

often set up a complex interdependence. Due to its extent, this phenomenon represents a separate issue which is impossible to deal with within this article's framework.

- 17 *Coup d'état* pro-German of Rashid Al Gaylani, reoccupation of Iraq by the British forces (1941), *wathbah* (uprising) of

To build a stadium: Le Corbusier's project for Baghdad, 1955-1973

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The commission's context

The commission apparently took place during the first semester of 1955. It was probably a direct commission from the minister of the Development Board and Ministry of Development, Nadim Pachachi. From the start, while the site of the future facility was currently under discussion by the Town Planning Consultants, the program included a stadium for 50,000 spectators, which contained a football stadium and athletics tracks; a 50 metres swimming pool and some adjoining ones for 5,000 individuals, a gymnasium for 3,000 individuals...¹

The Iraqi context that embraced this project was that of the start of the reign of the young king Fayçal II, who had reached his age of majority in April 1953. Despite the difficulties –riots of 1952 due to the renewal of the agreement between the Iraqi Petroleum Company (IPC) and the Iraqi State, a difficult agrarian situation, and an important dissatisfaction of the working class–, the existing exterior policy was clearly focused in the direction of the West, especially to the U.S.A. and U.K., and opposed to the Soviet Union. Under the insistence of the U.S.A. and the U.K., Iraq joined, with the U.K., Turkey, Pakistan and Iran, in an equal defensive coalition, whose objective was to ensure their collective security against the Soviet Union. This constituted Baghdad's agreement, undersigned in 1955².

The regime's orientation seemed to be particularly reflected in Baghdad's municipality, which had been deliberating on strategic urban planning and had been aiming to achieve an orientation resolutely marked in favour of modern architecture. The Ministry of Development was the driving force behind all of these plans being set into motion. In 1956, the moment when Le Corbusier's assignment for Baghdad's municipal stadium took administrative form, the Catalan José Luis Sert was hired by the U.S.A. to build their embassy in Baghdad³. In 1957, the architect Walter Gropius will see himself hired to design Baghdad's new university by Iraq's first minister, whose son,

Nizar Ali Jawdat, had been Gropius' pupil⁴. In 1963, architect Carlo Ponti finished the construction of the Ministry of Development. The new opera house would be designed by Frank Lloyd Wright right before his death. Finnish architect Alvar Aalto was commissioned the museum's construction...

Le Corbusier's interests in a project of this nature

Everything seems to show that between the decision taken by the Iraqi party and Le Corbusier's acceptance, at least, more than one year had lapsed. That was not due to the architect's lack of interest for the project. Several reasons should be mentioned here:

In the first place, and without any doubt, Le Corbusier's firm had an agenda full of commissions. The year 1955 remained committed to the construction of Chandigarh's city in India, the works at the Spinners' Association palace and the museum of Ahmedabad, and the cities of Shodhan and Sarabhai. It was also the time when the commission for the National Museum of Western Fine Arts of Tokyo was shaping up. And, in respect to French commissions, Le Corbusier's firm hands in the church of *Notre-Dame-du-Haut* at Ronchamp that same year, it finishes *Jaoul's* housing and *l'unité d'habitation* in Rezé-les-Nantes, it builds the Home of Brazil within the campus of Paris University, and it manages the site works of the monastery at La Tourette. It also receives the commission to make some studies to build a *ville radieuse* in Meaux and the stadium and cultural centre of Firminy, as well as the *unité d'habitation* of Briey-en-Forêt. This represents an extremely heavy program, which justifies, from 1956 onwards, a reorganization of work conditions between Le Corbusier and André Wogenscky, head of his firm promoted to associate.

Then, there is a suspicion from Le Corbusier's side of any commission that does not translate itself into facts or a financial agreement, which would somehow validate the seriousness of the proposition. The financial argument represents an important motive for Le Corbusier. He regularly complains of not having any money and being dispossessed of his own work by all kinds of selfish misers. In May of 1954, he tells in his notebooks what he thinks he has heard about himself: '*He has always been a very wealthy man*', and he immediately adds, this time without quotation marks: *at 67 years of age I lead a terrible life to be able to... support the younger ones (who are my family)*⁵. This 'victimization', which cannot be taken seriously, must be ignored, bearing in mind the information we now have in our hands in relation to his personal fortune⁶.

Taking into account the information we currently handle, nothing indicates, for the time being, that this kind of argument could have been used within the stadium of Baghdad dossier. However, conscious of the importance of the matters he has to manage, Le Corbusier seems to negotiate, over all, his absence on site in Baghdad during the construction period⁷. This is undoubtedly the reason why Le Corbusier seems to have gone into partnership with J. M. Présenté, head consultant engineer of a Technical Studies Office in Paris and manager of on site works for this project since its origin.

Even though he does not show his enthusiasm openly for Baghdad's stadium commission, all signs seem to indicate that Le Corbusier was interested in Iraq government's proposal. In fact, it should be remembered what an important role sports played in his life (he had always played sports, especially gymnastics) and the importance sports have in his representation of the new man, generated by modernity. Follower of the Hebertism⁸ since his childhood at La Chaux-de-Fonds, physical exercise in full nature, whether going for a walk or cross-country skiing, satisfies his representation of a healthy world regenerated physically and morally by physical fatigue and the altruistic values that it generates. Sports activity constitutes therefore part of his projects, whether a private space for sports within the accommodation or over the accommodation, as the fitting out project in 1926 for a stadium over the roof of a collective housing which should have been built in Cardinet Street (Paris' 17th district), or public spaces as the construction of big complexes over the 3,000,000 inhabitants' City plains within the *Plan Voisin*^{*} for Paris, or even the project for the *Ville Radieuse*. But, above all, it is from 1936 onwards and the settlement of the French Popular Front, that Le Corbusier demonstrated a rebirth of interest for sport activities, sensitive as he was to the arguments displayed by the political actors toward the population, their leisure time and their paid holidays. The reconstruction project for the unhealthy block #6 of 11th and 12th districts, around Faubourg Saint-Antoine Street, Daumesnil Avenue, Diderot Boulevard, Ledru-Rollin Avenue, and Sedaine and la Roquette Streets, includes the construction of vertical rooms with football, tennis, basketball... fields at their foot. On 7 January, 1937, Le Corbusier submits the construction project of a large stadium (100,000 seats) to Léo Lagrange (Popular Front's minister of Leisure) for the city which includes, apart from an olympic stadium, a speakers platform, a big open air cinema, an orchestra platform, a sizeable stage for huge performances, and an extensive field for group ceremonies, with adjoined stadiums for swimming, tennis and cycling. But

