

NATIONAL TENDENCY IN THE ARCHITECTURE  
OF SELECTED COUNTRIES OF THE EAST-CENTRAL EUROPE  
IN THE LATE 19<sup>TH</sup> AND THE BEGINNING OF THE 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY

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The 19<sup>th</sup> century nationalism, which led to crucial changes on the map of Europe as well as in politics and philosophy, left an imprint on the art, culture and architecture. There appeared national theaters, museums, libraries and universities. Finally, the architectural form itself acquired some national features. The latter phenomenon was particularly essential for the nations deprived of their own statehood, such as nations of the Central-East Europe, which – trying to obtain political independence – simultaneously developed the awareness of cultural differences. The concept of national style in architecture as such was not anything new. It was earlier postulated by Winckelmann. Then, in the 19<sup>th</sup> century there were a few ideas concerning national style. It was stated that the architecture – and the buildings connected to the representation, ideology and organization of the state in particular – should have been equipped with the symbols of national identification, which was to differ it from popular mainstream trends. In general however, the most common was a form of revival style, seen as a ‘historical symbol’ of the ‘flourishing times’ of a said nation. In Germany, up till the 1880s Gothic style had been in force as a native German style. Then, it was replaced by Romanesque. So called Mecklenburg Renaissance Revival occurred as *Johann-Albrecht-Stil*. Dutch Mannerism was also in favour. In Vienna, Baroque Revival was called ‘Maria Theresa Style’ whereas in Berlin similar stylistics was known as Wilhelm style. The foundations of such doings not always were firm; still they were developed, even though it often happened that they did not have solid historical background. For instance, the French provenance of Gothic style was proved in the 1850s, which was finally accepted by the Germans thirty years later.

What was innovative in the national stylistics at the turn of the centuries was the fact that it drifted away from the historicism. Even though it did not reject historical themes, unlike in cosmopolitan neo-trends, here the source was vernacular tradition. Searching for national stylistics, which were typical of East-Central Europe, was a very distinguished phenomenon. It resulted from not identical, and sometimes completely

different, historical and cultural conditions of the particular nations. On the other hand, notwithstanding all the historical and cultural differences, the Central-East European nations had one common feature. All of them were in a place where eastern and western cultures met. Thus, what is interesting is the question of the specification and uniqueness of the national styles in the individual countries, what the connections between them were and finally, is it possible to identify some common elements? These questions are likely to be answered on the examples of national stylistics of the Finns, Estonians, Czechs, Slovaks and Hungarians.

**Finns.** Phenomena in Finnish architecture at the turn of the centuries in the most evident way mirrored the idea of national style. Even though the term ‘independence’ was unusual in Finland since the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the Finns did not forfeit the sense of national identity. Until 1809 Finland was under Swedish occupancy, then, as Grand Duchy of Finland, was a part of the Russian Empire. Still, the Finns were able to defy the Russian and Swedish influences and took appropriate care of their national culture. In 1835, there was published ‘Kalevala’ – a national epos based on Finnish and Karelian folk traditions. In 1848, the national anthem was performed for the first time and twelve years later a money reform was introduced, in which Russian ruble was replaced by Finnish markka. In 1863, Finnish language received an official status. Literature written in the native language flourished. In a nutshell, the nation was getting ready to gain independence. People talked about it more loudly. Finally, at the turn of the centuries, after the tsar Nicholas II became a ruler of the Empire, there took place severe political acts, limitation of autonomy and strict press and military repressions.

A Finnish weapon was the art, which – being presented on the international forum – demonstrated cultural difference and self-sufficiency of the nation. ‘Kalevala’, exceedingly popular ‘sacral book of the Finns’, became a treasure of motifs for painting (especially for the painter Akseli Gallen-Kallela), sculpture, poetry and music. The inventor of the Finnish

national style in music, composer Jean Sibelius, became very famous abroad and his symphonic poem entitled 'Finlandia' played an important role in awakening patriotic feelings amongst the Finns. Due to the popularity of 'Kalevala', there appeared Karelianism (Kalevalianism) – the myth of Karelia as the cradle of the Finnish culture. The artists set out on the trips there to explore the folklore and to find the inspirations. Architecture was quite vital in the process of developing the national art. The centre of Karelianism became the wooden house-atelier of Gallen-Kallela by Ruovesi lake, known as Kalela, built and decorated in 1894 according to Karelian pattern, and theoretical point was the World's fair in Paris (1900), in which the Finns participated. Finnish architects and painters appeared very successful there. National pavilion designed by Armas Lindgren, Herman Gesellius and Eliel Saarinen (Fig. 1) was particularly appreciated. Its form was based on traditional Finnish sacral architecture and completed with folk carpentry and craft as well as mythological themes: in the interior there appeared frescoes painted by the aforementioned artist Gallen-Kallela, with the scenes from 'Kalevala'<sup>1</sup>.

The designers of the pavilion were to create Finnish national style, which operated with the motifs from the old, partly mythical history; inspired with 'Kalevala' (it was true both for the interior design and architectural details on the elevations). At the same time, there were actions undertaken to oppose the Russian influences by manifesting affiliation to the Scandinavian culture. That is why the new architectural form was based on the stylistics of National Romantic style, which was simultaneously developed in other Scandinavian countries, and, as it seems, especially orientated to the Norwegian variation. The early medieval character of the Finnish national style is evident: rough variety of forms, additivity of the blocks, large walls characterized with natural, rustic surface and finally, granite and wood as the 'national' building material. Typical of the style were massive, closed with a round arch, simple doors, simple windows, deprived of the frames and ornaments referring to the early-medieval Germanic, Viking and Celtic culture (animal motifs,

spirals, braid). The columns – if they appeared at all – were enormous and based on the orders with the botanical motifs.

