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Spain

Carlos Sambricio

On Urbanism in the Early Years of Francoism

The first reflections on architecture following the Spanish Civil War arose in the late 1970s, beginning with the exhibition Arquitecturas para después de una Guerra [Architecture for after a war]. Since then, an extensive bibliography assesses that which is known as the “art of the state” and aims to understand the architecture favored by the early Franco regime between 1939 and 1949. These studies have confirmed that the Nuevo Estado [New state], which is known as the “Fascist alternative,” was capable of generating an ideological response and presenting it as an alternative to the culture of the Republic. The regime, however, a bloody coup devoid of ideology, sought only to justify and theorize a posteriori. This amounted to an offering of an alternative mask for that which had been the culture of the Republic. Thus, one fact that is unanimously accepted by political scientists was not taken into account: Francoism consisted of numerous groups (for example, conservatives, monarchists, Fascists, Catholics) that competed with one another and were characterized by strong internal differences. Instead of a coherent image of architecture and urbanism as a reflection of state policy, contradictions were apparent. These contradictions include the government’s acceptance of a coordinated policy among agencies (for example, planning, colonization, reconstruction) working independently of those responsible for constructing social housing.

A Contradictory Political and Professional Landscape

The reflection on architecture and urbanism during the first years of Francoism should not focus on architects’ monographs, analyses presented by certain organizations, or the fortune of emblematic projects. Rather, this reflection should instead try to understand this reality by identifying contradictions. This is the only
means to understanding whether or not there was a break between architectural approaches prior to the war and those proposed after the war. It is true that many professionals decided, since the beginning of the uprising, to support Franco's project. However, it should be forgotten that these same actors had developed, up to the week prior to the battle, a modern approach to architecture and urbanism that was later repudiated. Regardless of the contemporary debates about minimal housing, standardization, prefabrication, and land management, they were required, within a short period of time, to end the dispute by improvising a formal alternative option.

Monarchists, such as Cesar Cort (professor of urbanism at the School of Madrid), criticized the liberal city model. They understood this model as representing a city in which promoters could act independently of guidelines and regulations implemented in specific areas or zones by use or amount. Among Catholic groups (for example, Opus Dei, the Propagandists), some proposed to maintain rationalist architecture as the formal image. Thus, Francoism would be presented to the world not as a dictatorial regime, but rather as a peaceful transition between two regimes. The latter required a radical change in regard to city management and the policies of social housing. Some, such as Francisco de Asís Cabrero, received their titles immediately after the war. Cabrero, an author, was living near the Trade Unions Building on the Paseo del Prado. After visiting Italy and seeing Libera's work, Cabrero proposed to adopt the metaphysical option at the same time as others, such as Luis Moya (teacher at the School of Madrid). He opted for a redefinition of classicism ranging from Diocletian’s Palace in Spalato (now Split, Croatia) to the projects conceived in the late eighteenth century by Boullee. Victor d’Ors, who had been called the architect aesthete of the Falange by Primo de Rivera himself, was incapable of projecting a single significant work. Luis Gutiérrez Soto (undoubtedly the architect par excellence of the Spanish bourgeoisie) was able, with unspeakable eclecticism, to convert a building into a representation of Francoism by including “ritual shouts” (that is, laudatory phrases, such as “Franco, Franco, Franco” or “Long live Spain”) in the facade. Soto was able conceal a functional building behind a historicist facade, therefore aiming to successfully produce the “architecture of the empire.”

Can Francoist architecture and urbanism be set equal to the architecture and urbanism of the Falange? Obviously, this is not the case. Those who, during the 1950s, were vehemently Falangist and not working for the Ministry of Housing
Figure 1. Alberto Acha, Theoretical organization of a district of 100,000 habitants, 1946

had been rationalist architects before the war. Those appointed, in 1939, to higher positions in the field of urbanism had collaborated with the previous reform project in 1934: the suburbs and extension of Madrid commissioned by the socialist government. As a result, the architect who designed the Royal Nautical Club in San Sebastian, which is the only example of a Baroque rationalist building (commented on by Sigfried Giedion and later by Henry-Russell Hitchcock), abandoned his professional practice scarcely three years after finishing the work and dedicated himself completely to the politics of the Fascist party Falange Española.

