Two Cities – Two Sentences
Vienna and Budapest at the last Turn of the Century

ANDRÁS GERŐ

I. Vienna and Budapest are the two capitals of the Monarchy

This first sentence, containing a seemingly clear statement is, on the one hand, true but, on the other hand, it leaves important and significant points and contents still to be clarified.

In case of Vienna, the various linguistic forms of its Roman name have spread world-wide, with the exception of Hungary. One of the expressions from old Hungarian (Bécs), meaning the edge, the rim or the end of something, here became the word referring to the city. This indicates that, viewed internationally, Vienna suggests a kind of continuity, whereas from a Hungarian point of view it represents rather the edge of one or the other world, depending where one is looking from.

The name of Budapest comes from the merging of the former names of two towns. Looking at it from the direction in which the river flows, an amalgamation of the names of the Royal seat on the right hand side of the Danube, Buda, and that of the civic town built on the left hand side, Pest. There are no references to Roman origins (which, incidentally, there are: Aquincum) and from the name one can only guess that there had been once a settlement (Óbuda, Ancient Buda) already inhabited by the first Hungarian settlers where their chieftain Árpád had been buried, according to the old chronicles. (His grave has, so far, not been found.)

The varying cultural colouring of the names, however, is rather a point of curiosity than a significant distinctive feature. What is much more important is the meaning of the word "capital",

more precisely, the historical difference this notion covers in the case of these two cities.

A capital, at least in the development of European cities, is the settlement of special rank and significance, where the given state's organs of power are concentrated.[1] As far as its previous history is concerned, a capital can be a former royal seat, but it can also be a settlement that attracted the various branches of state power due to its economical and social importance. The idea of a capital is partly related to the process of becoming a nation, since becoming a nation entails not only the creation of national symbolism, but also of a national space. The national space is naturally the national state itself (or the state that is considered national) and another space-related demand of the nation's self-expression is created within the state itself, manifest in national institutions. Such an institution can be the spatial expression of the different branches of the dominant national power (parliament, government, buildings of the supreme judicial power), the secular temples of national culture (the nation's theatre, the building housing the opera, the guardian of the national history, that is the national museum or museums) and naturally all those symbolic points in space that express the greatness and glory of the nation (monuments of national heroes and outstanding figures).

Thus the capital is more than and different from the original royal seat. Provided... provided that a genuine national articulation lies behind the meaning of the word 'capital'.

In this respect Vienna and Budapest are to be interpreted in a very different context.

Vienna is the seat of an extremely heterogeneous dynastic unit with of varying geographic extent. Its central function was given not by a national background or a geographically central location, but by the fact that the Kaiser reigning in the Empire under different legal titles and the apparatus serving him were found here. Hapsburg monarchs ruled the empire mainly from here, they

lived here and were buried here.[2] Vienna was the seat of the dynasty, the place for the central apparatus of the Hapsburg Empire, and for this reason it could become the capital of the Austrian part of the dual Monarchy with a self-explanatory ease and historical integrity. In principle, the function of a seat could have been relocated if the monarch had moved to another place, but in fact, this could not happen, due to precisely this century-old inertia. Vienna fulfilled the role of the actual and real imperial centre so well that when Ferdinand the First (according to the Austrian numbering, and Fifth according to the Hungarian) abandoned the throne but kept his royal title, and moved to Hradzin in Prague, the centre was not relocated, even though the abdicated emperor formally remained head of the dynasty and therefore retained authority over the family wealth.[3] All this is just to show that the central position of Vienna had become absolutely unquestionable by the XIXth century, without any national power contributing to it. This "deficiency" was made up for by the fact that, on the one hand, it was operating as the actual administrative centre of the empire, enriched with the emphasis given by the dynasty wearing the Austrian title of emperor from the beginning of the XIXth century. On the other hand, it interpreted itself as a symbolic end-point of the "West". Metternich's famous slogan saying that the Balkans start at Karlsplatz refers to the fact that the value of civilisation was also added.

