

## INTRODUCTION

In the history of Budapest 1873 was the most important turning point. The enactment of urban unification seemed to endorse the concept that in Hungary, having regained most of its constitutional independence by the Compromise of 1867, Pest-Buda irrevocably became the political center. 1873 is also of major importance in the life of the city from another perspective. Unifying the administrative and infrastructure organization of the three previously independent cities opened the way toward the incredibly rapid urbanization of the next few decades. As a result of the dazzling metropolitan evolution Budapest became a city of nearly a million inhabitants by the time the Dual Empire came to an end.

The gradual or dramatically rapid extension of urban administrative limits was not unique to Budapest. During the second half of the nineteenth century this was one of the ways in which many European and North American cities grew. Due to the gradual extension of its limits, Vienna a sister city, grew to a metropolis of two million inhabitants by 1914. Neighboring smaller communities were incorporated into Vienna in 1874, 1890 and 1905. Berlin became a metropolis of four million inhabitants by the end of World War I. Between 1861 and 1911 the boundaries of the city were repeatedly adjusted, eventually resulting in the creation of Greater Berlin. The territorial expansion of Paris began in 1860 after the surrounding fortifications were demolished. Starting in 1911, the twenty communities surrounding Paris, while not formally incorporated, were administrated from the *Hôtel de Ville*. In London the idea of bringing the surrounding communities under the administrative authority of the central city was first raised in 1855 and was implemented in 1899.<sup>1</sup> In the country where urbanization was the most rapid during the nineteenth century, the United States

of America, it was not uncommon that the expansion of the administrative boundaries made major contributions to urban development. It was just such a condition that contributed to New York City's spectacular growth during the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Until 1876 New York City was largely confined to the island of Manhattan but in that year it was enlarged by the incorporation of the Bronx. Present-day New York City was established in 1898 when Brooklyn, Queens and Staten Island became part of the city.<sup>2</sup>

There were some differences between Budapest and the European and American cities mentioned above. The latter were mostly large and populous cities when they started expanding their limits. In the case of the Hungarian capital the administrative unification of Pest, Buda and Óbuda, with the stroke of a pen, produced an urban conglomerate that then served as the basis for metropolitan development.

### *The Autonomy of the Capital and Its Limits*

At the time the three cities were united the Hungarian Parliament was active in legally re-defining the urban and rural municipalities. Legislation regulating the municipalities was enacted in 1870 (Act XLII) and 1871 (Act XVIII). The purpose of the legislative activity following the Compromise was to create an administrative organization for the Hungarian state, which had only recently regained its constitutional independence. This activity was also motivated by the opposition to the Compromise, manifested most strongly by the counties and some municipalities. They carried much weight due to the traditional influence exerted by the counties on the power structure of the legislative orders. Thus, the modernization of the local authorities after 1867 was accomplished at the same time that the central administrative power significantly reduced the autonomy of the local municipalities as well as the basis for their independent political role, known as the "Address to the Throne."

The unique status of the unified Budapest among the cities of the country was guaranteed by its being the capital. In general, the capital is elevated above the other cities in order for her to symbolize the

political, economic and intellectual values of the state. It is in the capital or via the capital that the sublime ideal of the nation-state takes shape. This was stated in the ministerial justification of the Unification Act,

The Hungarian state must have a center that is the gathering point of the interests of Hungary and which is the principal support and mover of said interests. It must represent the ideals of Hungarian statehood with distinction and must serve as an irresistible attraction, both intellectually and economically, to all other parts of the country.... [It is essential therefore that the municipal authorities be] suitably organized and administered...so that the city may become the pleasant gathering place of good order, true culture and of the most elevated societal principles.<sup>3</sup>

In drafting Act XXXVI of 1872 proclaiming the unification, the legislature essentially continued the work that started some years earlier of legally regulating the local authorities. Still, the act concerning the capital not only stated the act in general, but by proclaiming the legal status of the capital, it changed the legal hierarchy of cities into a three-tiered one. Henceforth, Budapest was startlingly different from the cities with municipal authority rights, and on the lowest level of the hierarchy, those with a city council.

It is not our intent to present an in-depth analysis of the act and of the capital as a legal entity. Legal historical scholarship has done that thoroughly some time ago.<sup>4</sup> We prefer to differentiate between the capital and the cities regarding municipal authority, and define what constituted the capital's peculiar legal status.

