheap; and all the more so, given that their *building processes were particularly laborious*. In its issue of the 1st October, the *Schweizerische Bauzeitung*, official mouthpiece of the Association of Swiss Engineers and Architects, known universally for the accuracy of its information, revealed the prices which should replace the competitors' claims of 13 million Francs: Broggi (Rome) 40 million; Erikson (Stockholm) 17 million; Lefevbre (Paris) 50 million; Pultz (Hamburg) 32 million; Labro (Paris) 43 million; Nénot (Paris) 27 million; Vago (Rome) 30 million..... And thus the League of Nations, has played hide and seek and allowed eight out of nine of the winning competitors, and is found to have selected projects costing 100, 200 and 300 % more than the price set as a determining factor of the competition."

This fact, added to the jury's non-observance of the clause of the programme relating to the distribution of the prizes, should be sufficient to justify a complaint by the undersigned against the decision of the 5th of May 1927. Nevertheless, confident in the justice of their cause and in the fairness of the League of Nations, to which they knew the decision had returned, they abstained from making it.

### 6. The decision of the Assembly of the League of Nations

However, this decision was to bring a new disappointment. On the 10th September 1927, on the suggestion of the Secretariat, the Assembly of the League of Nations named a committee limited to five members, responsible for presenting suggestions regarding the decision to be taken on the subject of the League's new buildings.

This committee consisted of the following 5 delegates: MM.Adatchi (Japan); Osusky (Czechoslovakia); Politis (Greece) Urrutia (Colombia) and Sir Edward Hilton Young (British Empire), chosen from among nations having no prizewinners.

Their mandate was:

1. Ascertain cost of the various plans and compare it with the funds available.
2. Examine the position resulting from this comparison. To what extent should the cost of schemes which exceed the financial limits indicated in the programme be regarded as an eliminating factor? Where these limits are exceeded, is there any possibility of modifying plans to bring their cost within the limits?
3. Consider the prize-winning plans from the point of view of convenience and administrative requirements.
4. If a suitable plan cannot be selected under satisfactory conditions, owing to the rejection of a large number of plans or the impossibility of bringing them within the required limits of expenditure, should the Assembly be asked to increase the credit vote?
5. If this proposal is not thought expedient, or in the case where the Assembly does not agree to it:
  - a) Should further consideration be given to the question of a building to



- accommodate the whole of the services? or
- b) Should a building be erected for the Assembly alone and the building occupied by the Secretariat be retained for use as at present?
6. No matter what decision is adopted regarding the financial conditions, a complete or a partial design must be selected. Should a choice be made from the prizewinning plans? If so, by what method, taking into account considerations of a financial, administrative and aesthetic character? If not, what procedure should be followed as regards the action to be taken?
  7. If no final decision is taken before the close of the present session of the Assembly, should the matter be held over until the next session, or who will be empowered to take a decision in the interval?\*

Finally, to decide these different points, the committee had to be able to consult all or some of the members of the jury of architects, the members of the Building Commission, the Secretary General and his representatives, and in a general way, all the experts whose opinions might appear desirable.

It was agreed that the mandate given to the select committee did not have a limiting character; the committee had to retain sufficient powers for assessment so as to be able to submit to the Assembly any suggestions that it might judge useful in the circumstances.

The special committee, pursuing its work unceasingly, presented its report on the 22nd September 1927. Judging that it was impossible to complete the study of the whole of this question during the present session of the Assembly, it believed, however, that it was now able to recommend certain decisions of principle to the Assembly.

The first related to the maximum cost of the work. The committee reckoned that after the sale of the Hôtel National, the sum of 15.400.000 Francs would be available for construction work. It showed that a study of the prize-winning projects in the architects' competition had convinced it that this sum would not be sufficient to ensure that the new buildings, should, without being unduly luxurious, nevertheless be satisfactory from an aesthetic, as well as from a practical point of view: accordingly, it was necessary to contemplate the probability that the credit allotted would ultimately have to be raised to approximately 19.500.000 francs. It might be possible to achieve some reduction on the sum named. But it was necessary, "and the Committee ventures to urge strongly the necessity of this measure, that the Assembly should now agree in principle that the Building Fund will be increased to the amount of approximately 19.500.000 francs, should it be confirmed that the required buildings cannot be obtained for less."

The second decision related to the procedure to be followed for the choice of project. The committee considered it reasonable and just that the definitive project should be chosen from among those awarded the nine equal prizes of 12.000 francs. It proposed to confer on a special committee the power necessary to choose, with eventual changes, the project which, in its opinion, satisfied most of the practical necessities, and aesthetic considerations. This committee should naturally be provided with all the professional assistance it might desire. Its decision would be submitted to the council of the League of Nations for ratification.

On the 23rd September 1927, after the committee had submitted its report to the fourth commission, this body recommended that the Assembly should adopt its proposal to entrust the choice of project to the members of the committee. And on the 26th September 1927, the Assembly ratified these conclusions in the following resolution:

"The Assembly:  
Approves the report of the Special Committee of five members in regard to the new buildings;



Approves, in principle, that the amount to be spent on the new buildings may be increased to approximately 19.500.000 francs. The exact amount of the supplementary credit necessary will be submitted to the Assembly at the next session;

Empowers a Committee composed as follows:

M.ADATCHI, M.OSUSKY, M.POLITIS, M.URRUTIA and Sir Edward HILTON YOUNG to study the nine plans awarded the equal prizes of 12,000 francs in the architects' competition, and to choose, with any changes that may be necessary, a plan which in its opinion complies most nearly with the practical and aesthetic requirements. *The decision of this Committee will be submitted to the council of the League of Nations for ratification, and will be communicated to the Assembly at the next session.*"

As the undersigned said previously, this decision disappointed them; the Assembly abandoned the figure of 13 million on which all the calculations for their project were based, and thus put them at a disadvantage compared to those of their competitors who had developed their projects without caring about this limit even though the competition rules had declared it essential.

### 7. The decision of the examining Committee

However that may be, the special committee commenced its work in an atmosphere of very lively agitation among the artists and the professionals, also among the inhabitants of the country where the palace of the League of Nations would be built. The prizewinners were preoccupied with any possible triumph of one of the artistic and architectural tendencies which were in the running. Some were disturbed by the hardly impartial character of the decisions taken. For this reason, on 22nd October 1927, the Société des Ingénieurs et Architectes Suisses produced a vigorous letter of protest, that we intend to analyse<sup>15\*</sup>. Articles in favour of the Le Corbusier-Jeanneret project had appeared in the most diverse journals and newspapers<sup>16\*</sup>. Certain of them attributed the raising of the original budget by 50% to influences which were obvious in view of the favouring of the authors of certain projects where the cost had so noticeably exceeded the budget<sup>17\*</sup>. The undersigned do not give credence to all these statements. They merely report them to underline the spontaneous reaction of independent opinion in different countries in the presence of decisions which had appeared to ignore the new tendencies of modern art, and requirements of fairness, in favour of certain parties of the school. Particularly precious to them are speeches made in their favour, notably on the part of professional associations belonging to very different countries, such as the "Werkbund Schweiz," the "Werkbund Deutsch", the association "Der Ring", the Association of German Architects, the Association of Austrian Architects and Engineers, the "Austrian Werkbund" the Society of architects, sculptors and painters, "Opbouw", from Amsterdam, the polish architects and painters grouped around the journal *Praeseus*, the society of Artists "Manes" from Czechoslovakia, etc<sup>18\*</sup>. They cite with equal emotion the testimonies of masters such as MM.Tony Garnier, Franz Jourdain, and their judges in the competition, MM.Hoffmann, Berlage, and Mose<sup>19\*</sup>.

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15\* See page 24

16\* See *Schweizerische Bauzeitung* 9th July 1927 p13; 29th October 1927, p239; 10th December 1927. p314; *Stavba* (Journal of Prague Architects) November 1927, p67- , *L'Europe Nouvelle* 10th and 17th September 1927; *l'Intransigeant* 10th November 1927 *l'Opinion* 10th December 1927, p15; no.s 7,8, and 9 of the review *Cahiers d'Art*, and notably the articles cited in no. 9 p xv and xvi.

17\* See *l'Opinion* 10th December 1927, p17.

18\* *Cahiers d'Art* no. 9, p xiii and xiv

19\* *Cahiers d'Art* no. 9, p xi, xii, xiii.



However the special committee pursued its work while shrouding it as an impenetrable secret. If one may believe certain newspapers, a struggle of influences occurred in its midst, struggles in which the project of Le Corbusier and Jeanneret, initially in very good standing, succumbed at last in spite of the opinions of the specially appointed experts<sup>20\*</sup>. The undersigned do not know if, as has been said, the technical questions yielded to political questions; that the members of the committee, in this embarrassing situation, had to resolve things diplomatically, by compromise<sup>21\*</sup>. The fact remains that after 3 days of deliberating, from the 19th to the 22nd December 1927, the Special Committee had carried out its mandate and ruled as follows<sup>22\*</sup>:

"The committee of Five... has studied the reports submitted: (1) by the Secretariat of the League of Nations; (2) by the two architects nominated by the committee and it has verified the conclusions on the detailed plans of the nine projects submitted to its examination. It has also examined the report presented by the Swiss experts nominated by the federal and Geneva governments.

The committee is concerned above all to define the task which has been entrusted to it by the Assembly.

It has been unanimous in thinking that its mandate had obliged it to choose a project from among the nine which received a first prize, but that the licence which had been given to it of not proceeding to this choice other than with eventual changes and permitted it to be inspired, in view of these changes, by other projects and consequently, to suggest that the authors of the chosen project should collaborate with the authors of other projects, not only in order to develop a new project, but also for the eventual execution of the work.

Thus the committee has thus arrived unanimously at the following conclusions:

- 1) The project which, in its opinion, satisfied most of the requirements of a practical and aesthetic order, is No. 387, the authors of which are MM.H.P.NENOT and J.FLEGENHEIMER.
- 2) Nevertheless, the committee has indicated the inconveniences which are presented by the projects in question and it has made suggestions for remedying them.  
A new project must be developed by the authors of project no.387, in collaboration with the authors of projects No. 117 (MM.BROGGI, VACCARO, and FRANZI), 143 (M.LEFEVBRE) and 431, (M.VAGO), and with the Secretariat of the League of Nations.
- 3) The authors of the project chosen as a basis and their collaborators indicated above, will be invited to develop the new project in such a way as to effect the modifications which have been indicated to them by the committee, which reserves complete freedom to assess the new project before definitely accepting it and submitting it for approval and ratification by the Council.
- 4) the committee, taking account of the generous donation made to the League of Nations by Mr ROCKERFELLER for the construction and maintenance of a library, consider that, in the chosen plan, budget estimates relating to the library should be extracted, and new estimates should be produced. A separate project will be set up for the new library.
- 5) In presenting the new project and the project for the library to the committee, the architects will have to indicate the total expenditure foreseen for carrying out the works; this must not exceed, in any case, architects' fees included, the sum of 19.500.000 Swiss francs for the Secretariat and the Hall of Assembly. The total budget for construction of the library, including the architects' fees will be about 4 million Swiss Francs.
- 6) In submitting the two above-mentioned projects to the committee, the architects will have to indicate the structure proposed by them (including the question of remuneration of various architects) for the continuation of their collaboration during the building works, after definite approval by the Council.

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20\* *Neue Zurcher Zeitung* 27th December 1927, 2nd edit., p1.

21\* *Neue Zurcher Zeitung* 27th December 1927.

22\* Text reproduced in the *Journal de Geneve* 28th December 1927.



7) The committee considers nevertheless, that it would be desirable, if at all possible, for the projected buildings to be oriented towards Mont-Blanc and that they should be built and set back in such a way as to safeguard the greatest possible number of the trees which are to be found along the shore of the lake.

8) All the architects collaborating in the development of the new project will be its designers."

On the 16th January 1928, following this decision, the interested parties received from the Secretary General of the League of Nations a letter worded as follows:

"As you have probably learned already through the press, the Special Committee, entrusted by the Assembly with choosing a project for the new building for the League of Nations, decided during its last session, held from the 19th to 22nd December 1927, that a new project should be established on the basis of project no. 387, in collaboration with the authors of projects no.s 117, 143 and 431.

As a result of this decision, it is no longer necessary to keep the project kindly left here by you at the disposal of the League of Nations. I should be much obliged if you would let me know to where and by what means it should be returned.

I would like to express my most hearty thanks for the obliging manner in which you have made your project available to me.

I remain, sir, etc."

This letter presented the decision taken as definite and did not acknowledge the necessity for ratification by the council. Reading this, it would appear that ratification was considered to be only a formality, and that the result was known in advance. The undersigned confess that, given the definite reservation in this respect contained in the decision of Assembly on 26th September 1927, they read this letter with a certain amazement.

The decision of the Committee of Five was variously greeted. Much turned upon the victory of old architectural ideas and a check to the evolution of art which began at the end of the 19th century (2). This opinion is, moreover, that of the principal victor, M.Nénot. He expressed it in these terms in an interview given to *l'Intransigeant*, on 24th December, 1927:

"I am happy simply for art," M.Nénot said to us gaily this morning; "*The goal of the French team, when it was not in the running, was to hold Barbarism in check.* What we call Barbarism is a certain architecture, or more exactly, a certain anti-architecture which has been causing an uproar for some years now in Eastern and Northern Europe, no less horrible than that style "*Coup de Fouet*" which, happily, we have crushed over the last twenty years. It denies all the belles époques of history, and insults common sense and good taste in every way. *It is defeated, and all is well.* The subject was difficult, and it was a costly project for us; nearly all nations had, effectively, subsidised their champions, because 21 great drawings, costing the earth, were required from each competitor. An English secretary - it would be an English idea - amused himself by putting the 370 submissions end to end, in all 14 kilometres."

These declarations are significant. M.Nénot conceived of participation in the competition not as the realisation of an effort of disinterested art, but as the means of crushing any adverse tendencies which displeased the Institute de France and the Ecole des Beaux Arts. For him, the struggle of the schools is more important than the concept of the work.

He has not been afraid to give to his spirit the force of a gross error, which consists in being ignorant of the fact that the modern architectural revolution is wholly rooted in the 19th and 20th centuries in France.



## II

The undersigned, faced with the situation thus imposed on them, reckoned that they could not be, by law and in justice, without recourse against the decisions issuing from the organs of the League of Nations.

It is a principle recognised today by all civilized states that a sovereign state should not, by reason of its sovereignty, be able to refuse to recognise the obligations that it may have contracted with respect to individuals. The procedure for such individuals to follow, in order to exercise their rights, may vary according to legislation: sometimes they have a judicial redress either before ordinary courts, or before special courts; sometimes they have an administrative redress by grace of the sovereign. These redresses are more or less generous, or more or less limited by exceptions. But the complainant is never faced with a brutal refusal of all redress.

The League of Nations, which is an association of Sovereign States for predetermined ends, should not think of shunning the application of principles long recognised as authoritative by the states of which it is composed. It can shun them even less given that its mission and reason for being are to substitute, little by little, in international relations, the rule of law for the rule of force. It is incomprehensible that, denying the ideas on which it is founded, its reason for existence, it should shelter behind its sovereignty and attempt to break with impunity the agreements that it has contracted respecting those who had faith in it, and escape from the application of rules laid down by itself. Insisting on this point might be thought an insult.

Undoubtedly, no judiciary exists before which the interested parties might appear to have their rights acknowledged. But is it necessary for there to be one? Should it not be sufficient to address the League itself, and to direct its attention to the errors which have been committed, in good faith, by itself, or by certain of its agents, so that it will be obliged to mend them?

The rules that we will invoke before it will be those which serve as the basis of legislation for all civilised nations; they will be those principles of natural law which form the substrate of constructive legislation; above all the requirement for fairness. Is it not, moreover, to this end that the practice of the League of Nations was originally directed? We believe that on many occasions it has had to recognise the redress claimed by individuals, notably by dismissed functionaries, and that in certain cases, it has recognised those of its obligations which may be expressed by the payment of compensation.

It is with reference to this case law that we will pursue the examination of the judicial problem posed.

In this respect, we must envisage three decisions in succession:

- a) that of the competition jury, on 5th May, 1927
- b) That of the Assembly of the League, on 26th September 1927
- c) That of the Committee of Five on 22nd December 1927

#### *8. The lawfulness of the Competition Jury's decision*

This lawfulness must be assessed in comparison with the programme and rules of the competition, which by virtue of the clause inserted on p23<sup>23\*</sup> constituted a contract.

From this point of view, it is necessary to ask first if the possibility of an appeal against the decision of the jury was not excluded by the second last phrase on p29 of the programme, as to the terms by which the decisions of the jury are "final".

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23\* See above, p3



The Secretary-General of the League of Nations has upheld this view in the answer he made to the complaint drawn up by the Society of Italian Architects<sup>24\*</sup>. It said:

"As you yourselves know, according to the programme, the jury was the sole judge, imposing the order of the day and arranging the progress of its work to suit itself. Its decisions are, for us as for the competitors, final."<sup>25\*</sup>

This refusal is insupportable. The right of the jury to impose the order of the day and to control the progress of its work has nothing to do with the decision taken at the end of this work in deciding which prizes will be awarded. As for the exclusion of the right of Appeal, it means only that the competitors, by the fact of their participation in the competition, renounce the right to contest the validity, in fact, of the decision of the jury, and notably the choice of any particular project rather than of another. But they have not renounced, and could not renounce in advance, the observation of the rules that the jury had undertaken to observe in the examination of projects and in the awarding of prizes. In the same way that in French law, for example, in accordance with a widely recognised distinction, an appeal for annulment<sup>53</sup> for violation of the law can be made against a decision delivered, as a last resort, that is to say, without appeal, in our case, a recourse founded on the violation by the jury of the competition rules remains admissible, then likewise the decision allocating a prize to such a candidate should not be liable to appeal.

Without entering into a detailed discussion, it would appear that there exists an appeal of a gracious character, which might be brought before that superior authority which, having chosen the jury and given it its mandate, the Assembly of Nations is. Is there a basis for this sort of redress in this case? The undersigned think so. The second element of the decision on the 5th of May 1927, relating to the awarding of prizes, appears contrary to the commitments undertaken on p26 of the programme.

These commitments, the text of which is quoted above<sup>26\*</sup> foresaw the awarding of 8 prizes, ranked according to a descending scale, from 30.000 to 5.000 francs. Then, the jury overturned this scale completely, by substituting for the hierarchy of 8 prizes previously foreseen, nine equal prizes of 12000 francs.

On this point, its decision does not appear legitimate. Without a doubt, the jury had the right to not award all the prizes, but in doing this, it had to observe the established hierarchy. For example, if it withheld the first prize, it was obliged to award two second prizes, if it withheld those, then it had to award another third prize, and so on. If it withheld all the envisaged prizes, it could then only award honorable mentions. The abolition of the hierarchy and of the classification resulted in effect, in modification of the basis of consideration under which the candidates had decided to compete; it did not permit them, morally speaking, to be properly distinguished from their competitors; it deprives them, from a pecuniary point of view, of the advantage of the fixed rates pertaining to prizes 1 to 5, which were wholly superior to the 12000 francs awarded. Finally, the creation of a ninth prize diminished by a certain amount, the value of the award, which would have been greater as the number elected were limited.

These criticisms have been made in the letters addressed to the Secretary-General of the League of Nations on the 22nd of October 1927 by the Society of Swiss Engineers and Architects<sup>27\*</sup>:

"A principle upheld in a great many countries, notably Switzerland, requires the programme of a competition to be considered as a contract, binding on both jury and competitors. In this respect, the programme of the League of Nations contained two essential directives:

24\* *Schwiezerische Bauzeitung* 10 December 1927, p314, cited above.

25\* see p2

26\* *ibid*

27\* *Schwiezerische Bauzeitung* 29 October 1927, p237.



2. The final cost of construction inclusive of the architects' fees, was not to exceed the sum of 13 million Swiss francs.

These principles are not evident in the Jury's decision, where nine equal prizes of 12.000 francs were issued without distinction, thus failing to supply any basis on which Assembly and Council might take a definite decision."

On this basis the undersigned should certainly have been able to pursue a claim directed against the decision of the jury. They did not make it because in practice this claim could only be made before the Assembly of the League of Nations. Then, they were informed by a letter from the Secretary-General on the 5th May 1927, that it would have to get to grips with the whole problem. It was therefore of no interest to bring before the Assembly a formal recourse founded on the violation of the competition rules. Also, they hoped that the Assembly, immune to the influences of the warring schools which troubled the decision of the jury, would recognise their efforts to conform rigorously to the conditions of the programme, neglected by other competitors, and act justly. We emphasize that they had to prove a deception.

#### *9. Examination of the resolution of the Assembly on 26th September 1927*

The negative decision of the jury had certainly put the Assembly in a gravely embarrassing situation. Three courses were open to it:

- a) To open a new competition
- b) To choose itself, from among the projects deposited.
- c) To entrust this choice to competent persons.

The opening of a new competition would have presented many difficulties. It would have delayed the moment of decision by a year or more. There was little chance that the results of a new competition would be different from those of the old; the problem to be resolved remained the same, the candidates would, in all probability, resolve it in the same fashion. If they were to modify their concepts, there would be a real possibility that inspiration might be drawn from the ideas of their competitors. Thus extremely delicate questions of artistic propriety would be raised. Therefore this solution was eliminated.

The second solution evidently exceeded the competence of the assembly. Even so, it should have been able to present a report explaining which of the winning candidates satisfied the conditions of the competition and indicating which appeared to be suitable for the final choice. This procedure would inevitably have led to the adoption of the Le Corbusier-Jeanneret project, since it was the only one which had conformed to the price limit.

The third solution was not without danger. Since the first jury had been unable to accomplish its task, it would be necessary to substitute a new jury chosen with the same care and which, composed of new personalities, might perhaps have more chance of a majority emerging from its midst. But even the appointment of members for this new jury could have constituted, considering the state of play, an advance verdict of inclinations.

Influenced by reports which have been presented to it, the Assembly has not adopted any of these solutions. It has resolved:

1. not to open a new competition and to have a choice made from among the winning projects.
2. To entrust the choice to a non-professional committee, which will be able to call on the aid of professionals freely chosen by them.
3. To modify, to make this choice easier, the conditions of the programme on the basis of which the winning projects were developed, by raising by 50% the limit set for the cost of execution of the works.

The first element of the decision was inspired by the circumstances. But the last two seriously changed the status of the competitors.

Instead of being judged by professionals, the names and reputations of whom were familiar to them, and whom they had accepted of their own free will, they were to be judged by honorable people, but the verdict of whom was necessarily subject to the opinion of those professionals freely chosen by them.

The third element of the decision was again, regrettable. It overturned completely the basis



of the competition and caused an irreparable breach of the rights of candidates who, like MM. Le Corbusier and Jeanneret, had conformed strictly to the price limit. It will be useful to recall the exact terms of the programme:

"The cost of construction, including the architect's fees, should *in no case* exceed the total sum of 13 million Swiss francs" (p16). "No award will be made in respect of any design... if the Jury is of the opinion that the cost of executing such plans would exceed the amount indicated" (p22).

It was on this basis that the projects were to be judged. What then, can we think of a decision which, without opening a new competition, considers it convenient to judge the results of the first as if, in place of the figure of 13 million, the programme had set a budget of 19.500.000 francs? Was not the obvious aim to favour those competitors who had not observed the limit and who, consequently, should have been excluded, at the expense of those who had observed it, and accordingly, had been able to count on this: only being under consideration with equally scrupulous candidates?

For the rest, it is clear that the estimated cost of construction exerts a great influence on the very conception of the project. If MM. Le Corbusier and Jeanneret had been able to envisage a cost of 19.500.000 francs instead of 13 million, they would have had much greater freedom in their concept. They would have been able to employ the most difficult materials, to envisage other decorative effects: the entire economy of their project would have been changed. How, from that moment on, could one legitimately, without authorising them to present a new project, force them to compete with the candidates who had not concerned themselves with cost in envisaging their designs, and who, consequently, had been able to give free reign to their ornamental and architectural ideas?

The resolution of the Assembly, then, seriously damaged the rights acquired by MM. Le Corbusier and Jeanneret. They should have been able - they should still be able - should the situation arise - to contest it, by way of a submission for an out of court settlement addressed to the assembly, a recourse where the assembly could not dismiss the examination, without ignoring principles accepted in administrative matters by the states which are subject to the League of Nations, and without committing a veritable denial of justice.

If the undersigned have not exercised this recourse, which they reserve as an option if need be, it is because they thought that the justice of their cause was so obvious that the committee of 5 would be unable not to find in their favour. In effect, all the projects with which they found themselves henceforth competing, with the exception of that of M. Erikson, similarly exceeded the new limit of 19.500.000 francs. It will suffice to recall the highest figures reported in the *Schweizerische Bauzeitung*:<sup>28\*</sup>

Erikson	17 million;	Vago	30 million;	Labro	43 million;
Farenkamp	27 million;	Pullitz	32 million;	Lefèvre	50 million.
Nénot	27 million;	Broggi	40 million;		

If the limit of 19.500.000 was to be respected - and there was no reason to suppose that it should not be - then only the project of M. Erikson was in the running with their project. And therefore they thought that they could wait for the decision of the Committee of Five before acting.

They could hardly foresee that the two projects below the new limit were precisely those which were to be excluded.

#### 10. *The decision of the Committee of Five*

Let us recall the task that the resolution of the Assembly had assigned to the Committee of Five. It was, taking account of the new limit of 19.500.000 francs, to study the nine projects which received equal prizes of 12000 francs during the architects' competition, and to choose, with eventual changes, "a plan which in its opinion complies most nearly with the practical and aesthetic requirements."

The sense of this resolution was clear: the jury of the competition having declared themselves powerless to choose, it was necessary to choose from among the winning projects in its place, indicating, should there be grounds, changes which should be introduced in the chosen project, either for practical and aesthetic reasons, or to take account of the cost of the works. But *therefore there was in some sense a new competition between the projects: it was necessary to*

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<sup>28\*</sup> See above, p10.



Is this what the committee did? Not at all. It declared that the project which satisfied most of the requirements of a practical and aesthetic order was that of MM. Nénot and Flegenhimer, but then immediately declared that because of the disadvantages of this project, "*a new project must be developed* by the authors of project no. 387 in collaboration with the authors of projects no. 117, 143, & 431, and with the Secretariat of the League of Nations." It specified that "the authors of the project chosen as a basis and their collaborators ...will be invited to *develop the new project*, in such a way as to effect the modifications which have been indicated to them by the committee, and *in this it reserves complete liberty to assess the new project before definitely accepting it.*"

In all, the committee, to satisfy in form the terms of its mandate, designated the project of Nénot and Flegenhimer. But immediately afterwards, it decided that this project must be replaced by another, drawn up in collaboration with five other architects and with the Services of the League of Nations. *Instead of choosing a project, it chose architects.*

This was not the task entrusted to it. It felt that very clearly, and has tried to justify its stance, in giving, in terms which betray some embarrassment, a definition of its mandate. This definition was pointless, because the mandate was perfectly clear: in fact it attempted to modify the terms.

The undersigned are not unaware that, after certain articles in the press<sup>29\*</sup>, this attitude was imposed on the committee by the necessity of finding a compromise between the influences which were brought to bear in favour of the authors of the projects that it has chosen. They may have wished to injure no-one, in associating the best-supported candidates. This manner of acting was perhaps the easiest from a diplomatic point of view. We will see that it is necessary to think from a technical point of view; in any case, it was contrary to law and to fairness.

In effect, from the moment when the committee had been freed from the obligation to choose one of the projects, one of the guarantees allowed by the resolution of 26th September 1927 to the contestants had disappeared. It was no longer a conception of the whole, forming a unit, that was to be evaluated, it was the ideas which were to serve as a basis, more exactly, the impression given by a model which had attempted to express them. And from then on, they had been able to disregard with impunity all the arrangements relative to the carrying out of the works, the volume of the buildings, the attack on the site by this project, the choice of materials, the ordering of the installations, the acoustics of the Hall of Assembly, and finally, the total cost of the works. All this need no longer be accounted for since everything could be modified, providing that the impression of the whole given by the model, was preserved. Basically, it is this on which the decision of the committee of five turned. And after that, all the advantages that were gained by the undersigned through their meticulousness in developing a project satisfying in all its parts and in all its details, and realising all economies, had vanished. Without doubt, tribute had been paid to their achievement and the practical character of their project had been commended; perhaps it was even recognised that from this point of view, their project was superior to those of their competitors. But of what importance was this when the projects were regarded only as a general basis on which a new project should be built, without the inconveniences now presented and to which it was easy to give- who knows? by means of an unacknowledged borrowing, all the advantages of the Le Corbusier-Jeanneret project?

If the point had not passed through their minds, and they had not had to worry about observing, in this petition, the courtesy due to the high authorities of the League of Nations, the undersigned should have said that they find themselves in the presence of a succession of episodes which have resulted in the distortion of all the conditions of the limited competition, set up by the resolution of 26th September 1927 and thus to deliver them the gravest disadvantage.

All the arbitrariness of this decision results again from its seventh point:

"All the same, the committee judges that it will be desirable, if possible and feasible, that the projected buildings should be oriented towards Mont Blanc, and that they may be built and set back in such a way as to safeguard the greatest possible number of the trees which are to be found along the shore of the lake."

That was exactly the character of Le Corbusier's project.

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29\* See the articles cited above, p15 & 16



In the case of the project whose authors have been chosen, this essential requirement of the programme was misconceived in the most complete fashion: therefore, a new project is required from them. And again that clearly leads to the eighth clause: "All the architects collaborating in the development of the new project, will be its authors." Therefore the project adopted for the palace of the League of Nations *will not be a project by Nénot-Flegenheimer, but a project by Nénot-Flegenheimer-Broggi-Vaccaro-Franzi-Lefèvre-Vago.*<sup>30\*</sup> What has become of the competition opened between projects? What has become of the 26th September 1927 resolution of the Assembly?

The committee of five again exceeded its powers on another point. We know that a generous donation of 2 million dollars was given by M. Rockefeller for the library of the League of Nations. A certain portion has to be allocated to the construction. The committee of Five has therefore excluded the library from the buildings comprising the new project. This was a change resulting from new facts and one which did not exceed the terms of its mandate. But it has gone much further: on its own authority it has set at 4 million Swiss francs, the total cost of the works for the library, this sum being in excess of the 19.500.000 francs foreseen for the palace. And equally, on its own authority, it has decided that the project for the construction of the library should be developed by the architects whom it has designated for the development of the palace project. One can search the resolution of Assembly in vain for any dispensation authorising it to proceed thus. It was for the assembly to deliberate on the consequences of the situation created by the gift of M. Rockefeller, to set the maximum cost of the works, and to determine in what conditions to choose architects to be entrusted with the construction, to decide, for example, on the opening of a special new competition to this end.

Therefore the interested parties deem the decision of the committee of Five on the 22nd of December 1927 irregular; it does not respect the terms of the mandate fixed by the Assembly, and by the arbitrary extension of its scope, it strikes at the rights acquired by the contestants by virtue of the programme-rules for the 1926 competition and by virtue of the 26th September 1927 resolution of Assembly, and it must, consequently, be annulled.

They deem that they are justified in petitioning this annulment by the League of Nations Council, not only by virtue of general principles of law applied in every country, notably in matters of administration, and by virtue of which one can always contest the decision of an inferior authority before a superior one, but also by virtue of the very terms of the resolution of the Assembly of 26th September 1927, where the final clause is couched in these terms: "The decision of this committee will be submitted to the Council of the League of Nations for ratification, and will be communicated to the Assembly at the next session."

From this clause, in conjunction with principles which will be recalled, results the existence of that which one might call "a recourse to full judgement" open to all interested parties to contest before the council, in making the final decision of the committee as law; there is therefore at the time possibility of a "recourse of annulment" and of a "recourse and reformation".

The first is about to be exercised; the validity of the second remains to be examined.

#### 11. *Practical disadvantages attached to the decision of the committee of Five.*

The undersigned will not repeat in this proposition all the reasons of a practical, aesthetic and financial order which mitigate in favour of the adoption of their project. They will confine themselves to citing the opinions of two of their judges.

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30\* M.Nénot understood very well that this decision weakened the scope of his success, because, to a question put to him by the editor of *l'Intransigeant* (interview, 24th December 1927) he responds that the principal object about which he must reach agreement with his stranger-collaborators concerns the library; it is the whole project, then, which is at stake.



M. Berlage, in conjunction with a certain number of his Dutch colleagues, wrote to *Cahiers d'Art* on 25th November 1927<sup>31\*</sup>:

"Besides the whole aesthetic question concerning the facade, the project of Le Corbusier and Pierre Jeanneret presents indisputable advantages as regards the site, the external and internal circulation, the proportions and acoustics of the great hall of Assembly."

M. Moser wrote on the 6th December 1927 to the same publication:

"Among the 377 projects submitted to the international competition for the Palace of the League of Nations, only the project of Le Corbusier-Pierre Jeanneret should have been retained for construction, as much for its aesthetic as for its practical qualities.

These are the reasons which favour of this project: respect for the site, preservation of the park and the most beautiful groups of trees; practical organisation of the external circulation, notably the automobile circulation; perfect division between the General Secretariat and the Hall of Assembly; rational lighting for the offices and halls; perfect conception of the great hall of Assembly, where good acoustics are scientifically guaranteed by a pre-existing example: the Salle Pleyel in Paris<sup>32\*</sup>; use of an absolutely certain means of construction; keeping the project within the sums foreseen by the rules of the competition."

The undersigned confidently submit these attestations to the Council in asking it to invite other impartial testimonies.

But they must now point out another advantage of their project by discussing that development foreseen by the decision of the committee of five. Their concept is unified: that of a group of architects designated by the committee and who will work in conjunction with the services of the secretariat, will be composite. The necessity of scaling down the basis of the project will forcibly shatter any unity. For the rest, each architect, each national school represented here, will want to put their mark on the building. The spirit of compromise, which has ended in grouping the authors of four projects, will also infuse their collaboration for a unique project; and if we take into account that certain of the projects in play already present a markedly composite character, we can expect to see from the hands of the associated architects a building which will hardly be stylistically pure, with harmonious lines, blending naturally into the chosen site as the competition programme required<sup>33\*</sup>. The committee apparently dreaded this result, because it reserved all rights to assess the new project before definitely accepting it<sup>34\*</sup>.

For the rest, it is necessary to expect that the deliberations will be long, and the conflicts in the midst of so learned an assembly will be lively; some time will be necessary for them to reach agreement. And to that one adds the delays caused by revisions of their work and corrections to the plan that will inevitably be required by the committee, one has to envisage that the long months will drift by before the foundations for the new palace may be started, instead of which, since all preliminary studies are complete, building of the Le Corbusier- Jeanneret project might start tomorrow, if the Council had given its consent. Even if it had decided that this project, having been adopted completely in principle, should be revised in certain ways to take account of the adjustment of the financial limit and of the new resolution to be taken on the subject of the library, the way in which the undersigned have proceeded to finalise their project is a guarantee that this revision could be accomplished in the minimum time and without compromising the unity of the concept vital to every work of art.

Finally, the undersigned again draw the attention of the Council to the fact that the Committee of Five has not required any guarantee from the authors of the new project, concerning keeping within the limit of 19.500.000 francs. It contents itself with saying that "the architects will

31\* *Cahiers d'Art* 1927, No.9, p xiii (See annex no.3)

32\* To show the importance of this fact, let us emphasise that out of 377 projects submitted, only 10 were preoccupied with the acoustics of the hall.

33\* programme, p7.

34\* Decision 22nd December 1927, 3rd clause.



have to indicate the total expenditure foreseen for carrying out the works; this must not exceed, in any case, architects' fees included, the sum of 19.500.000 Swiss francs." It is the same formula used in the competition programme for fixing the limit of 13 million. The council knows how the authors of the chosen projects observed that stricture: it was necessary to raise the maximum to avoid, ipso facto, eliminating them. What guarantee is there that they will not act in the same way with respect to the new limit, and that their declaration in this respect will not be purely formal, as in the preceeding case, given that the cost of the projects to be combined ranges from 27 to 50 million francs? Either we are deceiving ourselves completely, or we can expect a new demand for the raising of the limit, if the project born of this collaboration is adopted.

The undersigned, on the contrary, offer as a guarantee the engagement of a reputable firm of engineers, the Office of Terner and Chopard in Zurich, and they undertake to supplement this guarantee in any way judged desirable by the council.

### III

#### *Conclusions*

At the close of this long statement, new light must have been shed for the council of the League of Nations.

It should now realise the nature of the part played by the school and of the considerations of self-esteem before which the project of Le Corbusier-Jeanneret has fallen.

A programme was set for the competition: in conforming to it rigorously, in determining to resolve it, according to a concept of the whole, in harmonising it with the chosen site, all the difficulties of the problem posed to the candidates, they believed that they had every chance on their side. They did not foresee that other competitors less respectful of the conditions of the competition should manage to cancel progressively all the advantages of a position acquired at the price of great effort.

They were the only ones to respect the price limit; in terms of the rules the other candidates should have been excluded, or at the very least, ranked below them. By the tiredness of the jury, by the prevention of the formation in its midst of a majority; - something drove it<sup>54</sup> - weary of argument, retreating from its essential function, the choice of a project; and then the substitution of nine equal prizes for the eight hierarchical ones foreseen, was obtained from it, putting all the winning competitors on the same footing.

But the advantage resulting from the observation of the financial limit was again much too great an advantage for the undersigned: the Assembly was induced to raise it and to substitute a new limit which could only profit the less conscientious competitors.

It seems natural that in a technical competition, responsibility for the choice should be taken by professionals, and not by people undoubtedly honourable, but lacking technical competence.

Finally, the mandate given to this committee by the Assembly, which had established a competition between the winning projects, was also too precise; the committee was induced to give an interpretation which modifies the terms and which substituted for the choice of a project, the choice of architects to be entrusted with the establishment of a new project. And thanks to a compromise, the authors of completely different plans are brought together for this work, for them the single common task is in the reflection of concepts oriented towards the past.

Consequently the undersigned respectfully ask the council

1. To refuse to ratify the decision of the committee of Five on 22nd December 1927, as required by the final clause of the resolution of 26th September 1927 of Assembly.

2. To adopt a unified solution, which, respectful of those principles which are the basis of the organisation of the competition, and which inspired the mandate given to the Committee of Five, will safeguard the legitimate rights and interests of the undersigned.

With all due respect, they are certain that, as regards the subsequent exercise of their rights, that in ruling this way, you will see that justice is done.

signed in Paris 28th February 1928  
LE CORBUSIER and PIERRE JEANNERET



**Document 3.***League of Nations**Geneva, 25th June, 1928**Sir:*

*To my great regret, I can only confirm to you the terms of my letter of 31st March, 1928.*

*To make it absolutely clear to you, it is not the business of any individual to make representations to the Council of the League of Nations. For the rest, I am, in principle, without any power to present to this organ any communications from a non-official source. I remain, sir, etc.*

*The Under-Secretary General.*

S.PAULUCIS DE TALBOT JARVE

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On returning from Geneva, a most important personage said to us:

"If the great men of the world (the ministers of the Council of Nations) had had to settle this question, we should have been able to convince them. But constant opposition has come from the upper ranks of the Secretariat. You made a palace of work. *There* they demanded a palace sanctified by the dignity of nations and their delegations.

Additionally these gentlemen could not accept that cars should be parked beneath them."



**Document 4<sup>55</sup>.**

"Cahiers d'Art" No. 9, November 1927.

