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**LOTTE BEESE, 1930**

LOTTE BEESE, 1930

**Photo** Foto: Hannes Meyer

Getty Research Institute LA / 910170,  
HM 158

# Lotte Stam-Beese (1903 – 1988) From Entwurfsarchitektin to Urban-planning Architect

Lotte Stam-Beese (1903 – 1988)  
Od Entwurfsarchitektin po urbanistku

Hanneke Oosterhof

V Sliezskeu narodená architektka a urbanistka Lotte Stam-Beese sa vďaka svojim moderným povojnovým obytným štvrtiam v holandskom meste Rotterdam stala slávnou nielen v Holandsku, ale aj v okruhu CIAM (Congrès Internationaux d'Architecture Moderne).

Cesta, ktorú musela prejsť, kým dosiahla tento úspech, je fascinujúca a zároveň ukazuje, ako jej štúdium, práca, milostné aféry a vzťahy počas dvadsiatych a tridsiatych rokov 20. storočia natrvalo poznačili celý život. Príspevok sa zameriava na architektkinu kariéru, prihliadajúc predovšetkým na jej pôsobenie v Brne, v architektonickej firme Bohuslava Fuchsa v rokoch 1930 – 1932. Jeho zámerom je ukázať, ako dané obdobie a konkrétne okolnosti prispeli k jej osobnému formovaniu a k rozhodnutiam, ktoré následne v živote spravila. Príspevok vychádza z výskumu literárnych prameňov a z rôznych zdrojov pochádzajúcich z archívov v Českej republike, Nemecku, na Ukrajine, v Spojených štátoch a napokon v Holandsku.

Lotte Beese, ako znie jej dievčenské meno, vyrastala na vidieku neďaleko vtedy nemeckého mesta Breslau (dnešná Wrocław v Poľsku) v protestantskej rodine patriacej do nižšej strednej triedy. Len veľmi málo dievčat z takéhoto prostredia malo v tom čase možnosť získať vyššie vzdelanie.

Po vystriedaní niekoľkých zamestnaní sa jej však podarilo presvedčiť rodičov, že správna voľba pre ňu bude vyučenie sa na Bauhause v Dessau. Mala už 23 rokov, keď tam začala v akademickom roku 1926/1927 študovať, vďaka čomu patrila k jedným z najstarších študentov. Práve v roku 1928 vedenie školy vyzvalo švajčiarskeho architekta Hannesa Meyera, aby založil na Bauhause architektonický kurz nazvaný *die neue baulehre* (nový spôsob stavania). Meyer, inšpirovaný funkcionalistickým dizajnom a marxistickým myslením, vnímal architektúru a stavanie ako elementárny proces, v rámci ktorého sú pre navrhovanie obydli, a teda aj života, kľúčové biologické, mentálne a psychické potreby človeka.

Meyer nielen založil tento kurz, no už o rok neskôr nahradil Gropiusa ako riaditeľa Bauhausu. Na rozdiel od svojho predchodcu mal omnoho menej predsudkov o štúdiu žien a ich vzdelávaní v tých predmetoch, ktoré boli v minulosti prisúdené výhradne mužom. Lotte Beese sa s nadšením zapísala do jeho kurzu a toto štúdium jej aj schválili. Stala sa tak jeho prvou ženskou poslucháčkou. Meyer ju považoval za dobrú študentku, no už menej povzbudivý názor mal na jej nasledujúcu budúcnosť. Podľa neho

by sa Lotte Beese mohla stať architektkou, avšak jedine za predpokladu, že uzavrie manželstvo s architektom a bude u neho pracovať pre jeho firmu. Jeho rada bolo čoskoro takmer do písmena vypočutá, no v tom zmysle, že sa obidvaja do seba zamilovali.

Nápadná aféra medzi študentkou a riaditeľom, ktorý nielenže bol od nej o štrnásť rokov starší, no navyše bol aj ženatý a mal dve deti, bola na Bauhause, aj napriek tomu, že bol známy svojím voľnomyšlienkarstvom, jednoducho neakceptovateľná. Keď teda ich vzťah vyšiel na verejnosť, Meyer ju požiadal, aby kurz opustila. Namiesto toho jej našiel prácu architektky, spočiatku v jeho berlínskej firme, neskôr vo firme architekta Huga Häringa taktiež v Berlíne a napokon v Československu. Nastúpila tam v roku 1930 ako *Entwurfsarchitektin* (architektka – kresliarka) do firmy Bohuslava Fuchsa v Brne, v samotnej bašte československého modernizmu, kde bol Bohuslav Fuchs vedúcou osobnosťou. Tu zostala pracovať takmer dva roky.

Zachované osvedčenie, ktoré Lotte Beese od Bohuslava Fuchsa dostala, dokazuje, že počas roku 1930 pracovala na šiestich projektoch: na dokončení Školy pre ženské povolania Vesna, sporiteľniach v Třebíči a Tišnově, na Moravskej banke v Brne, sanatóriu Morava v Tatranskej Lomnici a na kresbách ocelových konštrukcií pre nízkoprahové ubytovanie v Taliansku.

V lete roku 1930 bol však Hannes Meyer z Bauhausu náhle prepustený. Bol totiž považovaný za „neprijemného a príliš politického“. Presťahoval sa do Moskvy, kde bol vymenovaný za profesora na Štátnej škole výstavby a architektúry, ako aj za hlavného architekta Inštitútu výstavby vyšších a technických škôl. Vtedy oslovil Lotte Beese, aby tam s ním spoločne žila a pracovala. S radosťou súhlasila a odcestovala s ním do ZSSR. Ich spoločný život však nebol šťastný a po niekoľkých mesiacoch sa opäť vrátila do Brna, kde mala možnosť pokračovať vo svojej práci vo Fuchsovej firme. Lotte Beese však už v tom čase bola tehotná a porodila syna, ktorého otcom bol Hannes Meyer.

Hoci jej Fuchs priznal tri mesiace materskej dovolenky, jej korešpondencia s právnikom nám odhaľuje, že jej odmietol platiť príslušnú podporu. Beese ho preto zažalovala na súde a zdá sa, že prípad vyhrala. Táto príhoda však nepomohla ich vzájomným vzťahom a kvôli nej sa už nemohla vrátiť späť na svoje miesto vo Fuchsovej firme. V skutočnosti si ako slobodná matka, navyše v čase prehlbujúcej sa ekonomickej krízy, nebola schopná nájsť v Brne akúkoľvek prácu.