The phenomenon of National Romantic style is treated as a general one and the Finnish architecture is included as a part of it. Despite of the convergence with the Scandinavian architecture, especially the Norwegian one, it certainly had its own uniqueness, which makes it possible to identify the Finnish variation of the style. First of all, it is about the sources of inspirations. The architects looked for the ideas in the traditional wooden architecture of Finland, particularly in Karelia<sup>2</sup>, but also in medieval stone castles (Olavinlinna, Turku Castle) and the churches<sup>3</sup>. These basic sources were supplemented with the elements of the national mythology, especially themes taken from 'Kalevala'. Current tendencies were also in favour as the influence of Jugendstil concept of Gesamtkunstwerk – firm collaboration of the representatives of different branches of art – is apparent as well as the revival signed by arts & crafts movement. In the main, it may be stated that the Finnish variation of the national style was a unique version of Jugendstil, especially that floral art nouveau, typical of Paris or Brussels, practically does not appear here. The influence of the American so called Richardsonian Romanesque<sup>4</sup> also seems to be important. The inspiration of the American architecture had probably more profound foundation as in the 19<sup>th</sup> century the United States became a symbol of independence for the European nations deprived of their own sovereignty<sup>5</sup>.

National stylistics made the impact on the housing architecture (villa Hvitträsk in Kirkkonummi, 1903, the studio of the three mentioned architects and the place to discuss architectural issues), sacral buildings (Tampere Cathedral, 1902–1907) and the public edifices. One of the earliest buildings was the one of the Finnish Insurance Association Pohjola in Helsinki (1901). In the façade, there appear numerous motifs from 'Kalevala': bears, columns stylized as trees or the archaized masks of the trolls and gnomes labeled with the names of the epos characters. On the front of the National Theatre (1902), there is exposed a kan-

<sup>1</sup> T. Cieślak, *Historia Finlandii*, Wrocław 1983, p. 199–202.

<sup>2</sup> Particularly widely used was a book by two Finnish architects, based on the materials collected during their trip to Karelia; Y. Blomstedt, V. Sucksdorff, *Karelische Gebäude und Ornamentmotive*, b.m. 1900.

<sup>3</sup> N. E. Wickberg, *Finnische Baukunst*, Helsinki 1963, p. 81.

<sup>4</sup> Compare: A. Salokorpi, *Suomen arkkitehtuuri 1900-luvulla*, Helsinki 1971, p. 7; M. Quantrell, *Finnish Architecture and the Modernist Tradition*, London 1995, p. 5.

<sup>5</sup> R. Wäre, *The situation of Art Nouveau Architecture in Finland. Some Aspects on the National Background and the Developments*, [in:] *Art Nouveau-Jugendstil Architecture in Europe*, ed. H. D. Dyroff, New York 1988, p. 50; compare: I. Okkonen, A. Salokorpi, *Finnish Architecture in the 20th Century*, Jyväskylä 1985, p. 24.

tele – a typical Finnish folk instrument. The crucial achievement within this trend belongs also National Museum in Helsinki (1901–1920), (Fig. 2): a group of stone blocks with a dominant high tower equipped with the embrasure-like windows, form rough, but balanced in terms of composition, entirety, designed with a great care for the implementation of the detail work. What is often taken into account is the sacral theme, expressed in the plan referring to the Latin cross<sup>6</sup>. This way, the building is an excellent combination of pagan and Christian details. The rustic granite walls are decorated in an economical manner and they mirror the ancient world of ‘Kalevala’: the gate is guarded by the bears – the favourite animal of the style. There also appeared other creatures and decorative ornaments with archaically geometrized, clearly ancient forms. Inside the museum, there appear frescos – scenes from ‘Kalevala’ painted by Gallen-Kallela (the painter used the sketches prepared for the pavilion in 1900).

The most important representative of the National Romantic Style, apart from Lindgren, Gesellius and Saarinen, were also Lars Sonck. He was famous for the design of the Tampere Cathedral, which is said to be the flagship masterpiece of the style. Yet in the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Snock designed wooden villas made of circular logs, based on Karelian type of building. Later architectural activity of Sonck seems to indicate the further stage of the development of the architecture in Finland, which around 1910 evolved towards the process of classicization<sup>7</sup>. The features to prove that thesis are visible in the railway station building in Helsinki (1904–1919), (Fig. 3)<sup>8</sup>. The rustic walls were replaced with flat regular joints, and the massive Romanesque disposition made space for classicized divisions. There left monumental character, details referring to the Finnish nature (bears), early medieval times and folk mythology: the main hall entrance is flanked with three-dimensional herm statues, simple and stylized in the archaic form. Such solutions may be identified as the intermediate stage on a way towards the neoclassical tendency, which appeared in the Finnish architecture in the years after the First World War, when the country regained its political independence.

