

## Bardejov (Slovakia)

No 973

### Identification

<i>Nomination</i>	Bardejov Town Conservation Reserve
<i>Location</i>	Prešov Region
<i>State Party</i>	Slovak Republic
<i>Date</i>	28 June 1999

### Justification by State Party

The urban complex of historic Bardejov is unique from the point of view of integrity and authenticity. It testifies to the existence of an advanced and highly developed medieval town.

#### Criterion iii

The significant and generous urban plan of Bardejov since it was founded in the 13th-14th centuries represents an important stage in European civilization. At the time the influx of foreign settlers, mainly from Germany, resulted in the foundation of a number of towns close to existing Slovak settlements. The original street plans of most of these have survived, but none can match Bardejov in this respect. At the same time, Bardejov was a melting pot where western and eastern cultures intermingled. Its urban layout and architectural styles clearly indicate that it is located in the Central European area.

#### Criterion iv

The historic town of Bardejov is an example of the traditional use of the land, ie the natural conditions of living and non-living nature. The planned walled town was created near an existing village at a favourable site in topographical and climatic terms, at the confluence of the Topľa river and the Lukavica stream near the ancient trade route between the Black Sea and the Baltic.

Each of the buildings surrounding its grandiose square, the primary function of which was trade, is an example of a traditional urban multipurpose residence. They represent a developed burgher culture, and also the people of many nationalities who lived there and who collaborated in the foundation and expansion of prosperous towns with well developed architectural and artistic styles, leaving a spiritual legacy for succeeding generations.

#### Criterion v

### Category of property

In terms of the categories of cultural property set out in Article 1 of the 1972 World Heritage Convention, this is a *group of buildings*.

### History and Description

#### History

There is evidence of human settlement at the site of Bardejov as early as the Palaeolithic period, and Bronze Age materials have been found in the centre of the present town. There was certainly Iron Age settlement in the area, in contact with the Roman Empire, and information is emerging of early medieval occupation, to be expected in view of the location of Bardejov on a major trade route across the Carpathians.

The first documentary reference to Bardejov, in an account of a journey on the main route from Old Hungary to Poland, dates from 1241, by which time the settlement appears to have been in existence for some time. Thereafter references to the town, in various forms of its name, become frequent. It is known to have belonged to the kings of Old Hungary from the 11th century to the beginning of the 12th century, when it was donated to a Polish Cistercian monastic community. Around this time Germans from Prešov settled in Bardejov, as a result of which the Cistercians in due course left the town and it reverted to the Hungarian state.

The importance of Bardejov's position on the main trade route into Poland from Hungary led to its being made the site of a customs office, to levy tolls on materials being exported. The Hungarian king Karol Róbert encouraged the development of the town, with an eye to acquisition of Polish lands, granting it the right to hold an annual market on 1 September, the feast day of St Egidius, patron saint of the town.

In the mid 14th century Ludovit I ordered the citizens to fortify the town. The entire defensive circuit was completed, with three gates on the main routes and bastions at strategic points. There was a second phase of fortification between 1420 and 1474, when more towers were added, along with other features that incorporated contemporary military architectural principles.

Within the walls, there were many improvements. The church of St Egidius was reconstructed and expanded progressively, a system for water distribution was installed, and large houses were built by the increasingly prosperous merchants. There was a growth of significant crafts, most importantly that of linen production, for which monopoly rights were granted in 1455. The early 16th century saw more development: the town hall was rebuilt and a school was built alongside the church. The final phase of fortification took place in the early 16th century, with the modernization of the bastions and digging of a water-filled moat.

Unrest within the Old Hungarian kingdom during the first half of the 16th century saw Bardejov entering into a period of recession, especially in its craft industries. This was to continue into the 18th century, when a number of fires took place, that of 1686 being particularly disastrous. Plague and cholera epidemics further ravaged the town during this period.

From the first quarter of the 18th century the situation began to improve. In 1530 the large German element had secured the right to restrict settlement by Slovaks and Poles, and the Jewish inhabitants were expelled. This policy came to an end and Slovaks and Hassidic Jews came into Bardejov in large numbers. By the end of the century the population of the town had regained the level of the 16th century. The

burghers' houses were rebuilt or modified in keeping with current architectural fashion, a Jewish quarter with a synagogue, slaughterhouse, and ritual baths developed in the north-western suburbs, and new churches and bridges were built.

