First aid

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First Aid
Stanislaus von Moos

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In early October 1943, a Japanese ocean liner registered under the name of *Teja Maru* left Shanghai, destination Mormugao in Goa, India. On board were American and Canadian civilians who had been surprised by the Japanese invasion of China and were being brought to Goa to be exchanged for Japanese civilians. While the body of the ship and its huge smokestacks were painted with white crosses and the Japanese coat of arms as tokens of national origin and the humanitarian nature of the convoy, a huge cross at the rear of the liner indicated that the operation was organized by the International Committee of the Red Cross. **fig.1** Hundreds of similar convoys took place during the war (and not just on the high seas), but the *Teja Maru*'s voyage stands out for the blatancy of its syncretism of messages and symbolic connotations. [1] That the ocean liner bore both the sign of the red cross and its negative in the form of the white cross may seem surprising. For even though the latter is often used to indicate the location of chemist's shops and dispensaries in the Anglo-Saxon world, the sign also happens to be the national emblem of Switzerland—an oddity I leave in suspension for the moment. More obvious is that the sign of the cross (white *or* red), when combined with a large vessel cruising the ocean, inevitably suggests the idea of rescue—and, by implication, its biblical archetype, Noah's Ark.

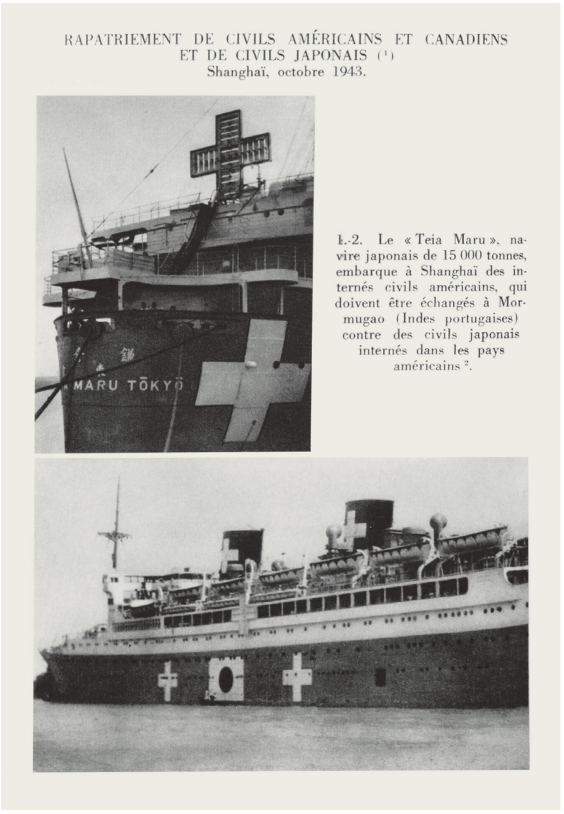

fig.1 Repatriation of American and Canadian civilians from Shanghai by the Japanese ocean liner *Teja Maru*, 1943.

Today, when news about "boat people" no longer even make it to the headlines, the ark remains a haunting notion on the political horizon. It is also a powerful architectural metaphor. In one of his last published essays, entitled "Noah's Ark," Hubert Damisch reflects on "imminent disaster and the means of mitigating it," reminding us that in the *Encyclopédie* the article on the "Arche de Noé" (by abbé Mallet) is three times longer than the one on "Architecture" (by Jacques François Blondel). [2] Damisch offers several explanations for this apparent paradox. He sees the eighteenth-century fascination with the ark as yet another foreboding of a world subjected to the rule of mathematics, logistics,

1 The voyage is documented in "Missions du Comité international," *Revue Internationale de la Croix-Rouge* 26, no. 307 (1944): 525–38. The facts and observations underlying the present essay are presented in greater detail in my book *Erste Hilfe: Neues Bauen und Alte Stadt nach 1940* (Zurich: gta Verlag, forthcoming).

2 Hubert Damisch, "Noah's Ark," *AA Files* 72 (2016): 115–26. See also Hubert Damisch, *Noah's Ark: Essays on Architecture*, ed. Anthony Vidler (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2016), 1–23; "G" [abbé Edmé-François Mallet], "Arche de Noé," in *Encyclopédie, ou Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers*, vol. 1, eds. Denis Diderot and Jean Le Rond d'Alembert (Paris: Briasson et al., 1751), 606–9; Jean-François Blondel, "Architecture," in ibid., 617–18.

fig.2 Noah's Ark, after Johann Jakob Scheuchzer's *Physica sacra* (1731/1735).

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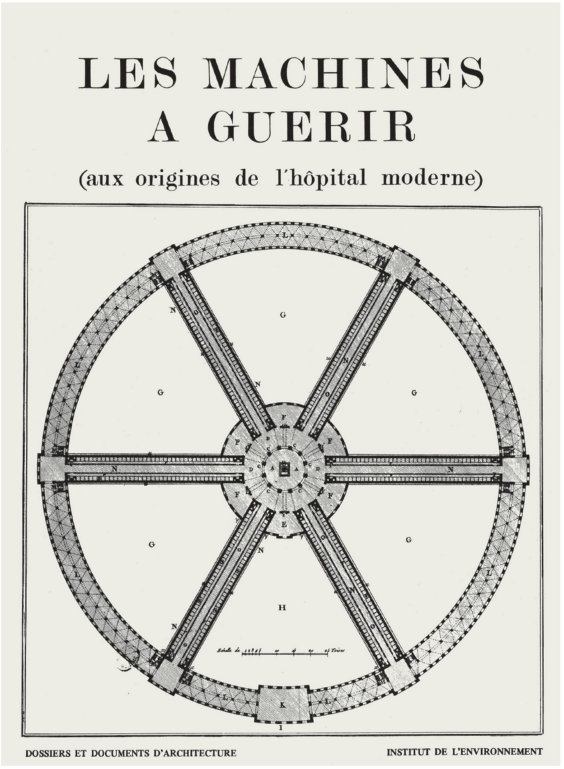


fig. 3 Cover of *Les Machines à guérir (aux origines de l'hôpital moderne)*, edited by Michel Foucault and others (1976).

and statics (according to the Scriptures, the biblical ark was to be approximately 570 meters long—a measure never reached by any twentieth-century transatlantic liner: the Flandre, reproduced in *Vers une architecture*, was 140 meters, and the Unité d'habitation in Marseille is 138 meters long). Damisch further contends that, for the ark's eighteenth-century chroniclers, the flood and the gigantic rescue operation it prompted were overshadowed by the specter of yet *another* catastrophe: the revolution. Seen from this perspective, it is only logical that Damisch repeatedly refers to Le Corbusier in this context, in particular to *Vers une architecture*—and not only because of the role ocean liners played in that book's evocation of an architecture of salvation. Damisch sees the concluding chapter of *Vers une architecture*, entitled "Architecture et révolution: On peut éviter la révolution" as engaged in an old Enlightenment idea—the idea of architecture as prophylactic rescue from catastrophe. **3**

3 Le Corbusier, *Vers une architecture* (Paris: Crès, 1923), 213–30. See also Jean-Louis Cohen, "Introduction," in Le Corbusier, *Toward an Architecture* (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2007), 1–82, here 25–27.

