

# IMPRESSIONS OF TWO AMS FOREIGN STUDY TOURS IN 1985

*Reported by Ian Curry*

## **The Veneto August and September 1985**

The year 1985 has been remarkable for the two AMS/SAH study tours to Yugoslavia in the Spring and to Italy in the late Summer. Together they covered a vast area of art and history, countryside and landscape, touching on the Hellenistic, Roman and Byzantine periods in Macedonia, and concentrating on the Byzantine achievements in Ravenna, the mystic splendours of mediaeval Serbia, the glories of Venice and the subtleties of Palladio's villas in the Veneto.

At the end of August we flew across the Alps to the Marco Polo Airport on the edge of the Venetian lagoon, to spend the first afternoon exploring the walled town of Castelfranco Veneto, our base for the Venetian expedition. Then in the evening Dr. G. Golin of the Palladio Centre in Vicenza introduced the main subject of this study tour, the development and works of Andrea di Pietro (1508-1580), usually known by his nickname, Palladio.

Our first visits, the following morning, were to villas which belonged to his later works, the Villa Emo at Franzolo (1561-4) and the Villa Barbaro at Maser (1558). The main portico of the Villa Emo is approached by a broad ramp, and flanked by the long arcaded barchesse which serve as the farm buildings of a villa estate. Internally the frescoes by Zelotti are set within 'trompe L'oeil' architectural frameworks. At the Villa Barbaro, the frescoes are by Veronese, but this time with three-dimensional stucco door-cases. A 'nymphaeum' in the form of a hemicycle backs onto the hillside, and the main salone is cruciform, overlooking the garden and avenue beyond. Within the view stands the village church of Maser—the domed and porticoed Tempietto (c.1580) which Palladio built for the Barbaro family at the end of his life. The portico bears his name.

Lunch was enjoyed in the delightful hill-town of Asolo, after visiting the Canova Tempio at Possagno, the vast mausoleum combining a Roman Pantheon with the portico of an Athenian Parthenon, which Antonio Canova designed for himself before his death in 1822. Down in Piombino Dese we were welcomed to the Villa Cornaro by Mrs. Rush, wife of the owner. Being on the edge of the town, this is a tall compact villa, without the extended barchesse wings associated with farm buildings. It had been started in 1552 and the upper storey was in progress in 1554. Frescoes are confined to the minor rooms round the main square salone, which has vast freestanding Tuscan columns. This opens out onto the loggia on the garden side, two storied, and pedimented.

The next morning was spent amongst some of the villas on the River Brenta, where the Villa Malcontenta (Villa Foscari Gambarare at Mira, 1560) is amongst Palladio's best known in this area. The high basement was provided to raise the villa above flood level, and the double flights of steps climb to the front portico, which leads into the tall groin-vaulted salone. Here the frescoes are again by Zellotti, but faint shadows of their former colouring, for the originals had been "lifted off" and sold in the 17th or 18th century, and coats of limewash have had to be removed during restoration in the past 50 years. For a few years in the 1970s the villa was owned by the English architect Claude Phillimore, who showed us round. (Plate 1).

A little further up the Brenta at Stra is the vast villa Pisani (V. Nazionale) designed by G. Frigimelica and remodelled in 1736-56 by Francesco Maria Preti. Atlantes support the central loggia of the entrance, and the immense ballroom vault is frescoed with Giambattista Tiepolo's 'Glory of the House of Pisani'. The park and gardens are on a suitably large scale, and the size of the palace was such that it was purchased by Napoleon, and was used by members of the Austrian Imperial Family in the 19th century.



Plate 1

Count Foscari and Claude Phillimore, the present and penultimate owners of the Villa Malcontenta

On Monday we were met in Venice by Philip Rylands with the news that most of the vaporette were on strike! Fortunately he was able to guide us through the alleys and across minor canals to the Zattere ai Gesuati, and find a ferry to the Giudecca. Here he introduced us to Palladio's last great works, the churches of San Giorgio Maggiore (1565-1611) and Il Redentore (1577-1592). Sansovino had been the most prominent architect in Venice during the mid 16th century, and until 1560, had prevented Palladio from receiving any commissions in the city. Palladio did however design the facade to complete Sansovino's church of San Francesco della Vigna in 1562, and he had been working on the Refectory and Cloisters of San Giorgio since 1560. The remainder of the day was free in this most wonderful of cities.

The next evenings were spent in Treviso, from which members were able to make further excursions to Venice, Torcello and the other Lagoon islands, but most spent the 'free day' on an expedition to Padua and Verona. In Padua we admired Giotto's frescoes in the Cappella Scrovegni (1303-5), the University and its galleried Anatomical Theatre (1594), the many-domed Basilica de Sant'Antonio begun in 1231, and the delightfully lively market areas near the Duomo. The afternoon was devoted to an all-too-brief visit to Verona in a loop of the River Adige, the Arena surrounded by papier-maché sphinxes for a performance of Aïda, busy streets leading to the Piazza dei Signori, the bridges, gates and Castelvecchio. The Romanesque church of San Zeno Maggiore stands west of the city centre and then several miles further up-river, Palladio's fragmentary Villa Sarego was discovered with some difficulty, 'round-cheese' rustications to the colonnades adding to its highly individual character (Plate 2). The executed part of the villa illustrated well the difficulties of relating many of the plans which Palladio published to what was actually built.

