

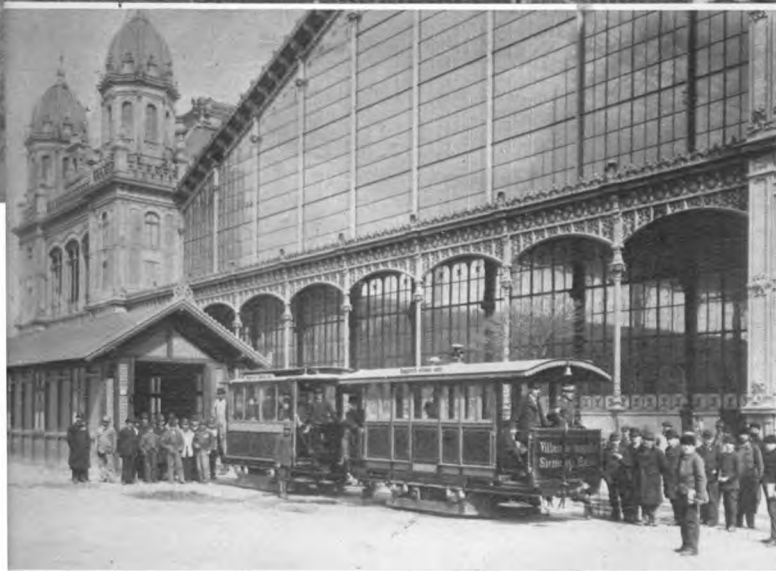
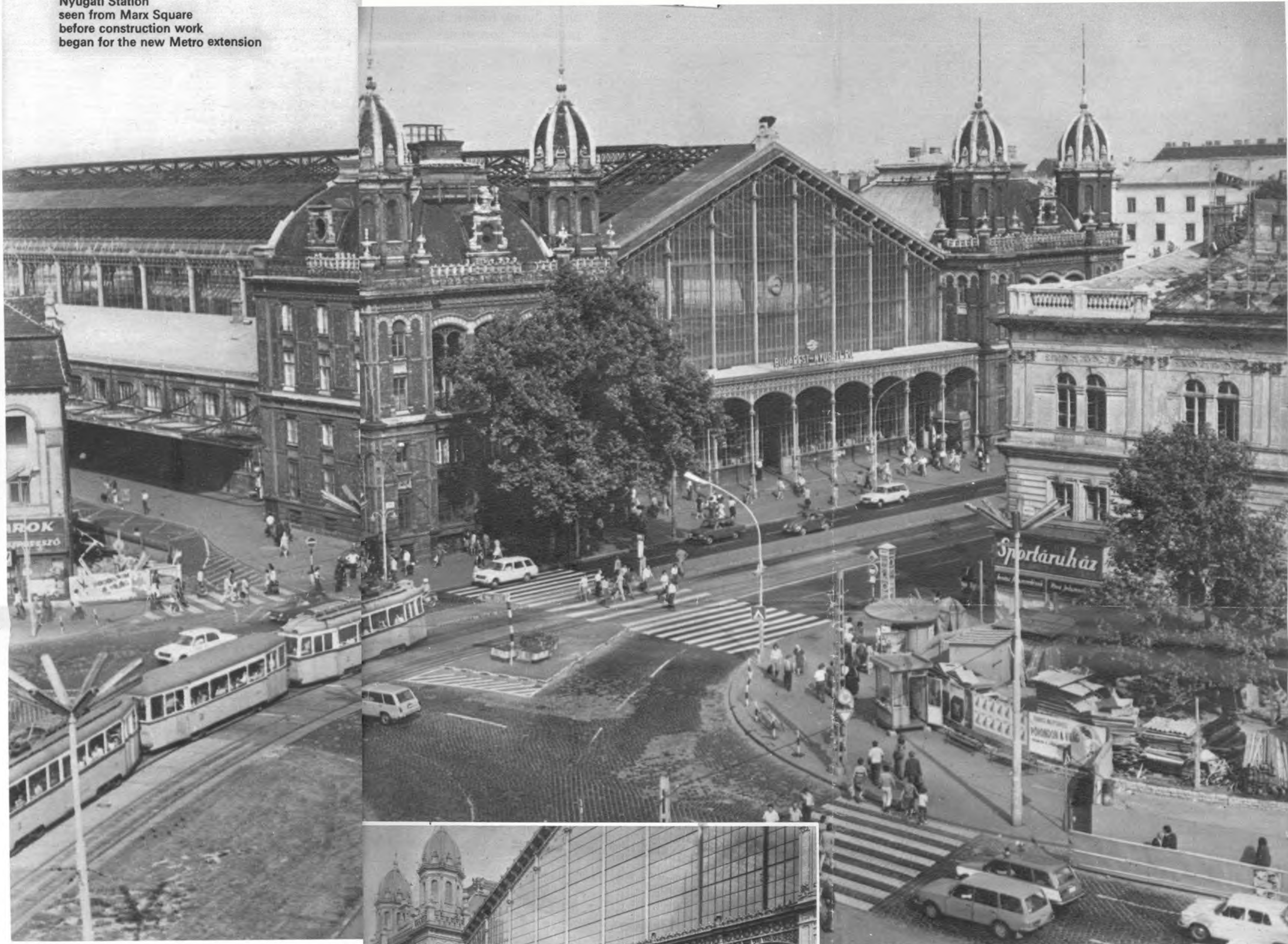
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Nyugati Station seen from Marx Square before construction work began for the new Metro extension



