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No previous individual publication has been devoted to the history of the Danube promenade, despite the fact that it has been part of the UNESCO World Heritage since 1987.

The reader is now introduced to the once famous old row of hotels, their architecture and technological innovations, as well as the hotel row that has emerged more recently with its old and new members, the former and present-day restaurants, cafés and the stories related to these establishments.

The volume provides descriptions of the works of art beautifying the promenade both today and in the past, monuments whose fate has been just as diverse as that of most other ornaments of Budapest.



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T LÁSZLÓ PROHÁSZKA THE DANUBE PROMENADE



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On the cover: the Danube promenade today
The inside covers feature the patio of the Café Negresco
in the mid-1930s

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“What is the Danube promenade?” asks Sándor Márai in the 35th issue of the theatrical magazine Színházi Élet in 1935. Answering his own question, the famous writer provides this description of the esplanade: “Let’s say that it is a dozen cafés with music, pretty women, a cosmopolitan public and terraces all in a beautiful setting with the view of the Castle, Gellért Hill and the bridges. And yet there is something beyond all this, something nowhere else to be found in the world in this combination of elements. This show window of Pest, glittering and floating, as if on the very surface of the Danube, is metropolis and lido, salon and pier, St Mark’s Square and the Levant all in one. The place, elegant in its very vulgarity, surprising and charming, never before seen and instantly enchanting, has indeed no match in the whole wide world.”

The promenade on the Pest embankment of the Danube often changed its shape between the middle of the nineteenth and the thirties of the twentieth century and was to assume a radically different appearance after 1945. This work endeavours to trace the history of this unique ornament of Budapest from its beginnings to the present. Besides recounting the ups and downs in the story of the famous hotel row, the restaurants, the cafés, and the public monuments, the book tries to evoke the strange life and the historically changing atmosphere of the promenade.

THE BEGINNINGS

A beautiful, neo-Classical row of mansions took shape in the Reform Age along the Pest bank of the Danube. The urge to build was given an additional boost by the Chain Bridge spanning the river nearby. The section of the river bank to the north of the new bridge was called the Upper Danube Row, the one stretching southwards the Lower Danube Row. Hotels were included in among the promenade buildings. The then three-storey high building at today’s No. 1 Akadémia utca housed the **István Főherceg Szálló** (Hotel Crown Prince Stephen) near to which stood the **Európa Szálló** (Hotel Europe). The familiar building of the old **Angol Királynő Szálló** (Queen of England Hotel) was built at the corner of today’s Deák Ferenc utca near the Danube in the 1790s. (The first of these buildings is still extant, while the second perished in 1945 and the third



THE DANUBE ROW IN THE EARLY 1800S

was demolished in 1938.) One of the finest architectural features of the promenade was the Lloyd Palace, built to plans by József Hild in 1830 on the southern side of what is today Roosevelt tér. The façade of this building was decorated with a tympanum and a sumptuous colonnade. Its name marks the fact that the building was acquired by the Pest Lloyd Company in 1851.

In the middle of the row of mansions the **Redoute**, designed by Mihály Pollack, was erected between 1829 and 1832. It was a building ranking among the finest. Its ground-floor rooms housed an elegant café opened in 1832. The beautiful neo-Classical building was not only the home of the billiard-playing café patrons, but also served as a venue of significant social and cultural events such as balls and concerts. Johann Strauss the elder played here as early as 1833 and the celebrated virtuoso violinist of the period Henri Vieuxtemps also gave several concerts. The pride of Hungary's musical life, Ferenc Liszt himself often returned from his extended stay abroad to play to the rapturous audiences of the Redout.

Later the Redoute became the site of momentous events in the country's history when Parliament was convened in its banquet hall in the summer of 1848.

The Danube row on the Buda side already bustled with life in the early 19th century. Although there were no paved embankments at the time (in fact paved streets were not much in evidence either), smartly dressed ladies and gen-

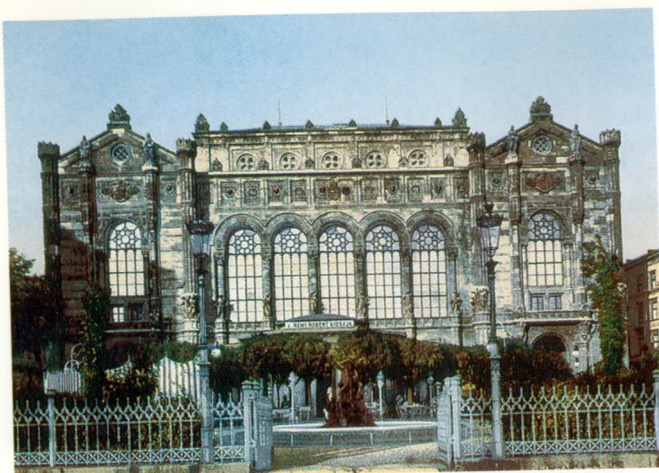
tlemen enjoyed strolling past the newly built row of mansions. As a series of water colours by the painter Miklós Barabás suggests, these early promenaders did not mind having to thread their way around carts or take their refreshments at the stalls of street vendors, squatting on low stools rather than in chic cafés. And yet it became fashionable to be seen here, to walk up and down the promenade and to exchange greetings with other strollers. And strolling was something that everyone could afford. This gradually emerging, curiously democratic form of social interaction created something in Pest that can only be summed up in the word *promenade*.

The colourful life of the Danube embankment in the Reform Age was evoked in an interesting way by Jenő Haranghy in the summer of 1946. The artist created four large tapestry-like murals to decorate the interior walls of the Corso Restaurant in Petőfi Sándor utca. These wall paintings, still in evidence, suggest something of the mood of the embankment in the first half of the 19th century.

During the War of Independence and the retaking of Buda Castle by Hungarian forces in May 1849, General Hentzi, the commander of the Austrian troops defending the Castle, had the defenceless row of mansions destroyed by artillery fire in revenge. *"Along the wonderful Danube row, a sight comparable in beauty to the face of a smiling young lady, thirty-two mansions stood in flames at one and the same time; among these was the Redoute building, the historic venue of the late Parliamentary session; the colonnade lay in ruins with its arches shattered,"* is how the sorry sight was described by the writer Mór Jókai in his novel *The Sons of the Stone-Hearted Man*.

The three-storey Hotel Crown Prince Stephen, which housed the offices of several government ministries in 1848, was subsequently restored, but it would no longer receive guests. The Queen of England on the other hand was rebuilt to plans by József Hild in 1851 and with its fine, original English furniture the hotel radiated the same calm that had characterised it before. This was where, for fifteen years, the statesman Ferenc Deák, architect of the 1867 Austrian–Hungarian Compromise lived.

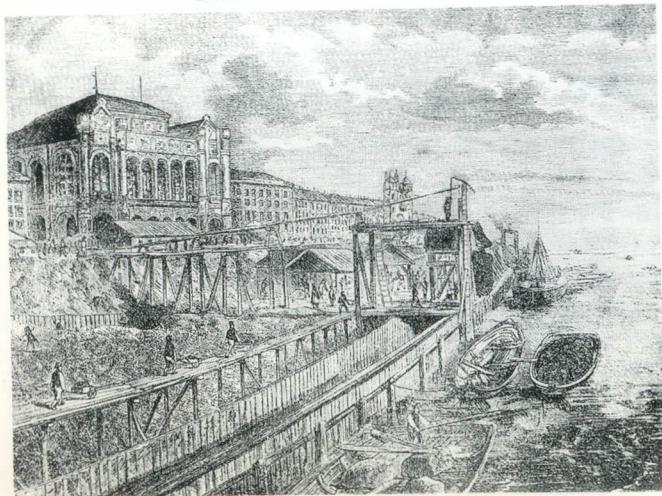
József Hild was, in 1853, the first to design a building with entertainment facilities meant to take the place of the ruined Redout; and in another five years Frigyes Feszly was



THE VIGADÓ AT THE END OF THE 19TH CENTURY
(BEFORE IT STANDS THE HANGLI PAVILION)

commissioned to prepare the plans of such an establishment. In 1860, the National Directorate of Architecture approved Feszli's designs, and on 15 January 1865 one of the most interesting architectural complexes of the Pest embankment, the **Vigadó** was inaugurated. The building, whose Romantic style was made peculiar by its mixture of strange Moorish elements, featured external sculptural or-

THE EMBANKMENT UNDER CONSTRUCTION
OUTSIDE THE VIGADÓ IN 1866



naments by Károly Alexy and János Marschalkó, while the twenty-seven murals decorating the walls of its ornamental staircase and banqueting hall were made by Mór Than and Károly Lotz.

A restaurant, beer hall and café were on the ground floor, behind the archway of the five-aperture main façade. North of the first-floor banqueting hall was the Csemegetár (Delicacy Store) or the buffet, one of its walls being decorated by Mór Than's *The Feast of Attila* and another by the huge painting *Mátyás and Holubár*, a large-scale work of Sándor Wagner. Originally there was an additional restaurant operated by the Csemegetár. The banqueting hall of the Vigadó, a room whose acoustics was a frequent target of unfavourable criticism, served as the venue for concerts given by such musical celebrities of the age as Ferenc Liszt, Johannes Brahms and Gustav Mahler.

In addition to concerts, the Vigadó was the venue of numerous social events. It was in the banqueting hall that the grand feast marking the coronation ceremony of Francis Joseph I and his spouse Queen Elizabeth was held on 9 June 1867. The room would see many more events in later times, too, ranging in variety from musical concerts of a serious nature to music-hall shows, from lottery games to political meetings.

Learning from the disastrous events of the 1838 flood, the First Danube Steamboat Company and the municipality of Pest started building an embankment in the region of the Chain Bridge. Between 1865 and 1866, the embankment between Zoltán utca and today's Petőfi tér, providing safe protection to the present day, was constructed to large-scale plans by Ferenc Reitter.

The resulting installation was more than a flood-control mechanism and embankment, as the land-fill operations created a new river bank. The municipal authorities were faced with a dilemma: they had to decide whether to let Palatine Joseph's and István Széchenyi's dream of a spacious tree-lined esplanade by the river come true or to parcel out the newly created land to have lots for a row of buildings. As so often before and after, financial considerations were given priority over popular demands for trees and parkland. Construction work commenced on the exorbitantly priced sites on the land conquered from the Danube.



