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14-31 **BORIS DUNDOVIĆ**

THE PALACE OF THE POST  
AND TELEGRAPH ADMINISTRATION  
OFFICE IN JURISIĆEVA STREET, ZAGREB  
ARCHITECTURAL AND STYLISTIC FEATURES  
UDC 725.161 (497.5 ZAGREB) "18/19"

PALAĆA RAVNATELJSTVA POSTE  
I BRZOJAVA U JURISIĆEVOJ ULICI  
U ZAGREBU

ODLIKE ARHITEKTURE I STILSKOGA RJEŠENJA  
UDK 725.161 (497.5 ZAGREB) "18/19"



Af



FIG. 1 PALACE OF THE POST AND TELEGRAPH ADMINISTRATION OFFICE IN JURISICEVA STREET, BETWEEN 1926 AND 1929  
SL. 1. PALAČA RAVNATELJSTVA POŠTE I BRZOJAVA U JURISICEVOJ ULICI, SNIMLJENA IZMEĐU 1926. I 1929. GODINE

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# THE PALACE OF THE POST AND TELEGRAPH ADMINISTRATION OFFICE IN JURISIĆEVA STREET, ZAGREB ARCHITECTURAL AND STYLISTIC FEATURES

## PALAČA RAVNATELJSTVA POŠTE I BRZOJAVA U JURISIĆEVOJ ULICI U ZAGREBU ODLIKE ARHITEKTURE I STILSKOGA RJEŠENJA

ERNŐ FOERK AND GYULA SÁNDY  
FIN-DE-SIÈCLE  
GENERAL POST OFFICE  
HUNGARIAN ARCHITECTURE  
ZAGREB, CROATIA

ERNŐ FOERK I GYULA SÁNDY  
PRIJELAZ 19. I 20. STOLJEĆA  
GLAVNA POŠTA  
MAĐARSKA ARHITEKTURA  
ZAGREB

The palace of the General Post and Telegraph Administration Office in Jurišićeva Street, designed by Ernő Foerk and Gyula Sándy in 1901, is an outstanding example of Hungarian architectural and technical achievements in the urban fabric of fin-de-siècle Lower Town Zagreb. This paper aims to determine the main identity factors of the building by elucidating its architectural and cultural history, as well as its previously unknown stylistic genealogy.

Palaca Ravnateljstva pošta i brzojava u Jurišićevoj ulici, koju su 1901. projektirali Ernő Foerk i Gyula Sándy, istaknut je primjer mađarskih arhitektonskih i tehnoloških dostignuća u tkivu zagrebačkoga Donjega grada na početku 20. stoljeća. Ovim su radom određeni glavni čimbenici identiteta zgrade, ponajprije putem njezina povijesno-prostornoga razvoja, kulturne povijesti, ali i dosad nepoznate geneze njena jedinstvenoga stilskog izraza.

## INTRODUCTION

### UVOD

One of the most significant examples of Hungarian architectural and technical achievements in the urban fabric of fin-de-siècle Zagreb, the palace of the General Post and Telegraph Administration Office in Jurišićeva Street, has always been unjustifiably neglected. Its architectural value has never been properly considered and determined – initially due to its symbolic suggestiveness of Hungarian domination over Croatian lands in the Dual Monarchy, and later due to numerous interventions that conclusively resulted in a slight diminishment of its original monumentality. In consequence, apart from several short newspaper and professional articles, no comprehensive study or paper on the building has been published so far. In this paper, the original design of the building and its later architectural alterations are discussed by analysing both Croatian and Hungarian archival and other sources. In its aim to elucidate the identity factors of the General Post Office building, and based on the exhaustive analyses of authors' oeuvres and tendencies in architecture theory at the turn of the twentieth century, this research<sup>1</sup> for the first time ever brings to light the architectural and cultural significance of the building, as well as its specific stylistic genealogy.

The importance of the General Post Office building lies primarily in its relevance to the urban fabric of the historical city centre. In the second half of the nineteenth century, Zagreb

commenced an expeditious development of its Lower Town (Donji grad). During that time, the main post office was impractically located in the Upper Town Gradec, in a building owned by Counts Oršić<sup>2</sup>, situated in the suitably named Poštanska (Post) Street (Fig. 2). Countess Julija Oršić was the last postmaster of Zagreb before Count Josip Jelčić founded the national postal service (with a post office director in charge) in 1852.<sup>3</sup>

At that time, the post-dispatch building was located on Harmica, the main town market (Fig. 4), east of which flowed Medveščak, a meandering stream that served as the border of church estates on Kaptol and Nova Ves. A short street leading from Harmica to the pathway along Medveščak was called Puževa Street.<sup>4</sup> In manuscripts dating from that time, Puževa Street was often described as putrid and unpleasant. In 1898, the stream Medveščak flooded a large number of streets in the Lower Town, only a year after it was regulated by Mayor Adolf Mosinsky.<sup>5</sup> It became evident that the stream needed to be covered and connected to the town sewer system, which was carried out in the following year. Also in 1899, former Puževa Street was levelled and elongated to the east border of the Lower Town, the Draskovičeva Street<sup>6</sup> (Fig. 3). The new street that replaced the old Puževa Street was named after Baron Nikola Jurišić in 1878<sup>7</sup>, and set a new axis towards east parts of Zagreb.<sup>8</sup>

The new Jurišićeva Street soon became the new business centre of Zagreb, particularly after the perpendicular Palmotičeva Street was opened in 1900, boasting boldly with several three-storey buildings.<sup>9</sup> Less than a decade later, other three-storey buildings rapidly followed in Jurišićeva Street as well, setting a strong height criterion for the future architecture for that part of Lower Town.

At the end of the nineteenth century, Lower Town Zagreb started to take the shape of a

<sup>1</sup> The research is a part of the scientific project "Heritage Urbanism – Urban and Spatial Planning Models for Revival and Enhancement of Cultural Heritage". It is financed by the Croatian Science Foundation [HRZZ-2032] and carried out at the University of Zagreb, Faculty of Architecture, under the project leadership of Prof. Mladen Obad Scitaroci, Ph.D, F.C.A.

<sup>2</sup> KOLVESHI, 1996: 52

<sup>3</sup> SOKOL, 1978: 83-84

<sup>4</sup> Named after the abundant population of terrestrial gastropods (Cro. *puž* – snail, slug) inhabiting the incessantly humid gardens adjacent to the stream.

<sup>5</sup> SOKOL, 1978: 148-149

<sup>6</sup> SZABO, 1941: 238-239

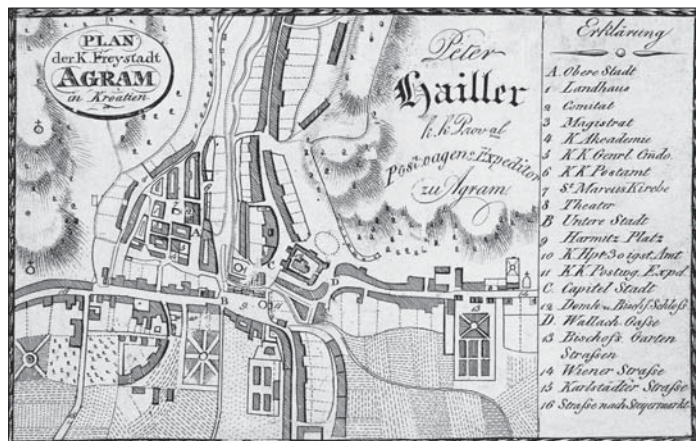
<sup>7</sup> MIRKOVIĆ, 2001: 51-52

<sup>8</sup> For a more detailed account on the development of Jurišićeva Street, consult: SZABO, 2012, and GALOVIĆ, 2013.

<sup>9</sup> HIRC, 2008: 230-231

<sup>10</sup> Concluded through comparison between two plans of Zagreb: the first by Dragutin Albrecht dating from 1864,





strict grid system of streets and blocks. Accordingly, Ružična Street, which served as a connection between Jurišićeva Street and Vlaška Street, was slightly altered to fit the envisioned orthogonal system.<sup>10</sup> Palmotičeva Street was later elongated to lead to Vlaška Street. Those four streets thus surrounded the rectangular lot (in the immediate vicinity of the building used at the time for dispatching the post chaise) that became the future location of the General Post Office building (Fig. 5).

## THE WINNING DESIGN OF THE POSTAL PALACE COMPETITION

### POBJEDNIČKI RAD NATJEČAJA ZA PALAČU GLAVNE POŠTE

The three decades leading to the First World War were crucial for the modernisation and growth of Zagreb. From 30,830 residents in 1880, the population doubled to 61,692 inhabitants at the very turn of the century.<sup>11</sup> During that time, Count Károly Khuen-Héderváry, infamous for his fervent attempts at

magyarisation, was the Ban of Croatia. But while he frequently disrupted and disrespected the self-governing autonomy of Croatia, he also provided Zagreb with numerous public services. By the year 1910, the increase of the number of residents to 74,000 was a result of the city modernisation process that started during his governance.<sup>12</sup>

Magyarisation attempts were often visually manifested in architecture, primarily through buildings of mutual interest to both countries. Accordingly, Hungarian architects did not delve much in the residential architecture of Zagreb, and designed only administration or transport buildings and facilities that celebrated Hungarian cultural and technological advancement.<sup>13</sup> In the stylistically diverse late historicist period, several notable Hungarian architects contributed to such architecture: Sándor Aigner designed the Forestry Society Palace in Vukotinovićeve Street and the State Forests Administration building in Katanciceva Street (both built in 1898)<sup>14</sup>, Lajos Zobel designed the Financial Directorate building (1901-1902) in Gajeva Street<sup>15</sup>, and Ferenc Pfaff, the leading Hungarian State Railways architect of the period, designed the Central Train Station (1891-1892) located south of King Tomislav Square (then Emperor Franz Joseph Square)<sup>16</sup>, and the Hungarian Imperial State Railways Administration building in the nearby Mihanovićeve Street (1901-1903).<sup>17</sup>

scale 1:5,760 [MGZ, inv. no. 5676], the second by City Construction Bureau from 1878, scale 1:11,520 [MGZ, inv. no. 2952]. For a more detailed account of the plans and the first cadastral survey of Zagreb in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, see ŠKALAMERA, 1994: 78-95.

