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THE PALACE OF BUDA

THE SYMBOLIC CHANGE IN POWER

One of the finest skylines of Budapest's city-scape is that of the Palace of Buda. The first to build a defensive wall round the Castle Hill in 1244, was King Béla IV, who had learnt a salutary lesson from the Tartar invasion a few years earlier. The stone walls stood up to the subsequent sieges,

and the Castle of Buda became a royal residence. By 1279 even the Church Synod was held here, and the famous eight-day fairs attracted merchants from far afield. A century later Sigismund of Luxemburg made Buda the capital of the Holy Roman Empire, and called the rebuilt seat the

◀ Main frontage facing the Danube.



A view of the state of reconstruction. In the foreground the former royal chancery, which became after 1920 Horthy's residence and the governor's offices. It will house the National Library, covering 12 storeys with a shelf-place 400 kilometres long.

THE PALACE OF BUDA

"Fresh Palace." According to a contemporary German chronicle the Fresh Palace was finer and richer even than that of the King of Persia. Beside its hot baths, heating, and richly decorated chambers it was also of tactical interest. In place of the former long, straight walls it was built in a star-like arrangement, with "mace towers" to mark the advent of a new kind of warfare, making it possible to shoot at attackers from the flanks with bows and arrows. The narrow passages between the walls, and the drawbridges, rendered attack very difficult.

The woodcut in Schedel's Chronicle (Nuremberg, 1493), prepared in 1470, shows Renaissance Buda. "Buda regia"—royal Buda—was the name given throughout Europe to the capital where the treasures of King Mátyás were kept. This was no longer a fortress but, according to the

enthusiastic eulogies of the humanists, a fairy castle. Buda was the residence of the great lords, the foreign scholars, the seat of the Press, the Mint, and from 1487 also of the University. The population of Buda under King Mátyás is estimated at eight thousand, and almost all were engaged directly in the king's service. Buda became a centre of brilliant festivities, scientific debates and ramified political schemes.

In 1541 the conquering Turkish troops occupied Buda. Through a century and a half, the call of the muezzin was heard from the church spires. The market was the first to be transformed—street vendors appeared, to sell cheese, rice and fruit in makeshift shacks of stone and boards. Water was brought up from the Danube on horseback, the gravestones from the cemeteries became benches, and in the ornate halls of the Palace, the works of humanist literature

—now deemed superfluous—lay among the debris, covered by cobwebs. Even the occasional Turkish diarists who visited the palace, were struck by the havoc and desolation. The seat of the Pasha of Buda enjoyed none of the benefits of the then three-hundred years old, highly developed Islamic architecture.

In 1686 Europe once more echoed the name of Buda. Broadsheets spread the news that Buda had been reconquered. Memorial medals were struck, thanksgiving festivities held, and in Rome an unprecedented show of fireworks was put on to celebrate the victory. The glory was dearly won, for Buda was completely destroyed. The first to settle in the deserted city were German immigrants and Slav and Italian soldiers of the besieging army.

After a great deal of planning, Maria Theresa (1740-1780) once more had the Palace rebuilt, according to the designs of Hillebrandt, who built her residence at Würzburg. The project was completed in 1770. Later, having survived the ravages of renewed fires and undergone some fur-

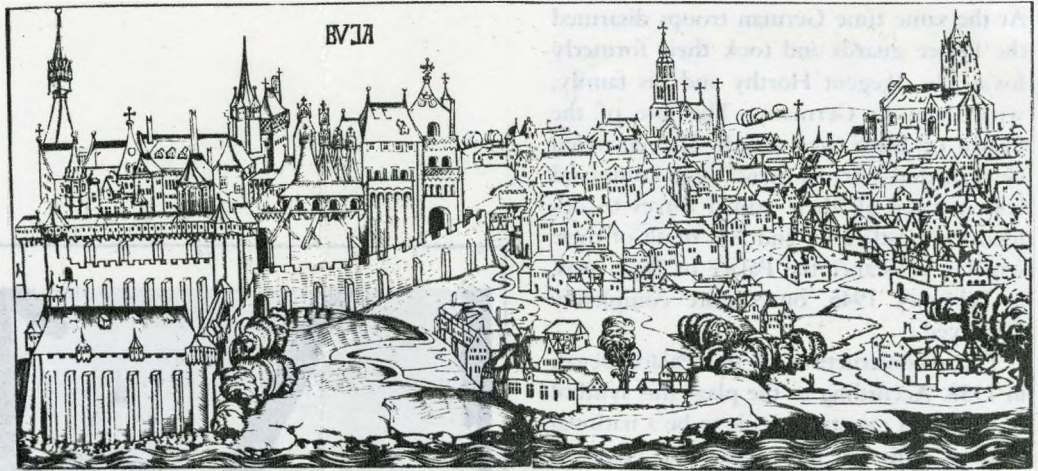
Panorama of Budapest with the Castle under reconstruction.



ther building, the Palace became the residence of Habsburg governors.