The capital's legally guaranteed uniqueness can be summarized briefly by saying that Budapest had a broader and more substantial administrative autonomy than the other cities. First of all, because it was not a Lord Lieutenant of the county who was at the head of the city administration, but a Lord Mayor. This meant that while the Lord Lieutenant was a government representative, the Lord Mayor was not because he was elected by the Municipal Council from a panel prepared by the king, i.e. the government. Consequently the king could not deal with the Lord Mayor as he pleased, and could not relieve him

arbitrarily from his post. Further, the city was in fact run not by the Lord Mayor, as some kind of deputy lieutenant, but by a capital council consisting of the Lord Mayor, two deputy mayors and the councilors standing at the head of the city departments.

The Capital City Council became an independent authority in accordance with the original intent of the legislature. It implemented the governmental ordinances (laws and ministerial decrees) as well as the rulings of the municipal board, i.e. the bylaws. The privileges of the Capital City Council as an independent authority were further enhanced by being charged with keeping the records of the very substantial funds and revenues of the capital and by being made responsible for their management.

Other than in Budapest there was no municipal official or organization that was given such a broad administrative responsibility. The very broad administrative autonomy granted to Budapest in 1872 was not appreciably decreased by the fact that in police and building policy matters the state enjoyed certain priorities. This affected the autonomy negatively but was a function of Budapest being the capital city and so was the broader administrative authority that Budapest enjoyed in all other branches of government. The increased local autonomy granted to the city was just as much the recognition of the city's special position, granted by the state, as were the minor limitations imposed on this authority. What happened in the latter instance was that the state reserved for itself the authority of creating an appearance suitable to a capital and assuring that the order of the city as a political center was adequately maintained. The state also assumed the financial obligations for these actions. There is no question that making the maintenance of law and order as well the financing and coordination of city growth and development a governmental responsibility contributed much to Budapest and offset the potential disadvantage of having her autonomy slightly curtailed. The state, entrusted with disbursing the national budget and having legislative authority, could exert a greater economic and administrative centralization than even a single city council, unique in size and power. The capital city, being also a metropolis, or rapidly becoming one, would be confronted from time to time with challenges in the two areas in question, which, if left alone, she would usually be unable to cope with.

The concept of protecting Budapest from the social stresses common to capital cities (preservation of law and order) and the use of public funds to create a grandiose urban environment, appropriate to the proper fulfillment of the functions of the capital were combined with a rational approach to the administration of the city. It was a universally noted problem that, "The great size of the cities, and the huge area variations within them, make it hard for councillors, who are elected to represent individual wards, to form a clear awareness of the needs of the city as a whole."<sup>5</sup>

Thus in Budapest there was an attempt to create a modern professional council or bureaucracy in order to produce a rational urban administration, while at the same time focusing attention to assure the proper political loyalty of the experts vis-à-vis the particular social groups represented in the council. This was to be achieved by devising an appropriate procedure for the election of these officials.<sup>6</sup> To meet the demands of expertise a set of qualifications for office was devised. The Capital City Act stated that positions in the various city departments (the number of which was ten at the beginning) could be filled only with persons of suitable, mostly university education. In 1883 an act required that career officials have a degree in law and political science. The election of officials for a limited period of time, six years, was deemed essential to guarantee political fitness.

The governmental intent to balance the "innate weakness" (Sutcliffe) of the capital city municipality led to the situation where in order to further the interests of the capital, the government interfered extensively with the inner life of the city. These endeavors of the government were further strengthened by certain circumstances peculiar to Budapest. One was that the new capital did not seem suitable for fulfilling the role of a centralized administrative body. This was due to the fact that Budapest, contrary to most European capitals, became a capital by having three cities made into one. It is a paradoxical consequence that immediately after the unification the new city had to respond to innumerable and frequently parallel expectations. As an example let us consider that to fulfill the political and cultural role inherent to a capital, Budapest had to physically accommodate a very large number of new administrative bodies, literally from one day to the next. This was no different from other European capitals, where a

new constitutional structure led to the multiplication of the political organizations. After 1857, during the massive remodeling of Vienna, these functional demands played a major role. In connection with the newly introduced parliamentarianism and the restructuring of the legislative process, the greatest difficulties were presented by the demands for buildings. It became evident that there was no way to provide suitable accommodation for the Parliament (1883) and the Palace of Justice (1881) in the old city. Even the newly created ministries kept requiring additional space.<sup>7</sup>

If even in the imperial capital there was such a need for new public buildings for political and non-political purposes during the second half of the nineteenth century, the need in Budapest for such buildings was even greater. The case of the City Hall and of the Parliament may serve as an example.

