

WELCOMING REMARKS

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Minister, Mr. Chancellor, Distinguished Honorees, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Allow me, in the name of the School of Architectural Engineering, to respectfully and with collegial affection welcome the participants of the scholarly conference and especially: Margit B. SZÜCS,

János BONTA,

Gyula HAJNÓCZI,

Ferenc MERÉNYI and

Alajos SÓDOR.

The invitation with the well-chosen title, – tradition and Intuition – excellently spotlights the role of tradition in creative work, since there is no lasting innovation without a basis in tradition. It is specifically this that qualifies the life's work of this generation of architectural historians, for they spent the last four decades of their activity inculcating in the minds of young architects, the vital consciousness of tradition, and a living sense of responsibility for the preservation of historical values.

Perhaps it is appropriate that as the opening thoughts of this conference, removed from personal attachments subjectively, but distancing ourselves, we view the changes of our age and within these, the role of the heritage of the past. It appears namely that following the enormous changes of the XXth century, humankind now, on the threshold of the last decade of the century, wishes to put its affairs in order, weighing the good and the bad, so that it can face the coming hundred years with a clear conscience.

Great events have taken place: the revolution in production, the explosion of society, the birth of a new world order, then its collapse, and what is left from all of this is perhaps no more than a lingering sense of social justice, or the energy crisis and the very real threat of the destruction of our environment. Then there is moral decay, the spread of violence and terrorism, and finally the entire problem of culture, what will become of culture? Related specifically to architecture, I must conclude, when examining the events of the twentieth century, that the breakthrough of modernism with its progressive impulse in the 1920s, and its denial of historicism, of tradi-

tion, its discarding of classical esthetics, carried with it the final threat, the break in continuity of the flow of culture. Following the Second World War, architecture became mass produced, and modern architecture, which had already allowed its esthetic content to slip away, now lost its most precious and last remaining commodity, that of individualism, of uniqueness. And there had to follow the denial of denials, the postindustrialist or postmodern movement. But there was throughout these misguided wild turns over dizzying paths, a secure point, a guiding light in the mist: tradition. And there was a modest but constant movement here in Hungary, even at the time of the subjugation of architecture to mass-building: the group of historian architects, of historic preservationists, and conservers of tradition. We know today the value of their efforts in shaping the general concepts of Hungarian architecture, from Jenő RADOS, through László GERŐ, to Gyula HAJNÓCZI; thanks to their tradition- and value-conscious service, and the sense of commitment with which they taught and preached here at the University, they awakened and spawned that unique Hungarian architectural movement, which carries on and is stamped with the national and ethnic tradition.

This striving to build bridges in our culture, to create continuity, makes up the often modest, unrecognized, struggle-filled life's work of the five architectural historians, teachers and colleagues, who are now being celebrated.

These five, as well as those before them and succeeding them, together with their historian and preservationist colleagues, inculcated in thousands of young Hungarian architects over the past four decades, the knowledge, respect and service of architectural traditions.

Gyula HAJNÓCZI with the principles of classical Greek and Roman architecture,

Gitta B. SZÜCS with the passionate translation the riches of the Renaissance,

Alajos SÓDOR with the introduction of Nineteenth Century Neoclassicism and Eclecticism,

Ferenc MERÉNYI with the introduction of the architecture of the turn of the century, and

János BONTA with modernism and the examination of contemporary activity have profoundly affected historical consciousness and cultivation, and strengthened the development of perception of architectural students.

What can a colleague, a contemporary say on such an occasion? Thank you for dedicating your lives to such a noble task, thank you for your trying intellectual and pedagogical efforts. We wish you good health, and strength, cheer, in your further scholarly work!