From Ark to *Machine à guérir*

The ark as discussed by abbé Mallet (and visualized in the *Encyclopédie* by the architect Bernard Lamy) thus turns out to be a fitting symbol for the project of modern architecture altogether, provided we understand that project as a rescue operation based on the natural sciences and rooted in a tradition that I shall only summarily evoke by citing Michel Foucault's concept of the "machine à guérir" as exemplified, for example, by Antoine Petit's unbuilt proposal for the Hôtel-Dieu in Paris. Note that the plate representing Noah's ark in Johann Jakob Scheuchzer's *Physica sacra*, published 1731–1735 (i.e., a few years before the *Encyclopédie*), is even more evocative in this context than Lamy's more laconic representation, as it visualizes the ark as a double-decker railway wagon of sorts crowning an extraordinarily long ship's body (Scheuchzer's theological interpretation of the ark is not of interest here). **4/fig. 2**

4 Scheuchzer's *Physica sacra* was published in five volumes from 1731 to 1735. See Urs B. Leu, *Natura Sacra: Der Frühaufklärer Johann Jakob Scheuchzer (1672–1733)* (Zug: Achius, 2012). On the illustrations—mostly done by Johann August Corvinus—see Jochen Hesse, "'Zur Erlaeuchtung und Zierde des Wercks': Die Illustrationen der Kupferbibel 'Physica sacra,'" in ibid., 104–28.

This is not the moment to discuss the long history of modern architecture's symbiotic alliance with the institutions of law and medicine, except to say that it may be fitting for some of

the emblematic prototypes of therapeutic, or indeed healing, architecture to be Swiss—granted that such is obviously *not* the case either with Petit's proposed replacement for the old Hôtel-Dieu next to Notre-Dame (which was ruined by fire in 1772) or with any other among the many proposals elaborated in this context. **fig. 3** Destined to form a center of hospitalization outside the city, Petit's project combines a baroque concept of authority with modern techniques of control, thus introducing concepts of salubrity and hygiene as the necessary premise of a thorough regeneration of the city. As Bruno Fortier aptly writes, "In a history of modernity, the affair of the Hôtel-Dieu might well be one of those moments when architectural projects were no longer conceived on the basis of a simple relationship to history but in terms of a double imperative of technical rationalization and disciplinary efficiency, both in terms of economy and the exercise of power." [5] Some 150 years later, Le Corbusier would apply a similar program of radical hygienization to the totality of Paris's city center, turning the area between the Rue de Rivoli and the Grands Boulevards into a colossal air-conditioning apparatus, a cooling device, as it were. One cannot but help to see a project such as Petit's sanitizing "wheel" as the direct antecedent, if not the necessary premise, of such proposals. With Le Corbusier's Plan Voisin, the urbanistic "cleaning up" implied *toilette sociale* as well as *toilette hygiénique*—for Paris was in this case thought to be largely cleansed of the gray matter of its former inhabitants. [6]

fig. 4 Olaf Nicolai, *International* (2003). Installation with the Chaise longue basculante by Le Corbusier and Charlotte Perriand (1928).

Since Sigfried Giedion proclaimed the sanatorium as a model for the "new city" in his little manifesto entitled *Befreites Wohnen* (1929), the roles of hospital and prison in the making of modernity have become pet subjects in cultural studies, and the same goes for the history of the lung sanatorium as the architectural instrument of "heliotherapy." [7] Giedion's beseeching plea that the "most recent studies undertaken in medical science on

5 Bruno Fortier, "Le Camp et la forteresse inversée," in Michel Foucault et al., eds., *Les Machines à guérir: Aux origines de l'hôpital moderne* (Brussels: Mardaga, 1979), 45–50, here 46. Translation by the author.

6 I have discussed the "hygienist" implications of the Plan Voisin elsewhere. See Stanislaus von Moos, "Das Prinzip Toilette: Über Loos, Le Corbusier und die Reinlichkeit," in *Verlangen Nach Reinheit oder Lust auf Schmutz? Gestaltungskonzepte zwischen rein und unrein*, ed. Roger Fayet (Vienna: Passagen, 2003), 41–58.

7 Reference texts include Michel Foucault, *Surveiller et punir: Naissance de la prison* (Paris: Gallimard, 1975); Michel Foucault, "La politique de la santé au XVIIIe siècle," in Foucault et al., *Les Machines à guérir* (see note 5), 7–18. See also Anthony Vidler, *The Writing of the Walls: Architectural Theory in the Late Enlightenment* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton Architectural Press, 1987). Useful for me were also André Tavares, *Arquitectura Antituberculose: Trocas e tráficos na construção terapêutica entre Portugal e Suíça* (Porto: FAUP Publicações, 2005), 107–16; Sven-Olov Wallenstein, *Biopolitics and the Emergence of Modern Architecture* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2009); Beatriz Colomina, "X-Ray Architecture: The Tuberculosis Effect," *Harvard Design Magazine* 40 (2015): 70–91. The role of Switzerland in this scenario has been studied by Bruno Fritzsche, "Neue Technologien und Industrialisierung," in *Damals in der Schweiz: Kultur, Geschichte, Volksleben der Schweiz im Spiegel der frühen Photographie*, ed. Peter Keckeis (Frauenfeld: Huber, 1980), 209–18; Geneviève Heller, *"Propre en ordre"—Habitation et vie domestique, 1850–1930: L'exemple vaudois* (Lausanne: Ed. d'En bas, 1979). For a summary, see my "Das Sanatorium Europas," in Stanislaus von Moos, *Industrieästhetik*, Ars Helvetica 11 (Disentis, Switzerland: Desertina, 1992), 133–58. The most complete study, however, is by Christof Kübler, *Wider den hermetischen Zauber—Rationalistische Erneuerung alpiner Architektur um 1930: Rudolf Gaberel und Davos* (Chur: Verlag Bündner Monatsblatt, 1997).