The Falange was a bloody coup of a class that saw its privileges questioned by a Republic that was worried about the correct management of its capital. Disparate tendencies did not only exist within Francoism, but were also inherent to the Falange. It was absurd to speak of a single line of thought. As a result, since its inception, the dissent, confrontations, expulsions, and condemnations that were to be ostracized remained constant. If the first national leader of the Falange were to
be assassinated by a Republican group after the beginning of the war, the second national leader would be sentenced to death by Franco’s government a few months later. Before the war, several architects supported the Falange, including Alberto Acha, José Manuel Aizpurúa, José Luis de Arrese, Manuel Bringas, José Fonseca, Víctor d’Ors, José Subirana, Manuel Valdés Larrañaga and Luis Felipe Vivanco. However, by the end of the conflict, this was no longer of any professional relevance for them.

From the early moments of the Franco victory, the media confused its audiences by presenting proposals for fanciful realities that would soon be forgotten. People demanded amends for property damaged during the war. In an urgent manner, they called upon property owners to construct extensive residential neighborhoods. However, nothing was done. At the same time, exhibitions were presented that showed housing projects planned for the short-term future.

At this time, in 1939, the seemingly impossible plan to build housing for 6,000 people in Madrid (blocks with six floors of four flats each for affordable, economical rents) was announced. Furthermore, in a few months’ time, 14,000 licenses for construction, repairs, and improvements were to be granted in the capital alone. This would provide a time frame within which property owners could modify their homes without paying fees. Furthermore, in an attempt to satisfy officials, the victors were granted the right to occupy (that is, seize) homes from the conquered. The order described this form of occupation as a temporary state, depending on whether or not authorization was granted by the mayor.

Pedro Bidagor and the Debate on Post–Civil War Reconstruction

Between July 18, 1936, and the final months of 1939, the Franco government faced five main issues: (1) definition of criteria for reconstruction policies; (2) substitution of the previous social-democratic model of the city with the next urban model defined by Berlin or Rome; (3) proposal of housing policies to benefit the bourgeoisie in order to secure their support; (4) construction of new economical housing; and (5) enhancement of autarkic policies (that is, to enable internal colonization). If reconstruction was the top priority, the situation at the end of the Civil War in April 1939, just prior to the invasion of Poland, forced the development of autarkic policies, so that reconstruction was understood as an economic and not an architec-
n the reconstruction of an economy characterized by a destroyed industry was necessary. The result was an autarkic economy, which was created in the belief that the urban and the rural should each generate different types of prosperity: big cities were to produce ideology, and rural areas were to support the economy. This distinction was developed by Pedro Bidagor (1906–96), who had collaborated on a project developed by Secundino Zuazo and Hermann Jansen for the expansion of Madrid prior to the war. Bidagor understood the necessity of converting a rural agrarian economy into an agrarian industrial economy. He accepted, in consequence, the Taylorist assumptions defined years earlier. Bidagor considered the function of urban centers, aside from presenting a monumental image, to be the creation of ideological wealth. In this manner, two visions of the city were defined (that is, the urban option and the rural option), between which there was no overlap. When we discuss how the same technicians simultaneously applied grandiloquent options in the city and maintained the rationalist knowledge that characterized the years of the Republic, the contradiction becomes apparent. As a consequence, during a time in which it was necessary to place high priority on investment (that is, due to the lack of materials for construction), the regime opted to postpone social housing reconstruction policies. The later attempts to tackle the problem, circa 1949, forced mass migration from rural areas to the large population centers as a result of the failure of autarkic policies. This caused the number of people living in shantytowns or caves in Madrid in 1943 to make up more than half of the population.

In June 1939, just three months after the end of the Spanish Civil War, the First National Assembly of Architects was celebrated. Bidagor and his group laid the foundations for the “capital of the empire,” the image of the new city, the concept of an organic city, industrial zones, the relationship between the city and its environment, plans for urban expansion, and even a vague “Plan for National Reconstruction.” Bidagor not only faced immediate problems, but also a bizarre situation in which ideas were presented in many distinct sectors, each more absurd than the one before. The Bishop of Madrid, for example, proposed dividing the city along the existing parishes in the diocese. One prominent Falangist, the president of the Commission to Promote the Culture of the Falange, recommended “changing the appearance of Madrid” by “burning Madrid on all four sides while keeping firefighters in some of the most important buildings.” Similar to another intellectual from the same party, he demonstrated his dislike of the city, referring
to it as “Ground Madrid.” Madrid, one must remember, resisted until the final moments of the war; its fall meant its own demise. Following this line of “logic,” the Germanophile Minister of External Affairs, Ramón Serrano Suñer, proposed punishing Madrid for having been the bastion of the Republic by moving the capital to Seville. In a few months’ time, all types of extraneous ideas were formed regarding Madrid’s potential futures: some claimed that it would regain its position as a European capital, others highlighted the necessity of reconstructing its idiosyncrasies and not reconstructing homes without changing customs. It is interesting, when analyzing these ideas, to try to understand the birth of a new option and its genealogy.