<sup>11</sup> SZABO, 1941: 241

<sup>12</sup> GRLIJAK, GOLDSTEIN, 2012: 352, 355-357

<sup>13</sup> In 1889, major changes occurred in economy and administration of the Lands of the Crown of Saint Stephen: the Ministry of Agriculture separated from the Ministry of Industry and Trade, and the latter joined the Ministry of Public Works and Transport, thus becoming the Ministry of Commerce. Since 8 November of that year, all the transport means and issues, state railways, traffic tolls, post and telegraph offices, major construction works, state roads, ship and shipping industry, and all the agriculture branches related to commerce and industry were put under the jurisdiction of the new Ministry. [BAZDAR, 2004: 316]

<sup>14</sup> KNEŽEVIĆ, 1996: 147, 201-203 (the author refers to the architect as Alexander von Aigner)

<sup>15</sup> DAMJANOVIĆ, 2011: 40

<sup>16</sup> LASLO, 2003: 26

<sup>17</sup> KNEŽEVIĆ, 1996: 494, 526



FIG. 2 PETER HAILLER'S PLAN OF ZAGREB, 1825 [A – UPPER TOWN; B – LOWER TOWN; 6 – THE FORMER MAIN POST OFFICE IN POSTANSKA STREET; 11 – THE POST-DISPATCH BUILDING]

SL. 2. PLAN ZAGREBA PETERA HAILLERA IZ 1825. GODINE [A – GORNJI GRAD; B – DONJI GRAD; 6 – GLAVNI POSTANSKI URED U POSTANSKOJ ULICI; 11 – ZGRADA ZA PRIJAM I EKSPEDICIJU POŠTE]

FIG. 3 THE VIEW OF THE TOWN SLAUGHTERHOUSE, MEDVEŠČAK, AND PUZEVA STREET AROUND 1898

SL. 3. POGLED NA GRADSKU KLAONICU, POTOK MEDVEŠČAK I PUZEVOU ULICU OKO 1898.

FIG. 4 HARMICA TOWN MARKET AND THE BEGINNING OF PETRINJSKA AND PUZEVA STREETS, AROUND THE YEAR 1850, VIEW FROM THE NORTH

SL. 4. GRADSKA TRŽNICA HARMICA I POČETAK PETRINJSKE I PUZEVE ULICE, SNIMLJENO OKO 1850., POGLED SA SJEVERA

FIG. 5 THE LOT PREPARED FOR THE FUTURE GENERAL POST OFFICE PALACE, AROUND 1900

SL. 5. ZEMLJIŠTE PRIPREMLJENO ZA BUDUĆU PALAČU GLAVNE POŠTE, SNIMLJENO OKO 1900.



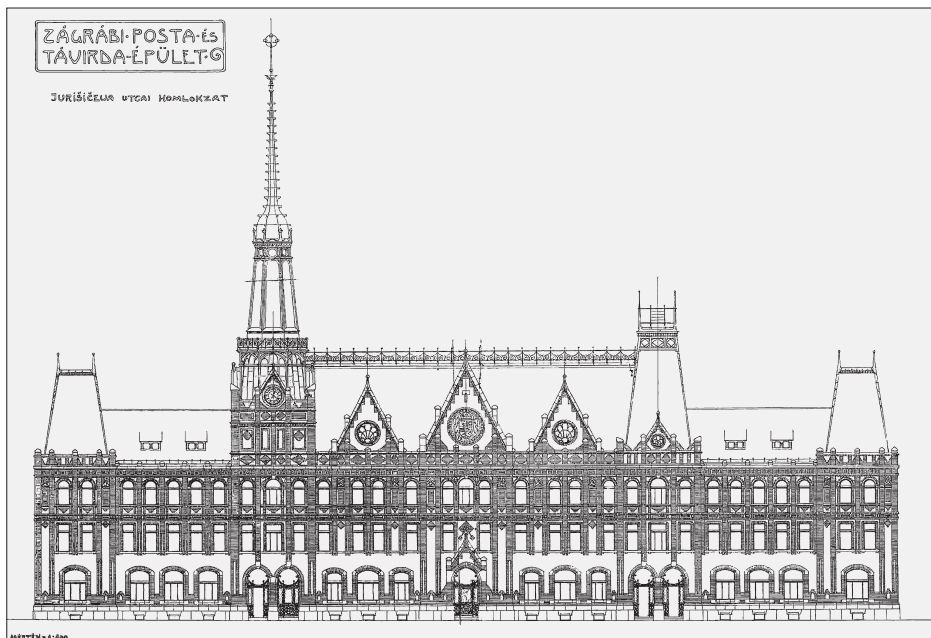


FIG. 6 THE WINNING DESIGN BY ERNŐ FOERK AND GYULA SÁNDY, THE MAIN FAÇADE  
 SL. 6. POBJEDNIČKI NATJEAJNI RAD ERNŐA FOERKA I GYULE SÁNDYJA, GLAVNO PROČEJE

In 1900, the Austro-Hungarian Minister of Commerce<sup>18</sup> saw the need to establish new general post offices in growing centres of provincial parts of Dual Monarchy as part of the new regulation system. The Ministry decided to invest two million kronas in those projects.<sup>19</sup> Considering the rapid expansion of Zagreb and its position as the new urban centre of the autonomous region of Croatia, the competition for the new postal palace in Jurišićeva Street was to be carried out along with those in Bratislava (then Pozsony), Pécs, and Sopron. Of these three, the General Post Office building in Zagreb was built first.

The competition announcement issued by the Minister of Commerce in Budapest for a new, two-storey postal palace appeared in every relevant newspaper in the days following 22 May, 1901. The competition was open exclusively to architects and engineers within the Austro-Hungarian Empire. The admissions were required to consist of all the usual preliminary design drawings in a scale 1:200, including technical description and a budget approximation (the highest budget allowed was 440,000 kronas). The first prize was 1,500, the second 1,200, and the third 600 kronas. It was also agreed by participating that any other design apart from awarded ones could be bought by the Ministry for 300 kronas.<sup>20</sup>

The competition concluded on 30 June. In August, a jury of ten secret members declared Gyula Sándy and Ernő Foerk's as the winning design. Their plans were innovative and quite eccentric, but at the same time very reasoned and balanced; their entry was comprised of floor plans and sections characterised by strict functionality, accompanied by a curious

and – at least for Zagreb – somewhat uncommon stylistic approach to elevation designs.

One of the elements that fulfilled the criterion of technological innovation and ensured the first place in the competition was a dominant detail in the building's façade – a 50-metre tall tower designed to include the telegraph wire system in its spire<sup>21</sup> (Fig. 6). With the exception of the telegraph tower, the 82-metre long main façade was otherwise symmetrical and divided in five parts similar in width. In the central axis of the building's frontispiece, the two-storeys high portal consisted of a neo-Gothic arc and pediment adorning the wrought iron entrance gates, appropriately indicating the position of the central foyer and the main staircase. In a similar manner, just above the cornice of the central part of frontispiece, there were three larger pediments with stained-glass windows (the central window wider and more ornamented than the remaining two). The two avant-corps flanking the frontispiece also had wrought iron gates; they were designed as pairs, serving as clearly marked accesses to the letter transaction hall on the left and the parcel transaction hall on the right. The two entrance foyers (vestibules) were easily approachable directly from the street (Fig. 7).<sup>22</sup>

The delivery entrance to the inner courtyard of the General Post Office was thoughtfully placed in the side Ruzična Street to avoid traffic congestion in Jurišićeva and Palmotičeva streets. The entrance was accentuated by wide gates that are part of a two-windows-wide avant-corps ending with a pediment similar to the one on the frontispiece. On the other side, from the Palmotičeva Street, the courtyard was separated only by fencing with a single wrought-iron pedestrian gate. As the initial building plans show, the fence was considered only temporary already in Foerk and Sándy's original design, as an addition of a third wing was intended to close the courtyard.

<sup>18</sup> The first Minister of Commerce was Gábor de Bellus Baross (from 1889 to 1892), who unified enormous Austro-Hungarian railway system network and laid the foundations of the Empire's post and telegraph service network [SPICIJARIC PAŠKVAN, 2011: 14]. From 1899 to 1902, Baross' work was continued by Sándor Hegedűs who built 197 new post offices, 112 new telegraph offices, and 177 telephone centres during his ministership. In that short period, 16 cities and towns got their first telephone service [GAÁL, 2012: 19].

<sup>19</sup> BENE, 1992: 33-34

<sup>20</sup> \*\*\* 1901.a: 8

<sup>21</sup> \*\*\* 1901.b: 3

<sup>22</sup> MÉM, "Foerk Ernő hagyatéka", inv. no. 91.09.20.9

<sup>23</sup> DAZG, fund ZGD 1122, inv. no. 155 / 475, 485, 487, 489, 491

<sup>24</sup> No unified stylistic features of art nouveau existed, not even within a single country. [MORAVÁNSZKY, 1998: 107]

<sup>25</sup> Moravánsky points out that the architects with historicist background, including Josip Vancas and the Hönigs-



The narrow side avant-corps on the edge of the building facing Palmotičeva Street was the entrance to the apartments on the first and the second storeys. The director's office and the main hallway of the post and telegraph administration offices were accessible from the director's apartment on the first storey. The second storey had a similar scheme, consisting of the head of the office's apartment and accountant offices, as well as a lengthy room for telegraph machines and a telephone centre.<sup>23</sup>

The winning design for the future Postal Palace of Zagreb represented a modern and sustainable idea of spatial disposition due to the practical flexibility of rooms that could accommodate the rapidly developing aforementioned telecommunication systems in the future. Clearly, it was a well thought-out symbiosis of technology and architectural design.

## FOLLOWING THE EMERGENCE OF HUNGARIAN NATIONAL STYLE

### POJAVA, UTJECAJ I PRAVCI MADARSKOGA NACIONALNOG STILA

The aberration in style was exactly what ensured the first place in the competition – the new Postal Palace was very Hungarian and represented a clear stylistic break from the otherwise uninterrupted line of historicist and art nouveau edifices of Lower Town Zagreb. The majority of other contemporary secessionist buildings, as Ákos Moravánszky points out, were built in the "synthetic version" of art nouveau<sup>24</sup>, which became the supranational style of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy.<sup>25</sup> Accordingly, despite the abundance of historicist neo-styles or the unlimited variety of extremely eclectic art nouveau, those styles were perceived as "Viennese"<sup>26</sup> and therefore not suitable for the new Post Office building, which aimed to represent Hungarian

berg&Deutsch atelier in Zagreb, with numerous realisations in the Lower Town, "could easily adopt the items of the new orthodoxy, which appear so frequently that one wonders if they came right from a building supplier's catalog". [MORAVÁNSZKY, 1998: 118]

<sup>26</sup> MORAVÁNSZKY, 1998: 125

<sup>27</sup> KESERÜ, 1990: 142

<sup>28</sup> MORAVÁNSZKY, 1998: 218

<sup>29</sup> GERLE, KOVÁCS, MAKOVECZ, 1990: 8-9, 13

<sup>30</sup> In his most influential article *Magyar formanyelv nem volt, hanem lesz* (There Was No Hungarian Language of Forms, but There Will Be), published in 1906, Ödön Lechner paraphrases Count István Széchenyi's concluding sentence of the 1830 book *Hitel* (Credit): "Many people think Hungary 'was'; but I like to believe it – 'will!'" [LECHNER, 1906: 1; SZÉCHENYI, 1830: 270]. Moreover, in 1838, Count Széchenyi straightforwardly proposed the idea of creating a national style for the first time [MORAVÁNSZKY, 1998: 218].

