the cities, the risk of family breakdown is great, as the reality often falls far short of
the dream, and mothers with children are often left unsupported. Speakers examined
topics such as brain and language
development, ways to encourage
education for peace and educational
solutions for children who are different.
A series of visits was arranged, which
included the official opening of the ‘Eva
Balke’ Ludoteca – a community project
supported by the OMEP Development Fund,
to provide support for families in a very
poor area of the city. A programme of
music and dancing and displays by the
children, brought together civic leaders,
OMEP members and the community, for an
afternoon of ‘fiesta’.
Other delegates visited La Portal – a
project funded partly by the Ministries of
Justice, and Welfare, and voluntary
subscriptions. Here children with either or
both parents in prison were educated,
supported and cared for in a most
successful programme, which has proved
its worth over some 23 years.

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HUNGARIAN – UNITED KINGDOM STUDY VISITS
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Hungary
In March 1993, seven preschool workers
from Hungary visited Great Britain after
contact had been made between
specialists, and with the help of OMEP and
the two National Committees and Audrey
Curtis, Vice President, European Region.
Four of us were in London and three in
Cambridge, where we had a chance to
study and get to know a bit of the Early
Education in Great Britain. The Hungarian
dlegation, besides the perfect prof­
essional programme got an opportunity to
look into the high level of British cultural
life.

For us as Hungarians, we saw many
interesting things whilst we were there to
learn from the British school system,
because the traditional Prussian-German–
Austrian way in our school system has
many differences from the British. The
pluralist school system, which is common
in Britain is spreading out in Hungary as
well, and tries to break the strong Eastern
European influence.

Our group loved the open, friendly,
peaceful freedom filled atmosphere which
is natural in the English preschools and
typical medium in Early Childhood
Education in Britain. In addition we have
got positive experiences about the primary
educational system and the good
connection between the nursery and
primary schools which are fairly good and
consecutive. It is a pity that in Hungary,
the connection between the nursery and
primary school has a gap and the two
kinds of educative institutes are different
from each other. The nursery school's
main aim is to educate instead of teaching
skills (but they teach skills hidden in play)
but the primary school's main
characteristic is teaching skills, even with
the first grade, 6 year old learners too.

It has been a really great privilege to us
that besides the nursery schools we were
able to see some excellent primary schools
too. In two of the schools which we found
remarkable, 4 and 5 year olds were
educated right beside older age groups on
the same corridor. Therefore it is quite
natural that it has its influence on each
other. It seemed so similar to each other,
that we could hardly tell which classroom
belonged to which age group. The lovely
coloured pictures on the wall and the
children's work put on the wall and the
wines and games in the school classrooms
made the atmosphere homely and the
institute pleasant for children. The good
open connection among the teachers and
parents set an example for us. What we
have seen made it clear to us that Early
Childhood Education has the child and
parents in its midst.

As I mentioned earlier the two systems
have differences, and have differences in
teacher training too. So we were pleased
when we had the opportunity to visit the
Chiltern Nursery Training College. To our
great surprise here we met a student who
spoke our language, Hungarian. The College has a lovely environment, but also a high standard to teach the future's educators. Not only did we see the Institute, but we also had an opportunity to discuss everything with both teachers and students.

We spent a pleasant and useful eight days with our English friends. We had many times to have new experiences and to learn from them, to debate and talk. Mutually we got to know each other's jobs, life and culture. I think OMEP as a world organisation has and will have a great part of intermediary among early childhood educators, and will help those who are interested in other country's mental and practical systems all over the world. We, Hungarians had many great experiences together with universal pre-school provision and an extensive social welfare programme, is being re-examined and new priorities established. The divisions in society are becoming more marked, as unemployment and its attendant evils becomes greater. It is a country which seems full of hope and expectation, aware of its cultural heritage and determined to preserve its new freedoms.

In our visit to Miskolc, an industrial town close to the C.I.S. border, we were privileged to discuss these matters in some depth, during two hectic days of sightseeing in and around Budapest. We cruised down the Danube past the Houses of Parliament and St. Margaret Island to the folk village of Szentendre, where local school children were selling craft articles which they had made. The group then travelled to Hollókő, a 14th Century village, to experience the traditional life of the Polak ethnic group, with its Slovakian influences. The next stage of the tour was through the Balaton National Park, with miles and miles of well managed deep, dark forests, mountain roads and intense silence, through Eiger with its famous 18th Century Lyceum, to the industrial town of Miskolc.

Then followed three days of intensive visiting to Day-care and Pre-school centres at Kelemer, Petnehazi and Serhaz, to the Directorate of the Country Public