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PROFESSIONALIZATION IN SOCIALISM

ARCHITECTS AND ARCHITECTURE AFTER 1945 IN HUNGARY²

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ABSTRACT

In my study, I investigate architects' search for their place in the new society and the history of their profession after 1945 in Hungary with the help of professionalization theories. Through statistics, memoirs, interviews, archival documents, laws and decrees, I seek to discover what kind of role architecture and architects played in the dictatorship of the 1950s and how that role changed in the Kádár system. In addition to external analysis, I place particular emphasis on how this change of role is reflected in the lifestory interviews and in the identity of the architects of the era.

Keywords: historical sociology, professionalization, architecture, oral history

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1. INTRODUCTION

The relationship between a professional group and the state – in the present case, the state-power-monopolizing Hungarian Workers' Party – represents a sensitive issue in all eras. In general, members of a certain profession (at least in continental Europe) simultaneously desire autonomy and require state support in order to reach their objectives (Halmos–Szívós 2010). This is especially true in the case of architects, who are unable to realize their professional ideas without having a significant amount of material resources placed at their disposal. However, this circumstance unavoidably entails the necessity of adapting to the demands of the client. During the period under examination, the state was the only significant client in Hungary, thus there was no question regarding where architects needed to look for support in order to attain their professional objectives. In the following pages, I will examine the measures taken in order to bridge the gap between professional autonomy and adaptation to the requirements of the state as well as the means utilized to achieve this aim.

I seek answers to my questions in part with the help of professionalization theories. Although professionalization theories were originally designed to explain the transformation of Anglo-Saxon societies in the 20th century, neither their historization nor their application to post-1945 socialist countries is unprecedented. Moreover, many studies have shown that analysing social changes in the age of socialism using the concept of professionalization can be especially fruitful.³

In addition to contemporary press and statistical sources, my analysis relies heavily on recollections, memoirs, and interviews. One group of sources consists of architectural interviews made for the 1956 Institute's Oral History Archive. The processed interviews took place between 1982 and 1988, ie before the change of regime. Other sources used are: short memoirs written on request in the 1984/3 issue of Hungarian Architecture (*Magyar Építőművészet*); an interview with György Jánossy published in the 1988/3 issue of *Magyar Építőművészet* (also, of course, before the change of regime); the interviews published in Judit Osskó's book "Unokáink is fogják látni [Our Grandchildren Will See Also]" (most of which were also conducted before the change of regime); and Péter Molnár's (biographically inspired) studies dealing with the Stalinist period.⁴

What the texts have in common is that the contemporary editors and interviewers tried to speak to the defining architects of each era of socialist Hungary. Another common feature of the circumstances of origin is that recollectors and interviewees shared their memories in a professional environment (and more or less for a

3 See for instance: Wolf-Dietrich Bukow et alii (Hrsg.): *Biographische Konstruktionen im multi kulturellen Bildungsprozess. Individuelle Standortsicherung im globalisierten Alltag*. Wiesbaden, 2006, VS.; Birgit Bütow– Karl August Chassé– Susanne Maurer (Hrsg): *Soziale Arbeit zwischen Aufbau und Abbau. Transformationsprozesse im Osten Deutschlands und die Kinder- und Jugendhilfe*. Wiesbaden, 2006, VS; Melanie Fabel-Lamla (2004): *Professionalisierungspfade ostdeutscher Lehrer*. Wies-baden, VS.; Daniel Giese: *Die SED und ihre Arme. Die NVA zwischen Politisierung und Professionalismus, 1956–65*. München, Oldenbourg 2002

4 The Post-Modern trend appeared in Hungary in the 1980s. This new trend initiated the research on the theme of socialist realism and revalued the Stalinist architecture of the 1950s.

professional audience). There were differences between the architects' recollections of how much they played a political role and how close they were to the leadership of the Communist Party. What these architects had in common, however, was that in both the Kádár and Rákosi era they were dominant, influential figures of Hungarian architecture.

Máté Major, a university professor and member of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences who was one of the most prominent figures in public architectural life in Hungary during the communist era, wrote in 1984 with reference to the Rákosi era (1945–1956):

"I must state: among architects—at least among those who create—generally there were not communists (socialists)—and there are not any today either—and those who declared—declare—themselves to be such awakened—and awaken—the suspicion in me that they are not even architects." (Major 1984) One might interpret Major's statement to mean that the architects who were "creating" during the Rákosi era constituted an intellectual opposition to the régime. However, researchers who survey the recollections of the leading architects in Hungary during the post-war period will be surprised at what they have to say.

