

1.1

The city ranks low for air quality.
This morning's roads, static ribbons:
steel, glass, rubber.

The Indian summer is over now.
Lungs feel light mist and perverse incentives
for diesel.

The highway tunnels are shut and condemned.
Productivity atrophies
in jams.

Outside public buildings, men stand in pairs.
Pleasant smiles set to offset the threat
of high spec weapons.

Mercedes trucks, covered in green canvas,
grumble through the streets, carrying these men
as shift gives way to shift.

This deployment has a distinctive smell:
air turned hard. You intuit that military
vehicles are exempt

from standard emissions regulations.
This can be such a liveable city.

1.2

a core / Of fact in a pulp of verbiage

Louis Macneice

This can be such a liveable city.
“Sized for _____” says the slogan.

Sized for art nouveau.
Sized for comics.
Sized for culture.
Sized for discoveries.
Sized for heritage.
Sized for history.
Sized for jazz.
Sized for summertime.

You get the picture.

Sized for 500 million Europeans.
Sized, of course, for you.

(and counting – which way?)

But the one that really sticks is

Sized for events

because it covers everything from congresses to concerts
and indeed you span these nouns.

The thing is, dear boy, events
are, from a historical perspective,
exactly what people
would like to avoid.