

DURING AND AFTER THE WAR: *BRUNO ZEVI AND IGNAZIO GARDELLA ON THE RADIO*

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Destruction and reconstruction question (urge) architecture primarily on the possible ethical and then political role that the project can assume in dialogue with the city and its citizens for a reconstruction that is not only physical but, above all, moral and identity-oriented. This theme challenges architecture not only in the required content but also in expressive and communicative methods; no images – a favored tool of architecture – but measured words, precise sentences, concise thoughts that can reach everyone, conveyed through an instrument that is close to citizens: the radio. Two communicative experiments that link architecture to the radio are proposed here. Although united by an urgent, immediate expressive language aimed at addressing the whole community, they are located in two distinct historical moments.

In 1942, a young Bruno Zevi (Rome, 1918 - Rome, 2000), recently moved to New York and determined to continue his anti-fascist action, participated in a research program on shortwave radio broadcasts for the National Broadcasting Company (NBC) in New York¹. The outcome of this collaboration, as well as his commitment to broadcasting his propaganda overseas, was translated into the realization of approximately 35 radio transmissions over almost a year and an activity that did not end with his American stay. The following year, Zevi received a significant assignment from the American Intelligence, leading him to move to London. In the English capital, forced to live as a refugee, he worked as a speaker on the “clandestine” radio *Giustizia e libertà*², producing a series of broadcasts dedicated to Italy.

A few years later, after the conclusion of the global conflict, Ignazio Gardella (Milan, 1905 - Oleggio, 1999) – a leading figure in a period known as “cultivated professionalism”³, he directed a certain way *to do* –, through a series of short, little-known texts, read on *Radio Milano*⁴ between 1945 and 1946, revealed a less evident side, compelled in this case to translate into words what he had previously expressed almost solely through architectural projects. These typewritten texts with titled *Functions and forms of the city* (Milan, June 20, 1945), *The house in the city* (Milan, August 1, 1945), and *Functions of the city* (Milan, February 13, 1946)⁵, in their necessary didactic synthesis, represent, in fact, the first written evidence of the Lombard architect’s critical stance.

Transcending his personal professional experience, Gardella reflected *aloud* in those years on the themes of reconstruction in an Italy devastated by the global conflict that increasingly revealed a precise design for rebirth, primarily of an identity nature.

In a particular historical moment for our country and as testimony to this unique event that ties architecture, its dissemination beyond disciplinary boundaries, and the radio medium, the authors have chosen to present two translated typewritten texts by Bruno Zevi and Ignazio Gardella in chronological order.

COMPAGNI ITALIANI I. FRATELLI I. Ascoltate .

Vi parla un italiano d'America, un vostro fratello di sangue e di terra .

Come avete sentito nel nostro ^{discorso} ~~comunicato~~, ieri Winston Churchill, il primo ministro della Commonwealth britannica, ha parlato al popolo italiano.

Churchill ha parlato a noi come a noi ,italiani, - e comune di voi che ascoltate in questo momento in termini chiari e precisi.

Il primo ministro britannico e' stato nel passato, ^{anche} la prima guerra mondiale, ed e' ancora oggi essenzialmente un combattente. Il dilemma che egli ha posto a noi italiani e' un dilemma che, prima di essere politico, e' strettamente militare.

In breve, Churchill ha detto così: l'Italia non e' il fascismo, anzi solo l'oppressione della dittatura ha portato il popolo italiano ^{ceduto, una volta} ~~mostrando~~ al presente stato di cose. Noi sappiamo che gli italiani non amano Mussolini, che sono stufi della guerra, che a ragione temono la distruzione delle loro città. Ma il problema si pone chiaramente: o il popolo italiano e' aspece di scindere le sue responsabilità dal nazismo, o e' responsabile di partecipare della oscura nazista. O il popolo italiano e' capace di liberarsi dalla dittatura e dovrà subire tutte le conseguenze che queste sotmissioni passive alla dittatura impone.

Il discorso e' un discorso preciso; non e' niente di retorico ne' niente di piacevole per noi italiani. E' un discorso, ripeto, di guerra.

Per noi italiani, che vediamo la cosa nella prospettiva dell'intero d'Italia, il senso degli avvenimenti contemporanei non e' sempre diverso. Ma questo dipende dalle diverse situazioni, interessi e sentimenti, e non stabilisce una colpa ne' di una parte ne' dell'altra.

C'e' stato un tempo in cui le sorti della guerra erano esattamente opposte alle presenti. Fu il tempo dell'invasione polacca, fu il tempo della caduta della Francia, fu il tempo della puntata alle spalle di Mussolini verso la ^{Sudria, la F-2} ~~Francia~~, fu il tempo dell'assassinio della Grecia e della Jugoslavia, fu il tempo dei bombardamenti di Londra.

I dittatori, spezzati che ebbero tutti i vincoli internazionali che soli potevano garantire la pace, e operati saldamente alle guerre ebbero l'ora - quasi due anni - di netta supremazia.

Ma Hitler, ne' Mussolini fecero mai ai popoli che stavano per conquistare discorsi e proposte pacifiche di collaborazione.