hospital building all agree on a subject that now concerns the entire realm of architecture: the DOCTOR, too, calls for a total dissolution of the walls into glass, for a totally unimpeded access of light!" and the idea that only a quasi-military enforcement of discipline within such institutions can ensure success coincided with the invention of penicillin (1928), an invention that put an end to the idea that exposure of the body to the sun is necessary to cure the lungs of tuberculosis. [8] Wilhelm Löffler, an eminent specialist of internal medicine in Zurich and a personal friend of Giedion's (Löffler had been an assistant doctor at one of the leading establishments of lung therapy in the Swiss Alps), has given us a slightly sardonic description of the house rules that governed life in one of the early lung sanatoria in the Alps. "The first order was: 'You make sure that after dinner the elevator is used either by women or by men only.' The second order: '3 minutes before two o'clock, not earlier or later, you take position on the commando bridge of the hall where the patients are resting, with your watch in your hand. On the stroke of two o'clock no movement will be tolerated in the hall, is that understood!'" [9]

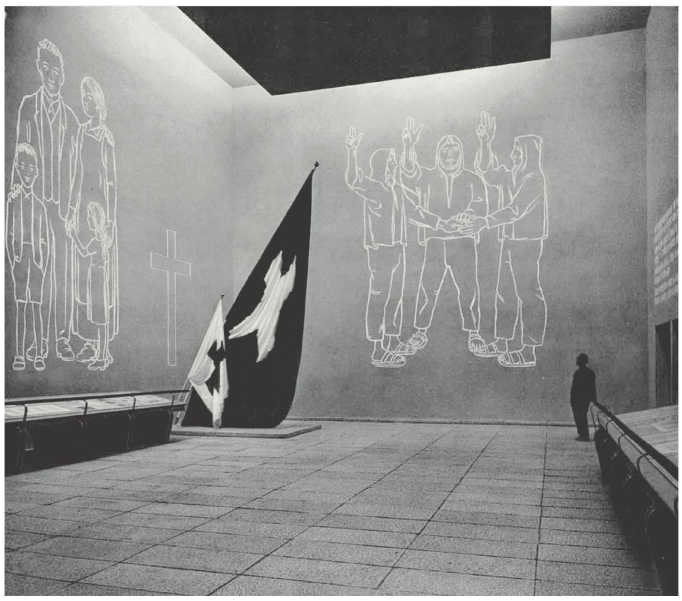


fig. 5 The Swiss flag and the flag of the International Committee of the Red Cross combined in the International Relations pavilion at the Swiss National Fair, Zurich, 1939.

8 Sigfried Giedion, *Befreites Wohnen* (Zurich: Orell Füssli, 1929), caption to fig. 57. Emphasis in original. Translation by the author. On Giedion and the question of the sanatorium, see André Tavares, "Modern Clumsiness: Befreites Wohnen and Sigfried Giedion's Loom," in André Tavares, *The Anatomy of the Architectural Book* (Zurich: Lars Müller Publishers, 2016), 61–105.

9 Wilhelm Löffler, "100 Jahre Davos auf medizingeschichtlichem Hintergrund," in *Hundert Jahre Lungen-Kurort Davos*, eds. Felix Suter and Hans Meyer (Bern: Huber, 1966), 9–27, here 19. Translation by the author.

Thus, by the logic of "heliotherapy," the ideal patient was thought of as lying down, immobile, on a sun terrace, in a position of absolute passivity—in silent obedience to the hierarchy that exists between the "perpetrator" and the "victim" of the modern art of medicine. Is it a coincidence that one of the best-known furniture designs by Le Corbusier and Charlotte Perriand conforms so neatly to this paradigm? And does not the artist Olaf Nicolai have a point when he associates the chaise longue to the symbolism of the red cross? **10/fig. 4**

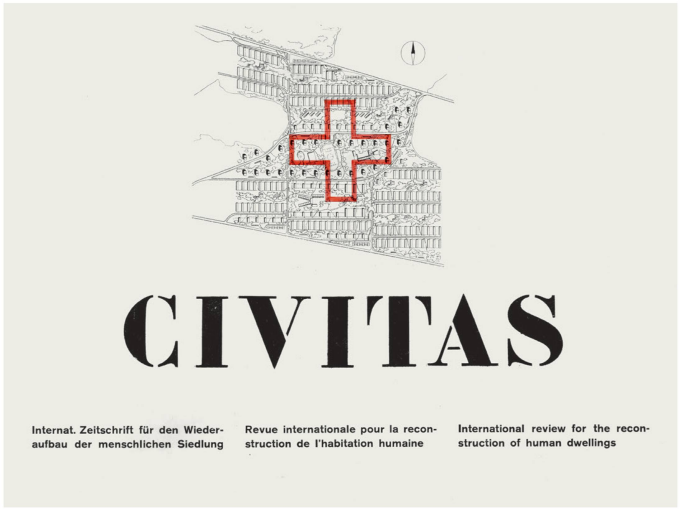
10 The chaise longue basculante was jointly designed by Le Corbusier and Charlotte Perriand. See Arthur Rüegg (in collaboration with Klaus Spechtenhauser), *Le Corbusier: Möbel und Intérieurs 1905–1965* (Zurich: Scheidegger & Spiess, 2012), 116–17, 282–84.