## WHO WILL BUILD THE PALACE OF NATIONS?

### II. - THE PRESENT SITUATION

The battle is not just between such and such of the nine projects winning initially.

It is a double battle of principle:

the hegemony (diplomatic battle);

the old spirit against the modern.

An inevitable diplomatic battle hangs over us, which may well be able to claim that, only to settle the question brutally by a secret negotiation<sup>56</sup> where questions of architecture will not be debated for one moment, but where the hatred and the ferocious jealousies will collide violently in the chancelleries; the ruses which work so well out of our view under the great fraternal intentions launched from the rostrums to people eager for delusion.

Is this to triumph thus at the last minute, to general astonishment, in the beards of England and Italy, behind the Swiss mask of M.FLEGENHEIMER, the "*Nénot Palace*" president of the *Academie des Beaux-Arts* and of the *Institut de France*?

This only occupies the specialists for a moment; the only possible outcome will sorely arouse opinion (opinion is the people, is the substance of the S.D.N). But this opinion will be faced by an accomplished fact.

This opinion, since the exhibition of the projects at Geneva has been absorbed by an ever-increasing manifestation of its creed. This history of the palace has become, for the elite, the pretext to proclaim the advent of a new spirit. Violent proclamation, hammered out, repeated, anguished. Spontaneously the voices are raised: "We want a new spirit. The S.D.N. makes no sense without a new spirit."

To the timorous timidity of our excellencies, we will explain: Haussmann was a new spirit; Louis XIV was a new spirit; Jules II was a new spirit; the master builders of the cathedrals were new spirits. All, rejecting the past, breaking with the tradition of their fathers because they had new means at their disposal, have created anew. *And it is this newness of which the history of civilization is composed!*

No, it is no longer possible to erect the nonsensical colossus of M.NENOT, architect of the Sorbonne last century, of M.VAGO, who sticks Byzantium and Rome on postage stamps.

The project of Le Corbusier and Jeanneret has galvanised opinion. Here we give the first waves of this appearance to the european elite. It will take heart if we make it clear that the literature concerning this project is immense (newspapers, periodicals) and also that a glacial silence isolates, in their calm security, those other winners dead to the spirit of their epoch.

CHRISTIAN ZERVOS



**MASTERS OF ARCHITECTURE TESTIFY**  
 ("Cahiers d'Art" Inquiry)

FRANCE

M.Tony Garnier, longtime holder of the grand prix de Rome, holds the premiere position in France in that movement which has renewed modern architecture. M.Tony Garnier, from whom M.Herriot professes a profound admiration, has built for the city of Lyon, the Cattle Market, the Abattoirs, the Stadium, and the Hospital, the most perfect in Europe, where concern for the purpose of an architecture yields in nothing to the search for a simple but perfect plastic form. His influence began previously (publication of the work 'Une Cité Industrielle') to trouble profoundly the teachings of the Ecole des Beaux Arts.

Lyon, 12 November, 1927

*Dear Monsieur Zervos,*

*It would be disastrous if the building of the Palace of the League of Nations is not entrusted to he who was given first prize in the competition judgement and especially given that Le Corbusier presents all guarantees and is one of the most interesting instigators of the renewal of architecture.*

*I remain, Sir, etc*

TONY GARNIER

We are all too young to know the first gestures of Frantz Jourdain in favour of the modern Europe. Energetic gestures, obstinate and strenuous, which led to the foundation of the Salon d'Automne, in opposition to the Salons bogged down by the Nationale and by the Artistes Francais. Before the war, under the impulse of its founder, the Salon d'Automne had become the place of the assises of modern French architecture. The history of the Salon d'Automne is the history of the architecture of these last twenty five years. And the history of the Salon d'Automne is that of Franz Jourdain.

Paris, 25th November, 1927

*My dear Zervos,*

*I write having read, with grief and humiliation, your article; so clear, so loyal, so generous and so courageous, on the competition for the Palace of Nations. Is this how the League of nations, which appeared as a new messiah to naive men like myself, is dishonoured by a judgement - a fiddle rather - so absolutely iniquitous? Apart from the whole aesthetic question, the costing question is essential, and it is cynical to mock so crudely the conditions imposed on the competitors. I know that it is the system adopted by the Institute, which professes the most profound contempt for the "vulgar and contemptible question of money" and which sits majestically on the engagements of honour put with respect to the competitors, but these, until now, were kept in the family. Today it is in full view of the entire world that this infamy took place and it is absolutely necessary to make the League of Nations understand that it cannot be thus soiled and that its watchword is to impose justice on all human events; intellectual, moral and civic.*

*The academic projects presented in your second number are of such ineptitude, such redundancy, such impotence, that it is necessary to be utterly lacking in any sense of the ridiculous to discuss them. These edifices raised on the moon as scenery for the theatre at Chatelet, recall the tendencies which have poisoned the French mentality and which typify completely the lamentable education imposed by the Institute at the Ecole des Beaux Arts. It is the project-type of the Grand Prix de Rome, in all its hideousness and its pretentious stupidity. Only Le Corbusier has realised the genius of his age, its needs, its scientific affinities, and he it is who must construct the modern cathedral which, like the Parthenon, the Pagoda of Angkor, Sainte-Chapelle, and the Place de la Concorde, will glorify his age.*

*I remain sir, etc*

FRANZ JOURDAIN

President of the Modern Architects Group,  
 Founder and President of the Salon d'Automne



M.Gustave Lyon, creator of the Salle Pleyel, a recent technical achievement, memorable in the history of architecture, is an old pupil of the Polytechnique. for more than forty years he has been absorbed in research into the laws of acoustics and he has succeeded in formulating them clearly enough so that in the future he will not have to "correct" halls with deplorable acoustics; on the contrary, one will henceforth be able to construct them according to these laws and to obtain the marvelous results of which the Salle Pleyel is the first example.

M.Gustave Lyon has not collaborated, as has sometimes been written, on the project by MM. Le Corbusier and P.Jeanneret; those architects have applied the theoretical principles of M.Lyon to the Hall of Assembly of the League of Nations.

M.Gustave Lyon said to us:

*I have thoroughly examined the projects at Geneva, I cannot see by what miracle the speakers in all these huge halls will be able to make themselves heard. Only Le Corbusier's Great Hall is constructed on a scientific basis; Le Corbusier and Jeanneret have come to me (along with a good many others) to ask me to explain to them the principles of acoustics that I have formulated through experiment. They understood how to create a perfect diagram and I can confirm that one will be able to hear in their hall. It is very necessary that those who are called to resolve this important question should realise that the hall of the Palace is immense and that any devices of a decorative nature will make hearing simply impossible.*

It was a somewhat delicate matter for us to solicit the appreciation of some great Parisian architects; most of them having participated in the competition for the palace. Perhaps they will give their opinions spontaneously following their colleagues?

Also aligning themselves in our manifesto in favour of the project of Le Corbusier and P.Jeanneret, are the following Parisian architects:

André Lurcat, many of whose projects have been reproduced in these Cahiers, Elkouken, Guevrekian, Moreux.

M.Loos, at present in Paris, writes:

*With all my heart I sign for Le Corbusier, whom I have known for a long time. I am very tempted to think that the question is not settled!*

## AUSTRIA

The personality of M.Joseph Hoffmann of Vienna is at the base of all contemporary architectural evolution. Around 1900, M.Hoffmann headed the movement following Otto Wagner and beside Loos and Olbrich. Commissioned by the authorities of the Empire, he built nearly all the pavilions representing his country in international exhibitions. He founded the Wienerwerkstätte and is a professor at the Viennese School of Architecture.

Vienna, 28th November 1927.

*The Austrian architectural organisations, after a thorough study of the winning projects for the Palace for the League of Nations, are convinced that the project of Le Corbusier-pierre Jeanneret is the best one for building and furthermore, that the choice of definitive project should alternate between the two projects of Le Corbusier and Vago.*

*Le Corbusier has, in so painstaking a fashion that it is obvious, recognised with admirable skill the bases of the programme and has found the most incisive means of expression without any superficial decoration.*

*As much from the point of view of townplanning as from the point of view of the accommodating interior of the plan, he offers a perfect solution, clear and simple and certainly representing a great step forward.*

for the Association of  
Austrian Artists  
"Kunstschau"  
The Committee:  
HANS BOHLER,  
JOSEPH HOFFMANN  
EUGENE STEINHOF,  
ALBERT GUTERSLOH

For the central Association  
of Austrian Artists.  
The Secretary:  
HOFBAUER.  
The President:  
(signature illegible)  
For the Viennese Werkbund,  
O.HAERDTL



## BELGIUM

Henri Van de Velde is one of the most active regenerators of architecture. He participated in the Parisian movement of 1900. Before the war, he was at the head of the applied arts movement in Belgium, then in Germany, where he founded and directed the Weimar school, which has become, after many metamorphoses, the Bauhaus of Dessau. His country finally chose him to head fine arts education in Brussels.

Victor Bourgeois, along with his brother Pierre Bourgeois, is the energetic promotor of the 7 Arts movement in Brussels. He and Van der Swaelmen are the builders of the model modern districts in Brussels.

*Henri Van der Velde, Louis Van der Swaelmen and Victor Bourgeois are happy to sign the manifesto of the Architectural Societies of Central Europe and of Holland, in favour of the project of Le Corbusier, which, by its design (circulation, acoustics, proportion) is essential for an organism such as the League of Nations.*

*Associating themselves with this campaign for a modern concept are the undersigned:*

*A.Barrez, M.Baugniet, P.Bourgeois, M.Casteels, L.Chenoy, Crowet, F.Deboeck, ch. Dekeukeleire, P.Flouquet, J.-J. Gaillard, M.Gaspard, J.Gien, E.Henvaux, W.Kessels, G.Latinis, J.Leonard, K.Maes, J.Mondalt, G.Poupeze, G.Rens, E.Van der Cammen, Van Tonderen, P.Werrie.*

## HOLLAND

Professor H.P.Berlage is one of the plainest figures of modern architecture in the entire world. His influence has been felt by the great majority of the architects of today.

Oud is the chief architect of the City of Rotterdam and no-one ignores the gigantic works which are being achieved by this truly modern municipality.

The other signatories to this letter are counted among the best of European architects. Most of them have been responsible for the construction of huge buildings for the municipal councils of Amsterdam, The Hague, Rotterdam, etc.

*Graverhage, 25th November 1927*

*Dear Monsieur Zervos,*

*Following my letter of 20th November on the subject of your manifesto in favour of a modern project for the Palace of Nations, I petition that you add my name to those of my colleagues:*

*A.H. Van Anrooy, A.boeken, W.Bruin, J.W.E. Buys, J.Duiker, C.Van Eesteren, J.B. Van Loghem, J.J.P.Oud, Van Ravesteyn, G.Rietveld, M.Stam, A.J.v.d.Steur, H.Th.Wydeveld.*

*as it is now a matter of a choice from among nine projects which have each been winners of a sum of 12000 Swiss Francs, we will declare "that outside the whole aesthetic question concerning the facade, the project of Le Corbusier and Pierre Jeanneret presents indisputable advantages as regards the site, the external and internal circulation, the proportions and the acoustics of the Great Hall of Assembly."*

*I remain sir, etc.*

*Dr.H.P.BERLAGE*

## SWITZERLAND

*Zurich, 6th December 1927*

*Among the 377 projects presented in the international competition for the Palace of Nations, only the project of Le Corbusier - Pierre Jeanneret should be retained for execution, as much for its aesthetic as for its practical qualities.*

*Here are the reasons which favour this project: respect for the site, preservation of the*



*bridge and the most beautiful groups of trees, practical organisation of external circulation, notably that of cars, perfect division between the General Secretariat and the Hall of Assembly; rational lighting of the offices and halls; a perfect concept of the Great Hall of Assembly; where good acoustics are scientifically guaranteed by a pre-existing example: the Salle Pleyel in Paris; the use of an absolutely sure means of construction; keeping the project within the sums foreseen in the rules of the competition.*

K.MOSER.

## CZECHOSLOVAKIA

In the Czech group "Manès", one figure stands out: that of M.Goçar, in whose hands is the future of architectural education at the Academy of Prague.

Czechoslovakia, where there is such vitality, has not hesitated to imbue its architecture with the new spirit that animates it. The Czechoslovak architectural movement merits the greatest attention.

*Prague, 24th November, 1927.*

*We, Czechoslovakian artists, see in the League of Nations an institution which, even from an artistic point of view, must be inspired by the spirit of progress, to be opposed to all the forces of reaction and to the old order. We follow its activities with the most lively interest and particularly that concerning the construction project for the building where the League will sit. We were very surprised to hear that in the course of the final deliberations regarding the Palace of the League of Nations at Geneva, it was possible to oppose a truly modern project in favour of projects inspired by an outmoded official architecture, which has lost all contact with life, and only stagnates thanks to the power of certain irresponsible circles.*

*Great was our joy on learning that Le Corbusier's project had obtained one of the prizes for excellence, and we hoped that this project would be chosen to be built. But we deceived ourselves in thinking that the question would be resolved without difficulties, in a spirit of justice, according to the interests of creative art. The fight for modern architecture, we see, is always coming up against obstacles which had apparently been defeated. We note with indignation that even in an international forum it is possible to put forward formal reasons and to commit profound injustices, to the detriment of an artist of eminent stature and of world importance, to support projects the value of which can only be described as provincial.*

*The Society of Artists Manès, which shelters the elite of the architects, painters and sculptors in the republic of Czechoslovakia, rises up in strength in favour of the project of Le Corbusier. It protests against all those interventions which do not proceed from the single desire to give to the new era of the life of nations, its appropriate expression in constructing the building which responds to the superior aspirations of the League of Nations.*

## GERMANY

M.Hugo Häring, secretary of the group "Der Ring" informed us at the last moment that the manifesto of the group will be sent to us in only a few days. We will publish it in the next issue of these *Cahiers*.

"Der Ring" is, in the country best at organisation, the cord linking the most active architects of Germany. The names of this group have become internationally valuable: Walter Gropius, Mies van der Rohe, May, Scharoun, etc.



## THE PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS TAKE ACTION

*To his excellency Mineitcuro Adatchi  
Ambassador of Japan, Brussels*

Zurich (Switz.)  
12th October 1927

Excellency,

the undersigned associations take the liberty of addressing your excellency directly on the subject of the decision to be taken on the projects for the Palace of Nations at Geneva and of begging you to support those of the projects which represent the solution best able to serve as a model for the future.

You have a great deal of power. It is to your commission that the responsibility of deciding between the nine winning projects falls. These nine projects inevitably reflect the diversity of the opinions of the people who formed the jury. These projects represent the most diverse nuances of architecture: that which belongs to the epochs of the development of styles long since abandoned, and that which one can point to as belonging to our age.

The construction of the Palace of Nations is not an ordinary theme. It is a symbol. -It is impossible to imagine that for the League of Nations, the goals of which aim for the future, one should construct a building which does not also represent the ideas of the future.

A house which "must dignify the League of Nations" - as it has been said during the session of 26th September last, - surely cannot, in your opinion, be conceived in an indulgent or so-called historical style. It is why we dare to ask you directly to transmit this point of view to the heart of your commission.

Also, it is not without disquiet that we received news of the increase in the budget from 13 to 19 and a half million francs, fearing that this increase could, if the case arose, favour solutions which the league of Nations may not know how to justify in the long run. This said, quite apart from the question that if the increase is brought into effect it would wrong all the participants of the competition who have conformed strictly to the budget foreseen within the confines of the competition. And, in effect, we have seen that it is possible that projects which develop as their goal a construction which must serve the aims of a modern institution, as is the case with the League of Nations, can keep within the budgetary limits fixed in advance.

It would be regrettable, not only for the development of architecture, but perhaps also for the spirit of the League of Nations, that such an exceptional task was not entrusted to abilities of all strength and where the target is the future.

We have the honour to remain, &c

THE SWISS WERKBUND  
THE GERMAN WERKBUND  
THE ASSOCIATION "THE RING"  
THE ASSOCIATION OF GERMAN ARCHITECTS  
THE ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRIAN ENGINEERS AND  
ARCHITECTS  
THE AUSTRIAN WERKBUND



*The Minister Mr Stephan Osusky,  
15, Avenue Charles-Floquet, Paris*

*Warsaw, 14th October 1927*

Sir,

The Polish architects and painters, gathered under the umbrella of the journal *Praesens*, take the liberty of petitioning you to exercise all your influence on the Commission so that the building of the Palace of the League of Nations in Geneva will be entrusted to the architect Le Corbusier.

Having examined all the projects for the aforesaid palace during the exhibition at Geneva, we are very certain that among the nine winning projects the project of M. Le Corbusier *is the only one capable of representing the League of Nations with dignity*. It possesses all the qualities: a marvellous siting, excellently organised plan and a modern character. This is not only the opinion of the *Praesens* group seeing that modern architects throughout Europe are in agreement on the remarkable qualities of the project of Le Corbusier.

If sir, you could possibly present to the Commission a letter of protest against the building of projects such as those of MM. Vago, Broggi or Nenot-Flegenheimer, we ask that you indicate to us to whom this letter should be addressed, and we will send it by return.

We hope that you will deign to notice our petition and thank you in advance; we remain sir,  
&c.

SZYMON SYRKUS, BOHDAN LACHERT, JOZEF SZANAJCA, JOZEF MALINOWSKI, HELENA NIEMIROWSKA, HENRYK STAZEWSKI, SLEKSANDER RAFALOWSKI, STANISLAW BRUKALSKI, BARBARA BRUKALSKA.

*His Excellency the Minister of the  
Czechoslovakian Republic, Stephan Osusky,  
15 Avenue Charles-Floquet, Paris*

The Society of architects, sculptors and painter "Opbouw" in Rotterdam permits itself to inform Your Excellency, as secretary of the Commission entrusted with the choice of a project for the League of Nations, of the following considerations:

That the principle of the League of Nations is to find a true expression of the ideal development of this age.

That this age has produced an architecture which embodies in an ideal form the real needs of our time.

That this architecture no longer evolves according to fashionable movements of the day but one can see above all that it is solidly rooted in the life of today.

That Architecture which takes its departure from historical forms does not ever fulfil the needs of a time, and consequently does not express its idea,

That the architect-members of the Society "Opbouw" after thorough studies of the nine projects under consideration, are of the opinion that the project of Le Corbusier answers all the stipulated conditions,

That furthermore, these members are persuaded that the project mentioned demonstrates in the most noble fashion the great work of the League of Nations.

Thus the Society "Opbouw" has the honour to request directly that your excellency agree to stress to the commission that the project of Le Corbusier should be chosen for building.

THE SOCIETY OF ARCHITECTS, SCULPTORS AND  
PAINTERS "OPBOUW", ROTTERDAM



## Document 5

### THE EUROPEAN PRESS GIVES ITS VERDICT

**La Lumiere** (25th June 1927, Paris): "Such is the project which found a means of uniting the latest technical improvements with the latin tradition. The League of Nations should pride itself on expediting its building, because it should offer thus to contemporary architecture a "summation" of the aesthetics and of the science of our time, and the S.D.N., contemporary architecture, and the French artists should pride themselves on the building of the Le Corbusier-Jeanneret project."

Georges HUISMANS

**Das Werk** (Zurich, June 1927): "The Le Corbusier-Jeanneret project might appear to us worthy of holding the attention of those who are called to fix the definitive choice of the League of Nations, because indisputably, it brings to the problem of the organisation of the services of the League of Nations, a logical and well-thought-out solution, and because it responds to the exigencies imposed by the siting and the actual Secheron site. From the most enlightened point of view, it responds to the most noble aspirations of our time, because of the fact that it wholly renounces all false luxury, all pretentious bombast, because it is similar in its very spirit, if one wishes to go to the bottom of things, to the spirit of this place, where the most representative manifestations are neither the Maison Royale Dôme at Eaux-Vives, nor the pagodas of Pré - L'Evêque, nor, similarly, the roofs and pinnacles of certain neo-Swiss houses, but very much in the pure and simple orderings of the lines of the Corraterie, of the Quai des Berques and the Great Quai.

"... The project of Le Corbusier and Pierre Jeanneret is made for the site for which it was intended.

"... In our opinion, adorning an institution of the future such as the League of Nations, in a costume modelled on the engravings of a fashion of bygone days, is a nonsense. It is really a confession of impotence, since the new spirit which must animate the peoples and the international organ they have created, must then be buried in a cenotaph built by men who have no faith in the resources of the present and who hope for nothing from the future..."

Camille MARTIN, Geneva

**Journal de Geneve** (10th July): "If our attention is held by the project of Le Corbusier and Pierre Jeanneret, it is not that the others lack value, but uniquely because it has most safe-guarded the natural beauties, while being capable of producing an external envelope which conforms to these last, while the dimensions and the architecture of the greater number of the other projects appear to us to be out of proportion with the site which is to receive them."

Guillaume FATIO.

**Le Travail** (Geneva): "Le Corbusier and Pierre Jeanneret have had the greatest understanding and are raised far above the other competitors, by a very evocative and very new plan, because they had at heart an ardent thirst to build, for the good of humanity, that house which is for the American, for the Russian... That said, it remains only to pay homage, and for the visitor who has realised the value of taking the trouble to study this project, always surrounded by admirers, at length, to recognise in all sincerity that it is placed without any doubt at the head of the list..."

**Neue Zürcher Zeitung** (21st July 1927): "Of four hundred projects, only eight contestants truly produced lively solutions (2.p. 100) and only one really answered appropriately in the ordering and in the organisation so that the building works might immediately follow. We have mentioned the Le Corbusier project before (15th May), and today after examining the project, we return to it. We can only comprehend the general praise which marks out this project by the fact that here the new architecture has reached a level which leads to a proposition valid for us."

GIEDION

**Basler Nachrichten** (27th June 1927): "The verdict, as it has been called, does not fall on an unknown name but on that of a true leader: Le Corbusier, whose name in the midst of those of the prizewinning architects has by far the greatest international reputation. And it is very significant that his project comes in at around 11 million francs, and that the grand concepts, sumptuously monumental, should cost around 50 million."

**Bund** (Berne, 30th June 1927): "What particularly moves us in the Le Corbusier project, is not accidental, not an exciting modernity... It is not a matter of a capricious fashion, but the very fruit



of a long-breathing work, crowning a slow and exceptionally precise organisation of architectural fact.  
D.S.G.

**Neue Zürcher Zeitung** (14th July, 1927): "It is unfortunately in 377 projects, the only one devoid of formulae, animated by a joyful freedom and representing the direct line of living architecture, as remote from the theatrical pathos called "classical" as from the hysterical bellows of a limited machinist modernity."

P.M.

**Journal de Geneve** (5th July, 1927): "MM. Le Corbusier and Pierre Jeanneret are the only ones who had principally considered the conservation of the beautiful existing trees on the land to be used."  
Cd.

**Journal de Geneve** (8th July 1927): "It is indisputably the project which raises the most passionate discussions because of the novelty of the architectural solutions which it proposes. However, all the world is agreed on the ingenuity and the excellence of the general plan which we have previously spoken of."

**Gazette de Cologne** (Germany, 11th July 1927): "In this case, it is to be hoped that the project of Le Corbusier be chosen to build; he is at least a creative artist."

Albert DENEKE (one of the winning competitors)

**Frankfurter Zeitung** (Germany, 20th July 1927): "For us all, who have for many years put all our hopes on the name of Le Corbusier, it was a great joy to learn that his project was placed in the first rank and recognised today, after the exhibition, by the greater number of visitors to Geneva as being by far the best project of the competition... this project unites in so perfect a manner the advantages of the site for the building, the discreet beauties of the architecture, with the technical arrangements for the construction, so that each day the voices urging that this project should be built, become stronger. There is no doubt that the League of nations should thereby gain a seat which would become the purest document of modern architecture, the best work of a man creative in the highest measure."

Joseph GANTNER.

**L'Europe Nouvelle** (Paris, 10th September 1927): "Of all the projects, this is the most economical one, and it is also the only one to respect the beauty of the shores of the lake of Geneva. So? Where does the opposition to the Le Corbusier project, the building of which we await, come from?"

Here the coalition of traditionalists which denies the ability of Le Corbusier and Jeanneret to understand beauty, intervenes. In spite of everything - the whole of the 19th century - in spite of the discoveries of engineers, beauty - architectural - is always made of a superimposed order of pastries and of flourishes. That the brothers Perret and Le Corbusier defend the straight line and simplicity, of which opinion acknowledges the rigour, if it is a matter of a construction of small dimensions. but when it is a question of a vast edifice, an audacious aesthetic is no longer possible. It is necessary, without discussion, to return to the eternal tired old formulae and to the standard pseudo-beauty.

Can one maintain to the very doubtful members of the S.D.N. that an infallibility in matters of aesthetics exists, and can one say, in nominating the Le Corbusier-Jeanneret project: "This alone represents beauty"? Let us guard against all dogmatism. But what is indisputable, is that we should commit the most distressing of errors, the most severe historical and aesthetic nonsense, in housing the S.D.N. in a palace of pastiche."

**7 Arts** (Brussels, 27th November 1927): "Let us add that M. Lemaesquier, French delegate, appears to have been one of the principal adversaries of the project of his fellow citizens, Le Corbusier-Jeanneret. When therefore will France, who possesses the creators of the winning plan in all areas of modern activity, realise the harm its "official" delegates did to it abroad: the precious choices of bald skulls, or of the bewigged of the Institute, the Academy and of the subsidised theatres?"

"... The European Elite is moved by these negotiations; most of the specialist journals, the principal architectural associations and the most renowned architects of Germany, Holland, Austria, Czechoslovakia, France, Belgium, etc..., have taken a position in favour of the Le Corbusier - Jeanneret project. Could the S.D.N. prefer the political schemes of Italy and England to living, artistic Europe?"

Victor BOURGEOIS



**La Suisse** (Geneva, 12th October 1927): "...If I have reserved my impressions on the work of Le Corbusier and Jeanneret to the end, it is because I would like to share with the reader a little bit of what I have experienced in contemplating the two modest edifices representing their part in this showing of the art of our epoch. I had read some of their works and understood some of their buildings. I had seen in them the theoreticians of the modern movement in art; also the practitioner incorporating in the sphere of housing the scientific methods adopted by our engineers and industrialists. The technical precision, the ease of maintenance, the rational comfort that we admire in a liner, they want for our houses and furniture. Why not? These things are addressed to the intelligence, and I find them perfectly reasonable, but ...what role should they play in our aesthetic concept? Because finally we have a sensibility? A certain reserve is essential and I understand those who, while entirely supporting their brilliant project for the palace of Nations, demand a revision of their facades. It is true that the plans of Le Corbusier and Jeanneret are vulnerable to accusations of representing cardboard buildings with the appearance of factories; is this not simply because they scorn the use of the simulcra of easy trompe l'oeil to which a certain school has so habituated us that even the professional man is fooled into accepting it?"

**L'Architecture Vivante** (Autumn-Winter 1927, Paris): "...This gigantic competition which brings together 377 projects covering in all about 10 kilometres of hanging space has (if we are to believe other reports besides the official jury report) marked out above all others the project of Le Corbusier and Pierre Jeanneret. Perhaps at the moment of the final decision one will understand exactly the discussions which occupied the 64 jury sessions!

"For the moment, the exhibition of all projects now drawing to a close in Geneva, has shown that the public and the professionals had found themselves carried along by the novel ideas of this project. The daily papers and the specialist journals of all countries have joined in decisive contributions which constitute the principle and recognise the indisputable manifestation of the contemporary spirit.

"We can say this: the reward given to the project of le Corbusier and Pierre Jeanneret has been underlined everywhere as an event. One expects from the League of Nations the gesture which will deliver to these architects the opportunity of realising one of the key works of the age."

Jean BADOVICI

**L'Europe Centrale** (Prague, 5th November 1927): "...This project, the only one representing the modern spirit, is due to Le Corbusier and Pierre Jeanneret: two Swiss architects based in Paris. It is clearly the most interesting entry of all, worthy of the proposed goal on all points, and of the reputation of its authors, Le Corbusier in particular, who may be considered as one of the inspirers of our modern architecture.

"...Let us suggest that the project of le Corbusier-Jeanneret win the votes of all disinterested professionals, of the associations of architects from all parts of the world, and even of the personnel of the League Secretariat.

"...Also the Czechoslovakian artistic milieux have judged it necessary to impress upon the representative of their country that all their sympathy, and that of the public, is with Le Corbusier, with this great architect who has previously exercised a marked influence on the development of Czechoslovak architecture. And it may be hoped that French opinion, which sees in Le Corbusier one of the most remarkable architects of the time, will have the courage to emphasise this. Then it will really be necessary for the League of Nations to decide in favour of the greatest worth."

Karel TEIGE<sup>57</sup>

**L'Intransigeant** (10th November 1927, Paris): "- A Battle about a place. The Genevois are suspicious of the archaic architectural projects for the League of Nations. There is fighting at Geneva. Who is to be believed? They fight about a palace, a palace which does not yet exist: "...But what surprised us more was seeing the singular manoeuvres of which the project of two Swiss architects, MM. Le Corbusier and Jeanneret, was to be the victim. This project, by I do not know what scheming, after being accepted, was excluded, not because it had not answered the conditions of the competition, but because the plans had been drawn on a paper not conforming to the regulations! Finally, before the impending scandal, it was reprieved and ranked among the best.

"Nothing could be more just. This project, of all of them, responded to the soul of the Genevois, at the same time as it satisfied the needs of the League of Nations and the most daring, yet most rational concepts of modern art. An essential point for us, instead of threatening the countryside, threatening the trees and blocking the coastline with an interminable facade, he had set his structures down between these trees in the available glades, presenting to the lake only a relatively limited bulk; the countryside keeping its lines.



"... Most of the informed Genevois were enthusiastic. Their surprise was all the more acute when they saw that it was the most controversial in high places.

"... Geneva," an old and distinguished Genevois remarked to us, "will very much want to have its say - since it will have to endure the new building.

"This point has been made before. It must be heard."

Gabriel BOISSY

**Vossische Zeitung** (Berlin, 3rd November 1927): "What obliges us to take a position at this moment, is the news from Geneva informing us that the two projects which are top of the list are those of le Corbusier and Vago. The decision between Le Corbusier and Vago symbolises very precisely the decision between today and the day before yesterday.

"... To the Le Corbusier project put thus in competition with Vago go all the best wishes of those who want to see the new political face of the League of Nations turned towards the future and not towards the past.

"... It is to be hoped that the representatives of the five states will have the courage to be free of the emptiness of conventional architecture."

Dr. Adolf BEHNE

**Bauwelt** (Berlin, 3rd November 1927): "The battle unfolding at Geneva over the building of the palace of Nations is, truthfully, not a battle, because it is a matter (if one defines it from the evolutionary point of view) of things long since resolved! It is a matter of phantoms. Perhaps fate will spare us to see these phantoms embodied. In any case, the necessary will be done so that the League of Nations cannot commit a sin with good conscience.

"... It will not be possible to do anything in secret. Before general agitation, it will be perceived everywhere. In Switzerland, voices publicly denounce the increased budget as a breach of contract. If the decisions of the League of Nations should take on the secretive tone which has been mentioned, not much insight is needed to realise that a scandal such as has not been seen for a long time, would explode.

"But over and above this question of right, there remains one no less important: moral prestige. One cannot put it any other way.

"A League of Nations which wishes to survive must be in touch with life.

"To live means productivity, and productivity is only found in the direction of the forces of the future.

"In a League of Nations which is wedded to phantoms, those phantoms will one day re-emege in force to destroy it."

**Neue Zürcher Zeitung** (9th November, Morning edition): "The Parisian journal Cahiers d'Art, published in issue No.7-8, signed by its editor, M.Christian Zervos, an article entitled "Who will build the Palace of Nations at Geneva?" The author narrates the less than glorious history of the final decision of the jury with these three times nine prizes and the strange roundabout way in which each one of the nine jury members had had to displace a project previously placed at the head of the line. Then, much later, came this curious manoeuvre: The League of Nations decided at the last moment to increase the budget of 13 million to 19 million. All these less-than-edifying facts are faithfully related. At the root there appeared to be a systematic opposition to the Le Corbusier project for its modern and uncompromising spirit. The increase of the budget at last analysis is directed only at him, because if the le Corbusier project which had followed the programme entirely faithfully and which, by its frank daring and by the logical adaption of new techniques to the practical ends of a Palace of Nations, had attracted the attention of those who are determined to follow the new architectural way, if this project can make do with 12 million, then the raising of funds indicates that in some circles Le Corbusier's project is not wanted, but that someone prefers to go about matters in the most diplomatic way...

"Beside the positive character of the Le Corbusier project, one sees all the more the monumental grandiloquence of the projects of Labro (Paris), Nénot and Flegenheimer (Paris), Lefevre (Paris) and the unspeakable characters of the Italian projects of Vago, Broggi and associates.

Dr. Hans TROG.



**Document 6<sup>58</sup>.**

*("Cahiers d'Art" No. 10. January 1928)*

**WHO WILL BUILD THE PALACE OF NATIONS?****III. THE DECISION OF THE JURY**

**The committee consisting of MM.**

**ADATCHI (Japan)**

**OSUSKY (Czechoslovakia)**

**SIR HILTON YOUNG (England)**

**POLITIS (Greece)**

**URRUTIA (Columbia)**

has decided that

**THE PALACE OF NATIONS**

will be built by

**M.NENOT**

**PRIX DE ROME**

Member of the Institute

President of the Salon of French Artists

*Here are the declarations of M.Nénot to L'Intransigeant, 24th december 1927:*

The French team had as its goal, when it was not in the running, the holding in check of Barbarism. What we call Barbarism is a certain architecture, or more exactly, a certain anti-architecture which has been causing an uproar for some years now in Eastern and Northern Europe, no less horrible than that style "Coup de Fouet" which happily we have crushed over the last twenty years. It denies all the belles époques of history, and, anyway, insults common sense and good taste.

**It is a great victory against barbarism!!**

We hope that his pretty cry of victory will delight all those who believe that art and great works of human genius are the privilege of the nationalists, and all the more so since Le Corbusier, whose project was worked on until the last moment, as much by the jury as by public opinion and finally by the very experts of the commission of Five, is in reality the best-known representative of the latin movement of contemporary architecture.

The victory of M.Nenot, thank god, neatly breaks the line of architectural evolution started in the 19th century by Labrouste, who was not, so we understand, a northern Barbarian.

*We have known for a year that the Institute had won the field but all the same we wished to protest against this reactionary intellectual force fighting for the very existence of the Ecole des Beaux Arts.*

*And finally we ask:*

**WHAT DO HONEST PEOPLE THINK OF THIS CARICATURE OF A COMPETITION**

where

1. The candidate was chosen in advance.
2. The contestant selected by the jury of architects was prevented from constructing the Palace of Nations by the ridiculous pretext that this project was presented in printer's ink (see "Cahiers d'Art" No.7-8)
3. The price of construction set at 13million Swiss Francs, under pain of disqualification of the entrant, was increased to double the amount, purely to favour the pre-selected candidate.
4. The candidate chosen for the construction of the Palace of Nations has total freedom to modify his project completely in order to give a lightweight satisfaction to public opinion which proved very scandalised by the evasions devised behind the diplomatic scene.

Is the League of Nations aware of the immorality of this competition?

**Christian ZERVOS**



**Document 5:** from a speech by M.Paul-Boncour<sup>59</sup> gleaned between two puffs of a cigarette:

....."Thinking about it, wasn't it always thus, under all regimes? Was the solid framework of French history not made by the laborious effort of great stewards? They are called Colbert<sup>60</sup>, they are called Carnot<sup>61</sup>. They toil, they build, while kings strut about, or where the politicians declaim. The regimes collapse, the masses turn away from things they once cheered; politics pass; the structure remains, and it is the essential thing."

(*Le Journal*, 24th May 1928)

\*  
 \* \*

Colbert?  
O that a new Colbert would suddenly appear! Above all, with passion, we are innumerable, we who await him. A clear-headed man, but a man who believes.  
A man steeped in his time!



