

CANADIAN CHANCERIES AND RESIDENCES ABROAD

Five major projects are presently underway, or have just been completed, in Europe. In November 1984, our new embassies in Belgrade and Budapest were officially opened by the Minister for International Trade, James Kelleher, plus renovations are proceeding on MacDonal House in London, Porta Latina, the official residence in Rome and the OECD Chancery in Paris.

In the June issue of *Liaison* we featured our embassy in Belgrade; let us now say a few words about some of the others.

The New Canadian Chancery in Budapest, Hungary

No longer will our Embassy in Budapest be hidden away in an apartment complex on Budakeszi Utca. This November 14, it was officially opened in an historic villa about two blocks away.

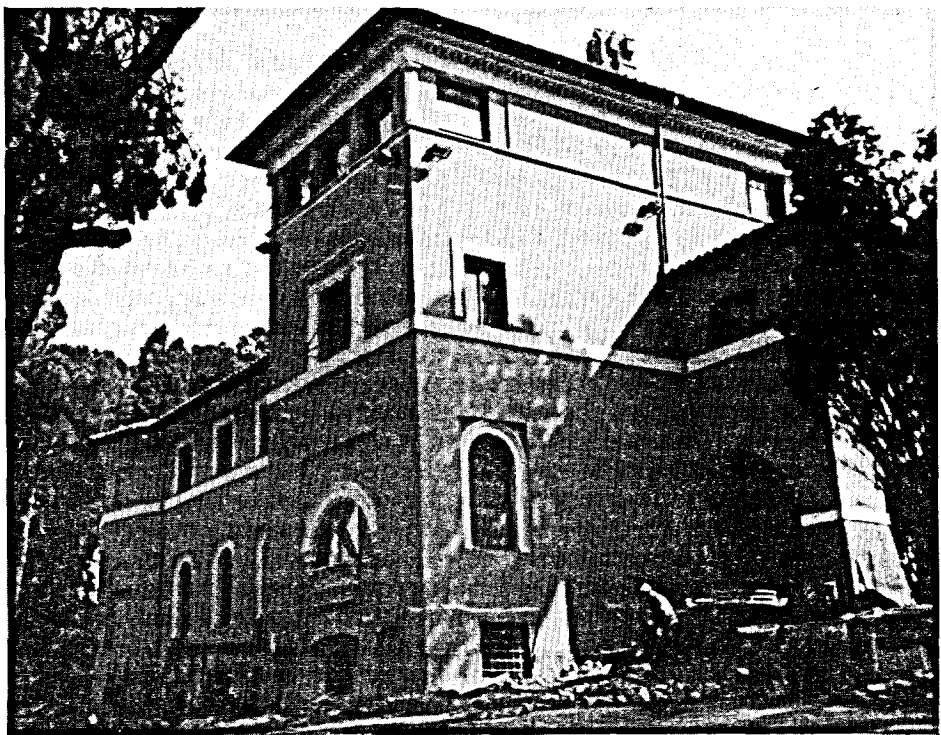
The property was first offered to us in 1977-78, but the lease was not negotiated and the foundation stone was not laid until March 1981 when Ambassador Dorothy Armstrong and External Affairs Minister Mark MacGuigan placed a symbolic metal cube into the ground containing Canadian and Hungarian coins and newspapers.

Major renovations were then required to convert the villa (which was built in 1845) into a chancery to house the political, trade and administration sections. An annex also had to be built to accommodate the consular/immigration section and to provide additional space for an entertainment area, exercise room, storage room and garage.

All the initial work was carried out by the Hungarians, then a Canadian construction crew under the direction of the Department completed the finishing touches. By early 1985, Ambassador Théodore Arcand and the rest of the Canadian staff should be (happily) relocated just across the road in the visible, functional, extremely attractive new premises.



New Canadian Embassy in Hungary.



Porta Latina, the official residence in Rome

Porta Latina — The Official Residence in Rome

Porta Latina has an intriguing history. The building was purchased in 1950 from funds (\$190 000) paid to Canada for war reparations. It used to belong to Count Dino Grandi, who was in the ruling council of Italy that impeached Mussolini and jailed him in the Alps in Northern Italy. From there he was rescued by the Germans and convinced by Hitler to return to Italy...whereupon he was immediately executed.

Count Grandi's former home was, and is, impressive. Located on five and a half acres in the historical section of Rome and backing onto the Aurelian Wall encircling Old Rome, (excavations even found part of an old Roman road there), for a long time it was considered too grand to be used as a Canadian official residence.

Over the years, several attempts were made to fix it up a little but circumstances always scuttled these attempts so consequently the villa has remained empty for the past 34 years.

During that time there was little deterioration or vandalism to the property, which, it is said, is attributable to the fact that Count Grandi's gardener was hired to look after our rented residence and when he retired in the early 1970's he moved into the gatehouse at Porta Latina and watched over the property there.

In 1981 approval was granted to proceed with major renovations to the building because it had now become more economical to renovate it than to pay the high rent that was required on the other residence.

Renovating it, however, was not as easy as was hoped. As the property was designated "historical", every change, internally and externally, had to be approved and nothing could be done to greatly alter the building from its original design. A major concern was the kitchen — it was in the basement. To make it functional, a dumb waiter had to be installed plus a pantry had to be added somewhere on the main floor — but where? The solution was to glass in the carport on the side of the building, as the Roman authorities would accept a glass exterior wall but not a solid wall. Next a balcony off the main salon was added to give more access to outdoor space for receptions. (The size of the balcony, however, was greatly reduced by Italian officials.) Most of the repairs, though, were to the plumbing, wiring, heating and roof, plus a great deal of work had to be done to the grounds as they had become totally overgrown in the intervening 34 years.

Construction began in September 1983 and is scheduled for completion by January 1985.