Ako nezamestnaná však mala viac času zúčastňovať sa na brnenskom ľavicovom politickom a kultúrnom živote. Bola členkou Komunistickej strany Československa a kultúrnej organizácie *Levá fronta*. Zúčastňovala sa na stretnutí *Levej fronty* a navštevovala diskusné večery o modernej literatúre a prednášky ľavicových spisovateľov a filozofov. Ako členka KSČ Lotte Beese pomáhala organizovať aj „proletárske večery“ a kampane.

V tom čase však mestská rada zakázala KSČ organizovať zhromaždenia, demonštrácie a verejné stretnutia. Napriek tomu však strana 30. októbra 1931 na počesť štrnásteho výročia vzniku ZSSR, zorganizovala pro-ruskú demonštráciu nasledovanú verejným stretnutím v Robotníckom dome v brnenskej štvrti Tuřany. Beese na tomto stretnutí predniesla prejav, za čo bola udaná na políciu. V Brne sa už viac necítila bezpečne, kontaktovala preto Hannesa Meyera, že sa k nemu chce aj s dieťaťom vrátiť. On už však nemal o opätovné zblíženie záujem. Keďže s nástupom národného socializmu v Nemecku nebol ani návrat tam riešením, Lotte Beese potrebovala alternatívu. Žiť a pracovať v Rusku sa jej zdalo najlepším riešením.

V apríli 1932 odišla pracovať ako architektka na Ukrajinu, do Charkova, a to pravdepodobne vďaka pomoci jej pražských priateľov – Karla Teigeho ľavicového kritika architektúry, publicistu a grafického dizajnéra a modernistického architekta Jaromíra Krejčara. Svojho syna Petra zanechala u Krejčara a jeho vtedajšej manželky, novinárky Mileny Jesenskej.

Lotte Beese v Charkove pracovala pre *Giprograd*, ukrajinskú sekciu Štátneho inštitútu mestského plánovania a navrhovala plány *sotsgorodu* (socialistického mesta) KhTZ – veľkej obytnej štvrte situovanej pozdĺž železničnej trate a vzdalenej desať kilometrov od Charkova. Štvrť, ktorej výstavba sa začala koncom dvadsiatych rokov 20. storočia, bola určená pre zamestnancov neďalekého novopostaveného Charkovského traktorového závodu.

V septembri roku 1932 sa vrátila po syna do Prahy, ktorého vzala so sebou do Charkova a jej vzťah s Hannesom Meyerom sa postupne chýlil ku koncu.

Na jar roku 1933 sa Lotte Beese náhodou stretla so svojim bývalým učiteľom na Bauhause, holandským funkcionalistickým architektom Martom Stamom. Stam zastával dôležitú

funkciu v *Májovej brigáde* (ktorú viedol bývalý mestský architekt Frankfurt Ernst May), kde bol projektovým manažérom výstavby priemyselného mesta Magnitogorsk na Urale. Z ich náhodného stretnutia vznikla ľubostná aféra. Lotte Beese sa pripojila k Martovi Stamovi a spoločne pracovali na rôznych projektoch mestských plánov vrátane renovácie mesta Orsk. No po tom, ako Mart Stam principiálne odmietol výstavbu nového mesta v nehostinnej lokalite blízko Balkaškého jazera, ktorá bola znečistená medenou rudou, museli obidvaja Sovietsky zväz opustiť. Po ich svadbe v Moskve odišli do Holandska, do Amsterdamu, kde následne žili a pracovali. Ich manželstvo sa však časom rozpadlo.

Vtedy už tridsaťsedem ročná sa Lotte Stam-Beese (po rozvoze si ponechala meno Stam) rozhodla dosiahnuť vyššie architektonické vzdelanie v Amsterdame, ktoré absolvovala v roku 1945. Uvedomovala si, že ako kvalifikovaná architektka má omnoho viac šancí nájsť si v rámci jej obľúbenej profesie prácu – a uspela. V roku 1946 bola vymenovaná za urbanistku Rotterdamu, ktorý bol zničený nemeckým bombovým náletom 14. mája 1940. V roku 1955 bola povýšená na hlavnú architektku a poverená navrhovaním nových a moderných obytných štvrtí pre celé mesto. Jej návrhy pozostávali z troch veľkých štvrtí realizovaných vo funkcionalistickom duchu.

Počas svojho pôsobenia v architektonickej firme Bohuslava Fuchsa v Brne sa Lotte Beese dobre oboznámila s modernistickou architektúrou. Rovnako tam spoznala podobne zmýšľajúcich ľudí, získala priateľov a stala sa politicky aktívnou. Toto všetko ju povzbudilo, aby išla pracovať do nového sovietskeho štátu a sformovalo jej politické povedomie. Oblasť, ktorá ju zaujímala a stala sa jej špecializáciou, nebola síce architektúra individuálnych budov, na ktorú sa zameriavala počas svojho pôsobenia v Československu, ale sociálne bývanie v urbánnom prostredí. Navrhovala veľké obytné štvrte uprostred zelene, kde, ako dúfala, si budú ľudia navzájom pomáhať a spolupracovať so svojimi susedmi. Vo svojich prednáškach pravidelne používala nasledujúci citát z knihy *Citadela* Antoina de Saint-Exupéryho: „*car je suis d'abord celui qui habite*“, ktorý interpretovala v tom zmysle, že „*ľudskou bytosťou sa môžete stať jedine vtedy, ak skutočne máte domov*“.

The Silesian-born urban-planning architect Lotte Stam-Beese became famous not only in the Netherlands, but also in the circles of the CIAM (Congrès Internationaux d'Architecture Moderne), for her designs for modern post-war housing districts in the Dutch city of Rotterdam.

The path she travelled to get there in her career was a fascinating one, and shows how the course of her life was determined by her training, work, love affairs and relationships during the 1920s and 1930s. This article takes a closer look at her career, with special emphasis on her work at Bohuslav Fuchs's architectural firm in Brno from 1930 to 1932 and her other activities in Czechoslovakia. It will attempt to show how this period and these circumstances helped shape her personal development and the choices she made in her life.