"The Meaning of Geneva"

Given the number and the importance of the sanatoria in the Swiss Alps, the country has often been referred to as "Europe's Sanatorium." While the sanatorium is not a Swiss invention, the Red Cross is. Over the course of its history since 1864 (when the International Committee of the Red Cross, ICRC, was founded), Switzerland has steadily slipped into an ever more complex political

alliance with the organization. [11] The title for this section of the article borrows from a photomontage by John Heartfield (*Der Sinn von Genf*, 1932) in which the German artist associates the Swiss flag perched above the Palais Wilson, the then seat of the League of Nations, with the Nazi swastika, thus castigating at an early date what many have seen as a tendency of Swiss politics in the 1930s to align itself with fascism. [12]

The Swiss themselves favored another heraldic contamination: that between the Swiss coat of arms and the sign of the Red Cross. In times of crisis, when the relative moral vacuum of "perennial neutrality" nourishes doubts among the populace about Switzerland's role in world history, the idea of the Red Cross is invoked as some kind of expiatory myth. At the 1939 National Fair (which coincided with the outbreak of the Second World War), for example, the ambivalence of symbols was celebrated as the quasi-essence of national identity. **fig. 5** The locus of this cult was the Ehrenraum der Auslandschweizer (Hall of Honor of the Swiss Abroad), a chapel-like space served by the Höhenstrasse (Scenic Road), a ceremonial passerelle that formed the backbone of the exhibition. [13] The reciprocity of heraldic signs, one symbolizing national autonomy, the other international commitment, was impossible to overlook. So easy to represent graphically, since one coat of arms is the inversion of the other and both use the sign of the cross, the duplicity of symbols inevitably puts the passerby into the position of having to admit a debt—if not of having to pay a penance. In 1941, the Swiss architect Alfred Roth tried to lure the ICRC into cosponsoring his magazine, *CIVITAS*, by using a hybrid cross—neither fully a Swiss cross nor fully a red cross—symbolizing neutrality and charity or, rather, charity as an excuse for neutrality (or the other way around, depending on circumstance). **fig. 6**



11 Perhaps slightly overstating the case, Jakob Tanner characterizes the Red Cross as a "karitatives Dienstleistungsunternehmen für die kriegführenden Mächte" (charitable service enterprise for the warring powers) in *Geschichte der Schweiz im 20. Jahrhundert* (Munich: Beck, 2015), 130. On the origins of the ICRC and the role of Switzerland in its creation, see Michael Ignatieff, "Die Ehre des Kriegers I," in *Krieger ohne Waffen: Das Internationale Komitee vom Roten Kreuz*, ed. Hans Magnus Enzensberger (Frankfurt: Eichborn, 2001), 9–25. On the problems caused by the ICRC's complicity with Swiss national politics, see Jean-Claude Favez (in collaboration with Geneviève Billeter), *Une mission impossible? Le CICR, les déportations et les camps de concentration nazis* (Lausanne: Éditions Payot, 1988); Hans Ulrich Jost, *Politik und Wirtschaft im Krieg: Die Schweiz 1938–1948* (Zurich: Chronos, 1998), 123, 126, 181. For a critical history of the Red Cross idea, see John F. Hutchinson, *Champions of Charity: War and the Rise of the Red Cross* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1996).

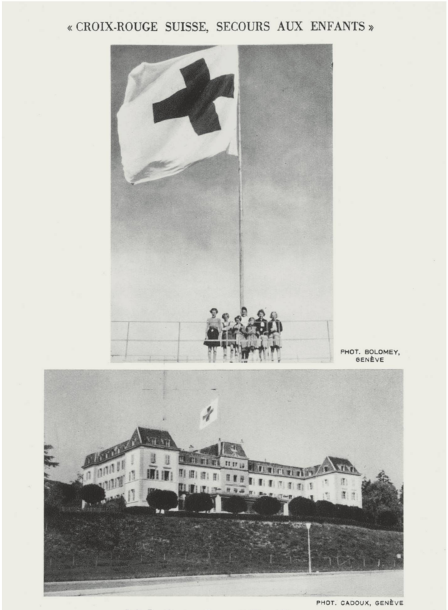
12 On Heartfield's photomontage and its political message, see Roland März, *Heartfield montiert: 1930–1938* (Leipzig: Edition Leipzig, 1993), 71–75.

fig. 6 Proposed cover design for the *CIVITAS* review by Alfred Roth (1941).

13 See *Die Schweiz im Spiegel der Landesausstellung 1939*, vol. 2, ed. Schweizerische Landesausstellung 1939 (Zurich: Atlantis-Verlag, 1940), 161.

fig. 7 US President Woodrow Wilson and Gustave Ador, president of the Swiss Confederation, as "patrons" of the League of Nations. Cover of a League of Nations handout (ca. 1920).

Roth had seen the Ehrenraum der Auslandschweizer, though he was probably not impressed by its design. However, the contamination of signs presented there was no novelty, having seen its first heyday a generation earlier, during and after the First World War, when the mystique of the white cross changing into red and vice versa practically turned out to be a nurturing ground for the League of Nations, founded in 1919 (as well as, indirectly, the Congrès Internationaux d'Architecture Moderne, CIAM). A well-known League of Nations graphic shows US President Woodrow Wilson and Swiss Federal President Gustave Ador. Between them, pinned behind the American eagle, are twin flags honoring Ador's service, before entering the national government of Switzerland, as president of the Red Cross. fig.7 "[B]ecause I am a Presbyterian," Wilson responded when asked why he had been so much in favor of Geneva (as opposed to Brussels) as the seat of the League of Nations. 14 The presence of the ICRC, with its already well-functioning bureaucracy, was undoubtedly another of Geneva's trump cards in this context. One of Wilson's advisors even urged that the league establish its headquarters immediately next to the those of the ICRC. 15 As for CIAM, its origins owe to the "scandal" of the League of Nations competition (i.e., the failure of Le Corbusier and Pierre Jeanneret's project to win the consensus of the jury). 16 No wonder that, as an organization, CIAM should have directly modeled itself after the League of Nations statute, as Jacques Gubler plausibly demonstrates. 17 Today, with the ICRC headquarters located directly across the street from the Palace of Nations, the least that can be said is that the symbolism of this institutional tête-à-tête speaks for itself. (Granted, the image shown here does not correspond with the palace as built, nor with its actual site, the immediate



1-2. Le Centre d'accueil Henri-Dunant.

fig. 8 Hotel Carlton, Geneva, serving as a center for the Children's Help activities organized by the Swiss Red Cross (1942–46).

14 See Joëlle Kuntz, *Genf: Geschichte einer Ausrichtung auf die Welt* (Geneva: Éditions Zoé, 2011), 55. For basic information on the League of Nations, see *La Société des Nations, ses fins, ses moyens, son oeuvre* (Geneva: Secrétariat de la Société des Nations, 1938).

