

## **Socialist Realist Architecture and the Problem of Tradition. The Case of Poland and Hungary.**

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The subject of national, traditional, vernacular forms in Socialist Realist architecture is a research issue of a complex character. Architecture has been held responsible for bringing national images into the present for centuries. However, in the new reality following the Yalta conference architecture was entangled in the political context more than it was previously. It became an instrument of persuasion and manipulation resulting from the Socialist Realist doctrine imposed on East and Central European countries after 1945 - or, to be more precise, after 1948. The historic forms implemented through administrative decisions were intended to be the basic building blocks of East-European architecture. In each of the countries these forms were intended to have both a national and a universal, socialist character. In reality, they were unnecessarily complex and non-uniform; consciously borrowing from different architectural patterns.

In this article I would like to discuss the mechanism for determining national forms in Polish and Hungarian Socialist Realist architecture. Presenting similarities and differences that emerge both in the process of implementing the doctrine, and in its subsequent execution. Taking into account a broader (Central) European perspective and using a comparative analysis of the architectural language will demonstrate not only the political meaning of each national vocabulary of form, but also the connection between architecture and the domestic building tradition, that is clearly visible in both Polish and Hungarian architecture, and constitutes an element of continuity with prewar stylistic attitudes and trends. The architectural landscape of those times was created by domestic architects who, although they

had been supervised by the authorities, were also, to some extent, functioning independently and professionally.

### **National in Form, Socialist in Content.<sup>1</sup> The Import of the Soviet Cultural Model**

The Soviet model of culture, gradually implemented in East-European countries after 1945, was based on the doctrine of Socialist Realism, that provided visual uniformity for socialist states and defined their new political membership and dependence.<sup>2</sup> The shortest approved, and most often referred to, definition of Socialist Realism is that "it is the art that is socialist in content and national in form." This slogan was totally inadequate as the description of a program of artistic activities, but extremely useful in the process of the expansion of communism beyond the Soviet Union borders after 1945.

Traditional, so-called "national form" was intended to be used in large-scale historic projects concerning collective memory. The doctrine, however, did not explicitly define the

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<sup>1</sup> The problem of „national forms” in the context of Soviet Art was emphasised by many researchers. For example, Anders Aman provides an excellent outline of the problem in *Architecture and Ideology in Eastern Europe during the Stalin Era. The aspect of Cold War*. The MIT Press 1992; In the case of Poland so called national forms were discussed for the first time by Wojciech Włodarczyk. *Socrealizm. Sztuka Polska w latach 1950-1954* (Socialist Realism. Polish Art in the Years 1950-1954). Paris 1986.

<sup>2</sup> The similarity of forms, as well as of compositional and artistic solutions became apparent in the case of comparison of Marszałkowska Housing District in Warsaw, (MDM) and Karl – Marx – Allee in Berlin, (KMA). This fact was strongly exposed by the authors of the catalogue of the exposition, *Architektoniczna spuścizna socrealizmu w Warszawie i Berlinie: Marszałkowska Dzielnica Mieszkaniowa- aleja Karola Marksa* (The Architectural Heritage of Socialist Realism in Warsaw and Berlin: The Marszałkowska Housing District – the Karl – Marx – Allee) (ed: Maria Wojtysik) Warsaw-Berlin 2001; it was much earlier pointed to by Włodarczyk 1986 (work cited in note 1).

form or composition of the architectural work. It was not unequivocally codified, even in the Soviet Union. The process of framing its ideas more clearly was taking place in the 1930s, and involved competitions and showcase projects that presented new stylistic principles that were, however, still enigmatic. The spectrum of acceptable stylistics was extremely wide and it was being extended. Apart from “classical” styles the theory of socialist realism referred to baroque, gothic and oriental styles, as well as to those derived from folk art.<sup>3</sup> It was recognized that Soviet architecture was the inheritor of all the elements constituting the cultural heritage of the Russian nation, through which it was supposed to convey universal and timeless values. Ginzburg, a Soviet constructivist architect, noted that it was not “about the battle of styles but the battle against styles aimed at everybody.”<sup>4</sup> The USSR did not establish one “leading” tradition, or appoint a chief architect, in contrast to the Third Reich, where rules were clearly defined, and where Albert Speer was “anointed” to be the guardian of the “new” architectural landscape.

In Eastern Europe, according to the assumptions of the so called “soft revolution,” the implementation of the Soviet cultural model began gradually, with such organizational changes as the centralization of architectural life, and a ban on private practice. At this initial stage (1945-1948) the architectural style, mainly based on Modernism, was not defined. However, a new role and function of architecture, that was intended to meet all of man’s needs, was being developed. At the end of the 1940s another stage of Sovietization began. New ready-made mottos and slogans that explained the principles of the new style in a very sketchy and vague way, were imported. During meetings, conventions and discussions it was

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<sup>3</sup> Vladimir Paperny. *Architecture in the Age of Stalin. Culture Two*. Cambridge University Press 2002.20-21.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. 12.

stressed, that in order to express “socialist content,” architecture had to use explicitly defined, commonly known and acceptable forms derived from the past.<sup>5</sup> History, according to the Soviet model, was perceived as a kind of a lumber room, a bank of forms, details and ornaments, that one could arbitrarily select from, although it was the state that determined the extent of this arbitrariness.<sup>6</sup>

