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»V prhavz smo šli radi živet.«**Pregled gradbene zgodovine in stanovanjske kulture
v rudniških stanovanjskih blokih v Idriji**

IZVLEČEK

S povečevanjem števila zaposlenih v idrijskem rudniku živega srebra v drugi polovici 19. stoletja se je med idrijskim delavstvom krepila stanovanjska stiska. Zasebna stanovanja v idrijskih rudarskih hišah so bila mnogokrat premajhna in zdravstveno neustrezna. K slabemu stanju so pripomogle tudi številne selitve rudarskih družin. To je rudniško ravnateljstvo napeljalo na misel o gradnji delavskih stanovanjskih blokov. T. i. prhavzi, ki jih je rudnik gradil med letoma 1872 in 1932, so delno pomagali rešiti pereči stanovanjski problem. Dobro grajeni stanovanjski bloki so številnim rudarskim družinam ponudili kvalitetnejši način bivanja, prispevali pa so tudi k boljši požarni varnosti. Notranja oprema se v zasebnem ali rudniškem stanovanju ni bistveno razlikovala. Delavci, nastanjeni v prhavzu, so bili v prednosti tudi zato, ker za razliko od zasebnih rudarskih hiš razen plačevanja najemnine drugih obveznosti niso imeli. Prhavzi še danes ostajajo živ del rudarske dediščine mesta Idrija, ki je priznanje prejela tudi na globalni ravni.

KLJUČNE BESEDE

Idrija, rudnik živega srebra, stavbna zgodovina, delavski stanovanjski bloki, prhavz

ABSTRACT

»WE LOOKED FORWARD TO LIVING IN PRHAVZ.«
A SURVEY OF THE BUILDING HISTORY AND RESIDENTIAL CULTURE
OF MINERS' BLOCKS OF FLATS IN IDRİJA

The growing number of employees at Idrija's Mercury Mine during the second half of the nineteenth century aggravated the workers' housing problem in the city. Private flats in the local miners' homes often provided conditions of overcrowding and unsuitable sanitary facilities. The poor living conditions were also a result of frequent resettlements of miners' families, until the mine management finally decided to build blocks of flats for the workers. The so-called prhavzi, which the mine constructed between 1872 and 1932, provided a partial solution to the pressing housing problem. Well-built blocks of flats provided sizable miners' families with better living conditions as well as improved fire safety. The interior furnishings in miners' homes did not differ significantly from those in private ones. The workers housed in prhavz were at an advantage also because, unlike the residents of private miners' homes, they had no other obligations than paying the rent. To this day, prhavzi have remained a living part of the mining heritage of Idrija, which also earned its recognition on a global level.

KEY WORDS

Idrija, mercury mine, architectural history, workers' blocks of flats, prhavz

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SUMMARY

**“We looked forward to living in prhavz.”
 A survey of the building history and residential culture of miners’ blocks of flats in Idrija**

The mercury mining industry attracted miners to the Idrija basin ever since this precious metal was discovered at the end of the fifteenth century. The growth of Idrija’s mine into one of the major producers of mercury in the world signified that Idrija had successfully maintained its centuries-long mining tradition. Large numbers of workers that migrated to the basin from near and far resided in multi-family homes. Until the last quarter of the nineteenth century, the predominant type of housing was the so-called Idrija miners’ homes. Most of them were wooden, multi-storey buildings standing on steep slopes surrounding the city centre. They were privately owned by miners and partly intended to rent out. Since the flats in these buildings were often of inferior quality and too small to adequately accommodate large miners’ families, many inhabitants of

Idrija lived in extremely poor conditions, which were further aggravated by complex landlord-tenant relationships, with tenants being obliged not only to pay rent but also to help their landlords with various tasks and hold them in courteous regard.

In 1872, the Idrija Mercury Mine interfered with this unique private housing monopoly by constructing the first workers' block of flats. In the decades leading up to 1932, the company built several relatively complex colonies (Brusovše, Prejnuta, Cegovnica, and Grapa) and a few individual blocks to provide at least a partial solution to the housing problem. Miners' blocks of flats, called *prhavzi* in the local dialect, were built of stone and brick. Apart from improved fire safety, the miners' blocks also ensured healthier living conditions. The acquisition of a flat brought a great relief to miners' families by releasing them from unwritten obligations to private homeowners. The new flats were airier and lighter,

enabling workers to fill their bare rooms with more pieces of furniture, as well as more spacious. However, the most important improvement perhaps was the possibility to fit a greater number of beds, given that many families faced challenging sleeping conditions. In congruence to the rule that only families with at least four children were entitled to a flat in *prhavz*, the mine provided for the planned growth of some families to improve their chances of obtaining one. As a result, even the miners' flats would often become overcrowded.

Cramped conditions notwithstanding, by constructing blocks of flats, the mine managed to somewhat alleviate the housing problem in Idrija. *Prhavzi* have to date largely preserved their original appearance and still continue to serve as residential buildings. They are part of a rich legacy of Idrija's centuries-old mercury culture and hence an integral part of world cultural heritage.