During the years of the Spanish Civil War, a group of architects who clearly opposed the Republic managed to infiltrate the anarcho-syndicalist union CNT (Confederación Nacional del Trabajo) and organize a work team with the objective to lay the foundations for the future of Madrid. They did so without specifying that the city that they were working on was the same one that they understood to be the capital of Francoist Spain. The group, which was directed by the previously cited Pedro Bidagor, worked on the issue for at least two years. When they finalized the content, the Francoist government faced the problem of how to derail the social democratic city. Thus, they reverted to the work coordinated by Bidagor. He presented his ideas on the new urban reality at the previously mentioned First National Assembly of Architects. In this context, architects, engineers, and administrators presented their criteria of a new city. They theorized their opinions about Die neue Stadt [The New city], the text recently published by Gottfried Feder, and its diffusion through Luis Pérez Míguez, who had studied at the Technische Hochschule Berlin [Technical School of Berlin] under the direction of Hermann Jansen.

Only twenty days after the end of the war, the recently constituted Junta de Reconstrucción de Madrid [Assembly for the reconstruction of Madrid] was made responsible for the urbanization project of the capital and its suburbs. Bidagor took control of the proposal. After defining Madrid’s position as the “capital of the empire,” he proposed both an internal reform and intervention in what, before the war, had been a city where, according to certain criteria, there was “social peace.”

As a reflection of Albert Speer’s proposals for Berlin, a monumental avenue with a monumental complex was defined for Madrid instead of housing for the upper, middle, and working classes. Gaspar Blein, who collaborated with Bidagor during the war and was later an architect on the city council, theorized about the “idiosyn-
Figure 2. Plan for the extension of the Castellana and the surrounding area in Madrid, 1946
crazy" of Spanish cities. According to Blein, these should be organized primarily to fulfill a mission, subordinating their role to destiny that comes from God so as to constitute a single group, understood as a human being, as an organic whole. Blein was in favor of the radioconcentric growth of the nineteenth century. He noted that, since the role of Madrid was to be representative, the city should be involved in establishing a central political district. Later, others publicly discussed the ideas developed by Bidagor's CNT group.

During those years, Bidagor would play a key role, as he was capable of absorbing and diluting the calls of the Technical Services of the Falange and preventing the transformation of the institution into an armed branch of something aiming to be a Spanish Arbeitsfront. At that time, a plot was hatched among different agencies responsible for reconstruction in Spain to expand their influence within the Dirección General de Regiones Devastadas [General Direction of Devastated Regions, DGRD], Dirección General de Arquitectura [General Direction of Architecture, DGA] or the Instituto Nacional de Colonización [National Institute of Colonization, INC]. The confusion regarding housing policies began in 1938, when the National Union Project was constructed. The aim of the project was not only to participate in the reconstruction, but also to create “protected housing” that would meet hygienic, technical, and economic requirements. Furthermore, it aimed to focus on different types of benefits, those who could use and construct them as well as how to conduct the necessary land expropriation. In December 1939 the directors of the Instituto Nacional de la Vivienda [National Institute of Housing, INV] and the Obra Sindical del Hogar [Worker Union of the Home, OSH] clashed over three premises defined by Bidagor. As a result, the state decided to approve three premises: (1) the construction of social housing in a destroyed Spain could only have an industrial solution; (2) the necessity of moving laborers’ housing settlements to the urban periphery, thus removing them from land speculation; and (3) the approval of a National Plan within which the actions of government agencies would be scheduled. The INV and OSH, who were entirely excluded from this process, would act at the margin of the guidelines defined by Bidagor, despite very limited budget allocations. Those familiar with the housing policies of the first ten years of Francoism should be able to confirm that official statistics reveal a reduction in the number of houses constructed. The housing constructed during the immediate postwar period consisted mostly of housing for party officials or laborers who were members of the party.
In a Spain that had been destroyed by the war and which lacked industrial resources, the handling of autarkic policies was a central problem. Contrary to the "art of the state," which failed on account of the lack of guidelines and overlapping proposals, the reconstruction (that is, the reconstruction of the agrarian economy, decisive in the years of autarky) was defined and coordinated by Bidagor. During the war, in 1938, the proposed guidelines were debated as part of the greater dispute over reconstruction at a conference of architects in Burgos. During the same meeting, the participating architects went beyond a rhetorical conversation about imprecise subjects. For example, the claim that "constructing 'homes' in front of buildings defined the house as 'the center of spiritual expansion and the framework for educating the family'" was discussed in the context of a debate about housing. It became evident that it was necessary to define a reconstruction policy. Pedro Muguruza, an architect of some fame prior to the war, initially assumed this task. Muguruza had contemporized architecture with his modern style. It was removed from the academies, but completely oblivious to the concerns that had characterized the pioneers during the early 1930s.

