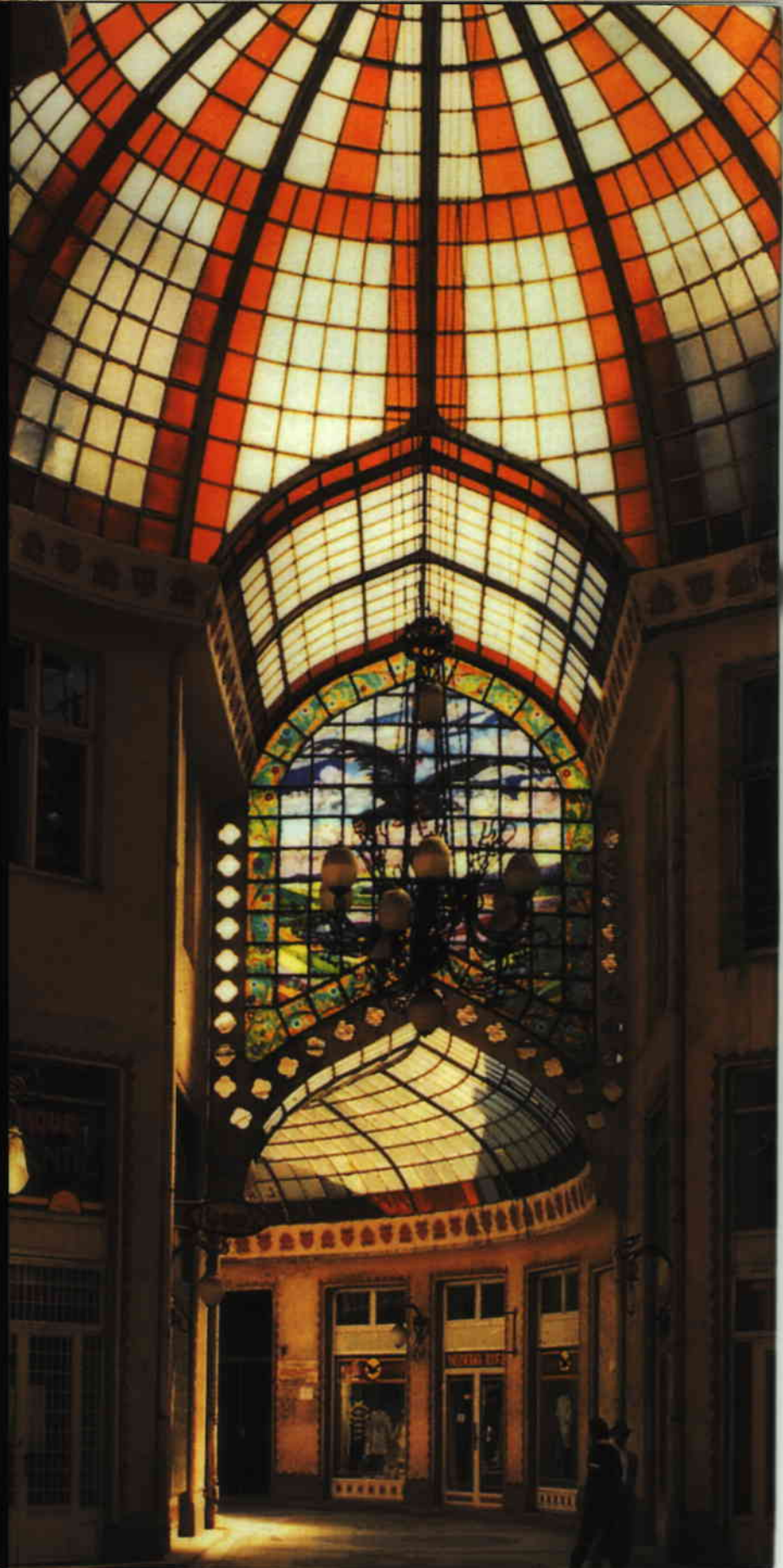


FREDRIC BEDOIRE

# THE JEWISH CONTRIBUTION TO MODERN ARCHITECTURE

1830-1930



Praise for  
*The Jewish Contribution  
to Modern Architecture,  
1830-1930*

Fredric Bedoire, Professor of Architectural History at the Royal University of Fine Arts in Stockholm, invites the reader on a grand tour of Europe, visiting the many cities where Jewish entrepreneurs, intellectuals, and architects had a more powerful impact on the environment of urban life than at any other time in the history of Western culture.

The author describes and analyzes the architecture of the palaces, synagogues, railroad stations, and department stores that architects and developers designed and built in Paris, Vienna, Budapest, Berlin, New York, Chicago, and other cities. This richly illustrated history begins with the dramatic changes in nineteenth-century society and culture that liberated the first generation of Jews from the ghettos of Venice, Prague, and Frankfurt. It concludes with the modernism of the 1920s and 1930s. The book combines family history, urban history, and the history of architecture and architects with a history of Jews and Jewish thought.

Fredric Bedoire forcefully argues that the Jewish cultural and financial elite of Europe's cities made a crucially important imprint on the eclectic mentality of nineteenth-century architecture and general culture. He presents evidence of a Jewish role even in national-style architecture (German historicism and the Hungarian Magyar style), and most important, he demonstrates the decisive Jewish influence on twentieth-century modernism. His book is an extremely valuable contribution to architectural and urban history as well as to the cultural history of continental Europe.

It is an intellectual thriller that will appeal to architects, historians, and general readers interested in art or in Jewish subjects.

Rudolf Klein  
Professor of the History of Architecture  
Tel Aviv and Budapest

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## **About the Author**

The author is a Swedish scholar, Fredric Bedoire, Ph. D. and Professor of the History of Architecture in the Royal University of Fine Arts, Stockholm, a productive writer on architectural and cultural history. He has above all specialized in the emergence of nineteenth- and twentieth-century European society.