<sup>31</sup> GERLE, KOVÁCS, MAKOVECZ, 1990: 9

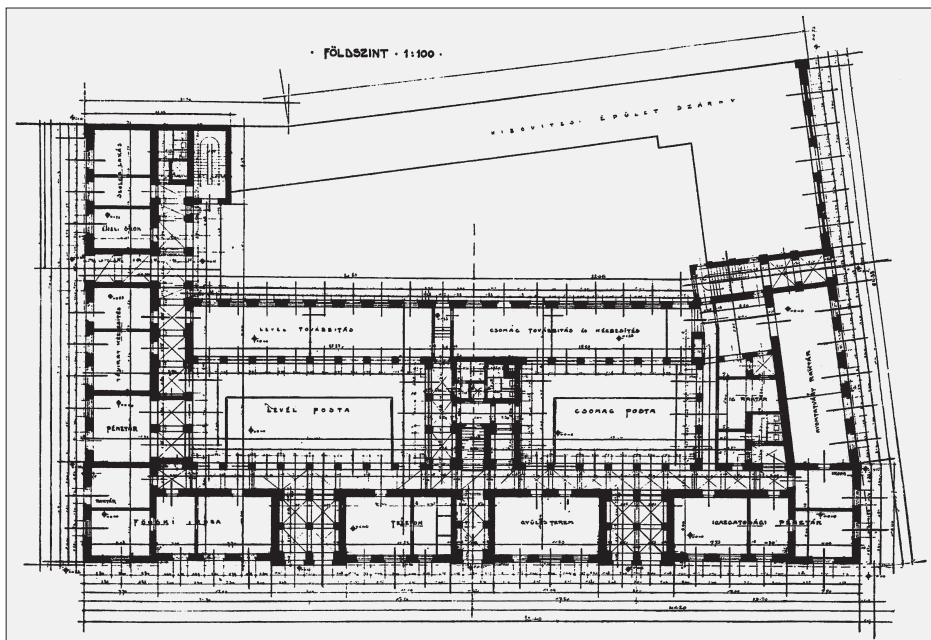


FIG. 7 PLAN OF THE GROUND FLOOR, INITIAL DESIGN, 1901  
SL. 7. TLOCRT PRIZEMLJA, IZVORNI PROJEKT, 1901.

advancement and the efforts of the Hungarian Kingdom to modernise all of the provinces under the Crown of Saint Stephen equally. However, owing to the fact that the Kingdom of Croatia-Slavonia maintained an internal autonomy and separate identity in the Transleithanian part of Dual Monarchy, Hungarian representational intentions were swiftly recognised and dismissed as symbols of their pretensions over Croatian lands. This kind of perception of the project cast a shadow over the building for the next hundred years.

A break away from Viennese and German styles and a quest for an authentic Hungarian artistic idiom began much before the emergence of art nouveau. It was the Hungarian Reform Era and the travel accounts written by liberal politicians and leaders that stimulated primarily a language reform, which in turn started gradually drawing attention to the reform of aesthetic design.<sup>27</sup> The language of the Hungarian rural population was "rediscovered by urban intellectuals as a 'maternal' language" and, seen as both ornamental and wild, it became a "powerful instrument to support a modern national culture".<sup>28</sup> One of the most prominent politicians of the first reform generation was Count István Széchenyi, whose writings encouraged Hungarian architect Frigyes Feszl to deliberate upon the question of national style.<sup>29</sup> His work later influenced young architect Ödön Lechner to devise his own recognisable style, in due time labelled 'the Hungarian national style'.<sup>30</sup> Lechner spent three years from 1876 to 1879 in France, aiming to construct a basis for a new style<sup>31</sup>, and in the 1890s he spent a considerable time touring England, during which

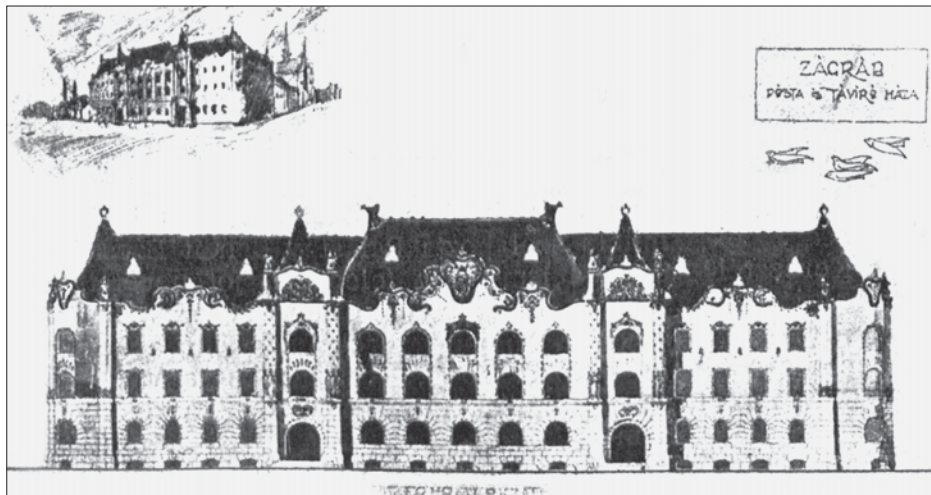


FIG. 8 BÉLA LAJTA'S INTERPRETATION OF ÖDÖN LECHNER'S IDIOM, THE GENERAL POSTAL PALACE COMPETITION SUBMISSION

SL. 8. BÉLA LAJTA, INTERPRETACIJA JEZIKA OBLIKOVANJA ÖDÖNA LECHNERA, NATJEČAJNI RAD ZA PALACU GLAVNE POŠTE U ZAGREBU

he became thoroughly introduced to the Arts and Crafts movement.<sup>32</sup> At the South Kensington Museum, he studied Oriental ceramics with Vilmos Zsolnay<sup>33</sup>, who later became the most prominent Hungarian pottery and ceramics manufacturer.<sup>34</sup>

In order to devise an authentic Hungarian artistic idiom, it was evident that one had to experiment with the most isolated and intact vernacular sources. An obvious solution appeared in 1881, when József Huszka began to collect and publish home-crafted designs of the Székely (Szekler) population that lived in the Transylvanian mountains and therefore remained "more secluded and better protected against outside influences" than the remainder of the Hungarian people.<sup>35</sup> A great ethnographical collection of dwelling houses with their interiors from a number of different geographical regions was presented at the Millennial Exhibition in Budapest in 1896<sup>36</sup>, which was also the most exhaustive display of folk architecture and applied art of the territories connected to the Kingdom of Hungary. From the 1880s onwards, Ödön Lechner also turned to folk motifs, and the Millennial Exhibition served as the ultimate confirmation for his stylistic deliberations. Today, despite Feszl's earliest ambitions in creating a typically Hungarian architectural style<sup>37</sup>, it is Lechner who is considered a pioneer of the Hungarian national style, "the first Hungarian architect who attempted to create a national style based on a renewed ornamental language."<sup>38</sup>

One of the submitted designs for the General Post Office in Zagreb came directly from Lechner's atelier; it was a plan by young Béla Lajta (then still Béla Leitersdorfer), who later became a prominent architect and one of the leading figures of early modernist architecture in Hungary.<sup>39</sup> In its spatial disposition,

the layout was similar to Foerk and Sándy's, but the building's elevations strongly emanated Lechner's stylistic idiom<sup>40</sup> (Fig. 8). The design of the façades was critiqued as possibly inappropriate even by the Hungarian press and was uncomplimentary labelled a *lechneriad*. Elaborate critiques were also directed at other designs of the competition, including those without a single trace of the Hungarian national style.<sup>41</sup> Ostensibly, the jury *did* want a Hungarian building, but Lechner's idiom was extremely provocative and with no semiotic depth in a non-Hungarian built environment, and thus deemed unsuitable for Zagreb. The jury clearly sought for a cunning solution which at first glance implied reconciliation with the surrounding architecture, granted it did not lose its dominant appearance in Jurisiceva Street.

## THE INFLUENCE OF HUNGARIAN NATIONAL STYLE ON FOERK AND SÁNDY

### UTJECAJ MAĐARSKOGA NACIONALNOG STILA NA FOERKA I SÁNDYJA

Gyula Sándy and Ernő Foerk apparently met the exact criteria of the jury by using a more essential and not blatantly apparent architectural vocabulary (Fig. 1). For them, the building was not a glaring representation of Hungarian national style, but their own artistic interpretation of the idiom. The task of the

<sup>32</sup> PÉTER, 2005: 186

<sup>33</sup> KESERÜ, 1990: 151

<sup>34</sup> Vilmos Zsolnay gained world recognition after his factory in Pécs introduced pyrogranite, a new durable material of ornamental ceramics, and the revolutionary technological process of eosin glazing. After the glazing process, ceramic appears iridescent metallic and reflects different colours depending on the viewing angle. It quickly became one of the favourite cladding materials of Hungarian architects of the period. [See: SINKÓ, 2002: 52-53]

<sup>35</sup> MORAVÁNSZKY, 1998: 219

<sup>36</sup> GERLE, KOVÁCS, MAKOVECZ, 1990: 11

<sup>37</sup> "Feszl sought to prove in practice that a specifically Hungarian idiom could fit into the framework of the romantic style." [KOVÁCS, GERLE, MAKOVECZ, 1990: 8]

<sup>38</sup> MORAVÁNSZKY, 1998: 223

<sup>39</sup> Lechner's office employed three of the leading figures of early Hungarian modernism: Béla Málnai, Béla Lajta, and József Vágó. [MORAVÁNSZKY, 1998: 239]

<sup>40</sup> GERLE, CSÁKI, 2013: 80

<sup>41</sup> The other non-winning submissions covered in the press were by György Kopeczek, Zoltán Bálint and Lajos Jámbor, Alfréd Wellisch, and Sándor Aigner. [\*\*\* 1901.b: 3]

<sup>42</sup> In his architectural guide of Zagreb, Aleksander Laslo describes the building as "the only example of Hungarian folkloristic import" [LASLO, 2011: B/K7, 7]. In 1983, Olga Maruševska mentions that the Post Office seems like the "foreign body" among the Germanic Central European architecture and, as a prominent example of technological advancement of the period, it "enriched the modernist architecture of Zagreb" [MARUŠEVSKI, 1983: 30].