### **The first female student at the Bauhaus's *die neue baulehre*<sup>1</sup> course**

Lotte Beese – her maiden name – grew up in the countryside near what was then the German city of Breslau (now Wrocław in Poland). She was the second and youngest daughter of a German railway clerk and a Polish farmer's daughter. In those days, few girls from such a lower-middle-class Protestant background received a secondary education.

## HANNES MEYER, 1930

HANNES MEYER, 1930

**Photo** Foto: Lotte Beese,  
Getty Research Institute LA / 910170,  
HM 161



After doing several minor jobs and taking drawing lessons at the Breslau academy of art, she persuaded her parents that a course at the Bauhaus in Dessau was the right choice for her. She was drawn to the institution's non-conformist climate and international outlook.

When she began studying there in the 1926 – 1927 academic year, she was already 23, making her one of the older students. In her first year, as part of the preliminary course, she was taught by the artists Josef Albers and Wassily Kandinsky and the graphic designer Joost Schmidt.<sup>2</sup> After completing the preliminary course, she continued her studies in a craft workshop – as was customary with almost all female students, the weaving workshop run by Gunta Stölzl. Weaving was considered the most suitable technique for women, and so the Bauhaus weaving class was an entirely female affair. She was also taught by the artists Paul Klee and László Moholy-Nagy.<sup>3</sup> Out of personal interest, she also began taking photographs with a second-hand camera she had bought herself. She mainly produced portraits, often in close-up. Her group portrait of the female students lying on the floor of the weaving class adorned the cover of a Bauhaus prospectus,<sup>4</sup> and from the 1960s up to today, many of her photographs have been used in publications on the Bauhaus.<sup>5</sup>

However, she did not want to specialise in either photography or weaving, for there was a new opportunity that interested her. The Swiss architect Hannes Meyer had been asked to set up an architecture course at the Bauhaus, entitled *die neue baulehre* ('the new way of building'). Architecture had previously been treated as a minor subject, in which training was limited to students studying and working at Bauhaus director Walter Gropius's architectural firm.<sup>6</sup> Inspired by Functionalist design and Marxist thinking, Meyer saw architecture and building as an elementary process, in which people's biological, mental and physical needs were crucial to the design of housing, and hence of living. He believed the aim should be the welfare of the whole people, as captured by his personal motto *Volksbedarf statt Luxusbedarf* ('the needs of the people, rather than the need for luxury'). Lotte Beese was keen to take the new architecture course, since not only design and building that appealed to her, but also the social and humane goals that Hannes Meyer attached to them. Meyer, who not only set up the course but a year later also succeeded Gropius as director of the Bauhaus, was less prejudiced than his predecessor about the idea of women studying subjects previously reserved for men. Beese was allowed to take the course, thus becoming the first female student.<sup>7</sup>

Under Meyer's directorship, the number of visiting teachers at the Bauhaus was greatly expanded. Among them was the Functionalist architect Mart Stam, who lectured there in summer 1928 and winter 1928 – 1929 on elementary building theory and urban planning. Beese attended his lectures on urban planning – never imagining that four years later she would be working and living with the Dutch teacher and architect.

On the practical side, a number of advanced students were assisting in one of Hannes Meyer's ongoing projects undertaken with his associate Hans Wittwer: a trade union training centre in Bernau, near Berlin. Beese was involved in the design and furnishing of the teachers' dwellings. She also produced drawings for the design competition for the Harzgerode sanatorium west of Dessau.

Meyer considered her a good student; but he was less encouraging about her future prospects. She could become an architect – provided she married a male architect and worked for his firm. Meyer did not feel she would be able to win contracts on her own.<sup>8</sup> His advice was soon followed almost to the letter – for the two fell in love. Although the Bauhaus was known for its free-thinking attitudes, a conspicuous affair between a female student and the director, who was not only fourteen years older but also married with two children, was simply not acceptable. When their relationship became public knowledge, Meyer told her to quit the course. It seems not to have occurred to him that he too should accept the consequences of their 'impossible' relationship.

### **Berlin – Vienna – Berlin**

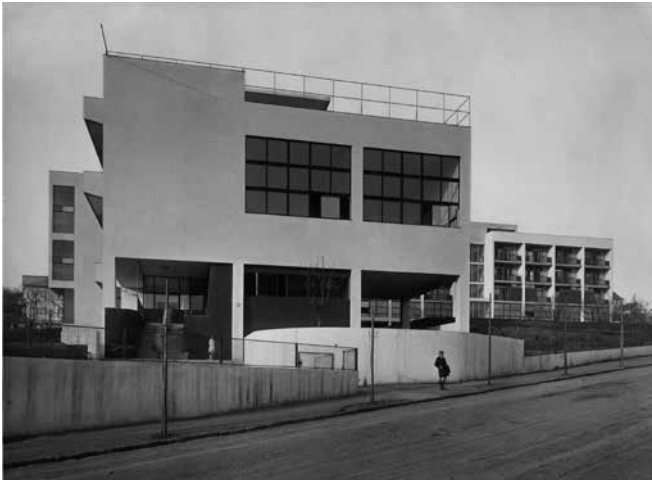
Hannes gave Lotte a job at his architectural firm in Berlin, where, together with other Bauhaus students, she was able to produce drawings for the completion of the trade union training centre in Bernau. Yet she was not happy there, since she missed her previous daily contact and work with Meyer. He tried to find her another job through his network; but the architect and former Bauhaus student Walter Tralau, now office manager at Otto Haesler's architecture firm in the town of Celle (near Hannover), turned him down. The reason can be found in a letter to his Bauhaus friend Konrad Püschel: Tralau did not 'like working with women'.<sup>9</sup> In September 1929, on her own initiative, Beese found a three-month job at the recently opened Socio-Economic Museum in Vienna, run by the philosopher and Marxist sympathiser Otto Neurath, whom she knew from his lectures at the Bauhaus. At the time, Neurath was most famous for inventing, in partnership with the German-Dutch graphic designer Gerd Arntz, the ISOTYPE (International System Of Typographic Picture Education), in which figures and words from statistics were visualised as recognisable pictograms. From Neurath, Beese learned how to draw these visual statistics. When the job was over she told Hannes she would like to return to Dessau; but he refused.