# The Jewish Contribution to Modern Architecture

1830-1930

Fredric Bedoire

**A** book about architecture and society, a wide-ranging cultural and historical depiction of successful Jewish entrepreneurs in an increasingly industrialized Europe, from the dissolution of the ghetto and the 1848 liberation movement to Hitler's assumption of power in Germany. Inspired by Jewish messianism, they pursued a modern culture, free from the old feudal society.

The principal characters are bankers, merchants, and industrialists together with their architects, from Schinkel and Semper to Mies van der Rohe and Le Corbusier. They built in Paris, Berlin, and Vienna, Budapest and New York and Chicago, and in more remote centers of Jewish entrepreneurial activity, such as Oradea (Nagyvárad) in present-day Romania and Lodz in Poland, Stockholm and Gothenburg in Sweden. The buildings shed new light on the Europe of today, but also on a Europe that is lost beyond recall.

Much of the modern **European** urban landscape was inspired by the initiative of these industrialists and philanthropists.

Coincidental to the main thesis, this volume is also a history of Jews in the period.

# The Promised City

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NAGYVÁRAD, LODZ, AND NEW YORK

*And may Thou return in mercy to Jerusalem, Thy city, and sit enthroned in its midst, as Thou hast proclaimed; rebuild her soon, in our time, for an eternal building, and fix Thy throne quickly within her. Praise be to Thee, O God, who maketh Jerusalem to rise again.*

—Minhah prayer<sup>1</sup>

*Simeon ben Lakish said: "The Holy One, blessed be He, will in days to come add to Jerusalem more than a thousand gardens and a thousand towers. . . . The Holy One, blessed be He, will build Jerusalem of sapphire stone, and these stones will shine like the sun, and the nations will come and look upon the glory of Israel."*

—Talmud, Bava Batra 75b<sup>2</sup>

*The New Jerusalem: the city in a valley surrounded by mountains, with the rising sun as a symbol of the messianic prophecy, a motif which returns in Jugendstil around 1900. From a Hebrew prayerbook for Passover (Amsterdam, 1695).*

## A New Jerusalem

For Jews and Christians alike, the concept of a New Jerusalem has been a driving force of Western utopias envisioning the ideal society. The prophetic and messianic side of Judaism confers a gravity which has helped to keep the Jews in the Diaspora united through the millennia. To the Orthodox, the place, the city, the country where they happened to be was often of no importance, and they were accustomed to migrating. The old

prayers sustained the longing for the soon-to-be-revived Holy City. But the traditional Jewish messianism also includes a great world-destroying catastrophe.

With the Enlightenment and the beginnings of emancipation, the hope of a Jerusalem outside Palestine took on a new meaning. Thoughts of reviving the old Jerusalem were toned down and replaced with an ever-stronger belief in uninterrupted progress. Messianism was reinterpreted in the spirit of the French Revolution and positivism, essentially different from the intellectual world of the Middle Ages, and was projected onto one's own city, where Jews and Christians could live side by side. The enlightened legislation of the modern age was regarded as an extension of the Mosaic law, the Promised Land came to be the place where one was living in the Diaspora. This does not imply any rejection of Judaism, but can be construed as a religious renewal. Among Jewish thinkers of the late nineteenth century, this view was represented by Hermann Cohen, professor of philosophy in Marburg in 1875 and in Berlin in 1912, the foremost German Kantian of the age and the author of *Religion als Vernunft*.<sup>3</sup>

The indefatigable involvement of the Pereire brothers in the rebuilding of Paris and their efforts to make the ambitions of Napoleon III and Haussmann practically feasible can therefore be regarded as the clearest expression of the messianism of the New Age. Together with a group of Jewish entrepreneurs, they not only took steps to finance the vast building project but also to involve themselves in companies as the developers of the most important buildings, the big hotels, department stores, and railroad stations; in addition, they provided a new infrastructure of water supply and sewerage and public transport. Their ambitions were global and were realized with an architecture that underscored uniformity, common responsibility, and collective, not private, magnificence. The home of Gustave de Rothschild, the most religious of James's sons, in the palace on the Avenue de Marigny contained paintings, above the doors of the main drawing-room, showing

Jerusalem liberated by the Crusaders. Their purpose was not to glorify Catholicism and the Counter-Reformation. Instead they can be taken to imply that the *Wandering Jew* portrait on the door knocker of the same palace had at last come to rest and captured Paris, his promised city, as triumphantly as the Crusaders had once captured Jerusalem.

The building of the Ringstrasse in Vienna, "*Zionstrasse in Neu-Jerusalem*," resulted from an agreement between the emperor and Jewish bankers aimed at achieving a magnificent composition in which pride of place went to the publicly useful institutions, not to the palaces of the individual developers. On the painted ceilings of a banker who had recently migrated from Russia, being accepted in the imperial city of Vienna was equated with having an audience with the king of Persia. What was built up in Vienna was a common Jerusalem. In all essential respects, this was accomplished during the liberal years preceding the stock market crash of 1873. After that the climate for the Jewish establishment became increasingly chilly.

The concept of the New Jerusalem in the Diaspora, however, was not entirely novel to the Jews. Ancient Rome had been looked on as a second Jerusalem. Sixteenth-century Venice had been regarded as a Jerusalem for Christians as well as Jews,<sup>4</sup> which gave the bankers on the Ringstrasse, like James de Rothschild and his kinsmen, a further reason for harking back to the Venice of the doges. Finally, seventeenth-century Amsterdam had also been regarded as a new Jerusalem with a pattern for architectural patrons and art collectors of the next century to follow. But this positivist-tinged messianism, in essence, had to be interpreted theoretically; it did not mean that the Talmud's promises of a city built of sapphires were to be fulfilled.

The movement to restore a Jewish state in Palestine, founded by Theodor Herzl, a Hungarian Jew, made Jerusalem a principal concern of Judaism at the turn of the century. Assimilated Jews continued to argue that it was in the places in the Diaspora where

Jews had been active for centuries that the New Jerusalem would appear. Theodor Herzl was a child of the country where this question was to be brought to a head, for modern society in Hungary was a Jewish creation. But it was in Vienna that he had gained insight into Zionism, after experiencing the harshly antisemitic mood of the imperial city.