**Estonians.** Estonia, which was passed from one ruler to another throughout the centuries, generally did not have a chance to create its own statehood. In the medieval times, the Estonian lands belonged to the German orders. In the modern times, Estonia was a place where the businesses of Poland, Russia, Denmark and Sweden interspersed. Finally, after the Third Northern War, the land went under Russian sovereign until the First World War. Despite of Germanization, Russification and Swedification, the independent culture (especially the folk tradition) survived. Its continuation was proved by the systematical research in the language, folklore and natural environment of Estonia, undertaken in the 19<sup>th</sup> century (particularly in the University of Dorpat). On this foundation there developed the Estonian national movement. The subsequent newspaper titles in the Estonian made it possible to create a distinct literature language; soon the works of literature began to appear, especially those connected to the history and folk mythology. In the 50s, the national epos called ‘Kalevipoeg’ was published. Similarly to ‘Kalevala’, it is based on the motifs of sagas and folk chants. Literature of this kind was especially appreciated by the Estonians, who were generally literal, and the Kalevipoeg became the symbol of fighting for the freedom of the nation<sup>9</sup>.

However, the Estonian architecture of the first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was evidently subjected to the initiatives of the Baltic Germans, who were still dominant in the social upper class<sup>10</sup>. The activities they undertook to demonstrate German culture caused the fact that the architecture of the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century had historical form typical of German culture – principal styles were Hansa neo-gothic, neo-renaissance and neo-mannerism, habitually designed by the Baltic-German architects from the Riga background. The example if such practice is the building of the Bank of Estonia in Tallinn (1904), designed by the architect from Riga, August Reinberg, in the form of the northern, brick neo-gothic, with a characteristic crow-stepped gable and the corner tower (Fig. 4). Other architects working in Estonia and using similar stylistics were Wilhelm Bockslaff and the Rosenbaum and Boustedt Co.

<sup>6</sup> L. Wedhorn, *Finland in Europa. Geschichte und Bauschaffen*, Berlin 1994, p. 271.

<sup>7</sup> Compare: A. Salokorpi, op. cit., p. 8.

<sup>8</sup> Competition design (1904) was prepared by three architects; Saarinen, who was responsible for the realisation, later modified the design; L. Wedhorn, op. cit., p. 272; compare: R. Wäre, op. cit., p. 52.

<sup>9</sup> J. Lewandowski, *Historia Estonii*, Wrocław 2002, p. 131–134.

<sup>10</sup> Compare: K. Kodres, *Sada aastat ehitamist Eestis. Ideid, probleeme ja lahendusi*, „Ehituskunst”, XXIV–XXVI, 1999, p. 7–31. In the German architectural and historical literature before 1910 the Estonians are not mentioned at all; the Estonian architecture is treated as a “Nordic” one, closely connected with Northern Germany; E. Kühnert, *Künstlerstreifzüge durch Reval*, Reval 1909.

At the same time, architectural landscape of Estonia was russified as it was common to offer the designs to the Russian architects. The most obvious example is the enormous Alexander Nevsky Orthodox Cathedral (1897–1900), in the Russian Revival style, placed on the Toompea hill<sup>11</sup> (Fig. 5). Russian character of the building is quite complex. Not only was the orthodox church named after the Russian national hero, who was famous for fighting against the Livonian Brothers of the Sword (the Livonian branch of the Teutonic Knights Order, consisted mostly of the Estonians), but also was located in the very much exposed and extremely crucial for the Estonian nation place. According to the legend, it was here where Kalevipoeg was buried. After 1910, in the designs of the Russian architects there preponderated classicized forms, typical of Petersburg of those times. Quite overwhelming stylistics of the Russian historicism is represented by the building of the Russian National Bank (designed by Aleksandr Jaron, 1909) and the Girls' Business School (designed by Aleksandr Rosenberg, 1912–1916)<sup>12</sup>. In turn, the railway station in Haapsal (designed by Karl Verheim, 1906) refers to the baroque palaces of Petersburg.

In this background, the crucial is architectural activity of Georg Hellat, one of the first Estonian architects, to whom the attempt of creating the national style is ascribed. It was to be expressed in the building of the Estonian Students Association in Tartu (1902)<sup>13</sup>. It was an organization, which in the 19<sup>th</sup> century did a lot to implement the Estonian national awareness. The architecture of the building is based on the simplified romantic and art nouveau stylistics, together with the folk motifs such as geometrical friezes (Fig. 6). However, additively treated entirety, covered with vast roofs may rather be associated with prairie houses by Frank Lloyd Wright. It is also possible to indicate some influences of Hansa gothic in contrastive red brick and the panels, coated with white plaster. It is difficult to state that in this building the architect presented the form attractive for the society<sup>14</sup>. Thus, this

proposal was not appreciated much. It certainly did not continue. Relatively humble and not very representative edifice was not a good recommendation for the architect, who finally quit the experiments like this one. The model of a timber building dedicated to the sports organization 'Kalev' in Pirita, designed by the Estonian architect Karl Burman ten years later did not come into use, neither. It was very much like the Russian dachas in the Gulf of Finland<sup>15</sup>.

In the meantime, because of the lack of the proper Estonian architects, the designs of the prestigious buildings were passed on to the leading Finnish architects (Lindgren, Saarinen), whose characteristic style, opposed to the Russian forms and 'Germanic' neo-gothic, was close to the Estonian need of creating the independent architectural form. One of the first buildings of the Finnish team was the worker's club of the plywood and furniture factory (1904–1905), designed as a quasi-sacral, stone aesthetical stylistics of National Romantic Style. On the axis of the façade, there was a bas-relief of a worker, considerably obliterated by the further interventions<sup>16</sup> (Fig. 7). Other works in Estonia – theatre Vanemuine in Tartu (Lindgren, 1906), Credit Bank in Tallinn (Saarinen, 1912) – mirror the stylistics of those architects, which evolved towards classicism. Saarinen also designed the St. Paul's church in Tartu (1913–1919). The most prestigious designs – the gigantic St. Paul's church (Lindgren, 1907) and the town hall in Tallinn (Saarinen, 1912) has never been erected. The design of the general city plan of Tallinn by Saarinen, which won the competition, has not been accomplished, neither<sup>17</sup>.