The growth or transformation of Budapest, or more precisely Pest-Buda, into a capital, on the other hand, was the result of a conscious process with a national goal - and a late process, compared to Vienna.[4] At the beginning of the 1830s it is Count István Széchenyi who mentions the "Budapest-idea"[5], for the country's body needs a "heart", a capital. The national element can definitely be traced here. This idea, which was later adopted by Lajos Kossuth[6] and the Hungarian liberal reform opposition, included the fact that Hungary did not have an "official" capital, for

the Parliament used to meet in Bratislava (Pozsony), the king's palace and the governing council were in Buda, as well as the fact that Buda and Pest were two separate cities in partial rivalry with each other. It is, then, not by accident that, in Hungary, the first permanent bridge over the Danube was built between Buda and Pest (the Chain Bridge) by Széchenyi, and also that laws recording the changes after 1848 placed the Parliament in Pest. It is also a logical consequence that in 1849 Bertalan Szemere, then Prime Minister, declared the city, now named Budapest, the capital of the country. After the repression of the revolution in 1848–49 the neo-absolutist reign handled Buda and Pest, once again operated as separate towns, as one of the several regional centres. It was only after the Compromise in 1872[7] that Budapest was declared to be one unique settlement, although the Parliament approving of the Compromise in 1867 had already been convoked here in 1865, and the cities on the two sides of the Danube were handled as a de facto capital.[8]

As a result of all the above, the idea of a capital came up as a strong national demand and its establishment was registered at the time as a success story of the Hungarian national consciousness. The fact that the Buda castle should function as a royal seat also played an important role in this national narrative. No one was disturbed by the fact that, after 1867, the royal couple preferred the mansion in Gödöllő near Budapest, a gift from the nation, to the Buda Castle which was austere and uncomfortable.[9] The main point was that Hungary, which the Hungarians considered as their own country, gained a capital where there was a place for the king, the government and the parliament. All this makes a nation consider a city their capital.

Imperial Vienna – national Budapest: perhaps this pair of adjectives gives a better clue to the real historical content of the word 'capital'.

That, of course, is far from exhausting the opportunities of contextualisation. Another issue is what Hungarians mean by "national" capital. The question is doubly interesting: on the one hand, a significant part of the city's population was not Hungarian, and, on the other hand, the majority of Hungary's population before the turn of the XIXth–XXth centuries had a language other than Hungarian as their mother tongue. Even after the turn of the century there was not a significant Hungarian majority. These absolutely essential and vital questions, however, point beyond the framework of the given topic; here I shall confine myself to noting that a major part of the population of the capital had become Hungarian, so a natural process of assimilation took place. As regards the country as a whole, an ideological concept was applied which, although it acknowledged ethnical heterogeneity, maintained the fiction of a uniform political nation, and this "political nation" was Hungarian. The breaking points of assimilation and the ideological concept started to appear quite clearly just at the turn of the XIXth–XXth centuries, but they became an unavoidable reality for interpretation only after the disintegration of the Monarchy and of historical Hungary.

Obviously, mention must be made of the two-capital concept of the dual Monarchy.

Even the name of the state formation, redefined by the Compromise, was not unambiguous. From a Hungarian point of view the expression "Countries of the Hungarian Crown and other countries under His Majesty's reign" bordered on linguistic impossibility. Franz Joseph published the royal manuscript that institutionalised the names – as they were to be used from then on – of all countries he ruled, on 14th November 1868. Austro-Hungarian Monarchy: this is the name the state was given, although we know that the expression "Austro" covers a significant number of Slavic populations and from a public law point of view it also included the Czech Royal title. The "Hungarian" part meant a kingdom

where Hungarians were in a minority until the turn of the century. Thus, the notion "dual Monarchy" was used for the lack of anything better and even "two capitals" is an expression with controversial content.[10]

The (apparently) equal centres of the two state bodies equal from a public law point of view were Vienna and Budapest. The delegations providing constitutional supervision of the joint matters linking the two state bodies had to meet alternately once in one capital, once in the other as it was laid down in the Compromise. However, the joint ministries (foreign affairs, defence, and finance to cover these) were operating in Vienna and the division of their activities between the two cities was effectively not so much real as told. The main reason for the location of the joint ministries was not only the advantage of Vienna's civilisation, but rather the fact that the monarch was actually ruling much more from Vienna than from Budapest. It was a constant wound for Budapest that there was no proper royal court in the Hungarian capital, the knight-marshal's office of Buda was subordinated to the one in Vienna, in spite of the fact that the Hungarian Parliament voted on the royal maintenance budget within its own competence. Thus, besides the apparent equality in the relationship between the two capitals, there was a permanent feeling of dissatisfaction on the half of Budapest (that, of course, manifested also as a "national" discontent), as well as a particularly serious desire to prove itself a belief that the Hungarian capital could "catch up with" Vienna.