he does it without success. The *Temps Nouveaux*^{*} Pavilion, built near the Maillot door within the framework of the 1937 exhibition, is a hymn to the glory of the city functions –To dwell– to enjoy – to work– to transport⁹. In its spirit, the stadium is not only a sports facility. In his works for the *Temps Nouveaux* Pavilion in 1938, the stadium project is baptized *Centre national de réjouissances populaires de 100.000 participants* (National Centre for 100,000 participants in popular festivities). It is a modern facility, as Le Corbusier justifies it himself:

A construction of this kind should not be limited only to olympic sports. It could be used, if weather allows, almost every day for many purposes. The country's waking up claims frequent sessions, parties or communal work: theatre, light-hearted, educational or propagandist cinema, civic-minded or political conferences. Finally, spectators should be able to become actors if it comes to it, particularly in parades.

This way, a completely new form of space for festivities is created which does not owe anything to antiquity or any other period. It is a tool of modern times¹⁰.

The Popular Front won't answer to Le Corbusier's attempts to build a big stadium for the capital. After the military defeat of May-June 1940, the appointment of full powers to Marshal Pétain, the setting of a new regime over the ashes of the deceased III Republic, the blasting declarations of the old soldier about the future revolution and the instigation of structural reforms; all this constitutes a speech that he would not find unpleasant, as it is quite similar, at least in form, to his own. From 15 January, 1941 to 1 July, 1942, Le Corbusier stays in Vichy, trying to gain a public commission and the recognition of his role within the French reconstruction¹¹. Undoubtedly due to his demands and hopes, the construction of a stadium for 100,000 individuals in Paris sits in a good place. But judged to be scarcely happy with the spirit of the national revolution, Le Corbusier is excluded from any important commission. In an enormous snub, Auguste Perret is chosen to make the preliminary studies for the National Olympic Park to be built in the Parisian region on 19 August, 1943 by the general commissioner of Education and Sports. The project designed by Auguste Perret is a stadium seating 125,000 people¹².

Le Corbusier does not give up. In 1945, his urban plan for Saint-Dié once again includes a project for a stadium. However, in this field, Le Corbusier's failure remains present. At the time of Baghdad's commission, he has just been able to build, in 1938 and under the initiative of the *Centre d'études du travail (CET)*[†], the retraining and gymnastics centre for the young and unemployed, at 9-11 Le-Bua Street (20th district).

Baghdad's commission takes place in a particular context that portrays, on one side, the awareness about these premises' significance for the city and the application of his theories about the contemporary city and, at the same time, the impossibility to be able to build even one of them. Besides, we should also remember that Baghdad's commission for a stadium would also be validated *a posteriori* by the commission he agrees to in October 1955 with his friend Claudius-Petit, mayor of Firminy, for the construction of a stadium of 4,000 seats planned within the framework of an expansion plan for 'Green-Firminy' initiated by the modern architect Andr  Sive. Actually, no doubt is allowed. Baghdad's stadium commission entails a particular importance within Le Corbusier's work. It presents itself as an opportunity to avert and settle, at the same time, the unfortunate incident of the 100,000 seat stadium of 1937 and to reinitiate a theoretical work about the relationship between city and sport which should culminate in the experimental operation of Green-Firminy.

FIRST TRIP OF LE CORBUSIER TO BAGHDAD, 8TH-13TH NOVEMBER, 1957

On 2 January, 1957, the authorities of Baghdad confirm his commission to Le Corbusier. That same day, when he is passing through La Chaux-de-Fonds and visits the stadium and the dump, the architect includes in his notebook his first thoughts about Baghdad's project: 'La Chaux-de-Fonds – deep wave swimming pool and able to be heated– for Baghdad, one surface of artificial ice for the summer = desert sport! I am waiting for an order for the swimming pool + stadium plans – La Chaux-de-Fonds'¹³. Therefore, from his first notes, it seems that is La Chaux de Fonds stadium which constitutes the first and immediate reference for Baghdad's stadium project. Beyond these initial deliberations, Le Corbusier feels hardly involved in this new mission. He subordinates his involvement to two previous conditions: the attribution of a sum of money and the handing over of a plane ticket which would allow him to fly to the site to launch the project's first studies¹⁴. Reassured by the Iraqi authorities, he boards from Paris to Istanbul, where he changes planes to arrive in Baghdad on the 8th of November.