The first Estonian architects (the most frequently those who graduated from the University of Technology in Riga) appeared around 1910<sup>18</sup>. However, for the next decade they were not able to conquer German and Russian architects. The German-Estonian struggle on the form in the architecture is clearly visible in two prestigious buildings of that time – two theatre buildings, the German and the Estonian one.

<sup>11</sup> K. Hallas-Murula, *Tallinn Architecture 1900–2010*, Tallinn 2010, p. 7.

<sup>12</sup> Compare: eadem, *20<sup>th</sup> Century Architecture in Tallinn*, Tallinn 2000, p. 42.

<sup>13</sup> J. Lewandowski, op. cit., p. 159.

<sup>14</sup> Compare: J. Hackmann, *Architektur als Symbol. Nation building in Nordosteuropa, Estland und Lettland im 20. Jahrhundert*, [w:] *Riga im Prozess der Modernisierung. Studien zum Wandel einer Ostseemetropole im 19. und frühen 20. Jahrhundert*, ed. E. Mühle, N. Angermann, Marburg 2004, p. 155.

<sup>15</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>16</sup> D. Bruns, R. Kangropool, V. Kallion, op. cit., p. 94.

<sup>17</sup> K. Hallas-Murula, U. Oja, K. Valk, *Arhitektuuris peegelduv ajalugu*, Tallinn 2005, p. 32.

<sup>18</sup> Ibidem; compare: K. Hallas-Murula, *Tallinn...*, op. cit., p. 7. Architectural studies at the Technical University of Tallinn was launched only in 1921, in the same year there was founded the Estonian Architects Association; ibidem, p. 8.

The German design (Fig. 8) was the winner of the competition. The architects from Petersburg – Aleksey Bubor and Nikolai Vassiljev – proposed the form inspired by the Finnish romanticism. However, the competition jury advised several corrections. As a result, there appeared a design referring to the solutions known from Berlin (Hebbel Theatre)<sup>19</sup>. In turn, the Estonian design, done by Armas Lindgren and Wivi Lönn, with two symmetrical blocks of the theatre and the concert hall represent the neo-classical form. The building was destroyed during the war and then rebuilt in the form of socialist realism (Fig. 9). The edifices turned back to each other – the German one towards the Old Town, dominated by the Germans, and the Estonian one towards the developing area of the New Town<sup>20</sup>.

**Czechs.** Attempts to create national forms in Czech architecture appeared very soon, in the times of historicism, when a proposal of ‘Czech neo-renaissance’ was postulated<sup>21</sup>. However, the idea did not become popular and remained only a tiny part of the main tendency called cosmopolitan historicism. Far more popular architectural style in Czech, especially in Prague, was secession. Yet, it varied; there appeared buildings typical of Art Nouveau historicism as well as Vienna Secessionist favored by local German architects<sup>22</sup>.

Development of post-secession architecture was possible thanks to excellent individuals, one of whom was Jan Kotěra<sup>23</sup>. Evolution of his architectural achievements was based on systematic simplification and geometrisation of traditional details. Having been fond of Art Nouveau, with time Kotěra steered towards greater geometrisation. He combined different motifs in order to get a picturesque entirety. At first, he treated architectural composition as in a decorative way. Then, he became to use more abstraction and stereo-geometrisation. The results of such approach

were Museum of East Bohemia in Hradec Králové (1909–1912), (Fig. 10) and *Mozarteum* in Prague (1911–1913). As a promoter of simplification and geometrisation, Kotěra anticipated the most creative Czech achievement of that time, i.e. Czech Cubism<sup>24</sup>.

Promoter of the style was one of Kotěra’s students – Josef Gočár, who gave up interesting modernistic experiments in favour of a cubist manner. A year after having completed the department store in Jaroměř (1911) with an extremely innovative façade, Gočár designed the famous House of the Black Madonna (Fig. 11), in which – yet timidly – the basic idea of cubism was formulated: abstractive geometrisation based on multiplied triangles, pyramids and prisms. The main issue was to treat a traditional silhouette and traditional articulation in a brand new way, based on abstractive geometrisation, but not deprived of certain folk details. Undoubtedly, cubist paintings by Georges Braque and Pablo Picasso were a source of inspirations for the architects. However, unlike the painting style, Czech cubism had some stylistic and decorative values. Till the end of 1918, there appeared various buildings of that type<sup>25</sup>. At the same time, theoretical background was enunciated<sup>26</sup>. The effect of dynamism and expression was achieved through the passages of planes mirroring a diamond’s cuts. This way, the architecture became a piece of sculpture with clear structure combined of numerous horizontal and vertical lines. Cubist architects paid attention to the decoration. However, unlike in historicism or Art Nouveau, instead of figurative or floral details, they exploited abstractive forms, based exclusively on geometrisation. It was a crucial stage in the evolution of Czech modernism.

Cubism remained a typically Czech style<sup>27</sup>, even though it never intended to be one. Moreover, it had evident international ambitions. It is believed that cubism was one of the three main sources of art deco stylistics; nevertheless, it was not applied in archi-

<sup>19</sup> K. Hallas-Murula, U. Oja, K. Valk, op. cit., p. 39.

<sup>20</sup> K. Hallas-Murula, *Tallim...*, op. cit., p. 8.

<sup>21</sup> J. Pavel, *Sztuka Czechosłowacji*, Warszawa 1986, p. 328.

