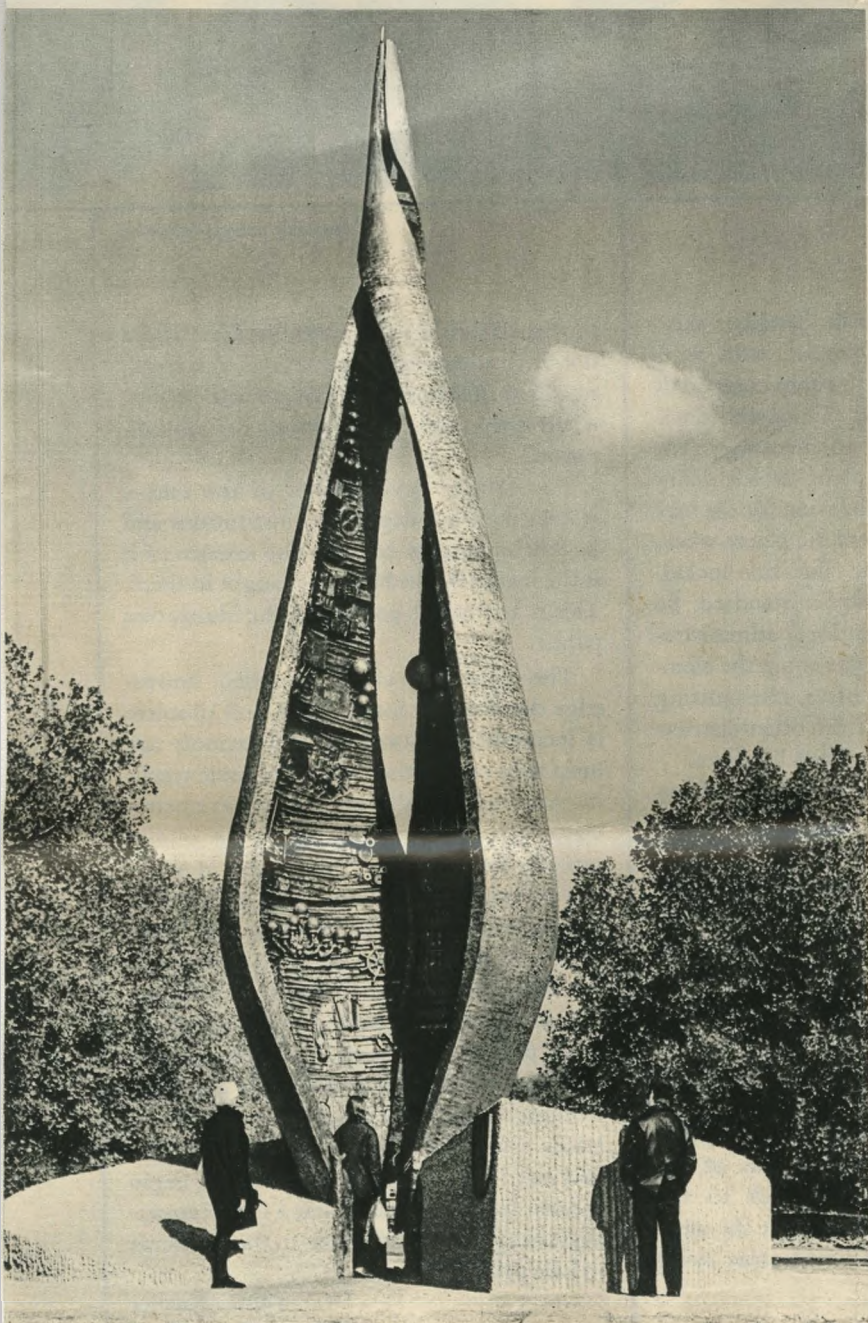


EUROPE WANTS TO L

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PHOTOS: OTTÓ WAHL AND MTI



Sculpture by István Kiss commemorating the centenary of the unification of Budapest, on Margaret Island in the Danube

In the autumn of 1972, the mayors of twenty-eight European capitals gathered in Budapest to celebrate the hundred-year anniversary of the union of Pest, Buda and Óbuda (Old Buda) into the present city. They met for three days not to voice their political stance, but to talk over common problems. Of course, although their conference centered on the tasks of urban development, it could not detach itself

from the progress of the last few years which spells greater security for the entire continent.

The protection of the environment was the topic on which the mayors spoke with the greatest zeal and which caused them the greatest worry. Pure air engrossed their attention, both in the conference room and on sightseeing trips.

It is well known that the danger of polluting the biosphere



Monsieur Roussilhe, counsellor for urban development, Paris, addressing the conference

has become a serious threat to man's well-being. An effective solution to the problem will not brook any further delay; all of us who live in Europe sense and understand this. The capitals of the continent developed traditionally in the course of centuries, but the really big changes in the life of most of the European metropolises occurred in the 19th century. It seemed then that wider streets paved with stone or asphalt, drainage systems and the introduction of gas and later electricity would cope with the most pressing problems of urbanization for a long time to come. We know today that even the boldest prognostications fell short of reality.

The basic problems are identical in every capital—this, as was to be expected, became clear at the first big meeting of the European mayors. The differing pace and dimensions of environmental protection, transport, green belts and housing programmes does not alter the fact that the difficulties are the same and can be solved only in harmony and cooperation.

In his report on international problems of urbanization, the Mayor of Vienna noted that a single litre of oil can turn one million litres of water unfit for human consumption. The ratio of one to a million speaks eloquently about the difficulty of



Lord Mayor of London at the time, Sir Desmond Plummer

finding an adequate solution. It brings home the fact that man's manifold interference in the biosphere could make the entire Earth unfit for human habitation. This is our basic common problem.

Europe was never undivided, and no one pretends that unity can develop from one day to the next. But no matter how much the wars destroyed, roads were built to link the countries of the

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Jesus Suevos Fernandes, first deputy Mayor of Madrid



Teuvo Aura, Mayor of Helsinki



The delegation from Moscow

President of the Budapest council, Zoltán Szépvölgyi greets the assembled guests

Opening of the exhibition "A glance at Europe's capitals"



Zoltán Szépvölgyi planting a tree for Budapest in the Europe Park in Buda

continent. The bridges of Europe, so often blindly blown up, once again span its rivers. It is gratifying to us that the Hungarian capital, which is known for its bridges, acted as a symbolic bridge by holding this conference.

Another topic that figured in the Budapest conference of the mayors of Europe was the need for the preservation of the historic city centres, the protection of

monuments and historic buildings. Each city leader reported on his country's efforts to save the old parts of its cities from the detrimental effects of urbanization—ultimately from destruction. The fact that the conference deliberations revolved around the "historic nucleus" indicates the deep attachment Europe has for its past, that it is drawing on its noble traditions to carry out its future plans.

At the same time the mayors of the twenty-eight capitals said that our continent must not become a relic, a monument, where some day visitors from strange stars will walk about as today the tourists amble amongst the stones of the Acropolis. Europe must not become a monument, Europe has a responsibility towards the world, Europe wants to live.

If nothing more happened at

the Budapest conference than that the leaders of 28 capitals conversed with each other for three days and—as they said in their joint statement—understood each other—even that means a great deal. We dare hope that eventually more will happen, that the saplings the mayors planted as a memento in the Europe Park on Castle Hill in Buda will spring into leaf.

György Csapó