THE STEIN HOUSE AND THE EXCHANGE

HISTORY OF THE PROMENADE FROM THE COMPROMISE OF 1867 TO 1945

The Compromise of 1867 gave an enormous boost to new construction work. Hungary, due to political stability and its gradual elevation to the status of equal partner in the dual monarchy, had entered a phase of substantial economic growth.

The land area created by filling the river bed by the Lower Danube Row was first divided into eleven building sites. Eventually a total of seven buildings was raised on ten sites between 1866 and 1872. The southernmost plot, the one bearing number XI, was left vacant, and was later to provide the space taken up by the square called Petőfi tér.

At the northernmost end of the row of buildings on the Pest bank the so-called **Stein House** was erected to plans by Antal Gottgeb in 1868. (The building acquired a tragic reputation when Pál Nyáry, formerly a respected member of the National Defence Committee of the 1848 War of Independence, took his own life here in 1871.) Owned by the grain Chandler Náthán Stein, the five-storey apartment block, built in the style of early Historicism, featured huge, ornamental attic towers alluding to French architecture. The northern side and the main façade overlooking the Danube were decorated, on the fourth-floor level, with caryatids (presumably made by Ignác Oppenheimer and Károly Turneszky). The Stein House was a rather short-lived building as it was demolished around 1910, the plot

being required for the Hotel Ritz. That was when **Restaurant Braun**, an eating place operating in the building and frequented mainly by grain chandlers for such delicacies as its famous matzoh dumpling soup, its brisket boiled with cabbage and its bean and smoked meat dish, *sólet*, also became defunct. (At that time, grain was kept in the storage space under the viaduct of the tram line which has been in service on the Danube embankment since 1900. The restaurant was close to the granaries and the exchange, which then operated in the neighbouring building.)

Also within the row of buildings on the Pest bank of the Danube, on the plot numbered II and III next to the Stein House, there was the **Budapest Stock and Commodity Exchange**. This five-storey building was raised in 1872 to plans made by Ferenc Kolbenheyer and Károly Benkó, both architects commissioned by the Pest Lloyd Company. An ornamental feature of the palace, built in neo-Renaissance style, was a squat tower at each of the two cor-

THE LLOYD HOUSE HOUSING THE EXCHANGE
IN A CONTEMPORARY PHOTO BY GYÖRGY KLÖSZ





THE DANUBE PROMENADE AT THE TURN OF THE CENTURY

ners on the south side. These provided a counter of sorts to the effect of the flat-roofed, one-and-a-half-floor tall attic towers topping the Stein House. Its huge exchange hall was on the first floor in the northern section and had a lounge, a conference room, and even a gambling room attached. The reading room of the exchange was decorated with four paintings by Károly Lotz, featuring allegories thematically related to the exchange. On the second, third and fourth floors of the Lloyd building there were rented flats, which were accessible via a staircase separated from the exchange. On the main façade overlooking the Danube the sign *Magyar Kereskedők Háza* (The House of Hungarian Traders) proclaimed the building's function. In 1905 the exchange was moved to its new headquarters on Szabadság tér, the Exchange Palace designed by Ignác Alpár. The old building, which had thus lost much of its former significance, served as a venue for cultural events and balls until part of it was connected to the neighbouring grand hotel, the Danube Palace, in 1937. In 1907 a café-cum-restaurant called **Deli** was opened on the ground floor. The establishment was, according to a contemporary report, "an eating place patronised by the Danube-side promenaders and the elite of the merchant classes". The Deli, which functioned as a café in the daytime and a restaurant at night, had a fine patio on the

promenade. (Following the bankruptcy of his business in the wake of World War I, the owner, Sámson Deli, committed suicide in the early twenties.)

Plots IV and V were originally reserved for the construction of the new National Theatre by the municipality of the capital. However, the Thonet brothers offered 404,000 forints for the land, the largest amount paid for a plot of land in Pest to date. The famous furniture manufacturers signed the purchase contract in 1869. The city spent this income on buying land for the future Opera House; the original owner of the latter plot then, in turn, used the money to finance the establishment of the Népszínház (People's Theatre) on Blaha Lujza tér, where later the National Theatre was housed for decades.

The five-storey apartment block named **Thonet Court** was built between 1869 and 1871 in neo-Renaissance style to plans by Antal Szkalnitzky and his brother-in-law Henrik Koch Jr. Historian Károly Vörös records in his volume *Egy világváros születése* (The Birth of a Metropolis) that the Thonet Court, registered as the largest apartment block in Budapest for years, generated the largest revenue, too, earning 106,000 forints in 1872, which is why the new Grand Hotel Hungária was relegated to second place with its 80,000 forint takings, though admittedly only in the first year of the latter's operation.

On the side overlooking the Danube, originally there were winged putti decorating the recesses of the arches above all three projection gates. (Of these only the pair in

PERSPECTIVE VIEW OF THE PROMENADE WITH THE ELIZABETH BRIDGE





THE HANGLI'S OPEN-AIR SECTION WITH SENYEI'S ORNAMENTAL WELL

the middle survives to this day.) On the ground floor there were a café and a beer hall. On the corner towards the Danube there was from 1885 the **Szidon**, then in its place from the beginning of the century, the **Ülits** café. On the south-eastern front overlooking Vigadó tér there was the **Pilsen Beer Hall**, which operated under various managements but had the same name for sixty years.

Besides the hotel row, the greatest aesthetic impression was made on those viewing Pest from Buda by the building of the **Vigadó**, designed by Frigyes Feszl. As the row of buildings was broken in front of the Vigadó, this Romantic pseudo-Moorish building, although standing in a street at one block's remove from it, could become, or rather remain, an organic part of the Danube panorama. (The back and side fronts of the Vigadó were extended to plans by István Linzbauer in 1872.)

Interestingly, the oldest catering establishment on the promenade was unrelated to the hotels here. On the square outside the Redoute there was an unsophisticated coffee shop around 1850 with the name of **Redout Glass Salon**. The rapid growth of this little café started when Márk Hangli, Ferenc Deák's bedroom waiter, took out a lease on the newly built Vigadó and the pavilion outside it in 1870. Although management would often change subsequently (lessees included Róbert Rémi and the Rónai brothers), the popular place kept the name **Hangli** until its destruction in 1945.

The glass-walled pavilion with its wrought-iron structure

was a frequent target of attacks in the press as many thought it was an ugly spot on the cityscape. And indeed, the construction was rather ill-placed. Rather than standing in the centre of the square (which was later occupied by Károly Senyei's fountain) it was placed towards the back virtually leaning against the neo-Gothic wrought-iron railing of the fence that is believed to have been designed by Frigyes Feszl. The pavilion and its open-air section blocked much of the main façade of the Vigadó from the view of passers-by. However, its fine cuisine and polite service earned it a reputation in Pest. A characteristic piece of trivia is that every regular guest is said to have had his or her own cup or glass.

The space outside the Vigadó was called *Vigarda tér* from 1873 and renamed *Vigadó tér* in 1879. The new square was flanked by a Historicist building on both the north and the south side. To the north stood the Thonet Court, while the site on the south was where the five-storey head office of the **First General Hungarian Insurance Company** was erected to plans by Lajos Frey and Lipót Kauser in 1871, its main façade, the most richly decorated of its fronts, facing the square. An indication of the financial institution's prestige was the fact that its façade was made of ashlar rather than plastered-over brick imitation. The sculptural ornamentation, including a couple of large atlases, was made by Ferenc and Károly Szandház.

In anticipation of an increasing number of customers from the promenade, it was in the ground-floor section

THE GRAND HOTEL HUNGÁRIA



giving onto the Danube that **Privorszky's Café** was opened in 1869. Ferenc Privorszky was one of the period's best known café operators, who once owned several famously elegant establishments of this nature. He sold all his cafés so he could open this one on the Danube promenade. According to Imre Gundel, Privorszky furnished his new café overlooking the promenade with the most absurd extravagance. What with the construction underway in the neighbourhood, however, he had little custom, which is why the luxury business turned out to be a financial disaster. The citizenry of Pest was too slow to discover the promenade and by the time the café could have become financially feasible, it had gone bankrupt.

The **Grand Hotel Hungária** opened near the head office of the First General Hungarian Insurance Company, at the corner of the promenade and Kishíd utca (since 1908 Türr István utca). Its plans, like those of the Thonet Court, were made by Antal Szkalnitzky assisted by Henrik Koch Jr. The construction of the neo-Renaissance luxury hotel, financed by the First Hungarian Hotel Share Company, established in 1868, was completed in only three years. Costs were enormous, approximating the then staggering amount of one and a half million forints. The investment, however, had conspicuous results. *"In terms of its furnishing and comfort, our hotel represents the best our age has to offer; besides the Grand Hotels in Paris and Vienna, there are hardly any in Europe that could compete with ours,"* claims an 1871 issue of the *Vasárnapi Újság* (Sunday News). The claim was no journalistic exaggeration. The Hungária was not merely the most elegant hotel and, incidentally, the first six-story building, in Pest, but one that truly matched the finest luxury hotels in Europe at the time. The building, painted light red between its ashlars, featured windows with green shutters exuding an amicable atmosphere. Of the nearly three hundred rooms, 133 afforded a view of the Danube. There was a chapel on the fourth floor with a large altarpiece.

Above the restaurant there was the banqueting hall, a two-storey high room, accessible from the foyer via marble stairs. The thick glass ceiling of the banqueting hall was supported by twenty-four griffin statues. The stone birds thus supporting the brackets of the iron structure were designed, like the sculptural ornamentation of the First General Hungarian Insurance Company and the Thonet Court, by the Szandház brothers, whereas the ho-

tel's stained glass windows were made by Zsigmond Róth. This formal atrium remained in use until the late 19th century, when it became defunct during internal reconstruction work overseen by Gusztáv Petschacher.

The hotel was equipped with the most advanced technology of the period. The main kitchen was in the basement together with the hotel's own bakery and confectioner's shop. The basement served as a huge larder and wine-cellar, not to mention a special ice room with its separate fish section and dairy chamber. Also here was the technical equipment servicing the hotel and the staff cafeteria. The ground floor provided space for eight boutiques as well as a restaurant and café. The conference and the telegraph rooms on the mezzanine catered for business-people. On the same floor were the barber's and the ladies' hairdresser's.