<sup>22</sup> M. Benešová, *Česká architektura v proměnách dvou století 1780–1980*, Praha 1984, p. 208.

<sup>23</sup> *Jan Kotěra 1871–1923. Zakladatel moderní české architektury*, ed. V. Šlapeta, Praha 2001.

<sup>24</sup> This trend is a subject of numerous studies, e.g.: A. H. Barr, *Cubism and Abstract Art*, New York 1936; I. Margolius, *Cubism in Architecture and the Applied Art. Bohemia and France 1900–1914*, London 1979; F. Burckhardt, M. Lamarová, *Cubismo checoslovacco – architetture e interni*, Milano 1982; A. von Vegesack, *Tschechischer Kubismus. Architektur und Design 1910–1925*, Weil

am Rhein 1991; M. Klivar, *Český kubismus v architektuře*, Praha 1992; R. Švácha, *Lomené, granaté a obloukové tvary. Česká kubistická architektura 1911–1923*, Praha 2000.

<sup>25</sup> Compare: M. Benešová, op. cit., p. 273–290.

<sup>26</sup> P. Janák, *Od moderní architektury k architektuře*, „Styl”, II, 1910, p. 105–109; idem, *Hranol a pyramida*, „Umělecký měsíčník”, II, 1911–1912, p. 162–170; idem, *Užitečnost uměleckého průmyslu*, „Umělecký měsíčník”, I, 1911–1912, p. 147–149; idem, *O nábytku a jiném*, „Umělecký měsíčník”, II, 1912–1913, p. 21–29; idem, *Obnova průčelí*, „Umělecký měsíčník”, II, 1912–1913, p. 85–93; J. Chochol, *K funkci architektonického článku*, „Styl”, II, 1913, p. 93–94.

<sup>27</sup> F. Haas, *Architektura 20. století*, Praha 1978, p. 145.

ecture as the international style<sup>28</sup>. At the beginning of so long-awaited independence, there was a thirst for a style that would have made the national tradition alive.

**Slovaks.** At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, in Slovak culture there appeared a strong national tendency which emphasized folk tradition, especially important in terms of Slovak nationalism. Folk motifs were present in literature, art, music (e.g. Slovak national chant, which later became the anthem, was based on the tune of the popular folk song *Kopala studienku*), and even in fashion: the outfit commonly worn by the upper class was a shirt with embroidered folk pattern, combined with so called ‘urban’ jacket<sup>29</sup>. As for the architecture, the most striking results obtained Dušan Jurkovič, who was a creator of decorative direction, referred to as ‘Slovak style’<sup>30</sup>, and sometimes as ‘Slavic classicism’<sup>31</sup>. This tendency may cause certain associations with Polish ‘Zakopane style’<sup>32</sup>. Jurkovič’s idea, developed on the basis of independent ethnographic research, used the processed patterns of traditional folk architecture combined with details typical of Vienna Secession and English cottage style. Jurkovič designed frequently housing architecture (such as his own house in Brno-Žabovřesky, 1905–1906) as well as mountain shelters (including the shelter complex on Pustevny band in the Moravian-Silesian Beskids, 1897–1899). When it comes to the public architecture, he designed Pomological Institute in Bohunice (1900–1901) and the Culture House in Skalica (1905), (Fig. 12). Jurkovič’s work, however, remained an isolated phenomenon in the Slovak architecture, which until the First World War fluctuated around the standard forms of historicism<sup>33</sup>.

**Hungarians.** The proposal of the Hungarian national style appeared in the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century due to extraordinary achievements of Ödön Lechner. Making the attempts to create purely Hungarian recipe for new architecture, he created the stylistics, which – even though it belongs to art nouveau and is classified as such (*szeszesszió*) – to large extent, represents an author’s genuine idea<sup>34</sup>. His design activity can be described as a fusion of an organic art nouveau form and Hungarian tradition, based on using motifs from the oriental and folk cultures. It was not difficult to join these two themes and make them work as the ancestors of the Magyars who came from outside the Ural Mountains have always been prone to eastern influence<sup>35</sup>. Lechner’s searching for inspiration reached the top in the last years of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when there appeared three of his most representative works in Budapest: Museum of Applied Arts (1893–1896), (Fig. 13), Geological Institute (1898–1899), (Fig. 14) and Postal Savings Bank in Budapest (1899–1901), (Fig. 15).

The common features of these buildings are picturesque blocks, highlighted by the towers or avant-corps, covered with mantelpieces in the shape of smooth, evenly drafted attic. Lechner decorated the elevations with subtle, but clearly folk ornamentation. Especially eye-catching were colourful roofs, covered with pirogranite – a kind of ceramics produced by a famous at that time porcelain factory Zsolanya. Multicoloured compositions made of pirogranite, combinations of folk costumes, paper-cuts and embroidery with Mauritian arabesques and Persian carpets, all of them became trademarks of Lechner’s designs. Other details typical of him were brick bands on the windows, united in an organically formed entirety. Every so often, especially in his later career, Lechner resigned the bands in favour of stylized, smooth contour,

<sup>28</sup> Compare: I. Bystřičan, *Jak se z cihel stavěl národ. O národovědomé roli kubismu a rondokubismu*, <http://blisty.cz/art/18083.html> [DOA: 25th of March, 2013].

<sup>29</sup> D. Kováč, *Słowacka tożsamość w procesie historycznym*, [w:] *Kim są Słowacy? Historia – kultura – tożsamość*, eds. J. Purchla, M. Vášáryová, Kraków 2005, p. 62.