During the succeeding days we at last came to Vicenze with its Palazzi, and the Villas near it. A rare privilege was to be allowed inside the Villa Almerico, 'La Rotonda' or Villa Capra (1569), four-square with four porticos, and comparatively narrow passages leading to the central domed rotunda. The published external dome was not executed, a stepped tiled circular roof being substituted by Scamozzi, who completed the villa after Palladio's death, while the rich stucco and fresco decoration of the interior which was executed in 1581, again seems to be looking forward to the Baroque.

In complete contrast is the austere interior of Scamozzi's Villa Pisani, 'La Rocca' (1576) high on its hill above Lonigo (Plate 3). Scamozzi set out to improve on 'La Rotonda', widening the entrances from corridors into open loggie, and surrounding the central space with deep niches. In this villa designed especially for

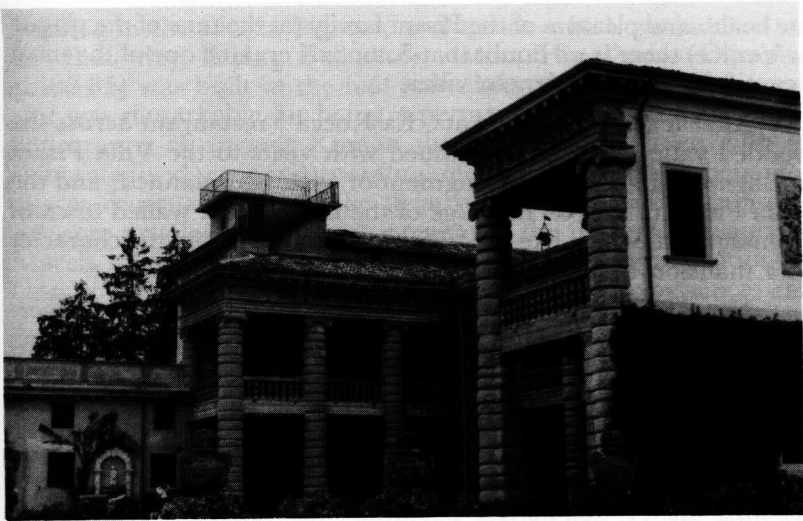


Plate 2  
Ville Sarego. Palladio's most curious design.

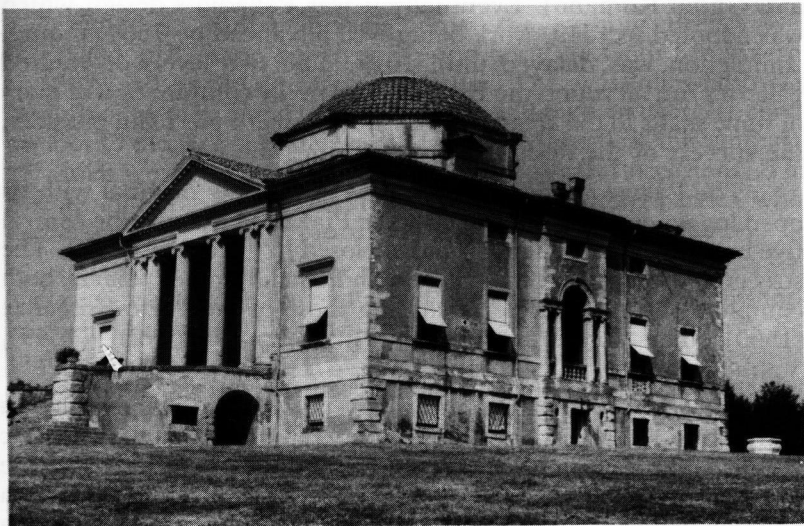


Plate 3  
La Rocca, Lenigo, by Scamozzi. As much the inspiration for  
Chiswick House as the Ville Rotanda.



the health and pleasure of the Pisani family (at the time of the plague in Venice) there is no doubt that Scamozzi created one of the most beautiful of all the Veneto villas.

After a splendid lunch at "La Rocca" restaurant across the wooded valley, the day continued with visits to the Villa Pisani at Bagnolo (1541), only a fragment of what was planned; and the Villa Pisani (1552) on the edge of the moat to the walled town of Montagnana, which like the Villa Cornaro, has more the character of a mansion than a villa.

Near 'La Rotonda' is the hillside palazzina (1668) or summer-villa with its foresteria (1725) or guest house of the Villa Valmarana dei Nani. Their fame stems from the commission of 1757 for Giambattista Tiepolo and his son Giandomenico to fresco both palazzina and foresteria. The father created heroic scenes in the villa, and the son concentrated on scenes of vernacular life and humorous fantasy in the foresteria, all set in elaborate architectural framing by G. Mengozzi Colonna, the Tiepolos' customary collaborator.

On the Saturday morning, the hillside platform of Monte Berico gave an excellent vantage point for viewing the panorama of the roofs of Vicenza, dominated by the vast cuprous green roof of the Basilica. The galleries of this late mediaeval civic hall had partially collapsed in 1496, and various prominent architects were consulted in the following fifty years (Sansovino, Serlio, Sanmicheli and Giulio Romano). Eventually it was Palladio's design which was adopted in 1549, work being well advanced by 1564, though completion was delayed until 1616. The two levels of vaulted galleries run all round the Basilica, and in the combination of pairs of Ionic shafts to the arcades grouped with major piers and pilasters, the success of the design entirely justifies the fame.

The Palazzo Chiericati (1550-54) is equally original with its open loggia of eleven bays facing the Piazza Matteotti, the central five bays projecting slightly, and enclosed in the upper storey. The streets of Vicenza are punctuated with Palladio's other palazzi, both complete and incomplete, including those of the Porto-Breganze (1560). The Barbarano (1570-75), Iseppo de Porti (1549), Valmarana Braga (1566) and Palazzo Thiene (1542).