The monarchy was dual only partly in reality, and partly in fiction; on the one hand, there were, in fact, two capitals, on the other hand, there was only one; these were the differing contexts of imperial Vienna and national Budapest. That's how our first, seemingly so unambiguous sentence could be modified.

II. At the turn of the XIXth–XXth centuries Vienna acquired a xenophobic, anti-Semitic political image, Budapest – a liberal one.

This second sentence, with its simplicity, makes a statement that can be reasoned, defended and supported. It is undoubtedly true that the city politics of the two capitals, marked by the names of Karl Lueger and István Bárczy were conceived in different ideological environments. The two periods slightly differed in time, but also overlapped: both left their marks on Viennese and Budapest city politics,[11] Lueger from 1897 to 1910, Bárczy from 1906 as a mayor, and from 1917 to 1918 as the mayor of the capital.

Before examining the main contextual elements of our second statement, it is worth considering for a moment whether a city can have its own political image. And how does a city get into a situation whereby it becomes part of any kind of political self-definition?

Naturally, it has to be taken into consideration that the function to be a "capital" makes a city carry weight, but this is not a sufficient explanation in itself. If what is understood by city development in the XIXth century does not cover everything under state-national representation, then it is mainly the state image that remains dominant. But in the case of Vienna and Budapest – with a delay in pace in Budapest's case – the issue was the establishment of a modern metropolis. All economic and social innovations related to the civilisation of the XIXth century had appeared as they were there in a concentrated form in the image of the big city. This is also true of the intellectual-cultural renewal as the big city provided space, opportunity, milieu and, not least, a kind of livelihood for the knights, grooms and servants of intellect and culture.

Regarding the whole of the Hapsburg Empire, it was only Vienna and Budapest that gave a meaning to the word "metropolis" as a whole and they were at the top of the league, even according to

European standards. Prague could not copy their eighteenth-century acceleration in the XIXth century. But Vienna and Budapest, due to extremely conscious city architecture and city politics, became metropolises of a million inhabitants in the periode of the second half of the XIXth century, around the turn of the century and the beginning of the next century. (Although by 1910 the population of Budapest was "only" 900 thousand, together with the suburbs it amounted to as much as 1.1 million.) Moreover, both in Austria and Hungary, all the other cities the capital were disproportionately "behind" the capitals, which meant that one had to come to one of these two cities if wanted to fulfil his career ambitions in the new bourgeois society. These two cities were more than just cities: they evolved into the symbolic and actual terrain for modernity, great opportunities and dynamism.[12]

Quantity factors developed into quality dimensions. The modern big city with its clerks, industrial workers, petty bourgeoisie and middle class, with the co-existence of the new type of city poverty and bourgeois way of life, with the appearance of the "bohemian", the "artist", the "paperboy" and other similar characters so far strange to the life of the city, became something new, something different. The new and the different became manifest also in the way the city attempted to give political expression to its own and its society's image. But true the inverse is: the quality changes induced a strong ideological criticism of the city, as well. The big city acquired a new political character in this criticism: it is treated as a phenomenon of criminality, trampling innocence in the dust. A kind of "secular devil" becomes manifest: it tempts those who enter, transforming their soul and even their speech. For the language of the city makes You different: the use of words, the pronunciation depending on the attitude, can elevate you or make you a "stranger" to the nation.

Big cities gained a hitherto unprecedented self-importance, expressed in culture, behaviour and language, and this, naturally,

became tangible in a kind of politics, too. It could arouse identification or simply sharp criticism.