The basic resources of stylistic conventions in Europe were supposed to be provided by those styles that drew on the “classical” heritage: the architecture of ancient Greece and Rome, part of the Renaissance, and, above all, architecture associated with classicism, particularly academic architecture. In official discourse, Russian architecture (i.e., Stalinist architecture) was considered to be a remote ideal, depicted more closely in the ideologized professional state press: *Architektura* in Poland and *Építés-építészet* in Hungary, the magazine which replaced the two previously leading magazines, *Tér és Forma* and *Új építészet*.<sup>7</sup> Selected architects became acquainted directly with the building of Socialist Realist projects, in the Soviet Union. Later, they described their “impressions” in the above-mentioned magazines, or in special publications issued specifically for that purpose. It should be

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<sup>5</sup> Edmund Goldzamt. „Zagadnienie realizmu socjalistycznego w architekturze” (The problem of Socialist Realism in Architecture), *O polską architekturę socrealistyczną. Materiały z krajowej partyjnej narady architektów z dnia 20-21 VI 1949 w Warszawie* (For Polish Socialist Realist Architecture. Materials from the National Party’s Meeting of Architects 20-21st June 1949 in Warsaw) (ed: Jan Minorski). Warsaw 1950.

<sup>6</sup> The problem of ‘history’ was discussed among others by Boris Groys, *Stalin jako totalne dzieło sztuki* (Stalin as a Work of Art). Warsaw 2010.

<sup>7</sup> Endre Prakfalvi, Pál Ritoók. ”W treści socjalistyczny, w formie narodowy. Poszukiwanie form narodowych w węgierskiej architekturze w pierwszej połowie lat pięćdziesiątych” (Socialist in Content, National in Forms. The search for National Forms in Hungarian Architecture in the mid 50s). *Autoportret 3* (2010). 66-68.

emphasized, however, that Socialist Realism theoreticians assigned to "implement" the doctrine and to deliver programmed speeches were already acquainted with Stalinist architecture, which they first saw in the 30s or during the war, as was the case of a Polish Socialist Realist theoretician, Edmund Goldzamt,<sup>8</sup> a young architect at the time.

In East European countries, the formal, "basic version" of Socialist Realism, based on classicism, was enriched by forms arbitrarily recognized as domestic, and rooted in the country's architecture. At the same time, the necessity to transform them and adapt them to a new reality, was emphasized. The theoretician of Socialist Realism in Poland, Edmund Goldzamt, emphasized: "It's not imitation or stylization, nor the eclectic mixture of styles, but the deep assimilation of the resources and composition principles developed in traditional architecture, which is used to express a completely new social content."<sup>9</sup> But the criteria for the selection of stylistic conventions were not completely clear, and national form was interpreted in a different way in each particular country. As a result, a national renaissance of traditional architecture occurred in Eisenhüttenstadt, Ostrava-Poruba or Nowa Huta.

In Poland, during the Meeting of Party Architects in 1949, that "introduced" Socialist Realism and also, in the course of subsequent discussions, that often accompanied prestigious competitions, referential examples, which were: classicism, which represented the dignity of

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<sup>8</sup> Wojciech Włodarczyk. "Socrealistyczny epizod. Warszawa 1933-Moskwa 1958" (The episode of Socialist Realism. Warsaw 1933-Moscow 1958), *Warszawa-Moskwa/Moskwa-Warszawa 1900-2000*, (Warsaw-Moscow/Moscow-Warsaw 1900-2000), (eds: Maria Porzęcka, Lidia Jowlewa). Warsaw 2004.63-69.

<sup>9</sup> Goldzamt 1950 (work cited in note 5).

authority, and the renaissance - not Italian though, but a "Polish" mythologized renaissance, that was derived from the architecture of Lublin.<sup>10</sup>

In Hungary, however, the codification of new style principles and the national form took place only in 1951 during the First Congress of Hungarian Architects, which was attended by a Polish representative, Jan Minorski.<sup>11</sup> The discussion concerning "the new" architecture initiated, among others by Máté Major in the magazine *Új építészet* began in Hungary earlier than in Poland. It was agreed that there was a necessity to create progressive, socialist humanistic architecture. However its doctrinal forms were not accepted.<sup>12</sup> Most Hungarian architectural projects completed by 1951 were modernist, or even functionalist, in design. The airport building, Ferihegy in Budapest, by the architect Károly Dávid (1950), and the trade union headquarters - MEMOSZ by the architects Lajos Gáboros, Imre Perény and Gábor Preisich (1950), (Fig. 1) can be seen as examples of this style. In Poland at that time a showcase investment of the Six-Year Plan - the Marszałkowska Housing District was under progress. The first polarization of the Hungarian architects' viewpoints took place in April, 1951, when Imre Perény, (a former functionalist) delivered a speech concerning the necessity of drawing

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<sup>10</sup> Kinga Blaschke. *Nasze własne, nasze polskie. Mit renesansu lubelskiego w polskiej historii sztuki* (Our Own, our Polish. The Myth of Lublin Renaissance in Polish History of Art). Cracow 2010. The views are based on the Eric Hobsbawm approach to tradition, *Tradycja wynaleziona* (Tradition Invented 1983). Cracow 2008.

<sup>11</sup> The report from the debate was published in "Architektura" in 1952. Jan Minorski. "Pierwszy kongres architektów węgierskich" (The First Congress of Hungarian Architects). *Architektura* 2 (1952). 52-55.