As well as a telegraph room, the grand hotel featured a lift, representing technology at its most advanced at the time. A brochure published in 1892 announced that, *"a perfectly safe hydraulic elevator relieves our most distinguished patrons of the nuisance of having to climb stairs"*. Installed at a later date, the hotel's famous automobile turntable was another sensation. Türr István utca was far too narrow outside the main entrance to allow a car to turn around with any degree of ease, which is why the management had a turntable built into the street. This spared guests the trouble of having to reverse their cars.

However advanced, it was nevertheless not its technological innovations that earned the hotel its fame but its comfortable rooms, elegant furniture, gourmet cuisine and fine dinner services. Every guest received a daily issue of the hotel's trilingual newspaper.

The Hungária was visited by a whole array of international celebrities. In 1877, Ferenc Liszt gave a concert here (a plaque was installed in the thirties in memory of the event). Other noted guests included Edison and Puccini, Richard Strauss and Vaslav Nizhinsky. Theodore Roosevelt, who came to Budapest with the express wish to meet the writer of *St Peter's Umbrella*, received the acclaimed Hungarian novelist Kálmán Mikszáth in the Hungária.

Next to the Grand Hotel Hungária, in fact built onto it and in the same neo-Classical style, the **Lévay House** was erected around 1870 to plans by István Linzbauer. This was operated as an apartment building by its owner, Henrik Lévay.



THE HEINRICH HOUSE (LATER THE CARLTON)
WITH THE PETŐFI STATUE IN THE FOREGROUND

In late 1860, the so-called **Heinrich House** was built at the southernmost end of the row, next to the Lévy House. Antal Gottgeb's design was characterised by the neo-Renaissance, Historicist style of most of the other buildings on the promenade. On the ground floor of István Heinrich's four-storey apartment building there was the **Steingassner** later **Petőfi Café**. This establishment was mainly patronised by middle-class guests, including women – a striking novelty at the time. Anecdotal evidence has it that the place was often visited by Kálmán Mikszáth and, before he organised his own table society in the Abbázia, Károly Eötvös as well.

Another sign of urbanisation was the fact that the Danube embankment, together with the streets Váci utca and Dorottya utca, received asphalt paving in 1872, among the first to do so in Pest. Tivadar Puskás's epoch-making invention of the telephone exchange opened, after Boston and Paris, in the Lipót Town district of Pest at No. 10 Fürdő

(today József Attila) utca on 1 May 1881. From twenty-three at the start, the number of subscribers grew at an amazing speed and included, needless to say, the elegant hotels on the promenade.

Traffic on the promenade was increased by the passenger boats putting in at the wharf. After the First Danube Steamboat Company (DGT), 1872 saw the establishment of the Budapest Propeller Ferry and Sailing Company (CSÁV), which only carried passengers across the Danube between Pest and Buda. The crossing boats sailed from and arrived at the wharf by Vigadó tér. River navigation played an essential part at the time due to the fact that before the opening of Margaret Bridge in 1876, the only permanent crossing facility between Buda and Pest was the Chain Bridge.

The limits of the Danube promenade were marked by a monument at each end until the early 1900s. The first of these was Adolf Huszár's statue of Baron József Eötvös,

ADOLF HUSZÁR'S EÖTVÖS STATUE
(BEHIND IT THE FAÇADE OF THE HOTEL ATRIUM-HYATT)



cast in bronze and inaugurated in 1879. This Historicist monument of Hungary's famous minister of culture stood on a pediment designed by Miklós Ybl. Around the sub-structure in a semi-circle there was a low, cast-iron fence, which brought well-deserved fame to its creator Miklós Oetl, though regrettably this feature is now longer in place. Carved on the back of the base the inscription *Raised by the nation in 1879* proclaimed the fact that the monument was financed from the takings of a fund raising campaign. A small, black marble plaque and a bronze wreath fixed to the pediment were placed here in 1913 by Hungary's teachers as an homage to the statesman who had done so much for the country's culture and education. The gilded lettering of the inscription declares:

This memorial / is dedicated by the teachers / and pupils of Hungary's secondary schools to / THE MEMORY OF EÖTVÖS / on 26 October 1913, / on the occasion of the nation-wide celebrations / marking the centenary of his birth.

The choice of the southernmost end of the promenade, in 1882, as the site for a statue of Sándor Petőfi is evidence of the care with which the cityscape was planned. Miklós Izsó, the artist originally commissioned to make the statue, died before the completion of the large casting mould, which is why the committee contracted Adolf Huszár to prepare the statue with the proviso that he was to use Izsó's finished scale model as a starting point. Indeed, Huszár was faithful to his late master's artistic intentions, even though his finished bronze statue, especially in comparison with the romantic dynamism of Izsó's work, appears to be frozen in an unnaturally ceremonial gesture. The pediment was, once again, designed by Miklós Ybl and was made of the same Mauthausen granite as that of the Eötvös monument. Inscribed into the front side is simply the name *Petőfi*. The inscription on the back reads: *Built with funds donated by the whole nation, 1882*. By far the greatest part of the funds was raised from concerts given by the internationally-famous violinist Ede Reményi.

Squares around each of the two monuments were also created. The statues in the middle of these squares marking the ends of the promenade have weathered both the destruction of the old and the construction of new hotels behind them. Renovated and floodlit at night, they stand to this day in their original places.



MIKLÓS IZSÓ AND ADOLF HUSZÁR: PETŐFI

After the erection of the Eötvös and the Petőfi statues, the *Fountain of the Little Gopher Hunters* was installed in the park in front of the Vigadó in 1896. Károly Senyei's delightful, cast-bronze, genre statue depicted two boys about to pour water into a gopher hole. The composition, dynamic though sculpted on a modest scale, was to become a well-liked, standard feature until its demolition in 1945.

Expecting significantly increased custom due to the forthcoming millenary celebrations marking the Magyar conquest of the Carpathian basin, the general manager of the Grand Hotel Hungária, József Illits, acquired the Lévey and the Heinrich buildings. In 1896, Illits had the two buildings turned into a hotel, which was then given the name Bristol. Second in the line of the famous hotels in the promenade row, the **Hotel Bristol**, with its 102 rooms, awaited its refined guests. Its windows overlooking the Danube afforded an exquisite panorama. Its restaurant, famous for its fine gypsy music and patio, catered to the general public promenading outside as well as to hotel

guests. Of literary historical interest is that between 1910 and 1930 a private room of the Bristol hosted sessions of the *Nyugat* (Occident) circle, comprising editors, contributors and readers of the epoch-making literary magazine. Endre Ady, the legendary poet-prince of the period, also featured among the guests in the first years of the century.

In 1900, the year the old century turned into the new, a new means of public transport made its first appearance on the embankment – the tram service started. Of the two competing transport companies, the Budapest Street Railway (BKVT) and the Budapest City Electric Railway Company (BVVV), the latter was commissioned to build and operate a tram line along the Danube embankment. As there was no room for the lines on the promenade, the track had to be fastened to three rows of riveted iron pillars virtually forming a 498 metre long viaduct, under which the above mentioned storage facilities opened onto the lower embankment. The first tram ran the length of the 1009 metre stretch between Petőfi tér and the Academy of Sciences on 20 October 1900. For these trains, BVVV acquired new driving units which, with their 30 hp performance, were more powerful than the company's existing motor carriages. They were painted yellow (as opposed to the brown of the BKVT carriages). Due to aesthetic considerations, the power lines ran between the rails, but frequent technical break-downs caused by adverse weather conditions in winter made inevitable the instalment of the upper power lines used to this day. (The tram line has periodically come under criticism for disturbing the quiet of the promenade.)

The path of passers-by was separated from the tram line by a carved stone banister and a cast-iron railing. The railing and the candelabra, the latter part of the former, were designed by Miklós Ybl to replace a neo-Gothic trelis-work.

The inauguration on 10 October 1903 of Elizabeth Bridge, at the time the structure with the largest suspension span of all the chain bridges in the world, had a huge impact on the development of the promenade. The bridge, designed by a team of architects under Aurél Czekelius and completed in six years, was rightly called the queen of the Danube. From this time on the natural end-points of the promenade were no longer the Eötvös and the Petőfi statues, but the most beautiful means of crossing the Danube in the capital, the Chain Bridge, called Széchenyi Chain Bridge from 1898, and the Elizabeth Bridge.

Meanwhile, time did not stand still at Vigadó tér. At the beginning of the century, after a somewhat slack period, the new tenant, theatre director and writer Lajos Evva managed to boost the Hangli and, attached to it, the Vigadó Café.

The northernmost border of the hotel row was marked by the **Grand Hotel Ritz**. It was expressly built as a luxury hotel in the place of the defunct Stein House between 1910 and 1913 to plans by Sándor Fellner in neo-Baroque, Historicist style. The hotel, opened on 17 January 1913 and furnished with sumptuous elegance, not only impressed with its imposing exterior (the building had five floors like the Hungária), but soon earned international recognition with the high standard of the services it offered. The interior was more than simply rich in a tasteful manner, it was glamorous. Its reading room could have been the pride of any aristocratic palace. While just a few years earlier it was still a technological sensation in the Hungária, the instalment of lifts was a matter-of-fact feature in the Ritz.

No sooner had the construction of the Ritz begun than the competition involved led to the reconstruction of the Grand Hotel Hungária. The management purchased the building at No. 5 Mária Valéria (today Apáczai Csere János) utca for the purposes of operating its laundry, linen storage facilities and maintenance workshop. The main building was thus rid of having to house these essential, but increasingly inconvenient servicing utilities, which took up an increasing amount of floor-space.

The opening of the Ritz completed the hotel row, which was rightly described by Pál Granasztói in his book *Budapest arcuatai* (The Faces of Budapest) as having been "a major attraction of Budapest's architectural design, an essential element of the overall effect of the cityscape".

In terms of style the hotels on the Danube embankment fitted into the general architectural tendency characterising the major public buildings of the larger cities in Austria-Hungary at the end of the 19th century. These buildings could have been erected in Vienna, Temesvár or Prague, in Lemberg or in Zagreb. And yet the unique qualities of these hotels, especially the Hungária and the Ritz, raised them above the otherwise often high standard of other buildings of a similar nature in the dual monarchy. However, this is not the real reason why they became famous.