Se avete visto i film tedeschi ora i nazisti applaudenti le città e intralciano le interne popolazioni civili, se avete le sventurate condizioni in cui si trovano le popolazioni polacche per ordine del governo di Berlino, e se non sono tracciate condizioni di fine del popolo greco, per ordine del regime fascista - voi sapete che, ora che i tempi e le sorti della guerra sono cambiati, e' difficile pretendere che il trattamento dei nemici del fascismo verso il fascismo sia molto diverso da quello che i fascisti ebbero verso di loro.

E i misfatti fascisti non sono finiti. Il popolo di Francia che grida LIBERTA', il popolo di Grecia che grida PANI, migliaia di ragazze polacche trasportate a forza in Germania per divenire prostitute dei nazi, montagne di corpi di bambini russi, strazianti e morte dalle eroiche gesta degli invasori tedeschi - milioni di uomini d'Europa che attendono con spavento un nuovo inverno di carestia e di gelo, le ombre di centinaia di ostaggi fucilati - si l'Europa intera antifascista e rivoluzionaria, quest'Europa oltre-tate, assassinata, dalle orde naziste e fasciste, ancora oggi soffre, ancora ogni giorno, - e alle armate liberatrici d'America e d'Inghilterra che si appressano per la battaglia d'Europa, gridano: VITTORIA!

Per chi, fra voi ascoltatori italiani, ha il senso d'amore per il nostro paese, per chi fra voi ha udito sottile e scorgere le voci dell'Europa ~~ma~~, di questa nostra Europa prostrata e sferzata, non sara' difficile scoprire fra i tanti pianti e fra i tanti strazi - il pianto e lo strazio della nostra Italia.

Si i anche dal suolo dell'eterna Italia sorgono le voci della liberta' assassinate da venti anni, sorgono le voci dell'oppressione sociale, dell'indipendenza nazionale venduta al tedesco, dopo tanto sangue, per conquistarla, sorgono le ombre dei martiri del Risorgimento e dei seicentomila morti della grande guerra - la cui causa e il cui sacrificio sono stati labbettati dal regime fascista, e sorgono infine le voci di tutti gli eroi dell'antifascismo italiano, dei 2000 uomini assassinati dai fascisti fino al 1938, delle migliaia di giovani operai, contadini, intellettuali condannati a marciare per decine di anni nelle carceri degli schiavisti del nostro popolo. Anche dal suolo italiano sorgono, come dal suolo di tutta l'Europa che soffre e che muore, i martiri della rivolta e della rivoluzione contro il fascismo, le ombre di Matteotti, di Don Minzoni, di Grassano, di Roselli - sorgono queste ombre dei nostri grandi italiani, e a tutti gli uomini e a tutti i popoli che vogliono la liberta' che combattono per la liberta', che muoiono per la liberta' d'Europa - gridano: VITTORIA.

Noi italiani siamo, dunque, ne' piu' ne' meno ~~come~~ nelle stesse condizioni di tutti i popoli fratelli d'Europa: siamo un popolo invaso e dominato dall'oppressore fascista. Io penso che ~~mi~~ siano pochi ormai gli illusi che credono che l'Italia abbia ~~un~~ un posto piu' privilegiato degli altri paesi conquistati dal nazismo, per il solo fatto che il nostro dittatore e' di sangue italiano. Del resto questo mio discorso di oggi non e' rivolto a quella minoranza di minorati intellettuali che non hanno ancora capito che il fascismo non e' un fenomeno nazionale. Che il fascismo e' una forma

una concezione della societa' e della vita, e cui i dittatori, per esempio Mussolini, sono capaci di sacrificare anche l'indipendenza nazionale dei paesi che dominano. NO i Oggi non si rivolge ne' agli illusi, ne' ai venduti, ne' ai servi sciocchi della dittatura.

L'ora e' troppo grave perché si possa perdere il tempo con la gente che e' nata servo, che sara' sempre servo, che andra' sempre dove va il vento, che non incidera' neanche per un minuto sulla storia dell'umanità, che questo sara' morta sara' proprio lo stesso che se non fosse mai nata.

Dopo il discorso di Churchill e specialmente dopo il terribile bombardamento di Torino di ieri, io mi rivolgo a te, ascoltatore, a te fratello italiano, a te donna, a te specialmente giovane che hai creduto in buona fede al fascismo e che oggi vedi il disastro della tua patria.

A tutti voi, compagni, che vi domando associati e ansiosi: CHE AVVERA' DELL'ITALIA? a tutti voi che ricercate fra i tormenti dell'ora, il vostro posto nella lotta per un'Italia ~~piu' vera~~, piu' alta, per un'Italia di giustizia e liberta', a tutti voi io mi rivolgo fraternamente, in questa grave ora della storia del nostro popolo.

Tutto quello che abbiamo sofferto e che soffriamo e' nulla in confronto di quello che ~~soffriranno~~ ^{debbono} soffrire. I bombardamenti delle città italiane del nord sono nulla e confronto della distruzione cui saranno soggette tutte le città, tutti i porti, tutte le industrie, tutti i depositi del nostro paese.