Saturday 9th of November, he is received by Akram Fahmy, director of Physical Education, who Le Corbusier, seduced, considers to be at the same level as a minister of Education, and who hands him the program items for Baghdad's stadium: a wave swimming pool, exercise grounds, a 50,000 seat stadium –some kind of program for an international olympic stadium–

and also a platform for the king. This highly ambitious program has reasons to satisfy Le Corbusier's appetite. He already wonders about the need to document himself in relation to the construction of Tokyo's stadium and also Beirut's, which he has heard talk of as well. At 16:00 hours he is on the selected site. The commission seems to be defined exactly: a competitive stadium with training grounds, a swimming pool, as well as a special diving pool, a gymnasium... Le Corbusier is already interested in the entrances which need to be planned in both directions so that the king can approach the sportsmen and sportswomen to congratulate them. He outlines the irrigation matters needed to plant trees and grow a lawn within the premises. Vegetation draws his attention; palm trees, Thujas, cyresses, eucalyptus, oleanders and nabuks, orange trees and palm groves. He interviews someone called Platounoff, architect and interpreter who speaks French and is the assistant head of the technical Development Board (head of the general building management's fourth section). Le Corbusier outlines a plan with three football fields, lined up among themselves.

What seems to interest him most leads, however, to the installation conditions of the premises within the site. From this careful observation, he concludes as first evidence that the urban planning which has been showed to him, admirable in colour, does not seem to be in accordance with reality in regard to measurements or the stadium project is not on the corresponding site. But, apart from this detail, it can be interesting to note with what attention Le Corbusier tries to define the place's spirit and spirituality, both with regard to the site as well as with the social and cultural practices. In this sense, he is in accordance with his work *Le po me de l'angle droit*^{*}, published in 1955, which considers the spirit of the place and the surroundings, the real elements of the architectural and urban project, as 'having got rid of obstacles better than before, the human kind's house, lover of its form, settles among nature; entirely in itself, functioning on the grounds, open to all four horizons, it lends its roof to the frequentation of clouds or the blue or the stars'¹⁵. In his notebook, Le Corbusier notes information on the landscape and living conditions of native populations. Baghdad's discovery seems to renovate his already ancient passion, and on many occasions claimed, for the Mediterranean world. Similar to the way he could lived it in Algeria in the 1930's, during his many trips made in order to try to obtain Algiers' or Nemours' urban planning. It is the harmony many times felt between landscape and colours which catches him again. The painter within him reacts to the harmonic colours of the Mediterranean: 'green of cinnabar – lemon green cadmium –a horizon strictly clean and

unified– violet –mauve– intense orange –solar axis– violet mauve–violet. Baghdad 17 1/4 returning from the palm grove.' Even if Le Corbusier knows that the oil riches –'the black gold fever started in 1952'– marks a fundamental disorder in Iraq and Baghdad's future, his spirit has from now on turned towards what is perennial and bases the ancient identity of a 'nomadic' people 'that come from the desert, grow chicken, produce milk and devote themselves to the manufacture of prefabricated'. Therefore everything leads one to think that the first thoughts of Le Corbusier in relation to Baghdad's stadium project examine the project conditions of integration within its landscape and cultural and identity environment. The demanded modernity will be, paradoxically, that of a relation to the place, its cultural history and timelessness. Baghdad's project acts thus perfectly as a bond with that bigger one that is Chandigarh, which wants to demonstrate itself as the possible and advisable link between modernity and tradition. This demand for Baghdad's stadium project undoubtedly explains his focused attention to common architecture. He designs a traditional bridge over the Tigris, without giving any reference. Above all, he goes to Baghdad's museum of Islamic antiquities, where he applies himself to take different measurements, in order to subject them to the Golden Rectangle and divine proportions theories drawn up by Prince Ghika at the beginning of the 1930's¹⁶, which he reorganized in his *Modular* theory, devised during the Second World War. The end of his stay in Baghdad finished with a lecture by Le Corbusier in front of the Engineers' Circle, where he seems to talk about the contemporary city, its organization, its traffic and the parking systems that need to be taken into account, as well as pedestrian movements.

BAGHDAD'S PROJECT: A PLAY OF REFERENCES

Back in Paris, on 13 November, 1957, two additional missions await Le Corbusier in relation to Baghdad's project:

The preparation of a more detailed program including the information provided by Baghdad's authorities, which seems to be more indicative than truly descriptive.

The preparation of a more detailed documentation in relation to the construction of stadiums around the world, in order to study the way technical solutions have been applied. From that point of view, Le Corbusier will not forget the enthusiasm showed by the Iraqi engineers in relation to Beirut's stadium while under construction.

To develop this project, in the first place he needs to make up a team within his firm. There is not much information on this

matter. The list of the project collaborators is deduced from letters and post gathered in the archives. The initial team make up evolves around Iannis Xenakis' personality, engineer and contemporary musician, who started to work for Le Corbusier in 1948, where he accumulated important collaborations: the *unit  d'habitation* of Marseilles, La Tourette monastery, and also Chandigarh. Since 1953, Xenakis had expressed the desire to take part in the whole process of elaboration of a project¹⁷. Xenakis is therefore a valuable collaborator, already endowed with a high competence, well seasoned in Le Corbusier's methodology and work exigencies. When he was called to integrate Baghdad's stadium project team, he had been working over a year in the conception of the Philips pavilion for the Brussels universal exhibition of 1958. For Baghdad's project, Iannis Xenakis is associated with Andr  Maisonnier, Augusto Tobito, who started to work for Le Corbusier's firm in 1953, and with Tav s, from the moment he enters 35, S vres Street, in 1958. The following year, Le Corbusier will take on J. Kronic, Yugoslavian architect who would control the on site works¹⁸. Finally, the team of architects devoted to Baghdad's stadium will be formed, from the beginning of the 1960's, by Oubrerie, Rebutato, Gardien and Jullian. Therefore, it can be seen that Baghdad's sports complex has mobilized the best of two generations of students from Le Corbusier's, and not just a few.