<sup>30</sup> D. Bořutová, *Impulzy a reflexie. Architektúra 20. storočia na Slovensku 1900–1918*, [in:] *Architektúra Slovenska. Impulzy a reflexia. Slowakei Architektur. Impulse und Reflexionen*, ed. A. Stiller, Wien 2004, p. 89–121.

<sup>31</sup> R. Čaupale, Z. Tołoczko, *Secesja i modernizm w Rydze. Pół wieku architektury lotewskiej – perłą europejskiego dziedzictwa kulturowego*. Part I. *U progu uzyskania suwerenności*, „Z czasopismo Techniczne”, CII, 2005, no 13–A, p. 16.

<sup>32</sup> Compare: A. Piecuch, *Dušan Jurkowicz 1868–1947*, „Magury. Rocznik Krajoznawczy poświęcony Beskidowi Niskiemu”, XVI, 2001, p. 31–36; A. Kroh, *Dušan Jurkovič a styl zakopiański*, [in:]

*Cmentarze z I wojny światowej na Podkarpaciu. Materiały z sesji krajoznawczej Wysowa 23–25 października 1987*, ed. B. Mościcki, Ł. Wierzycka, Warszawa 1989, p. 7–16.

<sup>33</sup> D. Bořutová, op. cit., p. 87.

<sup>34</sup> Compare: M. Pszczołkowski, *Węgierski Gaudí*, „Spotkania z Zabytkami”, XXXVI, 2012, no 1–2, p. 64–66.

<sup>35</sup> Around this time, the ethnographer József Huszka published his studies devoted to the Hungarian folk art, indicating its Indo-Persian roots; *J. Huszka, Magyar díszítő stíl, Budapest 1885*. At the turn of the centuries, there appeared other publications and albums on the folk architecture, with a particularly widely read *A Magyar NEP Művészete (D. Malonay, A Magyar Nep Művészete, Budapest 1907–1922)* in the lead. The Hungarian belief of being descendant of the Huns is proved by, amongst others, a popular legend about Magor and Hunor.

which underlined the differences in colours: villa of Sipeka Balázs in Budapest (Fig. 16), St. Elisabeth's church and Catholic secondary school in Bratislava.

Apparently, solutions used by Lechner were oriented towards the national stylistics. Introducing Turkish and Indian details, he tried to place them in the context of Hungarian landscape and, at the same time, to mirror the spirit and temperament of the nations having Eastern roots. Picturesque facture of the roofs appeared in the architecture of Hungarian historicism. In turn, the ornamentation on the elevations, translated into the art nouveau form is the motif taken from the folk design: stylized flowers, leaves, birds etc. The animal details embroiled in the attic of Postal Savings Bank, were borrowed from so called Attila's treasure, discovered in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century in Nagyszentmiklós. Of great importance for Lechner was also the architecture of so called the Upper Hungary. The elements of Renaissance defensive architecture, typical of the towns in that area, appeared in the town hall in Kecskemet<sup>36</sup>. Another characteristic detail of the modern architecture of the Upper Hungary was the attic, a detail used then by Lechner in the Postal Savings Bank. It cannot be denied that such actions were undertaken by the architect in the nationalistic context and his aim was to manifest the Magyar spirit of the Slovak regions. Undoubtedly, to some extent, Lechner was under influence of the romantic myth of the Upper Hungary, which was in the same time promoted by a famous writer Kálmán Mikszáth<sup>37</sup>.

Even though Lechner was the most excellent in terms of fantasy, freshness and impetus, his concepts and forms made such a visible impact on the other architects in that time, that the term 'School of Lechner' seems to be very accurate. Mostly, these were the architects of the young generation, associated in an open group called Fiatalok, i.e. 'The Youthful'. Jenő Lechner, Ödön's nephew, developed stylistics inspired with renaissance Upper Hungary attic<sup>38</sup>. Lechner's detail inspired numerous architects in very accurate ways: Albert Kálmán Körössy (*Kölcsey Ferenc Gimnázium* in Budapest) and Ferenc Reichle (palace in Szabadka), (Fig. 17) were enthusiastic about the curv-

ing contour. Oriental and folklore decorations were appreciated by Kornél Neuschloss and Gyula Pártos, who was earlier Lechner's co-worker. When it comes to the coloring contrast, including geometrical compositions incorporated into the roofs as well as the motif of the renaissance attic, they appeared in the works of Marcell Komor and Dezső Jakab (town hall in Szabadka), (Fig. 18). Particularly privileged elements were the brick bands, especially in the crowning parts of the buildings. This detail appeared almost at the same time in the designs of schools by Sándor and Baumgarten (Fig. 19). and then in the buildings designed by József Vas and Nándor Morbitzer: brick bands filled with folk floral details decorated the elevations of the town hall in Kiskunfélegyháza as well as the facade of a school building in Budapest (Ármin Hegedűs), which in the basement area was additionally embellished with a painting presenting children (Fig. 20). Hegedűs joined the themes taken from Lechner – both the formal and ideological ones – with historical inspirations. Gellert Hotel in Budapest is in some way a baroque interpretation of Lechner's designs. Yet, the most original building designed by Hegedűs was the Turkish Bank, also in Budapest (Fig. 21). The architecture of it is a mixture of early modern themes (glass wall) with the art nouveau details (masks of mythological gorgons). Still, the entire edifice is crowned with a mosaic having immensely national content: all the most excellent historical individuals with the Hungarian nation pay tribute to the Virgin Mary as the patron saint of Hungary (*Patrona Hungariae*).