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## Notes on translation

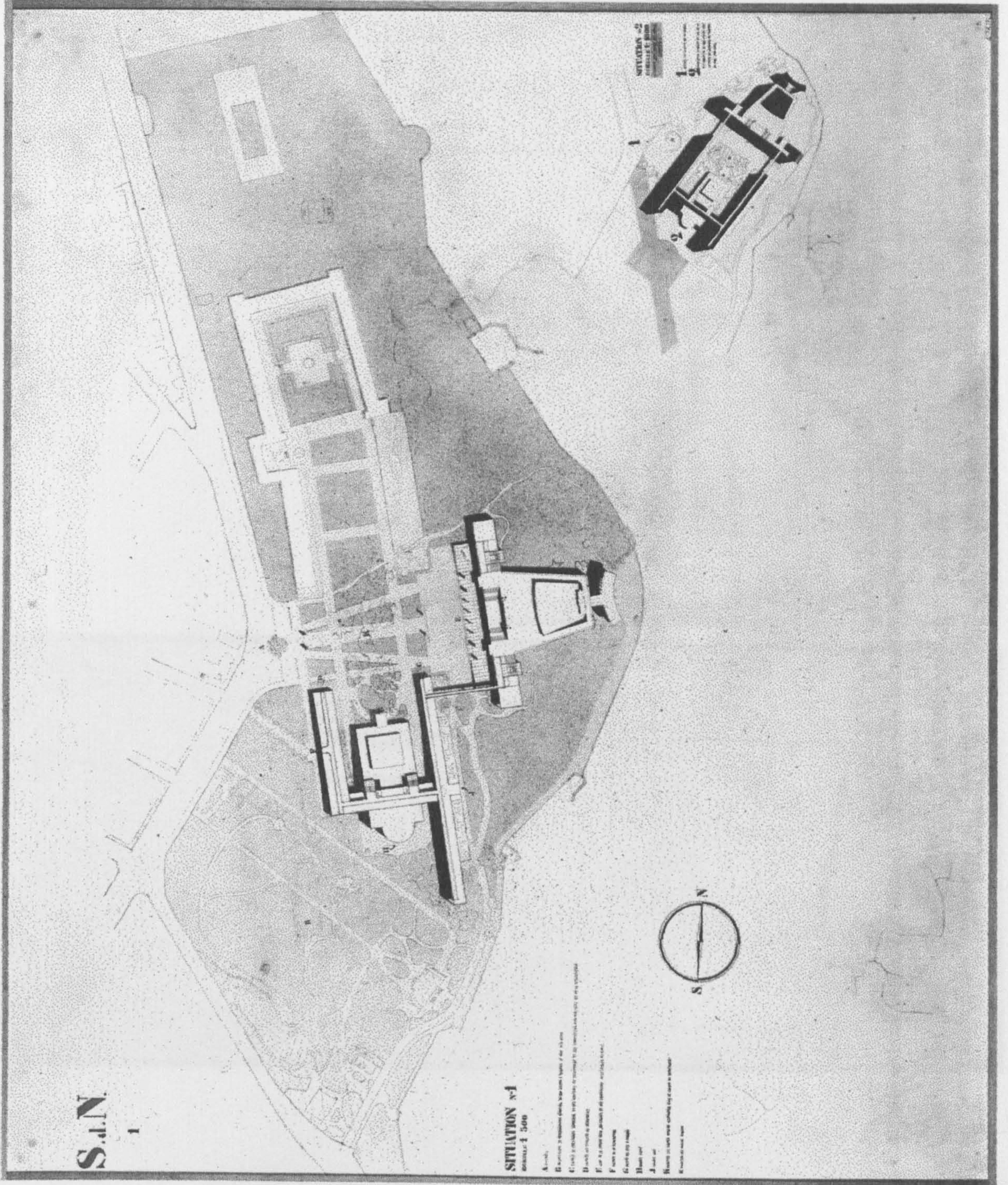
- 1 P2 - Fr. *effusion*
- 2 P3 - Fr. *mathématique* - strength, rigour, precision, logic.
- 3 P4 - Fr. *violente* - intense, fierce, severe
- 4 P4 - In *Vers une Architecture*.
- 5 P4 - See *Les Arts Decoratifs d'Aujourd'hui*
- 6 P5 - Fr. *habiter* and not *vivre* - wordplay lost in English
- 7 P6 - *laisser-aller* - carelessness, apathy
- 8 P8 - Fr. *ordonne* -to order/organise. A keyword in this thesis.
- 9 P14 - Fr. *rapports* - relationships, ratios. A keyword in this text. Translated as 'relationships' which conveys the more general, meaningful juxtapositions about which Le Corbusier is talking; 'ratios' implies a more specific and mathematical conjunction - of course, an underlying mathematical ratio may be the basis of a particular *rapport*.
- 10 P16 - Fr. *enfants terribles*
- 11 P18 - Fr. *spectacle* -sight, spectacle.
- 12 P20 - Fr. *classer* - to be ranked or classified
- 13 P22 - La Palisse - the following explanation supplied by Peter Vogelpoel:  
 His name has been associated with pleonastic truisms, or lines of reasoning that beg the question or come to ludicrously obvious conclusions, known as *lapalissades*. ...The origin of this was not La Palisse himself, but a song sung *about him* by the soldiers he was in command of; the last lines go something like this:  

*Un quart d'heure avant sa mort*  
*il était encore en vie*
- 14 P32 - Fr. *deformer* - to deform, distort, (of metal) to bend
- 15 P32 - Fr. *sensible* - having an effect on the senses, provoking a sensual response. Translated throughout this passage as "perceptible", although this does not convey the impression of a sensual *power*.
- 16 P32 - Fr. *un coeur* - a noble-hearted or courageous person
- 17 P36 - By the medieval poet, Charles d'Orleans.
- 18 P38 - Fr. *la nature le traque*.
- 19 P44 - Fr. *réserve*. Stock, store, funds, means, resources. translated here as *resources*.
- 20 P48 - Fr. *la lande*. Can mean 'heath' or 'moor'. '*Le Landes*' refers to the South - West of France specifically.
- 21 P48 - Christopher Green has identified the huts described here as the fishermen's shacks of the Arcachon Basin. See *Le Corbusier, Architect of the Century*, ed. Tim Benton, 1987. The landscape Le Corbusier describes is unique: the great vineyards of the Médoc, west of Bordeaux, give way to a heathland scattered with pine trees, marshy in places. Beyond this heathland, a line of lakes runs north to south, parallel to the Atlantic coast, but cut off from the sea by a line of encroaching sand dunes. At Arcachon the sea has broken through, and the lakes drain into it. Le Corbusier had known this landscape since at least 1918, when his collaboration with Ozenfant began [see Susan L. Ball,] and definitely since 1923, when he built ten small houses for Henri Frugès at Lèges, just north of the peninsula described in this passage. [His houses at nearby Pessac, west of Bordeaux, were built between 1924 - 1926.]
- 22 50 - Fr. *sauvage* - savage, primitive, native, rustic. Noble savage?
- 23 P52 - Fr. *dignité*.
- 24 P53 - '*they*' - the 'Academies' depicted as maggots gorging on carrion.
- 25 P54 - The *Cercle Militaire de Saint-Augustin* is a building in Paris [8 Place Saint-Augustin], seat of a military club, completed around the time of this book. The building takes its name from its address, rather than the other way around.
- 26 P54 *credits* - Old French monetary unit.
- 27 P66 - It is not clear where he wrote this. From the context, he might be referring to the 1st CIAM conference.



- 28 P84 - *Vers une Architecture* .
- 29 P94 - This paeon of praise to the benefits of pilotis recalls Le Corbusier's codification of the 'Five Points of a New Architecture' in his *Oeuvre Complète* vol1, p128.
- 30 P100 - Fr. type - another keyword in this text.
- 31 P101 - Fr. *fenêtre en longueur*
- 32 P101 - Floor slabs are spaced 3 metres apart vertically.
- 33 p101 - *Les Procuraties*: seat of the Venetian administrators. The *Procuratie Vecchie* completed c.1532, and the *Procuratie Nuove*, 1582 -1640.
- 34 P106 - The reference is unknown.
- 35 P106 - Character of the Palace: 'Character' as in the Beaux Arts usage, see Donald Drew Egbert
- 36 P111 - Fr. *brouhaha*
- 37 P111 - *une audition*
- 38 P114 - *Monsieur Tout le Monde*
- 39 P134 - Hotel National, Geneva - seat of the League before completion of the current UN buildings.
- 40 P134 - Fr. *Chez nous* - literally, our house/home.
- 41 P138 - Recalls Terragni's *Casa del Fascio* [1930], where all the entrance doors could be opened simultaneously.
- 42 P143 - In French:  
       ....et donnant à tout le problème si complexe de la circulation, au cours d'une session,  
       un classement automatique, obligatoire, forcé, dispensant de tout contrôle.
- 43 P147 - Fr. *systematiser*
- 44 P152 - Fr. *couronnement* - coronation, crown
- 45 P160 - Fr. *riant* - laughing
- 46 P173 - Fr. *coup de Fouet* - a whiplash. *Petit Robert* gives the figurative meaning as 'excitation, impulsion vigoureuse'
- 47 P193 - Fr. *rage de l'ordonnance*
- 48 P193 - Fr. *plates-bandes* - lintels or architraves formed from plain horizontal bands
- 49 P194 - Fr. *particulier*.
- 50 P195 - This document was printed as a bright orange flyer by Christian Zervos and a number survive in the archive of the Fondation Le Corbusier. Documents 4 & 6 [p 216 & 227] were later flyers in the series which updated the information in Document 1.
- 51 P196 - Fr. *avertissements* - here meaning 'admonishments', 'warnings', 'reproaches'.
- 52 P196 - The *Requête* - reproduced on p198-214
- 53 P208 - Fr. *cassation*
- 54 P214 - Fr. *on le poussa*
- 55 P216 - This was also a flyer for distribution. See note 51.
- 56 P216 - Fr. *tractation occulte*
- 57 P225 - A year later, Teige, adopting the stance of the *Neue Sachlichkeit*, attacked Le Corbusier's Mundaneum project, and by implication, the Palace of Nations, which is in many ways a forerunner to it, and arises out of a similar idealism.
- 58 P227 - See note 51. This is the third and last flyer in the series.
- 59 P228 - M. Joseph Paul-Boncour [1873-1972]- a prominent French politician; minister of labour [1911]; also held a number of important positions in the 1930s. Formed a breakaway socialist party [1931]; notable for voting against granting full powers to Petain [1940].
- 60 P228 - Jean Baptiste Colbert, known as the Great Colbert, the most prominent member of a distinguished family of French administrators under LOUIS XIV, directed virtually all of France's internal affairs from 1661 to 1683. Best known for Colbertism, also a great codifier of laws and an initiator of state cultural and scientific undertakings. [*Grolier Encyclopaedia*]
- 61 P228 - The Carnots: a distinguished French family - Lazare Carnot, the 'organiser of victory' during the French Revolution, later Napoleon's minister of war. His oldest son, Nicolas was a physicist, his second son, Hippolyte, was a writer and editor, also a notable reformer of the French education system. His son, Sadi, was minister of finance, then fourth president of the Third Republic. Assassinated in 1894 by an anarchist. [*Grolier Encyclopaedia*].

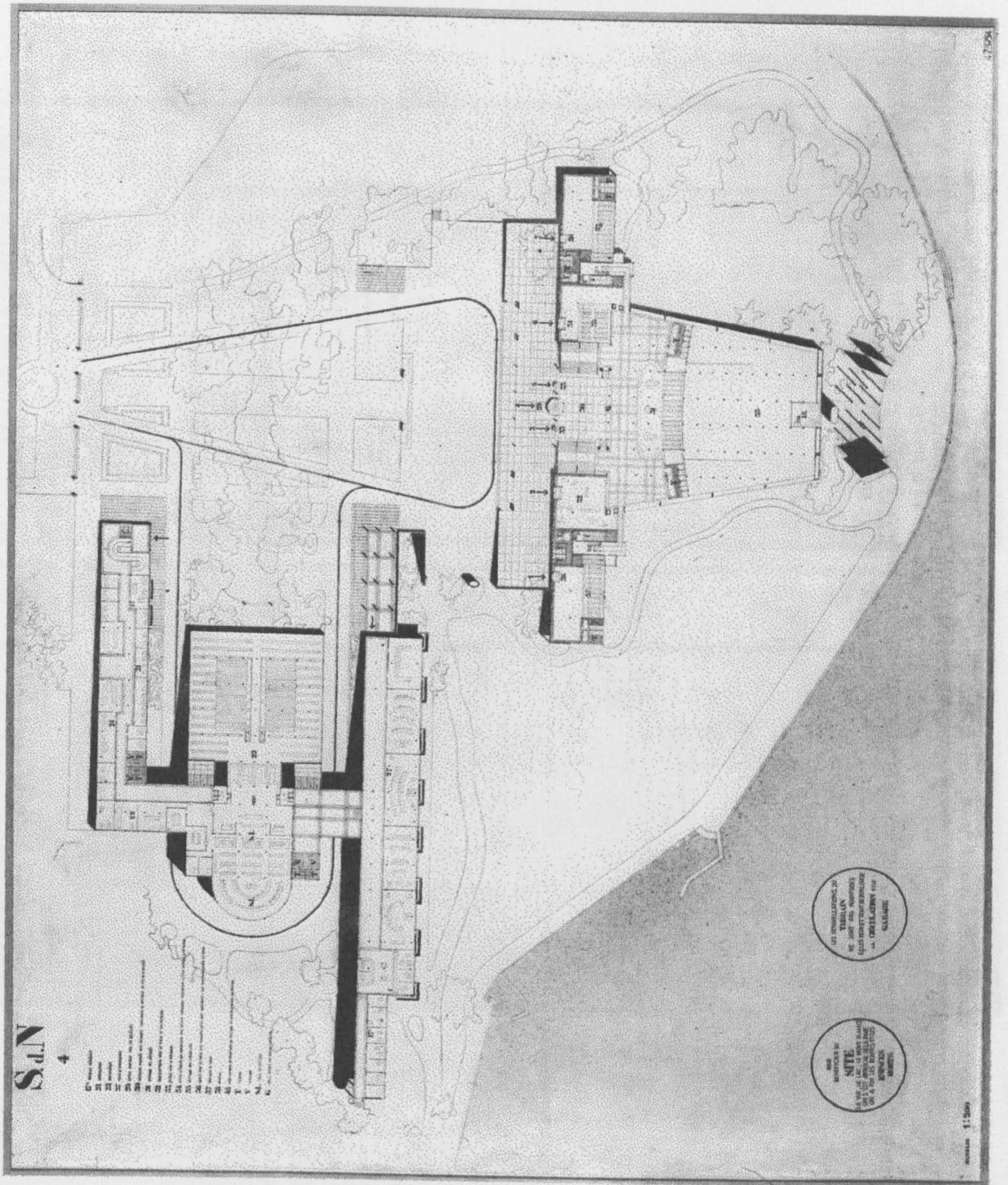












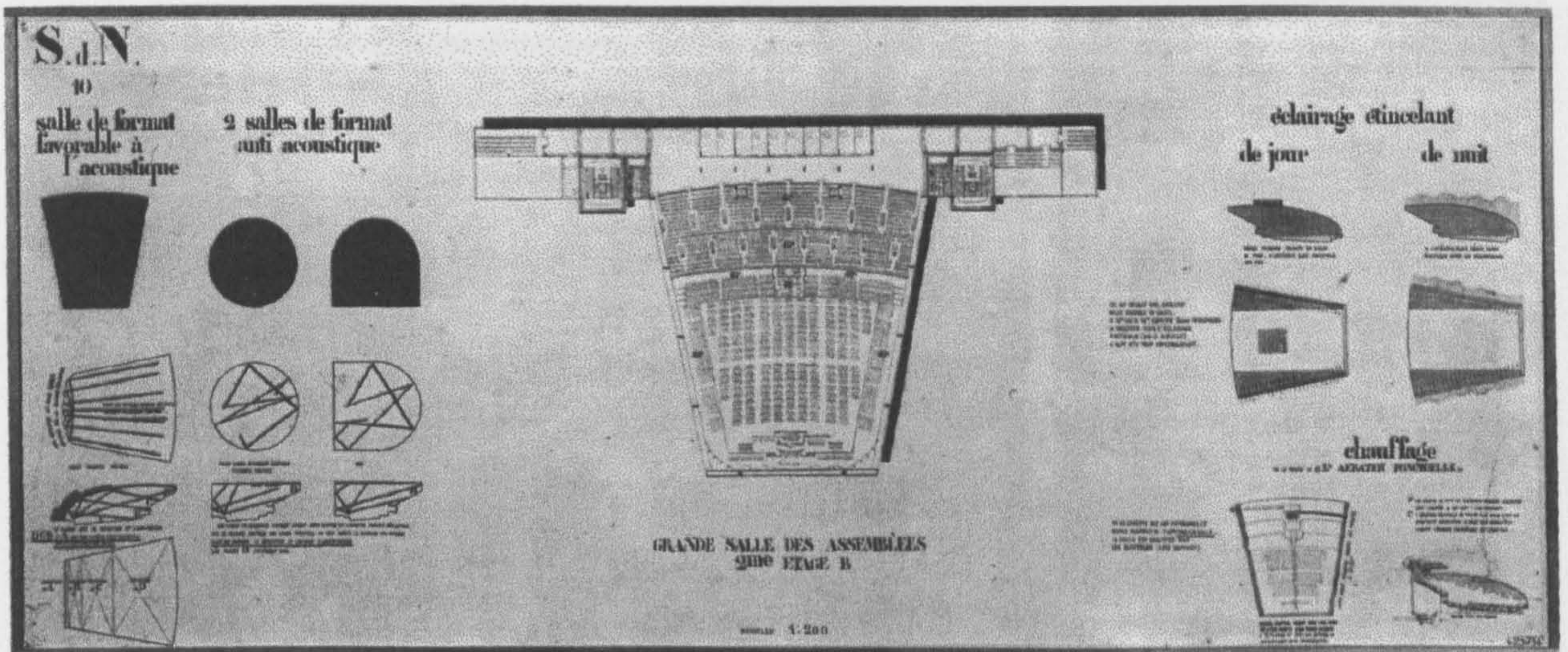
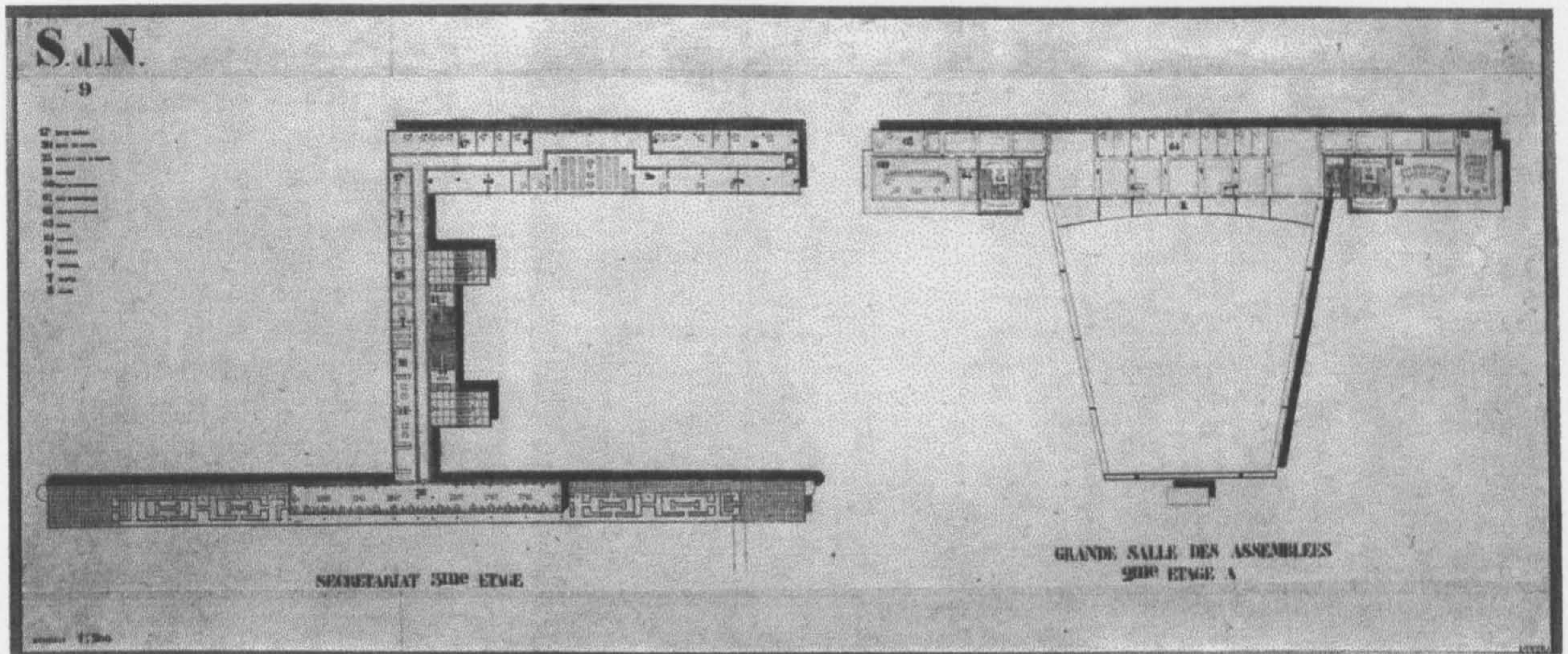




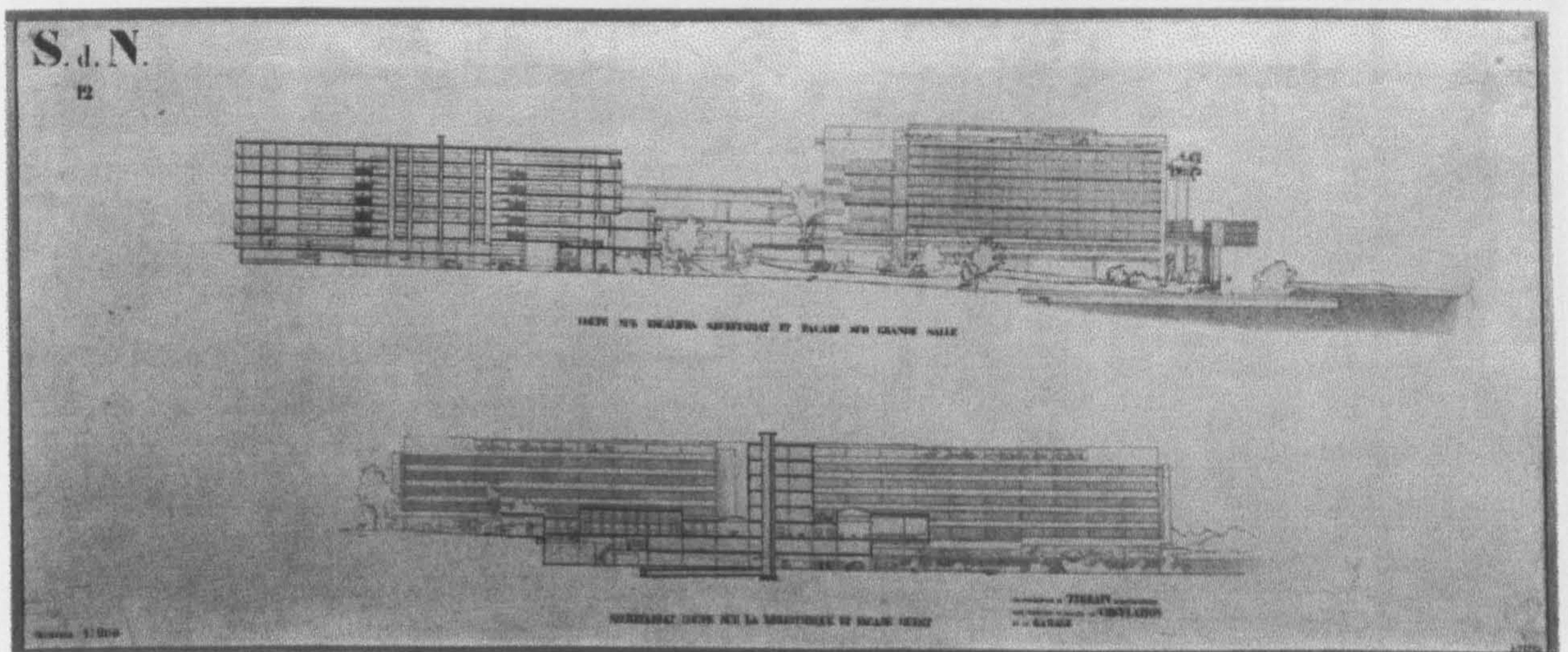
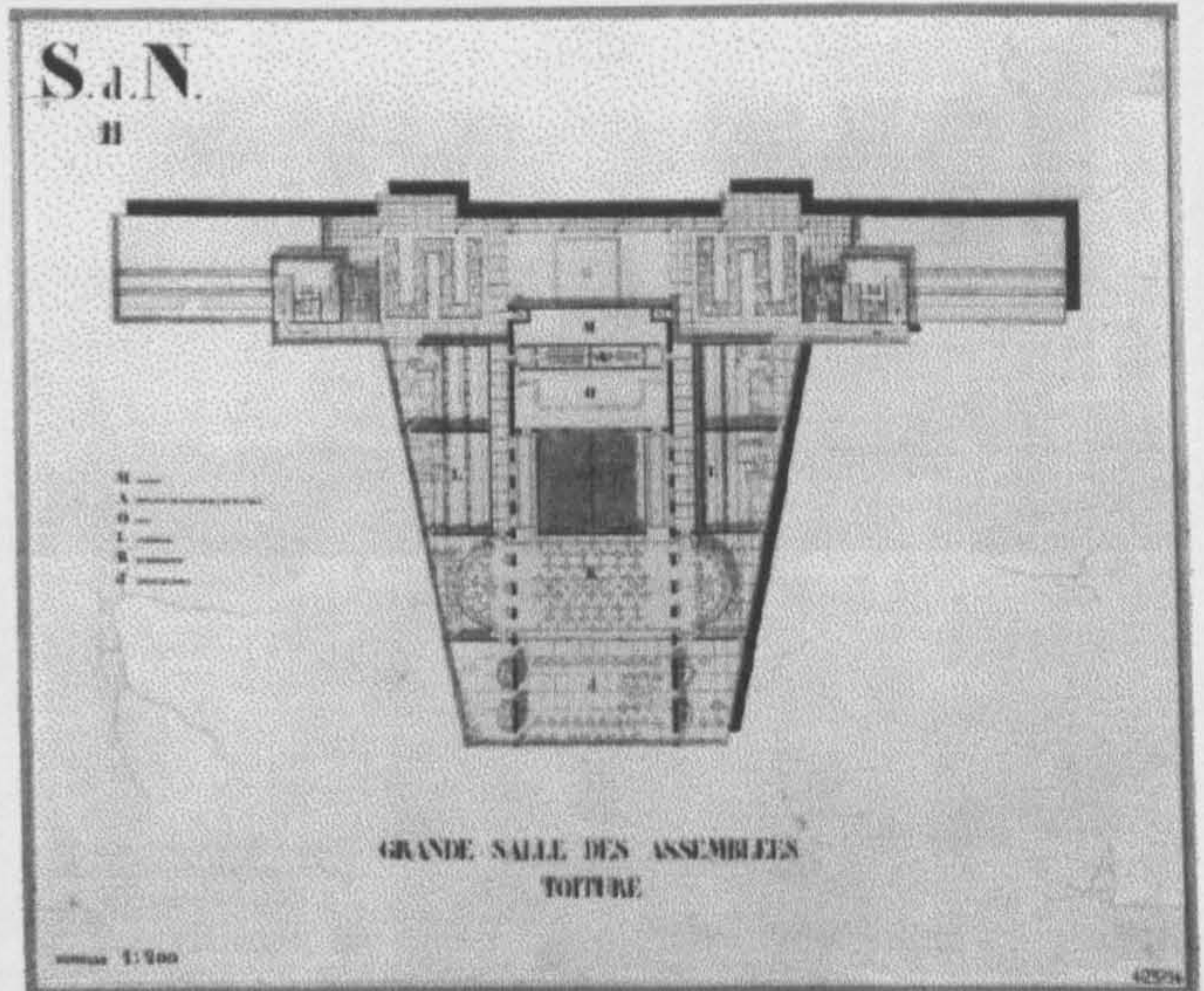




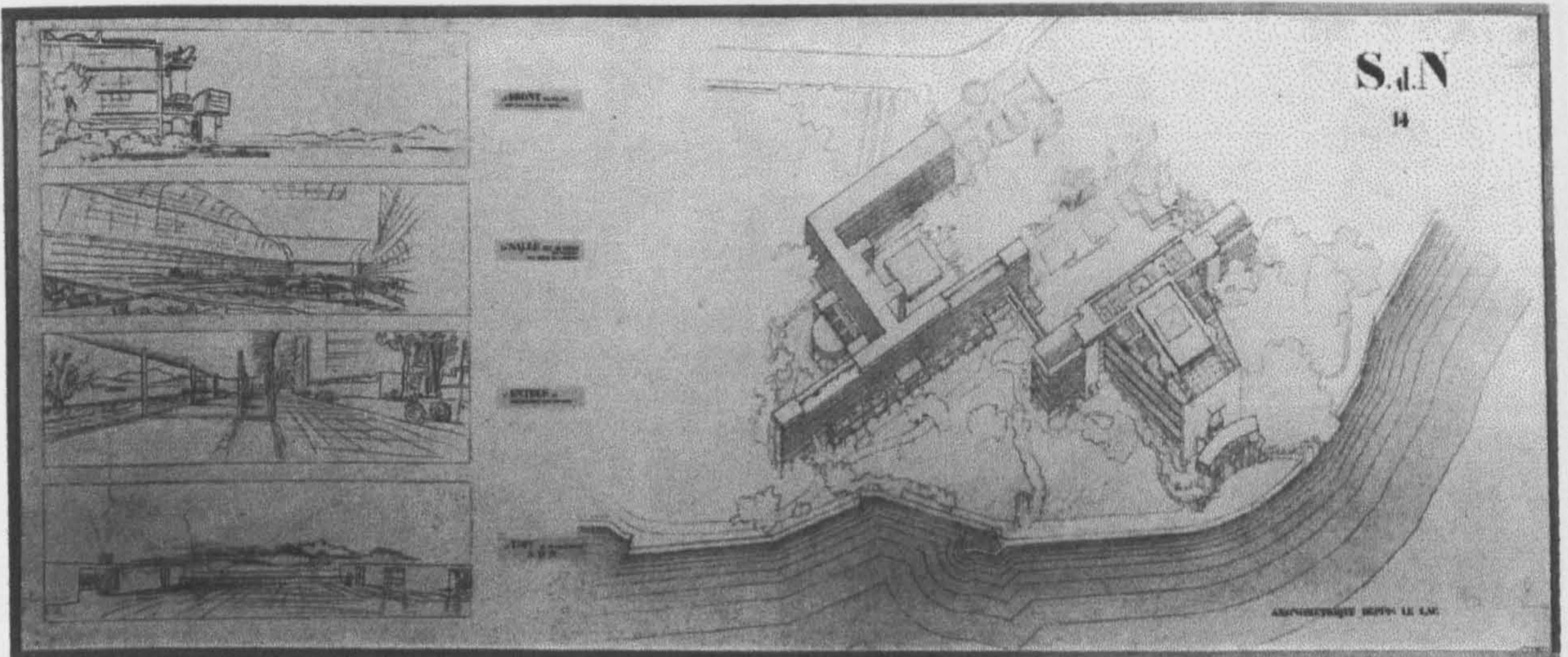
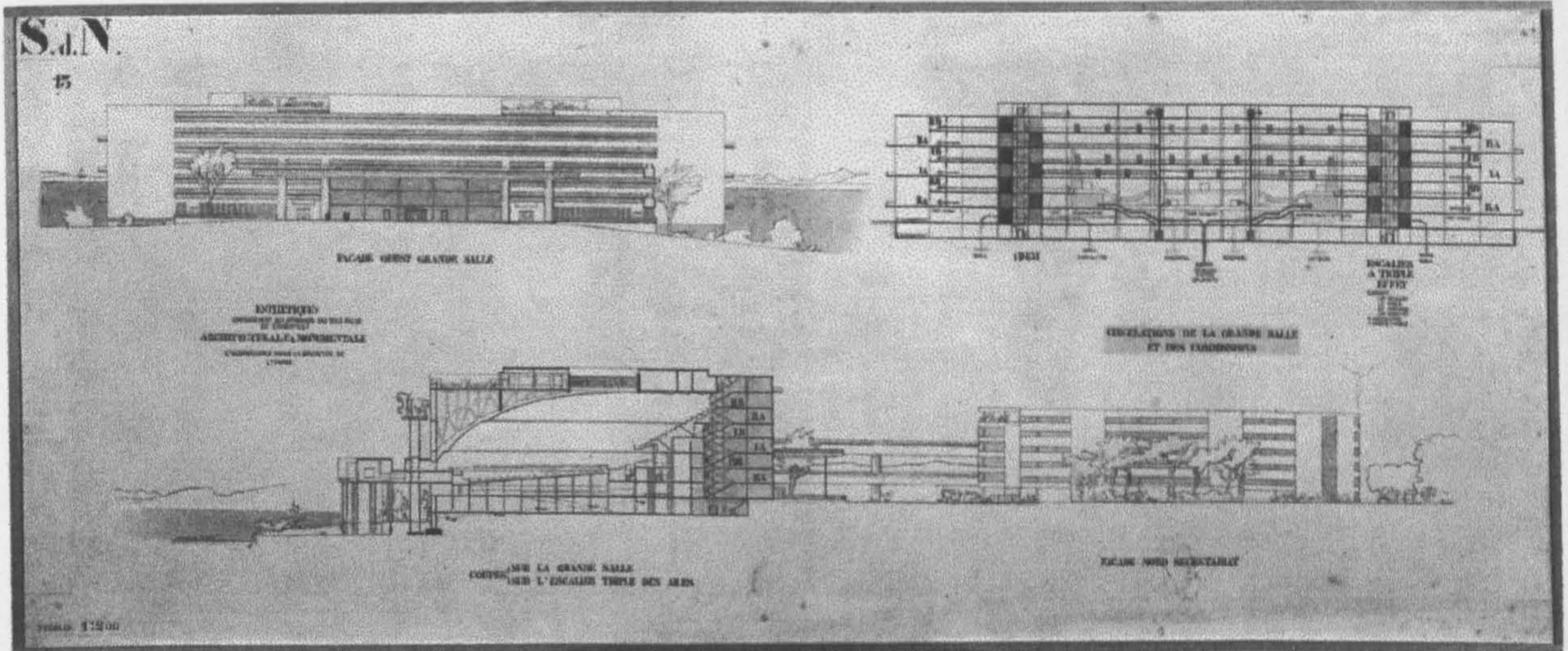








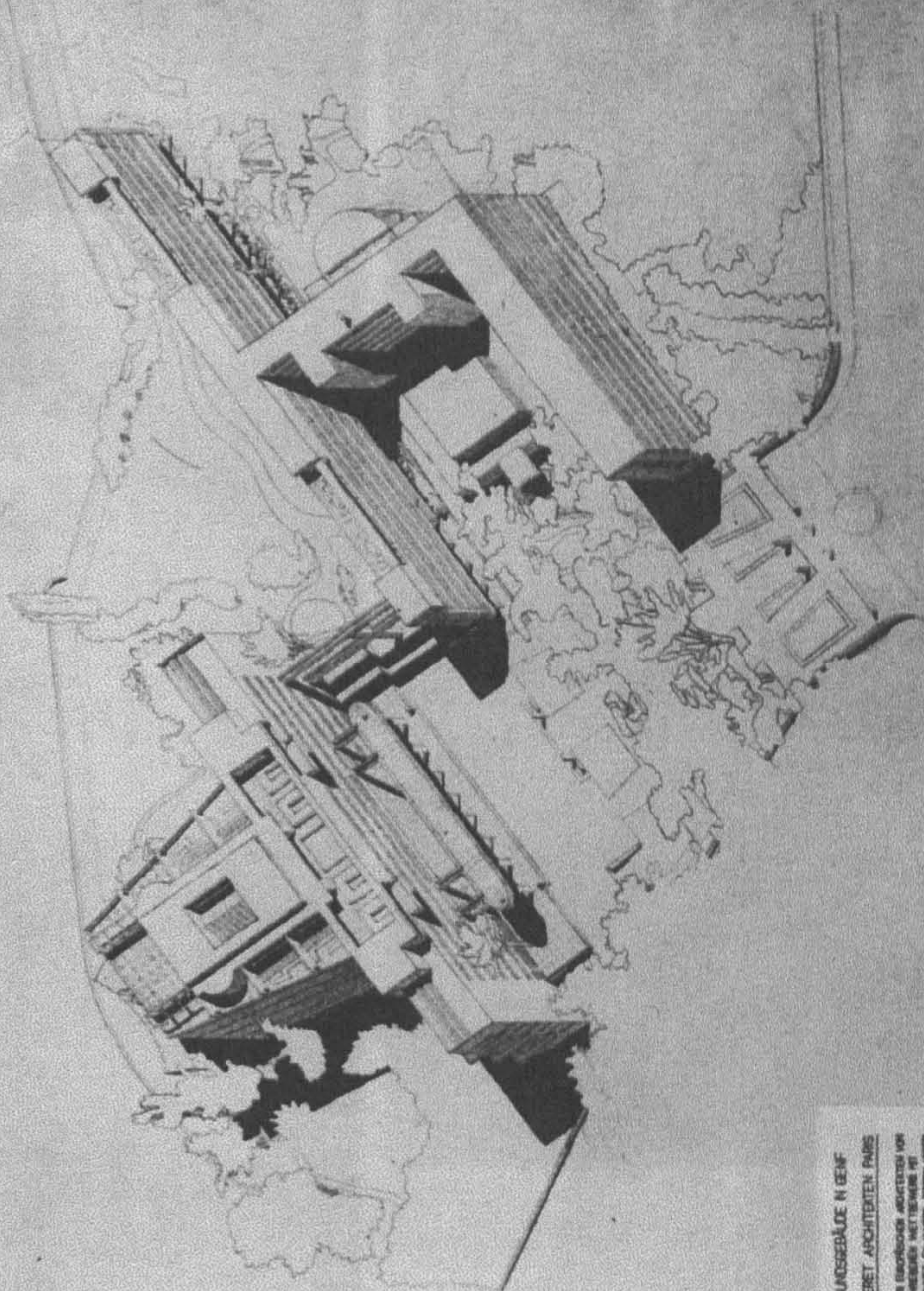






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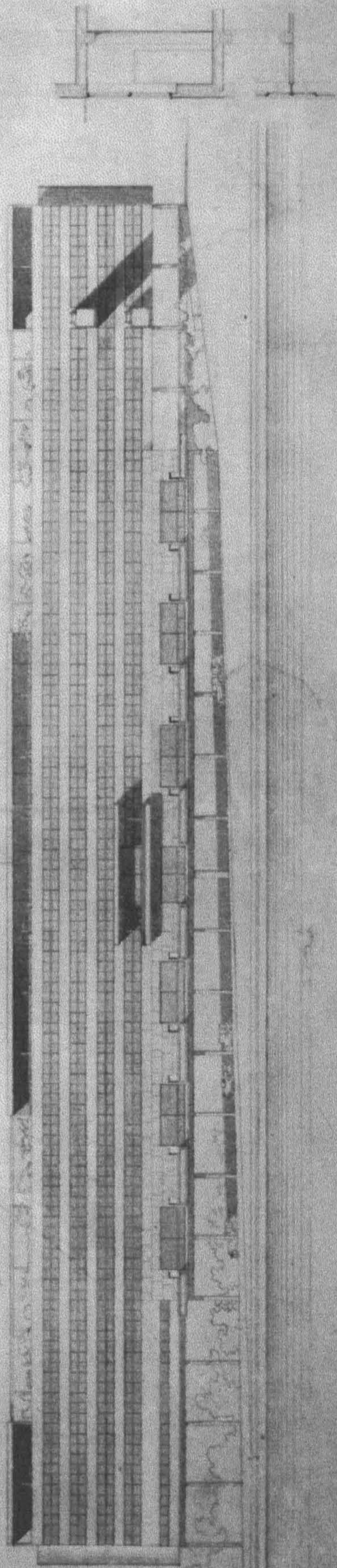
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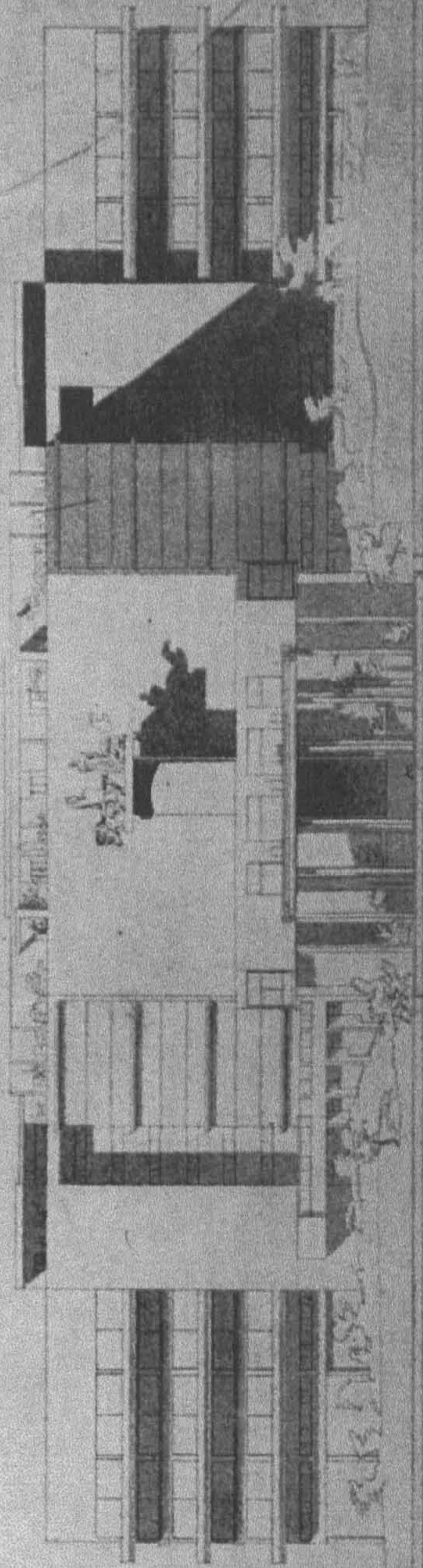