The work around Baghdad's stadium justifies an important accumulation of information about stadiums which are already built; a documentation whose benefit is nowadays difficult to measure. Let's bet, however, that it has been of use for the team while deliberating on the search for technical solutions that should be promoted within Baghdad's functional stadium organization. On 19 November, 1957, Le Corbusier addressed his native city's mayor (in La Chaux-de-Fonds) in order to ask him for the plan and sections of the stadium he had visited previously to his trip to Baghdad¹⁹. In May 1958, Le Corbusier showed a particular interest for the *Parc des Prince* Stadium routes, near which he lives²⁰. The following 20th of June, a prominent list of sports buildings is written in order to make a search of documentation related to them: the stadiums of Helsinki, Berlin, Rio de Janeiro, Vienna, Rome, Tokyo, and Bogot ; the gymnasiums of Stockholm, Tokyo, Montgomery and Dortmund; and finally Helsinki's swimming pool²¹. Le Corbusier is also interested in the stands of Milan's San Siro stadium, as well as those of the Orange theatre²².

Over and above this play of references, what kind of analysis can be made about the program definition for Baghdad's stadium? Taking into account Le Corbusier's aware-

ness in relation to the weakness of the stadium's program definition by the Iraqi authorities, he has sensed the need to further work on this issue since his arrival from Iraq. It seems to be the first work done in his firm from November 1957. Undoubtedly, the documentation demanded by the office in 35, Sèvres Street, on the plans and projects of big stadiums around the world, goes also to ensure the conditions for the deliberation that needs to be carried out in relation to the program. The work does not seem to make fast progresses. On 17 December, 1957, in a letter sent to Le Corbusier, Iannis Xenakis, who talks about the progresses made on the construction of the Philips building, he also justifies the difficulties he is encountering for the development of the deliberation on Baghdad:

*We do not have a precise program for Baghdad. Desires are general. It is necessary thus to ask for, for example:
number and type of playing grounds.
number of changing rooms.
number of toilets, showers and bathrooms.
warehouses and equipment stores.
platform for the king and his retinue.
numbers.*

Of course, we can create a program and propose it to them. But I think it is best to clean the ground already in order to avoid useless reorganizations²³.

In order to achieve a higher effectiveness, the work is shared out among the firm's available trainees. Xenakis and Tobito concentrate on the stadium project, while Tavès is assigned the gymnasium studies. The program seems to become precise, if we consider the development of the outlines. The office of studies Présenté seems to be responsible to communicate to the Iraqi authorities the outlines and axonometric drawings of the overall stadium at the end of May 1958. How is the project broken down, subject to the scrutiny of the Development Board authorities of the Ministry of Development?

The conception of Baghdad's stadium project seems to follow the methodology typical of Le Corbusier's firm; that is, a deliberation work on the program done according to the carrying out of outlines and plans of the actual stadium. This is something which is completely different to the classical work carried out for a project in an architectural firm, where the definition of the program comes first on the list in relation to the architectural definition of the project. This is what undoubtedly explains the firm's difficulties to fulfil, at the start, the

Development Board's demands. But the latter, conscious of the originality of Le Corbusier's process, seems in fact to have endowed herself with an indulgent patience which would resist any test, so as not to disturb any form of creation original to 35, Sèvres Street.

The second originality has to do with the nature of the way Le Corbusier conceives the core of Baghdad's stadium project. Without any doubt, in May 1958 he is still deeply marked by the interpretation he made, almost 20 years before, in January 1937, for his construction project of a big 100,000 seat stadium in Paris. The notion of a stadium is a complex one that reaches further away than that of just an evocation of a sport show. This complex notion which Le Corbusier translates in his project as *stadium* seems to take it back exactly to a notion of thickness, of social, cultural and political density, which undoubtedly allows the architect to bridge the gap between sport activities and urban planning. Also, Baghdad's stadium project seems to be grasped less as the construction of a stadium than an urban space provided of its own qualities, which reach further than just sport rules. This is the reason why the project description deals in the first place with conceptual urban categories, with conceptual categories of his project for the *Ville Radieuse* or that of the functional city. The notion of functionality comes back here with a predominant role as an image of the future destiny of the Corbusean city, which falls within the four functions of urban planning defined at the Fifth Congress CIAM (International Congress for Modern Architecture) of 1937 'Housing and Spare time', that is, to dwell, to enjoy, to work, to transport²⁴.

Baghdad's stadium program, formalized in a note dated the 31st of May 1958, finds itself divided into five different groups of functions:

- Group 1: A stadium for 50,000 spectators
- Group 2: A gymnasium for 3,500 spectators and an open air amphitheatre for basketball, tennis, volleyball, etc., for 3,000 spectators
- Group 3: Swimming
A swimming pool with 5,000 spectators and nautical entertainment (rivers, lakes and wave swimming pool)
- Group 4: Movement
Hydraulics of crowds
Pedestrians
Buses or cars and bicycles
- Group 5: Gardening. Parks and gardens²⁵

The detailed study of that document shows Le Corbusier's worry to make of the stadium something different than a simple

sport facility of Olympic magnitude. The stadium's composition includes an important opening which breaks, to the south, the circularity of its stands' device. Le Corbusier's proposal consists then to reserve some space in order to 'authorise the presence of a special building intended for electronic games, a recent creation of Le Corbusier (Brussels exhibition in 1958). At night time, those electronic games can be addressed to the 50,000 spectators via electronic resources as colour, sound, image, rhythm, etc.'

This way, Le Corbusier proposes, as he does for all his ephemeral buildings²⁶, to recycle for Baghdad the building he had built for the Brussels international exhibition, in April 1958, helped by Iannis Xenakis and commissioned by the Philips Society. The pavilion, in light concrete and designed taking into account the restrictions of propagation and the acoustics for music, took the form of a paraboloid hyperbolic which visitors could enter. Inside the pavilion, lacking any openings, they could attend a show of light and sound created by Le Corbusier and baptized *The Electronic Poem*, based on a composition by the musician Edgard Varèse. 'Protected within an architecture, volume specifically dependant of the space, the collection of sounds, light and images, rhythm and colour, *the electronic poem* aims to show, within an distressing commotion, our civilization devoted to the conquest of modern times²⁷'.