Creating their own type of architecture for the Hungarians was based on the confrontational attitude towards the Vienna art nouveau. Lechner, even though he was a descendant of the Austrian immigrants, criticized this convention as 'operating with Assyrian forms without any folk or national references'. This was what distinguished him and Otto Wagner, who treated such references in a rather careful way and for whom the starting point was the cosmopolitanism of a modern city<sup>39</sup>. Thanks to visionary imagination of Lechner and the influence he had on the architects, the Hungarian architecture managed to resist the Austrian

<sup>36</sup> K. Keserü, *Vernacularism in the Context of the National and Regional*, [in:] *Vernacular Art in Central Europe. International Conference 1–5 October 1997*, ed. J. Purchla, Cracow 2001, p. 194.

<sup>37</sup> C. G. Kiss, *Upper Hungary – the Myth of Countryside in Kálmán Mikszáth*, [in:] *Vernacular Art...*, op. cit., p. 181.

<sup>38</sup> Compare: J. Gerle, *Historyzm narodowy Jenő Lechnera, czyli specyficzne środkowoeuropejskie podejście do tożsamości naro-*

*dowej*, [in:] *Sztuka około 1900*, ed. p. Krakowski, J. Purchla, Kraków 1997, p. 155–157.

<sup>39</sup> E. Blau, *Die Stadt als Schaustellerin. Architektur in Zentraleuropa*, [in:] *Mythos Grossstadt. Architektur und Stadtbaukunst in Zentraleuropa 1890–1937*, eds. E. Blau, M. Platzer, München 1999, p. 10.

pressure to a large extent. Vienna art nouveau – a great part of modernism foundation – did not play an important role in Hungary and the German secession was even less important. The latter one influenced probably only the department stores architecture.

Lechner's artistic activity turned out to be a catalyst for the architects to search for the vernacular inspirations. Not only was the folk ornamentation in favour, but also folk construction as well as functional and formal solutions. Transylvanian motifs from the region of Kalotaszeg were applied by Károly Kós and Dezső Zrumeczky in the pavilions of the Budapest Zoo. They used the same stylistics in the other designs (National Museum Székely in Sepsiszentgyörgy, primary schools in Budapest), which made it possible to create the concept of 'Transylvanian style'. This trend rejected oriental decoration and its characteristic feature was thin, spiny roof – the echo of a tent which was, according to Kós, the most genuine architectural form of this region<sup>40</sup>. Other architects were in fond of motifs concerning the history of the nation. The National Pantheon on the Gellert's Hill, according to the not accomplished design by István Medgyaszay, was covered with a cupola inspired with the St. Steven's crown<sup>41</sup>. Finally, the themes from Hungarian fairy tales and legends, framed in the art nouveau form, may be found in the façade of one of the Budapest schools designed by Rezső Ray (Bajza street).

However, the most brilliant follower of Lechner was Béla Lajta. In the beginning of his career, the architect applied decorations stylized in a folk way and often joined them elegantly with some Vienna art nouveau details (*Parisiana* in Budapest). With time, he started to use his own stylistics, which was ambitiously aimed at creating a new form to replace historicism and art nouveau. What is exceptional is that, in order to do so, he used the cosmopolitan ornaments. He particularly appreciated *Backsteinexpressionismus* from Hamburg, expressed in applying brick and decorating buildings' elevations with geometrical ornaments. One of the most original instances of this type of inspirations in Budapest is Jewish secondary school, whose façade is decorated with stylized menorahs (Fig. 22)<sup>42</sup>. A common feature of the Lajta's designs was modernized monumentalism, achieved through applying severe, simplified forms similar to Alfred Messel's

giant order profiled pillars, and sometimes also the solid stone layer (Institute for the Deaf in Budapest), (Fig. 23). Not having quit the ornament, Lajta replaced the earlier folk motifs (school at Vas street 11) with an abstractive, geometrized decoration having evident ancient spirit (Elisabeth's Bank in Budapest).

It is estimated that Lajta was interested in the forms inspired with the Finnish neoromanticism; and in fact, in the stone, at times rustical, layers which Lajta used in some of his designs, there might be seen a connection with Saarinen. Yet, these references were neither very clear nor frequent. Still, in Hungarian architecture, there often appears a detail typical of Scandinavian architecture – a massive, fleshy portal of neo-Romanesque provenance (half-circle or parabolic one). This motif was applied by Lajta and by many other architects (József és László Vago, Kálmán Giergl, Károly Kós, Ármin Hegedűs). In an original way it was used by Marcell Komor in *OTI székháza* in Budapest (Fig. 24). Independently on the doors, the simplified motif of a portal appears in a form of the windows band. If the creativeness of Lajta has something to do with present Finnish architecture, there comes in mind one association that both of these nations came from one Finno-Ugric root. In that case, it was probable that Lajta wished to create some authentic Finno-Ugric stylistics. Such attempts were oriented to some further eastern roots (the same attempts were made earlier by Lechner) and must have been judged as a good proposal of the national stylistics, whereas the Hungarian pavilion in the World's fair in Turin in 1911 was based on neo-exotic form (Fig. 25): in the romantic building there might be recognized the reference to the Sumerian ziggurat, Egyptian pyramid and the temples with obelisks, or even the Halicarnassus mausoleum. Inside, the pavilion was decorated in a highly folk way. Besides, all the Hungarian pavilions in the world's fairs of that time – in Paris (1900), St. Louis (1904) and Milan (1906) were very much influenced by the vernacular Romanticism.