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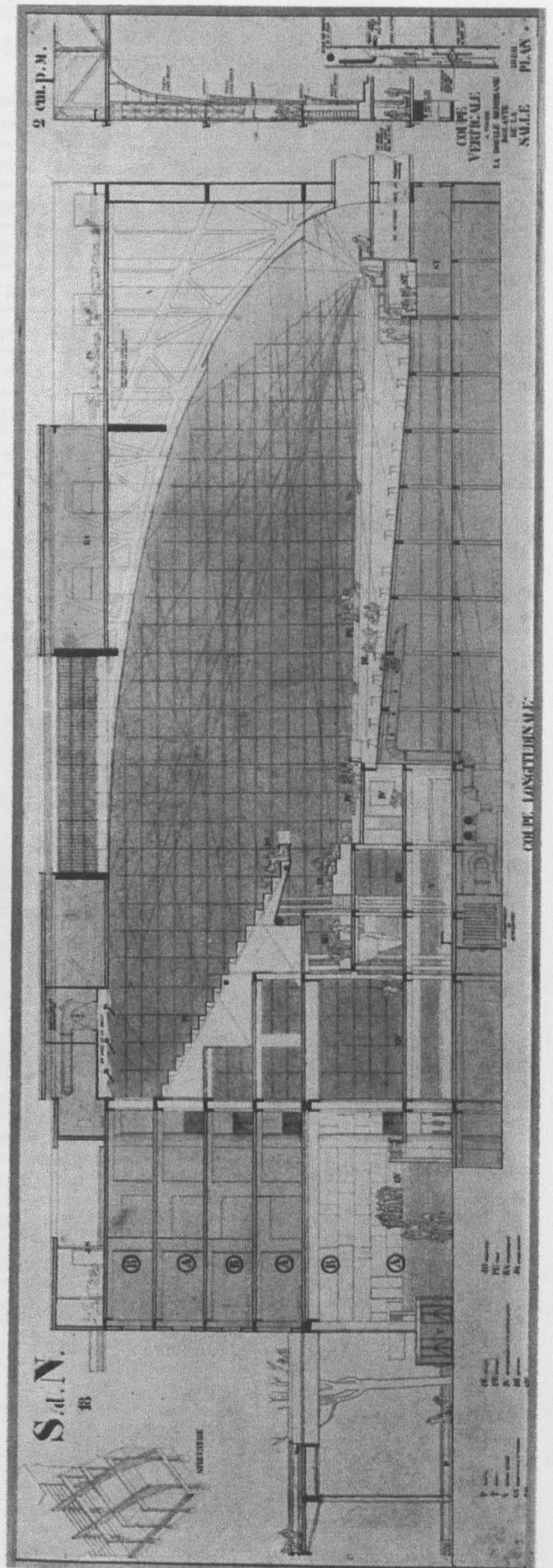
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SDN 17



The Competition Subject  
As incorporated into the

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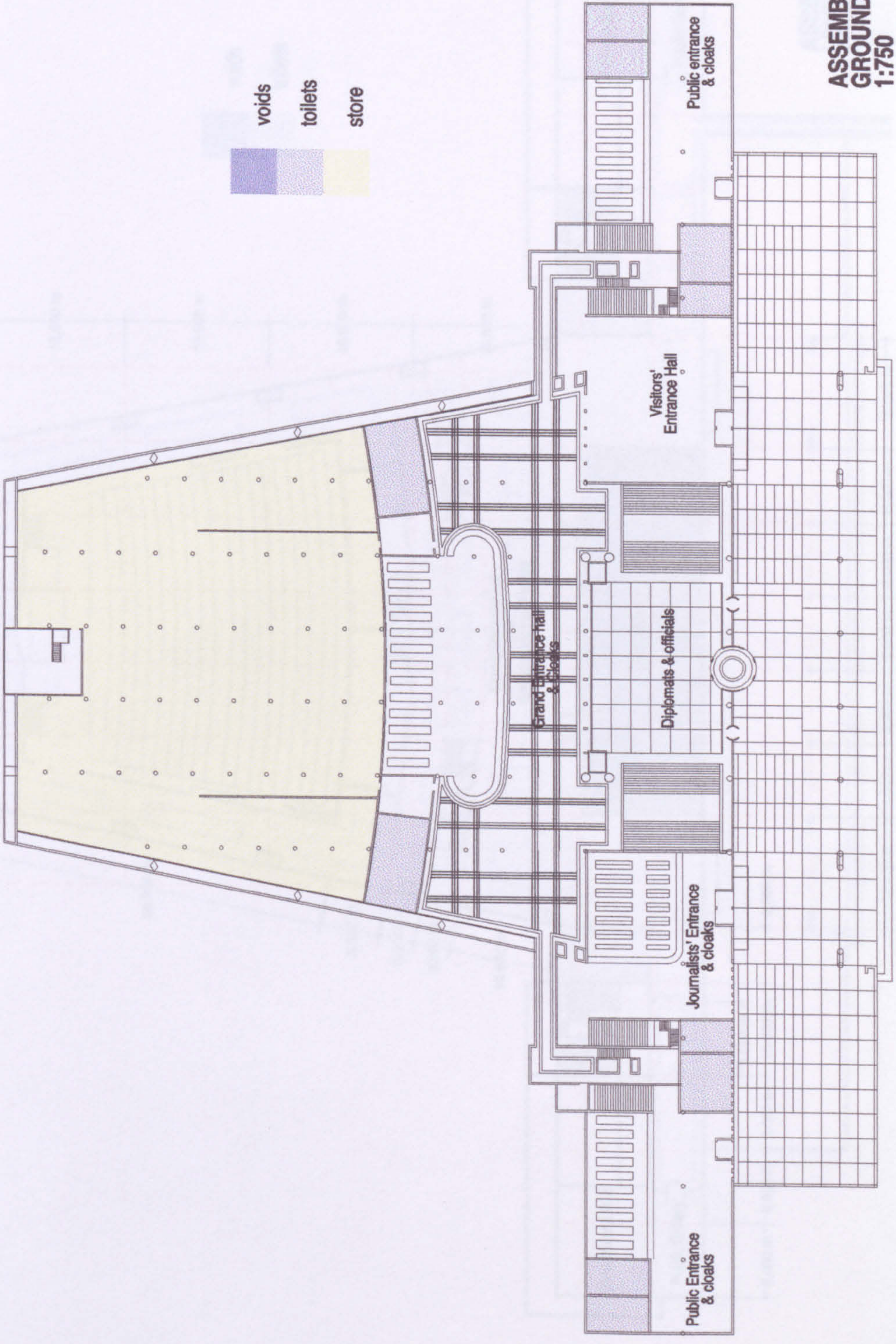
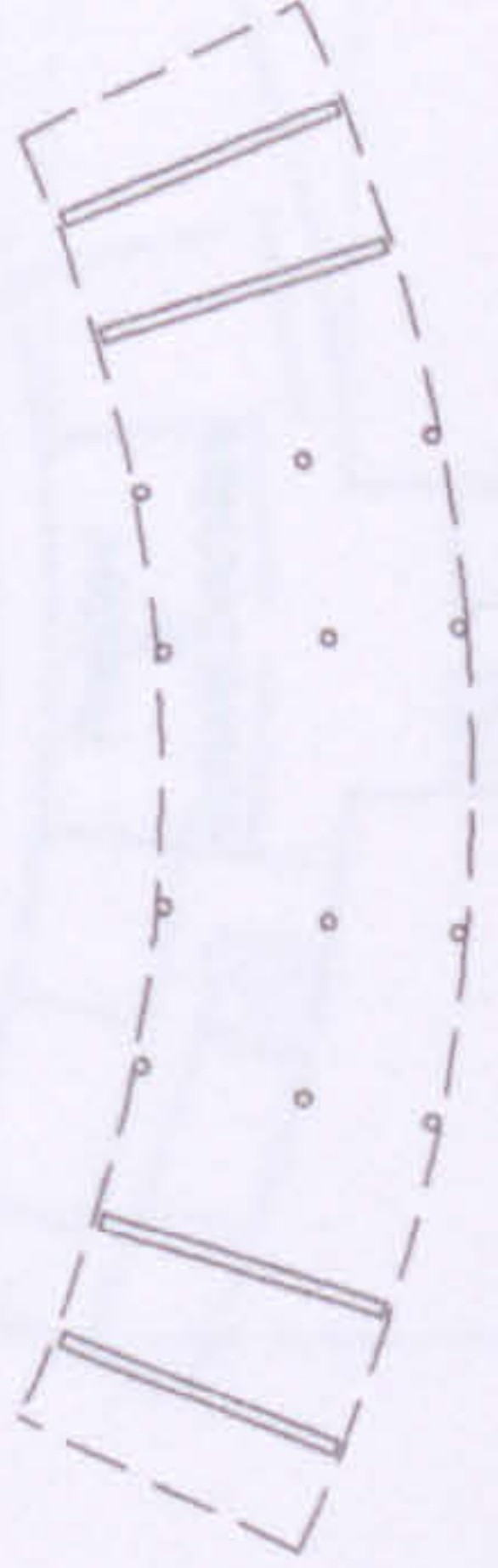




**The Competition Submission Drawings:**  
**As incorporated into the text of *Une Maison - Un Palais***

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SDN1	96-97	Main site plan and variant. Whole drg.
SDN2	135	Car Circulation below Secretariat. Whole drawing.
SDN3	104	Secretariat plan.
	131	Assembly plan.
SDN4	136-137	Plan ensemble with circulation. Whole drawing.
	144	repetition of Assembly Hall from above.
SDN5	105	Secretariat. plan
	140-141	Assembly Hall plan.
*SDN6	-	Omitted.
*SDN7	-	Omitted.
*SDN8	-	Omitted.
*SDN9	-	Omitted.
SDN10	113	Acoustics
	117	Acoustics
	123	Assembly Hall plan with seating
	129	Lighting
	131	HVAC
SDN11	154	Roof Gardens. Whole drawing
SDN12	148-149	Sectional elevations
*SDN13	139	Int Circulation Sectional Diagram
	140-141	Section Assembly Hall + Elev Sectr. Assembly facade missing.
*SDN14	155	Perspective sketch - one sketch missing.
	157	Perspective sketches
	165	Axo of Ensemble on Site from SE
SDN15	167	Axo of Ensemble on Site from NW
SDN16	102-103	Lakeside facade Secretariat.
SDN17	151	Lakeside facade Assembly Hall.
SDN18	120-121	Long section Assembly Hall.
	127	Small axo of structure for hall.
	129	Cross-Sect and plan of double glass screens.

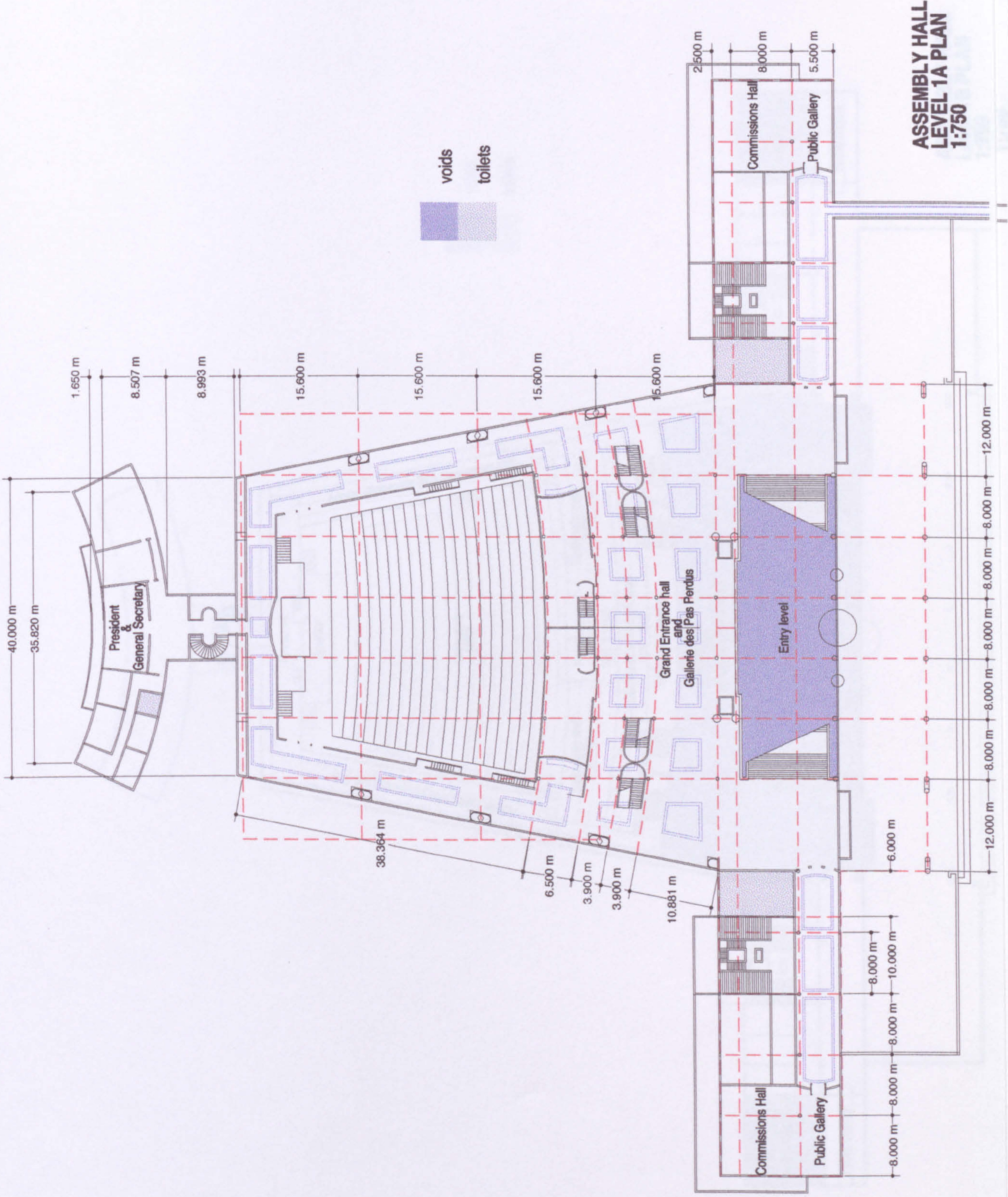




- voids
- toilets
- store

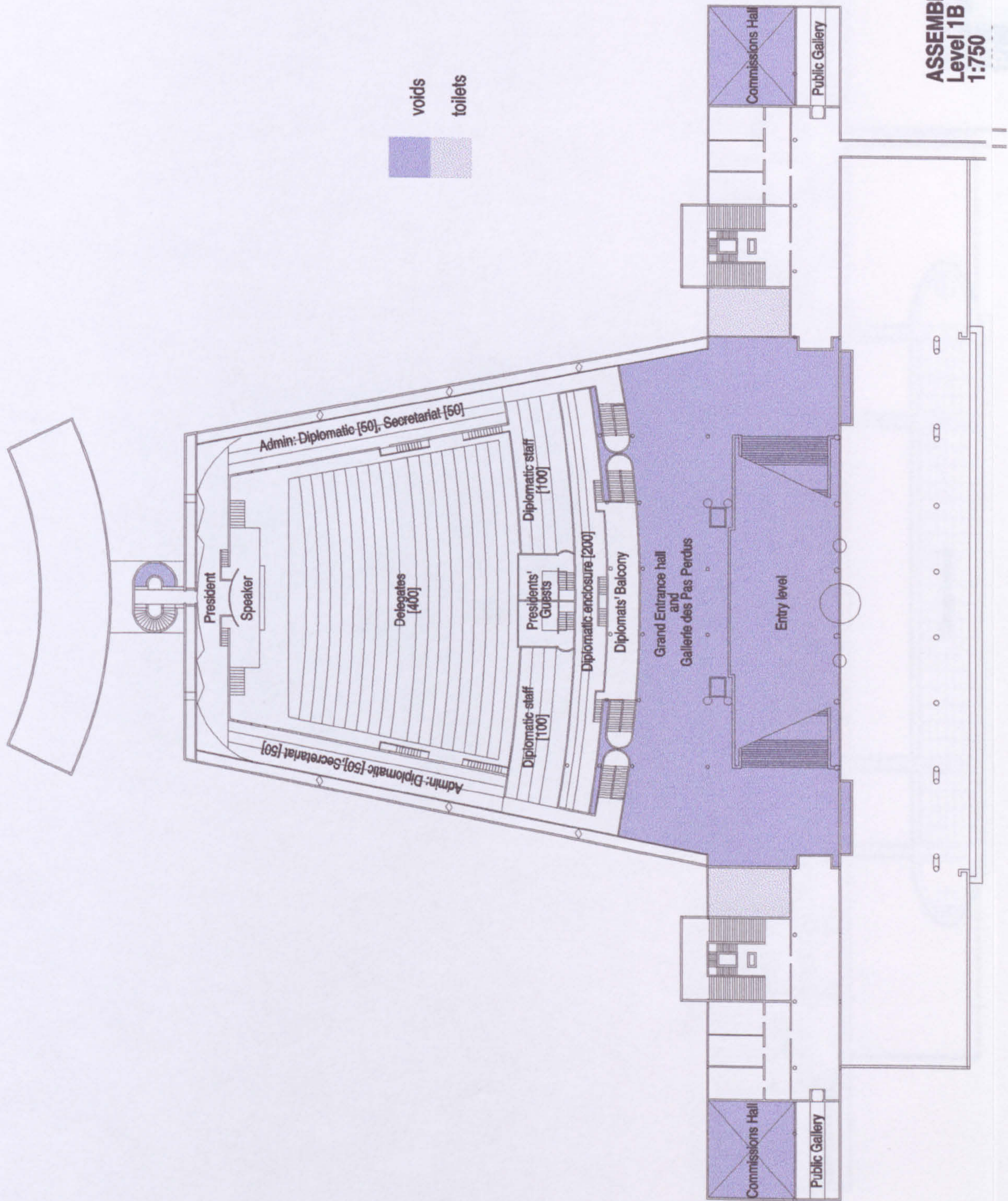
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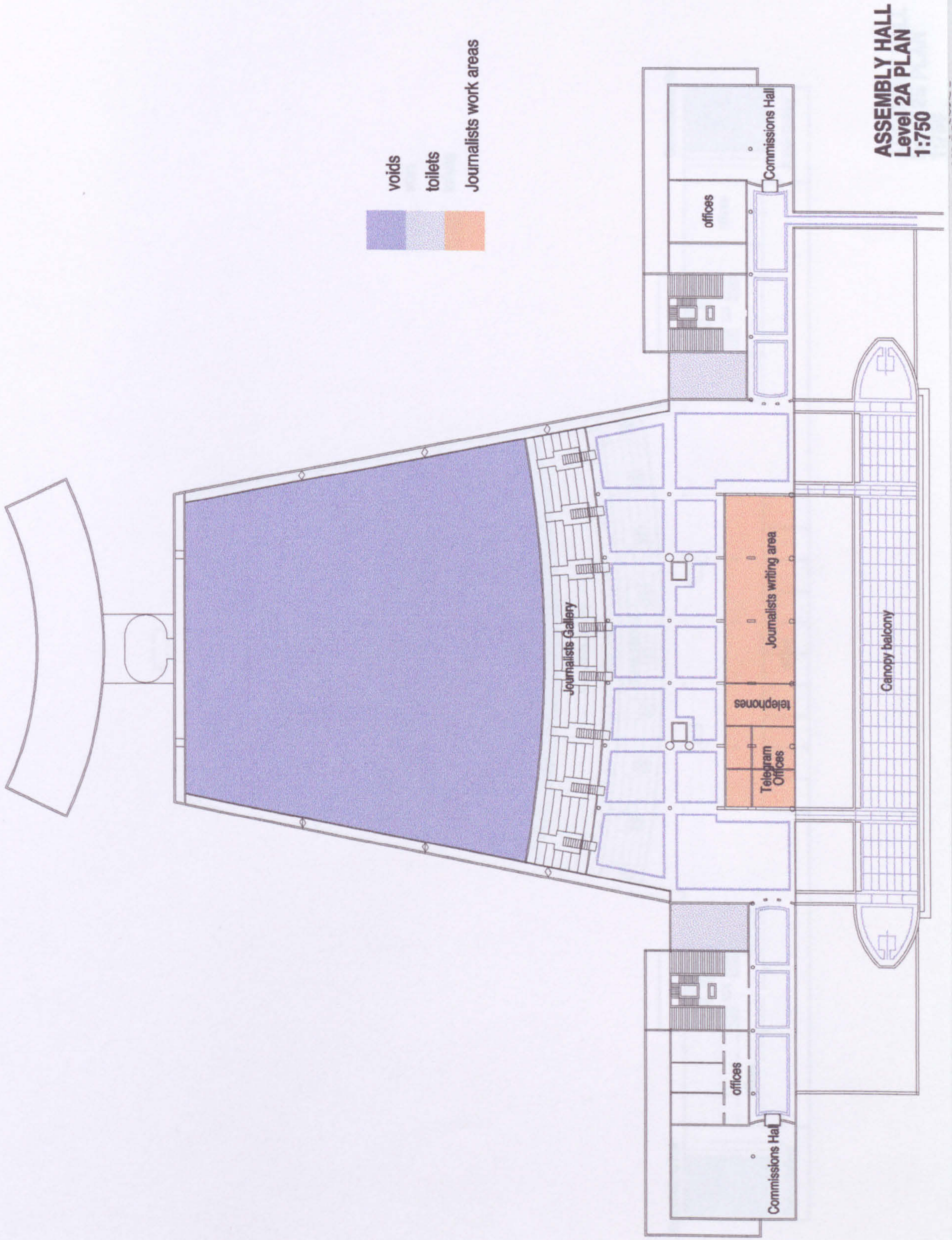
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LEVEL 1A PLAN  
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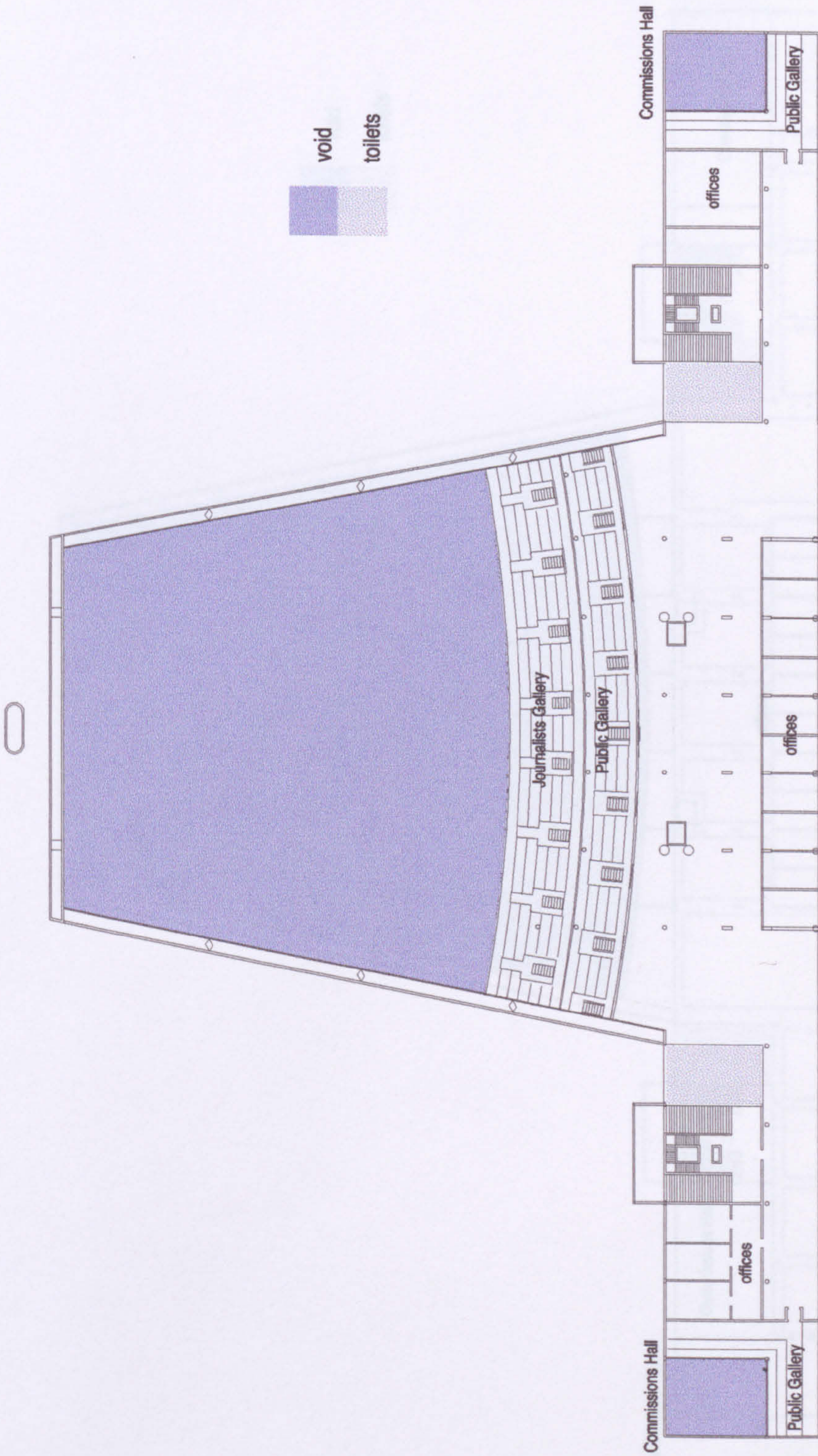


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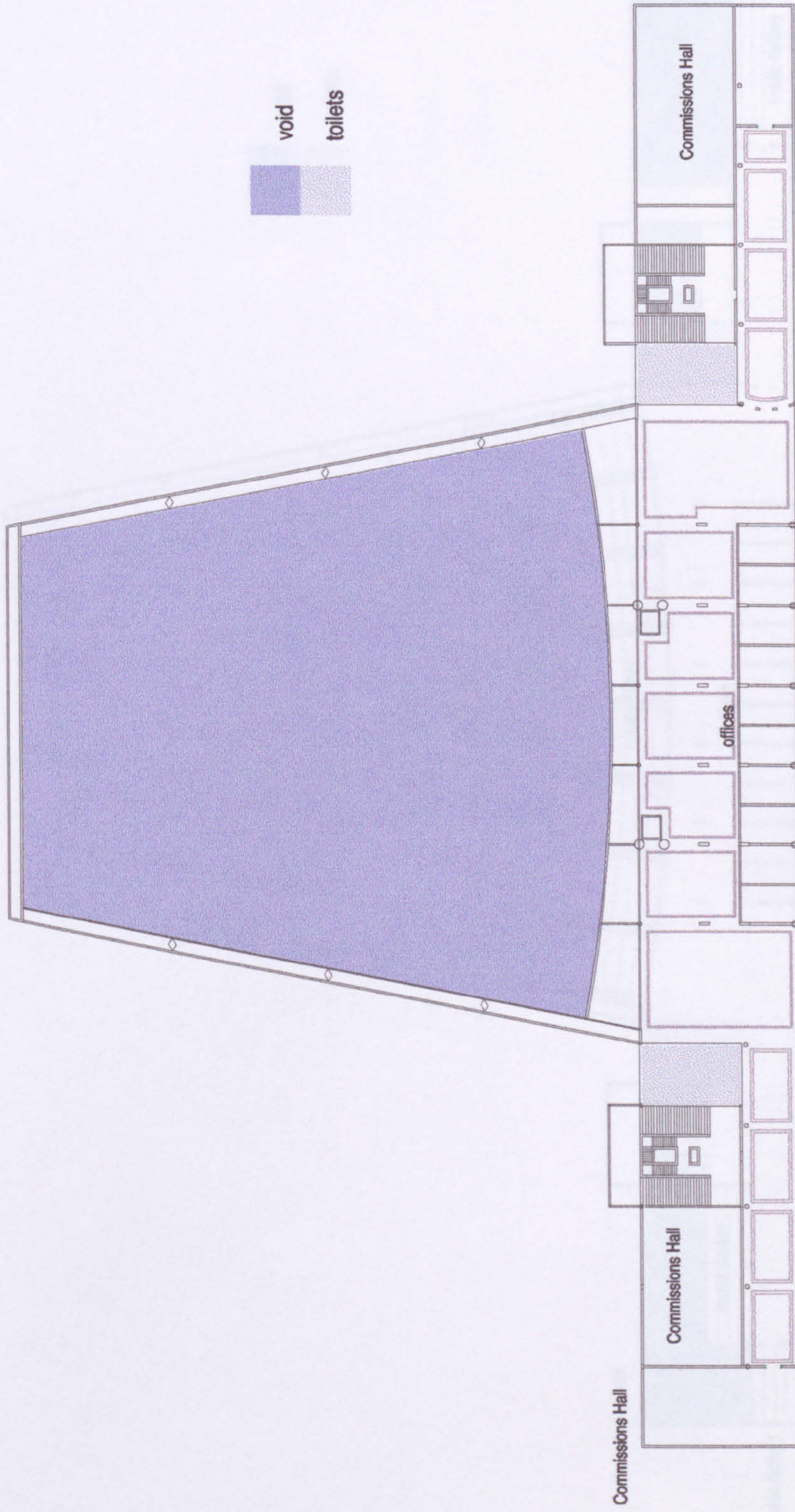






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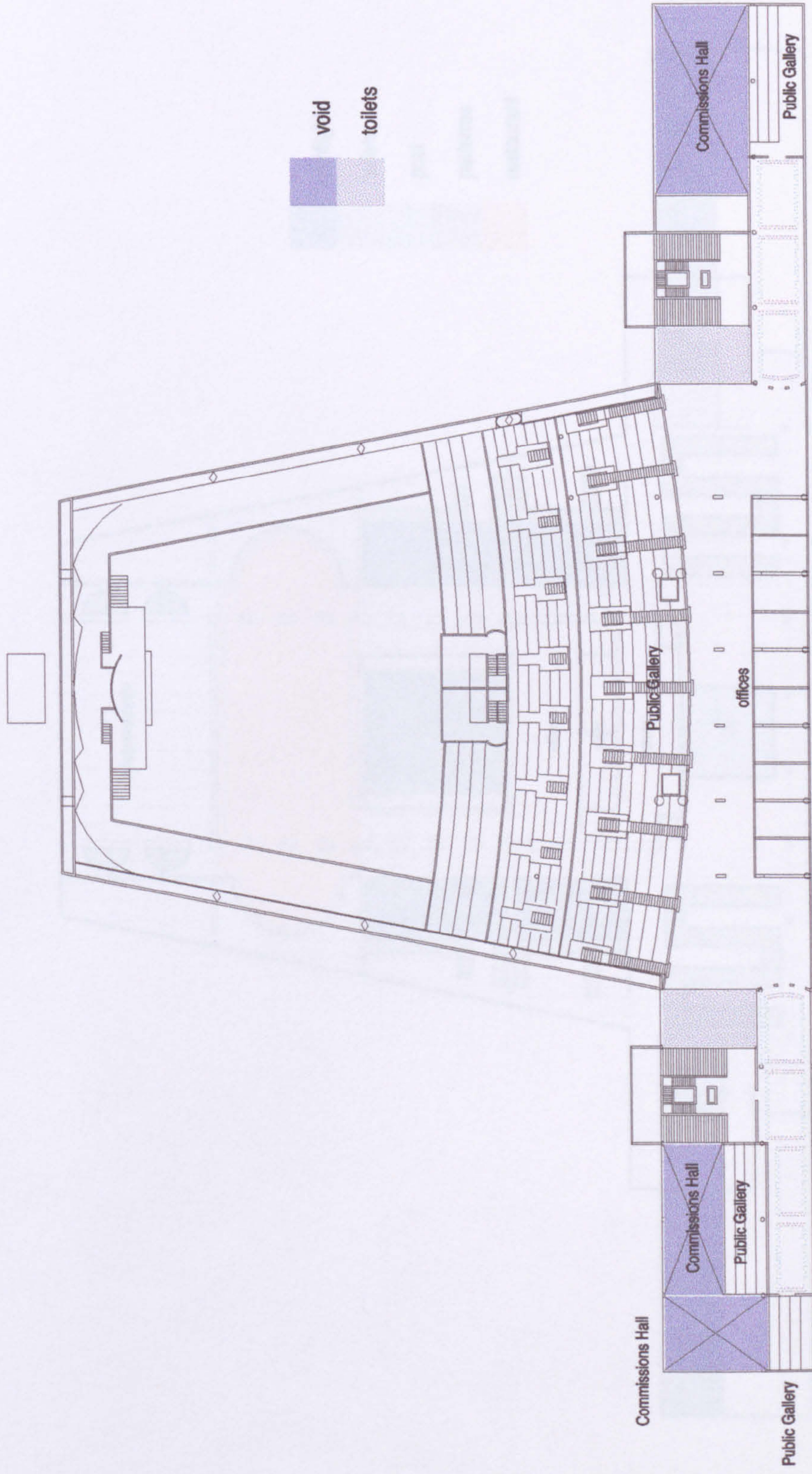




void  
toilets

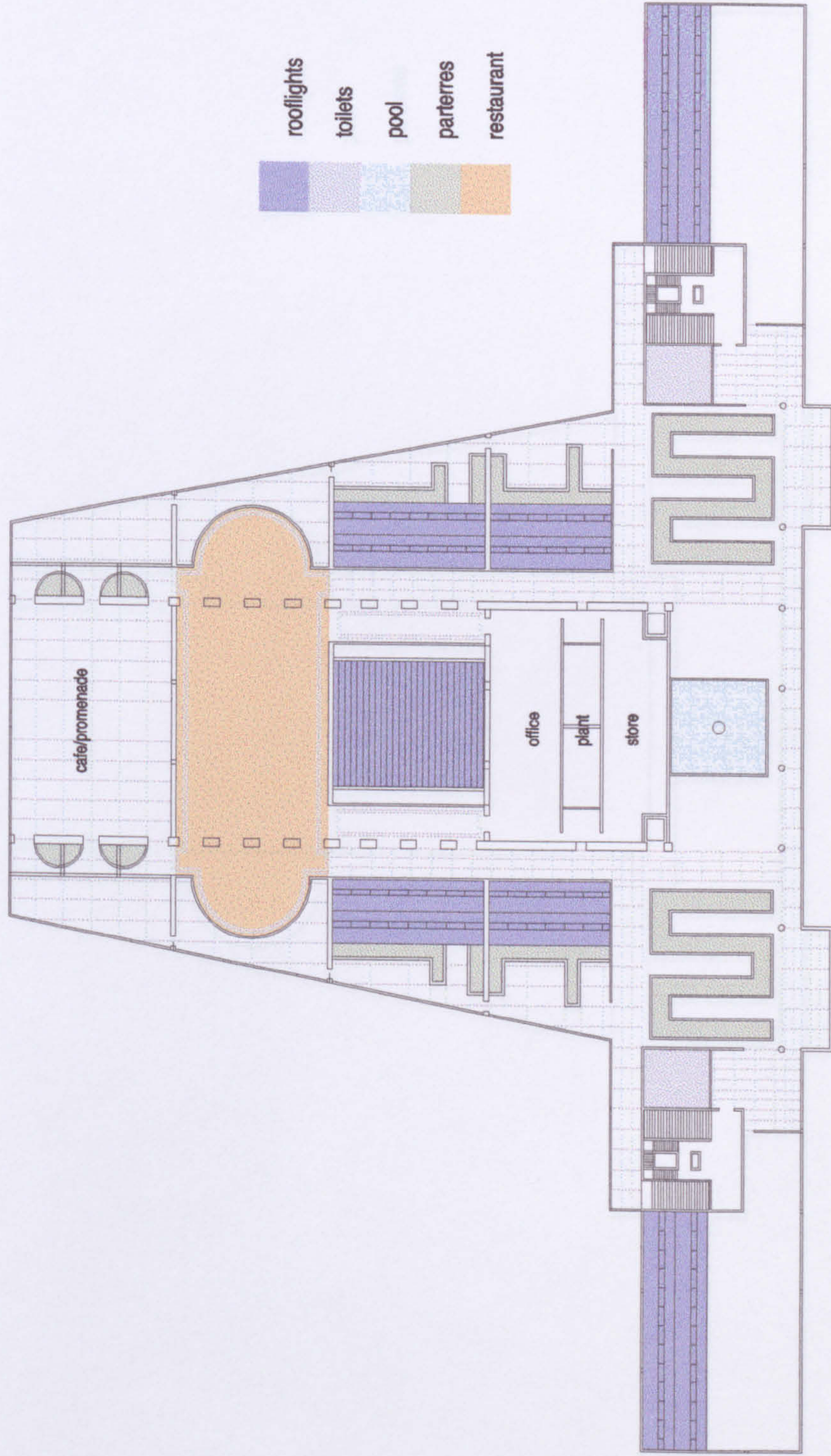
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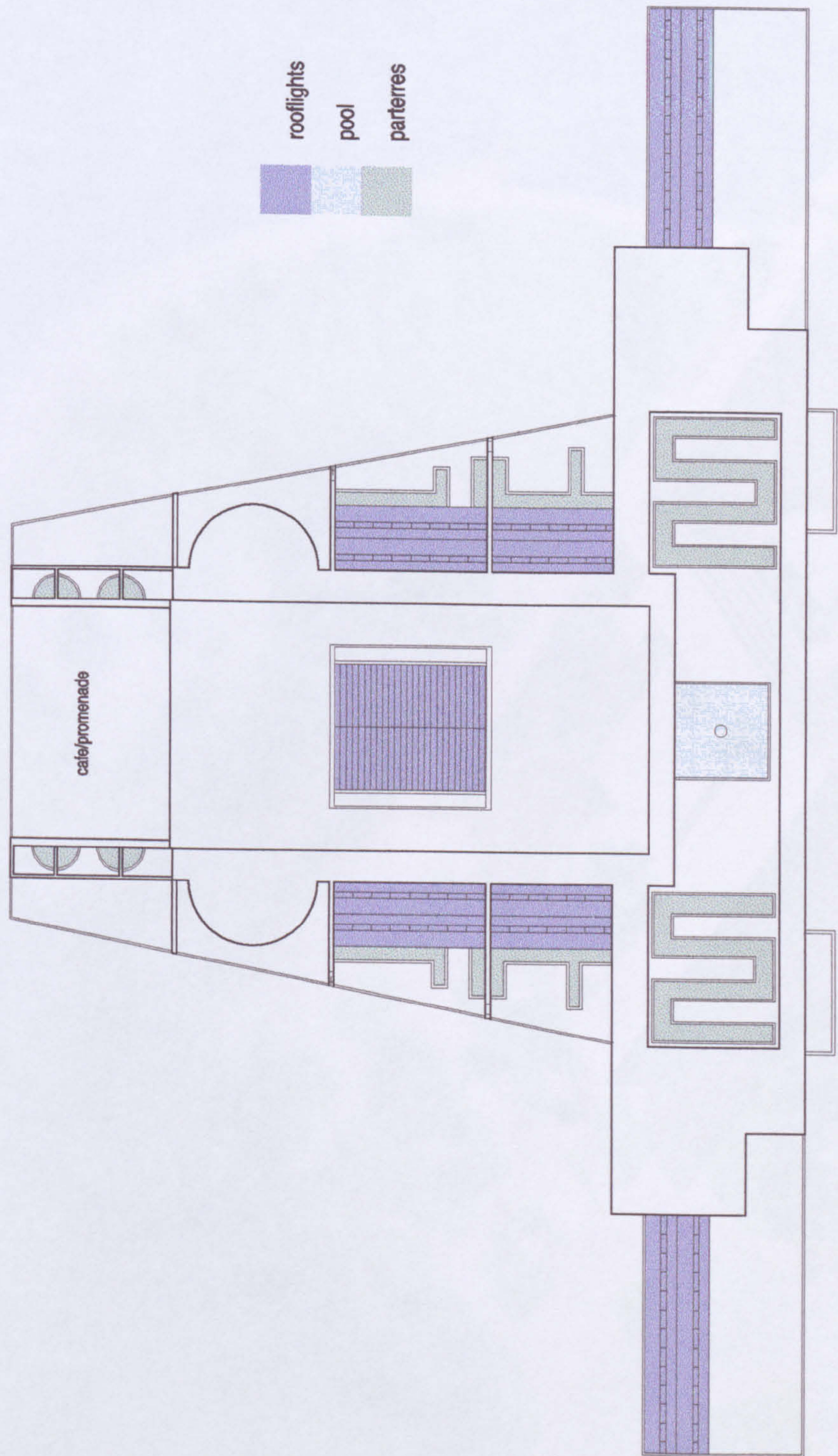
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**Level 3B PLAN**  
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ASSEMBLY HALL  
ROOF A PLAN  
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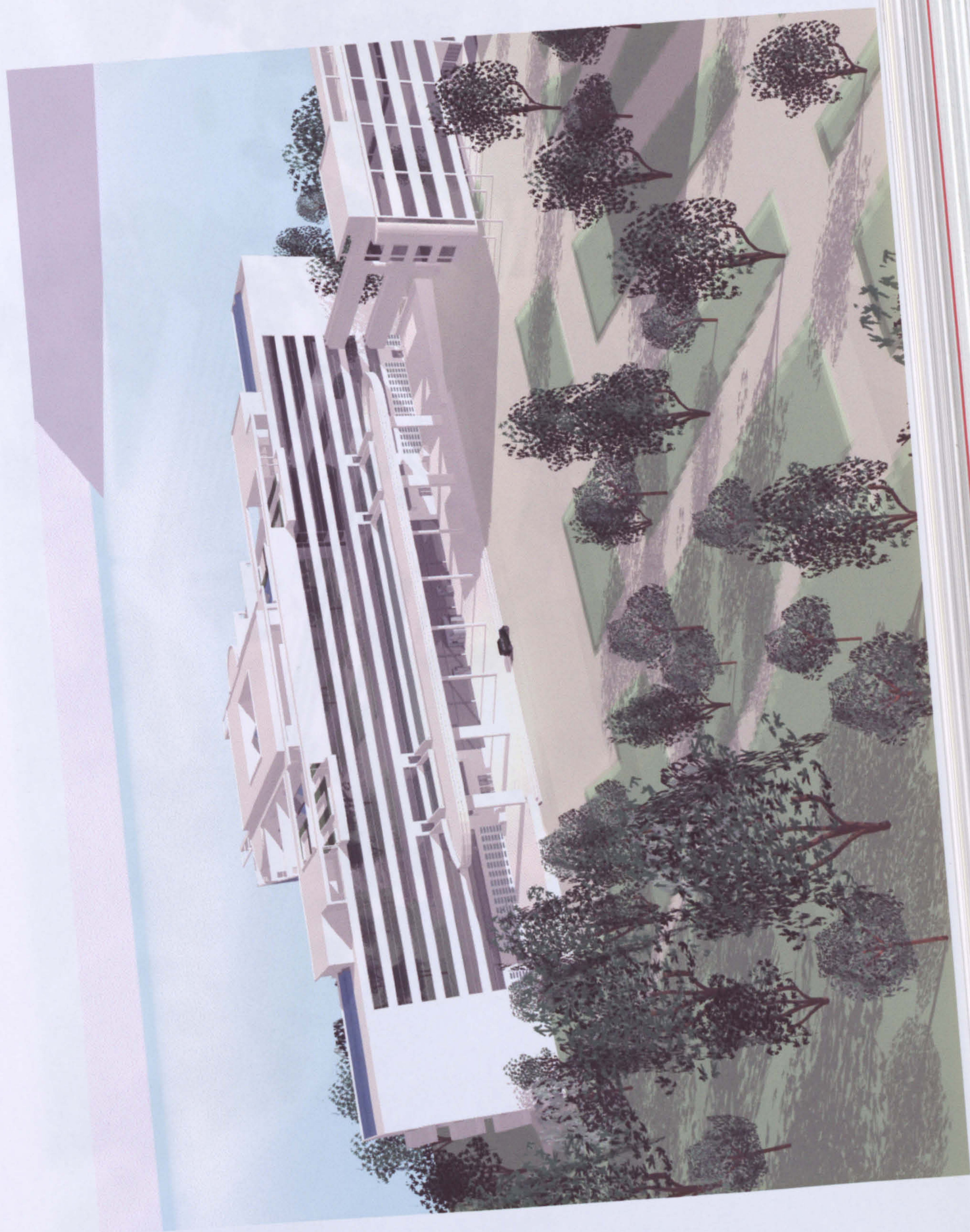
rooflights  
pool  
parterres