<sup>43</sup> Sometimes referred to as Ernesti Föörk or Ernő Föörk.

<sup>44</sup> His father was Károly Gusztáv Föörk, a reputable publisher at the time. [HADIK, 1998: 13]



building was, simply put, to evoke a strong feeling of 'hungarianness'. Moreover, it seems that, even after all the subsequent interventions in its physical appearance, it still evokes much the same impression, as can be read from several contemporary observations of Croatian art historians.<sup>42</sup> However, apart from those occasional and short mentions, there were no attempts of more detailed analysis in order to detect the original identity factors of the building.

Before delving into analysis of Foerk and Sándy's stylistic tendencies, it is crucial to determine the earliest influences on the two architects – those coming from their personal backgrounds and professional paths. Ernő Foerk<sup>43</sup> (1868-1934) was born in Temesvár (present-day Timișoara in western Romania) to a Lutheran family of German origins<sup>44</sup>, which may have had a considerable impact on Foerk's numerous church designs during his architectural career. More so, one ought not to discount the particular vernacular surrounding of his hometown, which is the centre of the historic region of Banat, located in close proximity to the region of Transylvania. After graduating from the State Hungarian Royal School of Applied Arts (Országos Magyar Királyi Iparművészeti Iskola) in Budapest, Foerk continued his studies in Vienna and soon after studied from the great historicist architect Friedrich von Schmidt.<sup>45</sup>

<sup>45</sup> In 1889, Foerk was awarded with a grant for continuation of his studies under the mentorship of Victor Luntz, at the Friedrich von Schmidt's Special School for Architecture (Spezialschule für Architektur), where he was often rewarded as an exceptional student. [\*\*\* 1892: 398; HADIK, 1984: 5]

<sup>46</sup> His father Gyula Károly Sándy was a painter and a teacher first in Eperjes, and later in Buda. [SÁNDY, 2005: 220]

<sup>47</sup> Known as Royal Joseph Polytechnic until 1862.

<sup>48</sup> Imre Steindl (1839-1902) was a Hungarian architect, author of the Hungarian Parliament building in Budapest, completed in 1904. During his studies in Vienna, Steindl was one of the Friedrich von Schmidt's finest students at the Academy of Fine Arts [\*\*\* 1902: 574]. Ernő Foerk also participated in the Parliament building design by drafting several interior plans [HADIK, 1984: 5-6; HADIK, 1998: 13].

<sup>49</sup> MÉM, "Sándy Gyula", inv. no. 1015/1, 1015/2

<sup>50</sup> Samu Pecz (1854-1922) was a Hungarian historicist architect and academic. He studied at the Vienna Academy of Fine Arts under Theophil Hansen, whose influence we can see on his most recognized work, the Great Market Hall in Budapest (1897). Its pyrogranite façade and the colourful ceramic roof tiles were both made in the Zsolnay factory in Pécs.

<sup>51</sup> See: SÁNDY, 1999

<sup>52</sup> MORAVÁNSZKY, 1998: 217

<sup>53</sup> In this case, the phrase "technical arts" serves as another term for applied arts and crafts.

<sup>54</sup> MORAVÁNSZKY, 1998: 217

<sup>55</sup> The wall was one of the elements described in Gottfried Semper's work *The Four Elements of Architecture* (1851), the other three being hearth, terrace, and roof [SEMPER, 1989: 102]. Harry Francis Mallgrave explains that elements are in fact technical operations based in the applied arts [SEMPER, 1989: 24].

Gyula Sándy (1868-1953) was born in Eperjes (present-day Prešov in eastern Slovakia) in an artistic Lutheran family.<sup>46</sup> After graduating from the Royal Joseph University (Királyi József Műegyetem) in Budapest<sup>47</sup> in 1891, he worked with Imre Steindl on the design for the Hungarian Parliament Building, together with Foerk who returned to Hungary in 1892.<sup>48</sup> Sándy tirelessly travelled to numerous European countries, and from the journals he kept<sup>49</sup>, we can discern an inexhaustible inspiration he gained from those travels for his later works. Sándy's determining influence was a historicist architect Samu Pecz, who worked as lecturer at the Royal Joseph University and in whose atelier Sándy worked early in his career.<sup>50</sup> Both Foerk and Sándy participated in the 1896 Millennial Exhibition in Budapest. Ultimately, Foerk became a teacher at the Hungarian Royal Public Higher Architectural Industrial School (Magyar Királyi Állami Felső Építő Ipariskola), while Sándy taught at the aforementioned Royal Joseph University, both in Budapest. During their professional careers, they published numerous research studies; Foerk on the history of Hungarian architecture and built heritage, and Sándy<sup>51</sup> mostly on architectural structures and construction details.

Both born in the year the Croatian-Hungarian Settlement was signed, which was preceded by the Austro-Hungarian Compromise of 1867, Sándy and Foerk grew up and studied in a monarchy where issues of national identity and territoriality rapidly became the main burning issues of intellectuals and politicians. Coexistence of numerous nations under a single monarch led to a special awareness of ethnicity and religion. However, the main "cultural and political artefact" was language<sup>52</sup>, and being a catalyst of problems in the Empire, it became a matter that had to be carefully dealt with on several levels, even within prominent artistic circles.

Acutely aware of the importance of (architectural) language, fin-de-siècle builders of the Dual Monarchy were greatly influenced by Gottfried Semper's comparative analyses of architecture, published in the 1850s, in which he claims that "architecture is not an original endeavour but borrowed an already developed language from the technical arts".<sup>53</sup> "Semper viewed elements of language as forms that undergo transformations."<sup>54</sup> One of those forms is a wall<sup>55</sup>, an element of enclosure, which was in primitive milieus initially made of mats and carpets, and later with embroidered carpets. Solid structures ensued from the need for load support or permanence were only secondary functional elements, whereas woven textiles, as Semper convincingly claims, remained the "original



FIG. 9 RED AND WHITE GEOMETRIC PATTERN OF THE TRADITIONAL SZÉKELY HOMESPUN  
SL. 9. CRVENO-BIJELI GEOMETRIJSKI UZORAK TRADICIONALNOGA NARODNOG TKANJA PLEMENA SZÉKELYA



means of separating space.”<sup>56</sup> Ultimately, Semper’s far-reaching deduction was that the ornamentation of the outer wall of the buildings could be traced to its origin in textile motifs.<sup>57</sup>

Following Semper’s conclusions in the analysis of Sándy and Foerk’s design for the Postal Palace in Zagreb, the origin of its elevations can be found in the motifs of Hungarian folk woven textiles. The geometric pattern of the common red and white homespun is clearly recognisable in the disposition of visible red bricks on the white plastered façades (Fig. 9). Moreover, it is known that, in historic Hungary, woven carpets were produced exclusively by a minority of Magyars – the already mentioned Székelys/Szeklers of Transylvania.<sup>58</sup>

Just above the cornice of the postal palace, we can see intriguing merlon-like elements at the upper ends of pilaster strips dividing the façade (Fig. 10). Those ornamented endings

presumably have their origins in carved wooden grave markers called *kopjafa*, commonly used as handcrafted funerary monuments among majority of all Hungarian tribes, and especially among Protestant Székelys (Fig. 13). To those familiar with the symbolism of *kopjafa* shapes, the ornaments forming the shaft of the grave marker usually tell the life story of the deceased, its top revealing their gender.<sup>59</sup> The top element of pilaster strips on the Post Office building uses this kind of a geometrically simplified male symbol in the form of a square pyramid.

Throughout the nineteenth century, the origin of Székelys was debated at great length and, due to their preserved and characteristically crafted tangible heritage, they were often associated with the historic cultures of the Middle East.<sup>60</sup> Sándy and Foerk’s romantic reflection on that discourse is visible in the ornaments found between the windows of the ground level; they resemble the Oriental pyramidal merlons, very much like those on the crenellation of the Ishtar Gate and the walls of Babylon (Fig. 14). However, we can find almost identical ornaments on the façades of the Mediaeval Castle in Turin (Fig. 11), built for the General Italian Exposition in 1884<sup>61</sup>, which doubtlessly inspired numerous other Foerk’s as well as Sándy’s designs.<sup>62</sup> In addition, the late mediaeval and Renaissance architecture of northern Italy served as a great inspiration to architects of modern bank and post office buildings of the period<sup>63</sup>, a great number of them built in the style or shape of Italian Renaissance palaces.<sup>64</sup>

Ornamental solutions used for the design of the façade and the cornice of the Postal Palace in Zagreb can also be found in the earlier works of Ernő Foerk, before his collaborations with Gyula Sándy, for example in the design for the Lutheran grammar school in Braşov (1901).<sup>65</sup> He remained faithful to his language

FIG. 10 THE TRADITIONAL CARVED WOODEN GRAVE MARKERS HANDCRAFTED BY THE PROTESTANT SZÉKELYS IN TRANSILVANIA

SL. 10. TRADICIONALNI RUČNO IZREZBARENI NADGROBNI SPOMENICI PROTESTANTSkih SZÉKELYA U TRANSILVANIJU

FIG. 11 THE MEDIAEVAL CASTLE OF TURIN, BUILT FOR THE GENERAL ITALIAN EXPOSITION OF 1884  
SL. 11. SREDNJOVEKOVNI BURG U TORINU IZGRAĐEN ZA OPCIU TALIJANSKU IZLOZBU 1884. GODINE

FIG. 12 THE WOMEN’S PRIORY IN MARTONOS BY ERNŐ FOERK AND GYULA PETROVÁČZ  
SL. 12. ŽENSKI SAMOSTAN U MARTONOŠU KOJI SU PROJEKTIRALI ERNŐ FOERK I GYULA PETROVÁČZ



<sup>56</sup> SEMPER, 1989: 103

<sup>57</sup> SEMPER, 1989: 137; JÄGER, 2002: 118-119

<sup>58</sup> BALASSA, ÖRTUTAY, 1980: 384-387

<sup>59</sup> SZINTE, 1901: 117

<sup>60</sup> In his work *Pesti por és sár* (Dust and Mud of Pest, 1866), Count István Széchenyi mentioned Scythians to be such culture, which resulted in influencing a great number of architects debating on Hungarian national style. [GERLE, KOVÁCS, MAKOVECZ, 1990: 8]

<sup>61</sup> The Mediaeval Castle (*Borgo medioevale*) was based on an idea by architect Alfredo d’Andrade (with the help of a group of artists, historians and literates) and built from 1882 to 1884 for the General Italian Exhibition (*Esposizione Generale Italiana*) in Turin. The burg consists of numerous architectural reproductions of representative historic buildings in Piedmont and Valle d’Aosta. [For further information, see: BOITO, 1884: 250-270; BARTOLOZZI, DAPRÀ, 1981: 189-213]