He found her another job in Berlin: at Hugo Häring's architecture firm. Together with such architects as Hans Scharoun, Bruno and Max Taut, Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, Peter Behrens and Hans Poelzig, Häring belonged to the circle of Modernist architects *Der Ring*, set up in Berlin in 1926. In those days he had plenty of work, including the project for the construction of the Siemensstadt Housing Estate in Berlin's Charlottenburg-Wilmersdorf district. A team of seven architects led by Hans Scharoun worked on this extensive housing estate for employees of the Siemens & Haske company and their families.

Lotte Beese herself also ended up living on a Modernist estate known as *Onkel Tom's Hütte* ('Uncle Tom's Cabin'), in the Zehlendorf district of Berlin. It is located in attractive wooded surroundings that she, being a nature-lover, must have enjoyed. But she was less charmed by her work, which she found too subordinate – and she told Meyer so. Once again he used his network to find her a new job, this time at Bohuslav Fuchs's architecture firm in the Czechoslovakian city of Brno. Meyer was friends with the Prague-based left-wing architecture critic, publicist and graphic designer Karel Teige, who in turn was in contact with Fuchs. Teige gave lectures at the Bauhaus on such topics as art during the first decade of the Czechoslovak Republic, contemporary literature and new forms in typography, while Meyer lectured in Prague on '*lebendiges bauen*' ('living construction').<sup>10</sup>

### **Entwurfsarchitektin at Bohuslav Fuchs's firm**

In April 1930 Beese began work as an *Entwurfsarchitektin* ('design architect') at Fuchs's firm – in the strongest bastion of Czechoslovakian Modernism, for Brno had a particularly large number of striking new Modernist buildings. Newly graduated architects from Vienna and Prague moved there, including Fuchs, who had studied and worked in Prague. In the early 1920s, Czechoslovak architecture displayed influences from the Amsterdam School, De Stijl and Le Corbusier's Purist



**VESNA INDUSTRIAL SCHOOL FOR GIRLS, BRNO, DESIGN: BOHUSLAV FUCHS AND JOSEF POLÁŠEK, 1929**

ŠKOLA PŘE ŽENSKÉ POVOLANÍ  
VESNA, BRNO, NÁVRH BOHUSLAV  
FUCHS A JOSEF POLÁŠEK, 1929

Source Zdroj: Špilberk Muzeum, Brno

**SANATORIUM MORAVA,  
TATRANSKÁ LOMNICA, DESIGN  
BOHUSLAV FUCHS, 1930**

SANATÓRIUM MORAVA,  
TATRANSKÁ LOMNICA, NÁVRH  
BOHUSLAV FUCHS, 1930

Source Zdroj: Špilberk Muzeum, Brno



architecture, and later developed a coherent Functionalist architecture of its own, with a markedly objective as well as subtler formal concept. Fuchs, whose work has been described as ‘a particularly elegant form of functionalism’<sup>11</sup> was in 1923 appointed project manager and city architect at Brno’s Department of Architecture and Urban Development, and in 1929 he set up his own architecture firm there. By then, according to the architecture critic Jan Sapák, he had already designed 42 Modernist buildings, seven of which were of outstanding architectural quality, including Café Zeman, the Ceremonial Hall/Central Cemetery and Hotel Avion.<sup>12</sup>

How many people were employed at his firm when Lotte Beese went to work there, and whether she was his only female assistant at the time, is not clear from the literature or the archives relating to Fuchs.<sup>13</sup> The firm was probably not very large, for starting his own business and recruiting the necessary staff would have been a risky undertaking during the Depression.

A surviving certificate that Beese received from him shows that she had worked on six projects during 1930:<sup>14</sup> completion of the Vesna industrial school for girls in Brno, the savings banks in Třebíč and Tišnov, the Moravian Bank in Brno, the Morava sanatorium in Tatranská Lomnica, and drawings for steel structures in low-rise dwellings in Italy. What her work on these projects actually involved is equally unclear. The fact that Fuchs referred to her on the certificate as *Entwurfsarchitektin* and that her own letterheads included the title *frau lotte beese architektin* does suggest that she not only produced drawings on behalf of her superiors, but also designs of her own.

Lotte Beese and Hannes Meyer kept in regular touch by letter and postcard.<sup>15</sup> In this correspondence, unlike Meyer, she scarcely ever wrote about her work or working conditions. One postcard she sent him reveals that she had travelled to Slovakia for the Tatranská Lomnica project: ‘Today and tomorrow I’m at a building site up in the Tatras ... You’re having a tough time right now – lots of trouble, lots of work. But all my good, strong thoughts are with you – with all of you! If you can find a use for me, I’ll come to Dessau ... you know that’s all I need to say. Your Lotte.’<sup>16</sup>

Here she was referring to the problems Meyer was having with his work at the Bauhaus. He was considered awkward, and too ‘political’, which in July 1930 would lead to his dismissal. The Morava sanatorium, nestling cosily against the mountains with its flat roofs, broad sun decks, large glass walls in the corridor and the elegant touch of a loggia, went down in history as the first Functionalist building in the High Tatras.<sup>17</sup> The fact that Hannes Meyer also paid a visit there, probably in 1930, can be seen from a family album photograph that was printed in the publication *Orbis Pictus Bohuslava Fuchse* (‘Bohuslav Fuchs’s world in pictures’).<sup>18</sup> Showing Fuchs and Meyer lying in the grass at Tatranská Lomnica, the picture was almost certainly taken by Lotte Beese, as this pose – people lying on the floor or on the ground – is a recurrent motif in her photographs.

A letter has also survived in which she wrote to Hannes Meyer about the low-rise housing project in Italy, and explained why she could not come to see him: ‘Right now I can’t get away, for I can’t abandon my work – modular structures for low-rise housing in Italy. I’m finally so delighted to get building and now, for a while, no longer have to take part in competitions – fortunately I passed the last one on 15 August.’<sup>19</sup> What she liked most was actually working on building projects, rather than submitting designs – which might or might not get built – for a competition,



**BOHUSLAV FUCHS (LEFT)  
AND HANNES MEYER (RIGHT),  
TATRANSKÁ LOMNICA, CA. 1930**

BOHUSLAV FUCHS (VĚVAVO)  
A HANNES MEYER (VPRAVO),  
TATRANSKÁ LOMNICA, OKOLO 1930

Photo Foto: probably made by Lotte  
Beese, private collection



even though the Morava sanatorium project was itself the result of a competition. I am not aware which competition project she was referring to in her letter.

