The Rocca Sforzesca

The d**uke Galeazzo Maria Sforza** decided to build a new *Rocca* on the south-western area because of the degradation of the ancient fortress located in the south-eastern area. The work for the construction started in 1473, with the project of the architect **Bartolomeo Gadio**, and finished in 1475.

With the feoffment of the c**ount Massimiliano Stampa** on 5th November 1536, the fortress was transformed into a castle, with a residential function, with interventions of pictorial decoration thanks to **Vincenzo Campi** who executed the fresco of the chapel in the south-eastern tower. The fortress was given to the Comune di Soncino by **Massimiliano Cesare Stampa**, the last Marquis of Soncino, on 27th May 1876.

In **1883**, the Minister of the Public Education designated the architect **Luca Beltrami** to project the restoration of the fortress. Beltrami's intervention represented an example of reconstruction by using strict historic documentation.

Description

The *Rocca Sforzesca* is 28m high and 73m large and it is consisting of two quadrilateral structures.

The Rivellino: it was a fortified barrier which had to absorb the enemies' efforts to attack this military place. Today two uncovered stairs allow to reach the *spalto*. Besides the exit towards the village, there was also another exit towards the countryside, through the ***"Ponte di soccorso", or escape bridge,*** a fortified structure connected to the body of the *Rivellino* with a drawbridge, used to escape in case of enemy attack.

The *link* between the *Rivellino* and the major structure is due to two drawbridges: one for people and the other one for knights, horses and carriages.

The Rocca: if you pass the principal entrance you can find a courtyard surrounded by walls, characterized by *spalti merlati,* passages used for the transit of soldiers.

The underground part: on the right there is a stair, which leads to the ground floor of the captain's tower. *D*ownstairs, a small hall had a drawbridge which could be connected to the escape bridge of the moat, linked to an underground passage which led to the church of Santa Maria delle Grazie.

The ***captain's tower:*** an indoor stair leads from the underground hall to the *captain*'s residence. It has got two overlapping rooms: the one on the courtyard floor has a big fireplace and a window. In an opening into the eastern wall, on the corner, there is a well for the domestic use of water. The room on the higher floor, with a well and latrine, was connected both to the northern and western *spalto* thanks to two drawbridges. The captain's tower was the extreme possibility of resistance and defence, from which the soldiers could reach the exit towards the Church of Santa Maria delle Grazie. A small stair leads to the floor of the *merlatura ghibellina,* swallow-tailed merlons.

The ***square towers:*** located on the eastern corners, they are identical. The room on the courtyard floor has a window with a ceiling characterized by a lunette vault. There are also two doors that, thanks to small brick stairs, lead to two different directions: the first one to the underground part and the other one to the higher floor, opened on the spalti. Another stair leads to the floor with the *merlatura*. In the south-eastern tower it had been organised a chapel.

The **circular tower**: it shows a corner, curved inwards, that allows the *spalti* to be inserted in the bulwark. The originality of this tower is due to the necessity to have a *torrione, a sort of tower, whi*ch, with other eight, contributed to form the walls of the village. On the *spalti* floor there is a *hall with a circular form, in* which a stair leads to the *merlatura* floor where a cylindrical pillar hides a spiral staircase, the ***befredo***, that reaches the observatory, opened on the roof of the tower.

The huge *moat,* that surrounds the *Rocca,* was divided into three sectors, among which, only the first one, in the West, towards the countryside, was permanently flooded. The water was brought by a branch of the *Roggia Bina*.