

András ROMÁN:

THE ARCHITECTURAL HERITAGE OF THE NATIONAL MINORITIES  
OF THE CARPATHIAN BASIN

"Old Cultures in New Worlds". This is a dilemma that can take many forms, not always familiar in the United States. It may be, for example, that certain ethnographical groups, separated from their main national community, live on in new surroundings as a minority within a different national grouping, further cultivating their national traditions. It may also be, as is the case in Central Europe and in particular in the Carpathian Basin that arbitrarily drawn national frontiers, disregarding the inhabitants ethnic origins make millions members of national minorities.

Central Europe and particularly the Carpathian Basin is typified by the large numbers of different nationalities living in close vicinity to one another. When the Hungarians settled in the Carpathian Basin at the end of the 9<sup>th</sup> century, Slovaks were already inhabiting the region. In the 13<sup>th</sup> century, the Romanians began to settle in Transylvania and in the Middle Ages and particularly after the defeat of the Turks, large numbers of German settlers came to live in the region. The colourful variety of nationalities was further widened by the appearance of South Slavs and Ukrainians.

The new frontiers created after the First World War, left unchanged after the Second World War not only failed to alleviate the minority problems of the Carpathian Basin but actually aggravated them. However, while the Slovaks, Romanians and South Slavs /Yugoslavs/ had suffered the fate of being national minorities before the First World War, 5 million Hungarians, a third of all Hungarians, became national minorities of the surrounding countries in 1918.

In democratic and humanist societies, the culture and cultural heritage of national minorities is in no way endangered. It is recognized by the national majority that the culture of the national minority contributes towards the country's historic heritage making it more complete and varied. At the same time, this additional variety represents no threat to the interests of the majority, and recognizing the fact that both the national culture of the majority and that of the minority are integral parts of man's universal cultural heritage, its protection becomes a universal human duty.

The situation concerning the architectural heritage of the national minorities in the region is extremely varied. There are good and shocking examples. It is always, for example, a delight for me to travel to Yugoslavia to find Hungarian historic monuments treasured in exactly the same manner as the monuments belonging to the national majorities. The remarkable and attractive townscape of the 19-20<sup>th</sup> century of Subotica /Szabadka in Hungarian/ has been preserved with great care and attention, with the historic monuments being restored skilfully. Yugoslavia is not a wealthy country, but the monuments of the Hungarian past receive no smaller a share of the available financial resources than the other

monuments. It is thanks to this that many outstanding creations of Hungarian Art Nouveau architecture - to the delight of Hungarian and Yugoslav alike - bear witness to the success of Yugoslav architectural conservation and at the same time demonstrate their complete lack of national prejudice. They guard and maintain the Hungarian rural heritage, too.

A small number of Hungarians live in Austrian Burgenland, which was transferred from Hungary in 1918. Here the ethnic and national boundaries roughly correspond. Among the nicely restored, well-maintained historic monuments, suffice here to mention just one; the house where Franz Liszt was born in Raiding /Hungarian-Doborján/.

The protection of Hungarian historic monuments elsewhere has not been given the same priority however. In the last few years strenuous efforts have been made by the Czechoslovaks in Banská Stiavnica /Hungarian-Selmecbánya/ to restore the valuable group of monuments there. For centuries, that town was a veritable capital of Hungarian culture, and it is a great joy to see that it may well soon be restored to its former glory. Another Slovakian town Bardejov /Hungarian-Bártfa, German-Bartschau/ is mainly German-speaking. Its restoration has been so successful that the town received the Prize of Europe.

There are however other predominantly Hungarian-speaking towns in Slovakia where the situation is not so rosy; restoration is either late or progressing very slowly. In addition, in the case of Bratislava /Hungarian-Pozsony/, much damage had been caused in previous decades, even as late as the sixties. The town has always been trilingual /Slovakian, German, Hungarian/, and as a result of incorrect town planning priorities, a large contiguous historic district was demolished and an expressway was built directly in front of the church in which the kings of Hungary had been formerly crowned.

