

# Alajos Hauszmann's Correlation to Hungarian Art Nouveau

## A Source Analysis of Dr. Jenő Kismarty-Lechner's Document "Remembrance of the Architect Alajos Hauszmann on the Centenary of His Birth"

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### Abstract

As the centenary of Alajos Hauszmann's death is commemorated in 2026, his legacy continues to shape the understanding of Hungarian architectural history at the turn of the century. This study presents and analyzes a previously unpublished manuscript by architect Dr. Jenő Kismarty-Lechner, written in 1947 to mark the centenary of Hauszmann's birth. Serving as a newly discovered primary source, this document fundamentally nuances the post-1945 perception of Hauszmann's oeuvre. Kismarty-Lechner, a former student and associate, challenges the strictly historicizing canon surrounding his master by identifying distinct Secessionist (Art Nouveau) elements in Hauszmann's late works, specifically within the interior spaces of the Royal Palace. The manuscript highlights the crucial role of Hauszmann's close collaborator, Géza Györgyi, in blending fashionable Secessionist ornamentation with Hungarian national motifs. Furthermore, the source provides an invaluable, emotionally charged firsthand report of the palace's ruined state following the 1945 siege of Budapest. Kismarty-Lechner strongly argued for the complete restoration of the building, viewing it as a vital endeavor for national identity. Ultimately, the analysis reveals that this manuscript was not merely a professional stylistic assessment, but also a poignant final attempt by a fading generation of bourgeois architects to legitimize, contextualize, and save their master's built and intellectual legacy amidst the radical ideological shifts of the post-war era.

### Keywords

architecture, Hauszmann Alajos, Royal Palace, Buda Castle, Hungarian Art Nouveau

### 1 Introduction

The history of Hungarian architecture commemorates the centenary of Alajos Hauszmann's death in 2026<sup>1</sup>. The oeuvre of one of the defining creators of the Hungarian turn of the century, complemented by his educational activities, fundamentally shaped the development of domestic architectural culture by establishing a distinct school of thought. In line with another centenary, this study examines the activities of the architect and university professor from a different perspective, drawing on Jenő Kismarty-Lechner's commemoration written for the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Hauszmann's birth (Kismarty-Lechner, 1947), thereby shedding new light on the creator's built and intellectual legacy. Based on current research and available databases, this publication presents and analyzes excerpts

from an unpublished manuscript as a primary source. This document has hitherto lain hidden deep within the archival estate of Ödön Kismarty-Lechner<sup>2</sup>.

Jenő Kismarty-Lechner's typewritten manuscript, dated 1947 and intended as a commemoration, goes far beyond the usual genre conventions of anniversary laudations. The text holds a dual significance for the history of science and monument preservation, and it meaningfully nuances the post-1945 perception of Hauszmann. The paper-based document offers a decidedly surprising stylistic analysis that sharply deviates from the general historicizing canon surrounding Hauszmann; the author resolutely evaluates Hauszmann's additions to the Royal

<sup>1</sup> Alajos Hauszmann (June 9, 1847 – July 31, 1926)

<sup>2</sup> Ödön Kismarty-Lechner (1916–2011), architect, nephew of Dr. Jenő Kismarty-Lechner (1878–1962) (Seidl, 2025a)

Palace<sup>3</sup> (created between 1891 and 1905), particularly its interiors, as Hungarian Art Nouveau. On the other hand, the manuscript is an invaluable imprint of the highly politicized debates that continue to surround the fate of the ruined palace, which was severely damaged in the 1945 siege. Jenő Kismarty-Lechner, as the last surviving member of the former creative collective, considered the complete restoration of the building complex essential, viewing it as a task that would strengthen national consciousness.

This study aims to contextualize this previously unknown source. The analysis of the text reveals that Kismarty-Lechner's "Secessionist" provocation regarding the style and his argumentation for restoration were not merely emotionally charged professional statements born of personal involvement. Rather, they represented the final attempt of a vanishing generation of bourgeois architects to legitimize and save the master's lifework within the ideological space of the emerging new regime. The Second World War not only separated historical eras but also served as a watershed in the evolution of the arts and artistic styles.

## 2 About the source

### 2.1 The Author: Dr. Jenő Kismarty-Lechner

Dr. Jenő Kismarty-Lechner (1878–1962) was the fifth child of Gyula Lechner<sup>4</sup> and the nephew of Ödön Lechner<sup>5</sup>. He inherited the Lechners' sensitivity to the arts, but alongside his excellent drawing skills, he received the talent of piano playing from his mother's family of musicians<sup>6</sup>. According to a family chronicle written by his aunt, he was "a doctor, an architect, and a professor at the Academy of Fine Arts" (Cserneczkyné Lechner, 2022:p.55). He was admitted to the Faculty of Architecture at the Royal Joseph Polytechnic University<sup>7</sup>, where his masters included

Alajos Hauszmann, Imre Steindl (1839–1902), and Győző Czigler (1850–1905) (Ritoók, 1991:p.9).

Alongside his university studies, he became involved in the architectural design processes at the studio of his uncle Ödön Lechner. After obtaining his degree from the university, Kismarty-Lechner secured a position in the studio of his master, Alajos Hauszmann, where he worked on the plans for the Red Cross Society's palace<sup>8</sup> on Dísz Square and played a role in drafting the apartment building of Hauszmann's daughter<sup>9</sup>, Gizella Hauszmann (Dezső Hüttl's wife) (1878–1968), on Budafoki Road (Seidl, 2025b). Alongside these tasks, he had the opportunity to participate in the design of the finishing touches for the Royal Palace, and he was entrusted with more independent responsibilities in designing Gizella Hauszmann's villa in Tátrafüred<sup>10</sup> (Ritoók, 1991). Jenő Kismarty-Lechner followed his university professor's lead in more than just architectural design. Before the palace's completion in 1904, Virgil Nagy (1859–1921) took the young architect under his wing (Kelecsényi, 2022:p.33), offering him the chance to prove himself not only in his office but also at the Department of Ancient Architectural History at the Royal Joseph Polytechnic University. Jenő Kismarty-Lechner taught *Renaissance and Baroque Architecture in Hungary* at a domestic higher education institution, serving as a teaching assistant in 1907 (N. N., 1907:p.381), an adjunct professor in 1914 (N. N., 1914:p.351), and a private docent from 1918 after obtaining his doctorate in technical sciences in 1915 (Seidl, 2025a).