RED ARMY SOLDIER IN A WINDOW OF THE SOVIET HOUSE
ON 24 JUNE 1919

As units in the hotel row they became organic parts of Pest's panorama, creating an architectural assemblage that could deservedly become the pride of Budapest, elevated to the seat of capital city and royal seat in 1892, with a population of almost a million by 1913.

During World War I the hotels experienced a drastic decline in custom, so much so that the Ritz found itself in deep financial trouble. The hotel, navigating in dire straits, was taken over by the Grand Hotel Hungária Share Company in 1916. From that time on the establishment continued under the name **Dunapalota** (Danube Palace), even though the general public continued to call it the Ritz until and even after 1945.

In 1916 the lease held by the DGT steam-boat company expired and so did the concession rights of its competitor CSÁV the following year, whereupon the operation of the ferry service across the Danube was taken over by the Hungarian Royal River and Sea Navigation Company (MFTR). On a side wall of the wharf building erected by MFTR, an installation existing to this day, lines carved into marble mark the levels reached by the water in the great floods of the river. According to the plaque, the highest level of 867 centimetres was measured in 1876.

In 1919 the Hungária was requisitioned for the com-

missars of the Hungarian Soviet Republic and, accordingly, the luxury hotel was renamed the **Soviet House**. The new regime leaned on the dissatisfaction of the impoverished masses who had had enough of the world war, but eventually failed to enlist the support of the majority of the country's population. After a number of provincial towns, Budapest also rose to oust from power the dictatorship of the proletariat. The building of the military academy, the Ludoviceum, and the embankment of the Danube were both sites of serious engagement between the opposing forces in the capital. The rebellious gunboats on the river shot at the Soviet House, while the red army troops and the red guardists returned fire from the windows of the Hungária, the promenade and the lower embankment. However, the skirmish did not last long. The insurrection collapsed overnight and its leaders escaped to Serbia. At this time the buildings in the hotel row sustained no serious damage.

After the fall of the Soviet Republic, the early twenties saw the beginning of a gradual process of stabilisation under the Bethlen government. By that time the various irregulars had left the hotels they had kept occupied, and within a few years the foreign military missions also returned to their own countries. The hotels were eventually reoccupied by their customary civilian guests. Immediately after the departure of the commissars the Grand Hotel Hungária naturally resumed its original name. The promenade itself also came back to life and visitors were once again greeted with the familiar view of people enjoying a leisurely stroll on the Danube embankment.

In 1926, the **Hotel Carlton** opened in the building partitioned off the Hotel Bristol, the former Heinrich House, which was later reconstructed to plans by Lajos Wagner as a five-storey edifice. It was a fine, elegant hotel, whose custom was provided by the wealthier segments of Hungary's middle classes as well as foreign visitors. Among the palm trees in the open-air section of its restaurant overlooking Petőfi tér, the tables were set with snow-white damask tablecloths and the guests were waited on with ceremonial formality. Yet the restaurant prices were affordable even for the lower middle classes. A junior bank clerk could afford a fixed midday meal once or twice a week in the Carlton's open-air restaurant, and with no unseemly extravagance either.

From 1916, the Hungária and the Dunapalota (the for-



LIFE ON THE PROMENADE IN THE MID-THIRTIES

mer Ritz) were operated under joint management and at luxury standards. *"The most modern and cosmopolitan of the two was the Ritz, but maybe the Hungária was the pleasantest,"* says Pál Granasztói in his work quoted above. Under the terms of an agreement, the Hungária catered for guests from the west, while the custom of the Dunapalota was eastern, but often even better off, and domestic in provenance. This policy was of course observed only at the level of the most tactful recommendations possible, as the visitor naturally checked into whichever hotel he or she preferred. In 1935, Edward Prince of Wales and his large entourage, for example, took up residence in the Dunapalota during a stay in Budapest, an event that received extensive press coverage.

The Danube promenade saw its heyday in the 1930s. From 1926 to his death in 1940, Imre Magyari's gypsy band played in the ground-floor banquet hall and on the terrace of the Grand Hotel Hungária. Those for whom the prices of the elegant restaurant were too high or who simply wished to take some fresh air could, whilst promenading or sitting down in a Buchwald chair outside, still listen to the music freely flowing in the air.

In response to growing demands further cafés were opened. In 1931, Lajos Paulin opened the famous **Café Negresco** on the ground floor of No. 1 Vigadó tér (in the

building of the First General Hungarian Insurance Company), in the section toward the Danube where the Privorshy Café used to be. From spring to autumn, its elegant patrons would sit in wicker chairs in the shade of a huge marquee looking out from the terrace of the café. The legendary restaurateur Imre Gundel recorded that the celebrated writer and operetta librettist Ferenc Molnár would only take his beer if Paulin himself poured it into his glass. In the evenings after 1945, the popular composer Jenő Horváth played the piano and sang his own songs, many of which had already been broadcast on the radio in the early forties.

In 1934, the exceptionally elegant **Prince of Wales Night-club**, also owned by Lajos Paulin, opened in the front of the same building overlooking the square. It gives credit to the owner's business spirit that this exclusive establishment was named in honour of the forthcoming visit of Edward Prince of Wales. During the few days in September 1935 that he spent in Budapest and during which he soon became popular, the prince himself turned up in the bar for a cocktail or two on a number of occasions, which made the club particularly attractive to the snobs of Pest.

ADVERTISEMENT FROM 1937



Ernő Vécsey played the piano in the bar, which was famous for its exorbitantly priced drinks. More nightly entertainment was provided by two beautiful actresses, the blonde Csöpi Salamon and the dark-haired Lenke Szőnyi.

On the side of the Thonet Court overlooking Vigadó tér, at the corner of Mária Valéria (today Apáczai Csere János) utca, the **Pilsen Beer Hall** operated until 1945. Its huge terrace was packed with guests on a fine summer evening. On the front giving onto the Danube there was the former Ulits or, under its new name, the **Dunacorso**, a restaurant-cum-café that became so fashionable under the management of Lajos Paulin from 1940, that it served as many as three hundred suppers a night. The kitchen was in the basement from where a dumb waiter brought the meals to the restaurant level. When in Budapest, operetta composer Ferenc Lehár would often sit here. At night György Feyér played the piano. He would later become the celebrated bar pianist of the Hotel Waldorf Astoria in New York.

The elegantly furnished **Café Dubarry** on the promenade also had a terrace on the esplanade.

Needless to say, the Dunapalota also had its own restaurant with an open-air section on the side toward the Eötvös statue. Lajos Martiny played the piano, accompanied by his own ensemble during the establishment's popular five-o'clock teas. Next to the Dunapalota, on the ground floor of the former Lloyd House was the **Café Mignon**, also with a terrace overlooking the Danube. Inside in the evenings Antal Gorody-Goitein would play pieces by Gershwin with so much virtuosity that many of the Music Academy students became regular visitors to the café.

In the early thirties the **Hangli** was also taken over by new management. In 1933 the new tenants, the Rónai brothers, converted the open structure into an elegant café and restaurant, which could now serve guests all year round. Gourmet buffets attracted the visitor with their rich selection from the early morning to the late night hours.

The banqueting hall of the **Vigadó** featured events with such musicians as Jenő Hubay, Ernő Dohnányi, Zoltán Kodály, Béla Bartók, Pablo Casals and Arthur Rubinstein. In 1929, the king of jazz, Paul Robeson himself gave a concert here. The memory of concerts of an earlier period given by *Ferenc Liszt* is kept alive by a marble relief on show to this day inside the building, which was made by Fülöp Ö. Beck in 1935. To please the significantly increased

number of foreign tourists, the interior design of **Café Vigadó**, another establishment operated by the Rónai brothers, was given an emphatically Hungarian national style.

In 1934 the Association of Hungarian Engineers and Architects invited theoretical tenders, that is to say designs intended to remain unrealised plans, for the rearrangement of Vigadó tér and the adjacent section of the promenade with the aim of resolving certain aesthetic and traffic-related problems. The award-winning design by Dezső Cserba and Ágost Benkhardt would have doomed the structure housing the Hangli to demolition in order that the building of the Vigadó be given full justice. The plan would have sunk the tram lines as well as the motor road on the lower embankment into a tunnel beneath the surface. The tram stop at Vigadó tér thus hidden under the pavement would have afforded transfer to the planned terminus of the imaginary extension to the existing millenary underground railway, inaugurated in 1896 and called Francis Joseph Underground Electric Railway (FJFVV) at the time. Rows of trees and parks would have been planted over the underground tunnel. "*The cafés on the Danube will no longer be cooped up on the narrow and bleak terraces they have today. Instead, they will cater for their ever increasing custom on giant terraces occupying the entire space which is now reserved for the promenade,*" asserted Dezső Cserba in an article published in a 1937 issue of the journal *Városi Szemle* (City Review) about the advantages to be gained through the imaginary overhaul. The plan, like many of its predecessors, remained on paper. The trams still run on the viaduct constructed in 1900. The Hangli was also spared by the city planners, only to be destroyed in 1945.

In the 1930s new works of art were unveiled on the promenade and in its immediate neighbourhood. A grey marble plaque paying homage to the German composer *Richard Wagner* was placed on the Türr István utca wall of the Grand Hotel Hungária in 1933. The small monument featured a bronze relief made by Antal Szécsi several decades earlier portraying Wagner glancing to the left. Guests attending the inauguration ceremony included local notabilities as well as the German ambassador. (The memorial plaque was destroyed together with the hotel in 1945.)

Also by the building of the Hungária, at the end of Türr István utca, Pál Pátzay's work *Danube Wind* was erected



PÁL PÁTZAY: DANUBE WIND
(BEHIND IT THE CAR TURNTABLE OUTSIDE THE GRAND
HOTEL HUNGÁRIA)

in 1937. The statue was placed on top of a stone column standing between two similar pillars carrying a chain that closed the street to the traffic. The slender female figure leans against the wind with her clothes clinging to the outlines of her body. As passers-by could always feel a breeze blowing from the river at this point, the very placement of the statue had a touch of genius. Pátzay always used to emphasise that you should only make a statue with a specific, architecturally well-conceived location in mind. (The statue currently standing on the promenade is actually a replica. The original is held by the Hungarian National Gallery.)

In response to growing tourism, the **Dunapalota** was extensively renovated and enlarged in 1937. Part of the former Lloyd House next door was annexed to the luxury hotel, which added fifty-five rooms to it. In 1931 the reading room on the mezzanine was converted into the elegant **Café de Paris** night club. The roof terrace of the renovated hotel was used for dancing in the summer.