ASSEMBLY HALL  
ROOF B PLAN  
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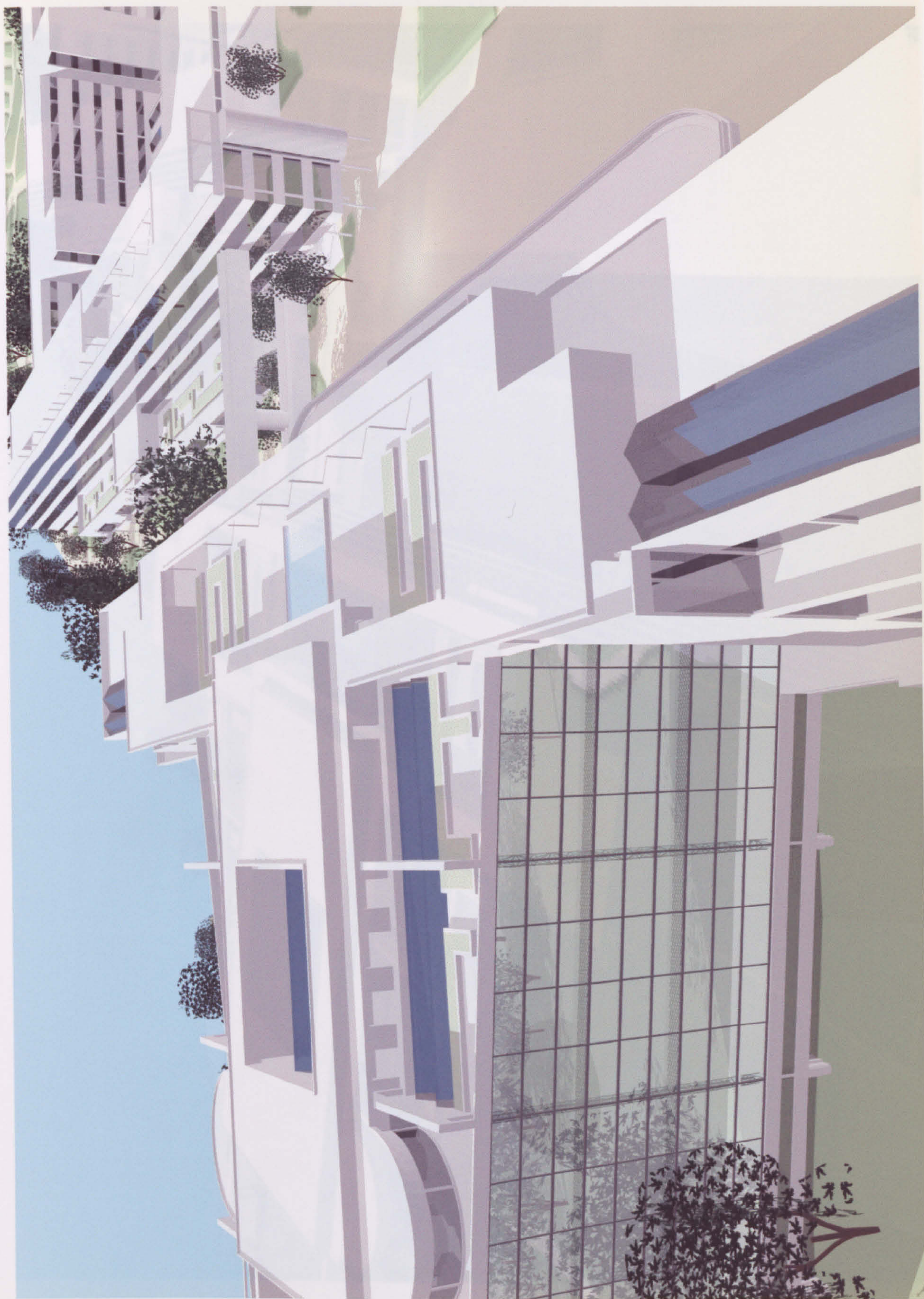




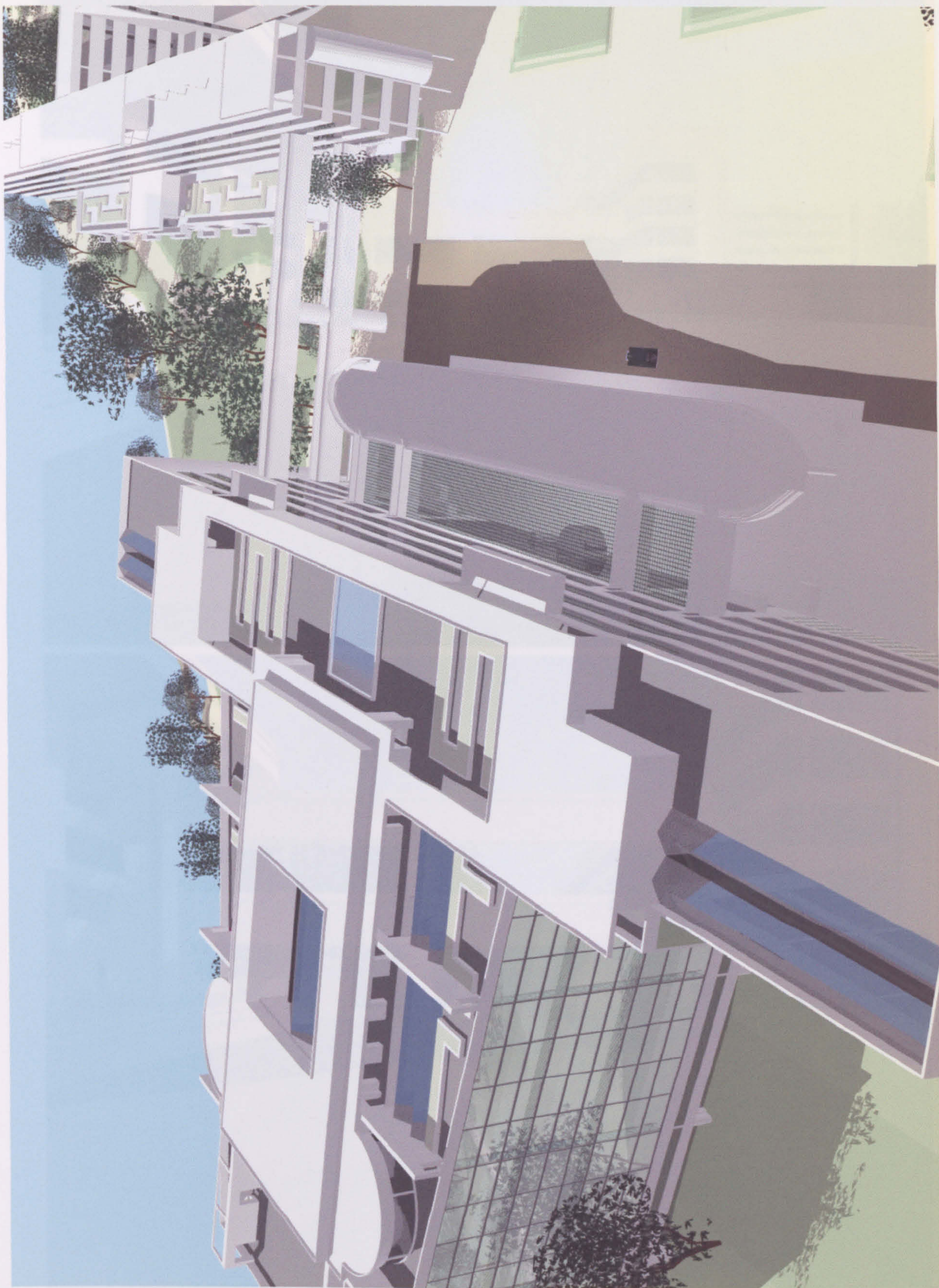




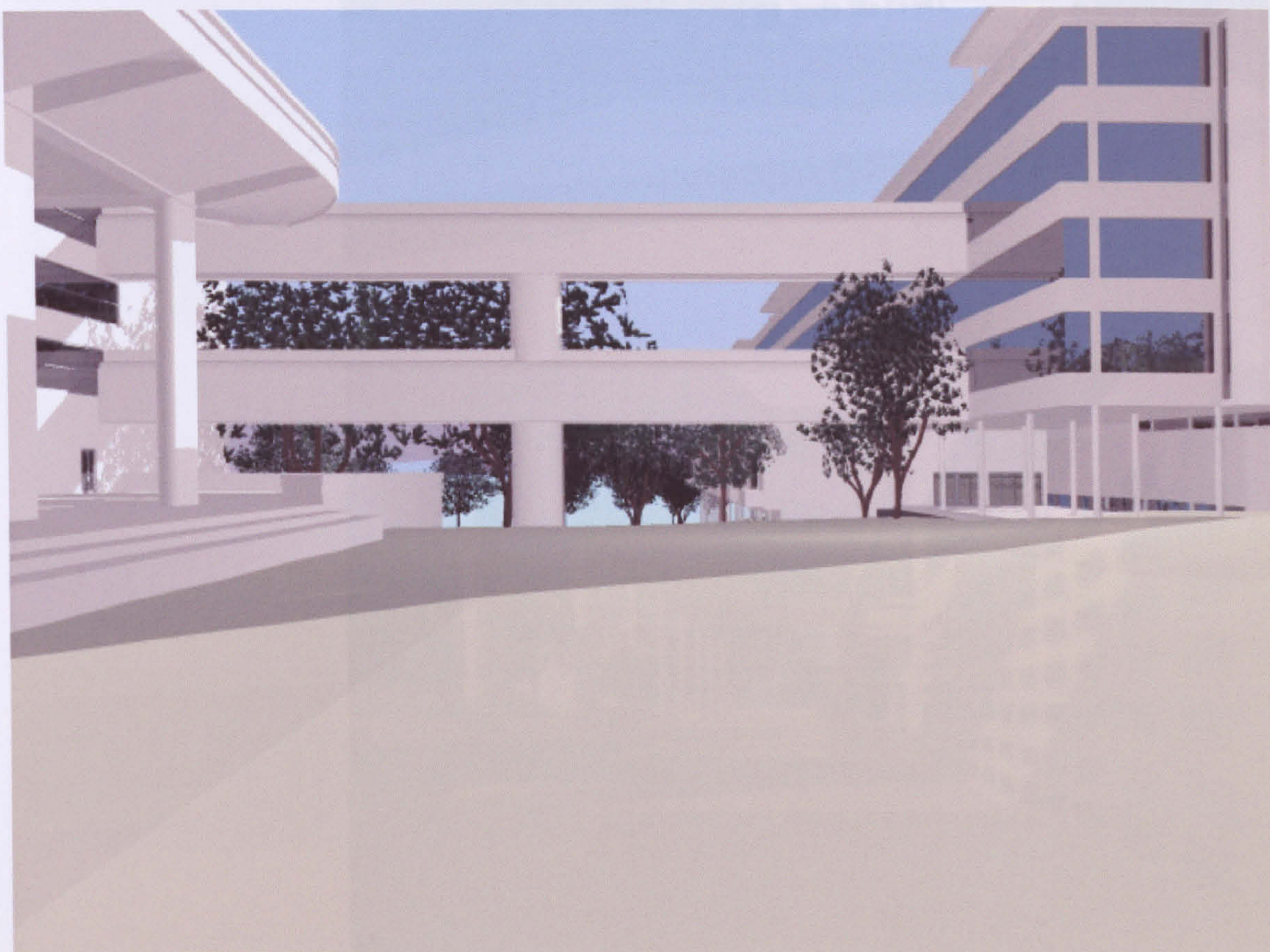
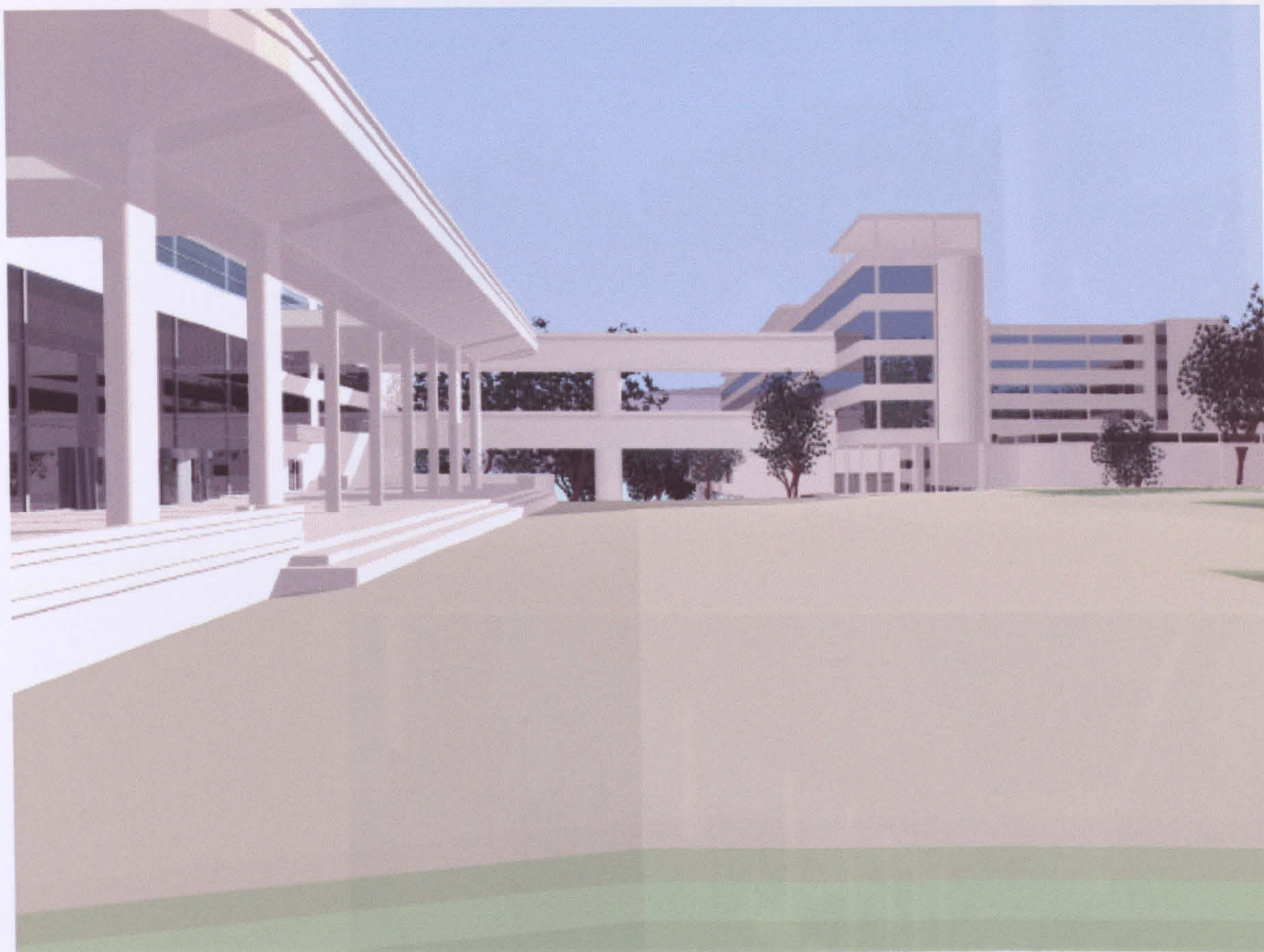




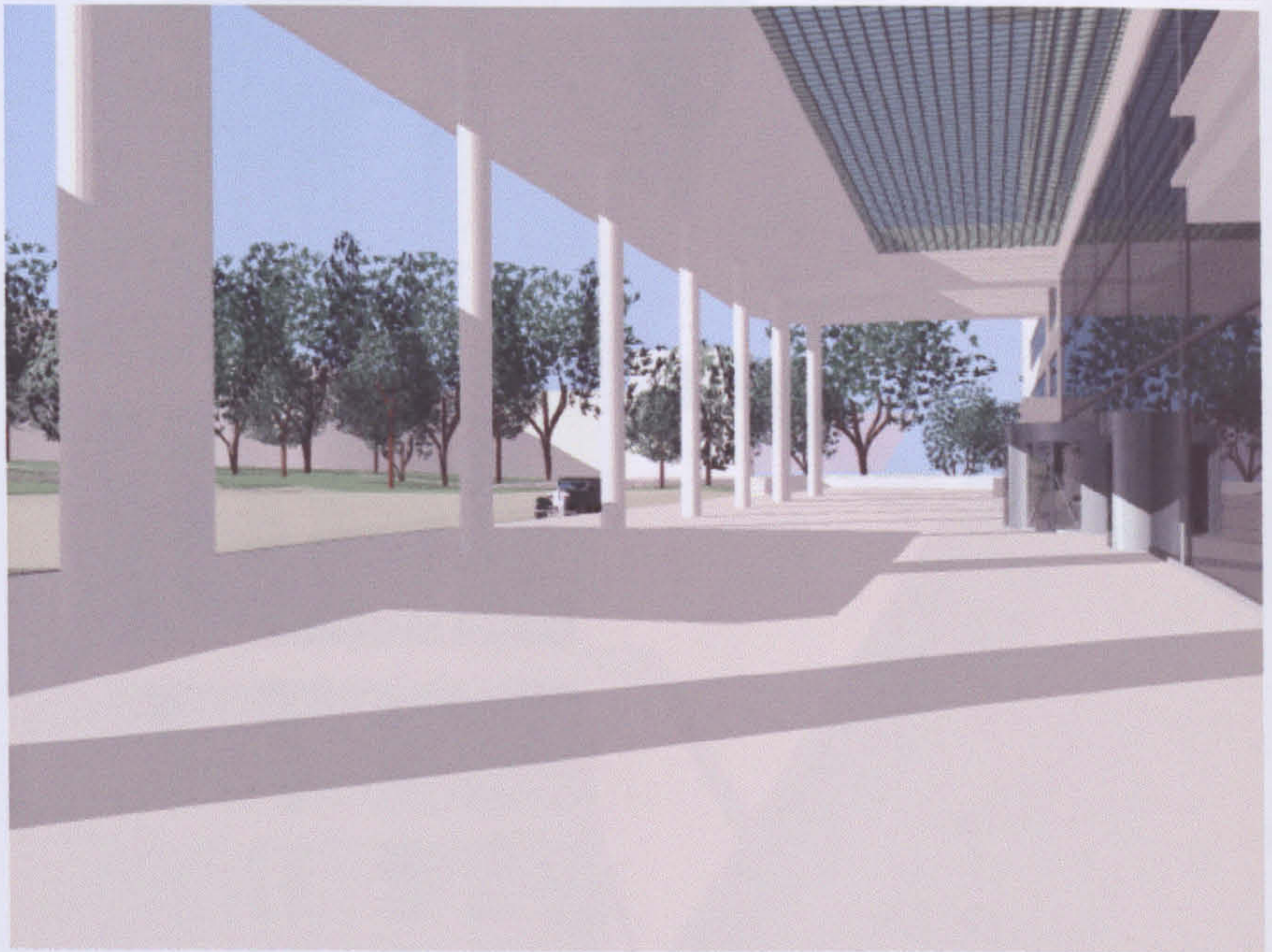
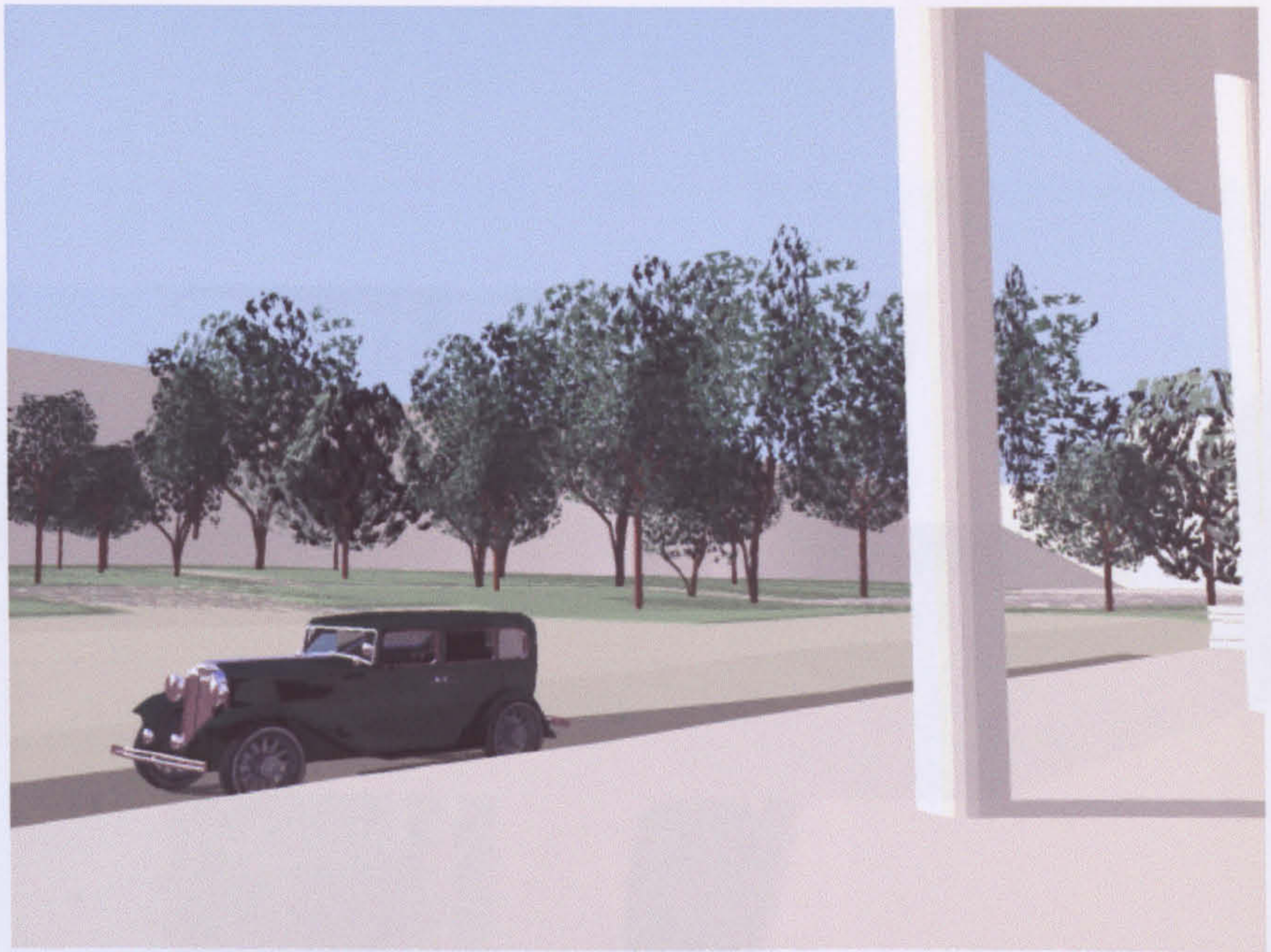




































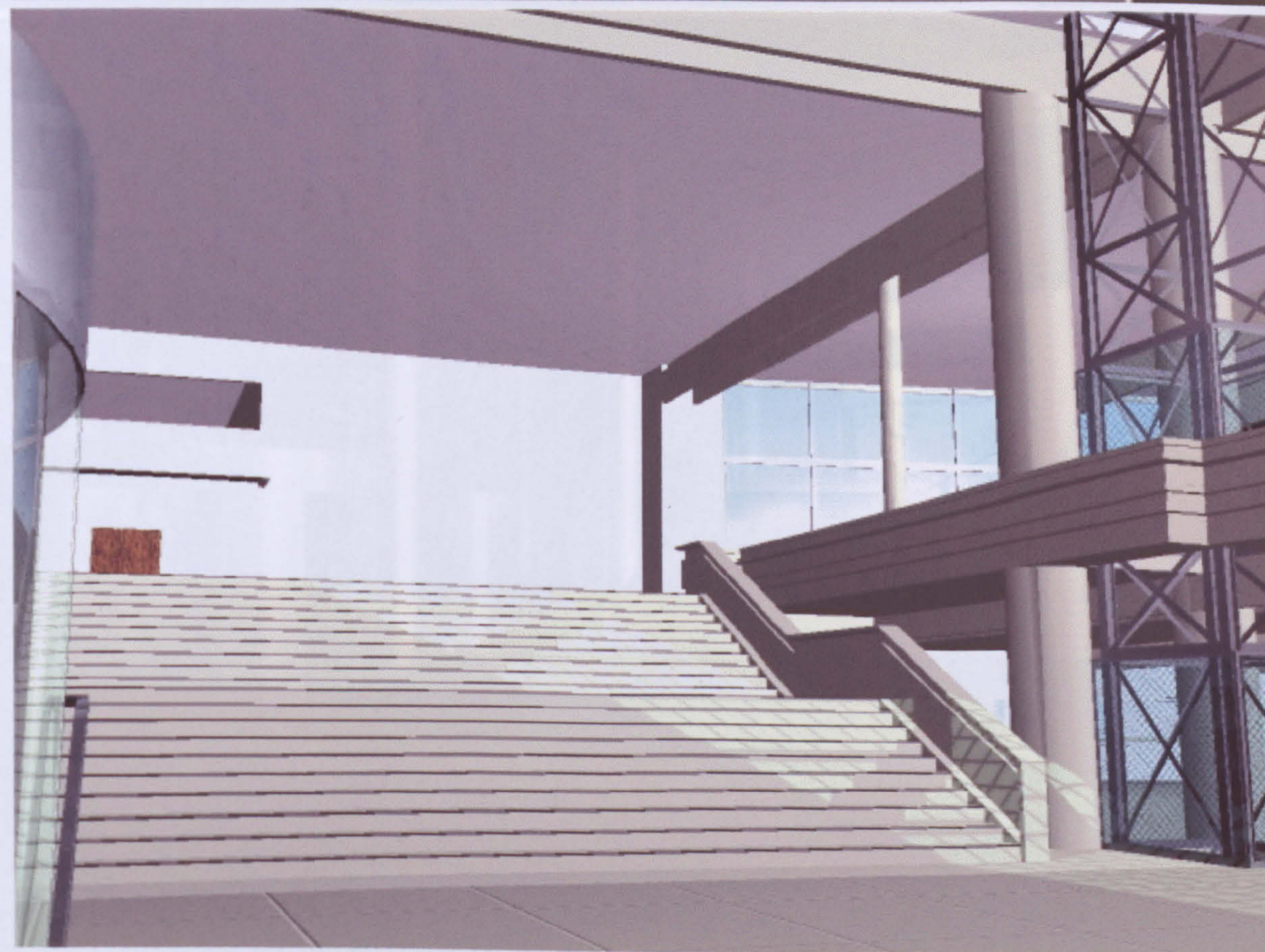
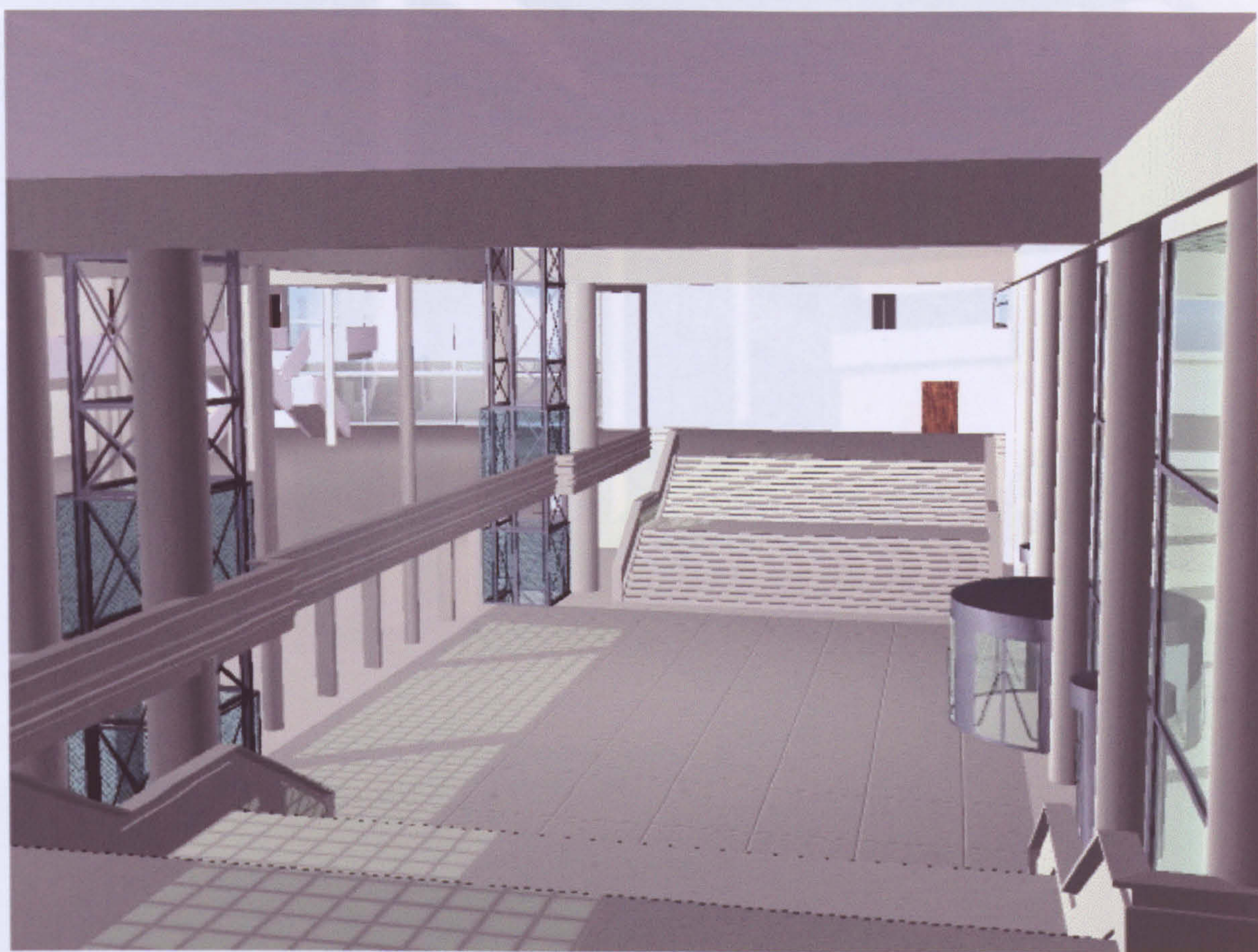




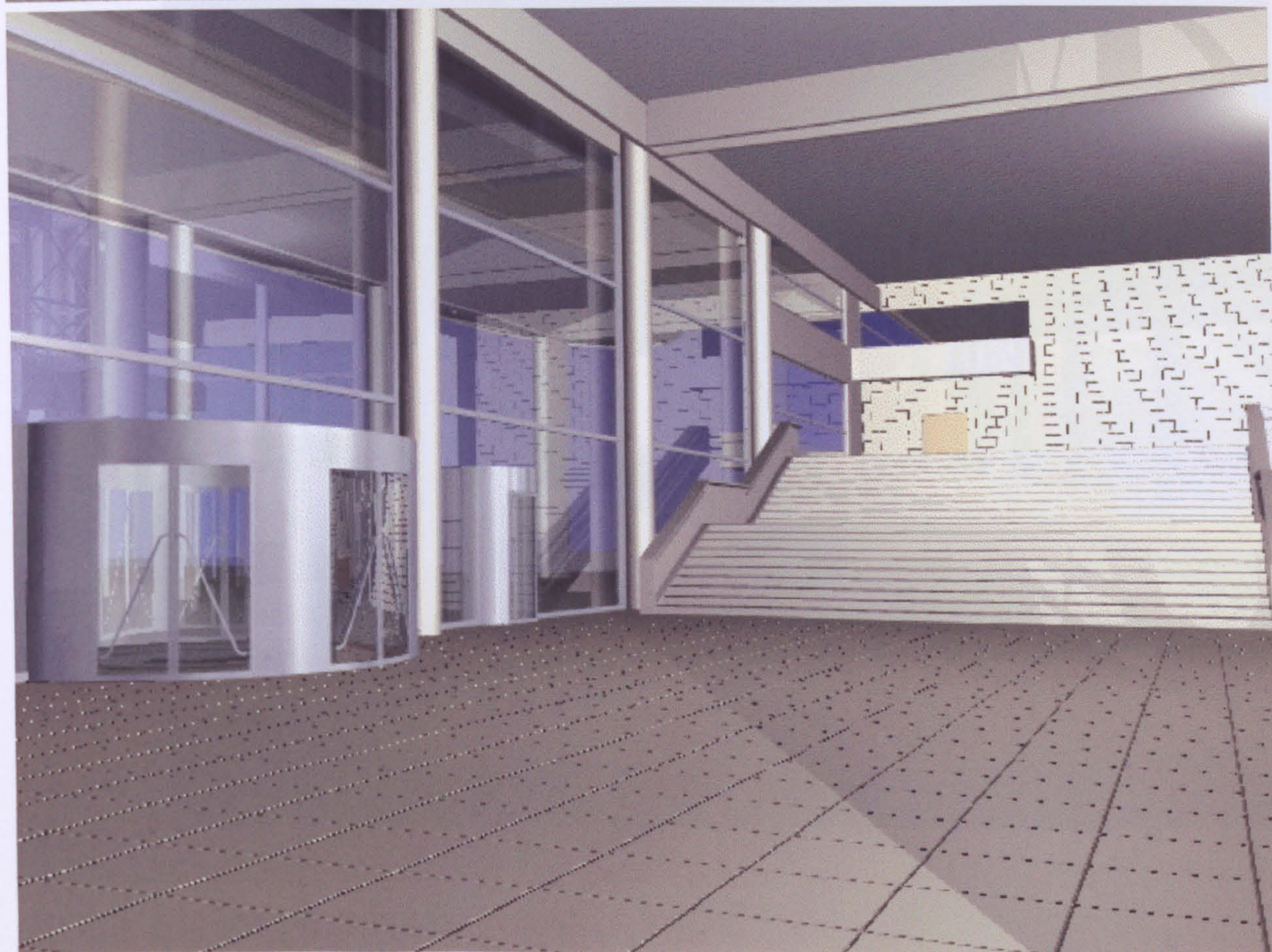
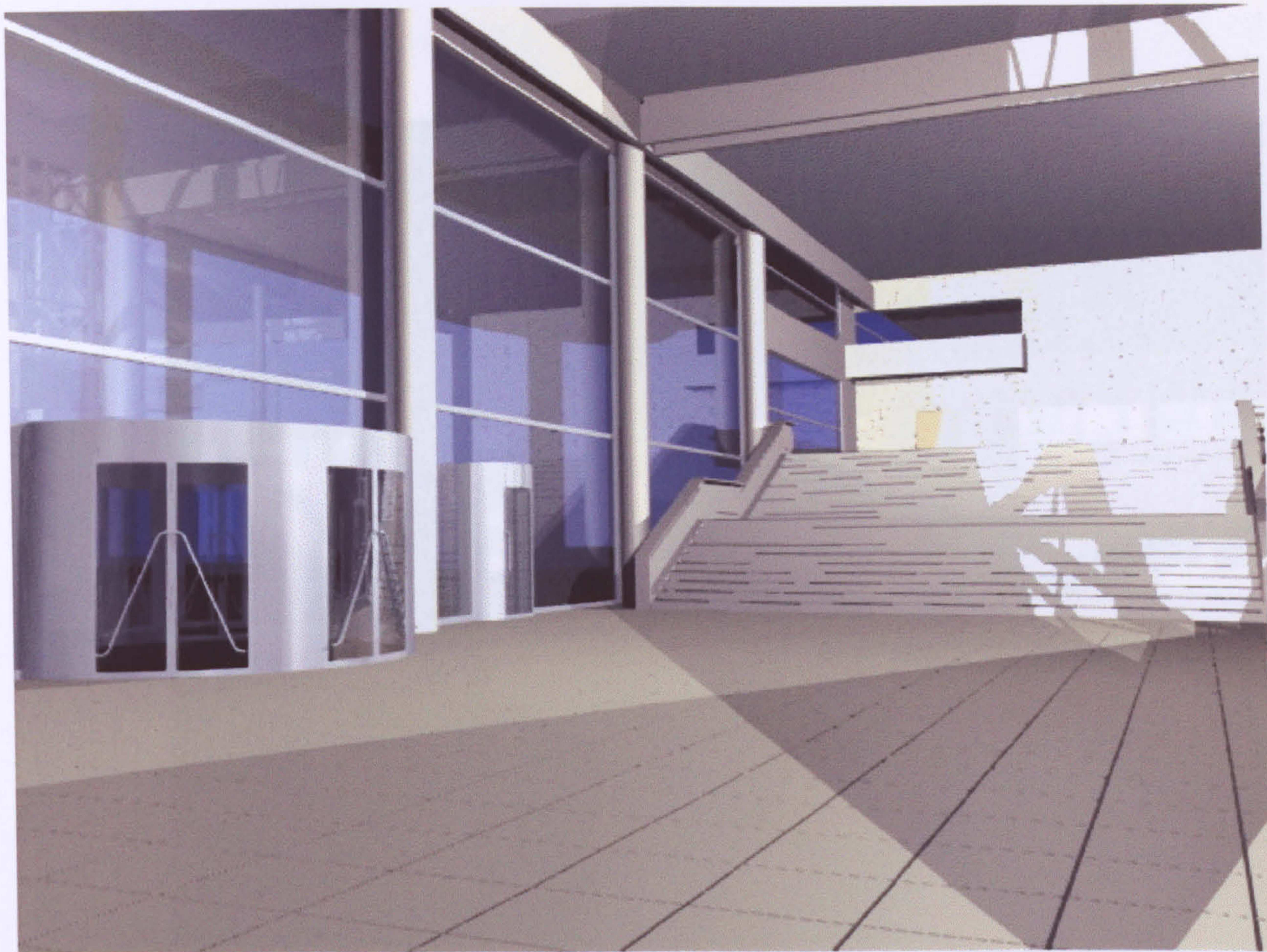