Vicenza proved a delightful city in which to wander, for in addition to Palladio's work, there are many fine Venetian Gothic houses and palazzi in the narrow streets, the best known being the 15th century Palazzo Da Schio, known as the "Ca'd'Oro". In addition there are churches of all periods including the Gothic Santa Corona and the Renaissance San Stefano.

The Loggia del Capitaniato (1571-2) stands opposite the

Basilica in the Piazza Signori, and beside which we lunched on the final day, facing Palladio's statue. His Teatro Olimpico (1580-85) was built in the half-ruined fortress for the Carravese, and was remarkable for being a permanent theatre based on the appearance of ancient Roman theatres, and provided with its elaborate fixed scene incorporating receding streets. This being the quatro-centenary year of the theatre's completion by Scamozzi, we were privileged to attend a repeat of the first performance in March 1585 of Sophocles' "Oedipus Rex" in the translation by Orsatto Giustiniani. This was a truly remarkable experience, and a rare opportunity to see a unique theatre in use as originally intended.

The final Sunday was given up to visits in the foothills of the Alps, where they abruptly meet the plain of the Veneto. Count Thiene made us most welcome at the Castello da Porto Thiene, in the small town of Thiene. The house of 1476 represented a fascinating combination of a castellated building and a villa, with broad loggias, open and arcaded at ground-floor level, partly enclosed on the first floor, and producing an immense tee-shaped room at the upper level. Ceilings had decorated timber beams and the walls were frescoed, except for the main upper room in which were hung a series of vast equestrian portraits. Appropriately, the stable wing also was on a grand and lavish scale, with marble columns and carved oak mangers which would have done justice to a cathedral's choir stalls.

Palladio's timber bridge across the rushing Brenta was inspected at Bassano del Grappa, and his Villa Godi Malinverni (c.1542) at Lonedo de Lugo Vicentino. This was followed by an 'al fresco' meal in a real farm barchesse, and then an energetic climb on foot to the Rocca of the walled town of Marostica, the ramparts of which we had seen from a distance on several occasions. The restaurant in the Rocca was entertaining two wedding parties, who, more sensibly, had driven up by the winding back road.

Across the plain, on the edge of the Enganean Hills, the early Villa dei Vescovi at Torreglia had been built for the Archbishops of Padua between 1529 and 1535 (by Falconetto and others). Set high on the hillside, it overlooks the terraced gardens and vineyards, and itself is built up in three terraced levels, with the salone and principal rooms at the top, domestic rooms at the intermediate level, and barchesse below. More conventional in Palladio's terms is the Villa Badoer (c.1556) at Fratta Polesine by the River Scortico. The house is raised on a high basement and is reached by long flights of steps both from the front, and from the curved and colonnaded barchesse wings at the sides. Again the house as built differs in

some details from the published plan, and it never received the intended second loggia on the garden side.

As a slight diversion from the Veneto, a short stay was made further down the Adriatic coast at Ravenna, to see its Byzantine splendours, lunch being taken on the way in Ferrara beside the brick fortress of the Este Dukes, who had ruled the city until the end of the 16th century. The principal monuments in Ravenna: San Vitale, S. Apollinare Nuovo and S. Apollinare in Classe were powerful reminders of the strength of the Classical tradition through the Dark Ages.

### **Serbian and Macedonian Painted Monasteries**

*In the Steps of Rebecca West's Falcon and Lamb, or Diary of a  
Visit to Yugoslavia April 1985*

The Spring Study Tour also began on the Adriatic, this time at Dubrovnic, on the Dalmatian coast. On the first morning we descended to the City of and met the local guide who was to take us around, starting at the Pile Gate. The whole of the old City lies within its perimeter walls, the main paved with polished limestone. Within the gateway is the large domed fountain designed by Onofrio della Cava in 1438, beside the small Chapel of Sveti Spas (St. Savior) of 1520. The fountain was seriously damaged in the Ragusa's Great Earthquake of 1617, and its domed superstructure was only partially reconstructed, for in a 17th century painting of the city, its crowning cupola is shown and its cornice and decorative dome, but only a semblance of these now survive.

Facing the fountain is the Franciscan Friary, and still in use as such, with its rather beautiful late-Romanesque cloister; tall double colonnades contained within wide, semi-circular arches to each bay, and each of the capitals richly carved, with beasts, birds, flowers and foliage. In the far corner of the cloister is the ancient Pharmacy which has served the city since 1319: its counter set out with the old porcelain and wooden jars in which the herbs and medicines were contained, and the poison cabinets at the ends. It also serves as a treasury and museum, displaying icons, fabrics, vestments, silver and goldsmiths work of the Ragusan school of craftsmen, and the ancient Black Cross inlaid with mother of pearl and traditionally carried in civic and religious processions. Also displayed is the 17th century painting of the city before the Great

Earthquake, and which shows how, when the town was planned in the 11th or 12th century, it was laid out in narrow ranges with blocks of dwellings running up from the central Placa in the valley.