The Thonet Court, renamed Phoenix House in 1934, al-

most became a hotel, too. In 1936 a potential buyer intended to purchase the building from its new owners, the Corso Palace Co., for the purposes of turning the property into a hotel, but the deal fell through.

It was no accident that the promenade became more and more popular. Its buildings giving onto the Danube afforded a magnificent view from the Elizabeth Bridge and the Gellért Hill, to the Castle Hill with the Royal Palace and the Chain Bridge. In 1928 the municipal authorities ordered, at first for an experimental period, the floodlighting of the Fishermen's Bastion and the Saint Gellért monument, later the Citadella on Gellért Hill and the St. Anna Church on Batthyány tér. The greatest attraction for the public was the night-time floodlighting from 1937 of the Royal Palace, the Matthias Church and the Chain Bridge.

Although the inner world of the hotels stood in no stark contrast with the life of the promenade, the two were not the same. The hotel guests of the Hungária or the Dunapalota were prosperous people accustomed to luxury in their daily lives. Yet there were few who could afford to frequent the restaurants of these hotels. Those patronising the beer places or attending to five-o'clock teas represented a larger segment of the population. And anybody could spend hours sitting in the wicker armchairs on the

THE FLOODLIT CHAIN BRIDGE, THE MATTHIAS CHURCH
AND THE FISHERMEN'S BASTION FROM THE PROMENADE



cafés' terraces outside, sipping away at a cup of coffee and a glass of fresh cold water.

A characteristic feature of the promenade was the large number (eight or even ten rows deep on Vigadó tér) of Buchwald chairs. Uniformed "Buchwald-ladies" collected the few forints rental for these chairs, which were constantly occupied in fair weather.

You could meet the whole of Pest here, from elegant ladies to penniless students who, leaning against the railings, listened to the violin music of Imre Magyari. Respectable gentlemen taking their afternoon stroll or discussing business could often see popular writers and famous actors here. The gossip column of *Színházi élet* (Theatre Life) liked to cover the promenade, where it was easy to photograph Elma Bulla, Ida Turay or Ella Gombaszögi.

The promenade was like a glamorous stage. The light superficiality of the life here is reflected in the following anecdote. The writer Jenő Heltai was strolling on the esplanade when he was joined by a young man. They were in the middle of a pleasant conversation when somebody greeted the writer. "Who was that?" asked the young man. "How do I know? I don't even know who you are," answered Heltai...

On 1 September 1939 World War II broke out, which soon cast its shadow over the carefree quiet of the promenade. The government decreed nightly blackouts. The famous floodlighting was over, leaving the Citadella, the Chain Bridge and the Buda Castle in darkness. Soon a new technical installation appeared near the Café Dunacorso on Vigadó tér in the shape of an air-raid siren placed on top of a tall iron post. Although as yet with a certain amount of discretion, a large proportion of hotel rooms in Budapest were requisitioned for military purposes, which is why more high ranking officers than usual showed up on the promenade.

Introduced in the following years, general rationing becoming increasingly stricter, together with specific restrictions regulating the food that could be served in restaurants, but these were less severely felt in the luxury hotels of the promenade. Rather than fall off, business actually took an upward turn. On hearing the gloomy news of the war, many believed that they should seize the time before it was too late. This ill-boding boom led to the opening of a new, elegant night club on the promenade in 1941. The

Ambassadeur, a new luxury restaurant-cum-bar with live music but no dance floor was arranged in a room partitioned off the Café Dunacorso by its owner Lajos Paulin.

Paulin deserves special mention here. As recounted by Imre Gundel and Judit Harmath in their *A vendéglátás emlékei* (Monuments of Catering), Paulin was trained in the Ritz where he afterwards worked as a head waiter. He devoted his life to the promenade gaining ownership of Negresco founded in 1931, the Prince of Wales opened in 1934 and, from 1940 on, the Dunacorso. This means that together with the Ambassadeur he had four establishments on the Danube by the early forties without which the contemporary promenade would have been unthinkable.

Hungary entered the war as an ally of the axis powers on 21 July 1941. On the promenade the Hangli became a veritable news exchange. Those in the know (or believing themselves to be in the know) compared notes here discussing the latest developments of the war as well as domestic and foreign politics.

Others felt that more was needed than café discussions. On 15 March 1942, the Hungarian Historical Memorial Committee organised a demonstration by the Petőfi statue at the southern end of the promenade to demand the war be ended. Passers-by on the promenade and guests sitting at the tables of the Hangli must have looked on in

PÁL PÁTZAY: PETŐFI (1942)



astonishment as the demonstration which had got from Petőfi tér as far as Vigadó tér was pushed back into Vigadó utca and dispersed by mounted police. The famous insignia of the demonstration, with Petőfi's portrait looking to the right and the inscription 1848 below, was designed by Pál Pátzay overnight. An enlarged bronze replica can be seen on a plaque on the wall of No. 1 Petőfi tér, unveiled in memory of the demonstration on 15 March 1972.

An entirely new situation emerged in the wake of the German occupation of Hungary which took place on 19 March 1944. The secret Anglo-Hungarian agreement of 1943 meant that Hungary was safe from attacks by the allied air forces, but as of late March 1944 aerial bombardment of the country, especially of military targets, commenced. At that time, however, the two sides of the Danube, the Royal Palace and the row of hotels, sustained no serious damage.

In autumn 1944, Regent Miklós Horthy attempted the virtually impossible – to lead the country, which now stood in flames, out of the war. Many believe that it was precisely here, on the promenade, that the course of events during the attempted breakaway took a sinister turn. In the early morning hours of 8 October 1944, the Gestapo kidnapped lieutenant general Szilárd Bakay on the promenade as this high ranking officer left army headquarters garrisoned in the Dunapalota to go on his supervisory round. Bakay was not merely the military commander of Budapest, but the designated leader of the breakaway. By capturing him the German secret service deactivated the military coordinator of the entire operation. The failure of the attempt at withdrawal from the war was followed on 16 October by the Arrow Cross take-over, which marked the beginning of the last act in the country's tragedy.

During the Christmas of 1944, Soviet forces completely encircled Budapest. With that a devastating two-month siege of the capital commenced. At the end of 1944, the civilian population sought refuge in basements and air raid shelters. At that point the hotel buildings still stood virtually unscathed on the promenade. The Dunapalota, the former Ritz, even had staying guests until the first days of 1945, right in the midst of the shower of bullets. True, these guests were accommodated in the air raid shelter in the basement. This is how Jenő Thassy, in his memoirs *Veszélyes vidék* (Dangerous Country), recalls a dinner in early January 1945.



A RUINED MAIN ENTRY TO THE DUNAPALOTA

"It seemed the Ritz had huge reserves of rice. The smoking tureens were covered with silver tops and French wine was served with our peas-and-rice dish. We finished off a seven-course rice meal and the only concession to proper form was the substitution of paper serviettes and a glass tabletop for proper linenware. The shirt fronts of the waiters may not have been quite as immaculately white as they would normally be, but they went about their business of serving up the various courses in the same impeccably polite manner as if no guns were thundering outside."

In a few days' time the Dunapalota burnt down after receiving a direct hit. Indicative of the scale of the devastation is the fact that the estimated value of just the glass and chinaware destroyed in the basement was in the region of a million pengős.

The Hungária, the other pride of the promenade, was hit by a bomb on 14 January 1945. The building blazed like a torch for days, as did the elegant Hotel Vadászkiút at the nearby corner of Türr István utca and Aranykéz utca. Only its front walls remained standing. The Thonet Court also sustained serious damage, and the headquarters of the First General Hungarian Insurance Company, with the cafés on its ground floor, also burnt out. The roof structure of the Vigadó caved in and its precious interior furnishing was all but completely destroyed. Only the main

façade overlooking the Danube survived in any degree of integrity. On the southern section of the promenade, the Carlton was destroyed, with only the Bristol escaping complete annihilation. Several bombs hit the viaduct of tram line No. 2, which collapsed at the northern end of Vigadó tér. Four days after the destruction of the Hungária, nemesis overtook the structures marking the limits of the promenade, the last bridges remaining intact –Elizabeth Bridge and the Chain Bridge. On 18 January 1945, the two most beautiful bridges of the capital were blown up by retreating German troops.

The raging battle destroyed more than the buildings on the Pest embankment. When guns fell silent on 13 February 1945, the whole of Budapest lay in ruins. Many believed that the capital city of Hungary would never be rebuilt.

FROM 1945 TO THE PRESENT

In many places rubble clearance had barely started when feverish work began on Vigadó tér in March 1945. The remaining ruins of the Hangli were hurriedly pulled down and the ornamental well by Károly Senyei was removed. In place of the well in the middle of the square the *Monument to Soviet Airmen* was erected. Inaugurated on 1 May 1945

THE SOVIET MONUMENT ON VIGADÓ TÉR WITH THE
CAVED-IN TRAM VIADUCT IN THE FOREGROUND IN 1945
(TO THE RIGHT IS THE INSURANCE BUILDING)

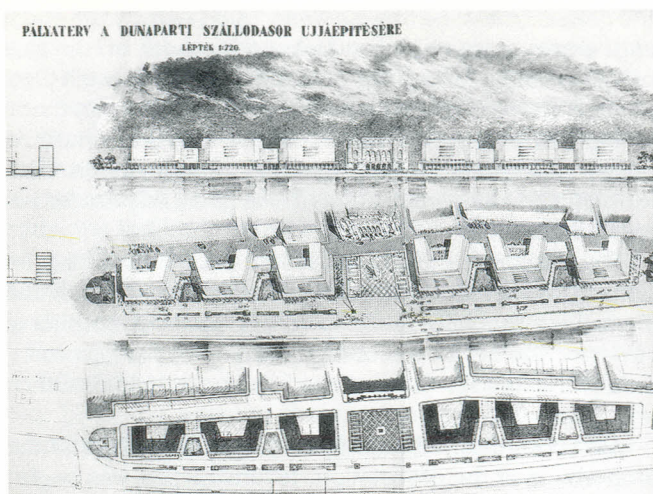


the carved limestone obelisk was topped with a scale model of a twin-engine bomber. Below the model, on the side of the column facing the Danube there was a gilt five-pointed star and lower down the similarly gilt escutcheon of the Soviet Union. The following inscription written in gilded letters was carved into the monument in both Russian and Hungarian: *Glory to the liberating Soviet heroes 1945*.