Typical of an artistic era undergoing continuous transitions, Kismarty-Lechner followed the current of development like a chameleon. His early works, reminiscent of Ödön Lechner's style, exhibit Eclectic, Neoclassical, and Secessionist features alike. Later, he sought to follow in the style-creating footsteps of his uncle, aiming to chart a new direction for domestic architecture, envisioning it in tectonic terms as a national spirit emerging from the

<sup>3</sup> Buda Castle, formerly also called the Royal Palace and the Royal Castle, architect: Alajos Hauszmann, built in 1891–1905. 5-6 Szent György Square, Budapest, 1014 Hungary

<sup>4</sup> Gyula Lechner (1841–1914), lawyer, painter, teacher at the Metropolitan School of Applied Drawing (Seidl, 2025a)

<sup>5</sup> Ödön Lechner (1845–1914), architect, younger brother of Gyula Lechner

<sup>6</sup> The uncles of Gyula Lechner's wife [Mária Irma Uhrink (1841–1916)], were composers, flutists, and conductors. They pursued distinguished musical careers: Ferenc Doppler (1821–1883) was the conductor of the Vienna Opera House, and Károly Doppler (1825–1900) was in the same role at the Stuttgart Opera House, respectively.

<sup>7</sup> The predecessor of the Budapest University of Technology and Economics

<sup>8</sup> Red Cross Society's palace, architect: Alajos Hauszmann, built in 1900–1903. 1-2 Dísz Square, Budapest, 1014 Hungary

<sup>9</sup> Apartment building of Dr. Dezső Hüttl's wife, architect: Alajos Hauszmann, built in 1902–1903. 3 Budafoki Road, Budapest, 1111 Hungary

<sup>10</sup> Very little information has survived concerning this building. The Hauszmann family frequently visited the property for recreation and sought refuge there during the horrors of World War I; however, maintaining the house became increasingly difficult following the Treaty of Trianon, leading to its sale in 1923.

ethos of the Upper Hungarian crenelated Renaissance tradition (Ezrey, 1916:p.1). In many cases, he drew the planar decoration of his buildings from the folk art of specific regions, particularly the Kalotaszeg (Transylvania) area, presenting it with an innovative use of materials, specifically sgraffito (Hodossy, 1914:p.7). By 1916, his style, while retaining folk architectural elements, had arrived at pre-modern rationality. That same year, he achieved a breakthrough with his decoration designed for the coronation ceremony of Charles IV of Hungary in Matthias Church, which opened opportunities for him in ecclesiastical architecture (N. N., 1916:p.10). In 1918, before the European classical revival of the 1920s, he returned to the roots of the Palatine Joseph era. In 1927, he infused his ancient Hungarian motif set into the Pest Empire style, and by the 1930s, he was already a prominent participant in modernism (Seidl, 2025a). Alongside his contemporary design work, he was committed to monuments, with numerous renovations and reconstructions tied to his name (Pusztai, 1991:pp.20–21).

His failing eyesight in old age (Kismarty-Lechner, 1991:p.22) steered him toward theoretical work. Jenő Kismarty-Lechner authored a monograph on his uncle and role model, Ödön Lechner, which was published in 1961 (Kismarty-Lechner, 1961; Vámos, 1962). As a complement to his university teaching activities, he published his 1945 book titled *Our Architecture in the Second Half of the 19th Century* (Kismarty-Lechner, 1945). Furthermore, his 1954 manuscript, *Secession: The Revolution of Arts and the Heroic Age of Hungarian Architecture*, stands as a memorial directly relevant to the subject of the present publication (Kismarty-Lechner, 1954).

## 2.2 The manuscript

Blessed with the Lechners' talent for drawing and creativity, Ödön Kismarty-Lechner Sr. continued the family's architectural lineage (Seidl, 2025a). Like his brother, Kamill, he tended to and preserved the architectural tradition he inherited from Ödön Lechner's foundational oeuvre. It is no coincidence that several of Ödön Kismarty-Lechner Sr.'s descendants also follow the example of their grandfather and great-grandfather when choosing their profession (Seidl, 2025a). This reverence for their ancestors carefully preserved the archival material<sup>11</sup> in which

the document discussed in this article was discovered. Several folders, categorized by individual, contain the statements and writings of the family's architects and university professors, as well as newspaper and journal clippings about them.

Jenő Kismarty-Lechner's three-page manuscript (Fig. A1 in Appendix) emerged from one of these folders. The document was typewritten in somewhat faded gray ink. No handwritten draft version is available alongside it. However, the composition and emotionally fluctuating trajectory of the typed document suggest that it is the result of capturing a momentary train of thought in real time. The document contains only minor spelling errors and occasional typos. The pagination of the third page<sup>12</sup> displays the character "3" twice, the first of which is scribbled out – presumably as a correction. The third page contains half a line invalidated with "x" characters, which presumably resulted from correcting the subsequent few words. The document, with a larger left margin, is airy; however, toward the end of the third page, the line spacing of the last two lines is reduced to keep the text on a single page. Furthermore, the last line was likely typed while partially obscured by another sheet of paper, so only the upper two-thirds of the letters are visible. Finally, the signature "dr Kismarty-Lechner Jenő" was added in much bolder black ink in the narrow remaining space, which can be considered the footer.

The physical carrier of the document consists of three A4-sized sheets, written on one side. Despite being stored in non-museum conditions since its creation, the paper quality is good; originally simple letter paper, it has yellowed over time. The three folios were held together by a paperclip, which left rust stains on the first and last pages. A longitudinal crease and heavier yellowing are visible down the middle of the paper. Presumably, this allowed it to be easily slipped into the inside pocket of a man's suit jacket during a commemoration. Except for the aforementioned corrections, the margins are clean; no handwritten notes or corrections have been inserted into the text. The source is divided into two large paragraphs, splitting the document's length exactly in half.

The first section approaches the topic from a broader perspective while clearly defining Alajos Hauszmann as one of the most significant Hungarian architects, who created the unforgettable building of the Hungarian capital.

<sup>11</sup> A significant portion of Jenő Kismarty-Lechner's estate is in the Kiscell Museum of the Budapest History Museum (BTM) (Branczik, 1991:p.16).

<sup>12</sup> The format of the pagination is: - 2 -, placed in the header and center-aligned. The first page is unnumbered.