This layout is still maintained on the upland side of the town where flights of steps run up between each block of houses, and in fact the street frontages, apart from the 17th and 18th century and facades, are running up the hill, facing out onto the flights of steps which become steeper and steeper as they climb up to the ramparts of the Land Walls, flag-bedecked with washing, foliage, and plants in many of them decorating the fronts of the houses. A second main cross street runs along uphill from the central street and eventually ends in the Chapel of St. Nicholas, backing onto the Sponza Palace. This faces the main street and served as the Mint building, with early Renaissance portico below and Gothic facade above. Beside it stands the Clock Tower where two bronze men strike the hours, and opposite is the Church of Saint Blaise (Sveti Vlaho), patron saint of Ragusa. The church was rebuilt in 1706 in bold Baroque forms. Close by is the Rector's Palace, also by Onofrio, with the Michelozzo Loggia in front, the reconstructed atrium or courtyard within, and a magnificent flight of stairs rising to the state apartments above, for the Rector was the Ragusan equivalent of the Venetian Doge. These apartments are now of the 18th century, the lightly gilded Rococo panelling to the walls, marble and tiled floors, and appropriate furnishings, all overlooking the cathedral. The Cathedral of the Assumption is undergoing restoration after the serious effects of one of the earthquakes in recent years, which caused so much damage, it having already been rebuilt in 1671-1713 in Baroque style after the Great Earthquake. The morning ended with a circuit of the Land Walls.

On the second day we entered Montenegro over rugged limestone and conglomerate mountains at the southern end of the Dinaric Alps, eventually to descend to Lake Skadar down towards the Albanian border. Crossing the lake and passing through Titograd, the new capital of Montenegro, we followed the River Moraca and entered its gorge or canyon, climbing ever upwards and following the twists of the gorge, with the rushing waters of the river far below, the intermediate plateau at the level at which we were travelling and the show-topped mountains above, finally to reach the Monastery of Moraca, our first Serbian Orthodox monastery. It was built in 1252 by Stefan II (The First-Crowned), son of Vukan and grandson of the Serbian Great Zupan, Stefan Nemanija, and is the best preserved church of the Nemanjic period in Montenegro.

The small domed church is roofed in copper and zinc and inside the wall paintings are all that one might expect of the Raska

school of Serbian art. The walls and vault of the narthex space are fully painted, depicting Ecumenical Councils of the Church, and the Royal doors lead into the body of the church, cruciform in plan, with the Dormition of The Virgin above the west entrance, and the Pantocrator in the dome above. The best of the 13th century frescoes survive in the apse beyond the icon screen in the Holy of Holies. The iconostasis in this instance is of marble arcading below, with the painted icons at eye level, and a beam above supporting a large carved 17th century crucifix of ebony and gilt filling the space almost up the vault.

The Monastery of Milesevo lies in a remote valley by the riverside, in the distance being the citadel which once guarded this valley route of the Bosnian Kings. The plain limewashed exterior was once all gilded, and has domes over the eastern end of the church and over the western narthex, with a separate belfry beyond to the west. It had been commissioned in 1235 by King Vladislav, second son of Stefan the First-Crowned, and was the last resting place of St. Sava, who had established the independent Serbian Orthodox Church in 1219. The frescoes are amongst the most remarkable in Serbia, and the donor's portrait is painted with great realism. The church was desecrated by the Turks in 1600 and its paintings damaged and hidden by plaster and limewash, then rediscovered in the 19th century and partly revealed where not entirely destroyed.

The third day was Maundy Thursday in the Serbian Church and leaving Partizanske Vode, we drove through less spectacular countryside down to Titovo Uzice to collect Mother Maria at her little Monastery of Vavadenja. Mother Maria is of English and French origin, now an Orthodox nun, and had just been appointed by the Bishop as Abbess to re-establish the convent at Gradac. She took the opportunity of explaining something of the meaning of Orthodox Liturgy, and pointing out that there was much in the Eastern Liturgy of the Eucharist which was recognisably the same as the forms used in the West. Speaking of the interiors of Orthodox churches, Mother Maria told us:

“The most striking point about this for anyone going into an Orthodox Church is obviously the icon screen, which is an invocation of the division between Heaven and Earth. Within the screen, within the altar area, is Heaven, and the liturgy, Christ's Liturgy, is celebrated in Heaven itself. But Christ became Incarnate, and therefore the priest comes out from the altar; brings the Gospel from the altar to the people, bringing the holy gifts from the altar to the people. We on earth, present at the Liturgy, are caught up into it, so that there is constant coming and going through the great doors, the Royal Doors in the centre of the screen,





Plate 1  
*Zica* (seat of the present  
Patriarchate, built in the 13th  
century), school of icon painting.



Plate 2  
*Studenica* 12th century frescoes in the Great Church of the Mother of God.

and also through the side doors. But Heaven is not closed to Man, but is open, and Man receives from Heaven the Gospel of the Good News of Christ, the Gift of Christ himself in the Eucharist."

By this time we had passed Kraljevo and reached the ancient Monastery of Zica, built 1207-1215 by King Stefan the First-Crowned, in co-operation with his brother, St. Sava, the first Serbian Archbishop, and whose Patriarchal seat it became. Within the outer curtilage of the monastic site, the principal church is painted red like some of those of Mount Athos, and the extensive cross-vaulted exonarthex leads into the high-domed nave, flanked by apsed chapels. We were shown the sanctuary beyond the iconostasis by a monk, but the monastery is now served by forty nuns, as explained by Mother Maria. At the far end of the monastic compound, which rises on a small hill above the river, we were shown the Icon Painting School, or Studio (Plate 1), which has been established recently, and receives commissions from Serbian emigrés in many parts of the world. Our visit ended in the refectory of the monastery, meeting Bishop Stefan, the Bishop Kraljevo, whose very large diocese stretches from Belgrade in the north well into the southern part of Serbia. He had spent some time training in England, and had completed his training at St. Augustine's College, Canterbury, before returning to take up his monastic and eventually episcopal duties in Serbia; his English was remarkably good, though he did fall back on the interpreter at time. He offered us the traditional Serbian monastic hospitality consisting of the local pear brandy, taken with cups of tea or coffee and small cakes, although as the Bishop explained, it still being Lent, the hospitality had to be somewhat restricted.