The designer of this bombastic monument, resting on an overdecorated substructure, is unknown, though the plans were probably made to reflect Soviet conceptions. However, the bill for the obelisk ordered by the commanders of the Red Army was picked up by the Mayor's Office of Budapest.

Life soon restarted among the ruins. Regardless of the proportions of the devastation, reconstruction was begun with incredible energy and enthusiasm. Registered under No. 7.467/1945, Budapest's Council of Public Works invited tenders for the rebuilding of the row of hotels on the Danube embankment as early as December 1945. The directives pointed out that "*the aggregate number of rooms before the siege was 633 (with 872 beds). It would be desirable to accommodate as many as 1500 rooms*". It was also stipulated that one parking space per every ten rooms was to be made available in underground garages. The tender invitation recommended sinking the tram line below the surface. A binding stipulation was that a four-lane road be designed for the lower embankment.

The best known architects of the country participated in the tender competition. Of the seventy-two competitive designs, only one provided for the restoration of the burnt-out hotels to their original form with the only major modification that creator Dr Iván Kotsis suggested flat roofs. A common feature of all other works submitted was that each envisaged a brand new row of modern buildings on the Danube bank. Károly Weichinger planned three, virtually identical, U-shaped hotels with flat roofs to the north and another three to the south of Vigadó tér; the cornice of these buildings would have been level with that of the Vigadó, which itself was to be reconstructed. Weichinger designed a broad esplanade for the space in front of the hotel row, with trams running under the surface. Paving similar to the ornamental stone covering of Heroes' Square would have surrounded the Soviet airmen's monument. The other designs involved embankment buildings



KÁROLY WEICHINGER'S RECONSTRUCTION DESIGN FROM 1946

usually higher than the Vigadó. One awardee, Vilmos Tárnok designed just two enormous hotel complexes, instead of separate buildings. (The idea resurfaced two decades later in designs made by József Finta.) Besides their modernity, these designs had the potential, at least in hindsight, of the depressing uniformity which was to characterise future housing developments.

Later the idea emerged that all the damaged buildings in the hotel row be demolished and their space be turned into parkland. That would have made visible the surviving section of Pest's war-torn pride of a bygone era – an architecturally homogenous group of 19th century neo-Classical buildings. What eventually happened was that, in the rather optimistic spirit of anticipating the construction of a new hotel row, the burnt-out but not hopelessly damaged buildings were all pulled down with the only exception of the Bristol and the Thonet Court.

In the event, the issue of the hotel row was dropped for a decade. Even the idea of renovating the Vigadó was debated, but the ruined building was at least conserved. However, a wave of changing street signs soon overtook the neighbourhood. As of 1946, the new name of Vigadó tér was *Molotov tér*. Real progress was only made in the field of transport. The bombed viaduct on the embankment was restored in 1946, the rebuilding of the Chain Bridge had also been completed by 20 November 1949,

and tram No. 2 could now run all the way to the Pest end of Margaret Bridge.

It was in the building of the former Bristol that an although modest but new establishment, the **Hotel Duna**, was opened after the war. However, the bustling life of earlier times did not return to the promenade. True enough, it had nowhere to return to. The visitor arriving at Petőfi tér was greeted by the sad sight of the ruins of what was once Elizabeth Bridge – a lonely pylon and some suspension chains that had fallen into the Danube. Most of the buildings that had made up the hotel row, with the remains of the Hungária, the Dunapalota and the Carlton among them, had been pulled down in 1948. This had also been the fate of the Lloyd Palace, despite all the protestations of the monument preservation experts.

The railing once designed by Miklós Ybl was also torn to pieces in several places. The surviving lamp posts stood in the dark for decades without their lamps, like beheaded trunks. The remains of the Buchwald chairs were carted off to a scrap yard. Pál Pátzay's statue *Danube Wind* was removed to be erected, like Senyei's ornamental well, at the Dagály Spa in 1950. Across the river on the Buda side the despondent sight of the burnt-out Royal Palace and the ruined Sándor Palace (the building that had once housed the prime minister's offices) struck the visitor standing on the promenade.

From 1949 on the darkness of the Rákosi era descended on the country. Developing the tourist industry and encouraging foreign investment were out of the question. It was not just the majority of its famous buildings that the Danube promenade had lost. It also ceased to exist as a focus of social intercourse. The promenade, this element of bourgeois life officially branded objectionable, was to be forgotten. The ground floor of the Thonet Court where the now defunct restaurants and cafés of pre-war times (the Pilsen Beer Hall, the Dubarry or the Ambassadeur) had been, was now turned into offices and storage facilities. It was part of this general tendency that in 1952 a new statue was set up in the square now named after Molotov. As the building of the First General Hungarian Insurance Company, burnt out during the war, had been demolished years earlier, the head office of the government bureau (IVATERV), erected in 1951 on the spot where the Queen of England had been, received the street sign with No. 1. Today the building houses offices of the Commerce and



THE HEAD OFFICE OF ÚVATERV, COMPLETED IN 1951

Credit Bank. It was here, outside the bureau for planning and design, a modern, seven-storey construction built to plans by István Nyíri, that Dezső Győry's statue *Young Architects* was erected. The three-and-a-half metre, carved limestone work featured two young architects, a man and a woman, holding a theodolite. This socialist realist statue, which was meant to represent the dynamism of reconstruction, was not thematically related to the square, let alone to the virtually non-existent promenade, but reflected the function of the ÚVATERV headquarters.

The events of the 1956 revolution did not cause any harm to the Danube promenade, which was now "lined" by only two buildings, the war-damaged Hotel Duna and the Thonet Court. Only the *Monument to Soviet Airmen* was deprived of its ostentatious decorations.

After 1956 the obelisk was restored, now in a more modest form (without the aeroplane). In 1957 the square itself got back its original name, becoming once again *Vigadó tér*. Not long after, Dezső Győry's *Young architects* was pulled down. It later reappeared in the provincial town of Békéscsaba around 1970.

The Pest embankment was given, perhaps in compensation for the removed *Danube Wind*, another work by Pátzay. The sculptor had been commissioned in the early fifties to produce an equestrian statue entitled *The Sports Rider*, which was meant to decorate the People's Stadium station of the then planned underground railway. The work featured the realistic figure of a twentieth century athlete standing mounted on a horse shaped in classical fashion. However, the cast bronze, 125% life-size composition waited years to be appointed an appropriate place, until it was eventually set up at the southern corner of the then empty Eötvös tér in 1958. In 1979 it was once again removed, this time because of the construction work for the future Forum Hotel. Today it stands in Gyula Germanus Park near the Buda end of Margaret Bridge.

In the late 1950s, the promenade came back to life. A

THE SPORTS RIDER BY PÁL PÁTZAY IN THE PARK WHERE THE DEMOLISHED DUNAPALOTA HAD STOOD



Budapest guidebook published in 1961 gave the following description of the esplanade, which was still closed to motor traffic: *"Here stretches the most beautiful and frequented 'promenade' of the Inner City and of the entire capital, an esplanade full of a public basking in the sun or enjoying a stroll from spring to autumn, especially on holidays."* Now the old practice of floodlighting the Citadella on Gellért Hill, the Széchenyi Chain Bridge, and the Matthias Church and Fishermen's Bastion in the Castle District on festive occasions was revived.

The Thonet Court's **Café Dunakorzó**, restored in 1960, the terrace of the Italian restaurant **Bella Italia**, opened in the place of the former in the summer of 1965, and the restaurant of the **Hotel Duna** (the former Bristol) all turned their fronts toward the promenade. A bright red marquee covering the terrace of the Hotel Duna somewhat relieved

THE DANUBE PROMENADE IN THE EARLY SIXTIES



VIEW FROM GELLÉRT HILL FROM AROUND 1960
(THE ONLY BUILDING STANDING ON THE PROMENADE IS
THE HOTEL DUNA)

the bleak sight of the dreary scaffolding around the building on its north and south sides. Incidentally, the southern scaffolding was famous for the **Dunakert** (Danube Garden) at its foot, operating in the spot where the demolished Carlton had stood. This open-air club, featuring live music and a dance floor, was open from spring to autumn and was so popular that tables were very hard to come by at night. The Dunakert, a pleasant enough place in spite of its peculiar setting, was a short-lived establishment. It was closed down before the demolition of the Hotel Duna in 1969 to make room for the capital's new luxury hotel, the Duna Inter-Continental. The roadway of the promenade was opened to motor traffic in the mid-sixties. Passers-by were obliged to use the existing pavements on each side. The real promenade, the scene of casual meetings was gradually shifted to Váci utca, since motor traffic which was gradually driven from this street, though somewhat shabby by this time, had preserved much of its elegance.

An important moment in the post-war history of the

Danube promenade was the construction of the new Elizabeth Bridge between 1960 and 1964. The snow-white, modern suspension bridge, built to plans by Pál Sávolly and inaugurated on 20 November 1964, provided a fitting end-point, as well as a means of communication, to the southern section of the promenade.

Elizabeth Bridge was still under construction when tenders were invited in 1963 for the designs of a new grand hotel to be built between Vigadó tér and Petőfi tér. The designs submitted, much like those made in 1946, represented two fundamental principles. One of the two schools would have had a high-rise of some twenty to twenty-five storeys, while the other envisaged a building lying along the Danube horizontally. Although prizes were awarded, no final decision was taken due to lack of finance.

The issue of limited resources, however, was shortly resolved. On the basis of a deal made in 1966 with the Inter-Continental, two Hungarian firms were invited to submit tenders. Before the year was out, a decision had already been made. Architectural plans for a new ten-storey luxury hotel were ordered from József Finta, a young, thirty-year-old architect employed by Lakóterv, in cooperation with interior designer László Kovácsy. Acting on orders, the designers had to restrain the arc of the side façade leaning towards the Danube, which is why the hotel creates an effect of overall angularity. The whole block of the building has thus become, contrary to Finta's concepts, much more rigid with an increased visual bulk.