<sup>12</sup> In April 1951 the speeches were given by Imre Perenyi, *Western decadent Trend in Today's Architecture* and Mate Major, *Confusion in Today's Architecture*, later published in the small booklet. Compare: Endre Prakfalvi. "The plans and construction of the underground railway in Budapest 1949-1956", *Acta Historiae Artium* 37 (1994-1995). 319.

inspiration from one's heritage. But in another speech, Máté Major encouraged architects to create a socialist architecture based on a modern style.<sup>13</sup> This doctrinal standpoint was finally adopted a few months later, in October, 1951, during the First Congress of Hungarian Architects. It should be emphasized that the keynote speech, delivered by György Kardos, was focused primarily on criticism of previously designed architecture and barely explained the principles of the new style. Similar underspecifications were a common practice. The Polish Meeting of Party Architects was similar in its structure, focusing on three basic activities – the criticism of existing works, an “offer” of cooperation, and vaguely defined principles of the new style.

### **Typical or national? Independent or imposed? Reevaluation of historical styles.**

A Socialist concept of a national style is not constitute consistent in architectural practice, and its entanglement in history is an even more complex problem, as instrumental, political functions overlap with the real social desires derived from prewar tradition as well as from the activities of architects, who often sought an architecture of compromise. It is worth noticing that many systems were present at the same time, and that they often mingled within the same architectural work.<sup>14</sup>

The political context of Socialist Realist doctrine in any country requires that we pay attention to the non-artistic significance of the national style of architecture that masks the

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<sup>13</sup> Minorski 1952 (work cited in note 11).

<sup>14</sup> Piotr Winkowski. “Architektura polska lat 50. – idee zbiorowe i indywidualne” (Polish Architecture of the 50s. – the collective and individual ideas), *Futuryzm miast przemysłowych. 100 lat Wolfsburga i Nowej Huty* (Futurism of the Industrial Cities. 100 Years of Wolfsburg and Nowa Huta) (eds: Martin Kaltwasser, Ewa Majewska, Kuba Szreder). Cracow 2007. 238-239.

real pragmatic aims of the expansion of Communism. It was advocated that the architecture of every country was to be both distinct and universal, thanks to a redefined notion of “typicality.”<sup>15</sup> ‘Typicality’ was believed to be responsible for the uniformity of domestic architecture, particularly of its key elements, that are crucial in the establishing of a “national character,” which was also characteristic of the totalitarian culture. Hannah Arendt, who had already emphasized that “... before they seize power and establish a world according to their doctrines, totalitarian movements conjure up a lying world of consistency which is more adequate to the needs of the human mind than reality itself; in which, through sheer imagination, uprooted masses can feel at home and are spared the never-ending shocks which real life and real experiences deal to human beings and their expectations.”<sup>16</sup> As a result, the architecture of the time had to use commonly known and understood forms that helped people to put down roots, reconcile contradictions and create simplified narrations. Its political aim was also to establish a “tradition” for the new authority, to destroy the ideology of the old, unwanted one, and to build a new national (socialist) tradition on its ruins. An apt description of this was made by Waldemar Baraniewski, a Polish art historian, who observed that in fact – „... the issue was what tradition to create, that was opposed to the kind of tradition that society had at that time . . .”<sup>17</sup> Building a new historical approach had to be accompanied by a manipulation of stylistic stereotypes - clichés that were rooted in social awareness. As a

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<sup>15</sup> Wojciech Tomasik. “Typowość” (Typicality), *Słownik realizmu socjalistycznego* (The Dictionary of the Socialist Realism)(eds: Zbigniew Łapiński, Wojciech Tomasik). Cracow 2005.135.

<sup>16</sup>Hannah Arendt. *Korzenie totalitaryzmu* (Origins of Totalitarianism 1951), v. 2, Warsaw 2008. 91.

<sup>17</sup> Waldemar Braniewski. ”Ideologia w architekturze Warszawy” (Ideology in the Architecture of Warsaw), *Rocznik Historii Sztuki* 22, (1996). 239-251. The similar views were expressed by Włodarczyk, who wrote that, in fact „the slogan did not trigger off the mechanisms of the adaptation of old forms, but caused their disintegration”. Włodarczyk 1986. 104 (work cited in note 1).

result, architectural designs were required to use simplified formulas creating recognizable signs and “symbols” of nationality. The authenticity of architecture and fidelity to its originals were not important issues.<sup>18</sup> Determining a common tradition in doctrinal terms often proved to be a backbreaking challenge. A good example comes from Czechoslovakia, and consists of these two countries having different histories and distinctive architectural styles.<sup>19</sup>

In Poland, for example, the forms and details commonly recognized as Polish were, among others: the Renaissance attic, coffered ceilings, cartouches, balustrades, a vase motif, mosaic tiles and - above all - sgraffito decoration. (Fig. 2) What is interesting, the same kind of “Polish Renaissance” became a legitimate style in what was then Czechoslovakia, the housing estate of Ostrava Poruba. (Fig. 3)<sup>20</sup>

Architects in Hungary also turned to Renaissance examples, which were frequently presented in professional magazines. As the main architectural style, the Renaissance style became the classic style of the 1940s, during the time of the “patriotic” revolution, and was considered to be Hungary’s most important architectural style. During the 1951 Congress of Hungarian architects, the Hungarian Minister of Culture and Arts, József Révai, emphasized:

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<sup>18</sup> Waldemar Baraniewski. „Klasycyzm a nowy monumentalizm” (Classicism in the Face of New Monumentalism), *Klasycyzm i klasycyzmy: materiały Sesji Stowarzyszenia Historyków Sztuki* (Classicism and Classicisms: the Materials from the Session of the Association of Art Historians) (ed: Teresa Hrankowska). Warsaw 1991. 239.