In addition to this, the big city, precisely because it had become a big and modern city, had to face problems arising from the appearance of the nineteenth-century processes, condensed in space. Namely, the practice of the city management to restrict its activity mainly to the role of policing was unsustainable. The accumulated problems of the city demanded solutions that, on the one hand, should turn the city into a servicing unit, and, on the other hand, should establish the financial power and basis for these services. An increasing number of new functions came into the sight of the management of cities, meant to deal with a range of tasks from infrastructural needs to poverty, from city parks to arts sponsorship, that had to be managed with active city politics.

London was the first to face these recently perceived problems in a structured way, and it was there that the term of the new city politics, municipal socialism, was created. Socialism in the expression "municipal socialism" has a double meaning: on the one hand, it refers to the wish to take institutions, serving the main life functions of the community (e.g.: gas, electricity works, city transport, waste disposal, etc.) into municipal, that is public ownership. The word socialism, on the other hand, meant that the city management was thinking in terms of communities; they provided solutions for the community, and not for the individual. In other words, the city is to be interpreted not as a set of individuals, but as a community. This is why pauper-hostels must be maintained, the arts must be promoted and public spaces must be developed.

The need for "municipal socialism" itself urged the city to acquire a political image. It had its own, characteristic problems, it had to invent characteristic answers of its own.

The example of London became contagious, since all big European cities faced a similar challenge: the management of Vienna

and Budapest did very similar things, but embedded the same actions into different ideological contexts.

The different ideological interpretations and the city's own political character are relative, of course, as the big city becomes also an economically independent power, but it is still not independent of the State. Politically and economically, there was no intention to do this, nor was there a method. There might have been conflicts between the State and the city (for example regarding the nomination of the mayor), but this could have never reached the point of rupture. One of the sources of power of the big city was due precisely to its capital status. It could not resist what it was the capital of. And the inverse was also true: the State could not play endless games with its own "heart".

An individual political image had to be created amidst the sensitive but not unmanageable games of independence and dependence.

Well then, why were the contextual characters different when the political images of the two cities were built on similar problems, similar practises, and similar relations?

Some thinkers derive the differences in the ideological context from the electoral system.[13] The system of curiae in Vienna and the "virilist" system in Budapest (in which the payers of the largest taxes were better represented in government) were in deed different, they weighted the political intentions of the city dwellers in different ways, but this, in my view, is not a sufficient explanation. It is an important but unsatisfactory aspects, since it does not explain why those who voted for the city, divided one way or another, moved in the given frame of reference of identity.

Because, and this is the approach I would like to outline, the main difference in the intellectual character of city politics was given precisely by the differing frame of reference of identity of the two cities.

Budapest is the simpler case. The capital, and the very act of becoming a big city, was interpreted and registered as a national enterprise, so there was no significant discrepancy between the self-expression of the city and the ideological character of the Hungarian government. Hungarian national awareness was conceived in liberalism and the system after the Compromise maintained this self-containedness with some contradictions. The Hungarian "grandeur et gloire" was made manifest through liberalism, and this liberal nationalism turned out to be the guarantee of civil development. (A rather characteristic example of this was provided by the series of millennium celebrations in 1896, which allowed of serious development for Budapest.[14]) In Budapest's political image, municipal socialism (which, incidentally, was an anti-liberal turn) could also appear as the liberal continuity of the Hungarian national self-realisation.

Naturally, the new conservative anti-liberalism, armoured with Christian values, also showed up in Hungary: in 1895, right in the shadow, the Catholic People's Party was incidentally established of one of the greatest victories of liberalism: the separation of State and Church. But then the new conservative incursion, often with strong anti-Semitic overtones was held back by the national component of the system tied to liberalism, which ensured the stability of domestic policy. The internal political stability, created by the Compromise, ensured a hegemonic role for the Hungarian elite, and this political interest suggested that any kind of assimilation was advantageous, as it strengthened the social, economic and demographic weight of Hungarians. Anti-Semitic politicising, and the political stigmatisation of the Jews, who contributed to the number and strength of Hungarians, was not in the interest of the elite who wished to preserve this hegemonic situation. I state only that it was not in their interest to eliminate liberal nationalism, not that there was no ideological framework created as basis for this elimination. The criticism of Budapest, the "Judapest"[15]