Earlier there was no permanent meeting space in Budapest for legislative purposes. Primarily because, during the long years when Hungary had no independent existence, there was no need for such a building and secondly because for the Habsburgs Pozsony (Pressburg), being closer to Vienna than Pest or Buda, was much more suitable as the capital of the province. As the Compromise was becoming a reality the correction of this deficiency became a pressing requirement. This was demonstrated by the haste with which the building of the Parliament was undertaken. After the plans of Miklós Ybl were accepted and submitted to the emperor for approval (August 30, 1865), the old military barracks on the lot selected for the site in Archduke Sándor Street, known today as Bródy Sándor Street, were vacated within forty-eight hours. Within a few days after September 11 they were demolished and the rubble was removed. The new walls were erected with feverish haste, and without a building permit, and within three months of the time that the barracks were demolished, on December 9th, the building was opened for legislative purposes. The opening session, scheduled for December 10 had to be postponed because the walls of the new building were still damp and the meeting room had no furniture.<sup>8</sup>

Another local circumstance was that Budapest was not an administrative unit until 1873 and therefore the fusion of the three cities preceded and only anticipated the firm political determination of cre-

ating a true capital city. Unfortunately the three cities, individually or as a unit, were unprepared to consider their next actions regarding the standards appropriate for a capital. It is informative to read the debates conducted in the ruling bodies of the three cities after the proposal for unification had been made by the government.<sup>9</sup> It is thus not without some justification that the contemporary government believed that in order to eliminate Pest's, Buda's and Óbuda's parochialism it was highly desirable to impose central decision-making on certain city affairs.

Finally, delayed development had the advantage that in the 1870s everybody was aware of the harm that spontaneous urbanization would cause. Thus there was consensus that the management of the increasing environmental concerns of the metropolis seemed hopeless without interference by higher authority including, at times, the government itself. The experiences of Paris, London, Berlin<sup>10</sup> and Vienna during the mid-century cautioned the politicians endeavoring to make Budapest into a metropolis that without a comprehensive urban plan and a deliberate urban policy it was futile to even begin the work. These were the considerations that led Prime Minister Count Gyula Andrassy, to propose on October 23, 1869, in the form of a Council of Ministers' Submission, that a metropolitan board of public works be set up.

The 1872 act had two effects that intersected but nevertheless acted in parallel. These were the increased legal independence of Budapest and, simultaneously, an increased dependence on the state as a consequence of being both a metropolis and a capital. These were then the factors that determined the history of the united city after 1873.

### *The Consequences of Unification*

In 1892, on the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Compromise and of the coronation of Francis Joseph as king of Hungary, the time seemed right for Hungary to initiate a move so that the second major city of the empire, Budapest, would be recognized as being of equal standing with Vienna. The emperor, in Budapest for the festivities, yielded to the desire of the Hungarian prime minister

and ordered on June 10 that Budapest may use the term “Budapest fő- és székváros”<sup>11</sup> (capital and royal seat). This event and the millennial celebrations in Budapest in 1896 were the closing chords of the first period of metropolitan development. During this quarter century the principal sources of the capital’s spectacular growth and modernization were the dynamic economic life and the fulfillment of its centralized political role.<sup>12</sup> Even before the unification, Pest was considered to be the principal commercial city of the country. By controlling the shipping of goods on the Danube and by being the center of the developing railroad network, Budapest had a monopoly in commercial and financial matters after 1870. By the end of the century eleven railroad lines terminated in Budapest which necessitated the building of passenger and freight terminals.

As part of the development of the Nagykörút (Great Boulevard) it was proposed at the beginning of the 1870s that the old depot be replaced by a modern metropolitan terminal. Act XLII of 1871 ordered the creation of the four kilometer long Nagykörút. The last segment of the boulevard, the Lipót Boulevard (now Szent István Boulevard), was not completed until a number of years later during the first decades of the twentieth century. The first building phase was completed in 1883, but the majority of the large buildings along the boulevard were erected between 1884 and 1896.

Opening of the Nyugati (Western) Terminal was followed in 1884 by the Keleti (Eastern) Terminal. Completion of this terminal gave an impetus for the completion of Kerepesi Avenue (since 1906 known as Rákóczi Avenue) which, after Andrásy Avenue, was the second major avenue in the city. In addition there was the Déli vasút (Southern Railway Terminal), a modest passenger terminal, the Józsefváros Terminal which became a freight station and a total of twelve minor, principally freight, stations that served the country’s railroad traffic concentrated until the turn of the century in and around the capital.