<sup>62</sup> In 1904, simultaneously with the construction of the General Postal Palace in Zagreb, Foerk and Sándy designed a small country house for Princess Sayn-Wittgenstein (the widow of Alajos Tüköry) and her three children in Dios near Daruvar, Croatia. The Tüköry Mansion, located in cen-



of woven-like ornamental forms, most notably in a project for the seminary institute in Timișoara (1912)<sup>66</sup>, as in collaborations with their mutual colleague Gyula Petrovác, for instance in a design for the women's priory in Martonoš (Fig. 12), a village in Vojvodina (1908).<sup>67</sup> Gyula Sándy embraced Foerk's language of forms during their collaborations, and can be seen in his later projects for various churches and, even more notably, in his secular buildings, such as Grünwald House in Oradea (1906), Co-op House in Mester Street (1907), and Heinrich Warehouse in Mária Street (1910) in Budapest.<sup>68</sup>

In a similar manner, Sándy designed and built his most renowned secular architectural work – the Postal Palace on the Krisztina Boulevard in Budapest (Fig. 15).<sup>69</sup> Although its ornaments are more elaborated, the building not solely bears a remarkable resemblance to the Post Office Building in Zagreb in its typology, brickwork solutions of the façade, and the upper endings of its pilaster strips, but it also includes the same geometry of ornamentation elements on the wall surrounding the round arch of the window. The only difference is that in Zagreb those elements were more sculptural and made of limestone (Fig. 16)<sup>70</sup>, while in Buda they are made in bas relief and are in colour. The use of colour as additional ornamentation on the Buda Postal Palace elevations marks a significant difference from the design for the Postal Palace in Zagreb.<sup>71</sup> The origins of such coloured floral pattern can be found, not in the homespun of Transylvania, but in Hungarian traditional embroideries handcrafted all over the Great Plain. In the General Post Office building in Zagreb, we can find those patterns in the interior design of letter and parcel transaction halls, but in more abstract and geometricised forms, as a variation in the manner of the more common art nouveau. The main entrance portal follows the same

tral Slavonia, also features arts-and-crafts ornaments and elements comparable to those of late mediaeval architecture of northern Italy (or of the aforementioned Mediaeval Castle in Turin). [SÁNDY, 2005: 88-89]

<sup>63</sup> Modern banking originated in mediaeval and early Renaissance northern Italy. The first modern banks were established by grain merchants in Lombardy.

<sup>64</sup> JÄGER-KLEIN, 2010: 183

<sup>65</sup> HADIK, 1998: 71

<sup>66</sup> MÉM, "Foerk Ernő hagyatéka", inv. no. 91.09.23.2

<sup>67</sup> VALKAY, 2010: 128

<sup>68</sup> SÁNDY, 2005: 249-251

<sup>69</sup> For more detailed account on the postal palace in Buda, consult: FEHÉRVÁRI, PRAKFAI, 2015.

<sup>70</sup> HDA, fund no. 905, inv. no. XII-7

<sup>71</sup> At the time of its building in 1924/25, twenty years after the postal palace in Zagreb, when modernist architecture was in full swing, the Buda Postal Palace was stylistically anachronistic. Its anachronism can be ascribed to the political situation in Hungary at the time (Horthysm).

<sup>72</sup> SZABO, 1941: 273



transformation pattern: in Zagreb, the iron doors are wrought in the usual art nouveau manner (Fig. 18), and in Buda – although consisting of similar elements – the doors are wooden in a wrought-iron frame, ornamented with carved motifs from Hungarian embroideries (Fig. 19).

The roof of the Postal Palace in Zagreb with its turrets was beyond question the most appealing element of the building. When built, the height of the turrets doubled the height of the building itself, and their roofs with finials became quite the presence in the silhouette of Zagreb. Because of the turrets' intimidating appearance, Gjuro Szabo later adversely described it as an obnoxious building in "Attila's style with horn-like turrets"<sup>72</sup>, perceiving the building as a diabolical and barbaric urban gesture. Once again, the origin of this kind of high roof can be traced to folk houses built by the Magyars of Transyl-



FIG. 13 AN ORNAMENT BETWEEN THE WINDOWS ON THE GROUND LEVEL RESEMBLING THE MERLONS OF THE ISHTAR GATES IN BABYLON

SL. 13. ORNAMENT KOJI NALAZIMO IZMEĐU PROZORA NA RAZINI PRIZEMLJA, A KOJI OPONAŠA ELEMENTE KRUNIŠTA IŠTARINIH DVERI U BABILONU

FIG. 14 ISHTAR GATE OF BABYLON, EXHIBITED IN THE PERGAMON MUSEUM IN BERLIN

SL. 14. BABILONSKE IŠTARINE DVERI, IZLOŽENE U PERGAMSKOME MUZEJU U BERLINU

FIG. 15 THE POSTAL PALACE ON THE KRISZTINA BOULEVARD IN BUDAPEST BY GYULA SÁNDY (1926)

SL. 15. POSTANSKA PALAČA NA KRISTININU BULEVARU U BUDIMPEŠTI, PROJEKTIRAO GYULA SÁNDY (1926.)

FIG. 16 THE ARCHITECTURAL PLASTIC OF THE FAÇADE, CORNICE AND ROOF OF THE GENERAL POST OFFICE IN ZAGREB, PHOTOGRAPHED BY V. HORVAT IN 1926

SL. 16. ARHITEKTONSKA PLASTIKA PROČELJA, VIJENCA I KROVA GLAVNE POŠTE U ZAGREBU, SNIMIO V. HORVAT 1926.





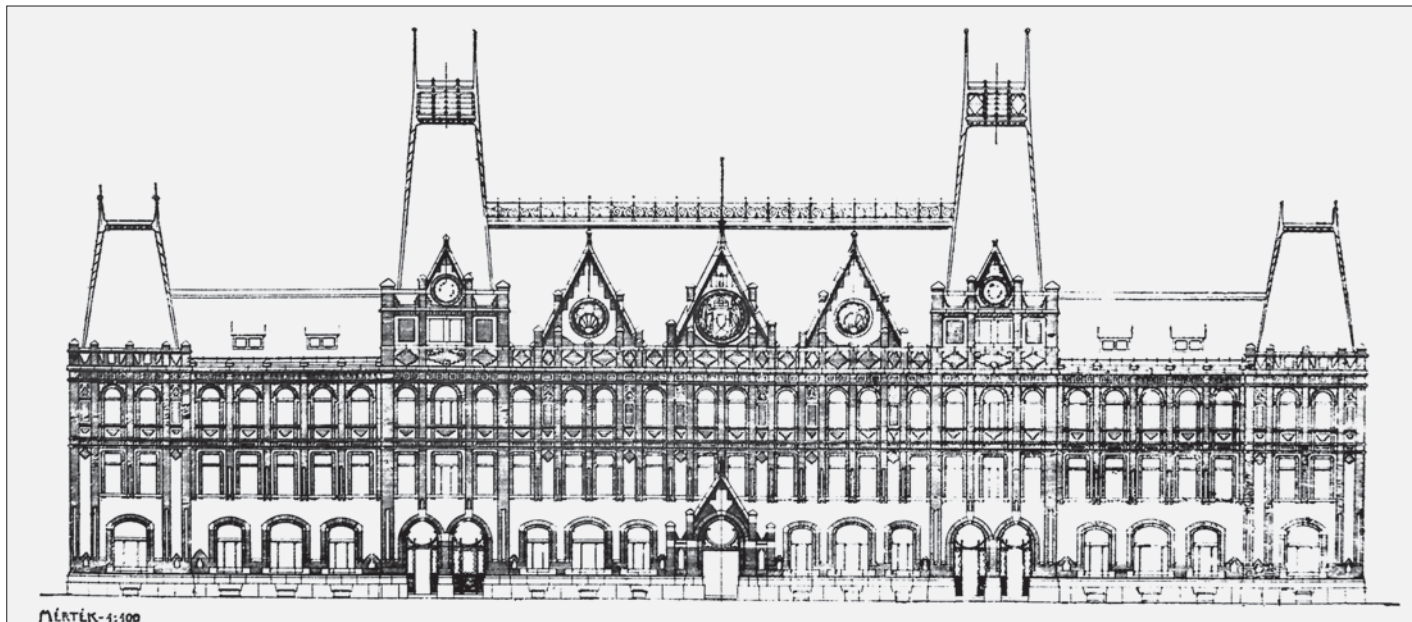


FIG. 17 THE FINAL DESIGN FOR THE MAIN ELEVATION OF THE GENERAL POSTAL PALACE IN ZAGREB, BY ERNŐ FOERK AND GYULA SÁNDY

SL. 17. KONAČNI NACRT ERNŐA FOERKA I GYULE SÁNDYJA ZA GLAVNO PROČELJE PALAČE GLAVNE POŠTE U ZAGREBU

FIG. 18 THE ONLY REMAINING ORIGINAL GATES OF THE GENERAL POST OFFICE IN ZAGREB

SL. 18. DANAS JEDINI PREOSTALI IZVORNI PORTAL GLAVNE POŠTE U ZAGREBU

FIG. 19 THE CARVED DECORATION INSPIRED BY FOLK ORNAMENTS OF KALOCSA VILLAGE, THE GATES OF THE BUDA POSTAL PALACE

SL. 19. REZBARENA DEKORACIJA NADAHNUTA NARODNIM ORNAMENTIMA SELA KALOCSJE, PORTAL BUDIMSKE POŠTANSKE PALAČE

FIG. 20 A TRADITIONAL SZÉKELY FOLK HOUSE IN TRANSYLVANIA

SL. 20. TRÁDICIONALNA SZÉKELYSKA SEOSKA KUĆA U TRANSILVANIJI



vania (Fig. 20). Aside from its height, the roof of the Postal Palace consisted of additional comparable details, including small dormer windows with a sloping roof, containing two small openings.

In 1903 Sándy and Foerk designed a very similar roof for a Post Office building in Pozsony (Bratislava), but at that competition their design lost to historicist designs.<sup>73</sup> At the Turin International Exhibition in 1911, the Kingdom of Hungary was represented with the pavilion by Móric Pogány and Emil Tőry, whose high roof resembled Attila's canopied dwellings<sup>74</sup>, and the edifice itself was often referred to as Attila's Tent. The roof became a powerful element of Hungarian architectural discourse, actualised in the work of many prominent Hungarian fin-de-siècle architects such as Béla Lajta, Károly Kós, and others, followed even by the post-modernist architecture of Imre Makovecz in the second half of the twentieth century.

The present-day remodelled roof of the General Postal Palace in Zagreb no longer bears resemblances to the abovementioned ideas.