Despite further fires in the last quarter of the 19th century, the town continued to thrive, thanks to major industrialization projects in the region. However, it declined again following the establishment of the first Czechoslovak Republic and became a backward farming region. World War II saw a worsening in the economic situation, though little damage from bombardment. However, since that time it has benefited from its designation as a town conservation reserve in 1950, and from the recreational facilities offered by neighbouring Bardejovské Kúpele (Bardejov Spa) and the Čergov and Ondavské vrchy Mountains.

#### *Description*

Bardejov is situated on a floodplain terrace of the Topľa river, in north-eastern Slovakia in the hills of the Nízke Beskydy. The nominated area covers the complete area of the historic reservation, that is to say, the core of the medieval town enclosed by the fortifications.

The layout of the town is an irregular checkerboard, based on three parallel streets, intersected by four narrower ones; there are also roads encircling the defences on the interior and exterior. In the centre is the rectangular main square (260m by 80m), closed on three sides by 46 burgher houses with typical narrow frontages. On the fourth side is the parish church of St Egidius, together with the town school; the tower of the church dominates the townscape. In the centre is the town hall.

The *fortifications* owe their present appearance to the early 15th century. The best preserved section is on the eastern side, from the massive five-storey Thick bastion (15th century, modified in the 16th and 17th centuries), the five-storey Great Bastion further north, and the three-storey Red Bastion. At the north-eastern corner is the Lower Gate and then comes the medieval Rectangular Bastion, the inner side of which is open to the town. This and the Renaissance Bastion cover access to the Lower Gate.

On the western side is the Moat Gate, one of the three entrances through the fortifications, which was demolished in 1906. The stretch of walls between here and the Upper Gate has three strong medieval forts, the four-storey School Bastion, the three-storey Monastery Bastion, and the four-storey Powder Bastion. The Upper Gate itself was built on the site of the fortified medieval customs station. Like the Lower Gate, it formerly had a barbican; its wooden bridge was replaced by the present stone structure in 1770.

Among the *churches* pride of place goes to the parish church of St Egidius. This was originally a Gothic three-aisled basilica with a polygonal sanctuary, sacristy, and tower. Work began in the late 14th century, to be completed in the 15th and 16th centuries and modified by Swiss master builders from Lugano in Renaissance style. It was restored after an earthquake in 1878 by Alois Steindl, who was responsible for the reconstruction of the Cathedral of St Elizabeth in Košice. Its fine Gothic interior contains some splendid wooden altarpieces from the 15th and 16th centuries, together with important wooden and stone carvings and sculptures.

The monastery Church of St John the Baptist was built by the Augustinians around 1380, and the monastery buildings around it date from various periods from the early 15th century onwards. The Augustinians were expelled in 1534 and the church was used as the municipal granary until 1696, when the monastery was reoccupied and the church taken over by Protestants. As part of the Counter-Reformation it was reclaimed by the Franciscans. Bardejov also contains a protestant church in Classical style, built when part of the walls in the northern part of the town were removed, and an Orthodox church in Eclectic style outside the line of the fortifications.

The *Town Hall* was built in 1505-09, the first building in Slovakia with Renaissance stone moulding. It is the work of Italian and Slovak master builders. It underwent reconstruction on several occasions after destruction by fire: the present appearance dates from the most recent reconstruction in 1902. It currently houses the town's historical museum.

Other public buildings include the Late Gothic Humanistic Grammar School, built in 1508 on the site of a medieval school. Its appearance was modified in Renaissance style in 1612 and again in Classical style in 1841. The municipal winehouse is known to have been in existence in the early 15th century: its function was that of a storehouse for wines from the vicinity of the town and from the Tokai region. The present richly decorated Renaissance decoration was added at the same time as the Town Hall was built.