Il dilemma e' preciso: c'e' una guerra fra un mondo fascista e un mondo che ripudia il fascismo. Le forze della giustizia, le forze della liberta' devono vincere, vincere a qualunque costo, a qualunque prezzo. A costo di qualunque sacrificio il fascismo deve scomparire dal a faccia della terra, se gli uomini e i popoli vorranno vivere in pace.

L'Italia sara' bombardata, distrutta, resa al suolo, se e' nece-

ENGLISH TRANSLATION OF BRUNO ZEVI'S TYPESCRIPT

ITALIAN COMRADES. BROTHERS. LISTEN⁶.

An Italian from America speaks to you, your blood and homeland brother.

As you heard in our *commentary* [deleted word] news, yesterday Winston Churchill, the Prime Minister of the British Commonwealth, spoke to the Italian people.

Churchill addressed us as he did to you, Italians — to each one of you listening at this moment in clear and precise terms.

The British Prime Minister, a fighter essentially both in the past *in* [deleted word] during the First World War and still today, presented a dilemma to us Italians that, before being political, is strictly military.

In short, Churchill said this: Italy is not fascism; rather, only the oppression of dictatorship has led the Italian people *unwillingly* [deleted word] against their will to the present state of affairs. We know that Italians do not love Mussolini, that they are tired of war, and rightfully fear the destruction of their cities. But the problem is clear: either the Italian people can separate their responsibilities from Nazism, or they are responsible for participating in the Nazi cause. Either the Italian people can free themselves from dictatorship, or they will have to suffer all the consequences that passive submission to dictatorship imposes.

The speech is precise; there is nothing rhetorical or pleasant for us Italians. It is, I repeat, a speech of war.

For us Italians who see things from the perspective of the Italian interior, the meaning of contemporary events may be different. But this depends on different attitudes, interests and feelings, and does not establish a fault on either side.
[deleted phrase]

There was a time when the fortunes of war were exactly the opposite of what they are now. It was the time of the invasion of Poland, the fall of *latin sister* [deleted phrase] France, the betrayal of Mussolini towards the Latin sister, the assassination of Greece and Yugoslavia, the bombings of London⁷.

The dictators, having broken all the international bonds that alone could guarantee peace and having firmly prepared for war, had the hour — almost two years — of clear supremacy.

Neither Hitler nor Mussolini ever made peaceful speeches and proposals to the people they were about to conquer.

If you have seen German films where Nazis flatten cities and machine-gun unarmed civilian populations, if you know the terrifying conditions in which the Polish people find themselves by order of the Berlin government, and the tragic conditions of hunger for the Greek people by order of the fascist regime — you understand that, now that the times and fortunes of war have changed, it is difficult to pretend that the treatment of the enemies of fascism towards fascism is much different from what the fascists had towards them.

And fascist misdeeds are not over. The people of France crying FREEDOM, the people of Greece crying BREAD, thousands of Polish girls forcibly transported to Germany to become Nazi prostitutes, mountains of dead Russian children, tortured to death by the “heroic” deeds of the German invaders — millions of men in Europe waiting in fear for a new winter of famine and frost, the shadows of hundreds of hostages shot — the entire anti-fascist and revolutionary Europe, this outraged Europe, still cries today — and to the liberating armies of America and England approaching for the battle of Europe, they shout: VENGEANCE!

For those among you, Italian listeners, who have a sense of love for our country, for those among you who have heard faintly to discern the voices of Europe, of our prostrate and crushed Europe, it will not be difficult to discover — among the many cries and the many agonies — the cry and the agony of our Italy.

Yes! Even from the soil of eternal Italy rise the voices of freedom assassinated for twenty years, the voices of social oppression, of national independence sold to the Germans, after so much blood *spread* [added word] to conquer it, the shadows of the martyrs of the Risorgimento and the six hundred thousand dead of the great war whose cause and sacrifice have been tarnished by the fascist regime, and finally the voices of all the heroes of Italian anti-fascism, the 3000 men murdered by the fascists until 1926, the thousands of young workers, peasants, intellectuals condemned to rot for decades in the prisons of the oppressors of our people. Even from Italian soil rise, as from the soil of all suffering and dying Europe, the martyrs of the revolt and revolution against fascism, the shadows of Matteotti, Don Minzoni, Gramsci, Rosselli⁸ — these shadows of our great Italians, and to all the men and peoples who want freedom, who fight for freedom, who die for the freedom of Europe — they shout: VENGEANCE.

Therefore, we Italians are neither more nor less in the same conditions as all the brother peoples of Europe: we are a people invaded and dominated by the fascist oppressor. I think there are few now who believe that Italy has a more privileged place than other countries conquered by Nazism, just because our dictator is of Italian blood.

Moreover, my speech today is not addressed to that minority of intellectual imbeciles who have not yet understood that fascism is not a national phenomenon. That fascism is a form, a conception of society and life, to which dictators like Mussolini are capable of sacrificing even the national independence of the countries they dominate. NO: Today, I do not address the deluded, the sold out, or the foolish servants of the dictatorship.