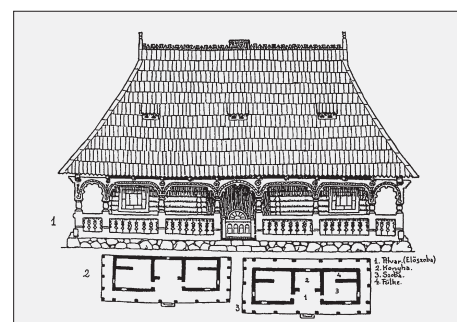
Sándy and Foerk's skilful integration of folk motifs in the building elevations prevails as its most distinctive feature and identity factor. Therefore, it remains unceasingly recognised as a part of the Hungarian architectural idiom.

## UNFOLDING THE CONSTRUCTION PROGRESS

### TIJEK PROCESA IZGRADNJE

At the turn of the nineteenth century, the architects' anxiety triggered by the rapid advance of industry in the last fifty years reached its peak, and a new demand for architecture – the one that challenges potentials in technical engineering – emerged. Necessity for such solutions was even more highlighted in architecture that followed the traditional or vernacular styles. Conclusively, architecture that relates arts and crafts with industry, engineering and new technical solutions became not just welcome, but indispensable.<sup>75</sup>

The construction of the General Post Office started as early as spring 1902, but the reali-



sation of the building proceeded slowly. The main reason lay in the Post Office Administration's requirement that a part of the contractors be local, resulting in many misunderstandings between Hungarian architects and Croatian craftsmen.<sup>76</sup> Also, in between the end of the competition, Sándy became familiar with the newly discovered possibilities of load-bearing structures, primarily considered for the wide span of the letter and parcel transaction halls. Apparently, the two transaction service halls had to be bigger due to the predicted amount of mail and parcels. Lacking the freedom with the budget provided by the Ministry, those changes were built in the project only after multiple revisions in which Sándy and Foerk unfortunately had to give up the originally designed third wing of the building.<sup>77</sup> After they won the first prize, they also consulted their colleague Károly Stegmüller, an iron structures specialist, who referred to the telegraph tower as unnecessary, since the technology of that time already distributed those cables under the ground.<sup>78</sup> Therefore, they gave up the tower as well, and planned most of the wires underground via Hultmann's blocks<sup>79</sup>, except for a few that fit into the considerably smaller, but still tall alternative roof tower.

In the final design, the main façade of the Postal Palace was completely symmetrical, the frontispiece roof and the railing on its ridge still much higher than the rest of the surrounding buildings. All parts of the front roof were flanked with identical roof towers on both sides – more than two storeys tall – marking the frontispiece, and somewhat lower ones on the side avant-corps (Fig. 17). Fortunately, the palace from design to realisation did not lose much of its striking appearance and its high roof towers were still the predominant elements not just of Jurišičeva Street (Fig. 23), but of the entire Lower Town skyline.



Fig. 23 Appearance of the General Postal Palace in Jurisiceva Street before 1930

Sándy and Foerk devised detailed construction plans, including typical details such as stairs or the roof. The first detailed construction drawings were for a skylight roof for both letter and parcel transaction halls. Those roofs were designed as modern steel trusses panelled with glass. A similar concept of such a court-like hall can be found in Otto Wagner's Post Office Savings Bank in Vienna, built in the coinciding period from 1903 to 1908.<sup>80</sup> As Sándy's field of expertise were architectural structures, he was the sole author of the detailed plans for the tower structure.<sup>81</sup> On the other hand, they co-signed the detailed disposition of elements on the façade.<sup>82</sup> Even though Sándy and Foerk supervised the building process, it was essential to comprehensively draw all detailed plans, because the construction work was actually carried out by Greiner and Waronig, a construction company from Zagreb.<sup>83</sup>

At the stage of construction supervision, Foerk's significant trait was his sociability<sup>84</sup>



Fig. 21 The Telephone Exchange Building, a three-storey annex by the construction firm Josip Dubský & Co.

Sl. 21. Zgrada telefonske centrale. Nadgradnju u obliku trokatne zgrade projektiralo je i izvelo poduzeće Josip Dubský i drug

Fig. 22 Former lateral entrances remodelled into windows

Sl. 22. Bivši bočni ulazi preoblikovani u prozore

Fig. 23 Appearance of the General Postal Palace in Jurisiceva Street before 1930

Sl. 23. Izgled Jurisiceve ulice s palačom glavne pošte prije 1930. godine

Fig. 24 C.B. type switchboards in the telephone hall and manual operators

Sl. 24. Ručni operateri za priključcima tipa C.B. u dvorani za telefon



73 FEJÉR, RITTER, 1903: 16-17, 33

74 GERLE, KOVÁCS, MAKOVECZ, 1990: 13

75 GIEDION, 1969: 214-216

76 SÁNDY, 2005: 206

77 SÁNDY, 1903: 95

78 SÁNDY, 2005: 205

79 The city planned to distribute the main cable from the Postal Palace through Jurisiceva Street, Ban Jelačić Square and Ilica. From there, it would branch out and lead to certain buildings that housed hubs placed in the attic, each of those hubs serving a hundred households. [\*\*\* 1903: 4]

80 JÄGER-KLEIN, 2010: 184-185

81 HDA, fund no. 905, inv. no. XII-7: *Toronytetők leköltése*

82 HDA, fund no. 905, inv. no. XII-7: *Palmiticeva utcai homlokzat részlete*

83 MIKÁČ, LASLO, 1982: 19; \*\*\* 2006.b: 210

84 According to Sándy, Foerk enjoyed a great popularity among the professors and lecturers. Because of its joyful atmosphere, Foerk's cabinet was where everybody would meet to work on a difficult task. [SÁNDY, 2005: 205]



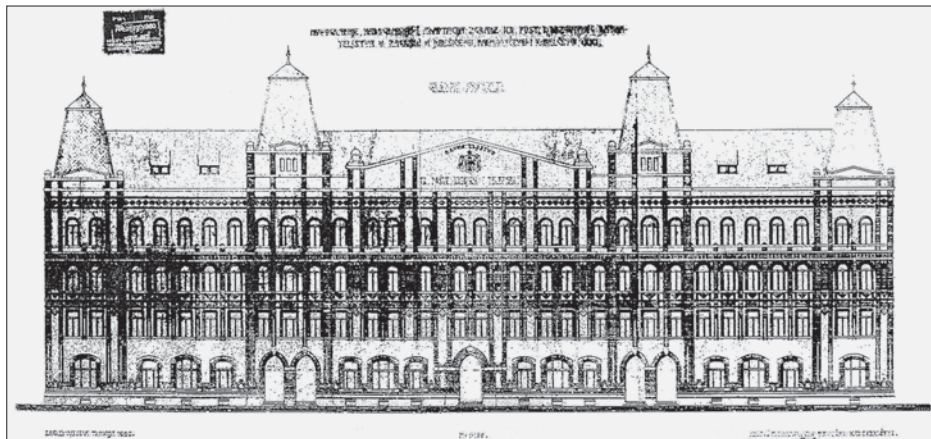


FIG. 25 A PROJECT FOR ADDITION OF THE THIRD STOREY AND THE REMODELLING OF THE FAÇADE BY PAVAO JUŠIĆ (1920), THE MAIN FAÇADE

SL. 25. PROJEKT PAVLA JUŠICA ZA NADogradnju TREĆEGA KATA I PREOBlikOVANJE PROCelJA (1920.), NACRT ZA GLAVNO PROCelJE

and his passion for work. Although we cannot conclusively say that all the communication with the contractors was entrusted to Foerk, we can read from Sándy's memoirs that he efficiently dealt with the communication issues during the construction. A great deal of the difficulties were letters from Croatia to Foerk's cabinet, often not addressed in Hungarian and thus failing to arrive, which embittered the locals. There was also an episode during the stonework, when a stonemason surnamed Pašić arrived to Budapest complaining the ornaments were too complex to cut. Foerk insisted that the ornaments be cut exactly as designed, aptly solving the situation.<sup>85</sup>

It was Foerk who designed the Hungarian coat of arms placed on the central pediment above the main entrance. It was produced in majolica style at the aforementioned renowned Zsolnay factory in Pécs.<sup>86</sup>

The interior of the new building was equipped with modern telecommunication technology. The telephone exchange system was relocated from Baron Nikolić's house in Teslina Street to the new Postal Palace, where modernised C.B. type manual switchboards (Fig.

24) for 1200 users were installed. That system was used until 1928.<sup>87</sup>

On 31 August, 1904, the construction was finalised and the certificate of occupancy was issued by the building inspection office within days.<sup>88</sup> On Monday, 12 September, the building was opened to the public.<sup>89</sup> The new postal, telegraph and telephone service affected public transport as well. Owing to residents popping on and off trams in front of the General Postal Palace on the opening day, the press proposed the addition of another tram stop, which was promptly arranged two days later.<sup>90</sup> After Jurisićeva Street was paved in the following months, and Palmotičeva and Ružična Street in 1905, the Post Office finally seemed to be settled and its surrounding regulated.

## A CENTURY OF ALTERATIONS

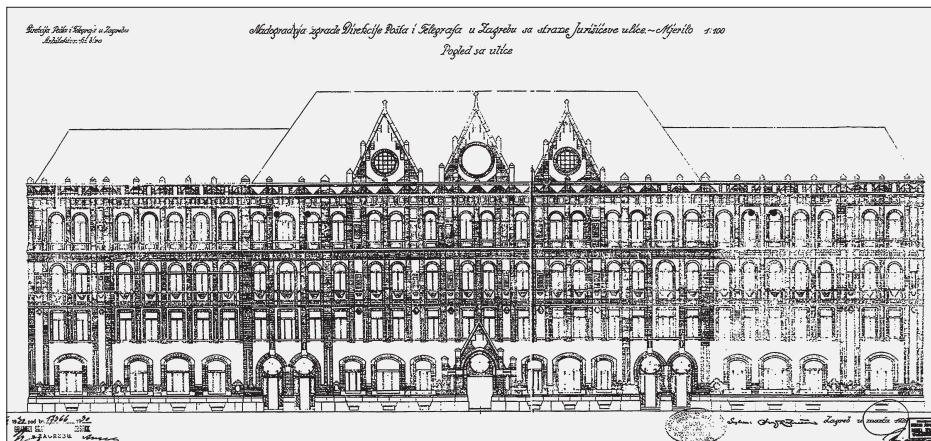
### STOLJEĆE PREGRADNJI

Even in their initial design for the Postal Palace in 1902, Gyula Sándy and Ernő Foerk were extremely aware of the ever-expanding field of technology, and especially of development of telecommunication systems. In September 1912, they proposed a plan for the addition of the third wing facing Palmotičeva Street.<sup>91</sup> Its main feature was a great hall for the Morse machines on the first storey, but it was never built.