Jenő Kismarty-Lechner elevates Alajos Hauszmann's oeuvre to the ranks of Europe's elite architects. Kismarty-Lechner outlines Hauszmann's life path through his most prominent activities. He touches upon Hauszmann's significance stemming from the evolution of architecture – namely, that he had to hold his ground in a formative and turbulent artistic world. At the end of the paragraph, the train of thought arrives at the Royal Palace, the destruction of which Kismarty-Lechner particularly laments due to his personal connection. The main subject of the second paragraph is the Buda Royal Palace, along with its design and detailing. Inspecting the condition of the architecturally rich building following the 1945 siege of Budapest provided a heartbreaking sight for Jenő Kismarty-Lechner. According to the author of the speech, the building – monumental and awe-inspiring even in its damaged state – could have been saved. The preservation of these uniquely significant assets – without neglecting the presentation of the stages of Hauszmann's architectural stylistic development – would have been a matter of national interest. The paragraph concludes with an expression of the author's pride, stating that it was an honor to be involved in his master's creative work.

Alajos Hauszmann was one of the most sought-after architects of the Hungarian turn of the century; from the last two decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century onward, he consistently won public building projects and private commissions. In accordance with the era's practice, he not only directed the design process but also oversaw its execution. Consequently, he worked with a massive office apparatus, maintaining design and site supervision offices at multiple locations. However, he gained a tremendous advantage over his peers. As a favored and celebrated professor at the Royal Joseph Polytechnic University, he could handpick from a multitude of university students and early-career architects. He mentored the talents he discovered during teaching and introduced them to the field of practical architecture (Seidl, 2022:p.7). He affectionately remembered (Karácsony 2023:pp.91–92) these gifted youths in his personal memoirs<sup>13</sup>, explicitly highlighting those who later became his colleagues (Hauszmann, 2022:pp.130–131). Among this circle

of students-turned-colleagues was Jenő Kismarty-Lechner, who believed it his duty, "as the last still-living associate" (Kismarty-Lechner, 1947:p.2) of Hauszmann, to fulfill this obligation with a commemoration written for the centenary of his master's birth.

The end of the typewritten document – which perfectly aligns with the elegant language use of an educated bourgeois family of noble origin – bears the signature "Dr. Jenő Kismarty-Lechner", but no date is indicated. Based on the occasion, it can be deduced to be from 1947. However, the honorable title of "the last living associate" is debatable, as several architects from the Hauszmann office who had since established independent practices were certainly still alive at that time: Károly Rainer died in 1951; Kálmán Giergl in 1954; Lajos Jámor and Albert Kálmán Körössi in 1955; and István Medgyaszay (Benkó) in 1959. Kismarty-Lechner's excuse might be the complete dispersion of Hungary's citizens, who emerged from both world wars with colossal losses.

The inclusion of a few additional personal details enhances the authenticity of the manuscript titled *Remembrance of the Architect Alajos Hauszmann on the Centenary of His Birth*. "In the last decade of its operation, the design office of the master celebrating his centenary was located behind the northwestern facade of the Krisztinaváros wing of the Royal Palace, on the second floor." (Kismarty-Lechner, 1947:p.3). The Hauszmann office, functioning as a well-oiled machine, operated its studios close to the various design sites to increase efficiency. Initially, Hauszmann's private office was attached to his apartment on Zöldfa Street (today Veres Pálné Street), which was sufficiently close to the university, then still located in Pest. The first relocated studio was tied to the construction of the New York Palace<sup>14</sup>, and later, during the execution of the Palace of Justice<sup>15</sup>, he opened his construction office on Honvéd Street. Due to the construction work on the Royal Palace from 1891 to 1905, Hauszmann moved to Buda, to Döbrentei Street near the southern flank of the castle, from where he could easily reach the castle construction office on Palota Road. It was this office that moved to the second floor of the Krisztinaváros wing upon its completion, where Hauszmann maintained his apparatus until 1907, despite the dissolution of the site supervision

<sup>13</sup> A significant portion of Alajos Hauszmann's estate was lost or destroyed after World War II. Hauszmann's personal diary, however, survived this era (Seidl, 1997:p.7) and was published in 1997 under the care of his great-grandson, Dr. Ambrus Seidl (Seidl, 1997). Hauszmann's personal writings have greatly contributed to our understanding of the turn of the century and its architectural mindset (Karácsony, 2023:pp.87–88).

<sup>14</sup> New York Palace, architect: Alajos Hauszmann, built in 1891–1894. 9–11 Erzsébet Boulevard, Budapest, 1073 Hungary

<sup>15</sup> Palace of Justice, also called Supreme Court or Curia, architect: Alajos Hauszmann, built in: 1893–1896. 12 Kossuth Square, Budapest, 1055 Hungary

directorship in 1905 (Kelecsényi, 2022:pp.27–28). "Its premises were closely connected to the room of the Hungarian Crown's vault, and the free air of noble thought flowed through the workrooms, where at one of the drafting tables, as the most modest junior associate, the writer of these lines was fortunate to be a participant, but mainly an observer, of his master's work" (Kismarty-Lechner, 1947:p.2), wrote Jenő Kismarty-Lechner. Jenő Kismarty-Lechner exercises modesty when he refers to himself merely as an "observer", since, as a member of the Hauszmann office – as previously mentioned – he not only participated in the finishing works of the Royal Palace, but also worked on the palace of the Red Cross Society, as well as Gizella Hauszmann's apartment building and her summer house in Tátrafüred. Involvement in all these outstanding design tasks was a privilege granted to only a select few.