Hannes Meyer paid Lotte Beese several visits at her various addresses in Brno. They also regularly spent a weekend in Prague, where they were able to make use of their friend the actress Nina Balcarová's flat. Here, together with Meyer, Beese met Karel Teige and Functionalist architects such as Jaromír Krejcar and Arnošt Wiesner. It was Teige that helped her spread critical reports in the Czech and Slovak press about what they considered Hannes Meyer's wrongful dismissal by the Bauhaus. Most of these reports, six in number, were published in the August and September 1930 issues of the journal *Tvorba*.<sup>20</sup> According to a letter from Beese to Meyer, the journal *Index* and the left-wing cultural organisation *Levá Fronta* wrote letters of protest to the Dessau town council.<sup>21</sup> But Meyer was dismissed all the same.

However, he soon found another job. He had set his sights on Russia, where he wanted to work on the development of the new Soviet state. In September 1930, he was appointed professor at the State College of Building and Architecture and chief architect at the Institute for the Construction of Higher and Technical Schools, both based in Moscow. Seven former students from his department at the Bauhaus were initially able to start work on the school-building projects. Meyer's group became known as the *Rotfront* ('Red Front') or *Rote Brigade* ('Red Brigade').

### Adventure in Moscow

Beese wrote to Meyer that she dreamed of being with him in Moscow. Having just moved there, it seems he could not live without her either, and wanted her to join him at once. The best way to do this was as 'his wife'. Meyer wrote to her: 'I wanted to ask you to come here at once. All the arrangements have now been made ... I've been told you can get here faster and more easily if you come here as my wife, rather than apply to work here from abroad. You can do whatever you like here – there's any amount of work ... I'd like you to leave Fuchs as soon as possible. Can you manage that by the end of the month [October]? If necessary on bad terms, but only if that can't be helped ... you see, I'd like to have you here soon, whatever it takes. Please, please, come here ... dear little Lotte.'<sup>22</sup>

Rather impulsively, with hindsight, Beese resigned from Fuchs's firm, and in November 1930 she set off for Moscow as 'Mrs Meyer'. She moved into Meyer's room in the 'Bauhaus commune' building on Arbat Square.

Her dreams came to nothing. On arrival in Moscow, to her complete surprise, 'Mrs Meyer' was confronted with a scruffy-looking man with a long beard, a corduroy suit and shoes that were far too big for him. He refused to accept the food coupons that were issued to foreign employees of the Soviet state. She tried to persuade him otherwise, but out of solidarity with the Russian workers he insisted. Beese saw this as 'the beginning of our conflict.'<sup>23</sup> She probably worked on the school-building projects in Moscow, but not for long. In late December, she moved back to Brno, where she was able to resume work at Fuchs's firm and find a new flat.

### A culturally and politically active unmarried mother

Although living with Hannes Meyer had not been a success, Lotte Beese was now pregnant by him, and she hoped that the birth of the child would 'bridge the gulf' between them.<sup>24</sup>

It is not known which projects she worked on after returning to Bohuslav Fuchs's firm in Brno. Given the period, these may have included the completion of the savings bank in Tišnov and perhaps the Eliška Machová dormitory at the Vesna industrial school for girls, for which it formed a physically connected annex.<sup>25</sup>

On 31 July, Lotte Beese gave birth to a son named Johann Peter (known for short as Peter). Although Fuchs had granted her three months' maternity leave, correspondence with a lawyer reveals that he refused to pay the necessary allowance. Beese took him to court, and appears to have won the case.<sup>26</sup> This did not improve relations between them, and she could no longer return to her job at his firm. Indeed, as an unmarried mother, she was no longer able to find any kind of work in Brno, especially at a time of deepening economic crisis.

Now unemployed, she had more time to take part in Brno's left-wing political and cultural life. She was a member of the Czechoslovakian communist party KSČ (*Komunistická strana Československa*)<sup>27</sup> and the previously noted cultural organisation *Levá Fronta*. She attended *Levá Fronta* meetings, where avant-garde films such as her former teacher Moholy-Nagy's *Marseille – Vieux Port* and *Light-play Black – White – Grey* were shown; and she went to discussion evenings on modern literature

**LOTTE BEESE WITH SON PETER,  
BRNO, AUGUST 1931**

LOTTE BEESE SO SYNOM PETROM,  
BRNO, AUGUST 1931

Source Zdroj: Collection A. R. Stam



and lectures by left-wing writers and thinkers on such political and historical topics as the communist system in Russia, pacifism, Karl Marx's political theory and fascism in Italy.<sup>28</sup>

A widely publicised event was Hannes Meyer's lecture in Brno on 29 September 1931 on his work as an architect in Russia. It was on this occasion that he first saw his son Peter and signed a document at the Brno city hall stating that he was the boy's father and official guardian.<sup>29</sup> The couple's life together in Moscow and the birth of their child had chilled their once passionate relationship, especially as far as Meyer was concerned.

As a member of the KSČ, Lotte Beese helped to organise 'proletarian evenings' and campaigns, even though by this date the city council had already banned KSČ assemblies, demonstrations and public meetings. On 30 October 1931, to mark the fourteenth anniversary of the USSR, the party organised a pro-Russian demonstration followed by a public meeting at the Workers' House in a district of Brno called Tuřany. Beese gave a speech at the meeting, and was reported to the police.<sup>30</sup> She stated in the report that she was married, for being an unmarried mother, as well as a foreigner who had worked in communist Russia, would probably have made her seem even more suspect.

No longer feeling safe in Brno, she told Meyer she wanted to join him with their child; but he was no longer interested. He fiercely criticised her 'political activities' in Brno, and said she was in the midst of a 'serious personal crisis' that she needed to recover from. Furthermore, if she wanted to work and live in Russia as a communist, she would first have to study hard and keep to the party's rules, otherwise she would be a 'red dilettante'.<sup>31</sup> Meyer also made a point of adding that she knew he had been living with the former Bauhaus student and weaver Lena Bergner for some time. He and Lena were in a totally non-committal, comradesly relationship that he had no intention of breaking up.

