

# INSIDE BUDAPEST

by

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THE CENTENARY

From the autumn of 1972 till the autumn of 1973 is the year of Budapest's centenary. Not of its founding, of course, since it goes back into the past of more than 2,000 years. As far as the Roman Aquincum, which was already a great city with almost 100,000 inhabitants in the first centuries A.D. and even before that as far as Ak Ink, the Celtic city, whose memory is preserved by artistic brass and pottery.

Buda, Pest and Óbuda, the three neighbouring towns by the Danube, developed and lived through the storms of many centuries separately until the idea of uniting them came to the fore in the middle of the nineteenth century. Like many of the other great ideas that guided Hungary towards the road of progress during the "Reform Era", the idea of uniting the three towns came from Count István Széchenyi. It was Széchenyi who spoke and wrote the word "Budapest" for the first time. Chain Bridge, the first permanent bridge over the Danube, built thanks to Széchenyi's initiative and organising work, was the first concrete step towards the unification.

The government of the 1848-49 revolution against the Hapsburgs incorporated the creation of *Budapest* into its programme but because of the failure of the freedom fight unification—together with many other desperately urgent reforms—became postponed. It was only half a decade after the "compromise" of 1867, on the 26th September, 1872 that the Hungarian parliament was able to enact the law of the unification of Buda, Pest and Óbuda. At that time Buda had fifty-four thousand inhabitants, Pest 206 thousand and Óbuda 16 thousand, the three towns together therefore had a population of 276 thousand inhabitants. The unification of the machineries of public administration and public works took a long time, thus it was over a year later that unification in fact took place and

the "new" city became reality. The municipal board for Budapest met for the first time on November 14th, 1873. That day marks the beginning of the life of the unified city.

The year of the centenary of the unification is made memorable by urbanistic events. On the invitation of the chairman of the Municipal Council, Zoltán Szépvölgyi, a conference was held between the 26th and 30th September where the mayors of the capitals of Europe met to discuss the problems of great cities. An exhibition entitled "Looking at Europe" showed the results and plans of the development of great European cities. A "Europe Park" was planted under the bastions of the reconstructed Buda Castle. The monument commemorating the unification of the three towns was unveiled on Margaret Island. Among the events of the centenary year the whole length of the East-West main line of the Budapest underground was put into service. Thereby an underground fast train link was brought about—through a tunnel under the Danube—linking Buda and Pest that became united a hundred years ago. In the course of the centenary year an international city historical conference will be held in Budapest, in the Spring of 1973, and in the autumn the Budapest Art Weeks will be held on the theme of the unification. Finally, on November 14th, 1973, on the hundredth anniversary of the day when the municipal board of the united city met for the first time, the celebratory meeting of the Municipal Council will bring to an end the events of the centenary year.

#### BUDAPEST EXHIBITION IN ROME

About a year before the centenary I was given the honour of a commission from the Municipal Council to work out the script for a Budapest exhibition. It was the mayor of Rome, Clelio Dario, who "invited" Budapest to Rome. It was the Mercati di Traiano, a building going back to the age of the Caesars that was offered as the location for the exhibition. This was appropriate, since it was Marcus Ulpus Traianus who re-organised the Danube provinces of the Roman Empire and made them prosper. It was during his rule that the golden age of Budapest's predecessor during the Roman period, Aquincum, began. At the same time this gesture of the mayor of Rome made one think: after all the two thousand year old columns of the Forum rise in the very centre of *today's* Rome, its throbbing, problem racked, alive reality towards the jet-streaked sky. I felt that a purely *centenary* exhibition would not be satisfactory in this environment. It would



be impossible not to reach back into the faraway centuries preceding the unification of the city, as their building and destructive work shaped the character of Budapest with still acting insoluble marks. But what is even more important: the present is built on the past.