### 3 The evolution of Alajos Hauszmann's architectural style from the perspectives of eclecticism and Art Nouveau

#### 3.1 The development of Hungarian architecture at the turn of the century

Alongside the Historicist ideal of reaching back to the past – the prevailing architectural paradigm at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century – a radically different trend emerged at the turn of the century. The "Secession", a term literally meaning withdrawal and separation (Hauszmann, 1903:p.6), was an anti-Historicism and anti-Eclecticism movement, with its appearance varying by country and feeding off folk-national vocabularies of form. It is vital to highlight Ödön Lechner, who stepped onto the stage as the apostle of *modern Hungarian architecture* molded to a national character; his pioneering work was the main driving force behind the free architectural development unfolding at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

One of the reasons for the emergence of modern Hungarian architecture of a national character was patriotic resistance against Austrian oppression, which was further ripened by the political, economic, and cultural tensions of the post-Compromise era. János Nepomuk Lechner the Younger (1812–1884), the grandfather of Jenő Kismarty-Lechner and the founder of the Lechner dynasty, resigned from his high-ranking official posts in the city of Pest during this period in protest against the Bach<sup>16</sup> era (Seidl, 2025b). In 1893, János Bobula<sup>17</sup> drew a

bold parallel between the buildings erected under the banner of "Germanization" and the dictatorial military presence (Bobula, 1893:p.272). Alongside the pomp of the 1896 millennium celebrations, the turn of the century harbored a cultural fermentation process deep beneath the surface. New political ideologies and movements permeated not only the branches of the arts but also the fields of social sciences. Alajos Hauszmann created his works within this continuously renewing and radically transforming world. However, he advocated for traditional, established styles; he nevertheless employed the most advanced technological innovations and followed contemporary trends in the articulation of architectural details.

#### 3.2 Alajos Hauszmann's architectural periods

In his manuscript remembering Alajos Hauszmann, Dr. Jenő Kismarty-Lechner briefly reviewed his master's architectural development, presenting his steadfastness across various stylistic trends. Kismarty-Lechner highlighted the "militant movement of the Secession" (Kismarty-Lechner, 1947:p.1) as a difficulty that caused stylistic problems for Hauszmann. Still, conversely, he spoke appreciatively of his master's efforts toward a freer, more spirit-filled utilization of historical stylistic forms. Kismarty-Lechner cited the Baroque dynamism of the New York Palace, the monumentality of the Curia, and the charming Neo-Renaissance character of the Technological Museum<sup>18</sup> as examples of his form search. Finally, Kismarty-Lechner refers to the building of the Royal Palace, "erected upon an ideal floor plan" (Kismarty-Lechner, 1947:p.2), as the masterpiece with which Hauszmann stepped into the "legacy of Miklós Ybl [1814–1891]" (Kismarty-Lechner, 1947:p.2), the "great master builder practically without rival across Europe" (Kismarty-Lechner, 1947:p.1). Alongside Jenő Kismarty-Lechner, János Gerle (1947–2012) also identifies the Buda Royal Palace as Alajos Hauszmann's masterpiece (Gerle, 2002:p.8). In his foreword, the editor of the first volume of the *Masters of Architecture (Az Építészet mesterei)* book series praises the excellence of Hauszmann, who "created his works in an era of architectural renewal, on the boundary between historical styles and modern architecture" (Gerle, 2002:p.10). Gerle notes only a Secessionist influence among the array of historicizing buildings, regarding Hauszmann as "the most consistent champion of the Neo-Renaissance style" (Gerle, 2002:p.10).

<sup>16</sup> Alexander Bach (1813–1893), Austrian Minister of the Interior

<sup>17</sup> János Bobula (1844–1903), architect, architectural writer

<sup>18</sup> Technological Museum and School, architect: Alajos Hauszmann, built in 1887–1889. 6 József Boulevard, Budapest, 1088 Hungary

István Czagány undertook a similar, overarching task, publishing a much more substantial article titled *The Stylistic Changes in the Art of Alajos Hauszmann* (Czagány, 1978). He detailed Hauszmann's architectural evolution, which, after graduating from the Bauakademie, began with creation in the Berlin manner, evidenced primarily by his early apartment buildings. After opening his independent office, Hauszmann employed the strongly neoclassical, early eclectic Neo-Renaissance that leaned toward Romanticism. The Erzsébet Square Kiosk<sup>19</sup>, completed in 1874, is unequivocally a German Neo-Renaissance structure. Still, almost exactly around this time, he experimented with Neo-Gothic style in the construction of Nádasdy Castle in Nádasdlaány<sup>20</sup> and of the Neo-Romanesque in the church of Sacred Heart<sup>21</sup> in Gyoma. With these buildings, Czagány proved that, in the case of Alajos Hauszmann, there is no linear stylistic development between the different "neo" trends. As a true Eclectic master, Hauszmann could work simultaneously with the form sets of multiple historical styles. However, a slow architectural shaping during his creative career could be detected. In the 1880s, Hauszmann gradually abandoned plaster architecture, simultaneously animating his facades, particularly by projecting the central avant-corps. By animating architectural masses and developing brick-and-stone facades, Hauszmann – who championed continuous development from an ethical standpoint – had stepped outside the academic framework by the 1890s. While decidedly using the vocabulary of the Italian Renaissance in the 1880s, in the last decade of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Hauszmann transitioned into the Neo-Baroque style.

Furthermore, it was then that the distinctly recognizable features of the Secession first appeared in his buildings. By then, as a highly popular professor, he selected the most talented students from the university and employed them in his office. These young architects, receptive to novelty, smuggled the new forms into the buildings of Hauszmann, who "had an understanding of the demands of the *zeitgeist*" (Kismarty-Lechner, 1961:p.104). This phenomenon can be observed on the main facade of the New York Palace, decorated with eclectic Neo-Baroque elements

mixed with Secessionist touches by two of his students, Flóris Korb and Kálmán Giergl. A similar approach can be seen in the reconstruction of the Royal Palace, where Géza Györgyi's work is evident in the detailing of Hauszmann's plans. According to István Czagány, the third turning point in Alajos Hauszmann's oeuvre occurred around this time, upon the completion of the Red Cross Society's palace. The classical Renaissance found in the first period, followed by the dynamic Neo-Baroque experienced in the next era, culminated in a calm Secession. The maestro finally unfolded this puritanical design approach in the central building of the Royal Joseph Polytechnic University<sup>22</sup> and the Darabont Bodyguard palaces<sup>23</sup> on Dózsa György Road, which he seemingly designed in the reflection of neoclassical serenity. Marcell Komor (1868–1944) summarized Alajos Hauszmann's decades-long, outstanding artistic activity in the most concisely and essential manner: "He was able to demonstrate lasting results, and from each era of the forming, changing styles, a successful, artistic Hauszmann creation has remained for us." (Komor, 1914:p.246).