slogan and anything related to this aspect was established in Hungarian political culture in the end of the XIXth century and the beginning of the new century, but it remained secondary while Hungarian nationalism had to maintain its dominant position in the multi-national Hungary. Its true strength and its development into a predominant political position showed up only after the disintegration of the Monarchy, when, in a country where 96% of the inhabitants were Hungarians, the political elite, showing some considerable personal continuity, was looking for a new social-economic-cultural enemy. As long as the lid of the Monarchy covered the pan called Hungary, Hungarian nationalism, that was thinking in terms of given realities, had an interest in maintaining the liberal political framework, and Budapest was also interpreted in this context.

Vienna is a somewhat more complicated case, as the city here had to be placed in a different mental frame of reference.[16] The Empire was not a nation. The nation was the German one. But Germandenoted another country: a country whose capital was called Berlin. Those who were thinking in terms of German national awareness involuntarily stated, in relation to Vienna, that the capital of the Empire should be a large but peripheral centre. Spoken or unspoken, the pan-German idea involved the depreciation of Vienna. The other possible option, precipitating a loss of national awareness, could be to place the city into a kind of world beyond nations. The social democrats interpreted things more or less in this direction. But the weak point of this interpretation laid in their concept of reforming society which was hard to accept for a significant majority of civilians. Finally, there was a third, Christian socialist interpretation, that of Lueger, that was adopted by the practise of "municipal socialism". This system of interpretation acknowledged that the strength and greatness of Vienna were ensured by its role of being an imperial capital. That is, this interpretation rejected the pan-German approach from a political point

of view (Lueger himself changed his views in this respect[17]) and took on an imperial character, Hapsburg loyalty, the role of a carrier of imperial "grandeur et gloire". On the other hand, however, it made concessions to a concealed national demand, in as much as culturally it made Germanisation one of the credos of city politics. This is why they had to make onslaughts on the Czechs and talk with animosity and condescension about Hungarians. Cultural Germanisation was a compensation for the lack of the national capital function and the inadmissibility of the imperial Vienna being devaluated to a peripheral German centre.

At the same time, Anti-Semitism, was convenient to partly channelthe accumulated social tension that gave strength to the social democrat option - tension that was due to the general problems of the big city on the one hand, and to the less regulated market economy, on the other hand. All this could be done, at least rhetorically, in a way that did not confront the bourgeoisie as a whole.

The special rhetorical mixture, covering the practise of "municipal socialism" in Vienna, was nationalist without a nation, anti-Semite without the total deprival and oppression of the Jews and socialist without socialism. When the lid of Monarchy was removed from the pan called Austria, well, then it turned out that every element of every option could change from a narrative into a political practise and reality.

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From the 60's, a special myth was created about Vienna and Budapest of the turn of the XIXth and XXth centuries that is now decaying. The turn of the century was, for both cities, a great era of development, the formation of a physical image that proved to be long-lasting, and substantial cultural and economic performances. People liked to mention the two cities in the same sentence, as their competition and co-existence rather strengthened the power

and impact of the bygone era. In my view, however, the two cities were located and interpreted (by themselves) in partly different frames of mental reference. The two capitals represented variant readings.

Budapest and Vienna are more like two separate sentences – in the same text.

Notes

1. For the General Features of European City History: Hohenberg, Paul M. – Lees, Lynn Hollen: The Making of Urban Europe 1000–1950. Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1995.; Lees, Andrew: Cities Perceived: Urban Society in European and American Thought 1820–1940. Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1983.

2. For the Imperial Nature of the Hapsburgs: Gonda Imre – Niederhauser Emil: A Habsburgok. Egy európai jelenség. [The Hapsburgs: A European phenomenon.] Gondolat, Budapest, 1977.; Hamann, Brigitte: Die Habsburger. Verlag Carl Neberreuter, Vienna, 1988.

3. For the 1848 "wandering" of the Dynasty, and for Internal Relations: Beller, Steven: Francis Joseph. Longman, London, New York, 1996.; Gerő, András: Emperor Francis Joseph, King of the Hungarians. Social Science Monographs. Boudder, Colorado, Columbia University Press, New York, 2001.

