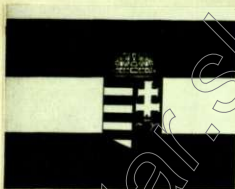


1956

MEMO TO THE HUNGARIAN PATRIOTS

Magyilent: "Saturday Evening Post"
1957

by Joseph Auslander



HEROES OF HUNGARY,
Alone, with naked fists and naked
faith, for five
Soul-shattering days and nights you
kept alive
The passion to be free,
The fitful furious flame of liberty.
And when at last you fell
You shook the citadel
Of tyranny
Down to its uttermost base in hell—
And shook our hearts as well.
Even as your threadbare, blood-soaked banner hurled
Its final scorn point-blank
At Soviet tank on tank on tank,
A shudder shook the world.

Debate and condemn,
Condemn and debate;
But what about them?
Despair cannot wait
While the Soviet horde,
With bullet and bomb,
With fire and sword
Drives the hard lesson home
In the schoolboy impaled

On the gates of the city,
In the madness that failed,
In the murder of pity,
In the flesh of defeat
Spreadeagled in flame,
Dumped high in the street
Without number or name.

But Stalin said it, Stalin said it plainly:
(In 1946, to be exact)

*The Magyar problem is a matter only
For boxcars. . . . Stalin said it. . . . Chilling fact
That was the way he spelled it out and read it
And good old Joey chuckled when he said it.*

Would you like to hear how they operate
Their death train round the clock to hell
(Vast Slave-and-Murder Syndicate)
It's a simple formula; it works well
You run down, smoke out, round up all
Your dangerous patriot deportees
The young, the old, the short, the tall;
No matter. Flesh and bone will squeeze.
Your assembling point for these human cattle
Lies east of the border, Uzhgorod.
From there the boxcars roll and rattle

With their branded cargo, load on load,
Jammed in by bayonets, forced to stand,
The cars sealed tight, no bread or water,
Far from their homes, their motherland,
Marked for the slave camp, marked for slaughter.
Over the rails the foul tide flows
As the boxcars carry these living dead,
The vomit and excrement stiff on their clothes,
Fetid and stale. And many go mad,
Shrieking for water. And many stand still,
Propped straight up in the airless spaces
By the stifling press, kept erect until,
Unloaded, they fall dead on their faces.



Shall I go on? Have you heard enough
Of the kindly ways of the Communist
Whose only law, when things get rough,
Is the rifle butt and the bludgeon fist?
(The hammer to break your head in two,
The sickle to cut your throat clean through.)
In the wreck and rubble of Budapest
They found toy soldiers, a set of toys
That somehow survived the holocaust
When Soviet tanks killed little boys.
The soldier who is made of zinc
Doesn't have to feel or think;

The warrior molded out of steel
Doesn't have to think or feel;
The hero who is carved of lead
May be killed, but won't stay dead;
Mounts of wood and iron men
Fight and fall and fight again.
Only flesh and bone are brittle—
Bleed a little, break a little;
Yet for courage nothing can
Match the flesh and blood of man.

Children whom hunger made both wan and wise,
Schoolboys whom hate exploded into men,
Your broken fists, your blind beseeching eyes,
Your bodies—strangely childlike even then—
Rebuke our world. Oh, yet once more forgive
The-all-too-little-and-the-much-too-late
That finds you still enslaved or fugitive,
That finds us still ensnared in bleak debate.

Rise and confront us in the council hall,
Unnoticed, unannounced and silent there,
Save for that One who stands against the wall,
The blood and sweat still matted in His hair,
His cry the cry of man's old agony:
"Forsaking these, you have forsaken Me!"