In the years preceding 1848 Buda had come to be a castle only in name. The most characteristic picture was the daily walk of the prisoners sentenced to castle dungeons, as they ambled along the narrow streets in single file, dragging their shackles. Their prison was the huge system of caverns under the buildings, and their task was to turn the wheel that raised the water. It was they who supplied water to the residents of the Palace. During the freedom struggle of 1849, the Palace of Buda was once more—heaven knows the number of previous occasions—burnt down to the ground.

In 1874 a start was again made with building the Palace according to the plans of Miklós Ybl and later of Alajos Hauszmann. By 1896, when the thousandth anniversary of the entry of the Magyars was celebrated, the Austrian Emperor and Hungarian King Francis Joseph I was able to reside here with his wife Elisabeth and his full retinue. Later they only came to



Buda and the Castle, at the end of the 15th century. (Contemporary wood-carving.)

Buda for short visits, for the permanent imperial residence was the Burg in Vienna.

After the First World War the peace treaties forbade the House of Habsburg to exercise their sovereignty, but Hungary's then leaders maintained the "kingdom without a king." From 1921 the Regent Miklós Horthy and his family lived in the

Palace. On October 15th, 1944, when an abortive attempt was made to obtain an armistice for Hungary, the German armed forces helped their Hungarian Fascist allies—the ultra-rightist "Arrow-cross" group—to seize power. On the next day, October 16th, Regent Horthy handed over the office of Head of State to Ferenc Szálasi.



At the same time German troops disarmed the Palace guards and took their formerly loyal ally, Regent Horthy and his family, with them to Germany. The fate of the Palace of Buda was sealed. The encircled German and "Arrow-cross" high command concentrated all their armed forces to defend the Castle Hill, and as a result of their senseless resistance the Palace of Buda was, in February 1945, once more completely destroyed.

The reconstruction of the Palace began in 1958. According to the plans this symbol of historical catastrophies is to be a national cultural centre. It is to house the National Museum, the National Gallery, the National Library, the Ethnographical Museum, the Budapest Historical Museum, the Museum of Recent History, and the once famous, resurrected Castle Theatre, where Beethoven gave a concert on May 7th, 1800.

Lajos Hidasi, the Chief Architect of the Palace, has been given a rare and inspiring task.

"The Castle Hill represents successive layers of history," declared Lajos Hidasi. "We must preserve these characteristic mementos and arrange their historic continuity so as to obtain a special harmony of their eclectic styles. In the main building, which is to house the National Gallery, we would like to resurrect the Baroque atmosphere. The old buildings will, however, serve modern functions, involving special difficulties in the lighting and heating techniques. I have been with my colleagues to all the important palaces of Europe, for we could not ignore the eternal treasures of architecture in designing a building that is to last for centuries. A subject of much debate was the dome, which in its present form is a stone-covered, thick-necked cupola, in the neo-Baroque style. It is 24 metres in diameter, and 42 metres high. We are in general striving everywhere to let the main part of the building express Baroque ideas, while also preserving the marks of the ancient Fresh Palace and the antique Castle in the wings.

"The vast project will, according to our plans, be completed in 1975. Air conditioning and central heating in the rooms will provide for favourable atmospheric conditions, and the public will be transported up from Palace Square in fast lifts. We shall provide for fine gardens round the Palace, and the walks will be bordered by old trees and lamps. Workers by hand and brain are all united on this job. Indeed, this could not be otherwise, for our everyday work holds many surprises. The picks of the workers unearth centuries-old remnants from under the ruins, and their preservation poses new problems and tasks."

The Palace of Buda is being built with meticulous designing and constructional work. It will be a centre of scholarship and the arts, a jealously guarded treasure of the reborn Hungary.

László Rapcsányi



The court of honour, the so-called Lions' Court, will be reconstructed in its original Baroque style. Seventeen thousand pieces of carved stone were used for the restoration of this court with excellent acoustics, to be used for outdoor concerts, with a seating capacity of 3,000 people.



Each item disclosed during the restoration and excavations is reviewed by a commission of experts.

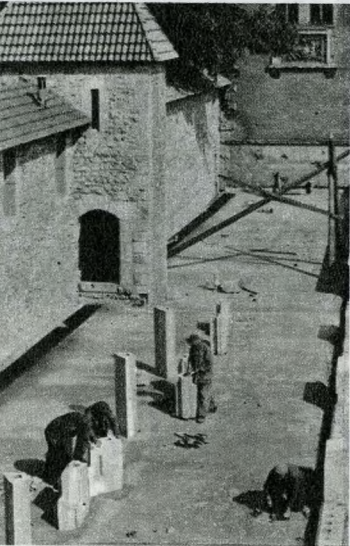
This palace will house the National Gallery. Its tympanum will be ornamented with bas-reliefs.