I had a chat with Zoltán Szépvölgyi. Every great city has its own, individual, particular face, we said. Yet they share many common features. They have to solve many similar tasks in order to create the right conditions for the work and recreation of their inhabitants. They have to struggle with identical—or almost identical—problems in order to realise the advantages of the city life-style and to diminish the harmful effects of urbanisation. Budapest Council invited the mayors of Europe to the autumn 1972 meeting with the undisguised hope that through debating the common urbanistic problems they would initiate effective cooperation between the great cities of the Continent. The debates on the questions of city development and administration, exchange visits by the experts working in different areas, the exchange of information between the various capitals, coordinated research into certain problems and the common drawing of conclusions on the basis of these researches could undoubtedly contribute, if not to the immediate solution, but at least to the amelioration of one of the most vital problems of our age, the crisis of the urban way of life. The Budapest exhibition in Rome might become one of the elements of this exchange of information between cities, said the chairman of the Municipal Council.

#### THE MAXIMUM SIZE FOR CITIES

I have read in an interesting collection of facts\* that had been published on the occasion of the Budapest centenary the speech made by Móric Szentkirályi, the mayor of Pest before the unification in which he spoke . . . *against* the union of the towns. Pest is a rapidly growing commercial centre, argued Szentkirályi, and its further prosperity would be seriously endangered by linking its fate to that of Buda. Not only because Buda, the historic seat of the crown, is linked by every stone to the past, but also because the territory and the population of the city would be increased by the unification to an unhealthy extent. This would put such problems and taxes on the shoulders of the citizenry that they would become barriers to further progress. Szentkirályi found himself in the minority and on the

\* *Források Budapest múltjából* (Source material on Budapest's past). Ed. Vera Bácskai. Fővárosi Levéltár, 1971.

principle of "if you can't beat them, join them" he later took an active part in the work of unification. However, the thought which he expressed—and which appeared so much against the logic of development in the second part of the nineteenth century—is becoming ever more prominent in today's great cities. The rapid development of Budapest after the unification, at the turn of the century, was a positive development in a Hungary which was then behind as regards industrialisation and urbanisation. However, between the two world wars, when Budapest was still growing and becoming more industrialised even in the territorially diminished country, while the other cities fell behind, the Budapest-centricity of progress became unfavourable from the point of view of the country as a whole. In the last year of peace before the World War II, in 1938, half the industry of the country was concentrated in Budapest, while in many of the provincial towns there was little or no industry. This situation naturally had demographic consequences too: the movement from the country to the towns, that was a world-wide phenomenon was a movement into Budapest in the case of Hungary. The great devastation of the second World War stopped this tendency only temporarily. After the most serious results of the devastation were put right the city began to grow once more, what is more in 1950 the till then separate peripheric towns were also amalgamated into the capital, thus creating "Greater Budapest". The capital's power of attraction has thereby increased even more. Administrative measures (mainly restriction of settling in Budapest) did not succeed in stopping people pouring into Budapest. Economic reality—better employment opportunities, a higher standard of living—proved stronger than administrative measures. The capital had 1.6 million inhabitants in 1950, 1,940,000 by 1970 and by 1972 it reached 2 million. The "daytime" population—including those who commute to work from the settlements around Budapest—is even larger, it exceeds 2.3 million.

What is the point of view of the Budapest urbanists as regards this question that is debated all over the world? Following the conversations that I had in the course of collecting information I am afraid I have to admit that in Budapest they have not found the answer either, just as in the other great cities. On the one hand one knows from one's experience that a city which has grown too large is both unhealthy and uneconomic. (For example, the amalgamation of the towns on the periphery into Greater Budapest put still lasting, heavy burdens on the city as regards the development of public works and of the road network and other respects.) On the other hand, Budapest is so important a base for the social, cultural and technical development of Hungary that its further development is absolutely ne-



cessary for the sake of the whole country's future. Thus the whole urban policy for Budapest is rather Janus-faced.

It approves of the great city life-style, and endeavours to facilitate the urbanisation of the whole Budapest agglomeration. A characteristic example for this is the debate that took place on the question of "dormitory towns". According to the original plans eight "dormitory towns" would have been created within Budapest's sphere of attraction, to house people working in the capital. Later, however, another consideration gained prominence, which held that dormitory towns without places of work, cultural opportunities and autonomous town centres would in reality retard urbanisation, thus the plan was dropped. In the new housing estates town centres are developed, together with service industries and cultural institutions.