### 3.3 Alajos Hauszmann and national Art Nouveau architecture

In the next section of his manuscript, Dr. Jenő Kismarty-Lechner presented the nature of Alajos Hauszmann's Secessionist architecture through detailing of the Royal Palace. According to him, with the Habsburg Room (Fig. 1) located on the axis of the main facade, Hauszmann "created one of the continent's most monumental state rooms" (Kismarty-Lechner, 1947:p.2), in which he "combined Baroque forms<sup>24</sup> with the novel form-shaping of the Secession with bold ingenuity" (Kismarty-Lechner, 1947:pp.2–3). Although Jenő Kismarty-Lechner might be biased toward his master, his assertion regarding the significance of the spatial sequence along the Danube is nonetheless valid. To lay the groundwork for his major design projects, Alajos Hauszmann typically undertook study trips abroad, during which he observed the technological requirements demanded by a given function.

<sup>19</sup> Erzsébet Square Kiosk, architect: Alajos Hauszmann, built in: 1871–1873. Demolished. Erzsébet Square, Budapest, 1051 Hungary

<sup>20</sup> Nádasdy Castle, architect: István Linzbauer, Alajos Hauszmann, built in: 1884–1885. 1 Kastélypark Nádasdlaány, 8145 Hungary

<sup>21</sup> Sacred Heart church, architect: Alajos Hauszmann, built in: 1875–1878. 226. Fő Street, Gyomaendrőd, 5501, Hungary

<sup>22</sup> Royal Joseph Polytechnic University, architect: Alajos Hauszmann, built in: 1906–1909. 3-9 Műgyetem Quay, Budapest, 1111 Hungary

<sup>23</sup> Darabont Bodyguard palaces, architect: Alajos Hauszmann, built in: 1907–1909. Demolished. 31 Attila Road, Budapest, 1013 Hungary

<sup>24</sup> In 1998, Ákos Moravánszky described the entire Palace as a "magnificent, yet somewhat rigid, Neo-Baroque" complex of buildings (Moravánszky, 1998:p.85).



Fig. 1 The Habsburg Room (Fortepan / Simon Gyula, 1925)

He conducted such a trip during the construction of the Üllői Road hospital, about which he authored a detailed study (Hauszmann, 1881). Hauszmann undertook a similar study trip, accompanied by Lajos Ybl (1855–1934) – an architect and the contemporary Captain of the Castle – to study the royal courts of Europe. Their travel report (Hauszmann and Ybl, 1899) discusses the examination of the palaces of the German, Danish, Swedish, Dutch, Belgian, Austrian and, of course, French and English monarchs. From the aforementioned details, it is evident that the keenly observant Hauszmann gained a comprehensive understanding of the design of top-tier European royal residences. Based on this, he formulated the grandiose concept for the domestic Royal Palace. Thus, Kismarty-Lechner's claim, which may seem boastful at first glance, that the row of state rooms hidden behind the Danube facade, with its length exceeding 200 meters, actually ranks second after Versailles in the continent's ranking of places that prioritize monumentality, becomes relevant (Hauszmann, 1912:p.45).

Returning to the manuscript's Baroque state room enriched with Secessionist elements, at this point, Jenő Kismarty-Lechner deemed it important to highlight Géza

Györgyi's activities, Hauszmann's most trusted associate. In his personal memoirs, Alajos Hauszmann dated his relationship with Géza Györgyi (1851–1934) back to the 1870s. At that time, returning from his training in Berlin, Hauszmann partnered with Béla Haliczky, Géza Györgyi's uncle. It is known from his memoirs that "since he had a great talent for drawing, (...) we hired [Györgyi] as a draftsman" in their joint office (Hauszmann, 2022:p.28). Shortly thereafter, Géza Györgyi followed the path of his slightly older master, Hauszmann, and graduated from the Bauakademie Berlin before taking a position in Miklós Ybl's office, where he participated in the design of the Royal Palace. After Ybl died in 1891, as the associate most familiar with the construction situation on Castle Hill, he became Alajos Hauszmann's right-hand man. Working on the creation of Hungary's largest building at the time, Hauszmann seized every opportunity to rationalize the operation of his office. Operating with a large staff, the architectural office developed its own architectural vocabulary, recorded in the pages of a unique *Bauformenbuch*, in accordance with the era's established practices. In line with contemporary practice, the designers drafted the comprehensive and detailed technical drawings of the Buda Palace by drawing upon this shared vocabulary of forms. Alongside the general layout plans, 1:1 scale con-signations, broken down by element, were frequently produced for individual components (Kaknics, 2025:p.51). As participants in the construction process, the artisans also "spoke" this shared formal language. Their knowledge was acquired partly through practical experience. At the same time, their formal training was furthered by the Budapest Metropolitan School of Applied Drawing (Budapest Székesfővárosi Iparrajziskola), founded in 1886, which offered specialized tracks in construction and the applied arts (Katona, 2023:p.117). Consequently, with the shared historicizing and eclectic vocabulary of forms permeating the entire design and execution process, the contemporary tendency to grant artisans greater freedom in the precise elaboration of certain details is also evident in the Palace's plans (Kaknics, 2025:p.58).

Hauszmann, having complete confidence in his colleagues, Hauszmann gave them free rein so that he could concentrate on formulating the representational concept expected in the splendor of imperial elegance, the enormous tasks of organizing the space functionally, integrating engineering innovations, and the immensely significant tasks of political liaison. Thus, Géza Györgyi, "under the master's guidance, fused with artistic taste the fashionable

Secessionist ornamentation with the Hungarian folk decorative elements" (Kismarty-Lechner, 1947:p.3), creating a style mixed with stylized folk-art ornaments. In addition to Jenő Kismarty-Lechner's retrospective praise of his merits, Hauszmann himself acknowledged them in his own era:

*"My friend and colleague Géza Györgyi, who is a master in the development of this ornament, brought its elements into rhythmic harmony and, while preserving its Hungarian character, refined it to such an extent that it can be applied not only as architectural sculpture – whether in the form of planar decoration, finials, or garlands – but also for the decoration of other artifacts."* (Huszmann, 1912:pp.47–48).

According to Kismarty-Lechner's description, "[Géza Györgyi] planted Hungarian floral ornamentation<sup>25</sup> into original frames" (Kismarty-Lechner, 1947:p.3) alongside Károly Lotz's ceiling fresco in the state room. "This ornamentation was not stripped of its Hungarian character; moreover, the Baroque style, within whose framework it was applied, was brought closer to us through it, meaning it became Hungarianized." (Kismarty-Lechner, 1947:p.3).