The situation in Romania, where in Transylvania 2.5 million Hungarians, the largest national minority in Europe live is quite depressing. The present political situation does not favour any type of architectural heritage, but the fate of Hungarian originated monuments is particularly sad. Money is neither being spent on their maintenance, nor on their restoration, and a significant proportion of the buildings are falling into disrepair, many on the point of collapse. The château at Vintu de Jos /Hungarian-Alvinc/ is just one example of this. This attractive renaissance château is of considerable historic importance; it was the home of György Marti-nuzzi, who although of Italian origin was one of the most celebrated personalities of Hungarian history. 15 - 20 years ago, the château was still in an acceptable state of repair; now it is in ruins. The sight of the Gothic castle of János Hunyadi in Hunedoara /Hungarian-Vajdahunyad/, one of the great heroes of Hungary, has been ruined by the steel works built right next to it. The château in Medieşul Aurit /Aranyosmeggyes in Hungarian/ was set on fire during World War II. Since that it has been waiting its restoration and as up to present nothing was done there is little left from the renaissance château. Unfortunately large is the number of the perishing monuments of Hungarian history and art: Branîşca, Sîmniclăuș, Hodod, Ilia, Simleul Silvaniei /Branyiska, Bethlenszentmiklós, Hadad, Marosillye, Szilágysomlyó in Hungarian / - and

long could yet be the list. The more sorrowful this phenomenon is because after World War II. the task of the efficient protection of the common architectural heritage was addressed in a serious way in Transylvania too and until so about twenty years ago many restorations got ready. Since the second half of the sixtieth however the works were suspended and the process of decline accelerates.

That then is the fate of Hungarian historic monuments abroad, in their 'new world', within the relatively new national frontiers. But what is the fate of the not entirely Hungarian monuments within the frontiers of modern Hungary? I hope that I am not being biased when I say that Hungarian practice at present can be listed among the good examples. In present-day Hungary, 90% of the population considers itself Hungarian. Despite their small numbers, and perhaps for that very reason, Hungarian policy stresses the importance of ensuring the survival of the cultures of the national minorities and the preservation of the objects and architectural ensembles of cultural importance to them.

In Hungary, no distinction is made between artefacts of Hungarian and non-Hungarian origin, if the memories they evoke are good or bad. The country remained for 150 years under Turkish occupation, and yet their monuments are considered among the most valuable of historic monuments in Hungary. Unfortunately few remain; the Turks considered Hungary to be a frontier area only of their empire and as a result relatively little was built, among which many were demolished after the liberation of the country during the 18<sup>th</sup> century. We are proud, however, that there are four working Turkish bath complexes in Budapest. One of the greatest Saints of Islam, Gül Baba died in Buda, and his tomb and sepulchral chapel is one of our precious monuments. Equally regarded are two mosques, and a third example, which after frequent reconstruction has turned out to have been a mosque and is also being restored. Three minarets are still standing and the town walls of Buda were also built by the Turks. Of all the historic monuments in Hungary, it is the Turkish ones that are the best looked after and restored. The reasons for this unusual, and probably unique situation are varied. On the one hand, there are relatively few such monuments, and due to their exotic nature they add an extra element to our range of monuments, and at the same time are of considerable importance to the tourist industry, since they are the western-most of Turkish monuments.

Among the historical towns of Hungary, Kőszeg and Sopron are of prime importance. Both towns lie right next to the Austrian frontier, and their populations have been bilingual for centuries. The structure of the towns is reminiscent of the towns in German-speaking areas and their heritage can be considered as theirs by both nationalities alike. This of course does not in any way impede their protection. Along with Buda, Sopron has been the scene of the most intensive programme of conservation in Hungary in the last few decades and this has brought some excellent results. A Gothic Chapterhouse and two Gothic synagogues, one of them of European importance, came to light and were restored. Delightful Baroque interiors have been investigated and put on show. The historic town centre is perhaps a good example of the rehabilitation of historic towns and it was one of the first town to receive the Prize of Europe /1975/. Work is well in progress in Kőszeg too, although the individual importance of the monuments is less than in Sopron.

The château of Ráckeve can also hardly be described as Hungarian. The home of Eugen of Savoya, was designed by Johann Lucas von Hildebrand, a famous Austrian architect. The château has been restored with great care and now functions as a conference centre, where ICOMOS events have also been held. It is a particularly precious building, as it formed the prototype for Hungarian châteaux in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries.