On the other hand, the more harmonious development of the whole country is encouraged by the endeavour to slow down the growth of Budapest. Despite the progress of the last few decades the urbanisation of the countryside is still at a low level. The largest "provincial" town, Miskolc has even today fewer than a tenth as many inhabitants as Budapest. As I have mentioned, between 1950 and 1960 the growth in the number of Budapest's inhabitants was attempted to be slowed by the restriction on settlement. Since the beginning of the sixties a conscious policy of decentralisation has been pursued in order to gradually lessen the disproportion between Budapest and the rest of the country. The bulk of new industries and important institutions is being moved to towns in parts of the country that had previously little or no industry. As a result of this policy of decentralisation the growth of the capital and its environs has slowed down, while the other towns develop twice as fast as Budapest. The rate of growth of certain regional centres that were chosen for increased development is three times that of Budapest. In the last decade Budapest's relative industrial weight has gradually decreased from 43% to 33%, but the production value of Budapest industry, measured in absolute figures, has increased. Budapest is still one of the greatest industrial cities in Europe with 600,000 industrial workers. In this respect only London, Moscow and Paris are larger.

It appears from the long-range city development plan for Budapest, which lays down the main tendencies for its development up to the year 2000, that in forty years (1960-2000) approximately half a million new flats will be built and 150,000 old flats will be demolished. The plan sees the optimum number of inhabitants in 2000 as  $2\frac{1}{4}$  million.

## WATER — LAND — SOIL — AIR

It was the fortunate meeting of natural and human factors that made Budapest into a city where one cannot merely make a living, but can live pleasantly. It is hardly fortuitous that its predecessor was called "Rich in water" (Ak Ink) by its Celt founders: the almost half kilometre wide stately Danube, the natural springs by the river and the mineral springs of the Buda hills have always made it "the city of water". From Geoffrey de Bouillon, the leader of the Crusaders, who used to bathe his painful limbs in the hot spring that is today the Gellért spa, to the Turkish pashas who built the still functioning marble baths with their cupolas (Rudas spa, Király spa) under Gellért and Rose Hills, successive generations of conquerors, tourists and citizens of Budapest have enjoyed the pleasures of the waters.

The land was also kind to the inhabitants of Budapest. The 4-500 metre high Buda hills make a wooded frame from the west and north and one could not wish a better natural look-out than Gellért Hill, whose boulders reach into the heart of the city by the Danube. From its terrace the whole Danube skyline is spread out deep below the viewer. Pest was built on a plain which greatly helped the industrial-commercial growth in the period of fast city development in the nineteenth century. The geological good fortune once again benefits the townscape: the plain gently rises at the peripheries of the city. It is as if Pest, that sea of houses, were lying in the palm of a giant, it provides a plastic, interesting view. Apart from certain districts in Pest which were built in too densely during the great boom in speculative building at the turn of the century, there are sufficient green areas to break up the city. There are great parks, such as Margaret Island, which is  $2\frac{1}{2}$  kilometres long, City Park, the People's Park, large and small squares, a multitude of walks and among them the green areas of the housing estates that have been built during the last decade. An extra feature to add to all this, as a positive aspect of Budapest's city architecture: the "human scale" that was kept when creating its major avenues, squares and characteristic buildings. The Fine Architecture Commission, that was founded in the middle of the 19th century, and later the Budapest Public Works Council are mainly responsible for the pleasant mood that the architectural unities of Budapest exude. The untutored merely notes it without knowing the reason for it. Yet it is basically simple: the proportions of the width of the streets and the height of the houses, the shape and scale of the squares, their relationship to the roads and buildings always remain within an intimate, human scale. It is a question though whether it will



be possible to preserve this scale in the age of tower blocks and prefabricated concrete elements.

But for the moment it was not this question, but the questions regarding the natural environment that I tried to answer. First of all: has the passivity that was manifest as regards the environmental issue even a few years ago changed, and if so, to what extent? I am thinking primarily of the passivity of public opinion, which till recently regarded it as an inevitable stroke of fate that Budapest is covered in thick smog during the winter months when the wind blows from the northern, industrial districts.