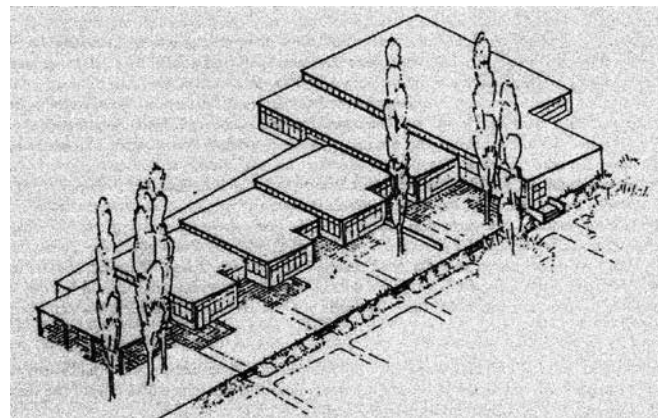
Now Meyer had made clear he had no interest in seeing her and 'their' child in Moscow, Beese needed an alternative. With the rise of national socialism in Germany, returning there was hardly an option. She had heard of 'purges' at the Bauhaus in which fifteen politically active students had been expelled by the police, and the foreigners among them deported from Germany. Working and living in the USSR seemed a better idea. In April 1932, probably with help from Karel Teige and Jaromír Krejcar, she set off for the Ukrainian city of Kharkov to work as an architect. She left her son Peter with Krejcar and his then wife, the journalist Milena Jesenská. At first she wanted to make sure the situation in Kharkov would allow her to live there with Peter. In 1934, Jaromír Krejcar and the architects Josef Špalek and Václav Rajniř also left for the USSR to work in the Constructivist architect Moisei Ginzburg's group at the State Institute of Town Planning.<sup>32</sup>



GROUND-PLAN KHzZ, KHARKOV  
SIGNED BY LOTTE BEESE, 1932

PÖDORYS KHzZ, CHARKOV,  
SIGNOVANÉ LOTTE BEESE, 1932

Source Zdroj: Het Nieuwe Instituut,  
Rotterdam, STAB ph 174



AXONOMETRY OF A CRÈCHE FOR  
90 CHILDREN IN ORSK, DESIGN:  
LOTTE BEESE, 1934, EXECUTION  
UNKNOWN

AXONOMETRIA, JASLE PRE 90 DETÍ  
V ORSKU, NÁVRH LOTTE BEESE, 1934,  
REALIZÁCIA NEZNÁMA

Source Zdroj: De 8 en Opbouw (1935) 2,  
p. 19.

## Work on the sotsgorods, and emigration to the Netherlands

Lotte Beese's work for *Giprograd*, the Ukrainian section of the State Institute of Town Planning, is confirmed from a number of personally signed ground-plan drawings for a housing district, photographs of which have survived in her personal archive at Het Nieuwe Instituut in Rotterdam. There are indications on the drawings that they were produced for *Giprograd*, and she wrote 'for Kharkov' on the back of one of them. Research in Kharkov and Kiev (now more generally known by their Ukrainian names Kharkiv and Kyiv) reveals that they were made for the *sotsgorod* ('socialist town') KHzZ – a large, linear housing district on a railway line ten kilometres from the city centre of Kharkov. Built from the late 1920s onwards, the district was intended for employees of the nearby, newly-built Kharkov Tractor Factory (KHzZ is the acronym of the factory's local name). In the years when Beese lived in Kharkov, the *sotsgorod* was the largest construction project in the city, supervised by the Ukrainian architect and urban planner Pavel Fedotovych Alyoshin. On her signed drawings for housing districts, we find parallel four-storey rows of dwellings interspersed with crèches, schools, green areas and a central kitchen, which resemble other ground-plan drawings for the same *sotsgorod*.<sup>33</sup>

In September 1932 she went to collect her son from Prague and take him to Kharkov. While working during the day, she left him in the care of a homeless girl called Manya, who moved in with her.<sup>34</sup> The relationship with Hannes Meyer gradually came to an end.

In spring 1933, something happened that would lead to a new phase in Beese's life. In Kharkov she ran into her former Bauhaus teacher, the Dutch architect Mart Stam, who had been given a leading position in the 'May Brigade' (led by Frankfurt's former city architect Ernst May) as project manager for the construction of the industrial city of Magnitogorsk in the Urals. Stam's wife Leni Lebeau and their daughter Jetti had also come to Magnitogorsk; but the marriage had broken down, and in early 1932 the mother and daughter had returned to the Netherlands. Stam was in Kharkov for talks with the regional authorities on the expansion plans for the Ukrainian town of Makeyevka (now Makiivka). His chance encounter with Lotte Beese turned into a love affair. Like Hannes Meyer, he was a good friend of Karel Teige's, whom he had known from the CIAM congresses,<sup>35</sup> such as the 1930 Brussels congress on 'Rational Land Development', to which they

had both contributed.<sup>36</sup> Teige had translated several articles by Stam for the Czechoslovak journal *Stavba*.<sup>37</sup> In Prague, Stam had designed the column-supported Modernist Palička house in the Baba estate, which was completed in 1932.<sup>38</sup> Together with her son Peter and his nanny Many, Beese joined Mart Stam and so ended up in the 'May Brigade' group of architects. She and Stam worked on various urban planning projects, including the renovation of the town of Orsk. She designed a school and some crèches for the town, but it is not known whether they were built according to her designs.

Like the other foreign architects in the USSR,<sup>39</sup> Lotte Beese was confronted with a shortage of building materials and the need to work directly among unskilled labourers – problems she had not encountered back in Czechoslovakia. At the same time, a wind of change was blowing through Russian architecture. Stalin now utterly rejected the once-favoured, internationally famed Constructivist or avant-garde architecture. Public buildings would henceforth have to display historical, classical features that would also lend the *sotsgorods* an air of prosperity.

Following Mart Stam's refusal on principle to build a new city in an inhospitable area polluted with copper ore near Lake Balkash, the couple had to quit the USSR. Before departing for Stam's native Netherlands in November 1934, they were married in Moscow. And so a new love brought Lotte Beese to a new country where she would continue to live until her death in 1988.

### **An urban-planning architect in Rotterdam**

On arrival in the Netherlands the couple set up their own firm, *Stam en Beese Architecten*, in Amsterdam. The firm's broad field of work included photography, advertisements, trade fair design, shop interiors, renovation, new construction, furnishing and furniture design. But, owing to the economic crisis, the small business never really got off the ground.