Zionism emanated from a heightened Jewish self-consciousness that was also apparent in culture. In Berlin there was talk of a Jewish renaissance, a movement affecting all strata of society and aimed at making what was Jewish visible in art and science. The middle classes were looking for new aesthetic values, and, to quote one of their spokesmen in Berlin at the beginning of the twentieth century, they wanted "to find the way to their people and their future on beautiful streets."<sup>5</sup> The Jewish renaissance was closely allied with the Art Nouveau aesthetic and, at the beginning of the century, with the avant-garde. Jewish writers and artists were the first to take note of the city: "The Jews have discovered and depicted the urban landscape and the spiritual landscape of city-dwellers. They have revealed urban civilization in all its complexity."<sup>6</sup> Alfred Messel was the architect who put a face to modern city living, and Walther Rathenau had prophesied, with messianic force, concerning the impending appearance of modern collectivist society. Early twentieth-century architectural visions of a future Berlin with towers and turrets were related to the ideal of Jerusalem.

Art Nouveau or Jugendstil, with its lack of historical roots, suited the Jewish renaissance. This was especially noteworthy in the Greater Hungary of the time, where there were no powerful rivals and where an architecture was aimed at that would, at one and the same time, be nationally Hungarian, oriental, and Jewish. Budapest was the center of this manifestation, and Magyar-Jewish architecture was to leave its imprint on a number of minor towns in Greater Hungary: Kecskemét and Szeged in present-day Hungary, Szabadka (Subotica) in Serbia, and Temesvár, Arad, and

Nagyvárad (Oradea) in what is now Romania. The ambition to create a new, colorful, and variegated Jewish city is especially apparent in Nagyvárad.

### *Nagyvárad*

Nagyvárad, or Grosswardein, now called Oradea, is perhaps the clearest European instance of the Jewish urban culture that flourished for more than 200 years down to the Second World War. The city is also known for the active role of its large Jewish populace in economic and cultural affairs.

Nagyvárad, as its name proclaims, was a fortress town, one of the Habsburg Empire's eastern outposts and the gateway to Transylvania.<sup>7</sup> It soon became a center of trade and agricultural produce, grain, horses, and cattle, with flourishing eastward links, above all in connection with four big annual markets. Later the city became a major hub of an extensive rail network. Jews were already present here in the seventeenth century. They lived near the fortress and attained a strong position, with their own court of justice, which they retained until the aftermath of the Revolution of 1848. In the Váralja district, immediately to the east of the ramparts, they built, in 1803, a late baroque synagogue which, architecturally speaking, is perfectly comparable to the Christian churches. In the mid-nineteenth century there were 1,438 Jews living in Nagyvárad. Immigration, mainly from Bohemia, Moravia, and Galicia, raised their numbers to 6,438 in 1867 and 12,000 (roughly a quarter of the population) in 1900. The Reform Jews had an unusually strong base here, although outnumbered by the Orthodox: they numbered only about 100 families in 1870.<sup>8</sup>

The area north of the Sebes-Körös River was dominated by the Roman Catholic church, with several monasteries, an Episcopal church, a residence, and several large hospitals, and its population was mainly Hungarian. The true center of the city was

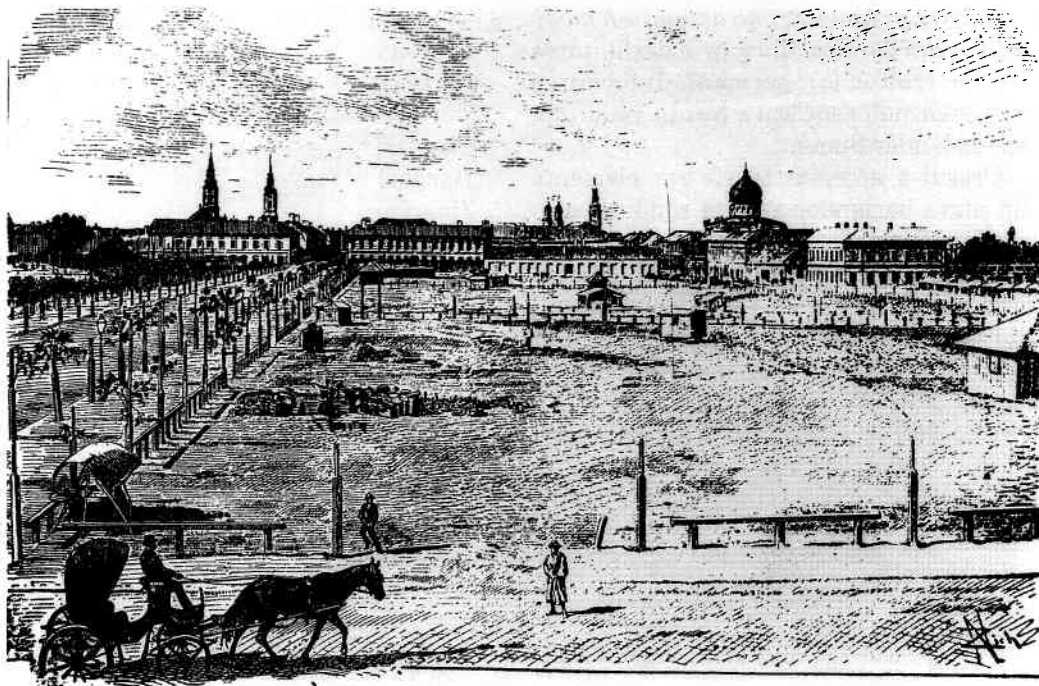


*Magyar-Jewish Art Nouveau architecture, Nagyvárad (now Oradea Mare). Two apartment buildings near the big theater north of the river (Str. Patriatilor and Str. Moscovei), erected by the lawyer Emil Adorján. Architects: Marcell Komor and Dező Jakab. Photograph by the author, 1995.*

*The huge agricultural produce market, Nagyvárad, c. 1890, with the Reform synagogue from 1878 to the right and the steeples of three different Catholic churches.*

Újváros (Neustadt), south of the river, which had straight streets on either side of an elongated square, Szt. László tér, complete with a city hall and three churches, Roman Catholic, Greek Catholic, and Greek Orthodox. This square also included large cafés, where Austrian officers, Hungarian landowners, journalists, and Jewish merchants all had their regular tables. Farther east was the big marketplace, the far side of which bordered on the castle and the old Jewish quarter. As the Jewish merchants became more and more prosperous, many of them moved over to Újváros, which became a predominantly Jewish district toward the end of the nineteenth century but also had a large Calvinist congregation.