Architect Zoltán Farkasdy said during an interview in the mid-1980s:

This is a very interesting process. Today people apply much more pejorative attributes to this thing [the Socialist Realist period] than this era deserves. We were young then, we believed in it—and even now in my old age I say that we rightfully believed in it. I still believe today that there was a very positive volition in that. This is why I feel in general that the current outcry is unjust, simply sweeping it aside, because it produced much more humane architecture than that which came into being later. [. . .] At that time, they regarded the essential elements of architecture, humanity and adaptation to man, as one of the specific domains of national culture even in the highest places. They paid such great attention to this in the supreme party circles, in the supreme leadership circles, that they also took care and attention to rein in architecture branded as modernist, which we had previously practiced, and with this proved that they wanted something else than had existed until then!⁵

Architect György Jánosy stated during a 1988 interview with regard to the same topic:

Did the Socialist Realist period damage Hungary's architectural culture and environmental culture as much as the years that followed?

It did not. Simply very few things were realized. And those fit into the sequence of the old buildings to some degree. The harm that it did, in fact, could be seen in the country's technical backwardness and the backwardness of architectural technology. The late-arriving, explosive modernity left more ruthless marks in the subsequent period than Socialist Realism.⁶

Pál Virágh said in a 1986 interview:

The assessment of Socialist Realist architecture was then [1970] in a fashionable way completely, 100-percent negative. However, I determined that Socialist Realism had two positive characteristics. One was that the Socialist Realist period excluded the circle that had become ossified into the Bauhaus style and barrenness and also excluded the opportunity to not deal with composition at all under the pretext of modernism and the Bauhaus, and impelled architecture along with all its historicizing and eclecticizing untimeliness to think about architectural formation. Its other positive aspect was city planning. [. . .] Socialist Realist city planning required certain emphases: formation of spaces, it returned to the street

5 Farkasdy Zoltán-interjú, [Interview with Zoltán Farkasdy] készítette Szabóné Dér Ilona 1983–87 között, 1956-os Intézet Oral History Archívuma (OHA), 52. sz., 322–323.

6 Jánosy György-interjú, [Interview with György Jánosy] készítette Szabóné Dér Ilona 1988-ban, OHA, 134. sz., 114.

and in place of architecture referred to as modern, called for certain historical values, squares, streets, insularity, to appear in the city.⁷

In a 1984 article published in *Hungarian Architectural Art*, Imre Perényi stated:

Socialist Realism, the period called “Socreal,” was short-lived: hardly four years. Nevertheless, in addition to the condemnably eclectic character of the works of this period, it in general had an undoubtedly positive role in heightening professional architectural knowledge—mostly in an artistic sense—and in the cultivation of tradition and in the relationship toward the environment. According to my point of view, a significant proportion of the architectural community did not create under constraint at this time, but out of conviction. [. . .] This period did not leave such an unfavorable mark on our cities as the following period did.” (Perényi 1984)

The opinions expressed above clearly contradict both the current and the contemporary (1980s) professional and non-professional assessment of the Socialist Realist period. The author will attempt in this study, among other things, to provide an explanation for this disparity.

Following the Second World War, left-wing and modernist architects occupied almost all the important positions in the architectural life of Hungary. Those architects who were not affiliated with the left wing (that is, the majority) kept away from politics, did not play a significant role in official architectural public life, and in absence of clients did not have the opportunity to appear before the public with their designs and buildings.⁸ In addition to their monopolization of state commissions, the 20 to 30 architects who maintained a close connection to political power were able to increase their authority as a result of the fact that the opportunities to engage in private design decreased after 1948, thus forcing architects to work in large state planning offices. A significant proportion of the design offices that later become “famous,” such as Középterv and Iparterv, came into being at this time.⁹ The aforementioned talented left-wing architects, who in their modernist professional creed regarded the architectural style associated with the Congrès Internationaux d’Architecture Moderne as representing the standard to be followed, received the leading role, thus making their monopoly on style and design complete.¹⁰