In 1935 the couple had a daughter called Ariane. Mart Stam sent Karel Teige a note that read, among other things, 'we just want to let you know that we now have a beautiful daughter, and that Lotti and the baby are doing very well.'<sup>40</sup> But within a few years the couple's marriage broke down, and in 1943 they were divorced.

By then, aged 37, Lotte Stam-Beese – she kept the name 'Stam' after her divorce – was taking a course in advanced and higher architectural teaching in Amsterdam, and she graduated in 1945. She realised that as a qualified architect she had more chance of finding a job in her favourite profession – and she succeeded. In 1946, she was appointed as an urban-planning architect in Rotterdam, which had been devastated in a German bombing raid on 14 May 1940. It was remarkable that she was appointed to this post not only as a woman, but also as someone with a German background. In 1955 she was promoted to chief architect, and was given the assignment of designing new, modern housing for the whole city.

Her designs included three large housing districts with a mainly Functionalist design concept. In the first, called Kleinpolder (1946 – 1952), she introduced the *woonpad* or 'residential path', a footpath amid green space that was connected to a traffic street. A later one called Pendrecht (1948 – 1952), which she designed in partnership with the architect Jaap Bakema, included the first *wooneenheid* or 'residential unit' in the Netherlands: a combination of juxtaposed single-family dwellings, old people's dwellings and flats that was a repeated pattern throughout the district. The Pendrecht designs were discussed at the CIAM congresses in Bergamo in 1949 and Hoddesdon in 1951. Her last design for a large district was Ommoord (1962 – 1969) – the second housing district in the Netherlands, after Amsterdam's Bijlmer district, with a relatively large amount of high-rise construction. Some of the blocks of flats had an unusual shape: they did not consist of a single straight line, but were angled. Together with the other, taller blocks, the 'angle' formed an 'inner space' with playgrounds, footpaths and vegetation.

As an urban-planning architect, Stam-Beese did not produce designs for individual buildings. In this she differed from her teachers Meyer, Fuchs and Stam. Mart Stam made a name for himself in the field of social housing in 1928 by designing 1,200 modern dwellings in Frankfurt's Hellerhof housing district in partnership with the Swiss architect Werner Moser. The district consisted of strictly organised linear blocks. The housing districts designed by Lotte Stam-Beese were less strict, showing her to be an exponent of a 'new' post-war functionalism in which the 'rough edges' were gradually smoothed over.

Even after retiring in 1968, Stam-Beese continued to work part-time on the completion of structural drawings for the expansion of eastern Rotterdam. She found it hard to stop working.



**KLEINPOLDER, ROTTERDAM WITH  
'RESIDENTIAL PATH'**

KLEINPOLDER, ROTTERDAM,  
S, REZIDENČNOU CESTOU'

Photo Foto: Willem van Rooij, 2015



**AERIAL PHOTOGRAPH,  
PENDRECHT, ROTTERDAM**

LETECKÝ POHLAD NA ŠTVRŤ  
PENDRECHT, ROTTERDAM

Photo Foto: Hofmeester-Aero Camera,  
1953



**FLATS IN OMMOORD, ROTTERDAM**

BYTY VO ŠTVRTI OMMOORD,  
ROTTERDAM

Photo Foto: Willem van Rooij, 2015

## Conclusion

In Rotterdam, after many years spent acquiring experience in various countries and with various teachers, Lotte Stam-Beese was finally able to develop her potential to the full and launch her personal career. The lessons she learned in the course of her life were not only about architecture, but also about love and politics.

At the Bauhaus and in Brno, she had met like-minded people and made friends. Her attendance at *Levá Fronta* meetings and her active membership of the communist party were an important basis for her decision to go and work in the new Soviet state, where she picked up valuable experience in the discipline of urban planning.

She remained faithful to the principle of 'historical materialism' within Marxist doctrine, in which 'being' determined consciousness rather than vice versa – an ideology meanwhile rejected by Hannes Meyer and Mart Stam. Lotte Stam-Beese could express her socialist ideas in her favourite field of work: social housing in relation to an urban environment.

She designed large estates in green surroundings, where she hoped people would assist and cooperate with their neighbours. Her plans and designs also tried to cater to the needs and wishes of today's and tomorrow's many residents. In her lectures she regularly used the following quote about Antoine de Saint-Exupéry's posthumous book *Citadelle*: 'car je suis d'abord celui qui habite', which she interpreted as 'you can only be a human being if you truly have a home.'

## APPEAL

I would like to hear from readers who can let me know how and where I could discover who was on the staff of Bohuslav Fuchs's architectural firm in Brno between 1930 and 1932. If you have any relevant information, please e-mail me. Thank you in advance!  
Hanneke Oosterhof

## VÝZVA

Rada by som sa skontaktovala s čitateľmi, ktorí mi vedia sprostredkovať informácie o zamestnancoch Fuchsovej brnenského ateliéru medzi rokmi 1930 a 1932. Ak máte relevantné informácie prosím napíšte mi ich cez e-mail. Vopred ďakujem!  
Hanneke Oosterhof