Researchers studying the role of German ambassadors during the war have highlighted the political significance of the dissemination of German technical books among Spanish professionals. This occurred at a time when Germany began preparing an exhibition about the architecture of the Third Reich, which was inaugurated in 1941 by Albert Speer at the National Library of Madrid. The two texts primarily disseminated include the previously mentioned *Die neue Stadt* by Gottfried Feder (1939) and *Der Osten* [The East] by Julius Schulte-Frohlinde and Walter Kratz, which was edited by the Arbeitsfront and published in 1938. German politicians were aware of the importance that internal colonialism could have for the government of Franco. Not only did the texts propose a reflection about popular architecture in East Prussia, they also proposed a response to the National Socialist ambition to transfer the "Aryan" population to that area ("Sie verloren die Heimat, um das Vaterland zu gewinnen" [They lost their homeland to win their fatherland]). The Nazis debated what should be characteristic of a colonized city of 100,000 inhabitants and analyzed which types of housing should be used. If, during those years, Spanish architects followed the example of German architecture, the references to Italian architecture were made from a poetic perspective. Intellectuals, such as Eugenio Montes or Rafael Sánchez Mazas, were valued in the way that Italian architects interpreted ancient Rome. Therefore, the first refer-
ences to internal colonialism appeared in published news of the bonifica of Agro Pontino, detailing the experiences made in Sabaudia, Pontinia, Pomezia, Aprilia, and Littoria.

In 1939 Pedro Muguruza presented his “Ideas generales sobre el Plan Nacional de Ordenación y Reconstrucción” [General ideas about the national plan for planning and reconstruction] at the First National Assembly of Architects, a reflection on the unpublished “Ten-year Plan for Reconstruction.” Here, complementing the guidelines for the Service to Devastated Regions, he defined precisely the infrastructure that was to be constructed (for example, military or civilian headquarters, courts, barracks, town halls) for the management of the government.

Some years later, he presented to Eduardo Torroja the necessity for technical systematization of what would be understood (well differentiated from what was initially proposed) as a national revival plan. For Muguruza, to reconstruct did not mean to rebuild homes, but rather to establish the state apparatus, complementing the idea of economic reconstruction. To understand the reality of that plan, it is useful to study official public calls for tenders published in those early years in the Boletín Informativo of the DGA.

The Institute of Credit for the Reconstruction, DGRD, and DGA were the three legs upon which the reconstruction was established. For this reason, the credit amounts granted by official agencies focused both on enhancing and rebuilding in the short term and on agriculture as an alternative to a destroyed industry (that is, building administrative buildings, whether barracks, government buildings, or government offices). The selection criteria for projects in rural centers were not based on the degree of destruction, but on the role the respective centers should play. Following the suggestions of agricultural engineers who collaborated on the policy, the relocation of some centers a short distance away from their original locations was proposed. This was considered a way to integrate a new population into the project on a large scale, which amounted to the configuration of a new economic space.