At the beginning of the second decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Hungarian architectural forms achieved the look of early modernism: they became simplified, still the ornamentation or the monumentalisation were not rejected. Cubical forms with regular rasters of the windows framed with narrow bands were covered with the

<sup>40</sup> A. Gall, *A Return to Pure Sources. The Role of Folk Architecture in the Early Architectural Works of Károly Kós*, [in:] *Vernacular Art...*, op. cit., p. 221. József Huszka expressed the opinion that the most primitive forms were preserved in the Székely area.

<sup>41</sup> J. Gerle, *Die städtebauliche Entwicklung von Budapest*, [in:] *Mythos Grosstadt*, op. cit., p. 110.

<sup>42</sup> Compare: N. Pamer, *Magyar építészet a két világháború között*, Budapest 2001, p. 51–52.



stone layers; there exists an evident mantelpiece (more or less modernized); in the area of the ground floor, there were incorporated (apart from the glass) some ornamental motifs (bank at Nador street) or figural details in neo-classicism stylistics (Adria). Lajta was prone to this stylistics and he designed *Leitersdorfer-haz* in Budapest (Fig. 26). This stage of his career coincided with the process of regaining political independence.

### Summary

In the architecture of the East-Central Europe, at the same time there appeared a number of analogical trends aimed at outworking the national form. They determined the image of the architecture, especially in the regions inhabited by the marginalized people, deprived of their own statehood, and became a way to maintain national identity. The sources of the national stylistics may be divided into two themes of historical traditions: the older cosmopolitan tradition – a reference to a particular historical style, extremely important or characteristic for the nation (but in fact based on the forms coming from outside the region), and the younger, vernacular tradition. Certainly, the development of these tendencies was influenced by the upper class, national bourgeoisie and the middle class, which were still in the process of forming themselves. For instance, in 1850 the Germans constituted 56 percent of the inhabitants in Budapest, whereas the Hungarians only 33 per cent. In 1890, the percentage of the Hungarians in the city was 67 percent. In Prague, which at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century was inhabited almost exclusively by the Germans, there left only 8,5 percent of this nation in the end of the century<sup>43</sup>. New inhabitants often came from the ordinary people. They assimilated and learnt how to live in the cities; yet, they did not reject folk traditions. On the contrary, they took care of them in order to make them an element of the national identity. That is why the main feature of nationalism, which was a typical city movement, was to worship the nation with all its untouched culture and pure character.

New concepts, developed at the turn of the centuries, varied in terms of inspirations and, consequently, in terms of a form as it resulted from the individual experiences of every nation. Nevertheless, all of them were aimed at forming the national stylistics. Thus,

they had several common features. Peculiar as it may seem, neo-romantic vernacular trend had an international character. Common ideological ground caused that the architects engaged in those activities independently came up with similar formal solutions. Thus, there may be identified two themes. The mythological theme looked for the inspirations in pre-Christian, pre-historical and ancient times. It had something to do with the nationalism of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, which also searched for the roots in the most distant times. The images were borrowed from the legends, which in fact were not the academic sources, but were usually accepted. Another theme was the folk one – based on still not sufficiently discovered and explored folklore<sup>44</sup>. The inspirations were not far away, since the middle class took care of the folk traditions to create the material for the national identification. Frequently, the folklore was joined with art nouveau (very popular at that time), which was not difficult as both the folk art and art nouveau operated with a flat bright colour smudge, vivid palette and apparent contour.

The national romantic forms very often were in the opposition to the forms used by the dominant nations. Noticeable is the approach of borrowing the inspirations from the areas under foreign government, which were considered to be a cradle of the nation. For example, the Finnish artists looked for the stimulation in Karelia<sup>45</sup>. Particular themes often interspersed each other and coexisted. In Lechner's designs, the folk decoration existed together with the Persian and Indian aesthetic, which was said to have been a pra-form of the Hungarian pra-nation. Frequently, all the three themes including the earliest cosmopolitan theme coexisted together.

After regaining independence, the national stylistics was being successively rejected in favour of the new possibilities, better applied to the new conditions. It was probably thought that the manifestation of the national identity based on the previous rules would be the anachronism in an independent state. The most important became the need of equaling the local architecture with the one in the West Europe. The excellent example of these phenomena are achievements of the father of the Finnish Functionalism, Alvar Aalto. His buildings were in harmony with the landscape because of their simple form, white colour and natural materials, particularly wood, used to do the detail work. It

<sup>43</sup> E. Blau, op. cit., p. 13.

<sup>44</sup> Compare: J. Gerle, *Vernacular Architecture in the Service of Social Development*, [in:] *Vernacular Art...*, op. cit., p. 205.

<sup>45</sup> A. Gall, op. cit., p. 223.

was wood which became the main building material and the core of the Finnish Pavilion at the World's fair in Paris in 1937. It can be stated that the Finnish architects outworked their own variation of Functionalism, taking into account specific nature and building materials of their country<sup>46</sup>. Alto introduced on a larger scale brick component of the elevation, which was even more developed after the war. The national difference of the Finnish architecture was also continued by Reima Pietilä. Hungarian architecture followed the same routes and the most important became the theme of modernization. Wherever the searching for national form was continued, it was treated in a rather commercial and instrumental way, and the idea of ideological honesty lost its importance. This was exactly what happened in Czechoslovakia, where the proposal of so called Rondocubism was hugely criticized by the avant-garde and finally came to an end.

Translated by K. Pszczółkowska

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<sup>46</sup> T. Cieślak, op. cit., p. 264.