By making explicit reference to the electronic pavilion Le Corbusier states that Baghdad's stadium is also a spectacular facility, as well as a facility for spectacle, and will stay that way according to the works carried out in 1937 for Paris' 100,000 seat stadium.

The gymnasium, planned for 3,500 spectators, undoubtedly answers the same programmatic demands as the stadium itself. It is, effectively, a closed and covered building which can be opened in its north façade via a tilting door 'as those in an aviation hangar', and thus allowed to relate the interior space with the external lawns. Similar considerations can be issued in relation to the program of the various swimming pools. It is in this sense that Le Corbusier turns his idea of a wave swimming pool into real form, which he had already outlined for Akram Fahmy during his stay in Baghdad:

A wave swimming pool is also planned with a springboard and rough water or quick currents. The installation of wave pools achieves great success in some places, particularly in Switzerland. Swimming is such a pleasant sport that the possibility to allow further occasions to practice it, apart from the Olympic training, will become very valuable to Baghdad.

Finally, group 3 includes a restaurant facing the garden, reserved for those who have paid an entrance fee. But there is a second restau-

rant, adjacent to the first one, which opens onto the public plain for non-payers²⁸.

In regard to movement (what Le Corbusier names 'Hydraulics of crowds') the project seeks to really articulate the different modes of movement among themselves, those of the staff, sportsmen/women teams, spectators, but also simple walkers or onlookers:

Walkers, onlookers, those who come to the park to enjoy the garden shades that are planned, but who do not pay entrance fee because they do not enter groups 1, 2 or 3. Those onlookers and walkers have access to the stadium park any time, day or night. Consequently, we have the right to talk here about the hydraulics of crowds.

Clearly, the premises (known, from now on, in the documents of Le Corbusier's firm as 'Le Corbusier's Olympic Stadium for Baghdad') are more than a sport facility. It has a vocation to really represent a leisure and recreation facility for Baghdad's metropolitan area. Le Corbusier is formal. These thoughts, noted in his general report, do not belong to a preliminary study but actually the project itself. Confident, he now expects the Development Board's opinion in regard to specific searches, done along several months from the office at Sèvres Street, which has been in touch with its engineers.

Apparently, and unless I find any other document which has been out of my reach so far, it feels right to think that the Iraqi assessment of proposals was made based on these documents. The stadium project was completely accepted by the Iraqi Ministry of Development via a radio telegram dated the 13 July, 1958. The following 20th of October, Le Corbusier promises to involve the firm in the drawing of Baghdad's Stadium and Sports Centre's definitive plans²⁹.

THE WORK OF LE CORBUSIER'S FIRM, NOVEMBER 1958 – AUGUST 1965

Iraqi political events do not seem to immediately affect Baghdad's stadium project. Till this moment, nothing has been found in Le Corbusier's archives about the matter. However, at the time of the Suez crisis, in 1956, Baghdad broke its diplomatic relations with France. Fearing internal disturbances from the opposition in favour of the Pan-Arabism of President Nasser, the head of the government, Nouri Saïd, decreed martial law in December 1956, which was maintained till his departure in June 1957. On the 14th of July, 1958, at the time of the monarchy's fall (victim of the *Comité des officiers libres*' revolution-

tion and the Republic's proclamation) Le Corbusier had just obtained an approval in principle the day before from the Ministry of Development authorities.

Since winter, the work is taken up again from a new configuration. The implementation of Baghdad's stadium is guaranteed by Présenté's Studies Office. Le Corbusier entrusts a double mission to the architect J. Kronic: to take part in the stadium implementation plans within Présenté Studies' Office and then move to Iraq to take on the site works surveillance. But, significantly, Le Corbusier specifies that his work contract will be established by the Iraqi government and not by Le Corbusier's firm³⁰. What should we make of the nature of this stipulation? He undoubtedly translates it as a concern in relation to the search for effectiveness in the management of the works. This demand of effectiveness could be understood due to importance of the matters lead in Sèvres Street firm: too many follow ups of site works would weaken other ongoing projects, but this explanation wouldn't really be enough. By dissociating the conception functions from the implementation works, Le Corbusier grants himself the means to actively pursue his firm's laboratory work, that work of *patient research* he personally talks about and that he confers to Sèvres Street the mission to explore new clues within the field of architectural conception. All responsibility taken in relation to the implementation and follow up of site works risks to put in danger the actual way Le Corbusier thinks, builds and defines his missions of acclaimed architect, by the glory and gold of the Republic.

Therefore, the firm stays concentrated on the conception work. That means that the process of production will remain original at length. In a standard process of an architectural project, the execution phase remains strictly second place with regard to the conception phase. But Le Corbusier's firm finds the means to retain control over the conception process within the execution phase. Iannis Xenakis assumes the continuity of this deliberation over the conception while already on the execution phase. It is he who supervises the stadium's coloured sketches which reflect the changes or constructive precisions. Xenakis' outstanding contributions come from the deliberations made in relation to the stadium's roof. Due to the lessons learned from the Philips pavilion with regard to stress systems applied to concrete, Xenakis defines a projecting roof, apparently, initially planned in concrete (33 projections are designed in this manner). Apart from being in keeping with the spirit of the Philips pavilion, this project is, above all, in line with the search of lightness and also the use of the curve which Le Corbusier strongly vindicates after *Le poème de l'angle droit*.