The South Slavs also produced their own distinctive group of monuments. Large numbers of Serbs left their own country as refugees fleeing the Turkish invaders and settled along the rivers Tisza and Danube. The first settlers arrived in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, and it was then that they built their first, and still Gothic church at Ráckeve. The vast majority settled in the eighteenth century in Hungary, with their centre situated at Szentendre, a delightful little town near Budapest. They also have many attractive churches all around the country. In the last few years, one of the most significant buildings to be restored is the church at Grábóc. This 18<sup>th</sup> century Byzantine styled church is visited by thousands upon thousands of pilgrims from Yugoslavia and to ensure that it is in a suitable state, the Hungarian government decided to put a special fund at the disposal of the restorers. The restoration of the building and its mural paintings is complete and the iconostasis will soon be ready. The restoration of many other Serbian churches has been accomplished including the churches at Székesfehérvár and Eger. This whole programme of restoration has been financed by the state due to the fact that the members of the orthodox church are not numerous enough to finance such a major programme of restoration. Szentendre itself, treasured by Hungarian and Serb alike is one of the main destinations for tourists and a town full of life and sparkle. A museum is at present under construction to house the treasures of the Serb Orthodox Church, financed by the Hungarian state. Along with the church at Székesfehérvár, the people of the town have joined together to save the last vernacular ensemble of the town; a group of buildings which bear witness to the crafts and architectural skills of the Serb colony.

Great importance is given in Hungary not only to the monuments of grand art but also to the protection of peasant, vernacular architecture, and not in the form of open air museums but in situ. We have to ensure that not only examples of Hungarian vernacular architecture are preserved in this manner, but also examples of the architecture of the national minorities. Among the vernacular ensembles, the most beautiful and jealously guarded is the one at Magyarpolány, showing the taste and building skill of Hungarian Germans or Swabians, as they are known here. /The village was known as Német-, that is German Polány until the war./ The 'Swabians' were famous for their knowledge of vine- and viticulture, and it should therefore come as no surprise that the whole press-house villages in Palkonya, Villánykövesd and Hajós, picturesque vernacular ensembles are protected monuments.

The appearance of villages in Hungary has changed considerably in the last few decades, in much the way as has happened in many other countries at one stage or other of their history. It is extremely rare to find a village such as Magyarpolány, that has retained its traditional appearance. In many villages, no more can be done than to preserve the last old house and to set up in it a small ethnographical collection. At present, there are almost 110 such small village museums and it goes without saying that

many display objects related to the cultures of the national minorities. There are a total of 27 South Slav, German and Romanian houses to be seen.

In one respect however, it seems to me that Hungarian practice is insufficient as concerns the protection of the architectural heritage of one national minority and that is that of the Gypsies. For a long time, the Gypsies were not considered as a national minority despite the fact that they number several hundred thousand. At present there are no Gypsy buildings under official protection, and there are no village museums as can be found in the case of the other minorities. One reason for this is that Gypsy architecture remains considerably behind the other nationalities. It has not developed far beyond its nomadic roots. A gypsy hovel cannot be compared architecturally with the German or Slovakian dwellings. Despite all this, we nevertheless must do something.

The protection of the cultures of minorities does not concern only the minority or even the nation. The world architectural heritage is universal, it belongs to the mankind. A modest village historic monument takes its share in the conscience of the world - or at least it should do so - as do the outstanding monuments. Nevertheless meanwhile Venice and Borobudur are /fortunately/ constantly under the watchful eyes of humanity the chateau of Vintul de Jos does not, cannot evidently get an international attention. However, precisely these historic monuments are in danger, since they run the greatest risk that to negligence, to lack of money contribute intolerance, bias, abuse of authority or vengefulness. That is why I am glad that the VIII. General Assembly of ICOMOS drew attention to the case of old cultures in new world, because there can be, and there is old and new world, but culture, where it is esteemed, is universal and eternal.

András ROMÁN: THE ARCHITECTURAL HERITAGE OF THE NATIONAL MINORITIES OF THE CARPATHIAN BASIN (Summary)

"Old Cultures in New Worlds". This is a dilemma that can take many forms, not always familiar in the United States. It may be, for example, that certain ethnographical groups, separated from their main national community, live on in new surroundings as a minority within a different national grouping. It may also be, as is the case in Central Europe and in particular in the Carpathian Basin that arbitrarily drawn national frontiers, disregarding the inhabitants ethnic origins make millions members of national minorities.

The new frontiers created after the First World War, left unchanged after the Second World War not only failed to alleviate the minority problems but actually aggravated them. In democratic and humanist societies, the culture and heritage of minorities is in no way endangered. It is recognized by the majority that the culture of the minority contributes towards the country's historic heritage making it more complete and varied.

The situation concerning the architectural heritage of the minorities in the region is extremely varied. There are good and shocking examples. In Yugoslavia Hungarian historic monuments are treasured in the same manner as the monuments belonging to the national majorities. In the last years strenuous efforts have been made by the Czechoslovaks to restore valuable town centres. There are however other towns in Slovakia where the situation is not so rosy: restoration is either late or progressing slowly.