Following unification the urban transportation system also grew and was modernized rapidly. The newly completed major thoroughfares and the new bridges across the Danube (Margit [Margaret] Bridge, 1876, Fővámter [Main Toll Square] Bridge, today Szabadság [Freedom] Bridge, 1896) made the development of metropolitan



mass transportation possible during these decades. In this regard the principal role was played by the horse trams which since the middle of the 1870s linked Pest and Buda across the new Margit Bridge. Their significance in the social integration of the two cities cannot be overestimated. The introduction of the penny-fare in 1886 indicates that the horse trams had become an instrument of mass transportation. Electric streetcars were introduced on the Nagykörút in 1887 and after 1889 only electric streetcar lines were built in Budapest. When in 1896 the underground railway, the first such on the Continent, was opened after only two years of construction it, together with the above-ground horse trams and electric streetcars were used by about fifty million passengers annually.

A major contribution to the image of the city and obviously also to transportation was made by the new thoroughfare sponsored by Count Gyula Andrásy, but already recommended much earlier, in 1841, by Lajos Kossuth. This typically metropolitan artery was created by Public Act LX of 1870. Planning this endeavor, directing the construction and the financing of it were the principal tasks of the newly established Metropolitan Board of Public Works during the decades immediately following unification. The activities of the Board included all of urban planning, urban construction and public capital investments. In addition the board also exercised the role of a building authority. This major task could be met by the board only if it was thoroughly familiar with every part of the city. In order to serve this purpose all three components of the city were surveyed preparatory to drafting a city map.

The new thoroughfare, the Sugárút (Avenue), was more than two kilometers long and was built with public funds while the bordering houses were built by private enterprise.<sup>13</sup> Building the thoroughfare began in 1871 just before the unification and took six years. The 132 buildings along the sides were completed only during the 1890s. The thoroughfare substantially changed the structure of the borough of Terézváros and there were considerable changes in ownership of real estate as well.

The Sugárút was imposing even by European standards. It was architecturally impressive and its traditionally designed neo-renaissance apartment buildings as well as the luxury villas that lined the

last few blocks were dignified symbols of Budapest, the newly emerging metropolis.<sup>14</sup> The thoroughfare, known since 1885 as Andrásy Avenue, was inhabited by middle-class and upper-class residents and it also gave a home to a number of public buildings. Among these the most important one was the Opera House, designed by Miklós Ybl (1884). Also worthy of attention were the old Museum of Art (1877), the old Academy of Music (1879) and the College of Fine Arts.

Andrásy Avenue abutted on the city park and the transition from thoroughfare to park was solved by the creation of the Hősök Tere (Heroes Square) at the end of Andrásy Avenue. The entire harmonious square was designed by Albert Schickedanz. In 1896 the Millennial Memorial Monument was placed into the center of the square and along the long axis of Andrásy Avenue. The monument, celebrating the conquest of the Carpathian Basin by the Hungarian tribes in 896, was not completed until 1929. On two sides of the square museum buildings were erected. On one side the Museum of Fine Arts, designed to house the Eszterházy collection, was begun in 1896 and finished two years later. Across from it the Műcsarnok (Art Gallery) was erected. Completion of the square accomplished the architectural and visual separation of Andrásy Avenue from the most important public park in the city.

The Városliget (City Grove) was converted into an English park according to the plan of Henry Nebbien after 1817, but had its real growth and development come after 1870. Its development was hastened by the completion of Andrásy Avenue which brought it closer to the city. The luxury villas erected at the Városliget end of Andrásy Avenue and in the streets surrounding the park noticeably increased its prestige.<sup>15</sup> The Városliget gained its present form as a public park in the 1880s after Stefánia Drive promenade was completed, formerly bare areas were planted with trees and some buildings were erected in the park. It was here that in 1885 a National Exhibition was held and ten years later the Millennial Exposition was also held in the Városliget. The buildings mentioned above served the purposes of the exhibitions very well.

Almost every level of society liked and enjoyed the Városliget, while the smaller public parks in Pest and Buda were frequented

almost exclusively by the lower classes. The Városmajor (City Manor) in Buda was opened to the public in 1825, while the Népliget (People's Grove) in Pest did not become popular until after 1893. Interspersed within the labyrinth of streets there were also the promenades for citizens looking for restful recreational areas. One of these was the Széchenyi Promenade that disappeared when the Újépület building was torn down at the turn of the century. There was also the Erzsébet Promenade, established in 1873 at the site of the old market. It was here that the Erzsébet Square pavilion was built according to the plans of Alajos Hauszmann (1873).<sup>16</sup>

The metropolitan development of Budapest was greatly enhanced by its role as the capital of the country which required the erection of public buildings. The placement of political and cultural public buildings required huge appropriations which were granted as early as the 1870s and these expenditures continued for another fifteen years. It was between the 1880s and the turn of the century that the Kossuth Square was built housing the Ministry of Agriculture (1887), the Supreme Court (1896) and the Parliament (1904). Many new university buildings were also erected in the university quarter between Egyetem (University) Street, Üllői Avenue and Múzeum Boulevard. During the year of the millennium the Central Market Hall was erected as were four smaller regional markets.