This is the reason why there exists a clear and strong interaction, within the conceptional work, between Le Corbusier's research in relation to Green-Firminy stadium and facilities and the deliberations around Baghdad's project. There seems to be a strong permeability between those two projects. In the notebook he dedicates to Green-Firminy construction, Le Corbusier designs several sketches for Baghdad, study sketches on ramps, entrances and exits³¹.

Le Corbusier makes a second trip to Baghdad, from the 3rd to the 6th of April 1959. This second trip is actually shorter than the first one. Reasonably, Le Corbusier talks about this trip as a *flash trip*. Due to the work achieved in his firm and in Présenté's office, Le Corbusier goes back to Baghdad to obtain the validation of all the completed studies. With more than 120 execution plans finished between the two parties, Le Corbusier seeks, from the Development Board, all reassurances in relation to the continuity of the project and its implementation. *That* he seems to have easily achieved. Equally, he professes to have attained to handle 'the matter of a possible plot for the stadium, settling this thorny matter within a forty-eight hours period and achieving the acceptance of my point of view'³².

Most of the year 1959 and also 1960 seem to have been devoted to technical matters, especially to plumbing, water supply and electricity management for the whole complex. Le Corbusier's hopes with regard to the location for the stadium premises seem to have been stated too early. While the definitive plans for the stadium and surrounding buildings are indeed finished, the architect bitterly complains of being confronted to the 'fourth change of location'³³ the 1st of March 1961. The architect dreams about the possibility to replace the aluminium of Baghdad's gymnasium's roof with a translucent and undulating material³⁴. Baghdad's gymnasium project seems to be quite similar to that of Green-Firminy's Youth and Cultural Centre, as in both cases what is pursued is to promote the principles of an architecture erected by using tightened cables. In the French case, the tightened cables have been used for the roof. A total of 132 cables tightened among the walls of the building make up the roof, which support closing slabs directly resting on them. In Baghdad's gymnasium project, Le Corbusier tries to promote a similar system, he wants to support closing sheets of aluminium on a structure of steel tightened cables³⁵. This system, rejected by the technical services of the French Aluminium Society, will need to suffer constant readjustments. We cannot yet assure that these readjustments were the cause of the complete resignation from the project. Le Corbusier's firm continues to work on Baghdad's stadium over the period

of 1961-1962. However, at the beginning of 1963, the documents kept bear witness to major current changes, which, at least, testify a deep alteration of the original project and the basic Corbusean ideas. These changes seem to come from two sources:

on one side, the Iraqi Ministry of Development opposition, which, represented by Platounoff, seems to harshly check the project. on the other, due to what Le Corbusier considers work or interpretation mistakes of Présenté's office with regard to the actual designs of the architect's firm.

In any case, the checking of the project during the beginning of 1963 seems to be significant, as it addresses the following items:

First of all, the abandonment of the wave swimming pool, which was present in every initial deliberation of Le Corbusier at the time of his first trip to Baghdad³⁶.

Secondly, the abandonment of the stadium's west cover, the famous 'cap'.

Then, the abandonment of the gymnasium's flexible and partially translucent roofing system. This, due to three reasons: the impossibility to obtain an acceptable thermal isolation, which would have also required a very expensive air conditioning system in initial cost as well as maintenance; the management complexity raised by the cables and their fixing to a bad foundation which would have caused significant surpasses of the assigned credits; the cables adjustment; the roof's covering maintenance and its joints under a climate which would give rise to delicate problems running the risk of leading to a quick deterioration of the building.

Finally, the abandonment of the idea for the gymnasium's door due to the impossibility to work the air-conditioning while it remained open³⁷.

If we also add the impossibility to reset up the Philips pavilion (from Brussels international exhibition) on the site chosen for the future stadium, we cannot miss imagining what a disappointment Le Corbusier felt when handling such a project. In any case, when the Iraqi government sends a dossier to enter the competition for the implementation of Baghdad's Civic Centre to 35, Sèvres Street, in November 1964, which should include 12 important public buildings, Le Corbusier does not seem interested in applying.

At the end of August 1965, Le Corbusier dies of hydrocution while swimming in Cap-Martin. At that time, the stadium still remained a project which had not yet known real implementation.

CONCLUSION: A FORGOTTEN PROJECT FROM LE CORBUSIER. THE FACTS OF ITS REASSESSMENT

Clearly, Le Corbusier's project for Baghdad is paradoxical. In the first place, it is an amended project, one in which actual implementation did not fulfil the project expectations. But here we are not necessarily talking about something fundamentally original. Due to their quality requirements, there are a lot of Le Corbusier's projects that have been implemented without incorporating all of his author's plastic and architectural recommendations. The most significant paradox with regard to Baghdad's stadium is that it was the first project which remained as one before Le Corbusier's death and was implemented *post-mortem*. It cannot possibly be compared to the majority of Le Corbusier's projects, built or not, while their author was still alive. In regard to those finished after his death by André Wogenscky, the old head of Le Corbusier's firm, apparently, Le Corbusier had the opportunity to see part of their implementation works while he was still alive. From this point of view, the only example which reminds us of Baghdad's stadium is that of Green-Firminy's church.

After Le Corbusier's death, this project's dossier does not fall into oblivion. Again, it is a question of finding an able person who could control the sport complex implementation once the work can really start to be seen on the site. Maurice Besset, as testamentary executor, addresses José Lluís Sert first and foremost, the 14 October, 1965, with André Wogenscky's approval. Sert rejects the proposal but suggests, in order of his preferences, Le Corbusier's pupils Jerzy Soltan, Pierre-André Emery and Dolf Schnebl³⁸ for the project. It seems that only Pierre-André Emery accepted. But, even though we would need to conduct a deeper search in relation to this matter, it seems almost granted that it was Présenté's office which assumed the biggest workload of this complex dossier management in the end.