The houses in Újváros are elongated, classicist buildings of one and two stories, in no way peculiar to the Jewish residents who dominated this part of the city, but twelve synagogues of various sizes bear witness to the Jewish presence. A large Reform synagogue from 1878 with a tall dome, on the south bank of the



river between Szt. László tér and the marketplace, is a striking feature of the townscape. And just below the big marketplace are an Orthodox synagogue in oriental style, built in 1890, and an Orthodox school and other buildings for the congregation. Surrounding the marketplace we find the majestic Stock Exchange building, a palace built in 1893, designed by the architects Phann & Gaal in a Renaissance style worthy of a city hall, and an opulent private palace in German Renaissance, built as early as 1886 by the merchant Izidor Ullmann, a leading figure among the Orthodox Jews. Ullmann's partner Kurländer built a home for himself in the same quarter. The houses of the Jewish merchants lined not only the marketplace but the streets leading to the city center. South of the marketplace, down toward Vámház utca (Custom House Street) and the old city boundary, where

*Orthodox synagogue in Nagyvárad, surrounded by buildings for the school and congregation, 1890. Architects: Nandor Bach and Ferenc Knapp. Photograph by the author, 1995.*





*Exchange Building on the north side of the market-place (Str. Independentei), Nagyvárad, erected by Jewish merchants in 1893. Right: the palace of the merchant Izidor Ullmann (1886). Photograph by the author, 1995.*

there were steam mills and distilleries. Moskovits, the biggest mill and distillery proprietor of all, resided here.

The old-fashioned quarter to the east of the castle was still densely populated by the Jewish lower classes, as was a ghetto-like area for strictly Orthodox immigrant Jews from farther east that had grown up in the western part of Újváros, in the district north of the main street, Teleky utca, up toward the river. They too lived in low-rise enfilades with neatly rendered façades overlooking streets planted with acacias. The plots were narrow and deep, capable of accommodating workshops and small synagogues. This was one of the few areas in Nagyvárad where caftan-clad men and



boys in black suits and with side curls were still to be seen after the First World War.

Agnes Györki, now living in Stockholm, recalls one of the typical late nineteenth-century Jewish houses in Újváros, the home of her mother's grandparents at Hármaskút 20, at the entrance to the city. It stands on the corner of the busy Teleki út, one of those low, elongated buildings in plain neo-Renaissance, with a shop on a countersunk ground floor and an apartment story reached by way of a tall staircase; the façade overlooked a wide side street planted with double rows of acacia trees. The building accommodated a grocery and a tavern. The populace from the surrounding countryside were to be seen there, on their way to the city center. The proprietor, Mór Weintraub, and his wife, Aranka Klein, had built the house as newlyweds in the 1880s. They belonged to the middle class of Orthodox Jews, spoke German and Hungarian, and read their newspaper in Yiddish. Although Aranka, in her widowhood after the First World War, relinquished her kosher principles, she continued, for the rest of her life, to light the Sabbath candles on the chest of drawers in her bedroom. She also made a practice of lighting a candle for every deceased member of the family. Their home was a bourgeois-furnished apartment of three large rooms, with a glazed veranda overlooking the courtyard, which also included a small garden, plus a kitchen and weekday dining room adjoining the shop. The sitting-room had heavy, sculpted furniture in German Renaissance style, and there was even a grand piano. On the doorpost was a mezuzah, a small wooden cylinder with a prayer scroll inside on which one could read a text from the Book of Deuteronomy commanding the Jews, as a memorial to the Lord, to fasten His commandments at their doors. Members of the family were buried in the old Jewish cemetery next to the fortress, where until as recently as the Second World War only stones, no flowers, could be deposited on the graves. Weintraub was a successful merchant who later opened a larger shop in a fine location

*Map of Nagyváradi (Oradea) in 1905 with broader lines marking blocks and lots belonging to persons with identifiably Jewish names. Black dots show buildings erected by Jews with architectural pretensions, mainly in the "Magyar-Jewish" style. The fringe of the fortifications is to the very right. Source: Address Book for 1904. The names of the streets are in Hungarian.*

on the corner of Szt. László tér and Teleky utca. But he did not belong to the group of modernist Jews who went in for building in the new century, nor did he have very much to do with the East European Jews or, in his private life, with the Hungarians.

○   ○   ○

At the outbreak of the First World War, Nagyvárad's economic life—factories and banking as well as wholesale and retail trade—was dominated by its population of rather more than 15,000 Jews. The markets were still at the center of things. The old activities had now been joined by modern hotels, restaurants, and cafés, also run by the Jews.

This city, which had close contacts both eastward and westward, became a subject of grandiloquent and sometimes reckless building schemes. The Jews felt safe in the city, and although most of them were new arrivals, as a group they were firmly rooted. Intellectually this was a living city, with an active press that included both Christian and Jewish newspapers, and people were aware of the Jewish renaissance of the time; the poet Endre Ady was active in the city as a journalist. Jewish entrepreneurs were in the process of also taking possession of the old northern part of the city, which until then had been dominated by representatives of traditional society, the church, the aristocracy, and the Hungarian gentry.