A long drive next through increasingly rugged and upland valley country along a very difficult and rough road, culminating in the Monastery of Studenica, the most important of the Raska school. Here again there is a vast fortified enclosure, oval in shape, with two bastioned gates and a third blocked gate with bell tower set over it. In the centre is the principal church, and two smaller churches remaining out of the seven or eight which once were set within the enclosure. The Great Church of the Mother of God was started in 1180 by Stefan Nemanija, founder of the dynasty, who wished to be buried here, and it became the second, better protected Coronation Church of the Serbian kings. The principal part of the church is of local marble externally including the front portico, all quite Romanesque in form. The church had doors to north and south as well as to the west and a dome over the crossing, and a second tower over the western additional cross-vaulted narthex, flanked by apses, and with some fine wallpainting: the inner narthex was built with the main church, (Plate 3); and the body of the church

itself, with the large dome reconstructed at a later period and now without paintings. The surrounding wallpaintings had been partly chipped away to provide a key for replastering when the Turks were hiding the paintings of the interior. Now that the plaster has been removed, strange snowflake effects result on the surviving frescoes, and one is left wondering whether this was the right technique, to leave the damage exposed or hide it by tinting in. In the western part of this church the most striking of the paintings is the Great Crucifixion above the western door painted with a golden background in imitation of mosaic.

The little church of St. Nicholas also dates from the end of the 12th century, with fine cycles of frescoes, while the third small church, the Royal Church, was built for King Milutin in 1314.

The day ended in the Turkish town of Novi Pazar, which is, being translated, 'Newmarket'. Above the town on a hillside stands the ancient Chapel of St. Peter, built in the 9th century, and surrounded by the strangest of gravestones. The church combines the Greek cross with a circular plan form, having an eastern apse, a circular cupola with a clerestory above, with a triforium or tribune, accessible by a staircase, and a full size Baptistery well to one side of the naos. This was the earliest church building we were to see in Serbia—pre-Serbian and Byzantine in its concept, and quite moving despite the fragmentary state of its wallpaintings and frescoes.

The town of Novi Pazar was a Turkish foundation, important in the 16th and 17th century, with the fine 16th century mosque of Altun Alem and an 18th century caravanserai. The Turkish Citadel stands beyond the river to the west, with both towers and battlements, and a range of several minarets, the one in the Citadel quite elaborate in design, the others further to the north white and gleaming in the early morning sun, with black conical roofs.

The architects for Novi Pazar have very consciously tried to recreate in modern style something appropriate to the Turkish heritage of the place, and the results are both astonishing and quite pleasing. Massive ranges of flats of varying heights have horn-like protrusions marking the tops of the bays, and attempts at modern street furniture are all mixed up in incomplete work out towards the north, Yugoslavia's financial state making it difficult to complete such grandiose schemes. But the most startling building is the Hotel Vrbac, in which we stayed—a tour-de-force in modernistic 'Pasha Pastiche'. Built on piloti, the circular grand foyer is surrounded by harem-like balconies leading to the bedrooms, and the whole structure is canopied by a vast translucent dome.

Good Friday morning and an early start, climbing west from

Novi Pazar, up the Raska valley, eventually to reach the Monastery of Sopoćani, set on its hill within its enclosing walls, and with the ruined remains of the old monastic buildings inside the curtain wall. The church was built in 1260 by King Uros I and destined as his burial place: it suffered considerably at the hands of the Turks in 1689, and had been roofless and partially ruined for one and a half centuries before restoration began in the 19th century, and has continued under UNESCO's guidance in more recent years.

Despite being roofless for so long it retains frescoes in surprisingly fair condition, and extremely important in themselves, with the large Dormition of the Virgin above the west door of the nave, and a fine Crucifixion cycle. The human figures show strong classical influence, and have dignity and status; they are amongst the greatest achievements of mediaeval Serbian art. Less well maintained or restored are the frescoes over the crossing area, and the marble-like iconostasis is probably renewed, without icons, and open in its intermediate part into the eastern apse where more frescoes of the Apostles survive.

From outside, the church might be mistaken for a Romanesque basilica, with nave and aisles, a dome over the crossing, and an eastern apse. But inside the plan form is quite different, with the narthex a single chamber still vaulted, linked to the more expected elongated Greek cross plan, and what from outside one might assume were aisles, are a series of chapels plus the cross arms of the Greek cross. To the west is an outer narthex arcaded and now roofless, beyond which is the belfry. One of the nuns was herding the goats, and others awaited our departure contentedly, for their priest had paused in the midst of the Good Friday services, so that we could visit their church.

A long journey to Peć across varied countryside, and valleys, rivers, fast flowing, and then gradually approaching the great line of mountains which separate Serbia from Albania. The Monastery and Patriarchate at Peć lies up a narrow and secluded valley above the town, close to the river torrent of the Rugovo gorge, and backed by the snow-peaked mountains. The Patriarchate was transferred here from Zica in 1253 for greater security from Hungarian and Bulgarian incursions, and within the encircling walls, the monastery complex has a central Church of the Holy Apostles of 1250, flanked by St. Demetrius to the north (1321-24) and the Church of Our Lady to the south (1330), with a great narthex to the west linking the three churches into one unit. Formerly this 14th century narthex was open and colonnaded but at a later stage has become enclosed and the internal walls and vaults covered with wall paintings. The central church has a tunnel-vaulted nave, longer than is customary, and with transepts, central dome, and longer apsed area beyond.

