

INAUGURAL ADDRESS¹

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That 'the well of past is extremely deep' has been known for a long time. But turbidity of its water just begins to be recognized. Of course, at any time, much of misbeliefs and lies have fallen from its curb. But until the rhythm of history had a slow beat, time enough was left to the *rubbish waste* to settle or to dissolve. In this century, however, with the acceleration of time, – either positive or negative – water once potable without risk became turbid, opaque, with a lot of sham truth floating on its surface. And all this happens at a time where an unprecedented crowd of communities and people go to the well to quench their thirst for truth.

Obviously, in a misery time of hangover after wide utopies and utopistic slops brewed of them, the upward striving now wants to define its identity mainly by its relation to the past. Namely, it is self-intended that vigorous extrapolations pointing to the future hardly elicit solvent demand.

It is especially risky to interpret architecture of the near past. In fact, words decompose rather quickly, and day by day, much of short half-life double Dutch arises that does not emerge to the *low deep* water level. But the building, the built environment is a lasting reality, be it bearer of lasting human values or simply, a shoddy forgery. And even this value is no certain final criterion, namely it has to be – say creativity – assigned to the conform social surrounding; the willingness of the public, to accept it. An *issue of V D* the prophecy meant as murderous cruel was read that maybe, once even the Anker Palace will be a historical monument. And – oh wonder! The prophecy has nearly become true by now, and it seems to depend only on the TV when the soul of our descendants will be enlightened...

¹ Delivered at the Technical University of Budapest, Institute of History and Theory of Architecture on the 13th of December 1990 on the occasion of the commemorative celebration and conference entitled 'Tradition and Intuition'.

All of these may be interpreted as a funny locution. Reminding, however, how committed adherents of progressive architectural mentality were forced to deny convictions in terms of buildings, to apologize later embarrassed in defence of their mental mongrels; considering that these misdeeds will be just forgiven by round-eyed posterity but it deeply despises heroic efforts made by this 'deviant' generation (also in expiation) in order to restore European contemporarity of Hungarian architecture, reminding how immense energies were spent in the past decades by the architectural profession and the Association of Hungarian Architects originally launched as aircraft carrier for 'socialist realist' forces in order to forward recognition of the real social importance of architecture in a social system fighting against surrealism in fact for the monopoly of surrealism, well, then, and only then becomes clear what is shouldered by one intending to survey what really happened in this region's architecture during the 20th century.

The to-be researcher can by no means disregard the architecture historical and theoretical activities within the Technical University, contributing to the direct formation of the mode of viewing of the young generation of architects just occupying essential posts of this profession in course of renewal.

Exhibition of the Institute of History and Theory of Architecture may be even called an account. Gyula HAJNÓCZI, Margit SZÜCS-BÁNÁTI, János BONTA, Ferenc MERÉNYI and Alajos SÓDOR are eminent personalities of a generation of historians close to retirement that although could not be determinant for the era, – neither could be the complete Hungarian intelligentsia – but without their activities the 'yet' trend of the past period were incomprehensible, and we were much instable on the sill of a curious period to *attribute cast willy-nilly marked importance role* to architecture in keeping and reinforcing cultural identity.

I am sure that many persons will attend this exhibition and it will be instructive to many. Namely, we have to face the fact that the Stalinist regime first attempted to squeeze the theory of architecture under itself, then, with interest passing, to drive it to the brim. Essentially, the same was done to monuments preservation, when part of them were preferred, another part, however, cynically left to perish, or even, consciously demolished.

In a period of change, it has to be absolutely reminded that there is no future without elucidating the past. But it is not enough to 'feel' the past. It has to be known and understood, just as the profession itself, and the wonderful world of architecture.

Once acknowledged that what is new is not absolutely an aesthetical value, it must not be considered that what is old is a self-intended valuable. This is an essential instruction for the contemporary architect, looking *fesh-*

eyed at the architecture of former periods. Take care not to let silly tongue lapses of stuttering foremen replace the vocabulary expected to renew our wealth of architectural forms.

Unfortunately being hampered by my obligations in Szeged from personally expressing my respect to the Institute and the exhibitors as chairman of the Association of Hungarian Architects and as a former pupil, I beg you to accept it in this form. I wish this exhibition to be not only an evidence and account, but also standard for the new generation of architecture historians and teachers.