Just before 1900, a new City Hall was built at Szt. László tér and, across the bridge at Bémer tér, a theater, designed by the Viennese architect Ferdinand Fellner. Next to the theater the Jewish merchants, headed by Weiszlovits, erected in 1900 a bazaar building with corner towers and magnificent entrances, accommodating a bank, elegant shops, and offices. The developers included only a few non-Jews, such as the city's big builder and architect Kálmán Rimanóczy. Bémer tér became the city's festival square, surrounded by banks, cafés, hotels, and restaurants, three- or four-story buildings with corner towers and domes, in a color-



*Kapucinus utca (Str. Prahovei), Nagyvárad, with some of the small traditional dwellings, one or two stories high, and Vágó ház, designed in 1905 by the brothers József and László Vágó for their parents. Photograph by the author, 1995.*

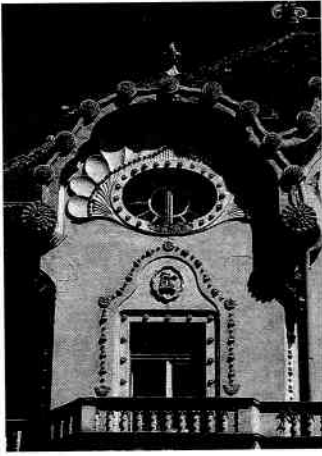
ful and exuberant diversity of shapes. A stately procession of buildings began, looking from the river, with the Savings Bank, in curvaceous Art Nouveau, designed by Rimanóczy, followed by the Hotel Pannonia, designed by the master builder Josef Guthmann, Emke Kávéház, designed by Ferenc Sztarill and lived in by Endre Ady, and the Parc Hotel on the main street just behind the square, a transformation and enlargement in fashionable Art Nouveau of a famous café that Weiszlovits had bought from Count Tisza. The large garden of the Parc Hotel was adorned with fantastic sculptures and façades with crocodiles and other exotic animals in high relief. Next to the theater, one of the city's wealthy intellectuals,

Emil Adorján, attorney and LL.D. put up two large dwelling houses, partly for his own use, designed by the well-known Jewish architects Komor & Jakab as expressive instances of the copiously decorated young Magyar-Jewish style of architecture. Close by, in Szilágyi Dezső utca, their colleague Adolf Sonnenfeld followed on with a large apartment building, the central section of which was generously pulled back from the street.

Emil Adorján was a man of about thirty, entrepreneur as well as intellectual, in close touch with the financial world and with the radical writers in the city, and a great collector of books. He joined forces with the young architects Marcell Komor and Dezső Jakab, the latter of whom had been born in a village close to

*The Black Eagle (Fekete Sas Palota) commercial emporium on Szt. László tér, Nagyvárad, with an inner glazed passage, 1902–09, erected for Emil Adorján and Edi Kurländer. Architects: Marcell Komor and Dezső Jakab, after a competition. Photograph by the author, 1995.*



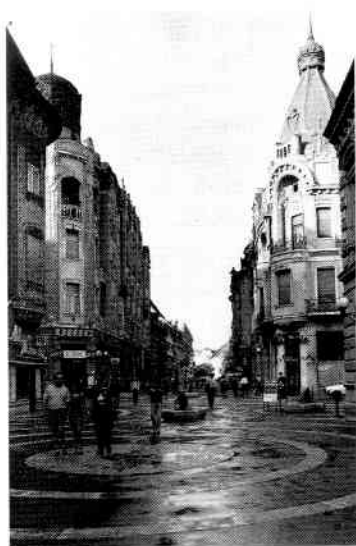


*Detail of the façade of The Black Eagle commercial emporium, Nagyvárad. Photograph by Rudolf Klein, 1995.*

Nagyvárad. As one of the leaders of the city's Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Adorján commissioned them to design a new building for it in Teleky utca in Újváros. He also engaged them for his biggest building enterprise, Fekete Sas Palota ("the Black Eagle"), a commercial center on the site of the old City Hall in Szt. László tér, which he began in 1902 together with Edi Kurländer, and which was commissioned in 1909. This center was the most extensive effort to give Nagyvárad the appearance of a big city, with an elegant glazed arcade, inspired by Gresham in Budapest, and with a hotel, casino, and theater side by side with high-class apartments and shops and offices. The size of Sas Palota, its tower, and its wealth of color made it the riposte of Jewish enterprise to the three Christian churches which until then had dominated the scene. The new City Hall on the other side of the square acquired a worthy competitor for power in the city.

The river now became the center of the city, with a dominant square on each side of it, Szt. László tér and Bémer tér, which together took on the character of one big patio. The many banks in the city transferred their offices here, the seven banks in Szt. László tér vied with the churches for attention, the other six surrounded Bémer tér. Unlike Szeged or Szabadka and many other Hungarian provincial cities, however, the townscape was not surmounted by a large synagogue in the new Magyar-Jewish style.<sup>9</sup> Clearly the secular building was considered quite adequate in itself. It continued along the main street, Fő utca, at this time renamed Rákóczi ut, debouching with a crescendo at the corner of Szanizló utca, with three rather frivolous towered shop and apartment buildings erected for the industrialist families of the city—Moskovits (1905) and Stern (1911)—and for the Apollo Company (1912–14). The architects were Kálmán Rimanóczy, Jr. (succeeded, after his death in 1912, by Tivadar Krausze) and Komor & Jakab. At the same time, this part of the city acquired an official status from one of the institutions of the old society, the Palace of Justice in Széchényi tér, and one of the largest banks. At





*"Jewish Corner" at intersection of Rákóczi ut and Sztaniszló utca (today Calea Republicii and Str. M. Eminescu), Nagyvárád, with towered commercial and apartment buildings. Left to right: Stern Palota, 1911 (Architects: Komor & Jakab), Apollo Palota, 1912–14 (Kálmán Rimanóczy & Tivadar Krausze), and Moskovits Palota, 1905 (Kálmán Rimanóczy). Photograph by the author, 1995.*