However, this group of left wing (social-democrat and communist) architects who organized and designed state commissions was not completely unified. (Ferkai 2015: 17-18.) Although they presented a united front supporting renewal in their previously mentioned proclamation, Máté Major soon fractured this unity through an article he published in the communist periodical *New Architecture* in which he made it clear that the good, “progressive” architect could not remain distant from politics. In this article, Major also specified which party such progressive architects must join, claiming that they must identify themselves with “the ideology of the workers’ society.” (Major 1949a) In a (somewhat sarcastic) response published in *Space and Form*, Pál Granasztói drew attention to the problematic nature of Máté Major’s outlook and asserted that emphasis must be shifted from ideology to the resolution of concrete problems. However, Major’s rejoinder unambiguously revealed that there was no demand for true debate and no possibility for genuine compromise. (Granasztói 1946, Major 1947, Saád 1985) With the building of the dictatorship and the strengthening of ideological control, both the opportunity for debate and the diversity of forums decreased. Both *Space and Form* and *New*

7 Virágh Pál-interjú,[Interview with Pál Vorágh] készítette Szabóné Dér Ilona 1986-ban, OHA, 47. sz., 165–166.

8 For the specific course of this and the displacement techniques used, see Major (2001), 123–147.

9 See: Az Állami Építéstudományi és Tervezőintézet szervezéséről szóló 5500/1948. Korm. sz. rendelet [Government decree on the organization of the State Institute of Architecture and Design]. and the 12.270/1948 government decree which divided the Institute in three design offices. For recollections of the history of each design office (from the beginning to the change of regime), see Schéry (2001).

10 *Congrès internationaux d’architecture moderne*: a forum of the modern architectural movement founded in 1928 in Switzerland on the initiative of Siegfried Giedion and Le Corbusier.

Architecture ceased publication within a year, although *Construction-Architecture* was launched soon thereafter to succeed the latter with Máté Major as managing editor and three editors from *New Architecture*. Articles proclaiming and demanding the omnipotence of Socialist Realism appeared in this new publication as well as the daily newspaper of the Hungarian Workers' Party, *Szabad Nép* (Free People). The "Resolution of Hungarian Communist Architects" published in 1949 made the turning point clear to everybody:

*"The activist communist architects discussed on November 26, 1949 the dangers of strong Western cosmopolitan influences that have appeared in our architecture and on the basis of this debate resolved to immediately launch a merciless fight against the imperialist attack that manifests itself in the domain of architecture via formalism and cosmopolitanism and for the establishment of Socialist Realist architecture in our homeland."*¹¹

After this, there still occurred a faint attempt to reconcile new architecture (that is, modern architecture) with Stalinist principles, though even in these constructions the exemplary quality of Soviet architecture and the primacy of artistic and architectural principles formulated in the Soviet Union were highlighted.) (Major 1949b) The process by which Socialist Realism became the obligatory dogma in Hungary concluded with the "great architectural debate" that the Agitation and Propaganda Department of the Hungarian Workers' Party Central Leadership organized on April 17 and April 24, 1951.¹² However, as Imre Perényi, who attended the two-session event, wrote many years later, exercising a certain degree of self-criticism, "it was neither a debate nor great, nor exclusively architectural," but rather resembled a well-staged theatrical performance. (Perényi 1984: 16.) This nevertheless provided Minister of Popular Culture József Révai with the opportunity—with the support of Marxist philosopher György Lukács—to make it clear to architects that those who wanted to work and create must follow the party-dictated aesthetic codex. In practice, this newly prescribed architecture, which was "socialist in content and national in form," meant that architects had to reach back to Reform Era Hungarian classicist architecture to find the forms to use in their designs. Centrally organized study excursions, brochures containing models and the Architectural Council established in 1952 to "guide" designs in the direction of Socialist Realism served to promote this. (Bonta 2008, 259, 268–69; Molnár 2005, 49–63. 56–58; Simon 1999) The end of the Socialist Realist period began with a speech that the General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, Nikita Khrushchev, delivered in December 1954. Khrushchev put an end to Socialist Realism not for aesthetic or ideological reasons, but because the Soviet construction industry was not able to resolve the USSR's housing shortage following this official style. (Prakfalvi 2004) The events in the Soviet Union brought an end to the style terror in Hungary, but did not immediately halt the construction of Socialist Realist buildings in the country. As a result of the long completion time in the construction industry, Socialist Realist buildings continued to be constructed in Hungary until the early 1960s (in the city of Dunaújváros, for example). The drastic decrease and reallocation of funding for large investments in Hungary in 1953 served to moderate the liberation of the country from the style dictatorship because it delayed construction of planned Socialist Realist buildings (Honvári 2006:254-260, Germuska 2004:92–129.,144–147).¹³ The construction of a large volume of buildings not designed in the Socialist Realist style essentially began only in the years 1959–1960. The history of the official state policy regarding architecture following the Second World War is undeniably compatible with the general history of the Rákosi régime and serves to make the positive image portrayed in interviews and memoirs even more incomprehensible.