<sup>19</sup> Kimberly Zarecor. *Manufacturing a Socialist Modernity. Housing in Czechoslovakia, 1945-1960*, Pittsburgh University Press 2011.

<sup>20</sup> Martin Strakos. *Nova Ostrva a jej satelity. Kapitoly z dějin architektury 30.–50. let 20. století*, Národní památkový ústav, Ostrava 2010.

“classicism of the reformist era is closer to us than the architecture in the times of idealistic or spiritualistic styles, in which the man was neither a scale or a measure.”<sup>21</sup> The National Museum in Budapest, designed by Mihály Pollack in the years 1837-1847, and the architecture of the Lower and Upper Boulevards along the Danube, were considered to be exemplary objects of a mythical, national character. The Hungarian Congress referred to the prewar works of Anna Zádor, who, on the one hand, regarded classicism as a Hungarian style and, on the other hand, as being universal.<sup>22</sup> In addition, in the debate that took place in *Magyar Építőművészet* in 1952, emphasis was placed not solely on classicism, but also on folk art.<sup>23</sup>

Exhibitions and prestigious architectural competitions played the role of a laboratory, an incubator, for the national style. Architectural design contributed to a much quicker dissemination of the principles of the new style. It also was significantly “purer,” in terms of ideology”, freer of the mundanity of the actual building.<sup>24</sup> In Poland, much attention was paid, particularly to issues of historical reference and to the shaping of a distinguishable, (that is,

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<sup>21</sup> The speech of József Révai was published in the Polish „Architektura”. József Révai, “Zagadnienia nowej węgierskiej architektury” (The Problem of the New Hungarian Architecture), *Architektura 2* (1952).49.

<sup>22</sup> Endre Präfalvi. *Architecture of dictatorship. The architecture of Budapest between 1945 and 1959*, Budapest 1999.6.

<sup>23</sup> Quoted after: Andreas Hadik. “National and Traditional Influences in Hungarian Architecture”, *Hungary: Architecture in the Era of Awakening*, (eds: Adolph Stiller, Andreas Kadik, Zoltan Fehervari), Vienna 2014.127.

<sup>24</sup> Włodarczyk 1986.46 (work cited in note 1).

identifiable as Polish) form. In competition designs for the Polish pavilion in the Moscow agricultural exhibition of 1951,<sup>25</sup> and in the designs for the 1934 Arch of Liberation in Lublin, the motif of the triumphal arch was “enriched” with “Polish” Renaissance details.<sup>26</sup> In this way, Polish tradition was applied to what was originally Roman. In Hungary, discussions concerning “nationality” were connected with competition designs for the Budapest underground stations - the most prestigious and the most propaganda-oriented implementation of Socialist Realism<sup>27</sup> - and to objects designed for agricultural exhibitions.<sup>28</sup> What is interesting, is that one of the pavilions designed for the Moscow exhibition included many elements of the Renaissance style, and resembled the pavilion in the Cloth Hall in Cracow (architect Karoly Weichinger).<sup>29</sup> Its character was also similar to that of the Polish pavilion designed by Zygmunt Stepiński for a competition related to the same Moscow exhibition.

Architects rarely got engaged in ideological arguments concerning design, these debates were held by decision-makers and a small group of so called ‘party architects.’ The majority of architects maintain that they were trying to achieve the best results possible, to create the designs that would be destined for completion, but simultaneously the ones that

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<sup>25</sup> “Dyskusja na temat pawilonu polskiego na Wystawie Rolniczej w Moskwie” (A Discussion on the Topic of Polish Pavilion at the Agricultural Exhibition in Moscow), *Architektura* 7 (1951).239–245.

<sup>26</sup> “Konkurs na Łuk Wyzwolenia w Lublinie” (The Competition for the Arch of Liberation in Lublin), *Architektura* 7-8 (1954). 151–165.

<sup>27</sup> Prakfalvi 1994-1995. 298 (work cited in note 12).

<sup>28</sup> Endre Prakfalvi. *Vasarok 1945 utan es Az 1954. evi Mezogazdasagi Kiallitas pavilonjai, Pavilon epiteszet a 19-20. szazadban a Magyar epiteszeti Muzeum gyujtemenyebol*, Budapest 2001. 143-150.

<sup>29</sup> Hadik 2014.125 (work cited in note 23)

they would accept themselves.<sup>30</sup> The reason for this was that prestigious projects were subject to the evaluation of selection committees. In Poland, the body assessing architectural designs was The Committee for Urban Planning and Architecture. Architects included domestic details and regional design for patriotic reasons, rather than for ideological obligations. From their point of view historical design was used to protect architecture from the Soviet style, which was often contemptuously referred to as “a dwarfish monster” and “a cookie cake style,” composed of glaze icing decorations.<sup>31</sup>

The most common design practice in East Europe was to combine monumental, formerly very well-known classic and more or less modern styles, so that the design would be characterized by symmetry, axiality and coherence - and included details that were connected in varying degrees to the history of a particular region. These individually designed projects were distinctive, neither standardized nor “nationalized,” and appeared particularly in the first, or ‘interim’ stage of Socialism, as “disguised” modernist architecture. Architects moved quite smoothly within the imposed style, working to create relatively good solutions. It is extremely difficult, however, to reconstruct a picture of the architecture of that period without referring to political myths. Socialist Realism can be analyzed at many different levels connected, among others, with politics, the totalitarian culture, and stylistic concerns. A reconsideration of Socialist Realist architecture requires a multi-faceted approach.