15 The ICRC headquarters were then located in the Hôtel Métropole on the left bank of Lake Geneva (the League of Nations ended up occupying the Hotel National on the right bank, subsequently renamed as Hotel Wilson).

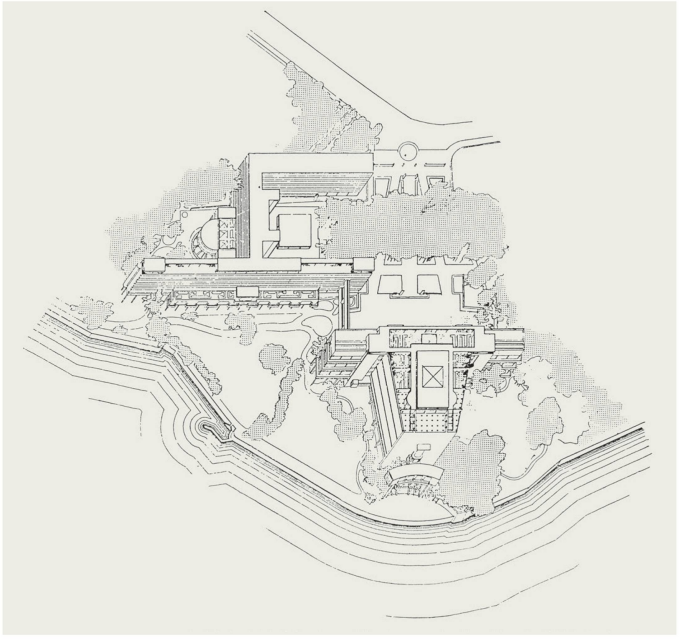
16 The basics are summarized in my *Le Corbusier: Elements of a Synthesis* (Rotterdam: 010 Publishers, 2009), 226–33.

17 Jacques Gubler, *Nationalisme et internationalisme dans l'architecture moderne de la Suisse* (Lausanne: L'Age d'Homme, 1975), 158. For a more detailed discussion of the CIAM's ideological affinity with the League of Nations see my forthcoming book (see note 1).

physical proximity across Geneva's Avenue de la Paix having in fact never been planned.) [18/figs. 8–9]

Brutalism's Ghost

For many, Jean-Luis Cohen's book *Architecture in Uniform* has been a powerful reminder of the impact the two world wars exerted on the careers of modern architects, if not on modern architecture altogether. [19] The part of Swiss architecture in this drama was marginal since the country was not militarily engaged in war — except if one were to place it into the context of the country's semiofficial vocation as the hub of a multifaceted international rescue operation. Nonetheless, given the unpredictable course of events in wartime, the possibility of massive demolition by bombs was as real in Switzerland as anywhere else in Europe, especially in the months after July 1941, when the government adopted a defense strategy that concentrated all forces in the National Redoubt, thus abandoning the midlands to a potentially fatal destiny. By the time architects like Armin Meili or Alfred Roth had come around to outlining their ideas on how to reconstruct Zurich, Basel, or Geneva if such a "chance" were given, the threat of massive demolitions was no longer real. [20] And by 1944, to engage in reconstruction work meant trying to get a foothold in reorganizing and rebuilding the world beyond the national borders. Roth's *CIVITAS* project is a reflection of such ambitions, and even more so Max Bill's small book entitled *Wiederaufbau* (1945), a hastily concocted yet extremely useful international survey of prefabrication systems. [21]



The quandary was a typical one: How can architecture respond to situations of emergency, of catastrophe? What is "reconstruction," and who needs to be in charge? Or rather, what needs to be done so that the right people (meaning CIAM people, since I am speaking of the two particularly vocal members of the Swiss CIAM chapter) are put in charge? Bill purposefully limited the scope of his little book to issues of architectural "first aid." While not ignoring the large-scale and long-term planning initiatives underway in such countries as France, the Netherlands,

18 Not until 1946 did the ICRC officially move to the former Hotel Carlton at Avenue de la Paix across the street from the present Palace of Nations. For details, see Kuntz, *Genf* (see note 14), 59; Joëlle Kuntz, "Le CICR: Une architecture de l'urgence," Genève internationale, n.d., http://www.geneve-int.ch/fr/le-cicr-une-architecture-de-l-urgence (accessed August 17, 2018). On the League of Nations Palace competition and the complicated search for an appropriate construction site, see Richard Quincerot, "Le Champ de bataille du Palais des Nations, 1923–1931," in *Le Corbusier à Genève 1922–1932: Projets et réalisations*, eds. Isabelle Charollais and André Ducret (Lausanne: Payot, 1987), 35–48; Katrin Schwarz, *Bauen für Die Weltgemeinschaft: Die CIAM und das Unesco-Gebäude in Paris* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2016), 212–25.

19 Jean-Louis Cohen, *Architecture in Uniform: Designing and Building for the Second World War* (Montreal: Canadian Centre for Architecture, 2011).

fig. 9 Le Corbusier and Pierre Jeanneret, League of Nations Palace competition project (1927).

20 See Armin Meili, "Zürich heute und morgen: Wille oder Zufall in der baulichen Gestaltung," *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, December 12, 14, and 15, 1944; Alfred Roth, "Civitas: Sammelwerk die menschliche Siedlung," *Werk* 31, no. 1 (1944): supplement. For an impressive documentation of the mix of fears and hopes European architects invested in the expected war bombardments from the late 1930s on, see Jörn Düwel and Niels Gutschow, *A Blessing in Disguise: War and Town Planning in Europe, 1940–1945* (Berlin: Dom Publishers, 2013).

21 Max Bill, *Wiederaufbau: Dokumente über Zerstörungen, Planungen, Konstruktionen* (Erlenbach-Zurich: Verlag für Architektur, 1945).

fig. 10 War industry housing projects in the United States: workers' housing in Vallejo, California, and Vanport, Oregon (both 1941).