The situation in Romania, where in Transylvania 2.5 million Hungarians the largest national minority in Europe live is quite depressing. The present political situation does not favour any type of architectural heritage, but the fate of Hungarian originated monuments is particularly sad. Money is neither being spent on their maintenance, nor on their restoration and a significant proportion of the buildings are falling into disrepair, many on the point of collapse.

In Hungary, no distinction is made between artefacts of Hungarian and non-Hungarian origin, if the memories they evoke are good or bad. The country remained for 150 years under Turkish occupation, and yet their monuments are considered among the most valuable of historic monuments in Hungary.

Among the historical towns of Hungary, Kőszeg and Sopron are of prime importance. Both lie right next to the Austrian frontier, and their population have been bilingual for centuries. This does not in any way impede their protection. Sopron has been the scene of one of the most intensive programmes of conservation in Hungary in the last few decades.

The South Slavs also produced their own distinctive groups of monuments. In the last few years, one of the most significant buildings to be restored is the church at Grábóc. The restoration of many other Serbian churches has been accomplished. Szentendre itself, treasured by Hungarian and Serb alike is one of the main destination for tourists and a town full of life and sparkle.

Among the vernacular ensembles, the most beautiful and jealously guarded is the one at Magyarpolány, showing the taste and building skill of Hungarian Germans. In one respect however, it seems to me that Hungarian practice is insufficient as concerns the protection of the architectural heritage of one national minority that of the Gypsies.

András ROMÁN: L'héritage architectural des minorités nationales dans le bassin carpathique. /Résumé/

"Cultures anciennes dans les mondes nouveaux"- cela n'est seulement pas possible comme existe ici, aux États Unis. Cela est possible aussi de cette manière que des troncs entiers s'arrachent de la nation-mère et vivent leur vie à un nouvel milieu, en minorité nationale. Ce qui est le plus typique en Europe centrale, plus strictement dans le bassin carpathique que des frontières, créées arbitrairement, dédaignant les appartenances ethniques ont forcé des milliers de gens à un sort minoritaire, formant ainsi une véritable mosaïque ethnographique.

Les nouvelles frontières d'après le Premier conflit mondial, restées intactes après la Guerre 1939-1945, n'ont point diminué, au contraire, elles ont augmenté le volume des groupes ethniques. Dans une société démocratique et humaniste la culture et patrimoine des minorités ne sont pas mis en péril. La nation-mère sait qu'une culture ethnique ne fait que compléter l'héritage national.

La situation du patrimoine architectural des minorités dans la région est fort différente. Il y a des bons exemples et des effrayants. En Yougoslavie on attache de la même valeur au monuments historiques hongrois qu'au patrimoine des nations majoritaires. En Tchécoslovaquie dans ces dernières années on s'est mis intensément à la restauration de plusieurs villes de valeurs, certes, nombreuses sont celles dont la restauration est trop lente.

Non équivoque est la triste situation en Roumanie, ou en Transylvanie vit la plus nombreuse minorité d'Europe: deux millions et demi de Hongrois. La situation actuelle en Roumanie en soi ne favorise pas le patrimoine architectural, mais le sort de l'héritage hongrois est désavantageux même dans ce cadre. On ne finance point leur entretien ou restauration, une partie importante des monuments historiques menace de crouler.

En Hongrie on ne fait pas de différence parmi les témoins architecturaux de l'histoire du pays: sont ils positifs ou bien négatifs du point de vue hongrois. Les monuments historiques turcs - bâtis à l'époque de domination ottomane - sont parmi nos monuments les plus précieux.

Parmi les villes historiques hongrois Sopron et Kőszeg se rangent en première ligne. Elles se situent dans le voisinage immédiat d'Autriche, leur population était toujours bilingue. Ce fait n'empêche évidemment pas la protection des monuments. L'activité de protection la plus intense dans les dizaines d'années passées se déroulaient à Buda et à Sopron.

Les monuments slaves méridonaux /Yougoslaves/ forment un groupe à part en Hongrie. La restauration de l'église stationnaire de Grábóc se figure parmi les plus importantes dans les années passées. Beaucoup d'autres églises serbes ont été restaurées. Szentendre - jalousement gardée en commune pas des serbes et des hongrois - est une de nos villes les plus vives, les plus belles, elle est l'un des principaux points de mire du tourisme.

Un des plus beaux, des mieux protégés des ensembles de l'architecture vernaculaire est celui de Magyarpolány, lequel vante le goût et le savoir faire des allemands de Hongrie. Il y a un défaut de la pratique hongroise dans le domaine de la protection du patrimoine des minorités: celui des tziganes.