11 A kommunista magyar építészek határozata. [The resolution of the Hungarian communist architects] *Építés-Építészet*, 1949, 5. Közli Major M., Osskó J., 29–30.

12 The material of the "discussion" was published in several places. The most important speeches and comments can be found Major M., Osskó J. 46–95.

13 The consequences of the shutdown were completely clear for the contemporaries. see: Farkasdy Zoltán-interjú, [Interview with Zoltán Farkasdy] készítette Szabóné Dér Ilona 1983–87 között, 1956-os Intézet Oral History Archivuma (OHA), 52. sz., 227.

The author of the present volume attributes the contradiction between the fact of the generally repressive atmosphere that prevailed in Hungary during the Rákosi era and the architects' positive memory of the period to the internal dynamic of the architectural occupation/profession and to their interaction with contemporary society and political power, that is, to the change in the professional standard of for architects. It is for this reason that the subsequent analysis of sources will take place using the concepts of *special knowledge necessary for the occupation, professional autonomy and economic-social position* (borrowed from theories of professionalization).

Members of the post-1949 architectural élite faced a serious dilemma: if they wanted to retain their modern architectural principles, they would lose their positions and thus the possibility to participate in the great task of reconstruction; while if they wanted to take part in this undertaking, they would have to discard one of the most important components of their professional identity—the modern architectural style. The Stalinist state spared no effort in its attempt to convince members of the architectural community. It attempted to make their choice easier via promises of preferential training, material security and heightened prestige. The details surrounding these offers and the response of architects to them will be detailed below.

2. THE STALINIST STATE AND THE ARCHITECTS' PROFESSIONALISATION

2.1 Education – Special knowledge for the occupation

Developing technical higher education and increasing the number of engineers represented fundamental objectives of the strengthening communist dictatorship. (Romsics 1999: 361.)¹⁴ The Heavy Industry University was established in Miskolc in 1949, the Transportation Technical University in Szeged in 1951 and the Chemical Industry University in Veszprém this same year. Also in 1951, evening and correspondence courses were introduced at technical universities, thus providing the opportunity to study alongside regular employment that the State Technical College had previously offered. Transformation of the training and education of architects represented a part of this process as well. In 1952, the Construction Industry Technical University was founded in place of the Construction and Architecture Faculty, thus furnishing architects with their own university for the first (and until today the last) time (Németh é.n.). In addition to the autonomy of architectural training and the increasing numbers of architectural students, the process of specialization was also launched: in 1949, the training of designers and builders was separated, while beginning in 1951 training in design arts came into the foreground (Vámosy 1998). With this, the plans regarding architectural training and education contained in the proclamation published in *Space and Form* after the Second World War were essentially implemented.

The primary objective of eliminating the possibility of private design and—parallel to this—establishing state design institutes (on the Soviet model) was to expand state control. This resulted in the modernization and increased professionalism of architectural output, thus conforming to the trend in Western Europe, North America and interwar Hungary. In the studio system utilized at design institutes, groups worked on state commissions under the leadership of an experienced architect. In addition to providing an environment that facilitated work (the continual possibility to consult with drafters and designers, library access), this offered the opportunity for intensive professional communication and development. Those who were young architects during this period refer to the positive impact of this new system time after time in their memoirs and in interviews. According to these architects, increasing bureaucracy stifled this inspiring environment during the

¹⁴ Compared to 1052 in 1937–38, there were already 7,134 full-time engineering students in 1950–51, their number reaching a maximum in the 1953–54 academic year (12,861), but even in 1956 it was over 11,000. I did not find any data specifically for architecture students.