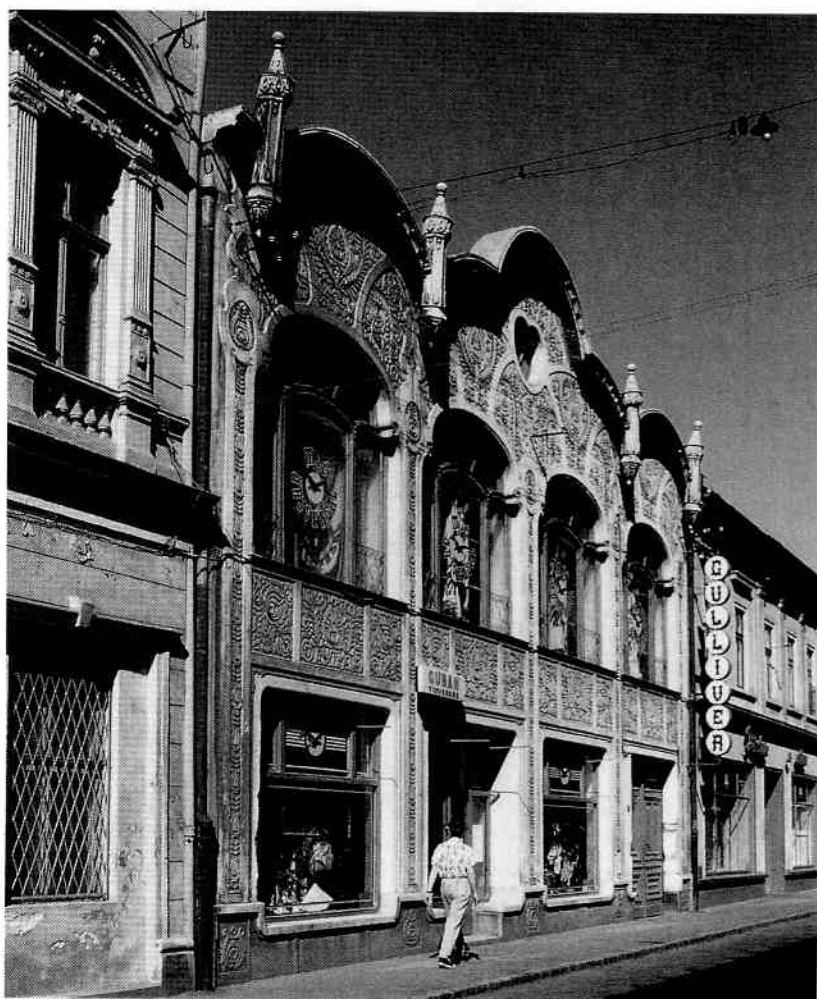
*Glazed passage of The Black Eagle commercial emporium, Nagyvárád, 1902–08. Architects: Komor & Jakab. A breath of city air on the outskirts of the Habsburg Empire. Photograph by the author, 1995.*

the far end of Rákóczi ut, between the towered Jewish buildings, one glimpses the shining onion domes of the Ministry of Finance, also designed by Rimanóczy.

In the buildings of Nagyvárád, one can discern a strong determination to create balance and interaction between different groups in society: between the official and the institutional, between the churches and the assimilated Jewish enterprise that dictated the terms. The Jewish city architect David Busch, who had begun his career in the town by designing the Reform synagogue, was a vigorous proponent of this integration. The symbolically charged urban pretension with its lofty aesthetic ambitions was akin to Camillo Sitte in Vienna, though with none of his interest in the Middle Ages. The importance of the aesthetic is underscored by a vigorous urban skyline and interesting street perspectives, with carefully selected buildings for view-stoppers on the side streets of the main thoroughfare, such as Rosenzweig's white Jugendstil building with its corner towers at the end of Szalardi utca, clearly visible from Bémer tér. The Jewish stretch begins right at the old city boundary with a small house with a tower, positioned on the corner of Vámház-utca and Kert utca, the street leading up toward the central axis of Szt. László tér. And on the big market square, on the corner near the Reform synagogue, Komor & Jakab designed a large decorative house for the wine merchant Fuchsel, clearly visible in the long perspective alongside the market square. Similarly, the same architects designed Dr. Schwarz's towered villa at the entrance to Szaniszló utca, in the vista looking toward the domed apartment building of Rákóczi ut. Power had definitely passed from the local landowners to the Jewish developers.

The architect Kálmán Rimanóczy, Jr., made visible the standing of the different groups in Nagyvárád. For Jewish clients he used a colorful Jugend baroque closely related to the disciples of Lechner. But when designing for the Greek Orthodox congregation, as with its large institutional building next to the City Hall

or the parish hall in *Úri utca*, and when designing for himself as in the case of *Rimanóczy Palota* in *Rákóczi-ut*, he mingled Venetian and Gothic as colorfully as in his architecture for the Jews, which was more decorative, with an undulating line. He was rooted in the city through his father, a builder from Budapest and contractor for the Reform synagogue, the Mercantile Exchange,



*"A nasty Jewish joke."  
Ignác Deutsch's porcelain  
shop on Zöldfa utca (Str.  
Alecsandri), Nagyvárad,  
1906. Architect: probably  
Ferenc Sztaril. Photograph  
by the author, 1995.*

*Detail of gable decorated with grapes and wine leaves on house of the wine dealer Fuchsel on Kossúth Lajos utca (Str. Independentei), Nagyvárad. Architects: Komor & Jakab c. 1907. Photograph by Rudolf Klein, 1995.*



and most of the public buildings. Rimanóczy, Jr., was born in Nagyvárad, studied in Budapest, and designed the bazaar building in Bémer tér (1899–1900), the Savings Bank building at the same location (1903), and the corner residence of the industrialist Moskovits (1905).

Jewish building activity in Nagyvárad presents variations and, finally, a rejection of the Magyar-Jewish vocabulary. Sometimes the buildings in this style get almost out of control and become sloppy and trite, as in the case of Ignác Deutsch's china shop on Zöldfa utca, "a nasty Jewish joke" in the words of my colleague Rudolf Klein, but the Jewish clients evidently found them attractive. Here they found a bond of community between Hungarian nationalism and their oriental heritage without their westernization being called into question: they spoke Hungarian, not Yiddish, and, as they themselves put it, were Hungarian citizens of the Jewish faith. The national, however, was but a veneer on Nagyvárad's architecture, and no recourse was had to the more authentic Transylvanian forms launched by the young architect Károly Kós and realized in Transylvanian cities like Temesvár and Kolozsvár.