Here in Budapest the change in the mood of public opinion did not happen as in America, where it was the youth movement that swept along the reluctant adults. In Budapest the doctors, public health experts and urbanists began the work of enlightenment and the social committees that were created within the framework of the Budapest organisations of the Patriotic People's Front took it up. Propaganda—in the good sense—was and still is absolutely necessary to make society willing to make the financial sacrifices which unavoidably accompany the protection of the environment. I learnt, for example, from György Sárdi, the secretary of the "Budapest Clean Air Committee" of the tremendous resistance that had to be overcome in the factories when the installation of equipment to diminish the output of pollutive materials, requiring large investments, came to the fore. The expenditure comes out of the profits of the firm and given the prevailing structure of income distribution in Hungarian firms this lowers the share of the profits distributed among the workers at the end of the year.

The protection of the environment began with the development of norms for air cleanliness and continuous measurements taken in the city area. (In many parts of Budapest there are permanent stations measuring air pollution. These are run by the National Institute for Public Health, this body having been commissioned by the Clean Air Committee. There are also mobile measuring instruments collecting random samples.)

The industrial firms are obliged, under the pain of financial penalties, to keep air and water pollution and noise damage below prescribed norms. Unfortunately, however, Budapest has the same experience as other great cities, that in many cases it is cheaper for the factories to pay the fines than to eliminate the source of pollution. For that reason—though the situation has somewhat improved in recent years—the Budapest city administration links industrial decentralisation, which is desirable in any case, with the protection of the environment. Those industrial firms which have a damaging effect on the environment that cannot be rectified, or whose

presence in the capital is undesirable in any case, are made to move out of Budapest. These moves are facilitated by a system of state grants, but the Budapest City Council also devotes significant sums to this purpose. The Council also brought in measures for eliminating the damaging effects on the environment of the factories which remain in the city, including the planting of wooded belts that act as a protection.

Naturally, it is absolutely necessary for the sake of clean air to modernise the heating in blocks of flats—at the moment even in the inner areas of the city coal or coke is used for domestic heating. In this field the development of district heating is a considerable advance: in 1960 5,000 flats were heated from the central plants, in 1970 50,000, and this will rise to 120,000 by 1975. While the newly constructed housing estates are generally provided with district heating, in the older parts of town it is by changing to gas heating that air pollution is eliminated. It was originally planned to finish the conversion of the inner areas of Budapest to gas heating by 1975, however, various technical difficulties will probably delay the completion of the first stage of the gas heating programme by a few years.

As I have already mentioned, water is not merely “an article of utility” for the inhabitants of Budapest, but one of the basic pleasures of life. The favourite “open-air club” of the inhabitants of Budapest is the Lukács spa, mellow with age, that is one of the meeting places of the artistic and literary world. The innumerable lidos, spas and baths are witnesses to the “water addiction” of the inhabitants of Budapest. Its origin goes back possibly to the time of the Turkish occupation or even longer into the past. The provision of plentiful and good drinking water was secured in the period following the unification of the city by the so-called filtered wells which supplied the waterworks network with the river water screened through the natural layers of pebbles and sand. In the course of many generations the inhabitants of Budapest became so used to the excellent and almost limitless water at their disposal that it came as an unpleasant shock when at the beginning of the fifties it turned out that the filter wells could no longer assure the requirements of the enlarged city. In order to secure the tremendously increased demand for water it was necessary to construct a so-called surface water extraction plant which feeds the water that was pumped directly out of the Danube, after the necessary biological and chemical purification processes, into the water network.

György Szántó, one of the leaders of the capital's public works administration, provided me with interesting information in the course of my background explorations in preparation for the Budapest exhibition in

Rome. On the one hand with the fact that it was found in the course of the most recent hydrological researches that, after all, it is not necessary to spoil the quality of the water by building new surface water extraction plants. Even from the point of view of economy it is better to increase the quantity of water by further extending the system of bottom filtered wells. The network of riverside wells extends over a distance of thirty kilometres from Budapest and new water supplies might be gained by the utilisation of the karst water in the coal mines about 40-50 kilometres from Budapest. What is just as important: the industrial water network for factories is further extended. The water problems of Budapest are caused to a great extent by the fact that the bulk of the factories receive their water from the normal city network. In other words they are using drinking water.