The hour is too serious to waste time with people who were born slaves, who will always be slaves, who will always go where the wind blows, who will not even make the slightest impact on the history of humanity, and who, when they are dead, will be the same as if they had never been born.

After Churchill’s speech and especially after yesterday’s terrible bombing of Turin, I address you, listener, to you, Italian brother, to you, woman, to you, especially young person who believed in good faith in fascism and who now sees the disaster of your homeland.

To all of you, comrades, who anxiously wonder: WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO ITALY? To all of you who search amid the torments of the moment for your place in the struggle for a truer, higher Italy, for a just and free Italy, to all of you, I fraternally address myself in this heavy hour in the history of our people.

Everything we have suffered and are suffering is nothing compared to what we *will* [deleted phrase] *will have to* [added phrase] endure. The bombings of the northern Italian cities are nothing compared to the destruction that will befall all the cities, all the ports, all the industries, all the warehouses of our country.

The dilemma is precise: there is a war between a fascist world and a world that rejects fascism. The forces of justice, the forces of freedom must win, win at any cost, at any price. At the cost of any sacrifice, fascism must disappear from the face of the earth if men and people want to live in peace.

Italy will be bombed, destroyed, razed to the ground if necessary. It is heartbreaking, I know, to think about it; but it is a fatal law *of our history* [deleted phrase] today. Fascism is war, destruction, hunger, the murder of intellectual and social freedoms. We must fight even at the cost of many lives. The pacifist illusions are over; the fascist war must be answered with war. To the bombings of London, Coventry, Rotterdam, Warsaw, Moscow, and Stalingrad, we respond with the bombings of Cologne, Turin, Genoa, Milan.

There is only one alternative that can avert such disaster: IT IS THE ANTI-SEMITIC [added phrase] REVOLUTION. It is understanding that one does not betray Italy by going to the side of the adversaries, but rather fights for Italy by revolting against the fascist oppressors of our country. They, and only they — *the fascists* [added word] — are the true traitors of Italy: they are Mussolini, Ciano, Farinacci⁹ — they are all the institutions of the state that have supinely signed every act of crime of fascism — they are the sharks of heavy industry and the landowners who wanted war to make more money, Volpi, Agnelli, Vaselli, Donegani, Ansaldo, Torlonia, and *many* [deleted word] a few others. These will answer for their betrayals before the tribunal of the anti-fascist revolution of Italy. They were not fascists like many of you, *between Fellini black shirt* [added phrase] deluded in good faith. They never believed in fascism; but cowardly, they took advantage of it for their interests. A liberating revolution must be waged against them.

If this does not happen, all Italians, on a sad day, will discover what the fascist legacy is. Fascism did not only assassinate 20 years of Italian life; it destroys the effort of 50 years of democratic and free Italy: the railways, the industries, all the assets of our country.

There is no room for illusions. Either people understand the ultimate meaning of this war, which before being a war between nations, was a civil war between free men and slaves, or they are destined for suicide. The illusion of being able to remain alongside fascism without participating in its misdeeds and responsibilities *must end* [deleted phrase] is over. You saw it with the French fleet. The Vichy French¹⁰ — at least some of them — were in good faith, they truly believed in the possibility of cooperating with Hitler's Germany *preserving independence and honour* [deleted phrase]. When they saw the breaking of the collaborationist illusion with fascism, they sank the fleet.

Heroic act, no doubt, but suicidal act, which costs France an immense national heritage that could have served it in a free Europe tomorrow. Think about how it would have influenced the destiny of the future of France if the fleet had joined the allies, and if the French fleet, with the flag of a free France, had fought alongside the allied fleets in the battle of Europe.

The French sailors understood too late the political significance of this great world battle. Too late, when the only honorable path left was the path of suicide.

May this heroic and tragic experience at the same time be a warning to us Italians in this phase of the war that destroys all Italian progress in industry and transport, all the results of 50 years of efforts and work by our fathers.

Whoever wants to save these things, who loves our country, who feels Italian, must prepare with all their strength, with all their energy, with all their faith, with all their youth for the revolution against fascism. And in this liberating struggle, may the spirit of our martyrs, the example of the hundreds, the thousands who died before us, be our guide. If we fight for a greater Italy, for a truer Italy, in the name of Matteotti, in the name of Rosselli!

Anti-fascist Italy! Revolutionary Italy! Proletarian Italy!

STAND UP!

1945

Architetto Ignazio Gardella
LA CASA NELLA CITTÀ

La casa - la nostra casa - non è solo uno spazio chiuso da mura, coperto da tetto; è anche famiglia, amici, gioie e dolori della nostra più intima vita.

Vi parlerò oggi di alcuni aspetti urbanistici della casa, intesa come abitazione dell'uomo; ma non dimentichiamo questo metaforico rischeggiare del vocabolo che ne amplia il suo primo significato tecnico.

La casa è uno degli strumenti essenziali del nostro vivere civile, un diritto e un dovere di noi uomini tutti.