middle and late 1950s rather than the introduction of Socialist Realism as the obligatory style.¹⁵

The Master School (Mesteriskola) established in 1953 as an institute for élite training provided the possibility for further professional development (Vámos 2011). The operation of this school was based on two-year cycles in which talented architects with a few years of experience were given the opportunity to work together with the recognized architects of the era in their studios. The students were also able to attend lectures and participate in professional debates. Those who took part in the first cycles of the Master School indeed became “masters,” determining the course of architecture in Hungary during the decades of the 1960s and 1970s.¹⁶

2.2 Socio-economic status

However, in addition to the opportunities for training and education and professional discourse, economic and social status and prestige also influence the overall feeling of satisfaction among the practitioners of a certain occupation. Architects in Hungary faced a difficult situation after the Second World War. Although a large part of the country stood in ruins, there were hardly any commissions available due to a lack of capital and clients. Moreover, beginning reconstruction projects primarily required the expertise of master builders (contractors) rather than architects (designers). Amid these conditions, neither the fashionable architects who had possessed a large clientele during the interwar period nor the architects who maintained close connections to the new system were able to maintain their previous standard of living.¹⁷ Amid these needy circumstances (especially in comparison with those who were active in related arts), the design institutes that came into existence in and after 1948 provided the majority of contemporary architects with a small though regular income and, along with the previously mentioned studio system, offered them the possibility to engage in creative work as well (Perényi 1984:16, Tamáska 2013a). Since the communist system that was taking root in Hungary regarded art in general and architecture in particular as vehicles for political communication, considering the design of new buildings to be a means of expressing ideology, it granted its architects serious, large-scale commissions. (Szalai 1995: 9-18)¹⁸ It was during this time that the Defense Ministry and the People’s Stadium were built in Budapest, new universities and university buildings were built in the capital, in Miskolc, and in Veszprém, and the Inota Power Plant was constructed in central Hungary.¹⁹ State commissions of this quantity and magnitude were unimaginable during the previous decades and served to significantly increase the social standing and improve the general estimation of architecture and architects. Conferred awards provide a clear reflection of state recognition in a dictatorship, although they do not unambiguously reveal the degree of true social esteem. The Council of Ministers of the Hungarian People’s Republic established the Ybl Award in 1953 specifically to acknowledge architectural activity. From then until 1964, six first-degree and six second-degree awards were granted annually.²⁰ Between 1948 and 1956, architects received one of the most prestigious cultural awards accorded during the period, the Kossuth Prize, on 18 occasions. The fact that certain designs were presented to the public not under the name of an architectural office or firm, but under that of the architect, served to further increase the status of the architectural profession.²¹ In 1951, the Alliance of Hungarian Architects was formed at the classicist National Museum, an appropriate representative site in terms of Socialist Realist ideol-

15 Farkasdy Zoltán-interjú [Interview with Zoltán Farkas], készítette Szabóné Dér Ilona 1983–87 között, OHA, 52. sz., 99–102; Jánosgy György-interjú [Interview with György Jánosgy], készítette Szabóné Dér Ilona 1988-ban, OHA, 134. sz., 90–93, 103–106; Gádos 1984: 17–19.

16 Szendrői Jenő-interjú (1977), Vámosy 1998.

17 Fischer József-interjú [Interview with József Fischer], készítette Szabóné Dér Ilona 1986–87 között, OHA, 42. sz.

18 The same happend in Poland. See for instance: Tamáska 2013b

19 For more information on these and other contemporary buildings, see Bonta 2008; Prakfalvi 2006, 9–18.

20 About the Ybl award see, Schéry 1995.

21 About the contrasting local practice, see Virágh Pál-interjú.[Interview with Pál Virágh] Készítette Szabóné Dér Ilona 1986-ban. OHA, 47. sz., 119–121.

ogy. This also symbolized the acknowledgement of the state and signaled that architecture is art and one of the most important branches of national culture.²² These circumstances indisputably provided architects with a privileged financial situation and a considerable degree of prestige.