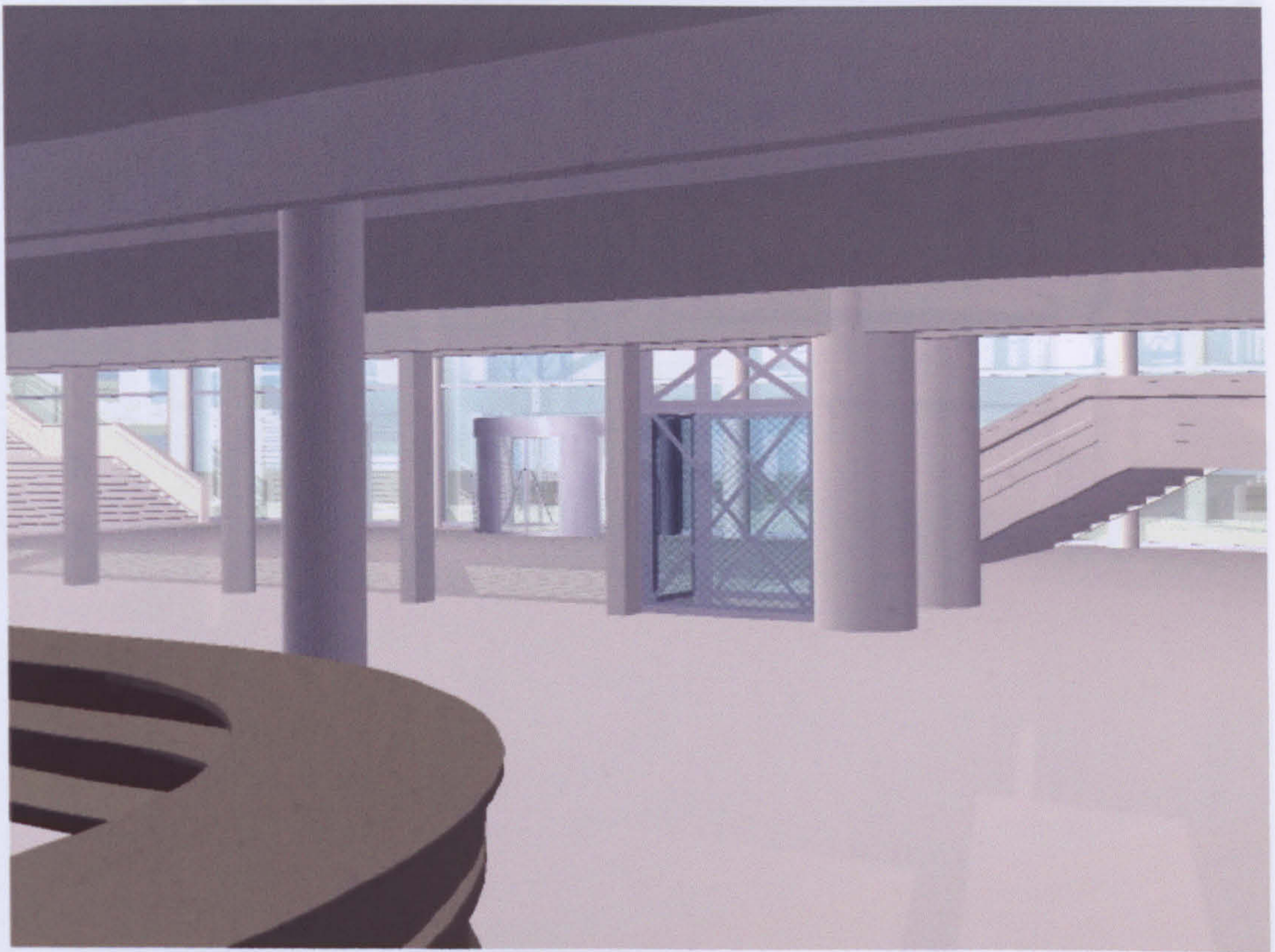




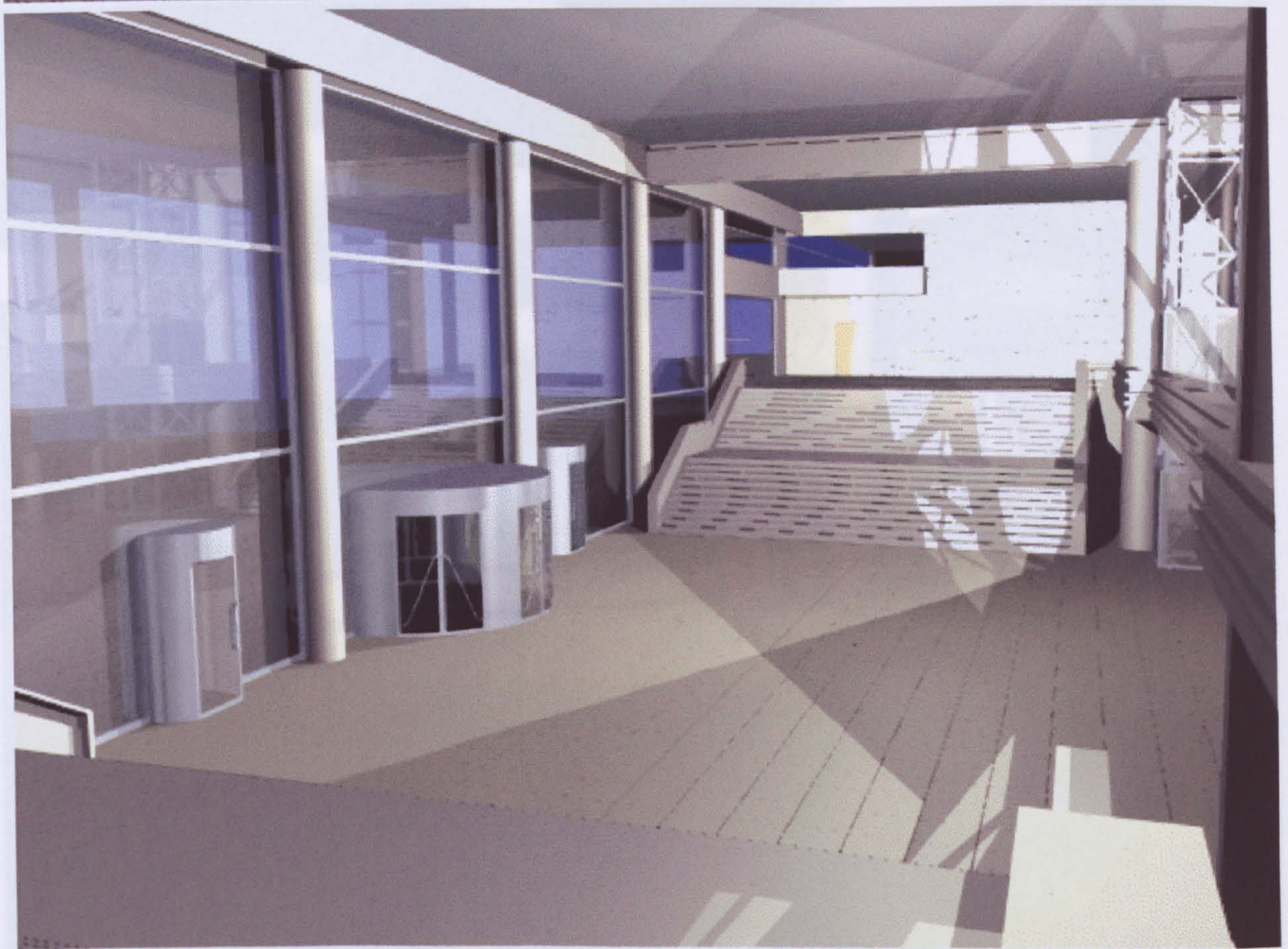
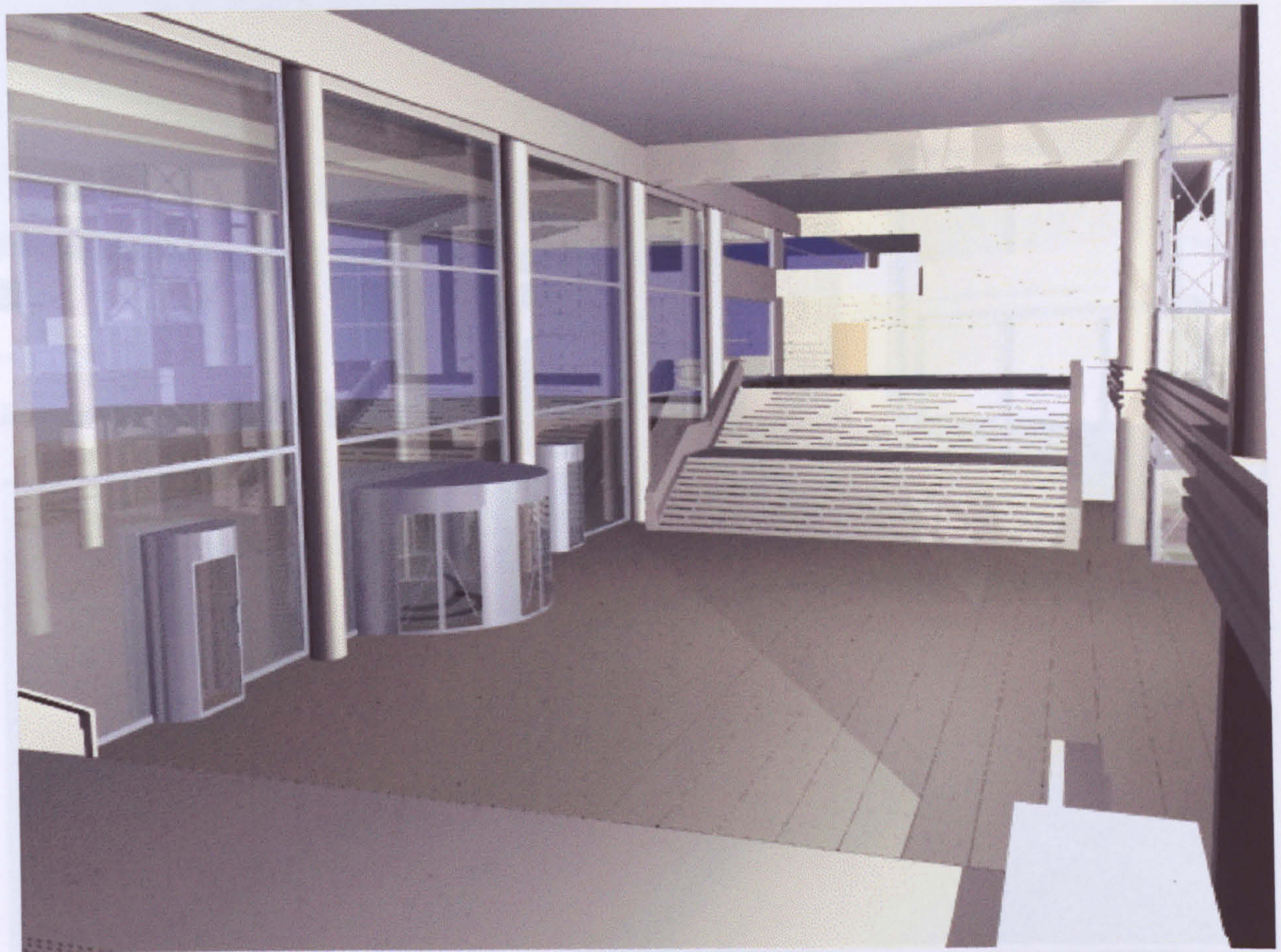




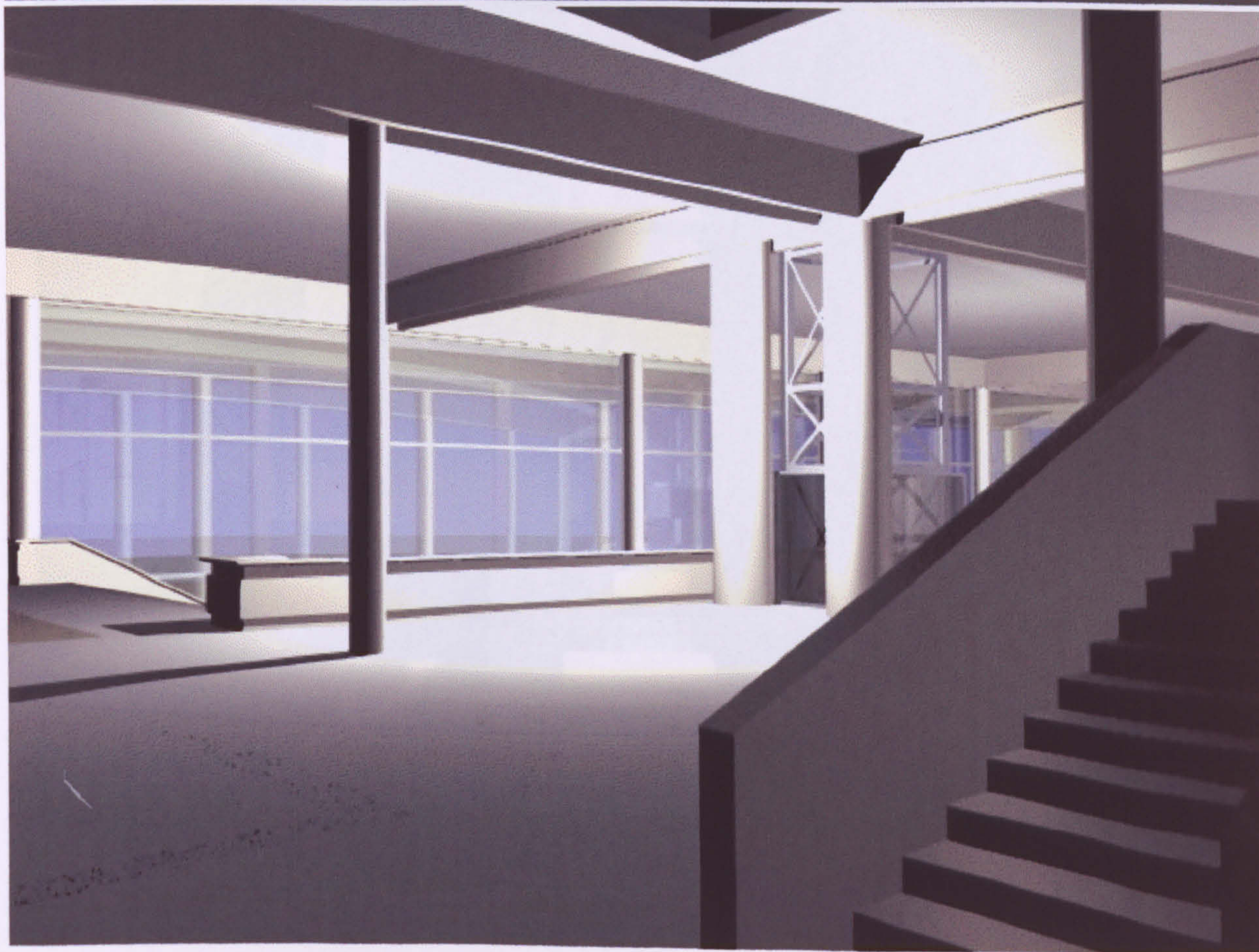
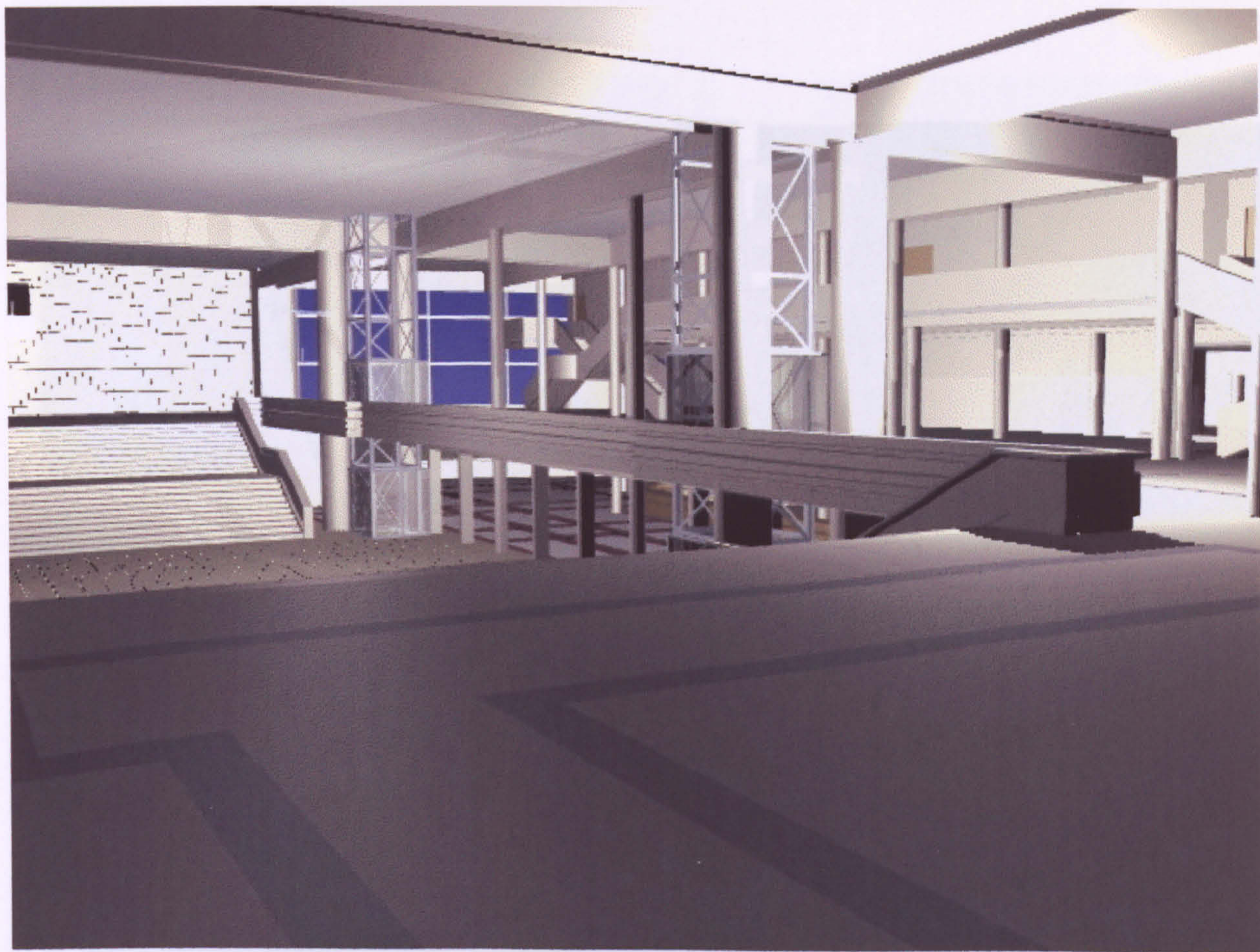




















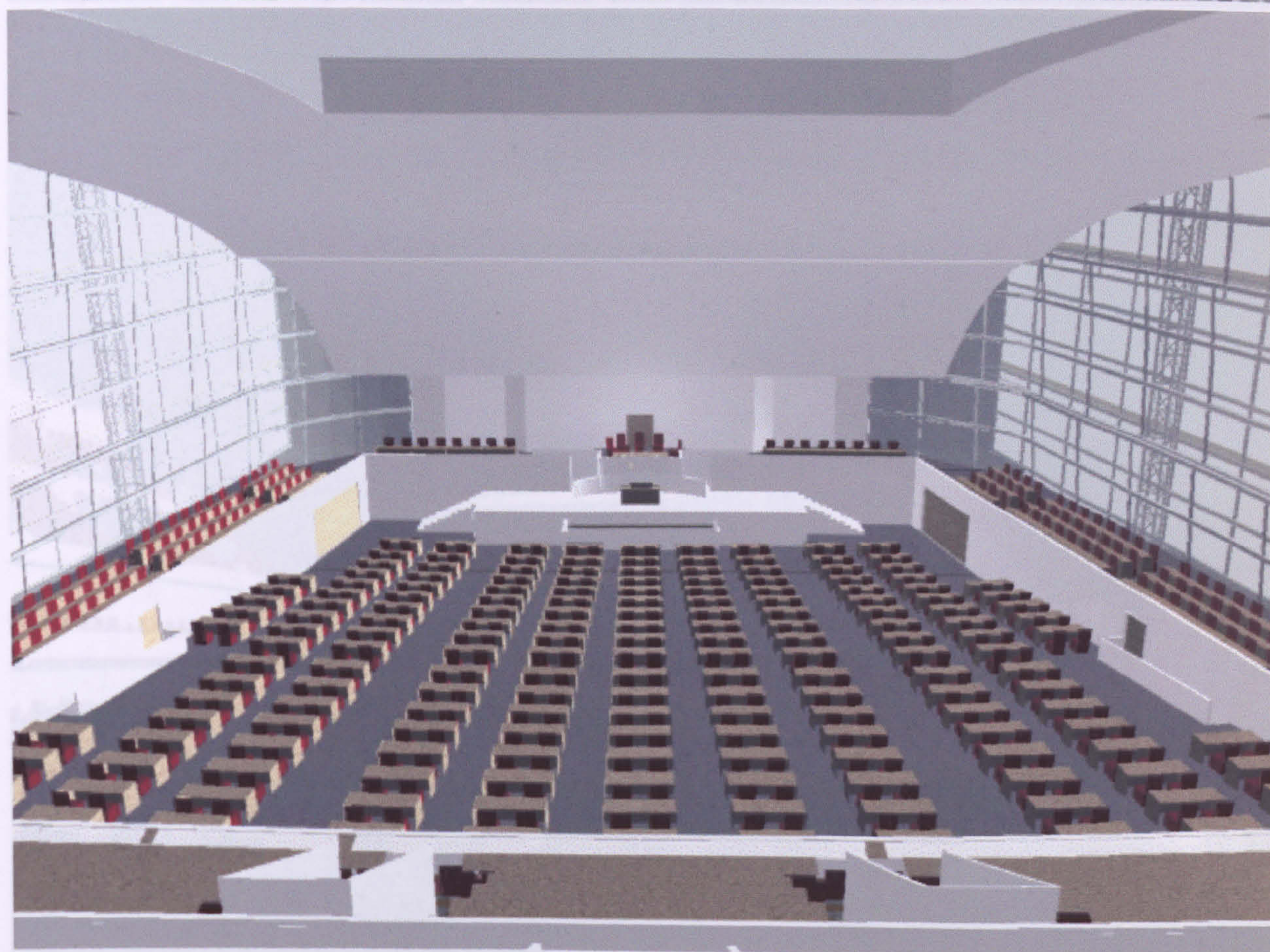
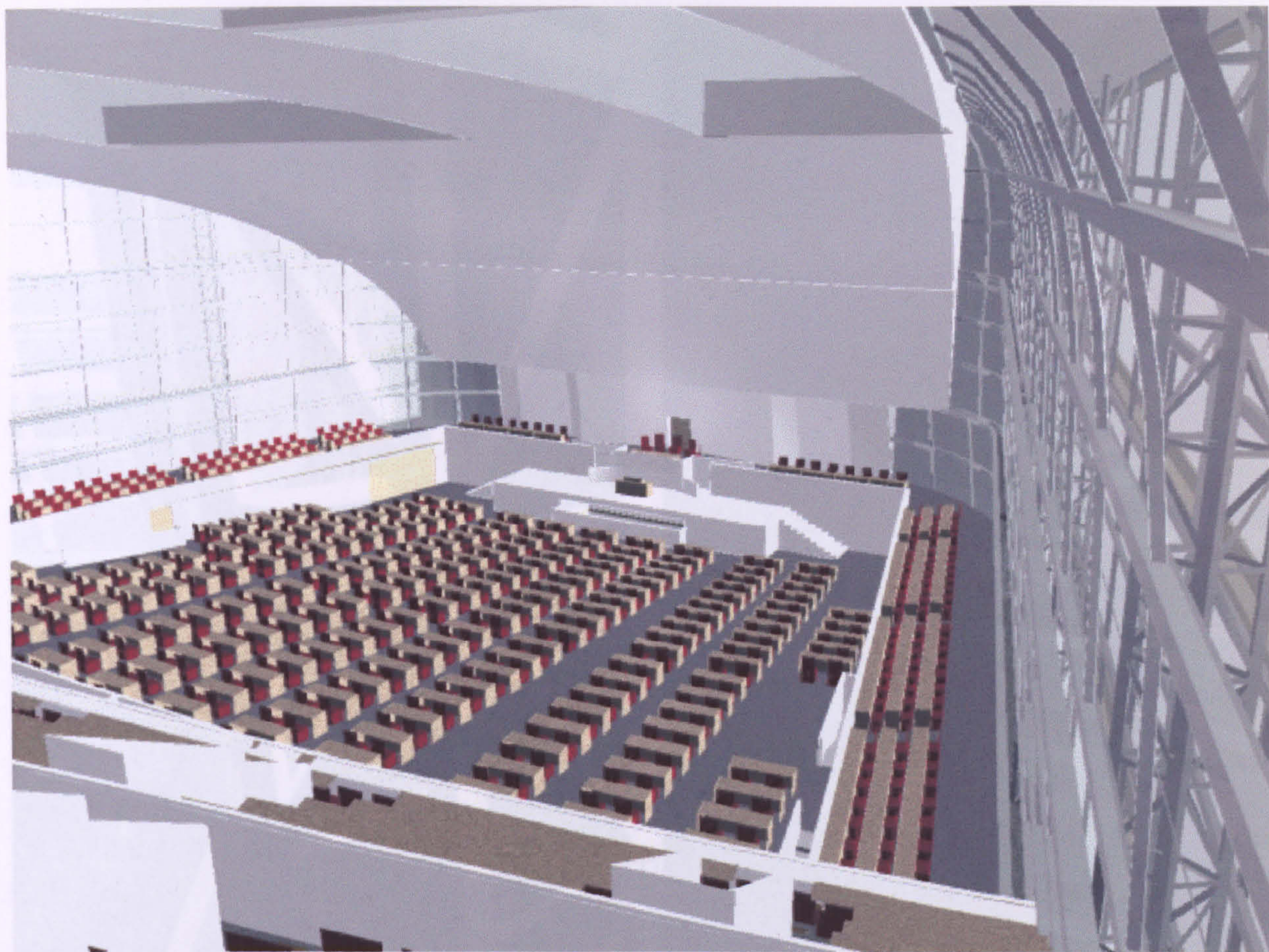




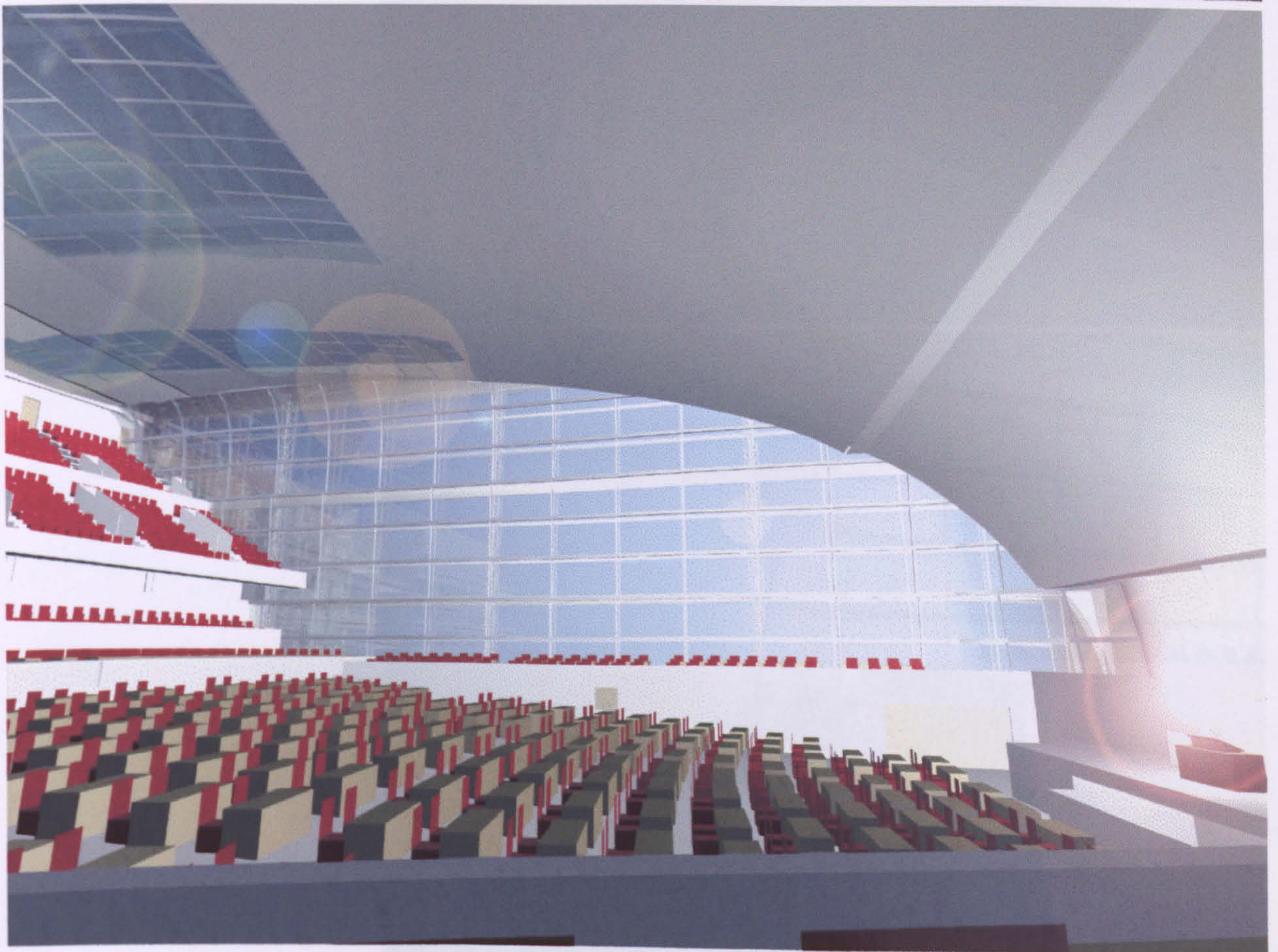
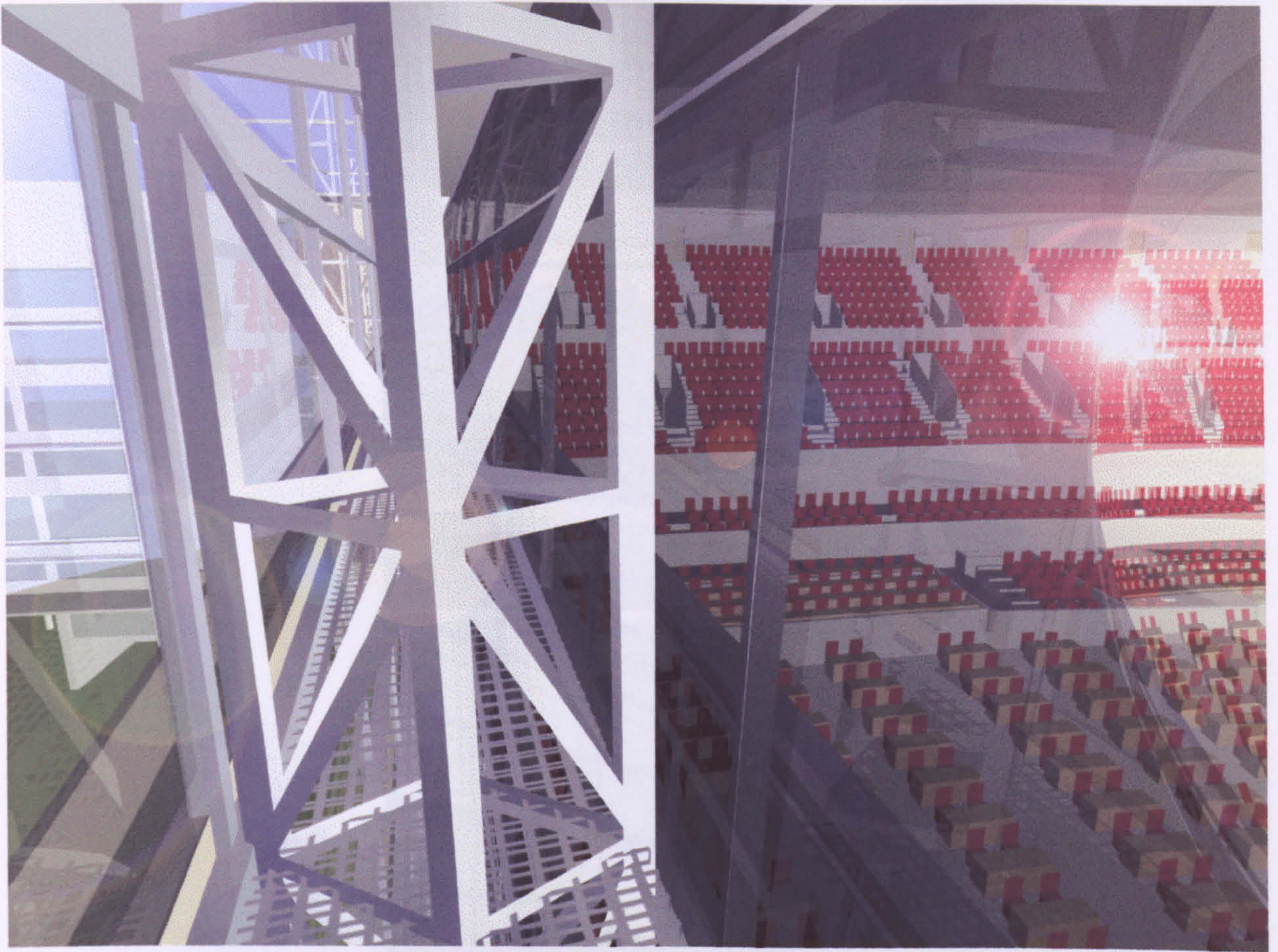