Apparently, and not wanting to question Pierre André Emery's competence here (as we cannot yet assess the reality of his implemented work), we cannot fail to observe the singularity of the Baghdad stadium's destiny, which still differs a little bit more from the inheritance logic and Le Corbusier's unfinished heritage management. Baghdad's stadium does not enter into the finished works briefcase implemented by the old head of the firm, André Wogenscky. Undoubtedly, the distance explains the fact that this last one did not seem to have expressed his desire to finish the execution of this project. Besides, Baghdad's stadium will not find a Pierre Jeanneret, as it was the case with Chandigarh, the brave cousin who moved

on site to finish the works of his former associate, even till his own death.

Finished in 1973, Baghdad's sport complex does not appear in the last volume of Le Corbusier's complete works –entitled *Les dernières œuvres*–, which only includes the period between 1965 and 1969³⁹. It does not appear either in a summary volume entitled *Œuvres complètes 1910-1965*⁴⁰. However, Green-Firminy's church project, which was not yet built at the time of Le Corbusier's death, appears in many work inventories of the master, in the form of plans, sections and models. This means that the argument which should explain the absence of Baghdad's project from these titles and which would entail establishing a link between the belated date of the stadium implementation and the publication date of the last volume of his complete works, does not have reason for being so.

The posthumous dimension of the stadium project and the particular conditions under which it was finished confer to it a particular character, that of not being possible to be completely claimed as one of the master's works. In this sense, Baghdad's project seems to be a forgotten project, undoubtedly a victim of an amnesiac logic from Le Corbusier's pupils and the architect's admirers side. Also, this project seems to be the greatest absence within the architectural history of modernity after the Second World War.

Nevertheless, without any doubt, Le Corbusier's Baghdad project remains one of particular significance, in the sense that it belongs to a period excessively prolix of the Corbusean architectural creation... Taking this into account, this project is not a work which gain sense *ex-nihilo*, but which sense and basic ideas fall within a long deliberation about sport, the city and its leisure facilities. It is a transition and formalization work of an always changing and complex inspiration, which comes from the relationship among cultural spheres more and more distant and unrelated. Nowadays, it seems interesting to proceed to this project reassessment, in relation to the Corbusean works (what we have sketched here) as well as in relation to the modernity showed in Baghdad in the 1960's, and also within the history of modern architectural trends.

Notes

- 1 FLC P4 (1) 4. Letter from Nadim Pachachi, minister of Development, to Le Corbusier, dated the 28 July, 1956, p. 1.
- 2 Philippe Rondot, *L'Irak*, Paris, PUF, 1979, pp. 33 et 34.
- 3 Jaume Freixa, *Josep Ll. Sert*, Zurich, Artemis, 1980, pp. 88-91.
- 4 Winfried Nerdinger, *Walter Gropius*, Berlin, 1985, p. 288.
- 5 *Le Corbusier Carnets*, 3, 1954-1957, Paris, New York, Herscher, 1981, n° 74.
- 6 Marc Bédarida, « Rue de Sèvres, 35. L'envers du décor », in *Le*

- Corbusier une encyclopédie*, Paris, Centre Georges Pompidou, 1987, p. 358.
- 7 FLC P4 (1) 4. Letter from José Luis Sert to Le Corbusier, dated the 25 October, 1956.
 - 8 This doctrine, shaped at the beginning of the century by major Hébert, is based on the practice of diversified gymnastic exercises, which need no apparatus.
 - 9 Le Corbusier, *Des Canons, des munitions? Merci! Des logis...S.V.P.*, Boulogne, Editions de l'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui, 1938, pp. 83 and following.
 - 10 Le Corbusier, *Des Canons, des munitions? Merci! Des logis...S.V.P.*, cit. p. 98.
 - 11 Rémi Baudouï, « L'attitude de Le Corbusier pendant la guerre », in *Le Corbusier, une encyclopédie*, cit. pp. 455-459.
 - 12 Institut Français d'Architecture, archives Auguste Perret, 535 AP 435. Dossier of preliminary studies for the national olympic park, 1943-1947.
 - 13 *Le Corbusier Carnets*, 3, 1954-1957, cit., n° 1051.
 - 14 FLC P 4 (1) 57. Letter from Ducret to Jeanne Heilbuth, dated the 28 October, 1957.
 - 15 Le Corbusier, *Le poème de l'angle droit*, Paris, Teriade, 1955, pp. 58 and following.
 - 16 Matila Ghyka, *L'esthétique des proportions dans la nature et dans les arts*, Paris, Gallimard, 1927; *Le Nombre d'Or; Rites et rythmes pythagoriciens dans le développement de la civilisation occidentale*, Paris, Gallimard, 1931.
 - 17 A. J. Droschke, « Après Le Corbusier » in *Xenakis*, LARC, Paris, Duponchelle, 1980, p. 64.
 - 18 FLC E (2) 06. Letter from Le Corbusier to J. Kronic, dated the 5 June, 1958.
 - 19 FLC P (4) 1. Letter from Le Corbusier to Schelling, dated the 19 November, 1957.
 - 20 *Le Corbusier Carnets*, 4, 1957-1964, Paris, New-York, Herscher, 1982, n°115.
 - 21 FLC P (4) 1. Plans of stadiums which should be claimed, 20 June, 1958.
 - 22 *Le Corbusier Carnets*, 4, 1957-1964, cit., nn. 126 et 127.
 - 23 FLC P (4) 1. Letter from Iannis Xenakis to Le Corbusier, dated the 17 December, 1957.
 - 24 Le Corbusier, *Des Canons, des munitions? Merci! Des logis... S.V.P.*, cit., p. 83.
 - 25 FLC P (4) 8. Provisional presentation of the project for Baghdad's Olympic stadium dated the 31 May, 1958, p. 1.
 - 26 Operation he had already tried to make for the *Esprit Nouveau pavilion* in 1925 and the *Temps Nouveaux pavilion* in 1937.
 - 27 Le Corbusier, *Le poème électronique*, Paris, Minuit, 1958, pp. 34-35.
 - 28 FLC P (4) 8. Provisional presentation of the project for Baghdad's Olympic stadium, cit., p. 4.
 - 29 FLC P (4) 8. Letter from Le Corbusier to the minister of Development, dated the 20 October, 1958.
 - 30 FLC E (2) 6. Letter from Le Corbusier to J. Kronic, dated the 21 November, 1958.
 - 31 *Le Corbusier Carnets*, 4, 1957-1964, cit., nn. 400 and 401.
 - 32 FLC P (4) 8, Letter from Le Corbusier to Jean-Pierre de Montmollin, dated the 7 Septembre, 1959.
 - 33 FLC P (4) 8. Letter from Le Corbusier to I.G. Platounoff, dated the 1 March, 1961.
 - 34 *Le Corbusier Carnets*, 4, 1957-1964, cit., n. 792.
 - 35 FLC P (4) 8. Letter from Le Corbusier to F. Huguet, dated the 21s October, 1961.
 - 36 FLC P (4) 1. Note from Le Corbusier, entitled 'Platounoff decides (Jullian + L.C.)', dated the 21 January, 1963.