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<sup>30</sup> Zaracor, 2011(work cited in note 19); Natalia Dushkina. “Architecture of the 1930s-50s and the fate of an architect in Russia”, *Stalinistische Architektur unter Denkmalschutz? ICOMOS*, “Journal of the German Committee XX” (1995). 65-70.

<sup>31</sup> Leopold Tyrmand, *Dziennik 1954* (Journal 1954). Warsaw 1999. 194.

## **Between an ideological vision of history and the need to refer to a cultural heritage: the case of Poland.**

Polish architecture of the 1940s, and at the beginning of Socialist Realism, was, to a large degree, dominated by the destruction of the War, and the necessity to rebuild the country. After 1949, the discourse of conservationists, similar to that of architects, became more and more ideological. The concept of freely-reconstructed historical styles became a tool to vanquish the collective memory of an earlier built environment. Historical creativity became visible during the reconstruction of Warsaw - for example, in a street in Nowy Świat), - which involved selectivity in the choice of historic styles, as well as in their “creative” interpretation, which was helpful in the creation of a good, positive tradition, and that would also legitimize the new Communist authority.<sup>32</sup> These activities have been forcefully summed up by Marta Leśniakowska, a Polish art historian as: “Building “new” monuments and “new” old towns, the unprecedented process of the creation of monument reconstructions, full-scale mock-ups and artificial back stages by the so-called Polish conservationist school was a sheer political act, whose aim was to give credibility to the totalitarian authorities under such attention-grabbing slogans as “the whole nation is rebuilding the capital.” Only a very few (e.g. Piwocki) had the courage to write that in resurrecting tradition as if it were a window-dressing, we, the Poles, were in fact destroying it more and more.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Piotr Majewski. *Ideologia i konserwacja. Architektura zabytkowa w Polsce w czasach socrealizmu*, (Ideology and Conservation. Monumental Architecture in Poland in the Period of Socialist Realism), Warsaw 2009. 335.

<sup>33</sup> Marta Leśniakowska. “Polska historia sztuki i nacjonalizm” (Polish History of Art. and Nationalism), *Nacjonalizm w sztuce i historii sztuki 1789-1950* (Nationalism in Art. and Art. History 1789-1950) (eds: Dariusz Konstantynów, Robert Pasieczny, Piotr Paszkiewicz). Warsaw 1998.46.

Drastic examples of the use of historic styles to destroy the local tradition and local cultural identity can be observed in the city of Gdansk (Danzig) and in the Western and Northern Territories (also called the Recovered Territories), where a postulate was made to “re-polonize” architecture, to get rid of its Prussian elements,<sup>34</sup> to return to the legacy of the ancient Piasts. Details, architectural and artistic elements of German (Teutonic) origins were replaced by “Polish” ones - or by those regarded as Polish, such as, (for example) the Polish attic.<sup>35</sup> In Gdansk (Danzig) the entire Old Town was reconstructed and converted into a housing estate. In Racibórz the tenement houses were “Polonized” by not reconstructing the grid of their former divisions, and by adding high attics to them. In Poznan the remains of the new “Prussian” Town Hall were completely demolished and the old Town Hall was revamped so that it would have a more Renaissance character.<sup>36</sup> This procedure was also used to symbolically take over a place that was culturally alien.. Such operations with the use of historic styles, that affected the collective memory, were also carried out in other regions - for example, in Łódź.<sup>37</sup> A new Old Town was built there, with styles unknown before World

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<sup>34</sup> *ibid.* 44. For conservations view, see also: Olgierd Czerner. ”Zabytki Śląska w Polsce dyktatury proletariatu” (The Monument of Silesia in Poland under Working Class Dictatorship), *Badania i ochrona zabytków w Polsce w XX wieku* (The Research on the Protection of Monuments in Poland in the 20th Century) (ed: Andrzej Tomaszewski). Warsaw 2000. 60.

<sup>35</sup> Irma Kozina, *Chaos i uporządkowanie. Dylematy architektoniczne na przemysłowym Górnym Śląsku w latach 1763-1955* (Chaos and Order. Dilemmas of industrial architecture in Upper Silesia in the years 1763-1955). Katowice 2005. 228-229.

<sup>36</sup> Piotr Marciniak. *Doświadczenie modernizmu. Architektura i urbanistyka Poznania w czasach PRL* (The Experience of Modernism. The Architecture and Urban Development of Poznań in the Period of the People`s Republic of Poland). Poznan 2010.53.

<sup>37</sup> Aleksandra Sumorok. *Architektura i urbanistyka Łodzi okresu realizmu socjalistycznego* (Architecture and Urban in Lodz during the Socialist Realist Period. Warsaw 2010.

War II, which introduced a new architectural narratives that destroyed the prewar traditions of the place, which used to be a busy square in the middle of a densely built-up Jewish district.