The external walls are of rough stone for the plastering, and crowned by marvellously undulating leadwork to the three cupolas and their surrounding roofs. The impressive figure of the Abbot of Peć had shown us around, although the Serbian Patriarchate is now based on Belgrade, the final installation ceremonies for the Patriarchs of the Serbia still take place in Peć.

The grandest example of the later Raska school is the Abbey of Decani, which lies further to the south up another narrow valley, and through its outer gate the monastery enclosure surrounds the splendidly unified design of the church, which has bands of honey coloured limestone alternating with bands of grey/pink marble (Plate 3). It was built between 1327 and 1335, intended as the tomb chapel of King Stefan Uros III, and was finished by his son, Tsar Dusan. The architect was a Franciscan friar from Kotor and he produced



Plate 3  
*Decani* early 14th century, detail of door jamb; built in marble by Dalmatian monks, it is the monastery with the most western appearance.



a truly monumental royal church. The triple-aisled narthex has lofty octagonal shafts supporting the vaults, and a grand sculptured entrance portal leading through into the naos. This also has outer aisles and octagonal columns, with timber cross beams as in Italian churches, and the body of the church rising to an immense height, crowned by the central cupola. The whole interior is covered with small frescoes, more than a thousand compositions in all.

Finally that day to the Plain of Kosovo, and the Field of Kosovo where in 1389 the Turks overthrew the Serbian Empire. The field of Kosovo is a sad place, and though the turba of Murad I marks the place where the Turkish Sultan fell in the battle, there is nothing to mark where the Serbian leader, Prince Lazar fell.

On Low Saturday in the Serbian Church, we started out from Pristina, the capital of Kosovo Province, on a cold morning and soon came to the fine Monastery Church of Gracanica, the finest of the Kosmet or Central School of design, where the central dome is usually surrounded by four lesser cupolas. It was built in 1320 by King Milutin (Uros II 1282-1321) who had enlarged the Serbian Empire to include much of Macedonia. The exterior is a remarkable composition in brick reds and honey stone, the walls banded in stone and brick in alternate courses and the window surrounds and infills in decorative brickwork while the cupolas soar upwards in brick and tile.

In front of the church is an additional narthex, added at a later stage, and which the architect-acquaintance of Rebecca West had hoped to demolish in 1938! The plan and three dimensional form of the interior is characterised by tall rectangular square piers running up much of the height of the building, and also by the circular shafts flanking the icon screen. All the walls, domes and vaults are covered in a remarkable series of frescoes and wallpaintings, many of the early period, by the frescoists Mihajlo and Euthije, and include portraits of the donor Milutin, and his child-bride Simonida.

Travelling across country we eventually entered Macedonia and reached Nerezi on the heights above Skopje. The former monastery church of Sveti Pantelejmon again belongs to the Kosmet type, and though a much smaller church than Gracanica, has the quadruple domes at the corners surrounding the central dome, with lead and tiled roofs, and the brick and stone banded exterior. The internal frescoes and paintings are considered of the greatest importance, and show how the Serbian artists were developing a bold and almost naturalistic style, even though the church had been badly damaged by earthquakes. One of the very interesting things is the carved marble icon screen and the peacock-carved tympana of the niches flanking the screen. Here we had an excellent lunch

in the former Guest House of the Monastic buildings, now converted to a restaurant.

Down the steep winding tracks again into Skopie and then west to Tetovo, which has the highly unusual 16th or 17th century "Painted Mosque", a square structure with fountain court and open Porch. The whole of exterior and interior is painted in tempora, in a 'Turkish Regency' style, mostly in geometrical panels centred with posies of roses, but with fascinating geometrical decoration and little painted scenes in the roundels on the central dome, while friezes of the cornice all round the rectangle have long, narrow painted scenes of the Bosphorus. The decorative carpets were quite limited in extent, and the mosque was still obviously in use by the local Albanian community with their white skull caps, gathering in the evening, and with the call to prayer of the Muezzin. Just across the little river was an unusual stone building of domes and arches which had been the Turkish bath house or hammam, and a little way across the town the former establishment of the Whirling Dervishes, the Suffi Dectashi, now an hotel, but with a museum in part of the former buildings. The most pleasing building in the group was an open garden pavilion with wide-spreading eaves and carved trellis-work, still with its marble fountain.

Finally, continuing down through the mountain passes, snow on all the peaks, towards Lake Orchrid, well to the south. As soon as we had come into Macedonia, a change in the character of the people and buildings was noticeable, something closer to Greece than Yugoslavia. South of Tetevo, into the mountainous passes leading to Ochrid, the farm buildings also changed noticeably in character, often with timbered upper parts to the barns and houses.

The day ended in Ochrid with the beginnings of the Easter Liturgy celebrations, down in one of the old churches of the city. Walking along the polished marble-cobbled streets into the old town towards midnight, we eventually heard music and singing in the distance, and evidence of the populace converging on the old church of Sv. Nikola Gerakomija, where now lie the remains of Sveti Kliment (St. Clement), the Patron Saint of Ochrid. He had been the disciple of SS. Cyril and Methodius, who had taken Christianity to the Slavs from Byzantium. Sv. Kliment, together with Sv. Naum, had brought Christianity back to Ochrid in 886, and was its first bishop.