Industriearbeitersiedlungen / USA 51

Die Frage der demontierbaren Häuser spielte für die großen Industriesiedlungen eine hervorragende Rolle. Ein Teil dieser Siedlungen wird nun demontiert und nach England verfrachtet.
Eine solche Stadt, aus Bauelementen errichtet, ist Vallejo in Californien (Arch. William Wurster). Ohne jede Bepflanzung, wie sie sich hier bietet, erscheint sie allerdings nicht im besten Licht, aber es ist immerhin festzustellen, daß der Versuch einer lebendigen Ordnung gemacht ist und daß jedes Haus seinen Platz an der Sonne und seine Freifläche in genügendem Ausmaß hat. Der hier gezeigte Ausschnitt zeigt ungefähr 250 Häuser für rund 1000 Einwohner. Die Amerikaner betrachten diese Anlage als sehr verbesserungsbedürftig.

Vallejo (Californien). Arch. W. Wurster. Fabrikmäßig hergestellte Reihenhäuser in Hügelgelände. Unbepflanzt, unfertiger Zustand. ca. 250 Häuser.

University-Homes, ein Teil von Vanport: City für Henry Kaisers Schiffswerften. Mit Laubengängen um Höfe angeordnet.

and the USSR, the bulk of Bill's book is dedicated to prefabrication systems that promise makeshift solutions for emergency situations. A Swiss army barrack equipped as an aid station is also shown in this context (including a rather archetypal version of the Corbusian chaise longue). Not surprisingly, Bill is fascinated by American prefab houses built to accommodate workers in America's war production sites—William Wurster's worker's housing in Vallejo, California, and George Howe and Louis Kahn's Carver Court in Coatesville, Pennsylvania, being emblematic examples in this context. **22/fig. 10**

22 Ibid., 51, 72, 155, and passim.

One among the illustrations in the book, however, does not pertain to prefab housing; instead, it shows the remains of a ruined building and a piling up of bricks extracted from the rubble that looks like the beginning of a makeshift construction undertaken by the victims of a recent bombardment. No architect is around. The scene reveals what war damage actually looks like, and it reminds us of the lessons such a precarity might hold in store. For, is not the tectonic essence of a building best revealed once it has turned into a state of ruin or, alternatively, in the first stages of a spontaneous construction process, as shown in the image Bill uses as a warning? **23/fig. 11**

23 Ibid., 26. The original source of the image is "Warum geplant werden muss," *Plan: Schweizerische Zeitschrift für Landes-, Regional- und Ortsplanung* 2, no. 2 (1945): 45.

Bill was not interested in a Choisy- or Viollet-le-Duc-like moment of learning, nor was he moved by the primary gestures of survival among those hit by catastrophe. On the contrary, the "Red Cross mission" of architecture must prevent such things from happening, he argues in the accompanying text, or else the "new city" will never be built. Roth would have agreed. In an essay also published in 1945, he develops a scrupulously contrived timetable for the various stages of reconstruction to be observed in the case of bomb damage. The faster prefabricated wooden houses can be provided, the better the chance for avoiding "chaos." The ultimate "reward" for everybody would be the final solution of the Functional City organized according to the Charte d'Athènes and built with mass-produced building elements. **24**

24 Alfred Roth, "Der Wiederaufbau und die Probleme der Notsiedelung," *Werk* 32 (1945): 167–76. Roth proposes a strict periodization of reconstruction activities: (1) period of precarity, (2) phase of general planning evaluations, (3) phase of planning, (4) phase of building.

In real life, reconstruction has rarely followed this script, and, where it did, the "new city" tended to fall short of the hopes architects had invested in its conception. At times, with changing socioeconomic conditions (the debacle of the German Democratic Republic, GDR, is the classic example), the attempt to solve the problem with functionalist housing units was granted a shorter life span than many of the world's innumerable camps for refugees or prisoners. With the partial demolition of some of the GDR's most emblematic *plattenbau* housing complexes, housing in the former Communist state—in many ways so exemplary in terms of the functionalist code—has come full circle to its origins in the *tabula rasa*. **25**

Perhaps Bill's choice of image marks a symptomatic moment in postwar neofunctionalism, all the more since other European architects of the same generation, more directly confronted with the ravages of war, took quite different cues from this experience. For Alvar Aalto, the abandoned ruins of the villages hit by Soviet bombs in 1940 turned out first of all to be a lesson in community life as well as in construction. In Germany, Hans Döllgast, Otto Bartning, Rudolf Schwarz, and others discovered the fragment and the ruin as a key to architectural regeneration. Franco Albini, Carlo Scarpa, and BBPR in Italy altogether redefined the art of building in terms of its dialogue with precarity, while Louis Kahn discovered the essentials of the art of building in the ruins of Rome and Ostia. **26** Le Corbusier, in turn, spent part of the years during and after the Second World War exploring his own version of the "ruin-" or "squatter-aesthetic," cajoling his personal preference for the crude, the unrefined, the primitive, the precarious, and thus in the long run anchoring the idea of progress in a mythopoetic universe of rambling archaism, with the Unité d'habitation in Marseille as one of the end points. **27**

26 Mangel in Deutschland

Die Backsteine werden gereinigt und sortiert.

steht die Gefahr, daß solche planlose Bauten später wieder entfernt werden müssen. Nur sofortige Planung kann hier einen aufkommenden Wirrwarr verhindern und unzweckmäßige Arbeitsleistung produktiv auswerten.

Neue Mauern entstehen, voraussichtlich am falschen Ort.

(Klischees „Plan")

fig. 11 "Bad" reconstruction that, according to Max Bill, should be prevented by thorough planning.

In the Logic of Purification

The Cité du Refuge, the Salvation Army hostel built in Paris by Le Corbusier and Pierre Jeanneret from 1928 to 1931, has often been identified as the typological blueprint behind the "phalansterian"

25 See Reinier de Graaf, *Four Walls and a Roof: The Complex Nature of a Simple Profession* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2017), 47.