The opening of Alajos Hauszmann's architecture toward the folk style, experienced in the Royal Palace, can be linked to several cultural-political events. First, it is important to note that he recorded in his diary that several of his contemporaries had "mobilized" to win the design work for the castle. "Lechner, Pártos, Bukovics, Perschacher, Schmal, etc." (Huszmann, 2022:p.88). approached Frigyes Podmaniczky and the major-domo at the Prime Minister's Office to secure the job. Hauszmann might have felt pressured to make a move, primarily because of the folk-oriented ambitions of the Lechner-Pártos duo, especially since other sources noted their potency. According to Ödön Gerő, concrete ideas about the palace's design were already taking shape in Lechner's head: "he [Lechner] said that the royal palace should be built in a local historical style closer to the era of King Matthias, and he named the Upper Hungarian Renaissance as such a style" (Gerő, 1908:p.51). Secondly, it should be noted that the design and construction of the palace, overseen by Hauszmann, were already well underway when the parliament decided in 1897 to participate in the 1900

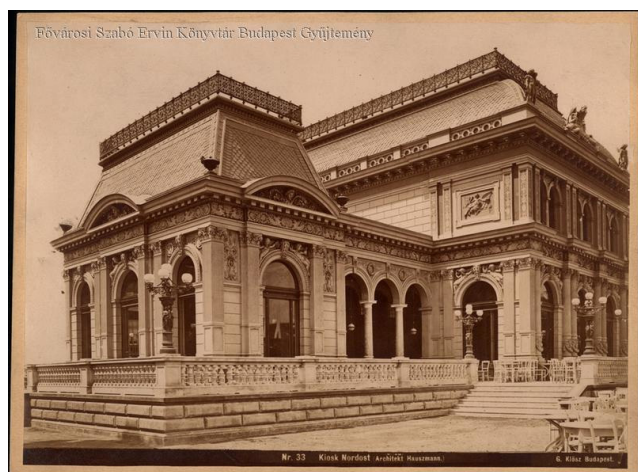
Paris World's Fair. By this time, Alajos Hauszmann was already in contact with the artisans serving Lechner, which is how Vilmos Zsolnay's petition came into the picture; he addressed the King to request permission to design a room covered in majolica tiles (Huszmann, 2022:p.96). The request reached the construction leader Hauszmann through a long bureaucratic route, in whom the anti-Secession voice immediately spoke up. He insisted that the historical state rooms be built in a style appropriate to their era. In this manner, he defined the "early Italian Renaissance" style of the room named after Mátyás Hunyadi, as well as the "Baroque employed by Johann Bernhard Fischer von Erlach" (1656–1723) for the Habsburg Room, which occupied a prominent position beneath the great dome (Huszmann, 1912:pp.48–50). Furthermore, he thus designated the Hungarian-style ornamentation of the Zsolnay ceramic cladding – redesigned by him to include Eastern and Romanesque elements – for the decoration of the room named after the state's founding forefather, St. Stephen (Rostás, 2022:p.39,42).

In the creation of the interior decoration for St. Stephen's Hall, a prominent role was assigned to master cabinet-maker Endre Thék (1842–1919), who also maintained a close personal and professional relationship with Ödön Lechner. The furniture of the Museum of Applied Arts can be considered among the fruits of their collaborative work. The locksmithing and wrought-iron elements for the museum building – envisioned by Lechner in his pioneering style – were produced in the metalworking and goldsmithing workshop of Gyula Jungfer (1841–1908). Utilizing the stylistic features of the floral Secession, Jungfer also participated as an artisan in the decorative works of the Buda Royal Palace. His creations were not only featured in St. Stephen's Hall, but he is also credited with the wrought-iron gate that won an award at the 1900 Paris Exposition. It is of particular interest that the architectural design of these wrought-iron ornaments is attributed to one of Hauszmann's students, Dezső Hüttl (1870–1945) (Karácsony, 2018a:pp.120–121); this further underscores the profound trust between the master and his office staff. Furthermore, Hüttl earned not only Hauszmann's professional (Karácsony, 2020:p.27) and pedagogical (Karácsony, 2018b:p.146) trust but also his personal trust, ultimately marrying Gizella Hauszmann (Huszmann, 2022:pp.101–103). To ensure the success of the World's Fair, with the inevitable presence of outstanding artisans, Alajos Hauszmann yielded space to Hungarian ornamentation and the Hungarian spirit.

<sup>25</sup> Alongside Ödön Lechner's 1896 debut with the Museum of Applied Arts, Hungarian ornamentation achieved significant public recognition through József Huszka's (1854–1934) 1898 collection (Huszka, 1898).

Often misunderstood in the rhetoric of the turn of the century, the Secession – which played a resounding role in the broader political ferment while still developing and defying categorization – was often misstated in public discourse. The sentences quoted in the paragraph above are significantly nuanced by several of Alajos Hauszmann's pronouncements. According to him, turmoil led to divisions among artists, which culminated in exaggerations and extravagances (Hauszmann, 1908). In numerous statements, he defended the mature styles of the past, condemning attempts to create a new language (Hauszmann, 1903). His statements clearly attacked Ödön Lechner and his followers, resulting in a professional polemic that dragged on for years among the greats of Hungarian art history. Ödön Lechner had dedicated his life to developing a national architectural language, which he could not envision within the artistic expression of the Romanesque, Gothic, and Renaissance, which had been frozen for centuries (Lechner, 1902).

One of Alajos Hauszmann's early buildings, the aforementioned Erzsébet Square Kiosk (Fig. 2), was particularly important to him, as it "was generally well-received" (Hauszmann, 2022:p.29) and brought him recognition among the elite (Ybl, 1953). Watching the fate of this building, the advancement of the new Secession style was an especially painful point in his career. The German Renaissance building – originally featuring richly gilded and marbled columns, decorated with vivid frescoes – was half-rebuilt in 1906 based on the designs of László Vágó (1875–1933) and József Vágó (1877–1947) (Vámos, 1926). József Vágó also belonged to the circle of talented and beloved Hauszmann students, and later associates, yet he and his brother altered their master's building beyond recognition – in line with stylistically pure Secessionist principles. Hauszmann spoke



**Fig. 2** The original building of the Kiosk on Erzsébet Square from FSZEK (Klősz, after 1874)

with contempt of the resulting small palace (Fig. 3): "Here is the Erzsébet Square kiosk, which was built as a splendid little artistic bijou, and when the National Salon moved into it, they turned it into a barn" (Rbt., 1914:p.7). It may stem from Hauszmann's personal hurt that the normally optimistic architect, who typically observed history dispassionately, nonetheless spoke negatively about the matter in several places. On the other hand, Ödön Gerő, siding with Ödön Lechner – the apostle of principles motivating development in a national direction – degraded the kiosk building as "an ordinary school assignment from an older era" (Gerő, 1907:p.2). The ensuing stylistic debate was on the agenda for weeks; even Lajos Ernő (1872–1937), the director of the National Salon, attacked Hauszmann in the foreword of the opening exhibition's catalog.