Candle vendors jostled outside the church, and gradually making our way inside the small galleried building, we found it brightly lit by beeswax tapers, candles and chandeliers. A priest was reading the Gospel, and then began a long chanted section taken by two Deacons alternating, whilst through the Royal Doors

of the Iconostasis one could see the Bishop being vested, and crowned with the jewel-studded coronet. The purple curtain was then drawn across the opening of the iconostasis, and as the chanting ended all the lights were extinguished, apart from a single dim flame in the Sanctuary beyond. Soon candles were re-kindled inside the Sanctuary, the curtain was drawn back, and the Bishop came forth with his pastoral staff and bearing three lighted tapers, from which everyone's candles were soon lit, the flame being passed from one to another all round the church and out into the crowds outside.

With chanting and singing the small procession of Bishop and his attendants, all vested in gold, moved out of the church, the bell rang out at midnight, and then the long sermon began, eventually ending with the Easter cry of "Christ is Risen", and the response "Indeed Christ is Risen". The language of the service was probably Macedonian, for the Macedonian Orthodox Church has now been established separately from that of Serbia, with the Archbishop of Ochrid as its Metropolitan. Finally back through the dark streets, each family carrying its lighted Easter candle home early that Easter Sunday morning.

Easter Sunday and Monday were spent in and around Ochrid and its Lake, starting bright and fresh with the sun streaming across Lake Ochrid and lighting the mountains beyond in Albania. A morning stroll, first to the Cindar, the giant ruined stump of the 500 year-old plane tree, around which the cafes are grouped at the north end of the main street. Here the old Ali Pasha Mosque has a 16 sided dome resting on an 8 sided intermediate storey on the square base, with another newer mosque in the Turkish part of the town; one has to remind oneself that Ochrid remained in Turkish hands until 1912.

Near the lakeshore stands the former great Cathedral of Heavenly Wisdom, Sveti Sofije. It incorporates the remains of a 5th century Byzantine basilica, extended in the 11th century, and its nave is plain externally, a colonnaded loggia running along the north side, with a western narthex, the most monumental structure we had seen: two great domed towers at the ends, arcaded lower and upper galleries with marble columns, and the rest of the shell all in decorative brickwork.

We continued to climb up and around the wooded promontory to Kaneo, a little fishing village tucked down under the cliffs. Out on the point is the small church of Sv. Jovan Bogoslov (St. John the Baptist) (Plate 4) beyond the park-like upper area of the peninsula with the former Imaret Mosque built at an angle across the earlier monastic Sv. Pantelejmon (893), and then an Early Christian basilica of which only the foundations are exposed. This



Plate 4  
*St Jovan, Kaneo* near Ochrid 14th century,  
an example of the Kosmet school of architecture.

seemed to have had northern and southern as well as eastern apses and a western apse set within the larger perimeter wall, making it difficult to know really what its form might have been. Up on the apex of the promontory are the encircling walls of the castle, started in the 5th century, and extended by Tsar Samuel of Macedonia in the 11th century when the Ochrid district became the capital of his Slav-Macedonian Empire. It proved rather disappointing internally and is much better viewed from a distance.

The visits on Monday included the south end of Lake Ochrid, the isolated former Monastery of Sveti Naum, which the saint had founded in 900, soon after he had come to Ochrid with St. Clement, and he was buried here. When Rebecca West was here, the monks still served the mentally disabled, but now all is deserted and even the hotel to which it was adapted is closed, for this otherwise idyllic spot is so close to the Albanian border that guards are constantly posted there.

It is also at this point that the main flow of crystal water comes into the Lake from high springs, and from Lake Prespa to the west, and contributes to the speciality of the area, Ochrid trout, on which we lunched that day by the lakeside. The outfall of the lake is at Struga and still shows the clarity of the water as it flows down

towards Albania and back into Yugoslavia to the sea. Struga is well known for its colourful market, and still has the natural history museum of local fauna (and the calf with two heads) described by Rebecca West in 1938.

On Tuesday we went to Skopje, the capital of the Macedonian Republic. The town suffered an immense earthquake in 1963 when much of it was destroyed, and all the large scale modern commercial and hotel buildings have been constructed since. Within the old town centre only the bazaar area, the citadel and its ramparts, some of the mosques, and the church of Sv. Spas survived. The Bazaar consists of a series of streets running and criss-crossing down slopes towards the market area, and does not seem to have suffered noticeably.

Blacksmiths and tinsmiths, rug-sellers and jewellery makers all ply their trades with saddlers and shoemakers much in evidence. Coopersmiths openly make stills for pear brandy, while ovens for cooking certain dishes and meats protrude from the shop fronts and their chimneys run up the fronts of the buildings. Cafes abound, and altogether a remarkable effect is produced, as Gypsies sell their wares, and Moslem women move about in their voluminous trousers of startling colour and design. Albanians wear their white skull caps, others berets and dark head-dresses—everything suggests the Middle East—for of course Skopje was also a Turkish town until as recently as 1912.

At the lower end of the bazaar area is the vegetable and fruit market still active in the afternoon, with each stall-holder selling only a single commodity—apples, nuts, or scallions, and nearby there was valuable bartering for chickens, a kid, carpets and rugs.