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- 1** The original German spelling, including the non-standard use of small initial letters, has been retained throughout the article.
- 2** Anonymous: draft article on Lotte Beese's training at the Bauhaus (typescript), n. y., p. 5. Bauhaus Archiv, Berlin, Lotte Beese archive, File 1.
- 3** *Ibid*, p. 13.
- 4** *junge menschen kommt ans bauhaus! bauhaus 2, 1928, 4.*
- 5** For example in: Bauhaus Fotografie. Ed. Fricke Roswitha. Düsseldorf, Marzona 1982, 320 pp. This includes over twenty photographs by Lotte Beese.
- 6** BAUER, Catherine I.: *Architekturstudentinnen in der Weimarer Republik: Bauhaus und Tessenow SchülerInnen*, Kassel. Universität Kassel (PhD thesis), 2003, p. 66.
- 7** See note 2, p. 24.
- 8** Interview by Cor de Wit with Lotte Stam-Beese (audio cassette), Krimpen aan den IJssel, 15 February 1976. Het Nieuwe Instituut (HNI), Rotterdam, WITC archive, CD 1.
- 9** Walter Tralau to Konrad Püschel, 25 May 1929. Sammlungsarchiv Stiftung Bauhaus (SSB), Dessau. I 14961-1. Quote translated from the original German.
- 10** Letters of confirmation from Hannes Meyer to Karel Teige about Teige's lectures at the Bauhaus in July 1929 and February 1930, and announcement of Meyer's lecture at the central library in Prague on 14 December 1929. Hannes Meyer archive, Deutsches Architektur Museum (DAM), Frankfurt, serial no. 164-102-020.
- 11** COHEN, Jean-Louis: *The Future of Architecture: since 1889*. New York, Phaidon Press 2012, p. 260.
- 12** SAPÁK, Jan: Bohuslav Fuchs. In: Bohuslav Fuchs 1895 – 1972: *Architekt der tschechischen Avantgarde*. Ed. Adolph Stiller. Salzburg / Vienna, M. Salzmann 2010, p. 14.
- 13** Written communications to the author from Jindřich Chatrný, Špilberk Muzeum, Brno, 17 July 2014 and 7 March 2016.
- 14** SCHILT, Jeroen – SELIER, Herman: *Van de oevers van de Oder tot Krimpen aan den IJssel*. In: Lotte Stam-Beese. Eds. Hélène Damen – Anne-Mie Devolder. Rotterdam, De Hef 1993, p. 14. The certificate, which had been in the possession of Beese and Meyer's son Peter Stam, was untraceable after he died in 2000.
- 15** The surviving correspondence, some 100 letters and postcards, can be found at the Getty Research Institute (GRI), Los Angeles, Special Collections, access no. 910170.
- 16** Beese to Meyer, 4 May 1930, Getty Research Institute (GRI), Los Angeles, HM 94. Quote translated from the original German.
- 17** MORAVČÍKOVÁ, Henrieta: *Ein tschechischer Architekt in der Slowakei: eine ambivalente Position*. In: STILLER, Adolf 2010, p. 128.
- 18** *Orbis Pictus Bohuslava Fuchse*. Eds. Jindřich Chatrný – Dagmar Černoušková – Pavla Seitlová. Brno, Muzeum města Brna, 2012, photograph no. 19. The year is given as 1933, by which time Meyer was living in the USSR; a more likely date seems 1930, when Lotte Beese was working and living in Tatranská Lomnica.
- 19** Beese to Meyer, 18 August 1930, Getty Research Institute (GRI), HM 98. Quote translated from the original German.
- 20** With thanks to Karolína Košťálová of the National Library of the Czech Republic for tracing the reports.
- 21** Beese to Meyer, Brno, 10 August 1930, Getty Research Institute (GRI), HM 93.
- 22** Meyer to Beese, 19 October 1930, Getty Research Institute (GRI), HM 33. Quote translated from the original German.
- 23** de WIT, Cor: Lotte Stam-Beese (1903 – 1988): 'Je moest kiezen, zwart of wit...' Op weg naar helderheid: ontmoetingen en herinneringen van een architect. Apeldoorn, published privately, 2005, p. 39.
- 24** Beese to Meyer, 18 July 1931, Getty Research Institute (GRI), HM 99.
- 25** CHATRNÝ, Jindřich – ČERNOUŠKOVÁ, Dagmar: Bohuslav Fuchs: *Architekt, Hochschulprofessor und Theoretiker*. In: Jindřich Chatrný – Dagmar Černoušková – Pavla Seitlová, 2012, 132. pp.
- 26** Correspondence with the lawyer Dr Immanuel Stern, Brno, 12 September 1932, Getty Research Institute (GRI), HM 104 – 105.
- 27** Lotte Beese joined the KSČ in June 1930. Written communication to the author from Astrid Volbert, 26 November 2014.
- 28** Moravský zemský archiv v Brně, Brno. Policejní ředitelství, Brno. B 26, box 2549, no. 1697. With thanks to Markéta Svobodová for tracing this archive.
- 29** This document from the Brno City District Civil Court, dated 29 September 1931, can be found in Ariane R. Stam's collection.
- 30** Moravský zemský archiv v Brně, Brno. Policejní ředitelství. B 26, box 2239, no. 3232/31. With thanks to Filip Bloem for the translation.
- 31** Meyer to Beese, 29 November 1931, Getty Research Institute (GRI), HM 24.
- 32** ŠVÁCHA, Rostislav: *Jaromír Krejcar 1895 – 1949*. Prague, Galerie Jaroslava Fragnera 1995, p. 126.
- 33** Ground plans, designs and historical photographs of KhTZ can be found in the Zabolotny State Science Library of Architecture and Construction in Kyiv. The two surviving KhTZ housing districts display similarities to the ground-plan drawings signed by Lotte Beese. With thanks to Jenia Gubkina and Natalka Neshevets for consulting the archives in Ukraine.
- 34** de WIT, Cor: Lotte Stam-Beese, pp. 40 – 41.
- 35** The CIAM congresses were held from 1928 to 1959.
- 36** SOMER, Kees: *De functionele stad: de CIAM en Cornelis van Eesteren*. 1928 – 1960. Rotterdam, NAI Uitgevers 2007, p. 35.
- 37** ABC-Beiträge zum Bauen: reprint, kommentar. Ed. Werner Möller. Baden, Lars Müller 1993, p. 45.
- 38** JACOBS, Stef: *Mart Stam: dichter van staal en glas*. Amsterdam, Universiteit van Amsterdam (PhD thesis) 2016, p. 168.
- 39** The number of foreign architects, engineers and urban planners working in the USSR in the 1920s and 1930s has been estimated at 20,000 to 30,000. See DAVID-FOX, Michael: *Showcasing the Great Experiment: Cultural Diplomacy & Western Visitors to the Soviet Union 1921 – 1941*. Oxford, Oxford University Press 2012, p. 184.
- 40** Stam to Teige, 28 November 1935, Literární Archiv Národního Musea, Prague, Karel Teige archive, Stam, Mart & Lotte, nos. 378 – 382, typescript. Quote translated from the original German.
- 41** Quote translated from the original Dutch.



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**Map of Belgrade with location of Kneževac-Kijevo  
housing estate, courtesy of Branislav Milenković**

Mapa Belehradu s lokalizáciou sídliska Kneževac-Kijevo,  
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