The actual preparations for the new Telephone Exchange Building (the third wing) began and several projects were proposed in the period from 1920 to 1924.<sup>92</sup> From 1925 to 1926, the final proposition for the annex<sup>93</sup> was designed by the prominent Zagreb-based construction firm Josip Dubský & Co.<sup>94</sup>, and the three storey high building soon filled the void of the aforementioned pedestrian entrance to the courtyard, thus perfecting the continuity of buildings in Palmotičeva Street (Fig. 21).

FIG. 26 A PROJECT FOR ADDITION OF THE THIRD STOREY BY STANKO KLISKA (1929), THE MAIN FAÇADE

SL. 26. PROJEKT STANKA KLISKE ZA NADogradnju TREĆEGA KATA (1929.), NACRT ZA GLAVNO PROCelJE



85 SÁNDY, 2005: 206

86 The original drawing was in scale 1:2. [SÁNDY, 2005: 206]

87 ŠUTALO, 1997: 11, 59; \*\*\* 2006.b: 210

88 \*\*\* 1904.a: 4

89 \*\*\* 1904.b: 4; \*\*\* 1904.c: 4

90 \*\*\* 1904.d: 6; \*\*\* 1904.e: 5

91 MÉM, "Foerk Ernő hagyatéka", inv. no. 91.09.20.1, 91.09.20.2, 91.09.20.3, 91.09.20.4, 91.09.20.5, 91.09.20.6

92 DAZG, fund ZGD 1122, inv. no. 155 / 500-526; HDA, fund no. 905, inv. no. XII-8

93 HDA, fund no. 905, inv. no. XII-9: *Nacrt dogradnje*; inv. no. XII-10: *Telefonska centrala*

94 Josip Dubský was the most active construction engineer of the period and the pioneer of the reinforced concrete constructions in Croatia, most famous for the silo building of the Steam Mill (Paromlin) complex in 1908, in Zagreb.

95 \*\*\* 2006.b: 211





After the end of the First World War and the dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the Hungarian coat of arms on the Post Office's central pediment was removed on the 1 November, 1918 by the National Council of the State of Slovenes, Croats and Serbs. It was replaced by an inscription that read *The Royal State Post Office – Croatia*, and which stood there until 1922.<sup>95</sup>

At that time, the post office management started to contemplate the idea of the addition of the third storey to the main building, which resulted in a preliminary design by Pavao Jusić in April 1920.<sup>96</sup> His design proposed the removal of the recognisable roof structure by Sándy and Foerk, replacing it with a simpler roof solution with mansard-roofed turrets (Fig. 25). The façade of the proposed third storey lacked the lavish ornamentation of the storeys below.<sup>97</sup> A new plan for the third storey (Fig. 26), designed by Stanko Kliska<sup>98</sup>, emerged almost a decade later in March 1929.<sup>99</sup> The main criteria for the design of the simple pyramid roof in three parts (higher above the frontispiece) and which had no turrets, were to keep three of the original central pediments corresponding

to the surrounding building heights and for the third storey façade and its cornice to follow the original ornamentation of the earlier storeys. Even the material, a special kind of red brick, was for that reason imported from Hungary.<sup>100</sup> This unifying solution with a great formal change of the General Post Office was built promptly in the following year.

Although it greatly changed the urban appearance of the building, the roof removal was a bland alternation compared to radical interventions of architect Marijan Haberle that affected the user's perception of the original spatial design. His design from 1955 proposed the closure of lateral entrances to the letter and parcel transaction halls (Fig. 22).<sup>101</sup> The only entrance left was the central opening, which was widened at the time to adapt to its newly projected user capacity (Fig. 29) and was simplified in a modernist manner by removing its original adornment. His design also transformed the interior: the removal of the hand-made majolica ornamentation, the covering of the columns, and the negation of the skylight function left the two transaction halls completely bare. Only the letter transaction hall kept its original function, becoming the main transaction hall, while the former parcel transaction hall became an exhibition area for the Museum of Post and Telecommunications.<sup>102</sup> Carried out in 1958<sup>103</sup>, Marijan Haberle's changes of the spatial disposition have been retained until today.

An ambition for the re-evaluation of the building's historical idiom emerged in 1997, when architect Nenad Kondža was entrusted with the task of "optimising the technical and aesthetic aspect of the existing content".<sup>104</sup> A project for the main transaction hall and the surrounding working areas along with the archive was designed in collaboration with Bogomir Hrnčić and Irena Vitasović in 2001. The main criterion was to restore the original

FIG. 27 THE LETTER TRANSACTION AT THE BEGINNING OF THE 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY

SL. 27. DVORANA ZA PISMOVNU POSTU NA POČETKU 20. STOLJEĆA

FIG. 28 THE MAIN TRANSACTION HALL AFTER THE RECONSTRUCTION CARRIED OUT IN 2000-2001

SL. 28. GLAVNA POŠTANSKA DVORANA NAKON REKONSTRUIRANJA IZVEDENOG OD 2000. DO 2001. GODINE

FIG. 29 THE MAIN ENTRANCE DESIGNED BY MARIJAN HABERLE IN 1955

SL. 29. GLAVNI ULAZ KOJEGA JE PROJEKTIRAO MARIJAN HABERLE 1955.



<sup>96</sup> DAZG, fund ZGD 1122, inv. no. 155 / 498; HDA, fund no. 905, inv. no. XII-8: *Novogradnje, nadgradnje i adaptacija zgrade Kr. poštanskog ravnateljstva*

<sup>97</sup> The design was not built, as we can see from the perspective drawing of Zagreb, 1926, which can be found in the personal fund of Ivan Persić. [DAZG, fund "Ivan Persić", inv. no. 110]

<sup>98</sup> DAMJANOVIĆ, 2014: 213 [in reference to: \*\*\* 1929: 6]

<sup>99</sup> DAZG, fund ZGD 1122, inv. no. 155 / 529, 531; HDA, fund no. 905, inv. no. XII-12: *Nadogradnja zgrade Direkcije Pošta i Telegrafa u Zagrebu*

<sup>100</sup> \*\*\* 2006.b: 211

<sup>101</sup> DAZG, fund ZGD 1122, inv. no. 156 / 1-32; CEKOL, 2004: 35

<sup>102</sup> HT Museum of Post and Telecommunications was founded in 1953 and held exhibitions until 1958. After several decades of only collecting and publishing, it became open for public again in 1997. [\*\*\* 2006.a: 387, 389]

<sup>103</sup> \*\*\* 2006.b: 211

<sup>104</sup> KISIĆ, 2001: 108



FIG. 30 THE GENERAL POST OFFICE BUILDING  
IN JURISIĆEVA STREET TODAY  
SL. 30. ZGRADA GLAVNE POŠTE U JURISIĆEVOJ ULICI DANAS

atmosphere of the interior and its reconciliation with contemporary needs. The original light concept was appraised by the reconstruction of the original steel frame, only this time it was with the use of white glass (and not the original historicist stained coloured glass), carried out by Ante Žaja. All of the original stone plastic elements – the chequered marble floor tiling, the columns of the bossed Bizek stone, the arches, and the vaults – were reconstructed from old photographs (Fig. 27), which was supervised by Mijo Jerković of the Croatian Conservation Institute. With specially designed counters and glass panels produced by Marko Murtić of the AAG Studio, the space got its final contemporary touch. The final phase of Kondža's reconstruction saw the approximate restoration of the majolica motifs, carried out by Antun and Pavao Vuksan's atelier.<sup>105</sup>

While retrieving the building's origins, Nenad Kondža elegantly met the requirements of contemporary interior design (Fig. 28), which brought him the prestigious Bernardo Bernardi Award.<sup>106</sup>

Even though Kondža's harmonious intervention in the Post Office interior provided fertile ground for a comprehensive re-evaluation of the Post Office's architectural design and appearance, in 2013 the Croatian Post closed the exhibition hall of the Museum of Post and Telecommunications, and rented it to a supermarket chain, thus changing its functional and spatial role once again.

The close surroundings of the General Post Office experienced major transformations as well. Even though originally conceived as the main business street of the Lower Town Za-

greb, Jurišićeva Street is today a calm street with only public and pedestrian traffic, and the Postal Palace building is visible behind a row of high vegetation forming a promenade (Fig. 30), itself a result of urban design proposed Mihajlo Kranjc in 1994.<sup>107</sup> In 2014, a reconstruction of present-day Kurelčeva Street (former Ruzična Street) flanked the Postal Palace with a clear space which provides a complete view of the building's south elevation.

## CONCLUSION

### ZAKLJUČAK

The Palace of the General Post and Telegraph Administration Office is a rare example of a technical building integrated in the centre of the urban fabric of Lower Town Zagreb, while all the other technical and industrial buildings of the period were specifically located at the borders and fringes of the city. The main criterion for building Hungarian buildings in Zagreb of that period was that the buildings be either directorates or administration buildings, facilities dependent of Hungarian ministries. Anticipating the new epoch of technology and advancement, the building surfaced as a unique block in the nineteenth-century downtown grid – both functionally and stylistically. This deliberate dual emphasis of the Postal Palace was one of the last attempts to represent the advancement and the primacy of Hungarian Kingdom, which was already in its decline.

In the transition from late historicist to modern architecture characterised by the secession of this new style from historic styles, Ernő Foerk and Gyula Sándy designed a building that indicated a need for a different historical basis. The Post follows the criterion of contemporary trends in technology, but also considers the tumultuous discourse of the national style and the origin of Hungari-

<sup>105</sup> Data obtained from the City Institute for the Conservation of Cultural and Natural Heritage.

<sup>106</sup> For a more detailed account on the project and the award, see: KISIC, 2001; KRIZIC ROBAN, 2002; MRDULJAS, 2011.

<sup>107</sup> KNEŽEVIĆ, 2013: 12-13

<sup>108</sup> In his work, Rudolf Klein discusses the typology of Hungarian styles in various periods, and marks this one as a "Kós Line". In their work, János Gerle, Attila Kovács and Imre Makovecz put Sándy and Foerk between "Provincial Renaissance" and "Hungarian Folk Applied Art". For a more detailed account, see: KLEIN, 1997; GERLE, KOVÁCS, MAKOVECZ, 1990 (a chart on the inside of the dust jacket).