2.3 Professional autonomy

Developments with regard to ideological control, training and the social and economic situation have been described earlier in this article. In addition to the prescribed obligatory style (or according to certain interpretations as compensation for it), (Gádoros 1984:18) the state provided significant material (economic) and social opportunities for architects. This obviously compensated to some degree for the professional one-sidedness that the prescribed style had caused. However, it would be worthwhile to examine the opportunities that individuals had at their disposal to avoid state political control. Thus the author will subsequently seek to answer the question: how strong and how extensive was the *professional autonomy* of architects during the years of the Rákosi dictatorship?²³ For the most part, the recollections of contemporaries provide the only means of examining this question. The author thus utilized this resource, enjoying its benefits and accepting its disadvantages as well.

As previously shown, works describing the Rákosi era assert that one of the distinguishing features of the dictatorship that existed in Hungary during this period was that it limited opportunities for autonomous creation. The dictatorship prescribed the themes that artists (which architects were considered to be at this time) could deal with and the form in which they were to appear. In architecture, use of the classicist forms of the Reform Era became the prescribed rule, which several institutions and actions received the task of enforcing. How was it possible to exist as a genuine intellectual in such an atmosphere? According to some architects, it was not at all possible to do so, thus they withdrew from the field of Hungarian architecture and accepted work exclusively as builders.²⁴ But other architects developed different strategies.

The Iparterv (Industrial Design) architectural office, which primarily designed industrial buildings and was thus less exposed to strict ideological obligations, offered a refuge from Socialist Realism. Not even during the most severe period of the 1950s were the stylistic attributes of Neo-Classical style expected to play a decisive role in the external appearance of industrial facilities. The most important reason for this was that while the form (neo-classicism) could be relatively well defined, the content (socialism) left architects with considerable room for movement (since the ideologues used examples primarily from literature as illustrations). This was particularly true with regard to the domain of industrial architecture, where function was allowed to supersede content without any particular difficulty, and the more emphatic the function the greater the degree to which it was possible to depart from the obligations vis-à-vis form. It is therefore not surprising that Iparterv became a refuge for architects who had been ignored during the period and who did not want to produce designs in the Socialist Realist style. It is perhaps not by accident that the architects who worked at Iparterv tended to be oriented toward the type of architecture that predominated in Western Europe during this period and among all the Hungarian design institutes, Iparterv was the one that managed to gain an international reputation and in 1961 was the first to win an international award, the Perret Prize (for development of on-site, large-element

22 Farkasdy Zoltán-interjú [Interview with Zoltán Farkas], készítette Szabóné Dér Ilona 1983–87 között, OHA, 52. sz., 323; Jánossy György-interjú [Interview with György Jánossy], készítette Szabóné Dér Ilona 1988-ban, OHA, 134. sz., 144–145.; Gádoros 1984: 18

23 Péter Molnár writes that the art history of the era can only be written through the history of these „resistances and autonomy”. – Molnár 1996: 56–63.

24 Of course, these “withdrawals” can be interpreted in many ways. Fischer József-interjú [Interview with József Fischer, készítette Szabóné Dér Ilona 1986–87 között, OHA, 42. sz., 310; Fischer 1984:21; Preisich 1984:11.; Rác György-interjú [Interview with György Rác], készítette Szabóné Dér Ilona 1988-ban, OHA, 135. sz., 138–139.

reinforced-concrete pre-fabrication). (Vámosy 1998.);²⁵ Of course, all this did not mean that no factories or plants were built in the socialist realist style at all, but the compulsion to adapt was much less here than in other areas of architecture (Haba 2019).

For those who could not or did not want to work at Iparterv, the previously mentioned professional atmosphere represented an avenue of escape. Because of the obstacles to intellectual dialogue with the West, professional architectural life in Hungary turned inward, although it was precisely this condition of “designing for each other” that made it possible to establish a standard (“ethics”) that diverged from the official one. This standard was sometimes articulated in the course of Alliance of Hungarian Architects debates, expressing strong criticism of the official professional position (albeit using the Socialist Realist lexicon) and providing support and a point of departure for techniques that avoided Socialist Realism as well as compensating for the lack of official acknowledgement.²⁶

Expansion of the concept of neo-classicism represented one of the means by which architects were able to comply with state requirements and at the same time meet their own standards and those of the professional community. Instead of Reform Era Hungarian neo-classicism, graduating architectural students who had gone to Northern Europe during the Second World War used the interwar classicism of the northern peoples (primarily the Swedes) as the foundation for their designs. (Molnár 2004:61; Jánossy–Lente 1988: 18)²⁷ Buildings designed according to this style satisfied the expectations of the government without compromising the standards of the architectural profession. (The design that Gyula Rimanóczy and János Kleineisel produced for the R-Building of the Budapest Technical University represented an example of this).