Architetti di ogni paese hanno appassionatamente lavorato e lottato, in questa prima metà del secolo, perché la casa degli uomini fosse uno strumento di vita e non un falso pezzo da museo folcloristico.

Uno strumento utile, giusto, coerente a quella civiltà che ora stiamo ritrovando su un piano politico, ma che era già presente o presentita sul piano dell'arte e della scienza.

I risultati raggiunti sono però rimasti isolate esperienze di laboratorio, chiuse entro il recinto delle sacre mura, sconosciute o peggio fraintese al di fuori di esse.

Se noi vogliamo che il problema della casa passi da questa fase sperimentale, nella quale esso si è chiarito per i tecnici, alle vaste realizzazioni che la Ricostruzione impone, occorre che il problema sia chiaro per tutti i cittadini.

Crede che ognuno di noi abbia finalmente capito che qualunque azione degli uomini, anche la più intelligente, sarà a lungo sterile se non troverà negli uomini attiva comprensione.

Cerchiamo di essere il sistema che si è venuto formando tra vita e scienza, tra vita e arte.

Noi architetti non vogliamo imporre le nuove case, le nuove forme di città che amiamo, vogliamo che anche voi le volete, che anche voi vi rendiate conto che solo esse si accordano, senza suonar falso, alla felicità verso cui vorrete di affacciarsi.

Che cosa noi chiediamo alla casa? *che sia un luogo di vita*

Le chiediamo ancora, *come l'abitante delle refrattarie locande*, un riparo contro le intemperie, un *giaciglio* per dormire, un focolare per cucinare.

Ma a queste immediate, elementari necessità si è sovrapposta una trama di più sottili necessità materiali e spirituali alle quali la casa deve soddisfare.

Nella casa noi trascorriamo molte ore della nostra giornata in quella ricreazione delle forze nervose, consumate dal lavoro, che si compie non solo nel sonno pesante, ma anche nella lettura, nella conversazione, nell'interazione "dolce far niente".

Nella casa vivono le nostre mogli; vivono, crescono, si educano i nostri figli.

Ci occorre uno spazio a misura d'uomo, moderatamente attrezzato, razionalmente distribuito senza inutili sprechi.

Ma vogliamo anche, nella nostra casa, aria e sole abbondanti, vogliamo che vi si possa riposare, leggere, chiacchierare senza essere disturbati dai rumori del traffico, vogliamo che dalle finestre non si vedano solo pietre, alberi e cielo.

Con ciò il problema della casa si pone subito, e così infatti deve porsi - come problema urbanistico - la casa nella città.

Spazio a misura d'uomo. Sole, verde, silenzio. Uomini felici.

Ma che cosa sono i nostri figli? *che cosa sono i nostri figli?*

Quale invece la realtà?

I bombardamenti dell'agosto 1943 hanno visualizzato, con tragiche sezioni al vero, tutta la miseria nascosta nel corpo della città.

Decorriti organismi edilizi sopravvissuti, contro ogni logica di sana economia, solo per un ingiustificato intrecciarsi di interessi privati, in essi intristiscono migliaia di individui.

Ciò commuove il nostro sentimento di solidarietà umana.

Ma c'è un indice ancor più impressionante della disorganizzazione urbanistica e sociale.

Avete mai visto le case della periferia che sorgono ancora isolate in mezzo ai prati?

Per un assurdo rispetto a casuali tracciati di strade, a capricciosi confini di proprietà, a malcongegnati regolamenti edilizi, esse voltano la fronte a Nord, alcune verso mezzogiorno, altre a muri nudi senza finestre. Invece di distendersi beatamente al sole, si arrotondano - con tanto spazio libero - intorno a chiusi cortili dove l'aria ristagna.

L'armonico cortile, intimo elemento centrale del vecchio palazzo, è degenerato nel tristissimo profondo pozzo delle moderne case d'affitto.

Mettiamo ordine nella città.

Aboliamo finalmente i cortili chiusi e disponiamo le nostre case a costruzione aperta, con quella costante orientazione che dia a ogni locale l'insolazione necessaria.

Distanziamoli come i filari delle viti, di tutto lo spazio *che* *occorre* perché una non getti ombra sull'altra.

Sistemiamo a giardino il terreno libero. Piantiamo degli alberi. Immergiamo la casa nel verde.

Respireremo finalmente aria pura. E i nostri figli potranno giocare ai piedi delle case sotto gli occhi delle madri. Noi avremo vicini i campi sportivi per la nostra ricreazione dopo il lavoro.

Evinciamo le nostre case dalle strade di grande traffico. Raggruppiamole lungo tranquille strade residenziali, in quartieri esclusivamente d'abitazione, che siano provvisti di tutti i necessari servizi collettivi e dove non sorgano industrie fumose e rumorose.

Non è utopia. E' solamente ordine.

Nei una nuova costruzione deve più poter sorgere al di fuori di tale ordine umano.

Al nostro diritto alla casa corrisponde questo nostro dovere di intelligenza e di volontà.

E del vecchio tessuto edilizio che cosa faremo?