The steel-framed main hall of the new station was one of the largest in Europe

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WHAT EIFFEL BUILT FOR BUDAPEST

July 15, 1846 was a great day in the transport history of Hungary: the first railway to use steam locomotion was opened between Pest and the town of Vác, 34 kilometres to the north. Not far from where Eiffel's Nyugati (West) Station stands today, passengers arrived in the centre of Pest at an old-fashioned station house.

lines opened and the number of passengers increased, there was a need to expand. First a two-storey annexe was built, but in 1872 the railway company (after a long period of ownership by a private Austrian company, it only became part of Hungarian State Railways in 1891) decided that a new station would be a better solution than further additions to the existing buildings. Another factor in the company's decision were the plans which had just been announced

That station house coped with the traffic for 25 years, but as new

for a great semi-circular boulevard around Pest which would have passed straight through the existing station.

Agreement on the new West Station was reached between the City of Pest and the railway company on January 5, 1873. Soon after the company's clerk of the works, Dr. Ágoston Seress, produced the plans, and four big contractors were invited to tender for the building work. It was Gustave Eiffel and Company of Paris who landed the contract, and construction began in 1875.



The original Nyugati (West) Station in a contemporary woodcut; it was replaced by Eiffel's station buildings in 1875-77

for more than a hundred years; the building's huge size and the air pollution from it have caused problems sometimes reaching critical proportions. The idea of moving the station out of the city centre was mooted more than once, but each suggested solution has finally had to be rejected.

Just recently, serious signs of corrosion have been noticed in the steel roofbeams and columns, and they are in urgent need of attention. The authorities invited tenders for the restoration work on the steel frame. Forty-three designs were received, to several of which the jury gave awards, and some have been purchased for use on the project.

Meanwhile, work has started on the reconstruction of Marx Square in front of the station, and the building of stage three of the new North-South Metro is also imminent, so that the proposed restoration of the West Station fits in well with the general plans for the area. Most Budapest people are relieved to know that the plans allow the original historic character of Eiffel's building to remain as a landmark in the centre of the city.

The great project will be completed in three stages: first the rearrangement of the square, then the opening of the new Metro station, and lastly the reconstruction of the West Station.

By 1985, Budapest's first railway terminus will have had its face-lift and stand ready for the next hundred years.

János Bertalan & Dr. Béla Barti



The new buildings under construction (1877)

The steel frame was designed by Theophil Seyrig, the Eiffel company's own engineer. Most of the steel members were cast in Paris, but some came from the Ganz foundry in Budapest.

The new steel-framed hall of the station was the fifth largest in the world when it was built: the entire building covers 14,390 square metres and the steel frame weighs 1,500 tons. The hall itself is 146 metres by 42 metres and has room for only six tracks. The roof is 25 metres high at the centre and 15 metres at the sides. Narrow cast-iron columns divide the façade into nine glazed strips. To the left and right the façade is flanked by three-storey blocks in composite style, each with a tower. Another 15 platforms are outside the main building—116 trains a day leave the station.

When the West Station opened on October 28, 1877, it was the first real terminus building in the capital. Since then it has been in use

Marx Square as it will be