The change in cultural identity through the process of reshaping urban space in a new “national” style after World War II, was taking place primarily in central areas in which the urban space was exposed, along main roads such as Marszałkowska Street in Warsaw, main city squares, such as Plac Konstytucji (Constitution Square) and Plac Zbawiciela (Saviour’s Square) in Warsaw, and the areas of central housing estates. There were plans to create scenographic designs, strongly but freely historicized, for ritual Socialist state spectacles, such as rallies, meetings and parades, with monumental elevations that were refined to the smallest details, at least on the street side (in reality, not many of them were completed). It is sufficient to recall the example of Marszałkowska Dzielnica Mieszkaniowa (Marszałkowska Housing District), situated on the outskirts of the district (on Marszałkowska street side), that abounded with giant mixed residential and commercial buildings, often adorned with multiple decorations, bay windows, pilasters, columns, arcades, vases, and, alluding to classical forms, balusters, sgraffiti, sculptures and reliefs. These decorations were intended to give the impression of wealth and palatial space, as well as to create a feeling that the buildings were inhabited (or rather, could be inhabited) by “the bourgeoisie,” as was the case in the past.<sup>38</sup> These buildings also led to a complete transformation of the part of the city that adopted the designs, which were entirely unfamiliar there in the prewar period. The housing estates, the so-called ZOR housing estates (derived from the Polish acronym of the Workers’ Housing Estate Unit), which held the state monopoly in the house-building industry, were of a different design. They were more modest, utilitarian and very often free from historic details, due to

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<sup>38</sup> Krzysztof Nawratek, *Ideologie w przestrzeni. Próby demystyfikacji* (Ideologies in Space. Attempts to Demystify). Cracow 2005.100.

economical planning, although at the very beginning they were characterized by interesting picturesque, historical details clearly visible, for example, in the housing estate “A” in Nowe Tychy (by the architect Tadeusz Teodorowicz-Todorowski), in the first housing estates in Nowa Huta (by the architect Tadeusz Ptaszycycki and a team), and in the Old Town housing estate in Łódź (by the architect Ryszard Karłowicz).

Historic “rooting” was introduced at Nowa Huta, one of the biggest East-European socialist cities, which was planned for 100,000 inhabitants. Historic details were especially apparent in the Steelworks Administration Center (the architects were Janusz Ingarden and Janusz Ballenstedt), which was decorated with Renaissance details. The design projects of the Town Hall in Nowa Huta, which was never built (architect Tadeusz Janowski) also referred to Renaissance designs. Now these elements are regarded as experiments with the form, rather than as a serious implementation of doctrinal guidance. In comparison with other socialist cities or districts of those times (i.e. Ostrava-Poruba and Eisenhüttenstadt), the process of historicization of Nowa Huta was fragmentary, hinting at the main role of the city, which was to provide housing facilities for its labor force.

The Warsaw Palace of Culture and Science, which was the only “Soviet” high-rise building on such a monumental scale in East-Central Europe,<sup>39</sup> constituted a particular, yet isolated,

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<sup>39</sup> Konrad Rokicki. „Kłopotliwy dar: Pałac Kultury i Nauki w Warszawie” (Bothersome gift: Palace of Culture and Science in Warsaw), *Zbudować Warszawę piękną... O nowy krajobraz stolicy (1944-1956)*(To build Warsaw beautiful ... A new landscape of the capital) (ed: Jerzy Kochanowski). Warsaw 2003; *Pałac Kultury i Nauki: między ideologią a masową wyobraźnią* (Palace of Culture and Science: between ideology and mass imagination) (ed: Zuzanna Grębecka). Warsaw 2007; Jarosław Zieliński. *Pałac Kultury i Nauki* (The Palace of Culture and Science). Lodz 2012.

case. It was built in accordance with political treaties. The first “suggestion” to build the Soviet style high-rise building in Warsaw was expressed by Molotov, who visited the Polish capital on July 2, 1951. The palace was designed in the Soviet Union by Lev Rudnev’s team, and built from 1952 to 1955. The building was a skyscraper, comprising a massive stylobate, four pavilions, side wings and a high tower that was crowned by a steeple. The Palace represented a foreign ideology forced into the central public space of the Polish capital by its Soviet authors. It is worth mentioning, though, that the Poles made decisions about the final height of the building and the size of the Parade Square, contributed to the selection of the location and participated to the interior design. The main Architect of Warsaw at the time, Josef Sigalin,<sup>40</sup> particularly emphasized the Polish people’s contribution to the construction of the Palace of Culture and Science. It was not only the scale and the monumentality of the project, but also its stunning historicized form that bewildered the public, with its variety of freely compiled “Polish” architectural details, such as a steeple, cupolas and Renaissance attics. The newly-built skyscraper was intended to appear (seemingly and superficially) as if it were a building that had been standing on its site for a very long time. What is interesting is that, some years later, the Palace of Culture and Science became permanently integrated into the cityscape of the capital, as a typically Polish monument, and one of the most recognizable iconic buildings of Warsaw - a building “of our own” that a whole generations of Poles were growing up with.

It should be remembered that most architects, even those taking part in the creation of new cities, were free of ideological intentions. The majority were simply preoccupied with creating and constructing the best buildings possible under Socialist Realism. For many Polish architects, traditional forms (which they did not perceived doctrinally) appeared to be

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<sup>40</sup> Józef Sigalin. *Warszawa 1944-1980. Z archiwum architekta* (Warsaw 1944-1986. From the architect’s archive). Warsaw 1986, v. 2.429.

likely to be adopted. Already in the 1930s Edgar Norwerth, who knew the assumptions of the new Muscovite, Soviet style, had advocated for a withdrawal from a “mechanical” type of architecture to an architecture that was emotional and beautiful, not just functional.<sup>41</sup>

Moreover, during the period when the country was being reconstructed, the majority of architects were in favor of a historical kind of reconstruction, not linked to ideology at all, but driven by a patriotic mission<sup>42</sup>.