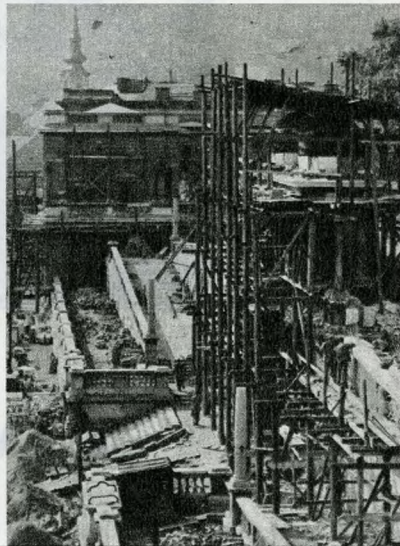
Twelve allegoric statues of 3.5 metres each, symbolizing the arts and sciences will decorate the façade of the National Gallery.



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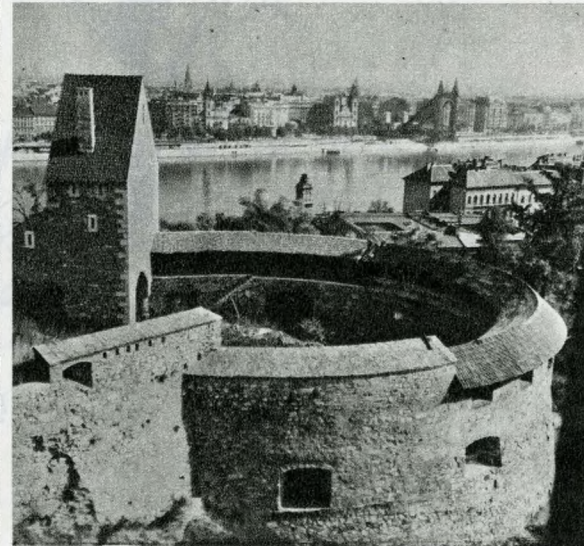
The bastion from the Danube side was restored in 1954. Stone cutters are still on the job.



Miklós Ybl, the famous architect built a fine stairway and terrace in the last century. The restoration work was completed in 1961, and at present it serves as the Youth Park.

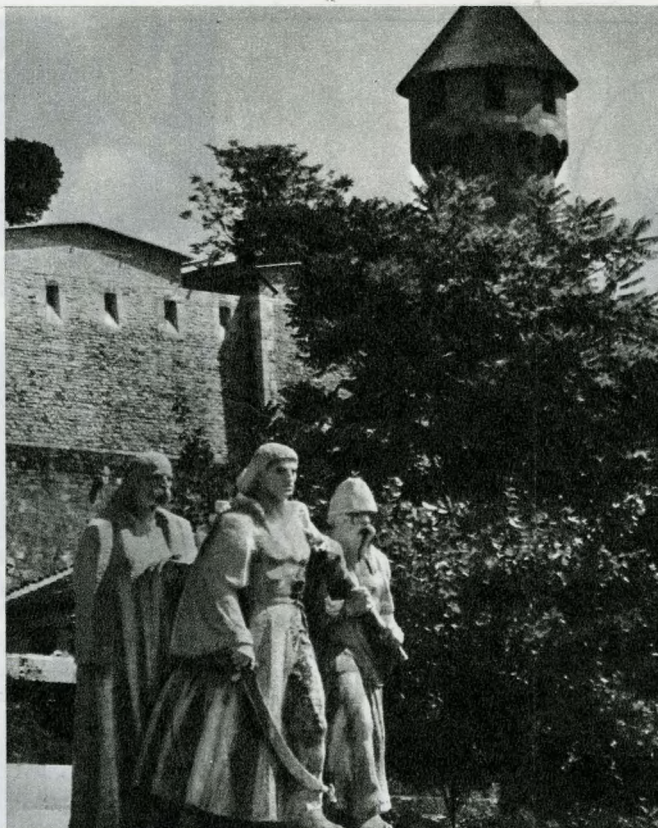


The southern bastion, built during the 15th century, had its defensive system worked out on three levels: the crenels of the battlement, the ramparts of the castle, and the flanking tower on the side.



This southern bastion was built around 1460 in Italian Renaissance style. The court will be used for outdoor concerts.

The Mace Tower; in the foreground, part of the monument of György Dózsa, leader of the 16th century peasant revolt.



Archeological excavation in the Castle's vast system of basements. Important wall remnants of King Mathias' palace have been disclosed in relatively good condition.