Between the Citadel and the Bazaar, and close to the imposing Mustafa Pasha Mosque (15th century), lies the church of Sveti Spas (St. Savior) set in the corner of a courtyard and approached down steps, for churches at this time had to be partially hidden underground, by order of the Turks, and not make themselves at all apparent. Inside, the tiny church has a plain boarded gallery on the west side, with two tiers of seats and the upper tier almost in form of tall stands to help people stand. The form of the church is a nave and two aisles of equal height carried on cylindrical columns and simple caps. The Bishop's throne stands on the south side. But the glory of the church is the wood carving of the iconostasis screen and other furniture. Birds, beasts, and foliage encrust the structure, with the central gates gilded, the side gates ungilded, and even the twisted columns are encased in almost Grinling Gibbons type carving. The prominent features above on the cornice are eagles, some with spread wings, others with folded



wings, all by the same set of craftsmen, two brothers and their assistant, working right at the beginning of the 19th century, about 1810. They spent 10 years carving this marvellous screen and made three others elsewhere in the area.

On the following morning in Skopje it rained rather heavily and starting at the Mustafa Pasha Mosque, the party moved down into the bazaar area and across to the Daut Pasha Hammam, the former Turkish baths, built very early in the Turkish period of rule in Macedonia in the 1490s. Here two large domed spaces are linked by a series of other domed spaces, the latter with star-shaped roof vents in the domes, and with elaborate stallecite work to the pendentives surviving in most of the rooms. Where the plaster and decorative work had not survived it was of extreme interest and value to see how the brickwork of the pendentives had been built up in complex corbelling to provide the background and formwork for the elaborate decorative treatment. The hammam is now an art gallery with some modern work but with one section devoted to a fine series of Icons of the 14th century.

Then to the Karmeni Most, the so-called Stone Bridge, spanning the River Vardar in ten arches, and built by Tasr Dusan in the 14th century on the foundation of a Roman bridge. It had been renovated by Sultan Murad II, and the bridge-gate pier carries his stallacite decoration. After another splendid lunch at Nevesi, the last visit of the day was to the former Monastery Church of Sveti Djordi (St George) at Stavo Nagoricano in south east Serbia, built on an earlier monastic site by order of King Milutin in 1313. Thursday, and departure from Nis, with a brief visit to the Cele Kule, that is the Skull Tower, a strange and rather horrid place where the skulls of Serb rebels against the Turks in 1809, were built into the mortar and stone of the small square tower, now enclosed in a mausoleum, and then to the Monastery of Ravanica, up a broad, shallow valley under Mount Kucaj, set amidst pear blossom and surrounded by a vast, ruined, fortified enclosure with a large tower or keep arrangement to the north of the church. Ravanica belongs to the Morava school, the last expression of Serbian mediaeval art, and the exterior of the church is highly ornamented in intricate designs of brickwork, especially the cupolas, one in the centre and four at the corners following the usual pattern. The narthex was destroyed and was rebuilt in the 18th century and fragments of its predecessor can still be discerned in its side walls. But the church itself was unroofed for a while and this has rather damaged the frescoes, particularly those of vaults and dome. An important series survive on the walls by the artist Konstantin, including portraits of Prince Lazar who founded the monastery in 1377, and an Entry into Jerusalem. Of particular interest inside

is the architectural form of the four main piers carrying the supola. In the dim light the piers at first glance seem plain and square with rounded corners, but turn out to the cylinders with minor shafts at the four corners, reminiscent of some 13th century work in Western Europe. Here again the church gives an impression of soaring to a great height with the central cupola and the four little ones tucked away in the corners off the side aisles and side chapels.

At Ravanica, Mother Gabriell was still Abbess and had provided Easter eggs for us died red with varied and intricate lace-like designs in white upon them, and executed by waxing the design onto the boiled egg before dyeing.

After the Fortress Monastery of Manasija, built between 1408 and 1418, the final visit on Thursday was to the great fortress of Smederevo, which had become capital of Serbia in 1427 under Prince Djuradj Brankovic and held out against the Turks until 1453. The fortress is triangular in shape where a minor stream meets the Danube, the ancient citadel or keep in the outer corner, and then the other three sides stretching an immense length with twenty five high, bold towers rising above the curtain walls. Conservation work was in progress on the inner gate area, where one of the mighty towers was leaning in towards the inner moat alarmingly and the one surviving wall of the Great Hall was leaning out towards the Danube equally alarmingly.

The final day, in Belgrade, started rather grey and damp, much cooler than normal for the city at this time of year, for the horse chestnuts were already in flower and in full leaf in the avenues. A tour of the city was undertaken with the city guide, first to the Kalemegdam Castle, a further great fortress with its early Serbian work, and later Turkish and Austrian fortifications, now with one of the ditches between the outer and inner walls serving as a military museum. The castle stands within a vast park, above the point where the brown muddy waters of the River Sava meet the greyer waters of the broad Danube. The whole area below the fortress tends to be filled to overflowing by the raising of the general river level caused by the construction of the new hydro-electric dam down the Danube Gorge at the Iron Gates between Yugoslavia and Rumania. The new city, Novi Beograd, lies across the River Sava, with its high-rise blocks and conference centres set in parkland, as is the late President Tito's villa complex and 'Flower House', now his mausoleum. One of the features of the city is the number of parks, the trees and green areas scattered in the old and new part of the town.

The evening began with a reception at the British

Ambassador's Residence, (a strange building modern in its ideas, planning and design, and yet fitted up in traditional 'English' manner), and then in Old Belgrade, within one of its famous old restaurants down by the Sava, a Gala Dinner, with speeches, presentations, and recitations. Background music and songs were provided by the band of energetic cafe musicians, fusing strains from Serbian folk music with the cosmopolitan traditions of the Danube basin—Magyarland to the west and Rumania to the east.