Budapest's new attraction, the five-star **Hotel Duna Inter-Continental**, opened on 31 December 1969 with every one of its suites and almost all of its 340 rooms overlooking the river. Built with an underground garage, the air-conditioned hotel has a conference hall, several private halls, a coffee shop, restaurants and an exclusive night club. Artists Arnold Gross and Béla Kondor had made paintings for the café and sgraffiti for the Buda Castle Hall respectively, while the wrought-iron works in the Csárda Restaurant are by Károly Bieber.

However, there was a price to be paid for the panorama afforded by the windows overlooking Buda. The huge hotel, taking up all the space once occupied by the First General Hungarian Insurance Company, the Grand Hotel Hungária, the hotels Bristol and Carlton, turns one enormously massive, windowless stone wall to the city on its Apáczai Csere János utca front. Moreover, the hotel per-

manently closed off the exit from Türr István utca to the promenade.

Designers were not only obliged to bear in mind the panorama, but also had to take into consideration the increasing motor traffic of the former promenade on the bank of the Danube. That is why the hotel's open-air terrace, raised above street level, was provided with a one-and-a-half metre high limestone breastwork. This parapet did in fact provide protection from the unwholesome effects of the traffic, but today having lost its original function, with cars banned from the promenade which is once again reserved for pedestrians, it separates, even segregates the space behind it.

Until the opening of the Hilton in the Castle District of Buda, the Hotel Duna Inter-Continental was the only five-star hotel in Budapest. A whole array of celebrities stayed here. Although contemporary daily papers devoted only a few lines to the event, it remained no secret that in 1972 Elizabeth Taylor celebrated her fortieth birthday here in the company of her husband Richard Burton and such international stars as Ringo Starr, Raquel Welch and Grace Kelly, who was already Princess of Monaco at the time.

The *Monument to Soviet Airmen* on Vigadó tér was replaced in 1975. The carved limestone monument was demolished and replaced by a more restrained new obelisk carved of expensive Swedish granite to plans by József Schall.

The opening of the rebuilt **Vigadó** in 1980 marked an important stage in the reconstruction of the promenade. Work started in 1967 to plans by György Tiry resulted in the restoration of the building to its former shape outside. On the inside, the builders managed to reconstruct the original design of the foyer on the ground floor and the ornamental stairway, and the once famous banqueting hall was also given a shape approximating its earlier appearance. Several smaller auditoria and rehearsal rooms were created in the renewed Vigadó. A smart, modern beer-hall-cum-restaurant was opened on the ground floor, while the southern wing houses temporary art exhibitions on the two floors of the Vigadó Gallery.

With money provided by an Austrian credit earmarked for tourism development, and to plans by József Finta, the construction of a new hotel started in 1979 between the former Dunapalota and the Lloyd House. Opened in 1981, the **Hotel Forum** rose to a height level with what was then

the Hotel Duna Inter-Continental, rather than the neighbouring building, the Thonet Court. In order to create a homogeneous hotel row on the promenade, the idea of demolishing the latter was raised. However, the idea, possibly because of the foreseeable magnitude of compensation sums, was abandoned, so the old building was given a face lift instead. To make allowances for this new situation, József Finta lowered part of the external façade ornamentation of the Forum to the level of the Thonet Court.

The hotel, which features a two-level underground garage as well as 408 rooms, can boast several precious works of art. The wall of the first floor, which is the most emphatic and most successful part of the interior design, is decorated with a hand-made tapestry created by artist Magda Pászthy Eleőd. The Vienna Café, which soon became a popular unit of the hotel and was given several tokens of international recognition, greets the guest entering it with a relief. Carved of wood by Pál Kő and Gizella Péterfi in 1981, the work evokes the atmosphere of the late 19th century. The café, although with no direct link to the promenade, has been one of the best liked places in the hotel since its opening, frequented by Hungarian as well as foreign guests.

In 1981, construction of the Forum's underground garage necessitated removal of the statue of József Eötvös, but within a few months the monument was returned to its original place completely renovated. *"A small piazza with a classical pattern in a rectangular frame was formed around the statue; the web-like arrangement of the paving creates a small island in the diagonal space,"* is how its designer László Wild describes the view. Eötvös tér, in view of the well harmonised spaces of the driveway and the pavement, has been rightly characterised as "the aesthetically and architecturally finest section of the rebuilt Danube promenade."

Our survey would be incomplete without mentioning the **Hotel Atrium-Hyatt**, designed by Tibor Zalaváry and opened in 1982, which is not in fact part of the promenade, but, serving as an eastern boundary for Eötvös tér, its bulk does alter the perspective view of the esplanade. The beer hall on the ground floor towards the Danube of this five-star luxury hotel, as well as the first-floor night club and restaurant provide a breath-taking night view of the floodlit Széchenyi Chain Bridge, the former Royal Palace on Castle Hill rising above the river on the Buda side, the



RECONSTRUCTED RAILING AND LAMP POST

similarly floodlit Eötvös statue and the promenade bustling with life.

What fundamentally changed the life of the promenade was the completion of the decorative paving of the esplanade (started in 1981 and finished in 1983) as part of the overall work related to the construction of the Hotel Forum. What is even more important is that on this occasion motor traffic was banned from the area. The separation of the pavement from the street level was therefore eliminated with the laying down of washed-surface, cast-stone slabs. It was also then that the cast-iron railing separating the tram line was restored and when replicas of the old Buchwald chairs appeared together with the ornamental cast-iron pillars from which hung chain-barriers closing the precinct to traffic. The baskets protecting tree trunks, the disc-shaped grills around tree-bottoms, the Haidecker-wire tipping litter-bins and the traditional green-and-yellow telephone booths and red letter boxes also evoke the atmosphere of the turn of the century. The old trees had been badly damaged during the war and given that construction work had grown too large, they were now



PETŐFI WELL DESIGNED BY LÁSZLÓ WILD

new replaced with ash trees. The few healthy trees, such as the robinias in the section towards the Chain Bridge and a Japanese acacia by Vigadó tér, which had survived the destruction, were not cut down, and the sycamores on Petőfi tér were also spared.

The reborn promenade was also enriched with some new works of art. To close the cast-stone covered esplanade on the south, László Wild designed a small ornamental fountain. The *Petőfi Fountain*, which evokes the style of neo-Classical architecture, was erected in 1983; its four basins hold the water splashing out of bronze spouts set in metal rosettes.

It was also Wild who, in 1984, designed two *flagstaffs* to stand on either side of the red granite obelisk on Vigadó tér. The ten-metre tall metal poles, topped with gilt finials and set into limestone pediments decorated with bronze laurel wreaths, were painted red, white and green, Hungary's national colours, to offset, decidedly if tactfully, the Soviet Memorial beside them.

The **Hotel Duna Inter-Continental** was greatly modernised in 1986. The southern section of the first-floor terrace was converted into an indoor facility with swimming

pool and fitness centre – criteria of the hotel's eligibility as a five-star establishment. As motor traffic had been permanently eliminated, the entrance giving onto the flight of stairs leading to this spot was closed and the main entrance on the south, opening to Petőfi tér, became the major access to the hotel.

The two-storey office block and row of shops connected to the hotel was also rebuilt, which added considerable extra floor space to the building. On the first floor there is now a branch of the Hertz car-rental company together with a few smaller shops and a Delta Airlines office. An exotic Thai restaurant called **Authentic Thai Cuisine** and the local office of the Turkish airline opened on the ground floor in the mid-nineties. To preserve stylistic uniformity, the side building was reconstructed in accordance with guidelines provided by József Finta, the designer of the hotel itself.

The most interesting new installation of the promenade, László Marton's *Little Princess*, was unveiled in 1990. The clever placement of the bronze statue is a masterstroke in itself. The artist sat the charming girl figure on the iron rail-

LÁSZLÓ MARTON: LITTLE PRINCESS

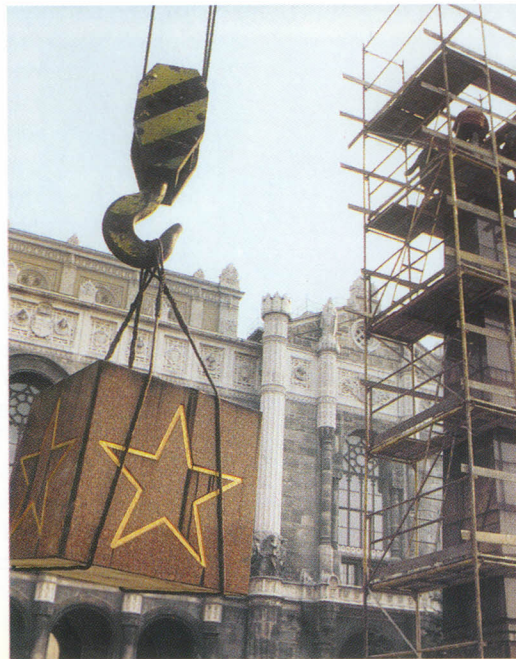


ing separating the tram line from the promenade near Vigadó tér. The *Little Princess* soon became a favourite with tourists and an emblem of the promenade itself, its image appearing on the cover of several guide books. (A life-size replica of the statue has been the pride of a pleasant square by the Mill Pond of the resort town Tapolca since 1990, while a bronze scale model made in 1972 can be found in the collection of the Hungarian National Gallery.) Another sign of the statue's popularity is that Péter István Németh has even written a poem to it:

*"May you live to hold
in times as yet untold
to brows creased up in many a woeful fold
your pert crown's truest gold!"*

In May 1990 the Danube promenade was visited by another Prince of Wales. In an episode of their four-day visit to Budapest, heir apparent Charles and Princess Diana

THE DEMOLITION
OF THE SOVIET MONUMENT ON VIGADÓ TÉR



took a pleasure ride in the famous tram No. 2 from its terminus at Jászai Mari tér to Vigadó tér. Here, as everywhere else, the Prince and his royal spouse were greeted by a huge and enthusiastic crowd.

However, the spring of 1990 has gone down in history for reasons other than the royal visit – that is the year which saw the changing of Hungary's political system. The political events left their mark on the promenade, too. The *Monument to Soviet Airmen* was removed. The red granite obelisk weighing several tonnes was expertly taken to pieces and removed between 9 and 11 March 1992.

Contrary to what many believed, there were no soldiers buried underneath. There were, however, Soviet monuments elsewhere in Budapest which stood above or near war graves, which were removed along with the monuments. The mortal remains of the Soviet soldiers thus exhumed were then reburied on 2 November 1992 with the appropriate military and religious (Eastern Orthodox) ceremony in section 215 of Rákoskeresztúr Cemetery. It was on that spot, too, where the almost twelve-metre-tall red granite obelisk removed from Vigadó tér was re-erected, now to stand guard above the genuine graves.