The Polish architectural landscape of the Socialist Realism period, however, was dominated by a style that was derived from classicism, with its universal system of visual codes, which was particularly notable in office and educational buildings, with their more utilitarian programs (Fig. 4). In spite of the existing doctrine, architects attempted to maintain a style of their own style, expressed in synthetic decoration and a functional interior decor. One of the attempts to individualize the stylistic language of Socialist Realism was that undertaken by a team of ambitious young architects based in Katowice – Henryk Buszko, Aleksander Franta and Jerzy Gotfried (Fig.5). Their execution of cultural centers (Dom Kultury) in Ozimek and Świętochłowice, and the trade union office building in Katowice - particularly its interior, deserve special attention.

However, another issue, of a different character, was regionalism. Vernacular architecture created before the war, specifically in the mountain regions, was also accepted during the period of Socialist Realism as an element of Polish folklore promoted by Soviet doctrine. The result was an architecture that continued prewar attempts to create a picturesque

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<sup>41</sup> Edgar Norwerth. "O drogach bojowych i drogach wstecznicstwa – trochę polemiki"(About fights and backwardness – a little controversy), *Architektura i Budownictwo* 3-4 (1935).117-119.

<sup>42</sup> Majewski 2009 (work cited in note 32).

and folk-oriented, but also home-grown, vision of the Polish mountain region of Podhale. Many architects treated this style as an “escape” from the imposition of Socialist Realism. The issue of regionalism was also creatively developed by an outstandingly charismatic professor of the Architecture Department in Cracow, Włodzimierz Gruszczyński, who had an enormous influence on a whole generations of architects. The individualized approach to the architecture of a particular place became clearly visible in architectural designs for the Podhale region by Tadeusz Brzoza and Zbigniew Kupiec (Dom Turysty (Tourist Hostel) in Zakopane) and in mountain hostels designed, either completely or partially, by Anna Górka, such as those in Polana Chochołowska and Dolina Pięciu Stawów.

### **The vernacular character of modernism: the case of Hungary.**

Hungarian architecture of the first half of the 50s has closer connections to the tradition of modernism and to the Roman fascist school than to the historicized Muscovite version of Socialist Realism, although it is difficult to point to representative examples. The architectural renditions considered to be the most important were those mentioned in the Five-Year plan, but not realized during the period of Socialist Realism, were the underground, the stadium and the industrial city of Dunaújváros (then Stalin City). The large-scale plans were reduced because of the effect that the worsening economic situation had on the construction industry. Only several prestigious buildings, that were far from the Stalinist models, however, were completed, during the Socialist Realist period, in Budapest, the Hungarian capital. In the first post-war period, the main architectural problem in Hungary, just as in Poland, was the reconstruction of the capital city. Reconstruction in Hungary, however, was not such an essential tool of manipulation. In view of the war damage, the majority of Hungarian architects were in favor of the production of a modern architecture with a “humanized content,” and subordinate to man’s needs. Much space was devoted to projects concerned with the creating of a functional city with wide avenues, good transport facilities and extended

living space. Fervent architectural discussions were not concerned with the form as much as with a new ways of functioning. On the other hand, the issue of the manipulation of historical form, interpreted differently than in Poland, emerged only in 1951, as the architects referred to less illustrative and more universal classicist form. Symmetry, horizontality, and such details as columnar porticos, and - often more ascetic and stark than in Poland - the Doric order, became the foundation of this new architecture. Its characteristic features were monumentality and austerity, but it lacked the optimistic “historical creativity,” which we have encountered in Poland. The buildings that may be considered as characteristic examples of the use of this very universal historic vocabulary are the Cultural Center in Tolna (architect Béla Pintér, 1951-53), the Communist Party Building in Miskolc (architect, Pál Vincze, 1951-53), and the Applied Art School building in Zugligeti Road (architect, Zoltán Farkasdy, 1953-1954). (Fig. 6)

Architects of that time also designed in an austere Scandinavian style of the early 20th century that was not connected to a vernacular style, but to an escape from tradition, and to a simplification of architecture as was demonstrated in the “R” Technical University buildings, designed by Gyula Rimanóczy<sup>43</sup> (Fig. 7) The Polytechnic complex, located on the Danube river at the foot of the Gellert Hill, had an over-100-meter-long façade - a simple outer shape, with a barracks-like appearance and a very thoroughly planned austere and an ascetic-appearing Doric interior.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Endre Prakfalvi 1999.53 (work cited in note 22).

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

The most important construction built in Budapest was the People's Stadium – Nepstadion (Fig.8), which was designed in the 40s by Károly Dávid,<sup>45</sup> a disciple of Le Corbusier. Its structure, quite complicated for those times, and its numerous budget limitations were responsible for delays in its completion. Finally it was authorized as ready for use on August 20th, 1953 - a Hungarian national holiday - although it was not yet completed - the upper part of the seating area was not constructed (and was never to be finished). It is worth noting that the structure of the stadium stands leaning on monumental reinforced concrete pillars covered with an openwork grid structure that produces an extraordinarily visual modern sculptural accent. It became the most modern sports stadium in East-Central Europe. The building, simple and ascetic, impresses spectators even today with the huge surface of its rustic exterior wall. The power, the might of the exteriors of buildings is generally associated with Italian architecture or with 1930s Nazi architecture, but in this case the inspiration came, rather, from the Doric order.