Nelle prossime conversazioni vi sarà detto come anche in esso si può operare con ordine per trasformarlo gradualmente dall'attuale rapporto casa-speculazione al rapporto casa-uomo.

L'urbanista come l'agricoltore *opera paziente* nel presente per il raccolto futuro.

~~1/8/1945~~

IGNAZIO GARDELLA'S SPEECH ON THE POST-WAR SITUATION "LA CASA NELLA CITTÀ" (THE HOUSE IN THE CITY) OF AUGUST 1, 1945 READ TO RADIO MILANO (©ASG, ARCHIVIO STORICO GARDELLA)

ENGLISH TRANSLATION OF IGNAZIO GARDELLA'S TYPESCRIPT

Architect Ignazio Gardella
THE HOUSE IN THE CITY¹¹

The house -our house- is not merely a space enclosed by walls, covered by a roof; it is also family, friends, joys and sorrows of our most intimate life.

Today, I will talk about certain urbanistic aspects¹² of the house, understood as the dwelling of the humankind; yet, let us not to forget the metaphorical resonance of the term that broadens its initial technical meaning.

The house is one of the fundamental tools of our civilized living, a right and a duty for all of us as human beings.

Architects from every country have passionately worked and struggled, in this first half of the century, to ensure that the home of man¹³ was an instrument of life and not a false folkloric museum piece.

A useful tool, precise, coherent with those civilizations that we are now *painfully* [deleted word] sorely¹⁴ recovering on a political level, but which was already present or anticipated on the planes of art and science.

However, the achieved results remain isolated laboratory experiences, confined within the sacred walls, unknown or worse misunderstood outside of them.

If we want the housing issue to change to transition from this experimental phase, where it has been clarified for technicians, to the extensive developments demanded by reconstruction, it's necessary for the problem to be clear to all citizens¹⁵.

I believe that each one of us has finally understood that any human action, even the most intelligent, will ultimately be sterile if it doesn't find active understanding among people.

Let us try to break down the diaphragm that has formed between life and science, between life and art.

We architects don't want to impose on you the new houses, the new city shapes that we love, we want you to love them too, and we want you to realize that only they harmonize, without sounding false, with the happiness toward which you strive to approach.

What do we ask of the house?

We still ask of it, *as the inhabitants of the Lombardy terremare*¹⁶ [deleted phrase] as our distant ancestors, for shelter against the elements, a bed to sleep on, a fire to cook on.

But upon these unchanging basic needs have been overlaid with a web of more subtle material and spiritual needs that the house must satisfy.

In the house, we spend many hours of our day in that recreation of nervous forces, consumed by work, which is accomplished not only in the deep sleep, but also in reading, in conversation, in the internationally renowned “dolce far niente”¹⁷.

Our wives live in the house; our children live, grow up, and are educated there. We need spaces on a human scale, modernly equipped, rationally distributed without unnecessary waste.

But we also want, in our house, ample air and sunlight, we want to be able to rest, read, and chat without being annoyed by traffic noise, we want to see not just stones from the windows but trees and sky.

Therefore, the problem of the house immediately arises – and so it must in fact arise – as an urbanistic issue: the house in the city.

Space on a human scale. Sunlight, greenery, silence. Happy men.

What instead is the reality?

The bombings of August 1943¹⁸ displayed, with tragically realistic cross-sections, all the misery hidden within the body of the city.

Decrepit building organisms that have survived, against any logic of sound economics, solely due to an unjustifiable interweaving of private interests. Thousands of individuals mourn in them.

This moves our feeling of human solidarity.

But there is an even more striking indication of urban and social disorganization.

Have you ever seen houses in the suburbs that still stand isolated in the middle of the fields?

Due to an absurd adherence to random road layouts, whimsical property limits, and poorly conceived building regulations¹⁹, they turn their fronts to the north, raise *huge* [deleted word] dreary windowless walls toward the south. Instead of stretching out blissfully in the sun, they roll up -with so much free space- around enclosed courtyards where the air stagnates.

The harmonious courtyard, the intimate central element of the ancient palace, has degenerated into the dreary deep pit of modern rented houses.

Let's bring order to the city.

Let's finally abolish closed courtyards and arrange our houses in open constructions, with that constant orientation that gives every room the necessary insolation.

Let's space them apart like rows of vineyards, as much space as necessary so that one does not cast a shadow on the other.

Let's convert the open land into gardens. Let's plant trees. Let's immerse the house in greenery.

We will finally breathe pure air. And our children will be able to play at the foot of the houses under their mothers' eyes. We will have sports fields nearby for our recreation after work.

Let's free our houses from the busy streets.

Let's group them along quiet residential streets, in exclusively housing districts, equipped with all the necessary collective services and where no smoky and noisy industries arise.

It's not utopia. It is merely order.

No new construction should be allowed outside of this human order.

Our right to housing corresponds to our duty of intelligence and will.

And what will we do with the old building fabric?

In the forthcoming conversations, you will be told how we can also work orderly in it to gradually transform it from the current house-speculation relationship to a house-human relationship²⁰.