<sup>109</sup> There are several names without which this extensive research would not be possible. The author's highest gratitude goes to David Edel who assiduously discussed and tirelessly proofread each version of this research. The author also wishes to thank Prof. Pál Ritoók, Prof. Rudolf Klein, Prof. Dragan Damjanović, Prof. Mladen Obad Scitaroci, Tamás Csáki, and Iva Prosoli for their generous help and guidance during this research.



ans. We may argue that it deliberately made a double operation – a secession from Secession – in order to return to the roots of the idea in need of transmission. By analysing the building's formal elements, we can notice that it relies on the original sources found among the Magyar tribes, in the authentic Hungarian villages,<sup>108</sup> thus making a clear distinction from the Viennese styles of the period. Influenced by the British Arts and Crafts movement and the provincial Renaissance of northern Italy, it found its theoretical basis in the hand-crafted arts of the Székely people of Transylvania. After this collaboration, an application of this kind of motifs became the stylistic criterion of both Foerk and Sándy's future designs. Moreover, in its potential to coexist with the most advanced technology of the period and assimilate it, the new stylistic idiom acquired certain integrity.

After the dissolution of the Empire, the apparent displacement (and deterritorialisation) of Transylvanian and Banat folk motifs became questionable, which became evident in the removal of the original roof structure. Although numerous alternations that followed in the twentieth century brought changes to its outer appearance as well as to the manner of use, it survives as the only example of Hungarian national style (sometimes called the Hungarian Secession or Hungarian Art Nouveau) in the architecture of Zagreb.

However, despite the complexity of factors that lead to its construction and later alterations, as well as the building's multiple significant historical, cultural and technological factors, the present-day General Post Office building is not protected as an individual building, but only as part of the historic urban ensemble of the Lower Town Zagreb. To secure the better protection as well as the proper active use of the building, future architectural and conservation methods ought to consider the building's main identity factors: its specific stylistic idiom, semiotics of its elements, and its functional features. Conclusively, this research<sup>109</sup> hopes to elucidate the need to legally protect the General Postal Palace as the important monument of technical heritage and substantial architectural proof of cultural and building history of fin-de-siècle Zagreb.

[Proofread by: DAVID EDEL, BA]

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## ILLUSTRATION SOURCES

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- FIG. 1 MGZ, inv. no. 5056
- FIG. 2 MGZ, inv. no. 3165
- FIG. 3 MGZ, inv. no. 912-III-1169 a,b; 912-II-16057
- FIG. 4 MKRH, inv. no. 952, neg. III-268
- FIG. 5 MGZ, inv. no. 4098
- FIG. 6 MÉM, inv. no. 91.09.20.9
- FIG. 7 SÁNDY, 1903: 97
- FIG. 8 BFL, Pályatervek 462: A zágrábi posta- és távirda-igazgatóság épületének pályaterve, homlokzat és távlati kép, 1901
- FIG. 9 BALASSA, ORTUTAY, 1980: Plate LXIII (between pages 672 and 673)
- FIG. 10, 18, 19, 21, 22, 28-30 Photos by author, taken in 2013 and 2014
- FIG. 11 Photo by Enrico Ciampolillo, 2014 (detail)
- FIG. 12 VALKAY, 2010: 126-127
- FIG. 13 Photo by Viktor Nagy, 2010
- FIG. 14 Photo by Maximilian Meisse, 2010 (detail)
- FIG. 15 PM, inv. no. 25-1997-2966
- FIG. 16 MKRH, inv. no. 191, V-191
- FIG. 17 SÁNDY, 1903: 96
- FIG. 20 MAGYAR, 2007: 19
- FIG. 23 MGZ, inv. no. 16167
- FIG. 24 PM, inv. no. 25-1993-2056
- FIG. 25 DAZG, fund ZGD 1122, inv. no. 155/498
- FIG. 26 DAZG, fund ZGD 1122, inv. no. 155/531
- FIG. 27 PM – inv. no. 25-1993-2055

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– Foerck Ernő hagyatéka  
– Sándy Gyula hagyatéka

## SUMMARY

## SAŽETAK

## PALAČA RAVNATELJSTVA POŠTE I BRZOJAVA U JURISIĆEVOJ ULICI U ZAGREBU

## ODLIKE ARHITEKTURE I STILSKOGA RJEŠENJA

Iako palača Ravnateljstva pošte i brzjava u Jurišićevoj ulici predstavlja jedan od najznačajnijih primjera mađarskoga arhitektonskog i tehnološkog dostignuća u Zagrebu na početku 20. stoljeća, njezin nastanak i značenje ostali su do danas neistraženi. Kako bi se utvrdili čimbenici identiteta koji grade njenu posebnost, ovim su istraživanjem prvi put obuhvaćeni i hrvatski i mađarski arhivski te drugi izvori, provedena je analiza graditeljskoga opusa njenih autora, ali i onodobna kulturna i teorijska kretanja.

Jedan od najznačajnijih čimbenika identiteta poštanske palače jest njezin smjestaj u gradskome tkivu. Nakon ujedinjenja Gradeca i Kaptola u jedinstveni grad Zagreb 1850. godine, grad se počeo ubrzano širiti prema jugu u obliku blokova smještenih u ortogonalni raster ulica Donjega grada. I nekadašnja Puzeva ulica istočno od Trga bana Jelčića, uz koju je tekao potok Medveščak, postala je 1899. godine Jurišićevom ulicom, svojevrsnim poslovnim nastavkom llice prema istočnim dijelovima grada, a koji se skladno uklapa u planirani raster. Tom je prilikom na sjevernoj strani Jurišićeve ulice nastalo prazno zemljište, zamišljeno kao smjestaj nove zagrebačke Glavne pošte.

Natječaj za novu, dvokatnu poštansku palaču objavljen je 22. svibnja 1901. godine. U kolovozu iste godine pobjedničkim je proglašen rad mađarskih arhitekata Ernőa Foerka i Gyule Sándyja. Jedan od elemenata koji je ispunio kriterij tehnološke inovativnosti u Foerkovu i Sándyjevom projektu bio je pedeset metara visok telegrafski toranj, primijecen i hvaljen u stručnome tisku. S druge strane, funkcionalni kriterij bio je ispunjen simetričnim prostornim razmještanjem, s glavnim ulazom u sredini pročelja uz Jurišićevu ulicu te dvostrukim bočnim ulazima, od kojih je jedan bio za listovnu poštu, a drugi za pošiljke. U unutrašnje je dvorište poštansko vozilo ulazilo kroz vežu na bočnome krilu zgrade iz pokrajnje Ruzične ulice (danas Kurelčeve). Vec tim prvim projektom planirano je proširenje u obliku

trećega krila zgrade, a koje bi udomilo telefonsku centralu. Tijekom izgradnje, zbog tehnološkog napretka, odustalo se od telegrafskoga tornja, a po otvorenju 1904. godine palača Glavne pošte bila je dvokatnica simetričnoga pročelja, s krovom koji je njezinu visinu udvostručavao.

Tijekom 20. stoljeća Glavna se pošta u Jurišićevoj ulici veoma rijetko spominjala u stručnoj literaturi. Aleksander Laslo spominje ju u svome *Arhitektonskome vodiču* tek kao „mađarski folkloristički import“, a Olga Marusevski u jednome broju časopisa „Čovjek i prostor“ zgradu naziva „mađarskom secesijom“, no jasniji kriteriji za njezine stilske odrednice nisu postavljeni. Mađarski napor u izgradnji reprezentativne arhitekture Donjega grada nije mogao biti predstavljen bečkom secesijom kao većina zagrebačke stambene arhitekture toga doba. Vec u drugoj polovici 19. stoljeća u mađarskoj arhitekturi nalazimo stilske tendencije koje ugrađuju mađarske cvjetne i mitološke motive u arhitekturu i obrt. To su većinom bili arhitekti i obrtnici okupljeni oko imena arhitekta Ödöna Lechnera. Arhitekt Béla Lajta, koji je tada kao naučnik-pripravnik radio kod Lechnera, također je ponudio rješenje za Glavnu poštu u Zagrebu, ali ono je i u mađarskome tisku bilo kritizirano zbog doslovnoga apliciranja mađarskih motiva na pročelja.

Bolji semiotički sustav nudilo je pročelje Foerkova i Sándyjeva rješenja. Korijene njihova arhitektonskoga jezika moramo najprije potražiti u mađarskome plemenu Székelya, a za koje se na prijelazu stoljeća smatralo da svojim tradicionalnim obrtom i arhitekturom predstavljaju izvorne mađarske elemente. Upravo te elemente Sándy i Foerk ugrađuju u zagrebačku poštansku palaču i oni ostaju vidljivi do danas. Slijedeći teorijsku potku Gottfrieda Sempera, motive slične ciglenim ornamentima pročelja Glavne pošte možemo pronaći u motivima narodnoga tkanja u Transilvaniji, dok završeci lizena na krovnome vijencu sadrže piramidalne elemente slične nadgrobnim spomenicima tamošnjih prote-

stantskih Székelya. Zbog kulturno-teorijskih kretanja i promišljanja podrijetla Madara na prijelazu stoljeća, na pročelju nalazimo i elemente arhitekture Mezopotamije (Istarinih dveri u Babilonu), a veoma značajan uzor na cjelokupan autorski opus Foerka i Sándyja bio je srednjovjekovni burg u Torinu, izgrađen za Opcu talijansku izložbu 1884. godine u Torinu, kao i mnoge talijanske palače izgrađene u doba renesanse.

Vec 1912. godine Foerk i Sándy izradili su projekt proširenja poštanske palače trećim krilom uz Palmotičevu ulicu, ali je ono u konačnici izvedeno tek od 1925. do 1926. godine prema projektu Josipa Dupskoga i njegovih suradnika. Godine 1920., projektom koji potpisuje Pavao Jusić, prvi je put predložena nadogradnja Glavne pošte još jednim, trećim katom, kao i preoblikovanje pročelja. Ipak, Glavna je pošta nadograđena tek deset godina poslije, prema projektu Stanka Kliske iz 1929. godine. Od 1955. do 1958. godine zatvoreni su bočni ulazi u zgradu, a glavni je ulaz proširen i njegova je arhitektonska plastika uklonjena pa je novi portal izveden prema projektu arhitekta Marijana Haberlea. Redukcija izvorne ornamenture provedena je i u interijeru. Tek je 2001. godine izvorni historicističko-secesijski interijer rekonstruiran prema projektu arhitekta Nenada Kondže i suradnika.

Unatoč svim pregradnjama tijekom 20. stoljeća, palača Glavne pošte u Jurišićevoj ulici zadržala je svoje glavne čimbenike identiteta: prostorno-funkcionalni razmjestaj koji se temelji na tehnološkim i arhitektonskim dostignućima Austro-Ugarske Monarhije na početku 20. stoljeća, ali i jedinstven jezik oblikovanja temeljen na povijesno-mitološkom predlošku mađarskoga nacionalnog stila i tradicionalnog obrta Transilvanije. Zgrada pritom radi dvostruku operaciju – secesiju od secesije – kako bi stvorila nov reprezentativni arhitektonski jezik kojim bi prenosila poruku napretka i značenja mađarskoga graditeljstva za urbano tkivo zagrebačke Donjega grada na početku 20. stoljeća.

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