A Complex Implementation

Since Bidagor’s role was not limited to laying the foundations for urban growth, knowing how to transmit standards (for example, oversight, evaluation, and interpretation) was just as important as being able to plan them. Bidagor also put
Figure 3. General Direction of devastated regions, Plan for the “New Belchite,” 1940
together a team of architect colleagues (for example, Blein, Pérez-Míguez, or García de Pablos), administrators (Jose Gascón and Marín) and industrial engineers (Abelardo Martinez de Lamadrid), each facing a common problem from a different perspective. By defining criteria, Bidagor was able to integrate, if only for a few years, municipal policies into the work of organizations like the INC and the DGRD. By using Muguruza’s illness as a pretext, he was even able to integrate them into the efforts of the DGA. The DGA accepted Bidagor’s standards, which characterized urban planning, without discussion. If the competitions organized by the DGA for the construction of buildings for the administration were directed at freelance professionals, the policies marked by Bidagor would be developed by official architects. In other words, if the freelance professionals lacked formal guidelines, forcing an architecture that they understood as what was desired by the Nuevo Estado, the latter knew at all times how to act and adapt to the policies imposed by the Bidagor group.

The DGRD and the INC faced a triple issue. First, they had to decide where to act, understanding the villages in terms of the new agricultural areas. Second, they had to shape the new settlements and their collective spaces. Third, they would have to show them the houses for farmers. Those technicians who, after the war, formed part of the DGRD or INC had mostly received their degrees before the war.
and had a discrete professional profile. The failure of their form of planning only has two possible explanations: either they were always eclectic in their planning or they did not see the contradiction between their previous activities and the reflection about the vernacular (that is, the study of popular culture and the normalization of tradition) imposed by the DGRD or INC. Unlike those in the city, who adopted the premises of a historicist pastiche, the guidelines about rural architecture were distinct. Several competitions were organized that related to rural housing for different regions. Ignasi de Solà-Morales highlighted the characteristics of housing during his time, emphasizing the continuity from the architecture before the war.

In National Socialist Germany, the work of Paul Schultze-Naumburg, _Kulturarbeiten_ [Cultivation work], was conceived as a catalogue of picturesqueness that identified with the eternal or Seele [soul] and not with the ephemeral or Geist [spirit]. In Italy, the study of popular architecture was considered – as Giuseppe Pagano and Guarniero Daniel did⁷ – by taking the vernacular as a guideline for the development of modern architecture, just as was proposed before 1936 by the Grup d’Arquitectes i Tècnics Catalans per a la Realització de l’Arquitectura Contemporània [Group of Architects and Technicians for the Realization of Contemporary Architecture, GATCPAC] and by Leopoldo Torres Balbás from Madrid.⁸ The population was faced with two options for rural projects in Francoist Spain. Therefore, its valuation was biased. As a result of the application of inaccurate facades, more or less locally, to generic rural architecture projects through pro-
grams designed for stringent requirements, an emphasis was placed on the value and survival of certain ornamental elements (for example, fences, windows, doors, facade colors). This emphasis aimed to make people forget (by way of intended picturesqueness) the extent to which such projects should be understood from the perspective of the rational logic that prevailed before the war.

The Republic had begun implementing an ambitious National Plan of Hydraulic Works (that is, after the 1929 crisis, the state focused, to the detriment of municipal performance, on strengthening hydraulic works, road networks, and the electrification of railways), which involved enhancing internal colonialism and occupying the unpopulated margins of the resulting water basins. In 1939 agricultural policy developed two different plans that prioritized, from the beginning, the first over the second. The food needs of the urban areas conditioned the situation of agricultural communities (I insist that the locations were determined by agricultural engineers) in relation to large population centers. Once the locations of the agricultural centers were determined, ground plans had to be developed. In this regard, German and Italian experiences with similar situations were determining.

In the early 1920s, Werner Hegemann published Nordic projects in new rural population centers in Städtebau. Some of these projects, in the following decade, would serve as a reference for other designs in Germany. The designs by Sverre Pedersen, which later inspired Herbert Rimpl, are one example. These images would reach architects in the Devastated Regions as well as those at the Institute of Colonization. It is true that the subject of rural centers had been raised multiple times in Spain since the beginning of the century. However, in the late 1930s, the model of the closed city, which was impossible to develop given the defined perimeter, was adopted as a solution for the colonization of early Francoism. As a result, the concept of the “organic city” was reclaimed. After defining the size and design of these rural centers, the question was how to deal with the organization and design of urban centers and Spanish architects looked to the Italian experience of bonifica agraria. This is why the program created plazas in urban centers, located next to the church and town hall, which was often also the location of party headquarters, facade, and notary, which were all seen as a pastiche that had little or nothing in common with the rationality of settler homes.