The *burghers' houses* on their deep narrow plots have undergone many modifications over the centuries, as the result of repeated fires. This type of building was introduced by German traders from Silesia in the early 13th century. The Renaissance saw the addition of ornate facades to the two-storey merchants' houses, which served for both commercial activities and residence, converting them into luxurious houses

The most significant Jewish element surviving in Bardejov is the *Great Synagogue*, built in 1725-47. The complex also contains ritual baths (*mikve*), a kosher slaughterhouse, and a meeting building (Beth Hamidrash), now serving as a school.

### **Management and Protection**

#### *Legal status*

Bardejov has been protected since the early 1950s when Czechoslovakia declared it an urban reserve. This protected it from any development within the historic centre, although the prevailing economic and political situation did not encourage any activity at all.

Nowadays, Bardejov is well protected under the 1987 Slovak Act Concerning Care of State Monuments (as a protected cultural heritage) and by town by-laws. An important additional protection is provided by a Master Plan and specifications to be followed for any activity on the buildings in the designated historic area.

#### *Management*

All plans have to be approved at the city level, where special personnel examine them to establish whether they conform with the relevant laws, conservation policy, and regulations. Copies of requests are also submitted to the

regional office of the National Institute of Monument Conservation (an agency of the Ministry of Culture) in Prešov.

Every individual house in the historic centre is documented and registered and no activity is allowed without a rigorous review of the plans and the details. The town has dedicated and well trained professional staff to handle special conservation and building permits, and they are in close contact with experts at national level.

## **Conservation and Authenticity**

### *Conservation history*

As an urban complex, the historic centre of Bardejov has retained its original building lot divisions (parcels), all streets, most of its open spaces, public buildings, and fortifications, and its townscape. The centre was not damaged during the World Wars, unlike many comparable cities in the region, including Poland and the Ukraine.

The buildings, their original materials, their openings, often their decorations, and sometimes their fittings, are well preserved. Most of the backyards have not had any additions (although they are potential spaces for development). The buildings have also in most cases retained their original use, with the upper floor residential and the lower commercial.

In the central square all the infrastructure is underground, including electricity and communication. Large parts of the fortifications have been demolished or, in the case of the moat, filled in. However, more than half is still intact and well maintained, and some of the towers are still in use.

### *Authenticity*

The historic centre has preserved an extremely high level of authenticity, mainly through no changes to urban patterns, no demolition of houses, and no additions.

The only parts that might be questionable are the roofs destroyed by fire in the 19th century. The new roofs were rebuilt, following existing documentation and studies. They were made to restore the shape and skyline, while allowing better use of space.

## **Evaluation**

### *Action by ICOMOS*

An ICOMOS expert mission visited Bardejov in February 2000. ICOMOS also consulted its International Scientific Committee on Historic Towns and Villages.

### *Qualities*

Bardejov's urban, architectural, historic, aesthetic, and human qualities and values are of the highest level. It has an especially high value because of its present-day vitality and contemporary activities which do not compromise the other values.

### *Comparative analysis*

The nomination dossier includes a comparative study of Bardejov, showing the difference between this town and others on the World Heritage list. The study is thorough

and convincing, although towns not already on the List were not compared. In discussions between the ICOMOS expert mission and local experts, the names of possible parallels in Slovakia, Poland, Ukraine, and Hungary were discussed. It seems that the closest parallels were heavily damaged as a result of World War II.

### *ICOMOS recommendations for future action*

The small but important Jewish quarter, around the Great Synagogue, was not included in the original nominated area (although it is within the buffer zone). ICOMOS considered that, because of its cultural and historical significance, this quarter should be included in the nominated property. This proposal has been accepted by the State Party.

## **Brief description**

Bardejov is a small but exceptionally complete and well preserved example of a fortified medieval town, which typifies the urbanization of this region. It also contains a small Jewish quarter around a fine 18th century synagogue.

## **Recommendation**

That this property be inscribed on the World Heritage List on the basis of *criteria iii and iv*:

**Criterion iii** The fortified town of Bardejov provides exceptionally well preserved evidence of the economic and social structure of trading towns in medieval Central Europe.

**Criterion iv** The plan, buildings, and fortifications of Bardejov illustrate the urban complex that developed in Central Europe in the Middle Ages at major points along the great trade routes of the period

ICOMOS, September 2000