Despite Alajos Hauszmann's later imperishable merits, the baseline for comparison must still be viewed along the lines of comparing the architects' youthful works. In this light, the then-bias toward the Renaissance of the academy-fresh Hauszmann should be juxtaposed with the Hungarian and modern courage of the Vágó brothers, which drove development forward. Moving exactly 40 years away from the statements made in the heat of the moment that also appeared in the March 1907 papers, Jenő Kismarty-Lechner's manuscript can resolve the tension for posterity, thus presenting the attitude Hauszmann maintained throughout his life:

*"The soul of the true artist is guided not only by the ambition to create something beautiful, but also by the ambition to create something original or individual. A new zeitgeist seeks new forms of expression. Hauszmann, too, sensed this new, refreshing spirit of his era and did not stubbornly armor himself with the conservatism of the old."* (Kismarty-Lechner, 1947:p.3).



**Fig. 3** The National Salon in 1909 (Fortepan / Magyar Földrajzi Múzeum / Kerekes J. Zoltán, 1909)

#### 4 The condition of the Royal Palace in 1947, according to Dr. Jenő Kismarty-Lechner

What the St. Peter's Basilica is to Rome, the Eiffel Tower to Paris, the Cathedral of St. Peter and Mary to Cologne, and the Piazzetta to Venice – that is what the former Royal Palace, conjured upon Castle Hill, is to the Hungarian capital (Fig. 4). Dr. Jenő Kismarty-Lechner began his remembrance of Alajos Hauszmann with this thought and concluded it with the sad situation of the domestic "Versailles" building in 1947. During the siege of Budapest in the freezing winter of 1944–1945, the last line of defense for the defeated German troops was in the Castle District, which sustained significant damage. According to Kismarty-Lechner, however, the tragic destruction of the royal palace's architecturally outstanding monuments was not only the consequence of the siege but also the result of leaving the ruined relics to decay with culpable negligence. After the offensive, Kismarty-Lechner walked through the ruined building with castellan László Szabó<sup>26</sup>, whose condition Szabó recorded in daily reports (Kókay, 1997), and which was summarized in the document titled *The Restoration of the Buda Castle* (Gerő, 1951). The dome and roof structure collapsed in multiple areas, the right flight of the main exterior staircase was destroyed, and the Buffet Hall and Habsburg Room sustained severe damage. Due to failures in the water supply network, fires ignited by artillery strikes could not be contained for weeks, resulting in the complete burnout of several wings.

Furthermore, the furnishings and movable art treasures that survived the bombardments and fire damage were looted as spoils of war by advancing Soviet troops. Despite the severe damages (Fig. 5), Kismarty-Lechner still considered the Habsburg Room, containing the unique stylistic elements discussed above, to be salvageable, and he convinced himself that two-thirds of the massive Károly Lotz fresco remained in almost intact condition. However, whatever survived the physical impacts of the siege and remained as a relic after the looting was eradicated through undocumented and uncontrolled demolition works. This is how St. Stephen's Hall, among other spaces, was subsequently destroyed (Finta, 2023:p.64). And thus began the Palace's enduring presence in the architectural spotlight, a period that, in the words of Granasztói, can be described (Kalmár, 2022:p.4) as an era of "debates,



Fig. 4 The Royal Palace in 1905 (Fortepan / Deutsche Fotothek / Brück und Sohn, 1905)

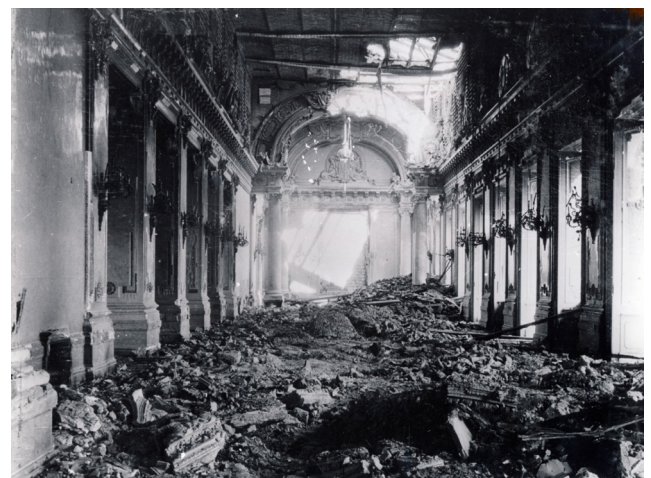


Fig. 5 The damaged Buffet Hall in 1945 (Fortepan / Fortepan, 1945)

agonizing, complications, and wrangling" (Granasztói, 1964:p.10). Numerous sources have explored the pre-destruction state and the alterations initiated from 1945 onward. Prominent among these is István Czagány's book (Czagány, 1966), which presents the conditions before and after Hauszmann's intervention, alongside the alterations<sup>27</sup> that took place in the 1960s (Bendefy, 1967).

Jenő Kismarty-Lechner sadly concluded in the final paragraph of his memoir that the restoration funds spent on other works should instead have been devoted to averting the further destruction of the palace. He considered it particularly painful that it was exactly Alajos Hauszmann

<sup>26</sup> László Szabó (1889–1956) architectural engineer, chief government counselor, Royal Castle Captain from 1940, then air raid commander of the Royal Castle

<sup>27</sup> In recent years, Péter Rostás and Péter Farbaky have emerged as prominent experts on the Palace's history following World War II. They have published extensively on the Palace as a whole (Benda et al., 2015; Farbaky, 2013; 2016), as well as on its specific details (Rostás, 2009). Both have authored significant studies regarding the relationship between Alajos Hauszmann and the Castle (Farbaky, 2001; 2009) and the post-World War II situation (Farbaky, 2015, Rostás, 2014). Furthermore, the book titled *Az újjáépült Budavári palota (The rebuilt Buda Castle)* (Kollányi, 1990) represents the most comprehensive analysis of the post-1945 history (Kalmár, 2022).