- 37 FLC P (4) 1. Note in relation to the justification of the modifications added to the initial project, dated the 30 January, 1963.
 38 FLC P (4) 8. 14 October 1965
 39 Le Corbusier, vol. 8, Zurich, Artémis, 1970, p. 208.

U.S. EMBASSY IN BAGHDAD: INGREDIENTS OF A COLD DISH

Josep M. Rovira

Fruit salad is a common dessert in many restaurant meals. It is eaten cold because of its refreshing properties and varied tastes. Before being served the fruit has to be prepared by selecting, peeling carefully, and cutting in small, similar-sized pieces. A base of juice and some time soaking provides the fusion of its bouquets. The diner can check how each spoonful offers a different taste, which never seems to coincide with the name of what is been eaten. He never knows exactly what he has eaten. A bit of this, a tiny part of that... no single taste is dominant. John F. Dulles, Secretary of the State Department (SD) with Eisenhower, and ultimately responsible for the assignment made to José Luis Sert, called the American embassies "the good fruits of our freedom".

Something similar occurs when one tries to analyze the project that Sert, Jackson and Gourley designed in 1955 for the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad. It is extremely complex to identify the ingredients necessary to catch a glimpse of the singular components which take part in its form. The analyst can easily arrive at some fragmented discourses which architecture can hardly join together. All of them are in the building. But it is impossible to know which proportion each has in the final result. To display all the fruits of the fruit salad makes it possible to get to the knowledge of an architecture, which, in the end, is only thinkable as the juice in the bottom of the cup, and the diner still does not know exactly what it is.

Iraq, a stormy background

In 1920, the British took control of what we call today Iraq. One year later, they installed a monarchy and defined the territorial borders in correspondence with the natural ones. They redacted a constitution and created a parliament. They were interested in petrol and they wanted to construct a railway to unite Europe and the Persian Gulf to trade with India without crossing Africa.

Between 1932 and 1958 Iraq went from independence to the constitution of a Republic. In 1932, the British term of office

went apparently to its end. Iraq was no longer a colony. However, the monarchy was not fully accepted by various from the several groups of power operating in the country: Baath, Kurds, Shiites, and Sunnis. Several revolts organized by nationalists and leftists were repressed, and in 1945 the country entered the United Nations. Two years later, the agreement between the UK and the *Iraq Petrol Company* is renewed. The IPC, contrary to the interests of the USA and the precursors of companies such as Shell, Total, BP and Exxon, would keep the discovery of petrol in Iraq secret, and would decrease production in order to keep the price high. Wasps in their nest start to wake.

Shortly later, King Faisal took a pro-USA position. In 1954, Nouri Al Said forbade political parties. Powerful Sunnis from the northeast of the country, who were owners of lands and also nationalists, and southern Shiites, employees of the Sunnis and pro-communists, who saw how Michel 'Aflaq's ideology (he was the founder of the Baath party, democrat and defender of human rights), a secular form of Arab nationalism, and that of Akram Al-Hawrani, pro-Arab and socialist, were able to organize the Ba'at party in 1945, which took the name of the Ba'at Socialist Party in 1947. In the same year, a document called "The United States Petroleum Policy" says, "The USA must try to eliminate or modify existing barriers to the expansion of American petrol operations and promote the entrance of new American brands in every step of foreign petrol operations". Nationalism and socialism do not join easily with imperialism and capitalism, so the wasps' nest now has many chances to explode.

In February 1955, Iraq entered the USA-sponsored Baghdad Agreement, and this inflamed those who were already against the king. It was a military alliance between Iraq and Turkey; England, Pakistan and Iran also joined in which caused the discontent among different factions in the country, nationalists and socialists, to increase. The assignment of the Iraqi Embassy dates from this time. July 14th, 1958 a coup d'état took place, organized by nationalist left wing officials, communists, Shiites and Kurds. In the Cold War times this represented a clear pro-soviet turn, although the pro-communists were soon repressed; there was no need to explain who encouraged these actions. In spite of that, and as a sign of a diverse Iraqi reality, the country established diplomatic relationships with communist nations.

A republic was then installed under general Kassem's rule, who, at the same time, was minister of the Army. This institution took the power in a fragilely balanced space. The Unified