In the course of our conversation we also touched on the problem of water pollution. Naturally, the question arose: ever since I heard in Ohio of the burning of the Cuyahoga river the thought has pursued me like a nightmare that the lovely Danube, where I have canoed so often and in whose water I had such good swims, and which even today provides the possibility for a separate, pleasant way of life for the multitude of those Budapestians who enjoy life on the Danube, might become finally and irrevocably polluted by the diesel oil of the ships and the waste products of the factories.

The position has unfortunately obviously much deteriorated in this field in the last decade but Budapest is hardly responsible for that. There is a big purification works in the southern part of the city. In the course of the next few years more purification plants will be built in order to keep pace with the ever growing quantity of sewage. The factories in (and outside) Budapest are forced by strict measures to purify industrial waste. The bulk of the pollution in the Danube in recent times originated outside Hungary—for example, the very great destruction of the Danube fish stock in the summer of 1972 was caused by the waste from a factory in Krems. Budapest hopes that every town by the Danube will do its best to save the river.

#### HISTORIC CITY IN AN EVER FASTER AGE

Two years ago I showed an American friend round Budapest. As it was his first visit to the city, he enjoyed its beauties with fresh eyes—and discovered those weaknesses which are almost invisible to ours which have become accustomed to them. For example, that inexplicably we hardly exploit the

marvellous opportunities offered by the banks of the Danube for walks, restaurants and places of amusement with picture windows opening onto the Danube. (The recently built Duna Intercontinental Hotel was the first "breakthrough" in this field since the row of hotels on the Pest bank of the Danube was completely destroyed in the second World War.) Also that the lower part of the Danube embankment can only be enjoyed by fishermen and lovers thanks to the steps leading down to the water, otherwise this beautiful road is full of huge racing lorries.

Now we came to the Chain Bridge. While we were slowly nearing the tunnel I told him: in a century and a quarter the bridge was blown up twice—luckily once only half successfully—by foreign occupiers. But despite the devastation of 1945, in the very difficult situation then prevailing, it was rebuilt at the cost of super-human effort... what is more in its original form. Exactly as William Tierney and Adam Clark had built it.

My friend nodded his appreciation. Then he asked: But why in its *original* form? After all this narrow bridge can hardly cope with great city traffic in the age of the motor car which has visibly reached Budapest too.

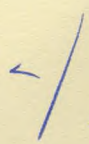
Please, do not believe for a moment that I recall this conversation in a spirit of irony. Especially because, though at first, I must admit my spirit that preserves European traditions that are deeply rooted in me was shocked by this entirely different point of view, in the month following our conversation, while I was spending half hours on my way home in front of the bridge at Roosevelt square and on the bridge itself, in the usual afternoon traffic jams, I realised that the *other point of view* should not be taken lightly either. Indeed, one of the greatest problems for the urbanists of today is to reconcile the two different points of view. What it is that for the sake of preserving the historic character of the city, must not be sacrificed even if the preservation in their original form of some relics of the past (as in this case of the Chain Bridge) inconveniences us and requires sacrifices. And where the region begins where this obligation ceases. Where the sentimentalism that would preserve everything becomes a barrier to progress. In Rome there are still furious debates over the destruction of the palaces from the Middle Ages which surrounded the Forum that was carried out on the orders of Mussolini. I rightly assumed that the inhabitants of Rome, the Italian urbanists are interested in the question: what has the Hungarian capital done and what does it plan to do in this field.

