

BUDAPEST WAS THE MEETING PLACE

when last September, for the first time, the mayors of the capital cities of Europe came together to discuss pressing questions of mutual interest. The occasion was a modest anniversary of sorts: the centenary of the union of the three ancient towns that now make up present-day Budapest. We are publishing in this issue the opening address given by the Chairman of the Budapest City Council, as well as an essay on aspects of metropolitan life, past and present, written by Zoltán Halász on the occasion of a Budapest exhibition that opened in Rome in October. László Gerő writes on the conglomerate of styles that make up the unique architectural features of Budapest.

Art nouveau, that romantic and elegantly decadent style which marks so many of Budapest's buildings, is discussed here as an influence in Hungarian painting around the turn of the century in Judit Szabadi's richly illustrated "The Iconography of Hungarian Art Nouveau." Readers interested in aspects of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy will enjoy László Mátrai's essay on its cultural heritage, still partly alive today.

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Hungary has for long been regarded as a country which, considering its size, produces an amazing number of brilliant intellectuals in many fields, such as science, music and the humanities. A change-resistant school system, partly the inheritance of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy and its German-based orientation in teaching, has become, however, a serious obstacle to modernization and to the fulfilment of the pressing needs of a rapidly developing economy. Hundreds of experts took part in a profound and radical rethinking of the country's entire elementary and secondary school system and their conclusions were then discussed and debated by thousands of others. The outlines, aims and principles of the reform are explained here by György Aczél, Secretary of the Party's Central Committee. Péter Rényi reviews the collection of speeches and articles by János Kádár who has been First Secretary of the Party since the difficult days of late 1956.

Hardly any non-Hungarian would admit even a faint remembrance from his

history class that what is now tiny Hungary was just five hundred years ago one of the great countries of the Continent with a territory many times the present size, stretching to the Adriatic Sea, as well as a centre of political strength, trade and learning. Some of this can clearly be seen in the work of the poet Janus Pannonius, Bishop of Pécs and Chancellor to the great Renaissance king Matthias Corvinus. He wrote all his epigrammes, elegies and panegyrics in Latin. Born in 1434 and educated in Italy, he rose to international fame as a young man, became a favourite of the king, but was subsequently dropped from favour for plotting against the court, and died young of consumption in 1472. As far as we know this is the first time any of his poems have appeared in English translation—done for *The NHQ* by the tireless and brilliant Edwin Morgan. Tibor Kardos writes on the life and poetry of Janus Pannonius.

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This is the second consecutive issue in which we are returning to Sándor Petőfi, the nineteenth century romantic revolutionary poet. The reader might be interested in the accounts of his life, his ideas and his international reputation, as well as in the pictures of him we print here. Though it may be too late to revive him in English, we hope that his irresistible personality may still come through to a certain extent.

The Editor