In Budapest there was no showcase housing district, like the KMA in Berlin or the MDM in Warsaw. The one in the area of Kerepesi Utca (Kerepesi Street), consisting of a section of housing blocks with internal atriums, that also included schools and kindergartens, is considered to be the most complete and interesting housing project in Budapest, (the architects were Brenner János and Fülep Sándor). (Fig. 9) Its architectural solutions, as they were related to style, avoided direct historical borrowing.<sup>46</sup> Although its assumptions concerning space and function comply with Socialist doctrine, its design is much more restrained and utilitarian, unlike the designs of other central housing districts in East-Central Europe capital cities. Hungarian housing districts built in places other than Budapest were

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<sup>45</sup> *Károly Dávid (1903-1973) építész emlékkiállítására*. Catalogue, Budapest Hap Galeria 2012.

<sup>46</sup> Prakfalvi 1999. 50-54 (work cited in note 22).

repetitious and utilitarian, consisting of fairly low buildings situated along the street, similar to ZOR-type Polish ones, already referred to in this paper.

It seems, however, that structures that were the most typical for Budapest and the Hungarian version of Socialist Realism at the beginning of the 50s were those representing the traditions of modernism; the national style of architecture was seldom selected. The Cultural Center MOM (of the Hungarian Optical Factory), designed by Károly Dávid in 1953, belongs among the more interesting buildings of the Budapest architectural style that avoided historicism. Indeed, that many architects treated innovative modernity of the interwar period as their national heritage.

One of the few, but essential, architectural projects close to Socialist Realism was the socialist industrial city, Dunaújváros (Sztalinvaros),<sup>47</sup> that was located on the investment map of the Hungarian Five-Year Plan.<sup>47</sup> This showcase socialist city was situated 70 kilometers from Budapest, on the right bank of the Danube River: its main designer was Tibor Weiner. The construction of the city coincided with the adoption of Socialist Realist principles by the Association of Hungarian Architects, although the first housing estates and other projects, such as a hospital by the (architects András Ivánka, Gyula Kondoray, 1951),<sup>48</sup> which had been built before the doctrinal interpretation of the principles of the new style took place (Fig. 10).

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<sup>47</sup> Endre Prakfalvi, Pál Ritoók 2010.67 (work cited in note 7).

<sup>48</sup> Endre Prakfalvi, Fehérvári Zoltán. *Modern és szocreál. Építészet és tervezés Magyarországon 1945-1959*. Magyar Építészeti Múzeum, Budapest 2006.12.

The national style was also experimented with in designs for the new underground, however, the designs referred only to its ascetic classicist type, as they represented a style close to the Soviet model, using historicized detail and a rich iconographic program.<sup>49</sup> But this kind of style was not generally implemented in Budapest. Particularly pompous works referred to the project of the Southern Railway Station, a huge transport hub combining the functions of a railway station and an underground transportation system.<sup>50</sup> At the beginning of the 50s, professional architectural magazines published conceptual development drafts of the Danube riverside boulevards containing Soviet-type high-rise buildings, but they were not built as designed, and should be considered as expressive of “paper” architecture.

### **National and traditional, or the architecture of “happiness” ?**

It is worth emphasizing that so-called national architecture built in the first half of the 50s, as the examples of Poland and Hungary indicate, were neither completely ideological and doctrinal, nor were they home-grown. They resulted from a mixture of different needs and viewpoints, represented, obviously, by decision-makers but also, which is commonly forgotten, by architects.

Putting this new “national style” into a political perspective, it should be noted that its aim was to create a certain impression of historicism. In the sphere of ideology it also combined dialectical contradictions and tolerated different motivations that, however, lead to the same goal - as, above all, it was intended to be subordinate to the key Soviet category of

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<sup>49</sup> There were competitions on the Underground Stations i.e.: Barossa Square, Moscow Square, Stalin Square, Kossuth Square. Prakfalvi 1994-1995. 306-317 (work cited in note 12).

<sup>50</sup> Ibid. 314-319.

“happiness.”<sup>51</sup> The basic meaning of historical style lay in the possibility of creating a context for it – a context of magnificence, grandeur and festivity, created by manipulating feelings of : pride, strength and delight, and by inspiring emotions that corresponded to a particular place and time, in a particular country. Using various styles, including modernism, architecture stimulated optimism and faith and motivated the citizens to make a greater effort for the Party, offering the promise of a better tomorrow, of great stadiums and schools (Budapest) and of new housing districts (Warsaw).

It should be remembered, however, that design practices have their own rules, and architects do not wish to participate, at least intentionally, in the creation of a new

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<sup>51</sup> Katerina Clark. “The new Moscow and the new ‘happiness’: architecture as the nodal point in the stalinist system of value”, *Petrified utopia. Happiness Soviet Style* (eds: Marina Balina, Evgeny Dobrenko). Anthem Press 2009. 189-200.

consciousness. Rather, they were rather interested in the creation of relatively good buildings. The knowledge, experience and practical skills mastered by the architects of that period resulted in good, although traditional, architecture that presented itself differently in different countries of Central Europe. Many differences observed in architecture (sometimes very small ones) were determined by the individual ways in which the procedural directives of Socialist Realism, and the individual, distinct traditions and artistic attitudes of the various peoples of Central and East Europe were brought together.