Perhaps the best of Nagyvárad's architecture is represented by the buildings designed by the Jewish brothers József and László Vágó, who were natives of the city. They belonged to the

phalanx of the new generation of Hungarian architects that had been inspired by the undecorated architecture of Vienna. In 1905 they designed a home for their family on Kapucinus utca in Nagyvárad that, with its crinkly façade and elegant cornice, was still in close touch with architects like Komor & Jakab. A few years later they had switched completely to a geometrically simplified architecture with complete, pale surfaces and austere, distinct, and brightly colored ornamentation, as, for example, in the palatial villa on Rimanóczy utca (present-day Vulcan str. 9), built in 1910–11 for Darvas La Roche, a Jewish banker who had migrated from Switzerland. The interiors are remarkable, with stylized geometrical décor in red, black, and gold and paintings of scenes from medieval Magyar history. Darvas La Roche had reason to favor an internationally modern vocabulary divorced from Hungarian idiosyncrasy, but on the inside it was still Magyar folklore that was illustrated. At the same time the Vágó

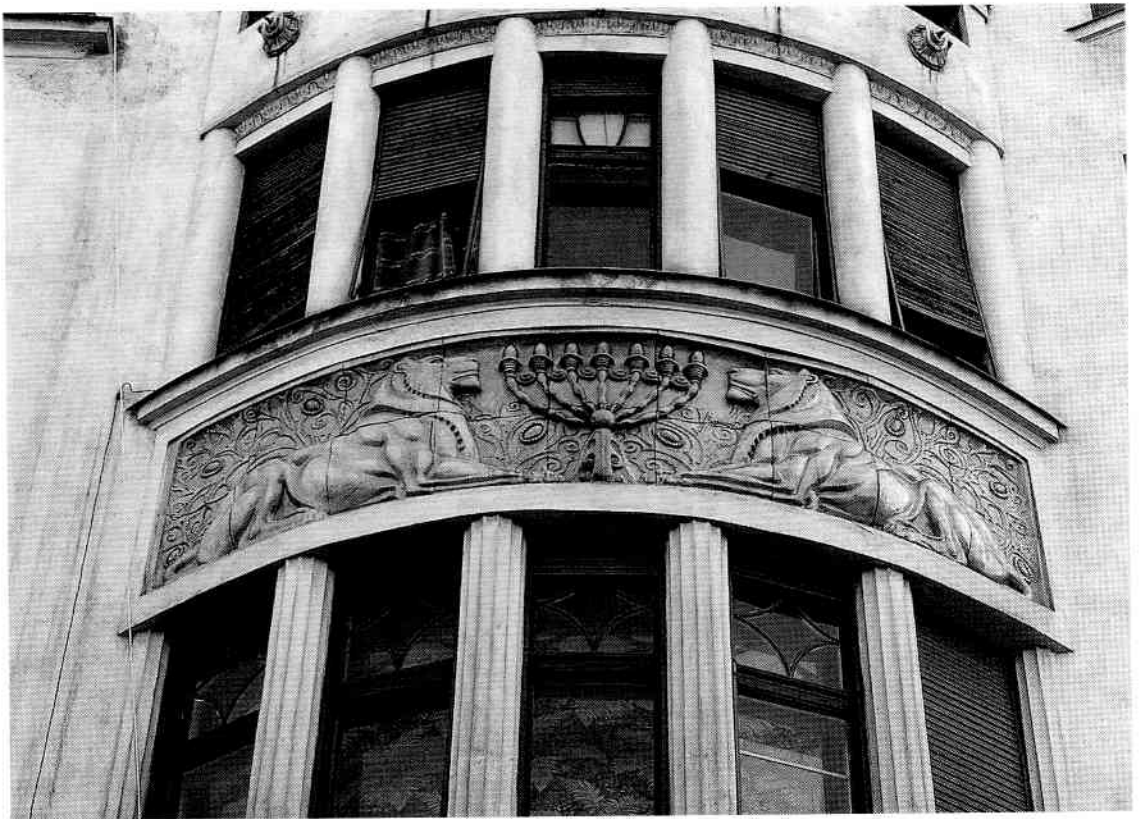


*Interior with Magyar history motif in palazzo-villa of the Swiss-Jewish banker Darvas La Roche at 11 Rimanóczy utca (Str. Vulcan), Nagyvárad 1910–11. Architects: József and László Vago. A colorful, modern Viennese design. Photograph by the author, 1995.*

brothers designed for Adolf Moskovits a large apartment building in Szt. László tér, which, with its reticent Viennese Secession, firmly dissociated itself from the vulgarity of the same family's corner house on Rákóczi ut, built in 1905.

In a relatively small city like Nagyvárád, concealment of Jewish identity was neither desired nor possible. Instead, the Jewish renaissance and the new self-awareness were manifested through building. Stars of David adorned the wrought iron bars of Rosenzweig's white Jugendstil house on Szalardi utca, just like the figure in the paired round-arched windows of Roth's classicist house on Bémer tér, perhaps the first Jewish-owned building on the northern side of the bridge. Ullmann & Kurländer's large apartment building from 1913 overlooking the marketplace and

*Detail of the menorah and the Nubian lions on façade of the big Kurländer & Ullmann apartment building at the south end of the market-place, Nagyvárád, 1909–11. Architect: Ferenc Löbl. Photograph by Rudolf Klein, 1995.*