– who labored at the Royal Joseph Polytechnic University to raise generations of architects, giving free rein to the unfolding of the modern and individual inclinations of the youth – whose building suffered. According to Kismarty-Lechner, restoring the palace to its original condition for the sake of the world-famous Danube cityscape would be a worthy expression of respect for the distinguished architect and professor born exactly one hundred years ago. Jenő Kismarty-Lechner confessed the following in a closing imbued with pride and emotion:

*"Suppose we lay down the unfading wreath of remembrance and recognition before his great creation burned to ruins, with the pledge that our current generation will strive to reconstruct it with its old artistic configurations, if possible. It would not be a small but a rewarding task, testifying to national consciousness."* (Kismarty-Lechner, 1947:p.3).

## 5 Conclusion

Written in 1947 and hitherto hidden from research, Dr. Jenő Kismarty-Lechner's manuscript is not merely a belated tribute to Alajos Hauszmann on the centenary of his birth, but rather a unique interpretation of a particularly fraught era in Hungarian architectural history. The evaluation of Hauszmann's oeuvre merits a new approach, particularly when examining the large-scale reconstructions of his buildings currently underway; in light of this, "we must reconsider our old evaluative frameworks" concerning 19<sup>th</sup>-century Historicism (Bellák, 2025:p.147). The source analysis highlights a previously marginalized paradox: while representing academic Historicism and publicly offering fierce criticism of the Secession and the Lechnerian style, Alajos Hauszmann nevertheless yielded ground to these innovative endeavors in practice. In the most monumental creation of his oeuvre, the interior design of the Royal Palace, ornamentation rooted in Hungarian folk arts was integrated into

the state rooms in a subtle, stylized form-facilitated by his exceptional associates, including Géza Györgyi, and the most prominent artisans of the era.

The significance of this architectural gesture extends far beyond mere stylistic play, carrying an irony of historical proportions. Reigning atop Buda's Castle Hill, the royal palace was intended to proclaim the power of the Habsburg dynasty, alongside the unshakeable unity and glory of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, at the capital's most prominent vantage point. It did so within a vibrant Central European region before the First World War, where the memory of the 1848–1849 Revolution and War of Independence, coupled with the patriotic fervor following the Austro-Hungarian Compromise, generated continuous political tension. Amidst this increasingly polarized European climate, characterized by the vociferous formation of national consciousness, Hauszmann – recognizing the dynamics of emerging new styles – quietly infused the pinnacle building of imperial representation with a Hungarian soul and visual identity. Thus, the Buda Royal Palace can be considered a symbol of national belonging not only from a historical perspective but also as a monument of Hungarian architectural and artistic identity (Gutowski, 2025:p.35). Despite continuous alterations and reconstructions, this "prestigious work in both historical and artistic respects" (Kalmár, 2022:p.11) embodies the "temporal continuity of national historical existence" (Gyáni, 2016:p.140).

From this perspective, Jenő Kismarty-Lechner's 1947 struggle and passionate argumentation for saving the ruined palace assume their true significance. For him, the complete reconstruction of the building complex did not represent the restoration of a symbol belonging to a bygone foreign dynasty, but rather the preservation of a unique cultural and national achievement – one that successfully articulated the encoded message of the Hungarian spirit, eternally captured in stone and ceramics, even within an imperial framework.

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## Appendix

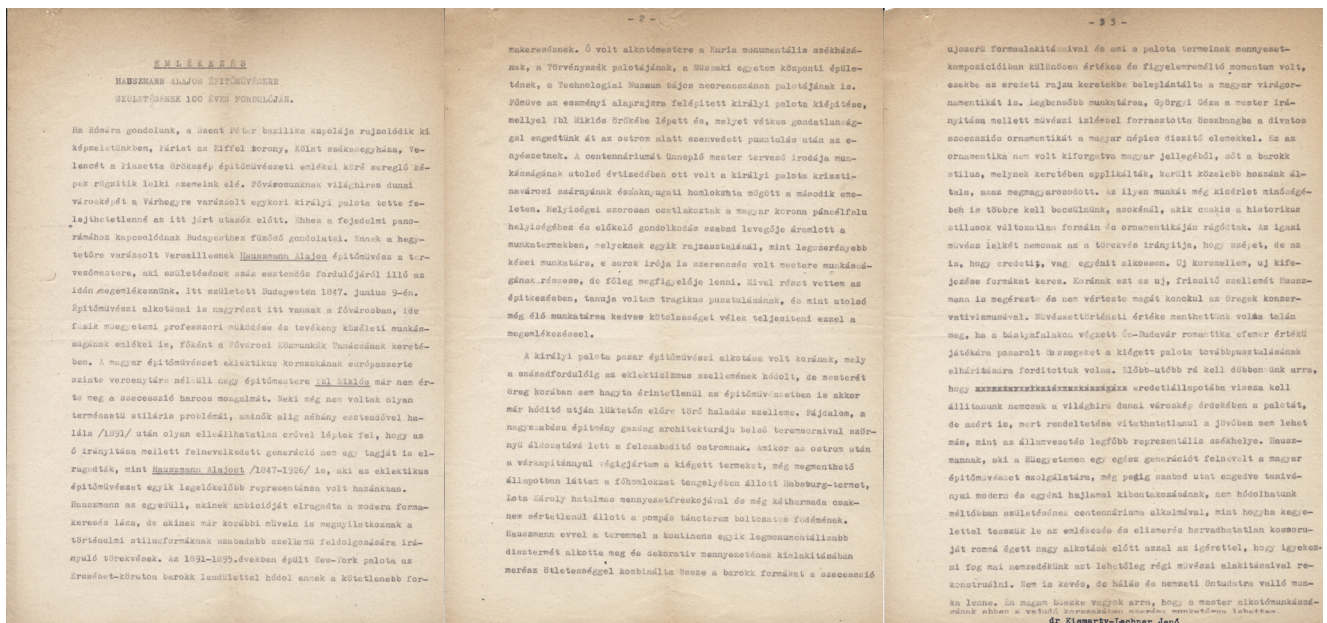


Fig. A1 The manuscript in Hungarian (Kismarty-Lechner, 1947)