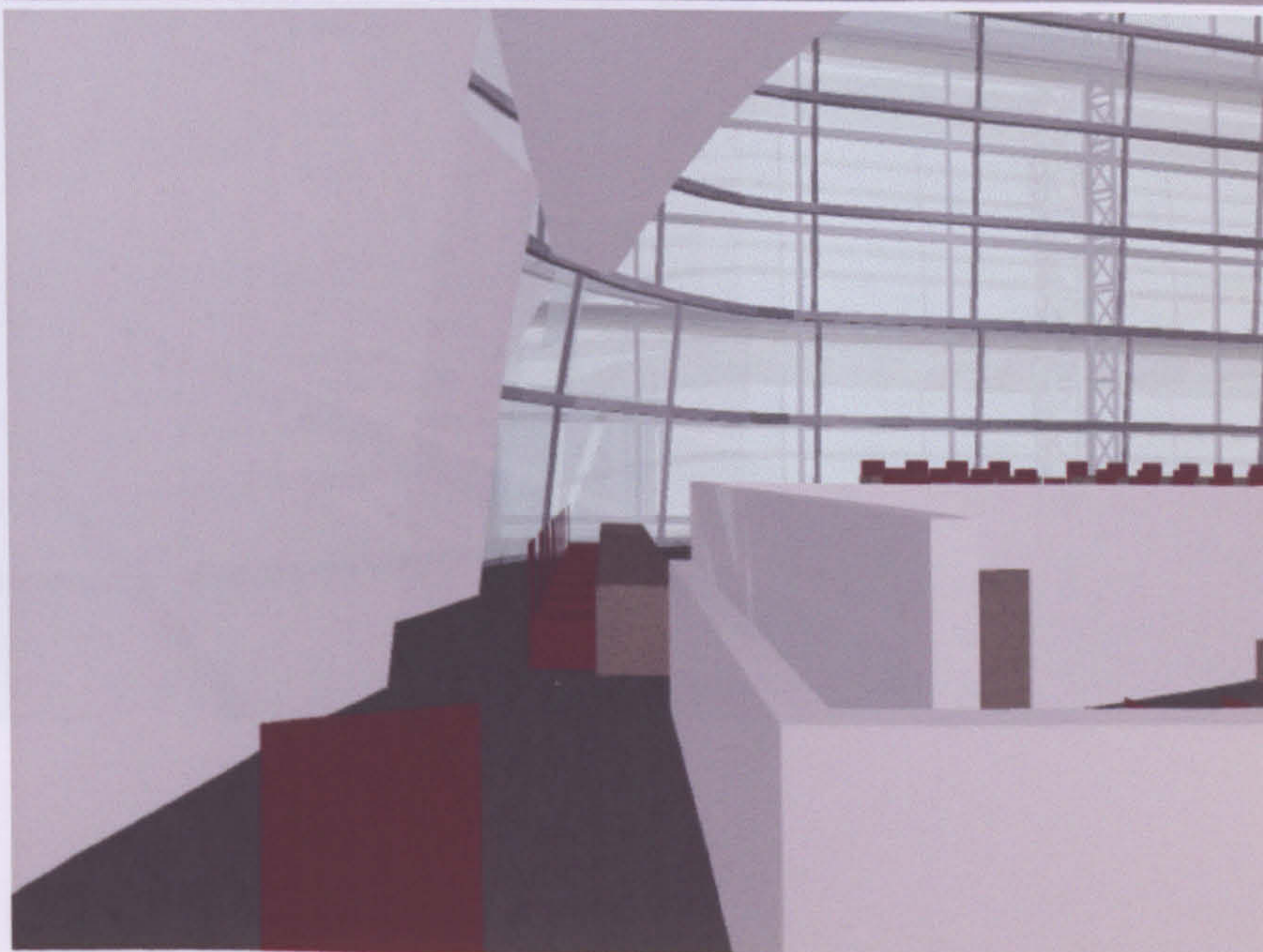
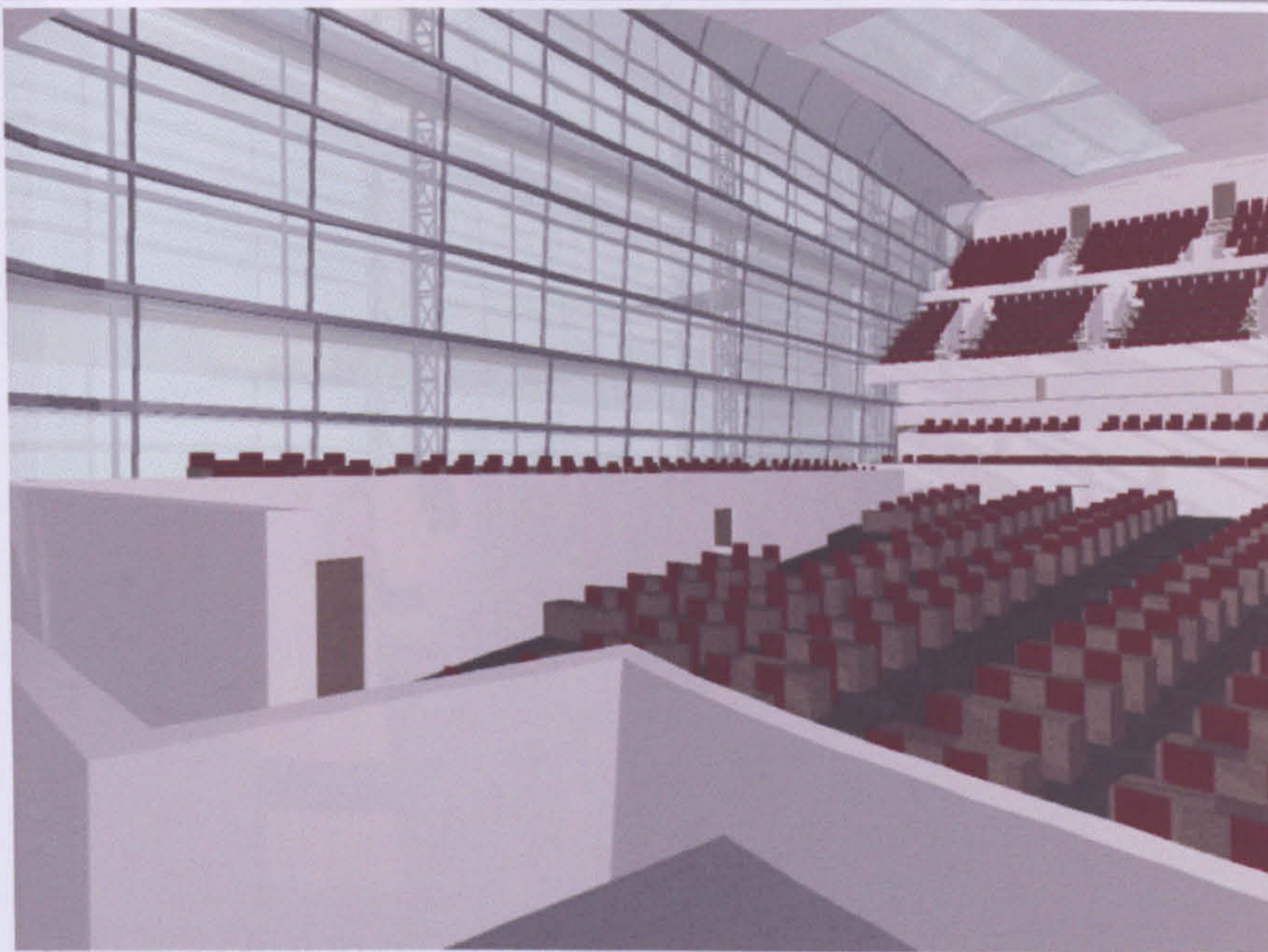
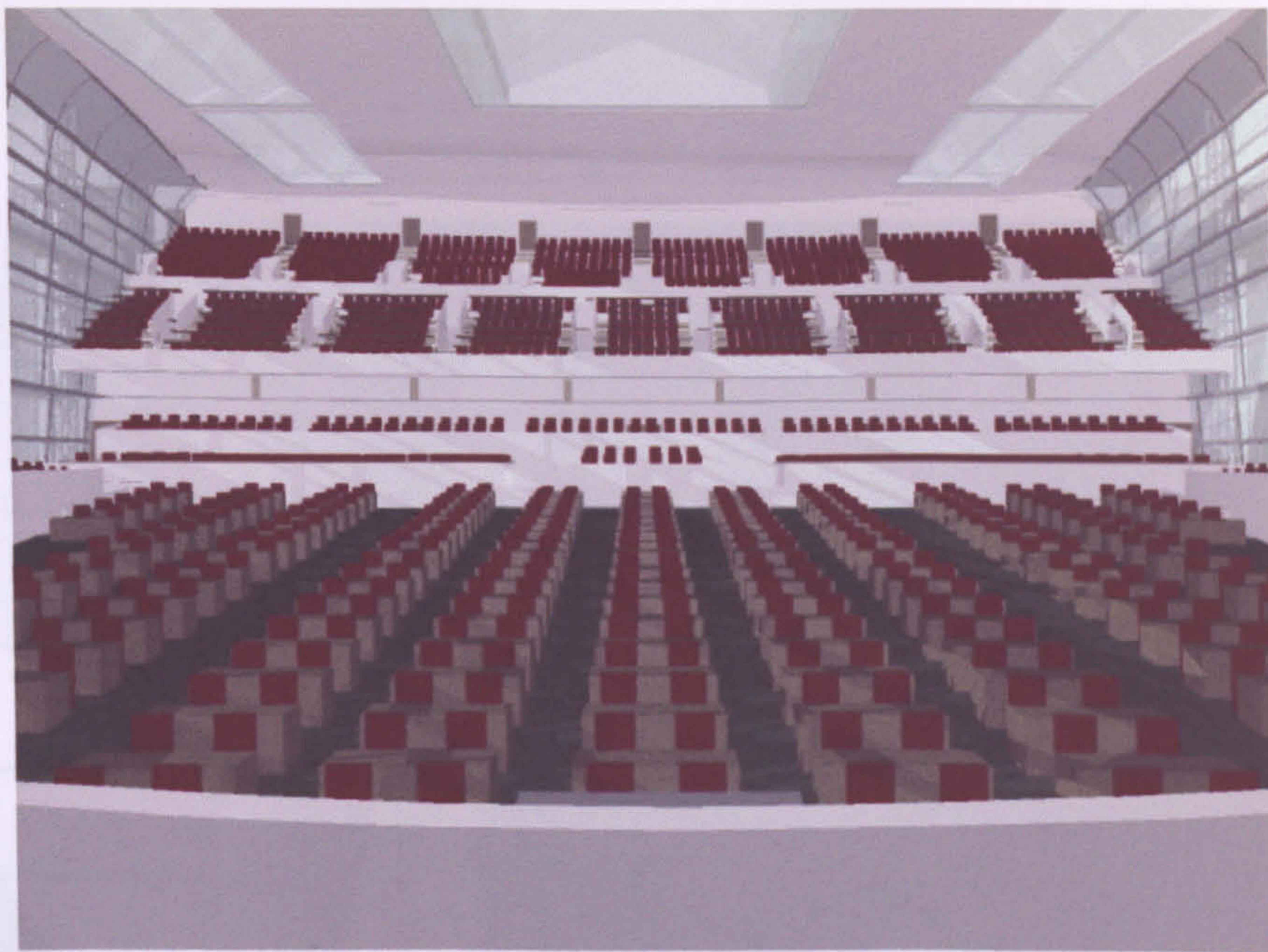




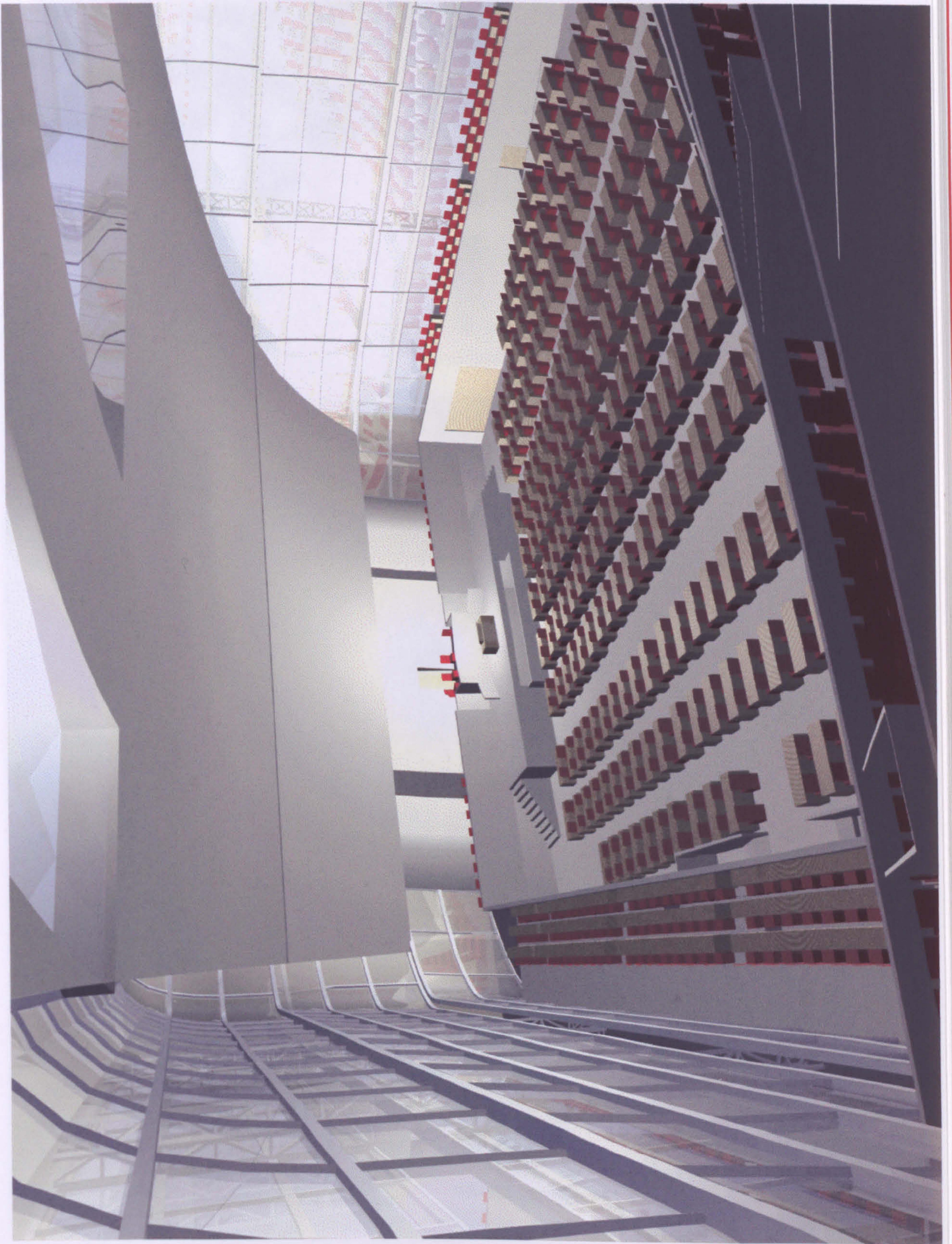










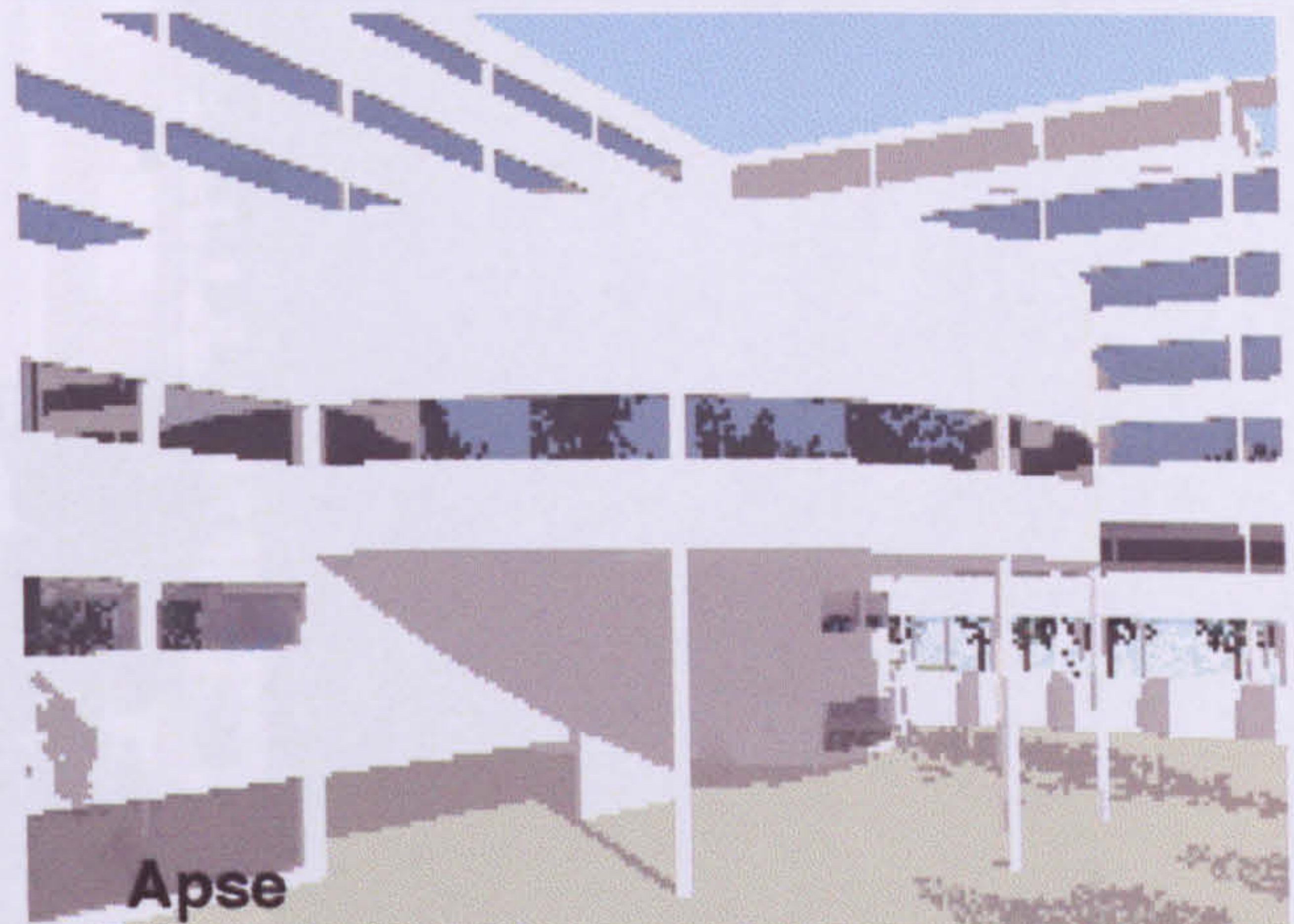






from animation - see CD





from animation - see CD

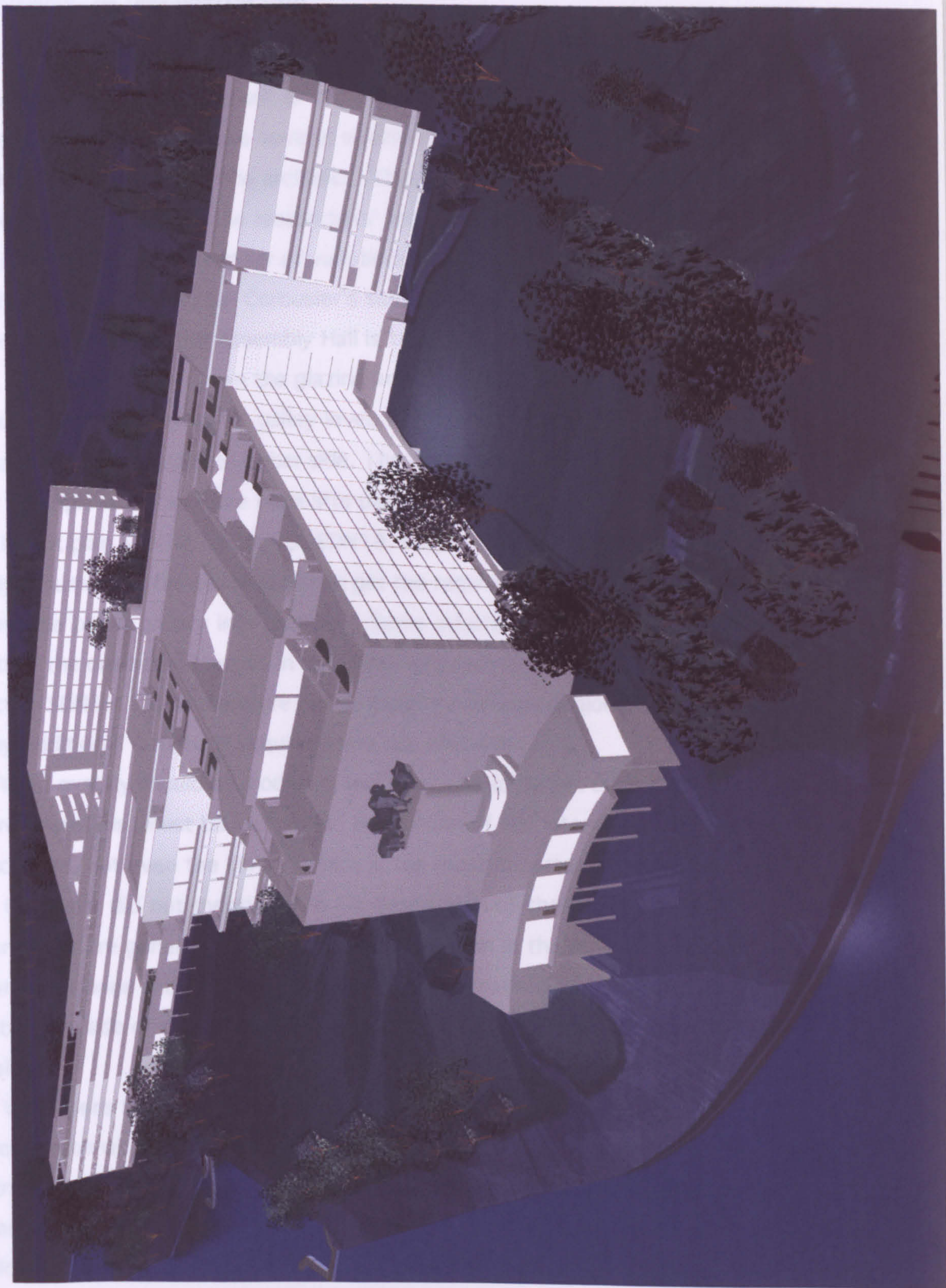














## ADDENDUM

### The Problems of Reconstruction

The reconstruction of a building where the designer is dead presents particular problems. In the case of an unbuilt or incomplete project, it is inevitable that where information is missing, or where several solutions are possible, decisions will have to be taken without the guidance of the architect. These decisions will be based on a knowledge of the architect's work, and on the researchers' architectural knowledge. The Palace of Nations drawings display a number of variations: I have generally modelled the solution that occurs most often. Parts of Le Corbusier's scheme were simply not resolved. For example, the inner glass screen in the Assembly Hall is tripartite, and the top of each section curves inwards. The junctions between the glazing and the gallery seating at the rear of the hall are problematic, especially at public galley level, where the curve of the glass cuts into the seating and the access stairs at either side. I have not attempted to find a solution here. Another example is the way the main lifts pass through the public gallery seating in the seating layout plan SDN10. In section SDN18, they do not, and I have modelled this version. I can only assume that the team could not get the required number of seats in without extending the public gallery into its lobby. Some information is missing: an example is provided by the downstand beams in the grand entrance hall. These are only indicated in the long section SDN18. I have therefore had to assume downstands along the angled edges of the slab; any additional structural requirements are unknown.

What exactly should be modelled, and what should be left out? Significant spaces and spatial relationships must be identified. Here, none of the interiors of the Secretariat have been modelled, not even the library, which is the most important space in the Secretariat. But Le Corbusier did not mention it in his description of the project; interior spaces within the Secretariat are generally much less developed than in the Assembly Hall building. The Secretariat entrance sequence is unresolved, and not satisfactorily related to the powerful symmetrical facade of the Secretariat, therefore I have only indicated the entrance externally.

What were the walls made of? The floors? The furnishings? There are no indications as to what the colours of the internal surfaces might have been. The interior of the entrance halls, at least, was probably intended to be stone: there are stone joints indicated on the main section [SDN18]. Interior walls have been left off-white throughout; the yellowish tinge in many of the images is from the slightly yellow lights used. Corbusian rendered interiors of the 1920's were often polychrome, and there are extant colour



schemes for the Centrosoyuz: had the Palace of Nations been built, Le Corbusier might well have proposed colouring some of the interiors.

In *Une Maison*, we learn that the exterior was to have been faced with a polished grey granite, locally available. My suspicion is that Le Corbusier did not really consider the facade cladding until after the competition, despite the list of prices for local stones helpfully included among the competition documents, because it is not indicated in the competition drawings, nor mentioned in the typewritten description which accompanies them. The external perspectives of the project in volume I of the *Oeuvre Complète* which indicate a stone cladding scheme postdate the competition. In the computer model, the exterior has been left a matt, off-white colour, because of the difficulties of showing enough detail with a darker surface, and because of the increased rendering time required for reflective surfaces. The post-competition stone jointing pattern might have been applied, but again I chose not to, to save computer time.

A stone inlay reminiscent of Perret is indicated for the floors of the Assembly Entrance Hall, and I have sketched this in. Other flooring is unknown; I have used a dark grey in the Assembly Hall, as if it were carpeted. The Assembly seating sketched in as blocks, has been arbitrarily coloured red, and the desks have been given a light, wood finish, to contrast with the other surfaces and to show the seating arrangement clearly.

The two main lifts in the Assembly entrance hall would have required a metal structure of some sort, which is indicated in none of the drawings. Having looked at other lifts of the period, I have indicated a trussed metal structure rising through the hall. There are images with and without this structure which would have been a prominent feature of the entrance hall<sup>1</sup>. All the other technical aspects of the building - the massive steel arches, the heating and ventilating - except for those things that reveal the 'concrete' frame - are in fact, hidden. Only the great glass screens forming the lateral facades of the hall hint at some of these systems. I had intended to model the steel structure but I realised that the only visible parts are the trussed columns between the glass screens, glimpsed as shadows. The Assembly Hall has in fact two structural systems, one concealed behind the other: the iron trusses of the nineteenth century are veiled by the concrete frame of Modernism. Similarly, the trussed lift structure commonly used in the 1920's belongs to the previous century, and is therefore hidden or denied in this exemplar of the modern.

The car seen in some of the stills of the site model is a 1932 Dodge, available free from the Avalon site on the Internet; only slightly anachronistic here. It was the oldest car available, and I have included it to give scale to the model. It is a big car, almost 4 metres long.



## A computer Reconstruction

The computer reconstruction of Le Corbusier's Palace of Nations project was produced on Apple Macintosh computers using the following graphics software:

Microstation Mac  
 form•Z Renderzone  
 StrataStudio Pro Blitz  
 Avid VideoShop  
 Adobe Photoshop  
 Hypercard  
 Apple QTVR panorama tools

### Sources:

Drawings in FLC -microfiche, NTS.  
 Drawings and maps issued with competition brief  
 Descriptions in *Une Maison* which give some of the setting-out dimensions and column grids.

### Models produced:

- 3D computer Model of Assembly Hall building showing
  - External Entrance facade
  - Main entrance Hall
  - Interior of Assembly Hall
- 3D External Model of Both buildings -Assembly Hall and Secretariat, on the Perle du Lac site showing relationship of buildings to each other, to the terrain, the circulation system.

### From these models, I have generated:

- A set of 2D scaled plans of the Assembly Hall building [Ground to roof level] & block plan of overall ensemble
- Axonometrics and perspectives
- A set of elevations
- A number of photo-realistic images of the buildings, inside the Assembly Hall and outside the whole group, as it could have been.
- A series of short, computer animations of the Assembly Hall building, presented on videotape. These represent several thousand hours of rendering time on a fast PPC: a 20sec animation sized for video [640x480pixels] running at 15 frames/sec takes around 200 hours for these models. This collection has been produced over the last two years as a means of exploring the spatial qualities of the project. These animations examine
  - the main facade of the Assembly Hall
  - the grand entrance hall and pas-perdus of the Assembly hall
  - the Assembly Hall interior
  - the ensemble of buildings on the site and the proposed circulation sequence.
- Several QTVR panoramas of the Assembly Hall interior, transferred to videotape, but best experienced on a computer screen, as they are navigable.
- analytical line drawings and diagrams of the project, combined with material from *Une Maison* & other Corbusian sources, which are used in Chapter 6.
- A WEB Site which displays a selection of small images from this computer



reconstruction has been made available on the University of Westminster Web site.  
[Designed on Mac using Claris Homepage for Netscape 3.0 browser.]

## Accuracy of the Reconstruction

Draft versions of the original drawings are available from the Fondation Le Corbusier, as prints off microfiche slides. The original scales of these drawings have been lost in the transfer to microfiche, and a scaling factor has therefore to be applied. Many of the drawings were photographed with a centimetre rule laid on top of them, so using Le Corbusier's own descriptions of the setting out of column grids etc in *Une Maison* Part II, a reasonably accurate reconstruction can be achieved. The site model was produced using the site plan provided by the League in 1926. This was digitised - ie., traced - into the computer, a method of transferral of only moderate accuracy, but gives a fair idea of the terrain for which the project was conceived. There are some inconsistencies between the model of the building and the terrain, and the most obvious example is found at the main Secretariat entrance, where the north end of the entrance quai and the feet of the last columns are partially buried in the terrain. Of course Le Corbusier was working at a distance too, and it is clear from the Garland archive drawings that the project team worked out several relevant sections from the contour map supplied with the competition documents, and then set out their buildings accordingly; it seems likely that some excavation would have been required to exactly accommodate Le Corbusier's ensemble and his circulation scheme. In order to reduce the size of the computer model, and thus to make the image calculations faster, the pattern of paths and parterres indicated in Le Corbusier's project has been applied to the model terrain as a coloured image map, with a bump map. This means that any height differences are only sketched in, and that the edges of the entry parterre are not raised up sharply. A trial with the paths modelled separately and sunk in the turf resulted in a model of 16Mb -twice the size of the final model, and too big to render animations from on the available equipment.

The trees are placed on the site more or less according to Le Corbusier's plan, simply to give some idea of the planting. It is extremely difficult to place them accurately on the terrain, especially when using a terrain image map, ie., it is not clear where the paths are until the final, colour image has been calculated. There are a few trees that have wandered onto the paths, and one or two that don't quite touch the ground. Once the final model has been assembled to make the images, it is difficult to track down the errant trees.

The project is revealed during the reconstruction: initial assumptions must sometimes be revised, and with hindsight, some elements should have been reconstructed



differently. One example is the covered route to the roof-top restaurant on the Assembly Hall building, which I made as an unglazed passage. Another is the height of the main entrance doors to the Secretariat: it is clear from viewing some of the circulation animations that they should be enlarged so that the lintels align with those of the glazing on the adjacent west wall.

### Limitations of the Model

An aspect of the Assembly Hall which I have not explored is the proposed lighting of the hall from between the double glass skins which form its lateral facades. Lighting & HVAC structures as well as access galleries were to be located within the double-skin glass wall, and the access galleries might have been quite substantial, contributing to the stiffness of the structure. The free passage of light may have been more obstructed than Le Corbusier envisaged, and the north/south orientation of the building would have resulted in an unequal lateral distribution of daylight.



**PROGRAMME AND RULES**

**FOR THE**

**ARCHITECTURAL COMPETITION**

**FOR THE ERECTION OF A**

**LEAGUE OF NATIONS BUILDING AT GENEVA**

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**INTRODUCTION.**

In conformity with the decisions of the fifth and sixth Assemblies and of the special session of the Assembly held in March 1926, the League of Nations is holding a competition for the choice of a plan for the construction of a League Building.

The League of Nations throws this competition open to architects in order that the building may be designed not only to provide accommodation of the most modern and practical kind for all the organisations essential to the League's work, but also to symbolise in style and outline the pacific ideals of the twentieth century.

The site on which this building is to be erected is a magnificent one; its highest part adjoins the Route de Lausanne, and it slopes gently, with lawns and shady avenues, to the shores of the Lake of Geneva. The grounds border the lake for more than 400 meters, and a path (which can be widened) on the property makes an admirable walk by the lake-side and has a marvellous view, including Mont Blanc.

It is in surroundings of this magnificence and beauty that the League of Nations building is to be planned.



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## **SECTION I**

**Summary of the Organisation of the League of Nations**

**Site**

**Access to the Grounds**

**Orientation**

**Character of the Soil and the Foundations**

**Buildings**

**Description of the Secretariat**

**Detailed description of each floor of the Secretariat**

**Detailed description of the Assembly Hall &**

**Rooms for the Council with Dependencies**

**Annex to the League Building**

**Cost of Construction**



## SUMMARY OF THE ORGANISATION OF THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS.

The building which forms the subject of the competition is to house all the organs of the League of Nations in Geneva.

It should be conceived in such a manner as to enable these bodies to carry out their work and to meet and deliberate easily and undisturbed in that quiet atmosphere in which it is desirable that international problems should be discussed.

These organs are:

(a) *The Assembly*, which will use mainly the large hall for public meetings; the delegates of all the States Members of the League of Nations will meet there at regular intervals and hold sessions attended by a large number of persons.

(b) *The Council*, a much smaller body than the Assembly, consisting at present of ten members. It meets several times a year, sometimes in private, sometimes in public.

(c) *The Secretariat*, which centralises all the work of the League of Nations, acts as a permanent body, organises meetings and receives the delegates of all the international committees, the members of the international Press and all persons interested in the work of the League of Nations.

(d) *The International Labour Conference*<sup>1</sup>, which meets periodically at other times than the Assembly, and will sit in the hall mentioned in paragraph (a).

\* \* \*

All parts of the building, including the different services, should be readily accessible to all persons taking part or assisting in the work of the League or attending its meetings, but, to ensure order and to avoid confusion, it is essential that the delegates of States and the staff of the Secretariat should have entrances separate from those of the Press and the public and should be able to reach their respective places without difficulty.

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## SITE<sup>2</sup>.

The site marked A, covering a total area of 66,406 square meters, on which the League building is to be erected, is bounded on the west by the Route de Lausanne, on the east by the Lake of Geneva, on the south by the public park of Mon-Repos and on the north by the Barton property, marked B.

The Barton property, which also borders on the lake between the site described and the International Labour Office, will be acquired later, and the grounds of the League of Nations will then extend from the Parc Mon-Repos to the grounds of the International Labour Office inclusive and will form a single property, giving space for the future development of all the activities of the League.

At present, no buildings can be erected on the Barton property and it is impossible to foresee at what moment this property will be acquired by the League; the building must, therefore be erected on Site A only, without encroaching on the Barton property.

<sup>1</sup> See Annex IX.

<sup>2</sup> See plan.



Competitors must remember, however, that, as this estate is to be acquired later, the building for which this competition is held must be placed on Site A in a situation suitable both as regards Site A and Site B, so that, if additional buildings are later to be erected on Site B, the main structure will still, owing to its situation, be the most conspicuous and outstanding building of the League of Nations.

A plan of the situation, showing the general topography of the ground, the declivities and nature of the soil, together with details regarding drainage (general drainage system), etc., is supplied to competitors.

#### ACCESS TO THE GROUNDS.

Carriages and motor-cars and also pedestrians and visitors using the frequent tramway service will normally have access to the grounds by the entrance on the Route de Lausanne.

During important meetings the motor-cars of delegates may enter through the Parc Mon-Repos.

A park will be laid out in the grounds, the existing plantations being utilised as far as possible.

#### ORIENTATION.

The orientation of the building is left to the discretion of competitors. Their attention is drawn, however, to the very cold winds which blow in winter from the north-east and to the beauty of the view across the lake towards Mont Blanc.

#### CHARACTER OF THE SOIL AND THE FOUNDATIONS.

Competitors must propose the system of foundation which in their opinion is most suitable to the character of the soil. For this purpose they are supplied with a drawing of a geological section of the ground, together with the results of the borings made.

If the foundations do not reach solid bottom, competitors can make use, for example, of a reinforced-concrete platform. In this case, the average permissible weight on the bottom of the platform is roughly a pressure of 0.75 kilogram per square centimeter.

#### BUILDINGS.

The League of Nations building will consist of *two principal parts*, which may be arranged either in separate buildings connected by galleries or colonnades or in a single building supplied with lobbies, galleries and exits.

These two parts are chiefly intended:

The first for the main *Assembly Hall*, for the *Council Rooms* and for their dependencies<sup>1</sup>;  
The second for the use of the *Secretariat*.

In view of the declivity of the soil, these two parts of the building must of necessity be erected on a basement to be used for various auxiliary services and, secondarily, so constructed as to

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<sup>1</sup> As the Assembly Hall is to be used for International Labour Conferences, the building must be arranged in such a way that the work of the Secretariat of the League will not in any way be disturbed during those Conferences.



place the ground floors of the two parts of the building as far as possible on the same level. The latter condition is optional; competitors are free to arrange the ground floors and other floors on the levels which seem to them to answer best both in regard to the *practical value* and *beauty* of their plans.

One system of heating, lighting, electro-motive force, ventilation, acoustics, water supply, drainage and general upkeep will be employed in both parts of the building.

The Route de Lausanne being one of the thoroughfares in the Canton most used by motor traffic, competitors should arrange for the building to stand at least 15 meters back from this road in order to avoid dust.

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### DESCRIPTION OF THE SECRETARIAT.

The Secretariat, which is the permanent organ of the League of Nations and is directed by the Secretary-General, at present consists of 480 officials. The Secretariat is responsible for the organisation of the meetings of the Assembly, of the Council and of the Committees; it undertakes all the preparatory work for these meetings, makes preliminary studies and carries out the resolutions and decisions adopted by these different organs of the League.

The Secretariat is divided into a certain number of sections and administrative departments. The principal Sections are as follows:

(a) *Offices of the Secretary-General and the Under Secretaries-General.* — The Secretary-General is responsible for the direction of the Secretariat as a whole. He is assisted by a Deputy Secretary-General and by two or three Under Secretaries-General, one of whom is in charge of internal administration.

(b) *International Bureaux.* — This Section deals with the relations of the League of Nations with all the international bureaux placed under the authority of the League in virtue of Article 24 of the Covenant. It also acts as the Secretariat of the International Committee on Intellectual Co-operation.

(c) *Political Section.* — This Section studies all international political problems with which the League of Nations may have to deal.

(d) *Office of the Legal Adviser.* — This Office gives opinions on the legal aspect of all questions dealt with by the League; it is also responsible for the registration and publication of treaties.

(e) *Administrative Commissions and Minorities Questions Section.* — This Section deals with administrative questions concerning the Saar Basin, the Free City of Danzig, etc., and with the protection of minorities in the countries in which there is an international regime for such protection.

(f) *Disarmament Section.* — This Section deals with all questions concerning security and disarmament, the supervision of the international trade in arms and the private manufacture of arms, and the publication of the *Armaments Year-Book*.

(g) *Economic and Financial Section.* — This Section constitutes the Secretariat of the Financial Committee and of the Economic Committee, which act as technical advisory bodies to the Council and Assembly for all financial and economic questions. At the same time it periodically issues publications on these questions.



(h) *Health Section.* — This Section constitutes the Secretariat of the Health Committee, which gives the Council and the Assembly of the League technical opinions on all questions relating to public health. It is responsible for establishing relations between the health services of the different countries, for centralising information concerning these questions, and for promoting the conclusion of international agreements relating to public health.

(i) *Information Section.* — This Section is responsible for relations with the Press, prepares communiqués and notes for the use of journalists, is responsible for keeping in touch with the organisations engaging in propaganda in favour of the League of Nations, and keeps the Secretariat informed of the state of public opinion with regard to the League of Nations.

(j) *Mandates Section.* — This Section acts as the Secretariat of the Mandates Commission, which has to examine the annual reports of the mandatory Powers; it is also responsible for all the preparatory work required by the Council and the Assembly in regard to questions concerning the mandated territories.

(k) *Social Questions and Opium Traffic Section.* — This Section deals with important social questions such as the protection and welfare of children, the suppression of the traffic in women and children, the suppression of obscene publications, the suppression of the illicit trade in opium, etc.

(l) *Communications and Transit Section.* — This Section acts as the Secretariat of the Advisory Committee for Communications and Transit, prepares the international conferences on transit questions, follows the application of the conventions concluded by these conferences, etc.

(m) *Financial Administration.* — The Treasurer of the League is responsible for the direction of financial operations and for drawing up the budget and supervising the internal control and accountancy services.

(n) *Latin-American Office.* — This Office is specially responsible for the liaison between the Secretariat and the Republics of Latin America.

The principal administrative departments are the following:

(a) *Establishment Office.* — This is responsible for making all material arrangements for meetings of the Assembly, the Council, the Committees, etc., and for all arrangements regarding buildings, supplies, stores, etc., and all questions concerning the staff of the lower grades.

(b) *Précis-Writing, Publication and Sales Department.* — This Department is responsible for the drafting and publication of Minutes and for the printing and sale of the documents, pamphlets, etc., published by the League of Nations.

(c) *Interpreters and Translators' Department.* — This Department, which is divided into an English branch and a French branch, is responsible for the translation of all the documents published by the Secretariat in the two official languages. It also supplies interpreters for the Assembly, Council, Conferences, Committees, etc.