The historic core of Budapest consists of two main parts which are located opposite each other on the two banks of the Danube. Of the two the Castle district of Buda, which was the seat of the crown in the Middle Ages, preserved its government centre character up to the end of the

second World War. In the battle to liberate Budapest in 1944-45 this area suffered the greatest damage. In place of very many buildings there remained only charred ruins. Reconstruction was preceded by careful scientific studies—in the case of the Castle by extensive archeological excavations—and then followed the reconstruction requiring a decade of work and huge financial expenditure. In the course of this work they consistently adhered to the characteristic feature of the protection of monuments in Hungary, whose essence is that the work is not restricted to individual buildings but historic townscape ensembles are preserved in their unblemished beauty, with scholarly exactitude, for the present and for future generations. In the course of the reconstruction the role of the Castle and of the whole Castle district has fundamentally changed. The one-time royal palace will be turned into exhibition halls, museums and a library and the Castle district largely devoted to the housing of scientific institutes, exhibition halls, a theatre and hotels. Some of these are ready and functioning. For example, in the reconstructed part of the Castle that dates back to the Middle Ages a part of the collection of the Budapest History Museum is located, the renovated building that was once the old feudal parliament now houses various institutions of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences (the chamber is now the scene for academic conferences), in palaces dating back to the Middle Ages there are the Bartók archives, the History Institute, the National Monuments Board, the Catering Museum, in what was once the baroque palace of the Buda City Hall there is today the Museum of the Working Class Movements.

The aim that the historic buildings and groups of buildings should be given new, modern functions after their reconstruction is of course generally approved both in Budapest and elsewhere. On the other hand many debates arose in connection with the architectural principle that placed modern houses, built in the style of our period, into groups of historic houses to replace buildings that were demolished during the war, or became uninhabitable for other reasons. In my opinion the results in Budapest have entirely justified this architectural practice. In the streets of the Castle district, among buildings from the Middle Ages certain gaps were filled in with modern houses, yet the beauty and the atmosphere of the whole remained unimpaired. At any rate the picture is much more artistic than if they had built pseudo-historic palaces instead.

The other main element of Budapest's historic core is Pest's inner city. For me—and I think for most of the inhabitants of Budapest—it is one of our favourite parts of the city because it represents at the same time historic tradition, the character of Budapest and the type of vitality and



movement which makes a city a city. In America—and by now even in Western Europe—this part of the city is increasingly transformed into a purely office and shopping district where in the evenings and at weekends everything is dead. Only in those streets is there some traffic where places of amusement attract people from their conurbations further away. The inner city of Pest has luckily not yet been transformed in this manner, though this danger did exist here too. However, there is reason to think that we no longer have to be afraid that this process so dangerous for the essence of urban life should take place here. The traditional old main street in the inner city, Váci Street, was made a walking precinct a few years ago and since then this elegant street of shops has become one of the favourite promenades for Budapestians. In Vörösmarty Square, at one end of Váci Street, a large-scale cultural centre was built and once the neighbouring Vigadó's reconstruction is completed it will be one of the centres for Budapest's musical life. I had a long conversation with Károly Polonyi, an architect, who is the head of the department for City Development of Budapest City Council, of the further plans for rehabilitating the inner city. The old, 18th–19th century buildings will be connected by passages, courtyards, glass-covered galleries and arcades, so that even in cold and wet weather it should be possible to walk round and window shop. However, the most important part of rehabilitation will be the “opening up” of the inner city towards the river. On the Danube embankment traffic will be removed to a lower level, while on the street level walks with lawns and flower beds will be set out and terraces constructed that will reach into the river and will house espressos, confectioneries and places where people can sun themselves. In my opinion this idea is good for two reasons: the Danube embankment, which in my youth was free of traffic, a promenade, and which since then has become a road for cars, to my great sorrow, will be restored to its proper purpose, will even be extended and made one of the most attractive parts of the city. On the other hand the human-centricity of the whole conception will improve the feel of the whole city. The extension of the pedestrian precinct of Váci Street will create a large community area which will undoubtedly diminish the alienating effects of the great city.

City development means of course more than the protection of historic monuments and rehabilitation—it also extends to the fundamental reconstruction of old, out-of-date districts. This is one of the most delicate aspects of city development, after all it involves moving tens of thousands of people from their accustomed environment and changing the face of whole districts. This constantly raises the question: how far can we go?