In addition to the public buildings a very large number of private apartment buildings were also erected. During the 1870s and 1880s two-thirds of all new buildings were apartment houses and this ratio increased to 70 percent by the end of the century. These projects increased the number of buildings and apartments in the city and more than made up for the demolition of old buildings and for the slum clearance. In the 1870s the number of houses demolished was slightly more than twenty percent of the new houses built and this ratio dropped to eight percent during the next decade and rose again to 18.8 percent during the 1890s.<sup>17</sup>

There were major changes in the infrastructure as well. Metropolitan development made it necessary during the last decades of the nineteenth century that technical and other requirements for the modernization of public utilities be implemented without delay. All this could be accomplished satisfactorily only if the expenses were

underwritten by the government. Because the political structure was different in different countries, the strategies of governmental participation in public health matters also showed marked differences.<sup>18</sup>

In Budapest the provision of public utilities began with Ferenc Reiter submitting his plans to the Metropolitan Board of Public Works in 1873. According to his ideas the main sewer line would run on the Pest side along the Danube and beneath Nagykörút and on the Buda side from Szentendre Avenue to the present Bem Square and then along the Danube and Attila Street. It took ten years before the city finally started to work out the details of the plan and actual work did not begin until 1891. The first goal was achieved in 1896 when the main collecting sewer and the southern central pumping station were completed. All that was accomplished in Buda by this time was to cover the main sewer ditch, known as the Devil's Ditch and the establishment of a modern sewer system was postponed. It can be seen that Buda's technical modernization was lagging behind. This was particularly true in the newly developed areas where even the most elemental environmental demands were not met prior to the turn of the century.

The recurring cholera epidemics were due primarily to contaminated drinking water. For this reason alone the establishment of proper water works and of a potable water system became an immediate necessity. Even though temporary water works were set up in both Pest and Buda in the 1870s and 80s, the final solution of the problem was not reached until 1896 when the Káposztásmegyer water works were completed. It was after this that the main water line was placed underground between the water works and the Nyugati Terminal. By the time of the millennium the drinking water problems of the capital seemed to be almost resolved because during the past twenty years the length of the water mains increased by a factor of four and the number of houses supplied with water increased by a factor of ten. By the middle of the 1890s the half million people in Budapest had eight times as much water supplied to them than their predecessors had at the time of the unification. In addition, the quality of the water was also much improved over the time when most of the drinking water was still supplied by female water carriers of whom there were eighty-seven in 1881.<sup>19</sup>

So far as energy supplies were concerned, at this time only the gas used for light had any significance. Initially gas was used only in street lighting and it was only toward the end of the century when gas began to be used for heating purposes. By this time both the length of the conduits and the amount of gas used increased five fold. Electricity, as a source of energy for lighting the city, was available early but until the 1890s was used only sporadically and for demonstration purposes. Electric lights could be seen in a few theaters, hotels and coffee houses. The first major commercial generator plants were established in 1893 and this was followed rapidly by the establishment of an electric grid serving the more prosperous residential areas in Buda in the Castle District and in Pest on the Nagykörút. In spite of the great progress made by electricity, the principal source of light, both in the homes and in the public areas in 1896 was still gas.

Public health care was made complete during these decades by the establishment of hospitals. In addition to the development of private clinics, beginning in the 1870s, the city-owned Szent Rókus Hospital and Szent János Hospital were enlarged and the Szent István Hospital (1886) and the Szent László Hospital (1893) were established. During the two decades prior to the millennium the number of people receiving health care was doubled, due partially to the fact that by enacting National Health Provision Plan in 1891 the state assumed the costs of providing health care to poor people.

In modernizing its infrastructure Budapest usually followed the example of Paris and Vienna.<sup>20</sup> So far as public communications were concerned, the Hungarian capital at times led its Western models. The early introduction of the telephone in Budapest was due to the fortuitous fact that Tivadar Puskás demonstrated an early telephone in 1879, and only two years after Paris the first telephone exchange was established in 1881. In that year the twenty-three subscribers were served by a total of 373 kilometers of wires. The number of subscribers rose to 405 within two years. Initially only the industrial and commercial enterprises were interested in the telephone and they were essentially the only subscribers.<sup>21</sup> This fact illustrates the economic developments that were the important and essential components of city growth and infrastructure modernization during the two-three decades following unification.