(d) *Registry.* — This Department is responsible for the receipt, registration and safe-keeping of the documents of the League of Nations.

(e) *Distribution.* — This Department is responsible for sending all official documents to the States Members of the League. It also distributes the documents necessary for the work of the Assembly, the Council, the Committees, etc.

(f) *Pool of Shorthand-typists.* — This Department, which comprises from sixty to eighty shorthand-typists, does the shorthand and typing work of the Secretariat.

(g) *Duplicating Department.* — This Department is responsible for reproducing the official documents of the League before their distribution.

(h) *Library.* — The Library is intended for the use of the delegates, the officials of the Secretariat, and all persons engaged in the study of international questions.



DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF EACH FLOOR OF THE SECRETARIAT.

*Basement.*

This floor might contain:

- (a) The premises for storing documents (at least 2,000 square meters);
- (b) Spacious cloak-rooms for men (100) and women (250 to 300);
- (c) Lavatories, water-closets, etc.

*Ground Floor<sup>1</sup>.*

- (a) Distribution Branch (21);
- (b) Internal Services: Offices for the Postal and Telegraph Service, Bank, etc. (17b).

*First Floor.*

- (a) Secretary-General's Office (1);
- (b) Deputy Secretary-General's Office (2);
- (c) Offices of the Under Secretary-General in charge of Internal Administration (3);
- (d) Offices of the Under Secretary-General Director of the International Bureaux Section (4);
- (e) Offices of the Under Secretary-General Director of the Political Section (5);
- (f) Latin-American Office (15) (or on second floor).

*Other Floors.*

- (a) Offices of the Legal Adviser (6);
- (b) Administrative Commissions and Minorities Questions Section (7);
- (c) Disarmament Section (8);
- (d) Economic and Financial Section (9);
- (e) Health Section (10);
- (f) Information Section (11);
- (g) Mandates Section (12);
- (h) Social Section (13);
- (i) Transit Section (14);
- (j) Financial Administration (16);
- (k) Internal Services (17a and 17c);
- (l) Précis-writing, Publishing and Sales Department (18);
- (m) Interpreters and Translators' Department (19);
- (n) Registry (20);
- (o) Library (22);
- (p) Pool of Shorthand-typists (23);
- (q) Duplicating Department (24);
- (r) Rooms for the use of the Staff (25);
- (s) Restaurant (26);
- (t) Auditors and Experts (28).

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<sup>1</sup> The figures in parentheses refer to the analytical table issued to competitors.



N.B. — On each floor there should be a sufficient number of small cloak-rooms, lavatories, etc. Arrangements should be made for very rapid communication between the different departments and offices by means of lifts, luggage elevators, pneumatic tubes, etc., and also between the Assembly Hall and the departments of the Secretariat.

The important distribution and courier service of the Secretariat (despatch of documents and pamphlets, receipt of documents) should as far as possible pass through an entrance or courtyard separate from the main entrance. The staff in charge of the heating and electricity systems should also utilise the same entrance or courtyard.

Competitors must provide for the possibility of enlarging the Secretariat later.

#### COMMITTEE ROOMS (27).

Eleven committee rooms are required. Six should be in the building of the Assembly Hall on the floors specified; the other five may be placed in accordance with any of the following four possibilities:

- (a) All on the ground floor of the Secretariat;
- (b) All on the ground floor between the Secretariat and the Assembly Hall;
- (c) Two on the ground floor of the Secretariat and three on the ground floor between the Secretariat and the Assembly Hall;
- (d) Two on the ground floor of the Secretariat and three on the third floor of the Assembly Hall.

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### DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE ASSEMBLY HALL AND ROOMS FOR THE COUNCIL, WITH DEPENDENCIES.

#### DESCRIPTION OF THE ASSEMBLY HALL.

The Assembly Hall (42), the shape of which is left to competitors, should be capable of holding a large audience. It will be situated on the ground floor.

The acoustics of the Assembly Hall should be as perfect as possible, and it should be spacious, well ventilated and well lit. In view of its purpose, careful attention should be given to its proportions.

It should be arranged as follows:

A portion in the centre, in tiers or arranged on an inclined plane, will be reserved for 400 delegates, who should be able to sit in comfort, two by two, at their desks (see sketch supplied).

Dominating the part reserved for delegates, and facing them, will be a dais for the President, the Secretary-General and an interpreter.

On either side of these three seats will be members of the Secretariat<sup>1</sup>, who will thus be able to communicate with the President and the Secretary-General. Behind the President there will be four or five seats<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Ten on each side, with desks.

<sup>2</sup> Without desks.



In front of the presidential dais, and below it, will be a platform on which speakers will stand and to which the delegates will come to vote.

Close to the speaker will be seated, when necessary, the representatives of Committees<sup>1</sup> and the interpreters<sup>2</sup>.

This platform should be readily accessible from the delegates' part of the hall. The delegates should be able to go up and come down by a double staircase when called upon to speak or vote.

At the foot of this platform there will be tables or desks for the use of précis-writers and verbatim reporters (about ten persons), who should have easy access to the rooms outside the Assembly Hall (48) behind the presidential dais.

*A. Official Platform (42).*—This platform should be on the same level as the upper rows of delegates' seats. It will be subdivided into: (a) four main sections, with desks, placed symmetrically in relation to the presidential dais. The two sections nearest to the dais will be reserved for members of the Secretariat (50 on each side); the other two will be occupied by secretaries of delegations (150 on each side); (b) two enclosures for friends of the President and of the Secretary-General; (c) a large diplomatic enclosure (this may be at a higher level, and must hold at least 200 persons).

*B. Press Gallery (42).*—This will be situated over the platform described above, and should be so arranged as to enable Press representatives (600) to take notes in comfort, and to move about or leave the chamber without difficulty during the meetings.

*C. Public Galleries (42).*—The public gallery or galleries, to accommodate about 1,000 persons, will be placed above the Press gallery. The public should be able to follow the debates without difficulty.

All the galleries should open out into spacious and convenient corridors.

*Dependencies directly connected with the Assembly Hall.* — The delegates should have at their disposal corridors or lobbies (41) in which they can move about easily and quietly, and where they can converse with their secretaries, Press representatives, etc.

*The other dependencies to the Assembly Hall will be as follows:*

A large private room for the President (43), communicating easily with the presidential dais;

A private room for the Secretary-General (44);

A large private room for the Secretariat (45);

A number of small rooms for persons attendant upon the President and the Secretary-General (46);

An office large enough to be used by the verbatim reporters and secretaries on duty at the foot of the speakers' platform (48);

Water-closets, toilet-tables, private washhand basins, etc. (47).

In addition to the above, the building should contain the following:

#### *Ground Floor.*

*Committee Rooms.*—Two large rectangular committee rooms of equal size, 200 square meters each (50). Each of these rooms must have a gallery accessible to the public otherwise than by the delegates' entrance, and containing seating accommodation for at least 100 persons (50).

*Telegraph Office.*—At the end of the corridors or lobbies there should be a telegraph office (49).

<sup>1</sup> A table will be provided for representatives of Committees when the Assembly is discussing the reports of those Committees.

<sup>2</sup> Four or five interpreters sitting at tables.



### *First Floor.*

*Council.*—The part reserved for the Council must be situated on the side towards the lake. It should contain: A room for public meetings of the Council (51) (this room, which should be rectangular, must contain on three sides a gallery for the use of the public, affording seating accommodation for at least 120 persons); a room for the President (53); and a room for private meetings of the Council (52).

*Committee Room.*—A committee room accessible to the public (54).

*Press.*—In the immediate proximity of the Press gallery should be placed fifteen telephone-boxes (55)<sup>1</sup>, each large enough to contain a small table and the telephone apparatus; a telegraph office (56); a wireless-telegraph office (57); a large writing-room for the Press (58); and a number of small offices (59)<sup>2</sup>.

### *Second Floor.*

Three committee rooms, accessible to the public, if possible facing the lake (60, 61, 62); a large office (63); and a number of smaller offices (64).

### *Third Floor.*

A refreshment-room (65), which should be situated on the side of the lake, and should be so arranged as to enable those taking part in the work of the Assembly to get there without difficulty. It should have several annexes, such as kitchen, scullery, lavatory, etc. (66).

### *Basement.*

*General Services.*—In addition to the delegates' entrance (29) and the other entrances (33, 34, 36), cloak-rooms (31, 35, 37) and numerous lavatories, water-closets, etc. (39), this floor should contain a waiting-room for the public (32), the various staircases (30, 34, 36, 39) and lifts. This floor should contain rooms to be used as store-rooms (38) for the documents required for the sessions of the Assembly. They must be well lit and dry.

*Entrance Hall, etc.*—In order to complete the description given above, it should be stated that the entrance reserved for the delegates of the States should lead into a large hall (40) in proximity to which will be situated a cloak-room (31) and all other conveniences for the use of the delegates. This part of the building is to be provided with lifts, both for persons and goods, and with spacious staircases.

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## ANNEX TO THE LEAGUE BUILDING.

To clear the approaches to the building and to allow space for waiting vehicles, competitors should provide for an annex in the vicinity of the Route de Lausanne on Site A, with a garage for 25 motor-cars and about 100 bicycles.

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<sup>1</sup> The telephone-boxes should be sufficiently well ventilated to make it possible for anyone to stay there for a considerable length of time without suffering inconvenience. The boxes should be completely separated by sound-proof partitions.

<sup>2</sup> Twenty offices, if possible (each approximately 20 square meters in size).



This garage should contain a waiting-room of 50 square meters for chauffeurs, accommodation for the caretaker and also outside shelters or galleries for about 75 motor-cars.

This annex, which should be made as small as possible, should be designed so as not to spoil the perspective of the main building and its approaches.

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#### COST OF CONSTRUCTION.

The cost of construction, including the architect's fees, should in no case exceed the total sum of 13 million Swiss francs. This price must include all general installations (heating, electricity, cold and hot water, lifts, ventilators, etc.).

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(A) SERVICES OF THE SECRETARIAT

**Observations**

A unit as used in the present table represents: 4 m. x 5.50 m., 22 square metres.

A unit thus indicates a room 5% larger (perpendicularity to its orientation) than 4 m.

The rooms are divided into three categories:

a) Single units: rooms of a length of 5.50 m. and a breadth of 4 m.

b) Double units: rooms of a length of 5.50 m. and a breadth of 6 m.

c) Triple units: rooms of a length of 5.50 m. and a breadth of 7 m.

The walls not being included in these measurements, it is necessary to add to each unit the space required for the construction of the walls.

These measurements apply to all accommodation figuring in the present table, except where otherwise indicated.



## (8) ASSEMBLY HALL AND ROOMS FOR THE COUNCIL WITH DEPENDENCIES.

No. in order	Description	Number	Approximate area	Remarks	Observations
29	BASEMENT: Perhaps on two levels, one level with the pavement and the other lower. Principal entrance for the delegates.	1			Ad 29. Two lifts to be provided for, each capable of holding ten persons, near the principal entrance for all the floors, including the basement. Ad 30. These two halls may be united in a single hall.
30	Entrance hall with main staircase communicating with the hall of the ground floor.	1			
31	Cloakroom sufficiently large to be used by 600 persons (delegates).	1			Ad 31. For visitors.
32	Waiting room for the public.	1			Ad 33. Two lifts to be provided for serving all floors.
33	Entrance for the staff.	1			
34	Entrance reserved for the Press with staircase communicating directly with the floor reserved for the Press.	1			
35	Cloakroom reserved for the Press (600 persons).	1			
36	One or two entrances for the public with staircases communicating directly with the public galleries.	1-2			Ad 36. All the entrances should be arranged so as to make it easy to supervise the entry of persons into the building.
37	Cloakroom for the public admitted to the meetings (1,000 persons).	1			
38	As many spacious rooms as possible for use as storerooms, well ventilated and dry.	1			Ad 38. Two lifts for the conveyance of documents in back part of the building.
39	Sufficient number of service staircases, passages, water closets, lavatories, wash-hand basins for men and women, etc.	1			
40	N.B. — These rooms should be so arranged as to make them easy of access from outside.	1			
40	GROUND FLOOR. Large principal hall.	1			Ad 40. See observation Ad 30.
41	Galleries or lobbies.	1			Ad 42. See detailed description. The doors of the Hall should open in both directions.
42	Assembly Hall with platforms.	1			
43	Large private room for the President.	1	70 sq. m.		Ad 43. etc. There should be a passage running past offices 43, 44, 45 and 46 and connected with the corridors or lobbies.
44	Private room for the Secretary-General.	1	40 sq. m.		
45	Large private room for the Secretariat.	1	70 sq. m.		
46	A number of small rooms for persons attendant upon the President and the Secretary-General.	1	Each 20 sq. m.		
47	Water-closets, toilet tables, lavatories and private wash-hand basins.	1			
48	Office large enough to be used by the verbatim reporters and secretaries on duty at the foot of the speakers' platform.	1	25 sq. m.		Ad 48. This room might be placed on an entresol.
49	Office for the receipt of telegrams.	1			Ad 49. At one end of the corridors (41).
50	Committee rooms with public galleries containing seating accommodation for 100 persons (See detailed description).	2	200 sq. m. each		Ad 50. These should be situated as far as possible on the side looking towards the lake and, if possible, should be furnished with an entrance other than the delegates' entrance.
51	Room for the public meetings of the Council with a gallery for the public (seating accommodation for 120 persons).	1	20 m. x 10 m.		
52	Room for the private meetings of the Council.	1	80 sq. m.	51-53	Ad 51. On the side of the lake. " 52.
53	Private room for the President of the Council.	1	30 sq. m.	52	Ad 54. Accessible to the public.
54	Committee room.	1	140 sq. m.		
55	Wide passage giving access to 50 telephone boxes, each sufficiently large to contain a small table for the telephone apparatus, properly ventilated and completely separated by sound-proof partitions.	1	50 sq. m.		
56	Room for the use of the telegraph office.	1	40 sq. m.		Ad 55. There should be rooms for " 56. the use of the Press behind the Assembly Hall.
57	Room for wireless telegraphy.	1	180 sq. m.		
58	Writing room for the Press.	1			
59	Small offices to the number of approximately.	20	20 sq. m. each		Ad 58. On the opposite side to the telephone boxes.
60	Committee room.	1	200 sq. m.		
61	Committee room.	1	180 sq. m.		Ad 60. Accessible to the public " 61. and, if possible, on the " 62. side of the lake.
62	Committee room.	1	160 sq. m.		
63	Office.	1	80 sq. m.		
64	Offices (in the remaining available space).	1	30-40 sq. m. each		
65	Refreshment room.	1	200 sq. m.		Ad 65. On the side of the lake. If possible, furnished with a balcony (loggia, verandah, terrace).
66	Annexes to the refreshment room: kitchen, sculleries, lavatories, etc.	1			

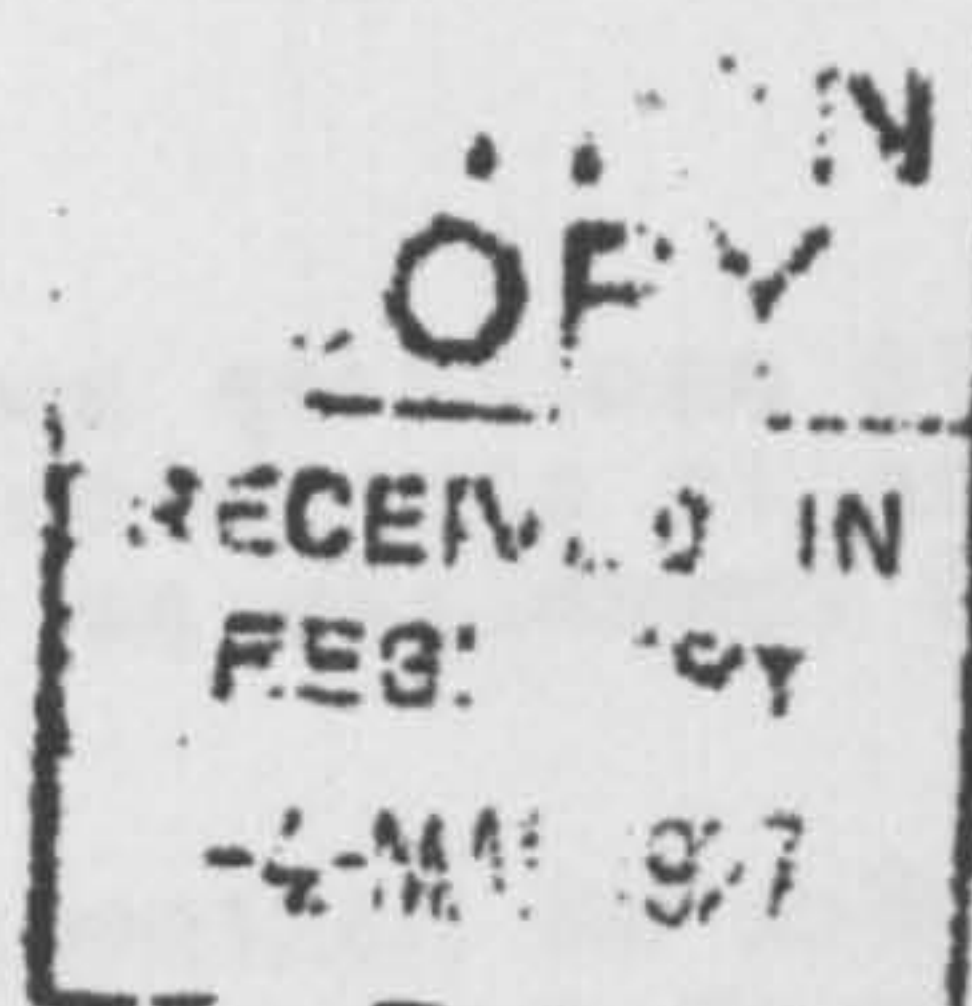
## GENERAL OBSERVATIONS.

On all floors there should be a sufficient number of water-closets, toilet tables and wash-hand basins for men and women. The competitors should appropriate the remaining available spaces on all the floors among rooms and offices, the total number of which ought not to be less than 40.



59106-128894.

SOCIÉTÉ DES NATIONS



LEAGUE OF NATIONS

Genève, le 28 avril 1927.

C

Monsieur le Secrétaire général,

J'ai l'honneur de vous exposer que le jury du concours d'architecture se trouve acculé à un point mort de ses discussions dont je prévois l'impossibilité de sortir sans votre intervention.

Le jury se bute d'une part, contre les clauses du règlement concernant les "dessins et documents à fournir par les concurrents" (page 20) et, d'autre part, contre la condition du coût de l'édifice (page 16) par laquelle la somme de treize millions ne peut être dépassée.

Sur la première question, aucun membre ne conteste le principe de l'application des susdites clauses; tous, nonobstant des réserves faites dès la première heure, se sont pliés à leur stricte application, jusqu'à présent. Mais, tandis que d'aucuns entendent en faire la condition sine qua non du jugement, exclure toute infraction et ne juger que les projets rigoureusement conformes, quitte à recommander ensuite à votre bienveillance quelques projets exclus;

d'autres membres demandent à ce que, avant tout jugement définitif, il soit passé outre à ces clauses, secondaires à mon avis, en présence du grand nombre d'infractions; ces infractions n'entachant ni la valeur artistique des projets ni portant entrave à leur complète compréhension. J'ai pu déclarer au jury, sans être contesté, que n'était le "Règlement" aucun membre de notre collège n'oserait reconnaître devant ses pairs qu'il a exclu un projet du présent Concours international pour l'une ou l'autre des clauses citées ci-dessus.

Incontestablement, ceux qui brandissent le Règlement sont dans leur droit et mon devoir est de les suivre jusqu'au bout.

Il est non moins vrai que je partage l'avis de ceux qui estiment se trouver devant un cas de force majeure et qu'exclure des projets sur lesquels l'attention du jury a été sérieusement attirée, sans aucun esprit d'école, ...

Sir Eric DRUMMOND,  
Secrétaire général de la  
Société des Nations,

GENÈVE



pour quelques questions d'ordre secondaire, c'est nuire plus aux concurrents et au concours en lui-même que d'appliquer un règlement à la lettre.

La question du coût de l'édifice est plus délicate encore à notre point de vue. Pour établir un prix de revient exact des projets, il faudrait vérifier tous les devis détaillés; le grand nombre de projets envoyés rend ce travail pratiquement impossible et au surplus inutile, puisqu'il importe peu à la Société des Nations ce que peuvent coûter des projets écartés par le jury pour leur absence de valeur artistique ou pratique. Il ne reste donc, en toute équité, qu'à vérifier les devis des projets qui seront retenus, malheureusement, c'est surtout à les retenir que la difficulté commence, d'une part, la question du règlement, d'autre part, et plus important : la méthode de vérification à appliquer. Une seule peut donner des précisions absolues: la vérification du devis détaillé, aussi pratiquement, impossible, sauf peut-être pour le projet qui serait classé premier. La seconde méthode que le jury a appliquée à neuf projets reconnus à priori dans le règlement, d'après leurs dessins et leur devis, consiste à cuber en bloc la construction et fixer un prix moyen pour le coût du mètre cube. Un seul projet est resté en ligne après vérification du cubage et application d'un prix de base de cinquante francs.

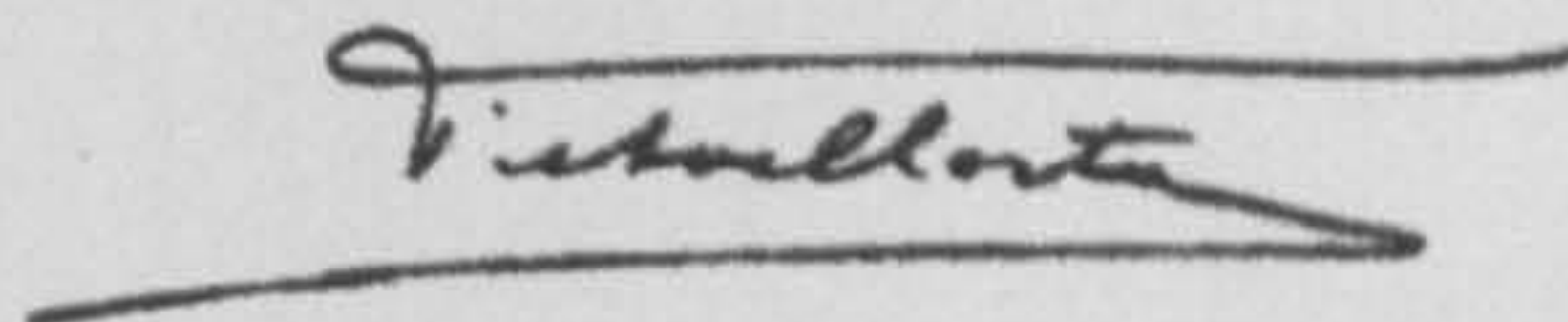
Par une augmentation de 10% du cubage, le jury est parvenu à retenir 4 projets, et par une augmentation d'environ 45%, 14 projets supplémentaires, lesquels, avec les 4 premiers sont, en ce moment, en discussion.

Une partie du jury estime qu'appliquer la tolérance de 10% est aussi illégal que de monter jusqu'à 30 ou 35%; que fixer cinquante francs est trop élevé, tandis qu'ici, j'estime que ce prix est insuffisant en me basant sur les discussions du jury lui-même avant l'ouverture du concours. Aucune solution ne sera jugée satisfaisante par les concurrents et fort probablement même par le jury.

S'il m'était permis de suggérer une idée personnelle, si le jury ne trouve pas le premier prix dans les projets réglementaires, je transposerais le concours du règlement-programme au programme seul, j'accepterais un cubage théorique de 60 % de la moyenne des estimations des concurrents, ainsi seraient retenus la plupart des projets ayant une valeur artistique et le but final poursuivi par la Société des Nations : découvrir une oeuvre d'art ou un maître digne de synthétiser son oeuvre dans l'édifice qui doit l'abriter serait atteint.

Veuillez, Monsieur le Secrétaire général, excuser la longueur de cette explication et agréer l'assurance de ma parfaite considération.

Le Président du Jury :





32/ 59106 - 26594

GENEVA.

April 30th, 1927.

Sir,

I have the honour to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of April 28th.

I appreciate your action in informing me of the matter which you mention in your letter, but I regret that the questions in connection with which you are so good as to refer to me, are not within my competence. On the one hand, I have no power to authorize any departure from the conditions fixed for the architectural competition for the erection of a League of Nations' building at Geneva by the Programme and Rules of that competition. On the other hand, the application of those conditions is, I think, a matter for your Jury.

I have the honour to be,

Sir,

Your obedient servant,

Secretary-General.

Monsieur Victor HORTA,

Président of the Jury of Architects,

G E N E V A.

Letter to Victor Horta from the Secretary General



# ARCHITECTURAL COMPETITION

FOR THE ERECTION OF A  
LEAGUE OF NATIONS BUILDING AT GENEVA

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## REPORT OF THE JURY.

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### COMPOSITION OF THE JURY:

M. H. P. BERLAGE (The Hague).  
Sir John J. BURNET (London).  
M. Carlos GATO (Madrid).  
M. Josef HOFFMANN (Vienna).  
M. Victor HORTA (Brussels), *President*.

M. Charles LEMARQUESQUIER (Paris).  
M. Karl MOSER (Zurich).  
M. Attilio MUGLIA (Bologna).  
M. Ivar TENGBOM (Stockholm).

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### REPORT.

The appeal made by the League of Nations to the architects of all its Member States to employ their talents in an extremely important architectural undertaking received an extensive response.

Three hundred and seventy-seven architects took part in the competition and submitted thousands of drawings expressing their ideas in a practical and artistic form worthy of the object in view. Although these ideas did not achieve perfection, the plans contained a wealth of valuable and original suggestions.

The Jury desires to thank all the architects for the keen interest and great amount of work which they have devoted to their plans.

The Jury's duties were clearly defined in the programme and rules for the competition and nearly six weeks were occupied in carrying them out. The Jury endeavoured in the first place to justify the confidence of the competitors by carefully checking the packages received, verifying their contents and supervising the placing of the plans.

The Jury was most anxious to judge the designs in strict accordance with the programme and rules and first of all satisfied itself that the material conditions of the programme and rules had been complied with. It then proceeded to study the plans and examine their architectural



and artistic qualities from the point of view of site, facilities for movement inside the building and traffic outside, arrangement and form of the building, construction and harmonious and logical architectural development.

The Jury was confronted with an extraordinary wealth of ideas, but was reluctantly compelled to realise that its work was made difficult by the fact that a considerable proportion of the competitors had not adhered strictly enough to the material conditions required by the programme and rules. With regard to the carrying-out of the programme, the fact that the designs show fundamental differences in their conception of the scheme is explained by the evolutionary phase through which contemporary architecture is now passing.

Having jointly and severally studied the plans with care and at great length and formed an opinion as to their material and artistic value, the Jury unanimously decided that the results of the competition did not justify it in recommending any one of the plans for execution.

The Jury unanimously decided to distribute the sum of 165,000 Swiss francs, placed at its disposal, as follows:

- Nine prizes of 12,000 francs each,
- Nine honourable mentions, Class I : 3,800 francs each,
- Nine honourable mentions, Class II : 2,500 francs each,

and unanimously awarded the prizes and honourable mentions, on an equal footing, to the designs bearing the following registration numbers (in numerical order):

*I. Prizes of 12,000 francs.*

No.	No.	No.
117	273	332
118	298	387
143	328	431

*II. Honourable Mentions, Class I — 3,800 francs.*

No.	No.	No.
102	241	338
128	251	372
142	327	423

*III. Honourable Mentions, Class II — 2,500 francs.*

No.	No.	No.
152	264	376
170	308	380
181	330	411

(Signed) Victor HORTA (*President*).  
K. MOSER (*Rapporteur*).  
A. MUGGIA.

John J. BURNET.  
Carlos GATO.  
Ivar TENGBOM.

H. P. BERLAGE.  
Josef HOFFMANN.  
C. LEMARESQUIER.

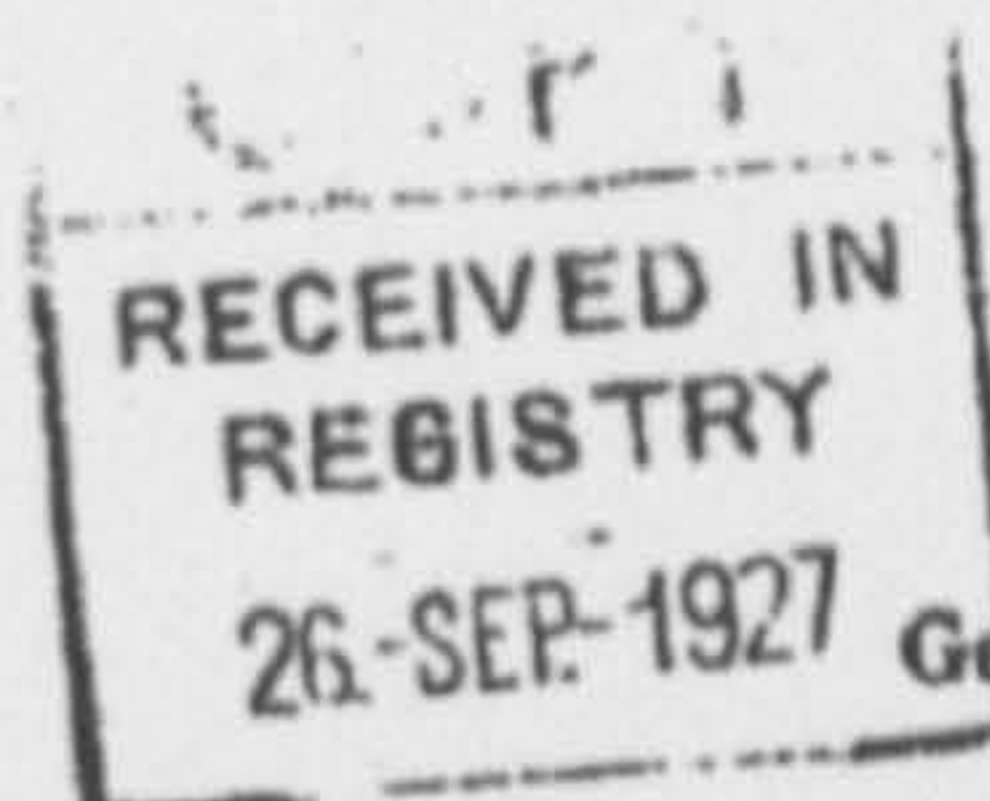
Geneva, May 5th, 1937.

*Note.*—The sealed envelopes containing the names of the authors of the above designs were opened in public at the Secretariat of the League of Nations on May 5th, 1937.

A list is annexed to this report.



[Communicated to the Council,  
the Members of the League  
and the Delegates at the Assembly.]



A. 93. 1927.

Geneva, September 22nd, 1927.

LEAGUE OF NATIONS

**Construction of an Assembly Hall and of New Buildings  
for the Use of the Secretariat.**

**REPORT SUBMITTED TO THE ASSEMBLY  
BY THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE.**

At the eleventh plenary meeting held on Saturday, September 10th, the Assembly appointed a Committee of five members to present suggestions with regard to the decision to be taken in the matter of the new League buildings. The members of the Committee were :

M. ADATCI (Japan),  
M. OSUSKY (Czechoslovakia), Chairman of the Supervisory Commission,  
M. POLITIS (Greece),  
M. URRUTIA (Colombia),  
Sir Edward Hilton YOUNG (British Empire).

The Committee appointed M. ADATCI Chairman and Sir Edward Hilton YOUNG Rapporteur.

The Committee has examined the question on the lines laid down in the terms of reference approved by the Assembly and has carefully considered all information on various details which the Secretariat was in a position to supply.

The Committee is of opinion that it is impossible to complete the study of the whole question during the present session of the Assembly. There are, however, certain points which appear quite clear to the Committee and which, in its view, enable certain decisions of principle to be taken by the Assembly at the present session, thus avoiding the necessity of an adjournment to the Assembly of 1928 and the resulting year's delay in commencing operations.

*1. Financial Position.*

The accounts of the Building Fund show a cash balance in hand on August 31st, 1927, of 11,400,000 francs in round figures, to which must be added the guaranteed sale price of the Hotel National — 4,000,000 francs. From this sum of 15,400,000 francs it is prudent to put aside a sum of 1,000,000 francs for the purchase of land and other general expenses. There is therefore a sum in hand at the present time of roughly 14,400,000 francs.

As some time will naturally elapse before any considerable payments must be made from this fund, it seems permissible to anticipate the addition of a sum of about 1,000,000 francs as interest on the large cash balance now actually in the possession of the League, thus bringing the amount available to a total of 15,400,000 francs.

A study of the prize-winning plans in the architects' competition has convinced the Committee that the sum at present available will not be sufficient to ensure that the new building or buildings shall, without being unduly luxurious, be satisfactory from the æsthetic point of view as well as from the practical. The estimates of cost submitted by the various competitors in accordance with the rules of the competition appear to the Committee to be in nearly all cases inadequate.

Basing itself upon a reasonable estimate of the cubic capacity necessary to provide the accommodation required and a by no means extravagant estimate of the probable cost per cubic metre, the Committee is of opinion that it is necessary to contemplate the probability that the credit allotted will ultimately have to be increased to approximately 19,500,000 francs. Until a plan has been definitely decided upon and carefully revised, it is of course impossible to give a more exact estimate ; it may be possible to effect a reduction upon the sum named ; and, in view of the amount of cash actually in hand, it is also unnecessary for the Assembly to vote at this present session a definite supplementary credit. All that is needed, and the Committee ventures to urge strongly the necessity of this measure, is that the

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1927. 11.



Assembly should now agree in principle that the Building Fund will be increased to the amount of approximately 19,500,000 francs, should it be confirmed that the required buildings cannot be obtained for less.

2. *Choice of Plan.*

The Committee is of opinion that it is reasonable and just that the ultimate choice of a plan should be made from among those which were awarded the nine equal prizes of 12,000 francs.

If the Assembly approves the Committee's recommendations, it will be necessary for a small committee to be appointed to continue the study of the questions contained in the terms of reference of the present Committee, with full powers to choose, with any changes that may be necessary, a plan that in their opinion most nearly satisfies the practical necessities and aesthetic considerations. This committee would, of course, be provided with such expert assistance as it may desire. The decision of the committee should be submitted to the Council for formal approval and ratification.

In conclusion, therefore, the Committee proposes to the Assembly the following resolution :

" The Assembly :

" Approves the report of the Special Committee of five members in regard to the new buildings ;

" Approves, in principle, that the amount to be spent on the new buildings may be increased to approximately 19,500,000 francs. The exact amount of the supplementary credit necessary will be submitted to the Assembly at the next session ;

" Empowers a Committee composed as follows :

.....  
to study the nine plans awarded the equal prizes of 12,000 francs in the architects' competition, and to choose, with any changes that may be necessary, a plan which in its opinion complies most nearly with the practical and aesthetic requirements. The decision of this Committee will be submitted to the Council of the League of Nations for ratification, and will be communicated to the Assembly at the next session. "



Information Section

League of Nations  
Geneva 27th December 1927

RESUME OF THE CONCLUSIONS OF THE SPECIAL  
COMMITTEE ENTRUSTED BY THE ASSEMBLY WITH  
CHOOSING A PROJECT FOR THE NEW BUILDING FOR  
THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS

(Press Communiqué from the President of the committee, his excellency the Japanese Ambassador Adatchi)

The committee of Five, composed of M.ADATCHI (Japan), President, and MM.OSUSKY (Czechoslovakia), POLITIS (Greece), URRUTIA (Columbia) and Sir Edward Hilton YOUNG (British Empire), having met in Geneva in the month of November and on the 19th and 22nd of December 1927, has studied the reports submitted: (1) by the Secretariat of the League of Nations; (2) by the two architects nominated by the committee and it has verified the conclusions on the detailed plans for the nine projects submitted to its examination. It has also examined the report presented by the Swiss experts nominated by the federal and Geneva governments.

The committee is concerned above all to define the task which has been entrusted to it by the Assembly.

It has been unanimous in thinking that its mandate had obliged it to choose a project from among the nine which received a first prize, but that the licence which had been given to it of not proceeding to this choice other than with eventual changes and permitted it to be inspired, in view of these changes, by other projects and consequently, to suggest that the authors of the chosen project should collaborate with the authors of other projects, not only in order to develop a new project, but also for the eventual execution of the work.

The committee has thus arrived unanimously at the following conclusions:

- 1) The project which, in its opinion, satisfied most of the requirements of a practical and aesthetic order, is Number 387, the authors of which are MM.H.P.NENOT and J.FLEGENHEIMER.
- 2) Nevertheless, the committee has indicated the inconveniences which are presented by the projects in question and it has made suggestions for remedying them.

A new project must be developed by the authors of project no.387, in collaboration with the authors of projects No. 117 (MM.BROGGI, VACCARD, and FRANZI), 143 (M.LEFEVBRE) and 431, (M.VAGO) and with the Secretariat of the League of Nations.

- 3) The authors of the project chosen as a basis and their



collaborators indicated above, will be invited to develop the new project in such a way as to effect the modifications which have been indicated to them by the committee, which reserves the total freedom to assess the new project before definitely accepting it and submitting it for approval and ratification by the Council.

4) the committee, taking account of the generous donation made to the League of Nations by Mr ROCKEFELLER for the construction and maintenance of a library, estimate that, in the chosen plan, estimates relating to the library should be extracted, and new estimates must be established.

A separate project will be set up for the new library.

5) In presenting the new project and the project for the library to the committee, the architects will have to indicate the total expenditure foreseen for carrying out the works; this must not exceed, in any case, architects' fees included, the sum of 19.500.000 Swiss francs for the Secretariat and the Hall of Assembly. The total budget for construction of the library, including the architects' fees will be about 4 million Swiss Francs.

6) In submitting to the committee the two above-mentioned projects, the architects will have to indicate the structure proposed by them (including the question of remuneration of various architects) for the continuation of the collaboration with respect to the building works, after definite approval by the Council.

7) The committee estimates all the same that it will be desirable, if possible and feasible, that the projected buildings should be oriented towards Mont-Blanc and that they might be built and set back in such a way as to safeguard the greatest possible number of the trees which are to be found along the shore of the lake.

8) All the architects having collaborated in the development of the new project will be its authors.



*Document 3.**Société des Nations.**Genève, 25 juin 1928.**Maître,*

*Je ne puis, à mon vif regret, que vous confirmer les termes de ma lettre du 31 mars 1928.*

*Ainsi qu'il ne vous échappera pas, il n'appartient pas à des particuliers de saisir le Conseil de la Société des Nations. D'autre part, je suis, en principe, sans compétence pour déférer à cet organe des communications de source non officielle.*

*Veuillez agréer, etc.*

*Le Sous-Secrétaire général,  
S. PAULUCIS DE TALBOL JARVE.*

*M. André PRUDHOMME,  
avocat à la Cour d'Appel,  
3, rue Georges-Ville.*

..

De retour de Genève, un personnage fort important nous dit : « Si les grands du monde (les ministres du Conseil des Nations) avaient eu à trancher de cette question, on aurait pu les convaincre. Mais l'opposition assidue, inlassable, est venue du Haut Secrétariat. Vous aviez fait un palais de travail. Là, on réclame un palais nimbé de la dignité des nations et de la dignité de leurs délégations.

« D'ailleurs, ces messieurs ne pouvaient admettre que les automobiles stationnent sous eux. »