The other means of avoiding the strict requirements was related to design technique. The Architectural Council that inspected all designs looked for the most part only at façade drawings. As a result, the role of architectural graphics increased: through shading or the deceptive portrayal of perspective it was possible to enhance or exaggerate the neo-classicist character of a building design. The disparities between designs and detailed drawings exercised a similar effect. Emphatically “Socialist Realist” motifs contained in submitted designs were either muted or eliminated in the detailed drawings that served as the basis for construction. Using these techniques, architects were able to comply with their own aesthetic-professional norms despite the considerable vigilance of the state oversight apparatus.²⁸

However, a profession must be capable of enforcing its will and asserting its norms not only toward the state, but in relation to society and other interest groups as well. Current architectural discourse also demonstrates that the architect-designer must be able to hold his or her own in the face of both the client and the builder. This situation of the architect-designer toward the client (the state) during this period has already been examined. Contemporary accounts suggest that it was precisely the special state attention (and the outstanding importance of buildings and thus of architecture for the dictatorship) as well as the handicraft-industry character of the construction industry in Hungary during the 1950s that served to subordinate the concepts of the architect to industrial-technological and economic considerations. The organizational embodiments of this were the Architectural Council and the National Architectural Office, the primary tasks of which were to

25 Szendrői Jenő-interjú [Interview with Jenő Szendrői] (1977) = Osskó i. m., 19–21, 23; Farkasdy Zoltán-interjú [Interview with Zoltán Farkasdy], készítette Szabóné Dér Ilona 1983–87 között, OHA, 52. sz. 165.

26 Jánossy György-interjú [Interview with György Jánossy], készítette Szabóné Dér Ilona 1988-ban, OHA, 134. sz., 136; Jánossy-Lente 1988:19; Farkasdy Zoltán-interjú, [Interview with Zoltán Farkasdy] készítette Szabóné Dér Ilona 1983–87 között, OHA, 52. sz., 211–212; Borvendég Béla-interjú [Interview with Béla Borvendég], készítette Szabóné Dér Ilona 1982–83 között, OHA 38. sz., 52–53.; Molnár 2004: 58.

27 For the influence of Swedish architecture in Hungary see Lampel 2003. About Scandinavian Classicism see: Frampton, 2002:254–267.

28 About resistance techniques Molnár 2004, 61; Jánossy György-interjú, készítette Szabóné Dér Ilona 1988-ban, OHA, 134. sz., 129–130.

oversee the application of Socialist Realism in architecture and represent architectural interests and principles vis-à-vis builders. Moreover, the two offices operated under the direct supervision of the Council of Ministers rather than under the auspices of the Construction Affairs Ministry (Perényi 1984:16, Gádoros 1984:18, Major 2001:252–253).

3. CONCLUSION

Why does it thus appear that architects maintain positive recollections of the oppressive years of the Rákosi era? Cognitive dissonance certainly played a role in this apparent contradiction: that is, architects who participated in the building and operation of the dictatorship portrayed the era in a positive light in order to preserve and strengthen their moral integrity. Although this psychological phenomenon undoubtedly exercised (and continues to exercise) an influence on architects who were active in Hungary following the Second World War, it does not provide a total explanation for their favorable assessment of the Rákosi era. Although during the subsequent Kádár era (when the relevant recollections were born) it was not fashionable to praise the Rákosi era, the mere fact of having filled leading functions during the latter period did not represent a shameful stigma that required apologies and excuses. However, proclaiming the advantages of the era nevertheless represented deviant behavior to some degree. Moreover, a large number of those in question did not fill leading positions during the Rákosi era even if they were members of the communist party—they were “only” frequently employed architects. It may have also occurred that the careers of the architects in question reached their pinnacle during the Rákosi era, thus causing them to recall this time with nostalgia. However, this hypothesis is difficult to defend in the majority of instances in which these architects continued to design major buildings, publish books, work as university professors and receive awards for their work in the 1960s and even later. It is nevertheless natural that those who began their careers and received professional opportunities in the 1950s would look back upon this decade with some degree of fondness.