The town planner like the farmer works *patiently* [deleted word] with patience in the present for the future harvest.

From Radio Milano 1/8/1945 [deleted phrase]

NOTES

- [1] Bello, Francesco, ed. 2019. *Bruno Zevi intellettuale di confine. L'esilio e la guerra fredda culturale italiana, 1938-1950*. Roma: Viella.
- [2] *Ibid.* The "clandestine" activity of *Radio Giustizia e libertà* was a result of the closure imposed by the British government due to the promotion of a series of actions deemed excessively anti-monarchical. [3]
- Capitanucci, Maria Vittoria. 2013. *Il professionismo colto nel dopoguerra*, edited by Alessandro Sartori and Stefano Suriano. Milano: Abitare. An expression that identifies that generation of architects active in the post-war years who, in the wake of the legacies of the Modern Movement, engaged in the reconstruction of the city of Milan. Intellectual figures related to the spheres of engineering, design, and art, who gathered in the environments of the *Triennale*, of the *Movimento Studi per l'Architettura* (Study Movement for Architecture) association, and of the editorial offices of the magazines *Domus* and *Casabella*.
- [4] During the Second World War, nearly all radio broadcasts were suspended, largely due to damage inflicted on broadcasting equipment from bombing raids. *Radio Milano* suffered a similar fate and resumed its operations only after the Liberation, more precisely on April 26, 1946, following a proclamation by Sandro Pertini, the head of *Comitato di Liberazione Nazionale Alta Italia* (Committee of National Liberation of Northern Italy).
- [5] As of today, these texts are preserved in the Gardella Historical Archive, specifically cataloged as G4.scr.30-49.4, G4.scr.30-49.5, and G4.scr.30-49.6. In this essay, it has been deemed appropriate to include only the lecture "*La casa nella città*" (The house in the city) as it better synthesizes and articulates the connection that needs to be reestablished initially between the citizen and their dwelling, and subsequently between the dwelling and the city.
- [6] November 30, 1942. The following text comes from a communication held by Bruno Zevi and directed to Italy by broadcaster NBC of New York. Following racial laws, Zevi left Italy in 1939 to travel first to London and then to the United States. There he graduated from Harvard University's Graduate School of Design, directed by Walter Gropius, and discovered Frank Lloyd Wright. In New York, flanked by Aldo Garosci, Enzo Tagliacozzo, Renato Poggioli and Mario Salvadori, he directed the "*Quaderni Italiani*" of the *Giustizia e libertà* (Justice and Freedom) movement.
- [7] Zevi talks about the beginning of World War II. In particular, the period 1939-1941.
- [8] Giacomo Matteotti Italian politician (Fratta Polesine, 1885 - Rome, 1924). He was a member of parliament many times and he was secretary of the United Socialist Party in 1922. A staunch anti-fascist, he was killed following his denunciation of fraud committed by fascists during the 1924 elections; Giovanni Minzoni (Ravenna, 1885 - Argenta, 1923) was an Italian presbyter, also known as Don Minzoni. He was close to the Christian-social positions of the People's Party and he was a lifelong opponent of fascism. In August 1923 he was attacked by two Fascist squadrists and, as a result of his injuries, he died a few hours later; Antonio Gramsci, Politician and writer (Ales, 1891 - Rome, 1937). A member of the Italian Socialist Party, he was part of the executive of the Communist International in 1923. He became secretary of the Communist Party of Italy (PCdI) and deputy in 1924. In the same year he founded the political newspaper "*l'Unità*", organ of the PCdI. For his anti-fascist activities and ideas he was sentenced to twenty years in prison in 1928, where he died; Carlo Rosselli, Politician (Rome, 1899 - Bagnoles-de-l'Orne, 1937); antifascist, pupil of Gaetano Salvemini; professor until 1926] at Bocconi University in Milan, after Matteotti crime joined the United Socialist Party. He was one of the organizers of clandestine antifascist political emigration; for aiding the escape of Filippo Turati, he was confined to Lipari, from which he escaped to move to France, where he formed the *Giustizia e Libertà* movement, of which he was the leader until his death.
- [9] Gian Galeazzo Ciano (Livorno, 1903 - Verona, 1944) was an Italian diplomat and politician. In 1930 he married Edda Mussolini, Benito's daughter. He was minister of foreign affairs from 1936 to 1943. He supported the dismissal of Benito Mussolini, for which he was convicted in the Verona trial on January 10, 1944, and shot the next day; Roberto Farinacci (Isernia, 1892 - Vimercate, 1945) was a leading Italian Fascist politician and important member of the National Fascist Party before and during World War II as well as one of its ardent antisemitic proponents.
- [10] Vichy France (*Régime de Vichy*; 10 July 1940 - 9 August 1944), officially the French State (*État français*), was the French rump state headed by Philippe Pétain during World War II. It was named after its seat of government, the city of Vichy. Officially independent, but with half of its territory occupied under the harsh terms of the 1940 armistice with Nazi Germany, it adopted a policy of collaboration.