4. For the Hungarian aspect of the European city history: Granasztói György: A középkori magyar város. [The Hungarian City in the Middle Ages.] Gondolat, Budapest, 1980.; Bácskai Vera: Városok Magyarországon az iparosodás előtt. [Cities in Hungary Before Industrialisation.] Osiris, Budapest, 2002.; Specifically for the History of Budapest: Spira György – Vörös Károly: Budapest története a márciusi forradalomtól az őszirózsás forradalomig. [The history of Budapest from the March Revolution to the 1918 Aster Revolution.] (History of Budapest, IV. Chief Editor.: László Gerevich.) Akadémiai Kiadó, Budapest, 1978.; Gerő, András – Poór, János (eds.): Budapest. A History from its beginnings to 1998. Columbia University Press, New York, 2001.

5. Széchenyi, István: Secular, that is enlightening fragments in order to correct some mistakes and prejudices. Pest, 1831. 516.

6. The Documents of Lajos Kossuth, May 1837 – December 1840. In: The Complete Works of Lajos Kossuth. Arranged for press by: Gábor Pajkossy. Akadémiai Kiadó, Budapest, 1989. 393., 395.

7. The Parliament decided on the unification of the three towns: Pest, Buda, Óbuda and the Margaret Island of today in 1872, but the administrative, technical process took another year. (Finally, the unification took place on 17th November 1873.)

8. See: Siklóssy, László: How was Budapest built? (1870–1930) Budapest, 1931., furthermore: Budapesti Negyed (Budapest Quarter), Autumn–Winter 1993, 2. issue called Koncepció és vízió (Concept and Vision).

9. Varga Kálmán: A gödöllői kastély évszázadai. [The Centuries of the Gödöllő Mansion.] MÁG, Budapest, 2000.

10. A great help in interpretation is: Das Zeitalter Kaiser Franz Joseph. Part 1: Von der Revolution zur Gründerzeit, 1848–1880; and Part 2: 1880–1916. Glanz und Elend, Schloss Grafenegg, 1984. 1987.

11. A great deal has been done lately in the field of processing the Lueger Era and the Bárczy Era. A fundamental work regarding Vienna is: Boyer, John W.: Political radicalism in Late Imperial Vienna. Origins of the Christian Social Movement, 1848–1897. The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, London, 1981.; Boyer, John W.: Culture and Political Crisis in Vienna Christian Socialism in Power, 1897–1918. The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, London, 1995. A thorough and comprehensive monograph of the Bárczy Era is: Sipos András: Várospolitika és városigazgatás Budapesten 1890–1914. [City politics and City Administration in Budapest 1890–1914.] BFL, Budapest, 1997.

12. This transformation is analysed by: Schorske, Carl E.: Fin de Siecle Vienna. Vintage Books, New York, 1981. (regarding Vienna); by: Hanák Péter: Kert és Műhely. [Garden and Workshop.] Gondolat, Budapest, 1988. (regarding Budapest). (The work was published in 1992 in German by Böhlau Publisher's, and in 1998 in English by Princeton University Press.)

13. John W. Boyer rightly placed great emphasis on this factor.

14. For national contexts regarding the city related to the millennium see: Budapesti Negyed, Winter 1995 – Spring 1996, 10–11. issue called Budapest 1896.

15. Frojimonics Kinga – Komoróczy Géza – Pusztai Viktória – Strbik Andrea: A zsidó Budapest [The Jewish Budapest], I–II. The Judaist Research Team of the Hungarian Science Academy, City Hall, Budapest, 1993. A

comprehensive presentation of the issue in: Gyurgyák János: A zsidókérdés Magyarországon. [The Jewish Issue in Hungary.] Osiris, Budapest, 2001.

16. Interesting, but for me an often questionable interpretation: Johnston, William M.: The Austrian Mind. An Intellectual and Social History 1848–1938. University of California Press, Berkeley, 1972.

17. An in-depth presentation in: Hamann, Brigitte: Hitlers Wien Lehrjahre Eines Diktators. Piper Verlag GmbH, Munich, 1996.

BFL = Budapest Municipal Archives
MAG = State Monument Conservation Agency, Budapest