26 Examples will be referenced and discussed in greater detail in my forthcoming book (see note 1).

27 See Stanislaus von Moos, "Brutalism's Ghosts—Le Corbusier, Art, and War," in *What Moves Us? Le Corbusier and Asger Jorn in Art and Architecture*, ed. Ruth Baumeister (Zurich: Scheidegger & Spiess, 2015), 17–25.

distribution of individual and collective spaces within the Unité complex. But what about the client, the Salvation Army? What about William Booth, the founder, a man who saw himself as an antipode to Karl Marx and who was convinced that social progress cannot be achieved via class struggle but only via the inner purification of the individual as an ethical being—and whose sense of urgency was such that help needed to be administered via a radically enforced military discipline? If Booth promoted his institution in military terms by way of an annual "war congress," a magazine called *The War Cry*, and, all in all, a "general" and

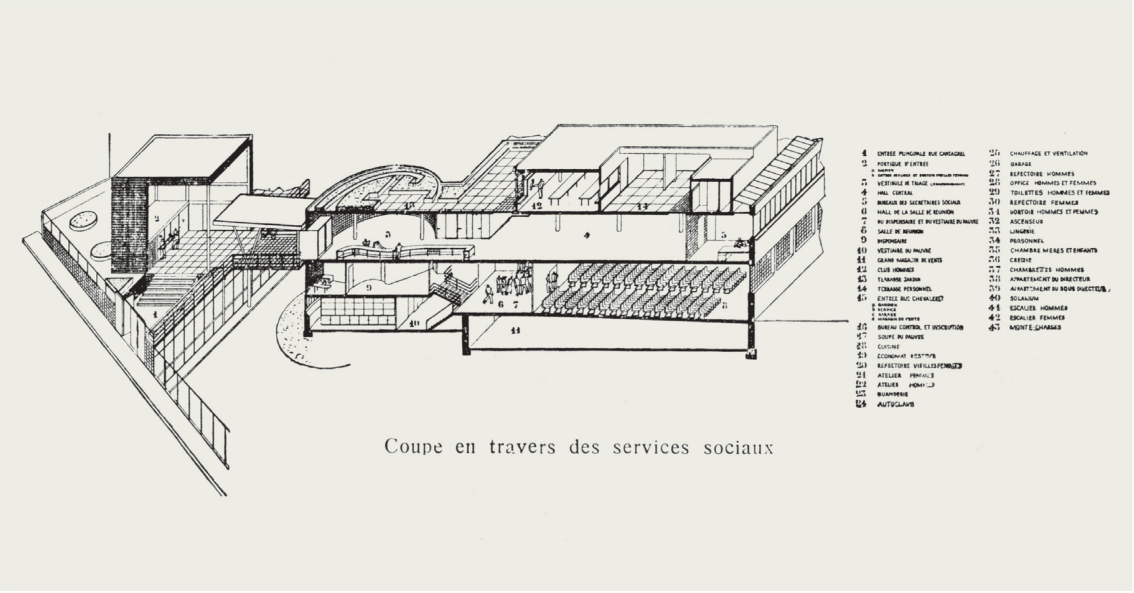


fig. 12 Le Corbusier and Pierre Jeanneret, Cité de Refuge. View of entrance porch and collective equipment (1927; 1928–1931).

his uniformed "officers," then for Le Corbusier to have called his building "L'usine du bien," thus calling upon the factory as model, is only normal. [28] Access to the building is orchestrated as a "purifying procession" that starts with the grand portico of the main entrance, from where the *clochards* are dispatched over a kind of drawbridge into the belly of the building, a receptacle organized *hors-d'oeuvre*; here, in the Cité's "lobby", they are submitted to a succession of cleansing rituals, beginning with small cabins reserved for "troubling confessions," before finally being handed over to further blessings of mercy and to either the benefice of solar radiation or (depending on weather or season) the nuisance of unsupportable glare, heat, or cold. **fig. 12**

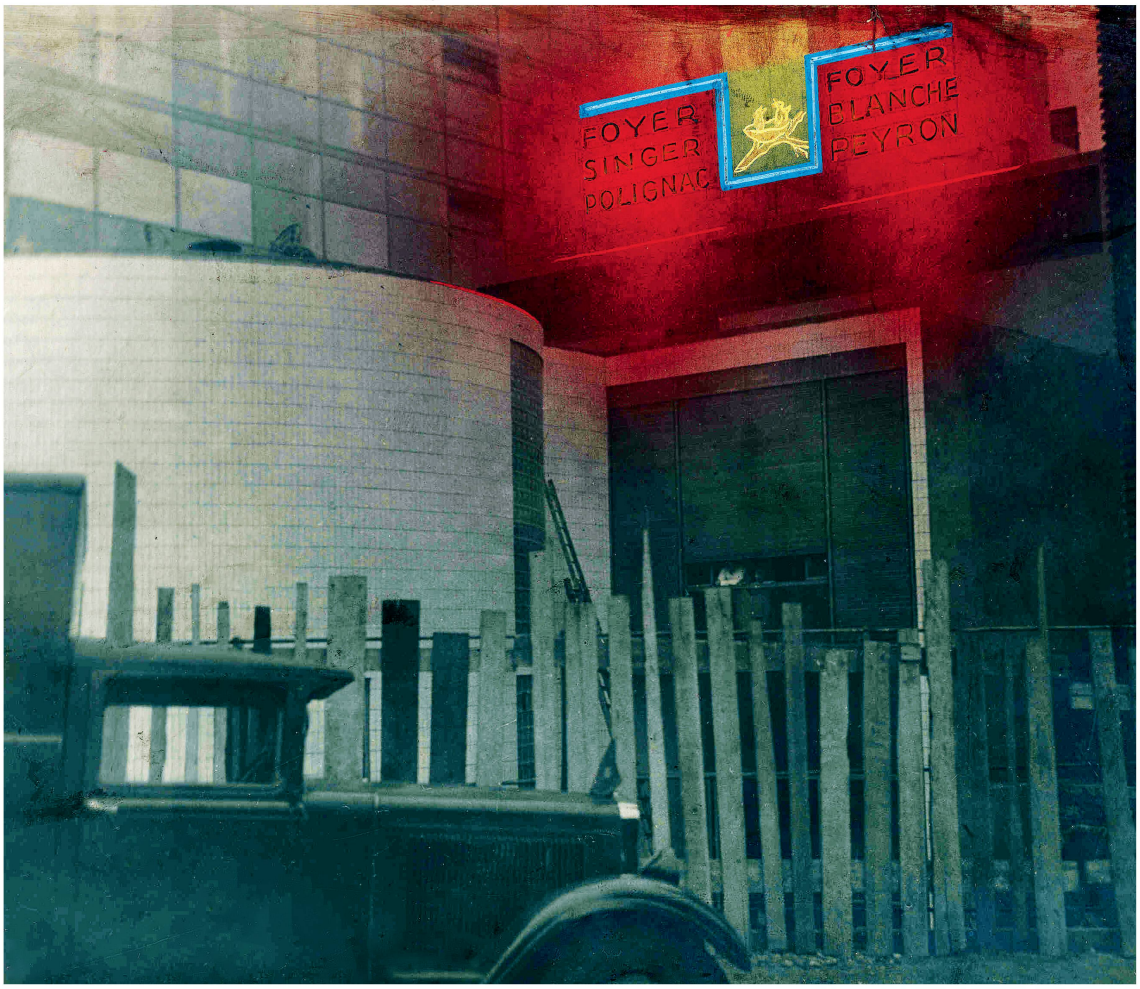
The most biblical among Le Corbusier's "industrial" interpretations of modern charity is surely the Asile Flottant (which, alas, was submerged beneath the Seine during flooding in February 2018). In a more literal sense than the Cité de Refuge, this *péniche* is a miniature Noah's Ark for those shipwrecked by life. [29] Something of this biblical charge is also inscribed in the very setup of the Unité d'habitation, which has so often been compared to an ocean liner.