Although the arguments presented above are valid, even their collective impact does not fully explain the attitudes of the relevant generation of architects toward the 1950s. The positive image of this decade that is common among members of this generation can be better explained via analysis of the process of professionalization that took place within the architectural profession at this time. The importance of architecture increased in comparison to the pre-war period in accordance with the nature of the dictatorship. Buildings, which had previously been appraised based on their function and aesthetic value, gained symbolic meaning via the requirement that they represent the new political system. Although heightened state attention entailed significant disadvantages and obligations, it also served to “elevate” the “social” importance of architecture and to classify it as an art without debating the issue. Consequently, the prestige of architecture rose, the material circumstances of architects improved and, as previously described, the ability of those active in the architectural profession to assert their interests against those of the construction industry increased. Moreover, the institutional system of architectural training became more refined and the number of people who participated in such training increased. It also became evident that in spite of the prescribed obligatory style, architects had managed to preserve certain aspects of professional autonomy. Taken together, these factors served to accelerate the process of professionalization that had begun a long time previously, thus improving the situation with regard to the architectural profession. This process understandably resulted in positive changes for those who worked as architects during the period in question.

This situation may seem particularly favorable if seen from the perspective of the Kádár era, when several elements of the Rákosi-era “compact” between the state and architects underwent modification. According to these changes, there was no longer an officially prescribed architectural style and both the Architectural Council and the National Construction Affairs Office were abolished. However, the termination of state supervi-

sion at the national level resulted not only in a greater degree of professional freedom, but also meant (as became clear within a few years) that architecture no longer represented the most important form of expression for the state, which no longer wished to represent its ideology and itself through the design features of buildings constructed in Hungary. It was precisely the less offensive nature of self-representation that became the foundation of the Kádár régime's consolidation (Tamáska 2018). The framework and content of architectural training also underwent transformation during the Kádár era, when the formation of construction engineers serving the interest of industry supplanted the design-oriented approach of the 1950s. This, along with rising numbers of students, resulted in a decrease in the quality of training.²⁹ The very successful Master School that had supplemented basic architectural education was closed in 1960 amid accusations that it had been conducting élite training.³⁰

The decline in the role and position that the state accorded to architecture is clearly demonstrated in the fact that architects, who had previously been the recipients of many Kossuth Prizes, were no longer eligible to win the award after 1963, from which year it was granted only in recognition of cultural and artistic achievement (since according to the new concept of the state, architecture was classified under the rubric of industry rather than art or culture). The decreasing importance of architecture for the state is also reflected in the transfer of the authority to confer Ybl Awards from the Council of Ministers to the minister of the competent government ministry.³¹ The increased emphasis placed on economic efficiency likewise served to alter the relationship between industry and architecture. The previous task of industry had been to serve as a vehicle for implantation of the architect-conceived design representing the socialist state, whereas from the end of the 1950s (at the latest), the technological frameworks and economic allocations of the construction industry became decisive.³²

29 The Statistical Office only published the number of full-time students by faculty from the 1961–62 academic year. According to the data, by the mid-1970s, the number of students at the Faculty of Architecture of the Technical University had increased by more than 30 percent, then decreased slightly, but even in 1990-91 it exceeded the number in the early 1960s by more than 20 percent. See *Statisztikai Évkönyv 1961*, Budapest, KSH, 1962, 319, *Statisztikai Évkönyv 1975*, Budapest, KSH, 1976, 398; *Statisztikai Évkönyv 1990*, Budapest, KSH, 1991, 269; Németh J., i. m.; Vámosy 1998.; Farkasdy Zoltán-interjú, készítette Szabóné Dér Ilona 1983–87 között, OHA, 52. sz., 325.

30 Janáky István-interjú [Interview with István Janáky] készítette Kőműves Ágnes 2005-ben, OHA, 811. sz., 5; Vámosy 1998; Vámos 2011.

31 Farkasdy Zoltán-interjú, készítette Szabóné Dér Ilona 1983–87 között, OHA, 52. sz.; Major 2001: 252.

32 See, József Finta's answer to the 1977 round table question (What are the main problems of today's Hungarian architecture?) = Major M., Oskó J., i. m., 467. and MAJOR 1981: 383

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