On 17 April 1993, the *Seamen's Monument* was unveiled between the Hotel Forum and the Thonet Court, where Szende Pál utca reaches the promenade. Lying on a large base made of cast-stone slabs corrugated in a wave-like pattern, the monument, a huge iron anchor, keeps alive the memory of Hungarian sailors who have perished in the oceans. By the lower part of the anchor, which is painted black, there is a cast bronze, crown-topped, laurel wreathed escutcheon of Hungary. Etched into a copper plaque by the escutcheon is the inscription:

*Idegen tenger zúg hamvaik felett, / Magyar, ki erre jársz,
köszöntsd hőseidet! / (Strange seas rage above their remains;
/ Hungarian, when passing by, salute your heroes!)
In memory / of those Hungarian seamen / who lost their
life at sea. / Erected by the / Hungarian Seamen's Association.*

The monument, hardly rising above pavement level, is guarded by two black bollards connected by thick iron chains.

It is part of the history of the statues on the Danube



REPLICA OF PÁTZAY'S STATUE DANUBE WIND
OUTSIDE THE INTER-CONTINENTAL

promenade that from 1972 on it was from the Petőfi statue that demonstrations departed on 15 March, organised by the political opposition to counter official celebrations of the event. (In September 1993, the statue was temporarily removed to be briefly restored.)

As traffic was banned from the area in front of the hotels and the whole promenade was returned to pedestrians, many began to miss Pál Pátzay's statue *Danube Wind*, which had, in 1978, been moved from the Dagály Spa to the Hungarian National Gallery, an altogether more appropriate place. During reconstruction work in August 1994 a replica was placed on the promenade, the original remaining in the National Gallery. Since its original location, the junction of Türr István utca and the promenade, had disappeared with the construction of the Hotel Duna Intercontinental, and as the junction with Szende Pál utca was already occupied by the *Seaman's Monument*, Pátzay's work was erected outside the main façade of the

Hotel Forum. The low marble plinth, designed by József Finta, is decorated with waves in allusion to the river flowing nearby. The inscription carved into the paving by the plinth reads: *Pátzay Pál 1937*.

In the early 1990s, a **red London double decker** was installed in the north of Petőfi tér, near the car park of the Hotel Duna Inter-Continental. The partially converted interior of the bus and the tables set up around it were used as a coffee-and-sandwich shop, but the establishment attracted little attention. Foreign visitors were not looking for an ambience characteristic of London here and the local public also showed moderate enthusiasm about the bar in the bus. The English double decker proved to be unsuccessful as a café in Budapest. By the mid-nineties it had permanently disappeared from the promenade, where it had never quite blended into its environment.

Among the reconstruction work related to the promenade, the 1995 renewal of the tram line had a prominent place. During the reconstruction, which due to safety considerations could not be delayed, the original steel structure was retained but a new bedding was placed beneath the lines. The pillars supporting the overhead contact wires were reconstructed, too. The lower embankment received historically authentic but functionally modern street lamps. The switch huts belonging to the tram lines owned by BKV (Budapest Transport Authority) were also restored to their earlier appearance. The viaduct and the storage space underneath had regained their original, early twentieth century form by late September 1995. (BKV runs an occasional nostalgia service on the No. 2 line, with restored old-fashioned cars.)

The most significant change in ownership occurred when the two major hotels on the promenade were privatised. The Intercontinental was bought by the Marriott chain together with another foreign investor. The new owners had the hotel renewed for a considerable sum, after which it reopened on 3 April 1994 under the new name of **Hotel Marriott** with 362 rooms and twenty suites. On its terrace overlooking the Danube and connected to the promenade, a beer hall, operating from spring to autumn, has been opened, while the coffee shop in the foyer features soft piano music, the sounds of which provide a pleasant backdrop to an evening tête-à-tête.

The other great hotel on the promenade, the Forum, has been operated as a franchise of the global chain Inter-



THE HOTEL MARRIOTT

Continental Hotels and Resorts (IHR) since its opening in 1981. Upon its privatisation on 6 May 1997, it was re-named **Inter-Continental**, by which name it is known to be catering for discerning tourists and business people. The hotel has more than four hundred rooms, including twenty-four suites. In the course of its internal reconstruction in 1998, a job costing \$11 million, the hotel will open two floors of rooms each with Internet access, two telephone lines and a telex connection.

Special mention must be made of the rebirth of the Thonet Court. Parts of the former apartment building house several offices (including the State Audit Office in place of the former Central People's Supervision Committee), while on the other floors there are flats. However, the offices and storage facilities on the ground floor have been gradually phased out since the middle of the 1980s. At first, it was the **Gösser**, today **Anker Beer Hall**, which opened around 1985 in the cellar of the northern section with a bowling alley, a rarity in Pest at the time. Later, in 1989, a record shop opened at the northern corner of the building overlooking the Danube.

The **Restaurant Dunacorso** at another corner of the Thonet Court has been run by the Schuch family since 1971. In summertime the huge patio evokes the promenade of earlier times. The menu features a rich sampling of what Hungarian cuisine has to offer, and guests are nightly entertained with softly played gypsy tunes. The Dunacorso has been the favourite haunt of several famous athletes and actors in recent years. (Actress Ida Turay, an ever-enthusiastic promenader until she passed away in



THE HOTEL INTER-CONTINENTAL

1997, remained a loyal patron to the last days of her life.)

A Polish airlines ticket office has been working for decades next to the restaurant. A plaque was placed on the wall by the office in 1959 in memory of the battle with the gunboats in 1919, but the memorial was removed in 1992.

The **Café Ambassador** opened in 1994. The former luxury restaurant, now employing an English name in place of its earlier French one, serves guests from spring to autumn on its large open-air patio. Next door is the

THE THONET COURT TODAY



Dubarry, which opened in the mid-eighties as a café but which has operated as a restaurant since 1989. It has a terrace on the promenade from spring to autumn. This pleasant little restaurant has its own kitchen. Guests can sample Hungarian cuisine at night with live piano music playing in the background. A curiosity of the Dubarry is that the original lamp holders once decorating the building on the outside wall have been restored to their original condition. Shimmering in the friendly light glowing in them is the memory of the old promenade.

For years the hydrological archives and library were based at the corner of Apáczai Cseré János utca, where the Pilsen Beer Hall had once stood. When they moved out in the late 1980s the place was returned to caterers. Today it is the Italian cuisine of the **Restaurant Marco Polo** that adds another flavour to the gastronomic attractions of the promenade.

The history of the Danube promenade is not yet over. As a final stage in its reconstruction, the *Fountain of the Little Gopher Hunters* is to be returned to its original place in the centre of Vigadó tér in 1998. Károly Senyei's work waited for things to look up in Dagály Spa for decades

LITTLE GOPHER HUNTERS BY KÁROLY SENYEI,
AS YET IN THE COURTYARD OF AN OFFICE BUILDING



BIRD'S EYE VIEW OF THE NO. 2 TRAM AND THE PROMENADE

from 1945. It was exhibited in the Kommunálexpo held at the Budapest International Exhibition Centre in 1993; ever since it has been kept in the courtyard of the office building above the People's Stadium station of the Budapest underground. As the cast iron fence on a limestone base around the park was restored as early as 1983, Senyei's work can return to its original environment.

It is also envisioned that the aluminium lamp posts currently standing on the promenade be replaced by slim cast iron standards with spherical lamps already planned in the thirties.

Finally, the passage by Márai quoted at the beginning of this work should be continued, as his works are as valid today as they were when he first set them to paper:

"Dunacorso!" they say with a foreign accent; and we should accept it that we own something worth a fortune which has the potential of becoming a global attraction.

What shall we do with it? Should we really rid the promenade of its tram cars? I don't know. Should we plant flowers where the wharves are? I don't know. Should we demolish this and build that? No one knows for certain. These are no 'deep' issues. But surely, the attraction of Pest's showcase is worth the setting to work of our best experts and poets, architects and painters, professionals and laymen to give the final touch to this fine shop window?"

It certainly is.

I. BUILDINGS ON THE DANUBE PROMENADE AND THEIR DESIGNERS

A) From 1867 to 1966

1. *Stein House*, Antal Gottgeb (1817–1883) in its place from 1913: *Grand Hotel Ritz* (from 1916 *Dunapalota*), Sándor Fellner (1857–1944)
2. *Lloyd House*, Károly Benkó (1837–1893) and Ferenc Kolbenheyer (1840–1891)
3. *Thonet Court* (from 1936 the *Phoenix House*), Antal Szkalnitzky (1836–1878) and Henrik Koch Jr. (1840–1889)
4. *First General Hungarian Insurance Company*, Lajos Frey (1826–1878) and Lipót Kauser (1818–1877)
5. *Grand Hotel Hungária*, Antal Szkalnitzky (1836–1878) and Henrik Koch Jr. (1840–1889)
6. *Lévay House* (from 1896 *Bristol*, between 1948 and 1966 *Hotel Duna*), Sándor Linzbauer (1838–1880)
7. *Heinrich House* (from 1926 *Hotel Carlton*), Antal Gottgeb (1817–1883)

B) From 1967 to the present

1. *Hotel Forum* (since 1997 *Hotel Inter-Continental*), József Finta (1935–)
2. *Thonet Court*, Antal Szkalnitzky (1836–1878) and Henrik Koch Jr. (1840–1889)
3. *Hotel Duna Intercontinental* (since 1994 *Hotel Marriott*), József Finta (1935–)

II. PUBLIC STATUES ERECTED ON THE DANUBE PROMENADE AND THEIR CREATORS

1. *Baron József Eötvös*, Adolf Huszár (1842–1885)
2. *Sándor Petőfi*, Miklós Izsó (1831–1875) and Adolf Huszár (1842–1885)
3. *Fountain of the Little Gopher Hunters*,* Károly Senyei (1854–1919)
4. *Danube Wind*, Pál Pátzay (1896–1979)
5. *Young Architects*,* Dezső Győri (1908–1979)
6. *Sports Rider*,* Pál Pátzay (1896–1979)
7. *Little Princess*, László Marton (1925–)

* Not on the promenade at present.

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