Until the late 1940s, that system survived. The break toward modernity came when the failure of the autarkic policies resulted in the massive abandonment of the country by rural populations as they moved to large cities. As a consequence, if
until the moment the construction of homes in large city centers had scarcely been the subject of reflection, in few years shanty towns (that is, the forced residence of a dispossessed population) occupied land coveted by those seeking to undertake large real estate projects in Madrid, Barcelona, Bilbao, and Valencia. Moreover, the end of World War II forced new architectural references. In Spain, concerns regarding this issue would be reflected in works published by Miguel Fisac in the very official Boletín of the Dirección General de Arquitectura. Fisac’s works ridiculed historicist architecture and presented European concerns about the new bias that architecture was forced to assume. Fisac, who had received his architecture degree shortly before, would go on to become one of the brightest professionals in the following decades.

If the formal dreams of those who dared to propose an architecture of the state were soon forgotten (taken into account realized projects), the urban project in large population centers also gave way to the pressure of real estate and landholders. The


Die "Obra Sindical de la Vivienda" bestand nicht nur, sondern verwirklicht sich ihre Wohnungen, welche über den Arbeitskraftsystem ausgebaut sind, und in vielen Jahren Eigentum des Empfängers wurdend.


Als Vernunft, der von der Gewerkschaften abhängig ist, projektiert und bestellt die "Obra Sindical de la Vivienda" auch alle Gebäude, die sie für ihre Ziele benötigt, sowie auch Erhaltungsbauten für die Arbeiter, Ausbildungsschulen, Krankenhäuser, Sportplätze, etc...

Figure 7. Triptych of the Spanish pavilion for the Interbau 1957 Berlin, reverse.

government was the worst enemy of the plan conceived by Bidagor, relinquishing the proposed "imperial city" to the interests of the real estate sector. Had the plan been made public in 1941, it would have been approved as a law in 1946, when (after the real estate sector had hoarded the land, increasing its value), expropriation became impossible. That early period of Francoist urbanism ended as quickly as the dream of Nuevo Estado architecture ended, because, when early Francoism was stripped of its idealist mask, financial capital took control of planning after sabotaging the plan, thus ruining what was the architecture of the soft pencil. That which was proposed during the first five years of Francoism was reflected only in the magazines of the period; the brutality of those who ended the urban vision of the Republic (that is, of a city understood in terms of social peace) gave way to absurdity.
Suggestions for Further Research

In conclusion, I would like to touch on several aspects that any research should take into account: In the first place, to reflect on whether Francoism was capable of generating an ideology, in which case it created an urban-architectural proposal consistent with the global policy developed in those years, or whether, on the contrary, because it was only a military coup whose only ideology was to change the political situation that had developed in the social-democratic Republic, it was necessary to invent self-styled architectural proposals linked to the heroic past, while necessity forced an urban response based on urban productivity criteria. Even this last statement needs to be questioned to differentiate between what urbanism was in large population centers and the solutions provided to carry out autarkic policies. The third aspect is to assume that Francoism was monolithic over nearly forty years or, on the contrary, to assume that international events (that is, changes in economic conditions) forced the consideration of at least three major phases: (i) that since the end of the Civil War in 1939, the Vatican and the US signed the first diplomatic agreements with the regime; (2) when agrarian policy failed, the major population centers experienced a mass emigration that disrupted urban structures; finally, (3) the awakening that began in 1960 in Spain with economic development. A last question would be to determine and evaluate the extent to which early Francoism took up the proposals made during the years of the Republic. This would mean that the phrase coined by Ernst Bloch would take on new meaning: “The pages that follow will speak of all kinds of ancient and surprising phenomena. The deception has been huge – and how it was done – not only do you need to look at the hands of the rascals, but also to see what is hidden in them, mainly to see if they have stolen what they had or, if at one time, that which is now dirty was in better hands.”9

Translation by Alice Driver, revised by Neele Reimann-Philipp

Notes

1. See Victor D’Ors, “Confesión de un arquitecto.”
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