- [11] August 1, 1945, Historical Archive Gardella, typewritten text in three copies, with pencil annotations and corrections, G4.scr.30-49.5. Two subsequent interventions followed this initial one, which also remained unpublished and are preserved in the Historical Archive Gardella and, in duplicate, at the CSAC in Parma.
- [12] The term refers to the connection with the urban aspect and, therefore, to the relationship with the city, although it is possible to imagine a reference to the writings of Le Corbusier, particularly to Le Corbusier. 1925. *Urbanisme*, Paris: Les Editions G. Crès & Cie.
- [13] In this case as well, the reference to this specific interpretation can be traced back to François de Pierrefeuf, Le Corbusier. 1941. *La Maison des Hommes*, Paris: Librairie Plon.
- [14] The correction appears to seek to mitigate the shared sense of pain felt by the population for the events experienced.
- [15] From 1943, Gardella was among the promoters of the Piano A.R. and actively involved in its drafting - a project for the new urban plan of Milan. This initiative represented a significant cultural exercise aimed at rethinking and reconstructing the city as an expression of a new democratic society. The acronym "A.R." stood for *Architetti Riuniti*. The initial group included Ignazio Gardella, Franco Albini, Gian Luigi Banfi, Piero Bottoni, Gabriele Mucchi, Enrico Peressutti, Giovanni Romano, Mario Pucci, Aldo Putelli. In 1945, Ezio Cerutti and Lodovico Barbiano di Belgiojoso (who had returned from the Mauthausen-Gusen concentration camp) joined, along with Rogers (who had taken refuge in Switzerland during the war). The Piano A.R., dedicated to the memory of Banfi, who died in Mauthausen-Gusen, was later submitted to the Ideas Competition for the new urban plan announced by the Municipality of Milan in 1945 and published in *Costruzioni Casabella*, n. 194 in 1946. Some of its key contents were then reworked and incorporated into the new Piano Regolatore Generale of Milan, which was approved in 1953.
- [16] The term "terramare" refers to the Terramare civilization, one of the most advanced in continental Europe during the Bronze Age. This civilization played a central role in the Mediterranean area due to its expertise in water management, cultivation across different territorial zones, and trade in crucial resources such as copper and amber. The word "terramara" is derived from the distortion of the term "terra marna", used by agronomists in the 19th century to describe highly fertile lands from these areas. Gardella's reflection on this term probably relates to the difficulty of understanding this reality among the radio audience.
- [17] Sweet idleness. The term in quotation marks is supposed to come from Plinio il Vecchio who wrote in Book VIII of the *Epistole* (ep. 9): "*Olim non librum in manus, non stilum sumpsit; olim nescio quid sit otium, quid quies, quid denique illud iners quidem, iucundum tamen nihil agere, nihil esse*", that means "Once I did not take a book in hand, nor a pen; once I did not know what leisure is, what rest is, and, finally, what that inactive state is, which, though idle, is nevertheless pleasant, doing nothing, being nothing." It could also refer to the painting *Dolce far niente* (1877) by Auguste Toulmouche or to the poem by Aaro Hellaakoski, *Dolce far niente* (1928).
- [18] On August 13, 1943, 504 British bombers dropped 1,252 tons of bombs and incendiary devices on the city of Milan. On August 16, RAF bombers targeted the Lombard capital again with 600 tons of deadly ordnance. The final toll was hundreds of deaths, over 200 industries hit, 11,700 buildings destroyed, and more than 15,000 damaged. For a visual representation, it is possible to explore the dramatic events of August 1943 using the following link: Milan Geoportal.
- [19] For further information see: Dodi, Luigi. 1956. "L'urbanistica milanese dal 1860 al 1945". *Urbanistica*, no. 18-19 (March); De Finetti, Giuseppe. 1969. *Milano, costruzione di una città*, edited by Giovanni Cislighi, Mara De Benedetti, Piergiorgio Marabelli, Milano: Etas Compass; Franchi, Dario, 1972. "Interventi edilizi e piani regolatori a Milano 1923". In *Urbanistica a Milano in regime fascista*, edited by Dario Franchi and Rosa Chiumeo. Florence: La Nuova Italia.
- [20] The intention to link the theme of the small scale of living, the house, to the larger scale of living, the city, was part of a wider thinking that would soon develop into the renewed editorial project of *Costruzioni Casabella*, of which Ignazio Gardella was an active editor. The journal, whose work had been suspended following the detention of Giuseppe Pagano, its director in 1943, resumed publication in March 1946 with its first issue, n. 193, which openly declared the need of the time to return to the field of architectural critiques as well as to address "all the problems that have as their object man, as an individual and as an element of society, and that intervene with greater or lesser importance in the field of the architect's thought and action". A booklet of just 18 pages that dealt precisely with the theme of building reconstruction, reporting a critical reflection on the first *Convegno nazionale per la ricostruzione edilizia* (national convention for building reconstruction) and a more precise reflection on the theme of the prefabricated house, conducted directly by Gardella, who emphasised both the negative and positive aspects of the exhibition organised in December 1945 in Milan, on the occasion of the initiative of Consiglio Nazionale delle Ricerche as part of the Convention.