How much do we have to preserve of the relics of the past in areas condemned for demolition in order to ensure that reconstruction does not threaten the historically shaped, characteristic face of the city? Of the work now being carried out the most important reconstruction is that of the one time Óbuda—today's III District—where in place of six thousand out-of-date flats sixteen thousand new ones are being built. Another large-scale reconstruction project is being carried out in the XIV District of Pest where three and a half thousand old flats are being demolished, to be replaced by twelve thousand new flats.

In Óbuda, where there was once a Roman town, many archeological relics were found, as it was expected, in the course of the work. Careful scholarly research will decide what should be placed in museums and what should be preserved *in situ*, in the showrooms that are to be developed in the basements and ground floors of the new buildings. A good many of the characteristic buildings from the 18th and 19th century are being preserved. These form pleasant little islands among the modern blocks. They are given various functions, such as house of culture, youth club and library and their interiors are suitably transformed for these purposes. The essence of the reconstruction is naturally the building of flats on a large scale, which provides new, modern, district heated homes for thousands of families. The inhabitants of the demolished houses receive flats in exchange, those who owned their own houses receive, as well as new flats, financial compensation amounting to the full value of their property. Most of the new blocks are ten, others four stories high. Concurrently with their construction steps are taken to ensure adequate transport facilities, a network of shops and parks. All this is done by the municipal council. It is perhaps worthwhile in this connection to mention the obligatory norms connected with the large-scale construction of flats: for every 1000 flats there must be built a crèche for 50 babies, kindergarten accommodating 100, a school of ten classes, a district polyclinic and chemists of 120 m<sup>2</sup> area, service industries 310 m<sup>2</sup> in area, 1,300 m<sup>2</sup> shopping area and 100 m<sup>2</sup> of cultural institutions.

#### THE COOPERATION OF EUROPEAN CAPITALS

Budapest's centenary is naturally a Hungarian affair. The whole country sees itself reflected in the city that in the course of history has been the centre of our political, cultural and economic life, the spring of freedom movements, the symbol of the achievements of creative work. However,

the centenary of unification has become a matter for Europe too. When the Budapest Municipal Council invited the mayors of Europe to Budapest it referred to the United Nations Charter according to which the world organisation promotes the bringing about of those conditions of permanence and welfare which are necessary for the peaceful and friendly relationship between the nations on the basis of respect for equality and independence that the people are entitled to. In the course of the Budapest meeting it was found that the urbanists living in different social systems, in great cities with differing conditions, yet "speak the same language". There was an unanimous recognition of the need to increase the areas of contact between the cities because the promotion of the permanence and welfare of urban life can only have a positive effect on the life of the whole continent.

The most important contribution that Budapest can make to the European city development of our age arises from the fact that it is a capital of a socialist country. The great cities of industrially more advanced countries are in some respects in advance of Hungary in the field of technology. The mass construction of flats is realised in Budapest with the help of Soviet and Danish house factories. The fast thickening traffic has improved since we imported traffic control installations from countries with more experience in this field. There are many similar examples. Nonetheless—the life of Budapest is made more harmonious, less alienated by those features which spring from the socialist character of society. I have already cited a few examples. Let me add the free medical services that cover the whole population, such manifestations of social policy as the three year grant to enable mothers to stay at home with their babies, the ensurance of crèches and kindergartens, the many ways in which the old people are looked after—from the social homes to the network of social nurses and the Houses for Pensioners, where the residents receive board and medical care on a non-profit-making basis. Last but not least, Budapest is a city of culture not only in the sense that it is one of the pulsating centres of European intellectual life, but also because it is available for the masses. It is possible and even necessary to argue at times about the *ways* of subsidising culture. But the fact that books, opera, theatre and cinema tickets are cheap and available to everyone is undoubtedly good and important.

It is perhaps not wishful thinking to hope that from the initiative of Budapest Municipal Council on the occasion of the centenary the outlines of a new cooperation can be perceived, that will extend over a long period, because it is in harmony with the interests of millions living in the cities of Europe, and their endeavours towards peace and security.