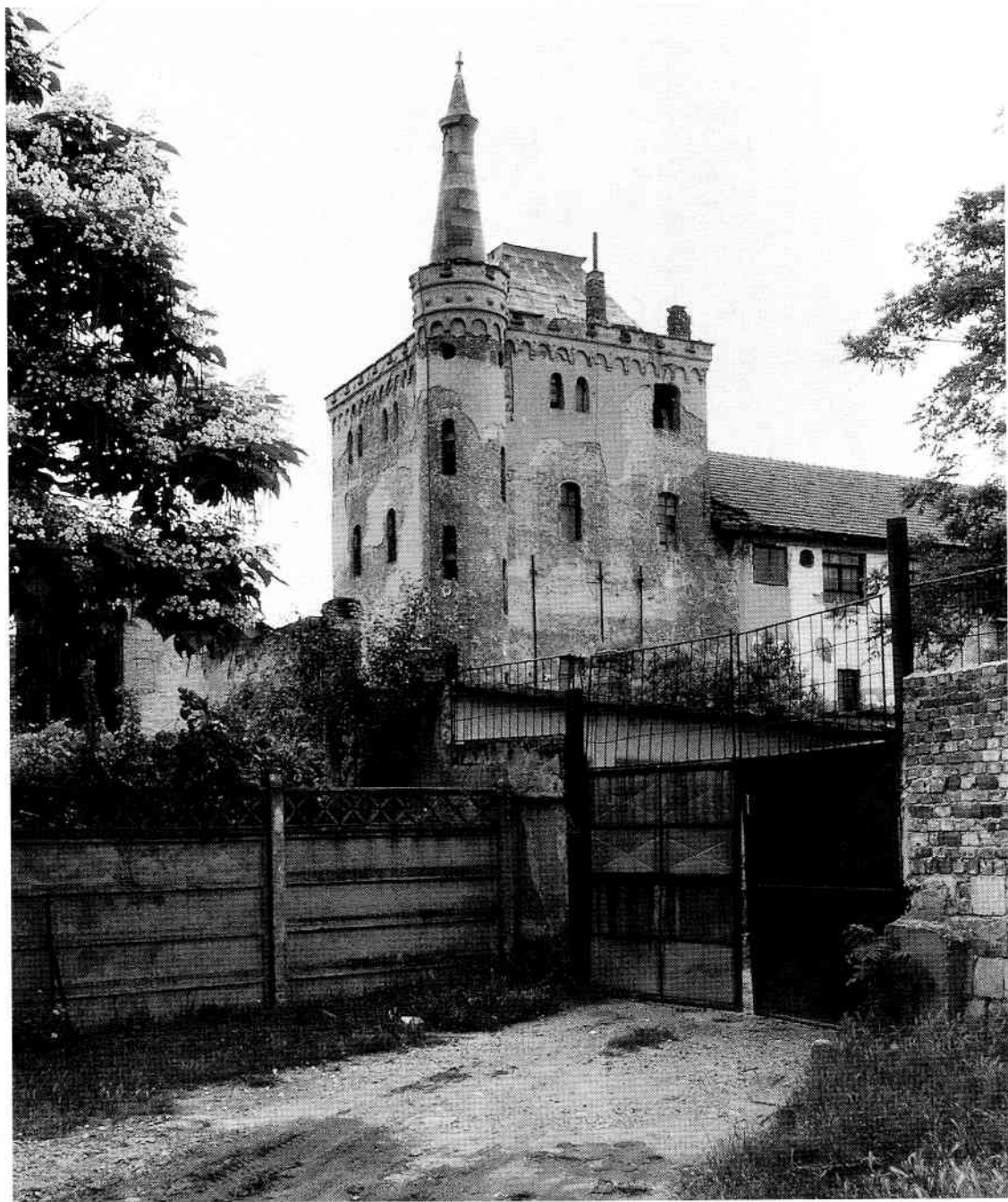
the Orthodox synagogue was decorated with Nubian lions and the seven-branched candelabra. This building was designed by the Jewish architect Ferenc Löbl, a Hungarian practicing in Vienna, and included a private synagogue.

The harmony characterizing Nagyvárad was perhaps a chimera. Even amongst the Jews themselves, there were conflicts between the assimilated and the Orthodox, the latter rejecting the modern ways of the successful Reform Jews and their building development in a part of the city where Jews had no traditional right of abode. But this was also a matter of class identity. The new Jerusalem that was built in cities like Nagyvárad only existed in the second instance for the little people of the overcrowded low-rise building in the old parts of the city. In Nagyvárad there were hardly any really strong and interesting competitors among the Christians, except for the master builder Rimanóczy, who in any case was the Jews' man. Beneath the surface there were always antipathies and jealousies between Jews and Christians. Here as in other parts of Hungary the Jews were on good terms with the old nobility. Izidor Ullmann was one of the leading members of Prime Minister Count István Tisza's political party.

The aim of building in Nagyvárad was not to display the individual entrepreneurs or families but to beautify the city and give it a place in the new world. Not even in the cemeteries did the wealthy Jewish families display any aspirations to pre-eminence.

The city is well preserved, but its old atmosphere has gone. After the First World War it was ceded to Romania and renamed Oradea Mare. The 1920s and 1930s were a period of stagnation and recession, with very little building in the central parts of the city. The Jewish families built nothing, and only in a few places did the new régime present itself with a modern Byzantine architecture. Between 1940 and 1945 the city was again Hungarian, and Hungary's largest ghetto, next to Budapest's, was established in Újváros, south of the marketplace in the area surrounding the Orthodox synagogue and Moskovits's large steam mill and

*Château-like Moskovits distillery on Vamhaz utca (Str. Unirii) in the 1890s. It was the center of the large ghetto that the Nazis organized in Oradea. Photograph by the author, 1995, from the adjoining synagogue.*





distillery. Nearly all the 27,000 Jewish residents were deported in 1944. The first to go was Emil Adorján, perhaps the foremost representative of a humanist attitude among the builders of the city. Not even Aranka Weintraub in Teleky utca, now more than eighty years old, was left in peace. She was sitting in her garden when the Hungarian gendarmes came to collect her, and she asked her Christian tenants in the courtyard building to carry her chair indoors: she would soon be back.

*Main street of Lodz, Piotrkowska, before 1900. The towered building belonged to the Protestant mill owner Geyer, the house to the right of it is Artur Rubinstein's birthplace.*