28 On Booth and the Salvation Army, see Henning Ritter, *Die Schreie der Verwundeten. Versuch über die Grausamkeit* (Munich: Beck: 2013), 138–39. On the Cité de Refuge, see Brian Brace Taylor, *Le Corbusier: La Cité de Refuge—Paris 1929/1933* (Paris: L'Équerre, 1980); Gilles Ragot and Olivier Chadoin, *La Cité de Refuge—Le Corbusier et Pierre Jeanneret: L'Usine à guérir* (Paris: Éditions du Patrimoine, 2016). For an early discussion of the project's ideological implications, see Stanislaus von Moos, "Wohnkollektiv, Hospiz und Dampfer," *archithese* 12 (1974), 30–41, 56; von Moos, *Le Corbusier* (see note 16), 151–55.

29 Le Corbusier, *Oeuvre complète: 1929–1934* (Zurich: Girsberger, 1935), 32–33. See in this context the exhaustive study by Katya Samardzic, "L'Asile flottant" (Mémoire de DEA, Université de Genève, 2004/5).

"Rescue"

On May 27, 1954, the abbé Pierre paid a short visit to the Unité in Marseilles. A few months earlier he had organized a relief action to benefit the innumerable victims of the 1954 February cold in Paris ("l'insurrection de la bonté"), which made him the ultimate French synonym of humanitarianism. A curious kind of poignancy attaches to the few photographs that record the abbé's visit to the Unité. [30] Architects and planners, too, like to "help." The capacity to show compassion is a token of professional and moral authority. The more urgent the need, the more the architect feels entitled to make radical choices. That the victim of extreme precarity has, in general, no voice is helpful; it allows the designer to come up with exemplary solutions. Coalitions with political bodies, institutions, or agencies are indispensable in such contexts. Nothing gets done otherwise. Such collaborations may be conviction-driven or no more than opportunistic. In the case of Le Corbusier's liaisons with CIAM, the League of Nations, and the Salvation Army, they were both.



30 Photographs at the Fondation Le Corbusier, Paris. For "l'insurrection de la bonté," see Axelle Brodiez-Dolino, *Emmaüs et l'abbé Pierre* (Paris: Presses des Sciences Po, 2008), 48–57.

fig. 13 Le Corbusier and Pierre Jeanneret, Cité de Refuge. Sign above the entrance to the collective services wing showing a bird feeding its young, ca. 1928.

Surprisingly, given that the Cité de Refuge is among Le Corbusier's and Pierre Jeanneret's most thoroughly scrutinized works, one detail of the building—a small sign perched above the entrance—has remained hitherto unnoticed in the critical

literature. Negligible as architecture (unless one were to define the building as a "decorated shed"), it is all the more intriguing as a graphic logo. It shows a nest supported by a branch with two little birds in it. Their beaks are wide open in expectation of a little bite. fig. 13 While the image may fail to measure up to the notion of a "founding myth," when stripped of its theological aura and reduced to the miserable format of a neon sign advertising a beer brand it represents the "ethos" of the Cité in a nutshell — if not the mission of the Salvation Army altogether — as simply and as eloquently as Booth's motto, "Soup, Soap, Salvation." Still, the sign in fact represents precarity rather than charity. Contrasting with the Nestlé logo, the obvious iconographic source, where the mother animal feeding her children dominates the scene, the chicks in this case remain unattended to. 31 Why is this? Who is going to feed the needy creatures? The answer may be given by the two larger inscriptions on either side of the sign above the entrance. They give the names of the two ladies without whose financial support the Cité de Refuge would not exist in its chosen form: Mme. Blanche Peyron, the Salvation Army general's wife; and the Cité's principal donor, Princesse Edmond de Polignac. 32

But what about today? True, the humanitarian success of the projects referred to in these notes may be doubtful. Or rather: what we call "architecture" probably plays but a secondary (if not a marginal) role in their success or failure in terms of social benefits — granted the relativity of that notion. Yet the programs discussed and the design choices proposed address questions that are still unanswered. With a world caught in the maelstrom of growth, there is no end in sight for the spiraling numbers of human casualties, including casualties of war. Neither the Red Cross nor the United Nations nor even the Salvation Army will be out of work in the foreseeable future. On the other hand: if the romance of humanitarianism and modern architecture looks outlandish today, this might be a measure of the extent to which precarity as a human condition has disappeared from the discipline's radar.

31 Remember that Le Corbusier und Pierre Jeanneret designed a pavilion for Nestlé that was shown at the 1928 commercial fair in Liège. See Le Corbusier, *Oeuvre complète: 1910–1929* (Zurich: Girsberger, 1937), 174; *L'Architecture vivante*, Summer 1929, plates 28–29. Two symbolic Nestlé milk-powder cans displaying the firm's logo were perched on the facade. For Le Corbusier's sketches based on that logo, see H. Allen Brooks, ed., *The Le Corbusier Archive*, vol. 6: *Armée du Salut – Cité de Refuge* (New York: Garland, 1983), 358, 362, 392.

32 On the latter, a philanthropist art lover and former subscriber of *L'Esprit nouveau*, see Winnaretta Polignac, *Souvenirs de Winnaretta Singer, Princesse Edmond de Polignac* (Paris: Fondation Singer-Polignac, 2000).