

36TH YEAR

The
Reader's Digest

MARCH 1957

An article a day of enduring significance, in condensed permanent booklet form

You don't really know the heroic things that happened behind the barricades of Budapest until you read this true and tragic story. Written in the blood of those who died, told by those who fought, it is a flaming record for all the world to ponder

The Bridge at Andau

*Condensed from the book***JAMES A. MICHENER**

In Hungary, Russian Communism showed its true character to the world. With a ferocity and barbarism unmatched in recent history, it ruthlessly destroyed a defenseless population.

After what the Russians did, after their destruction of a magnificent city, after their slaughter of fellow Communists, the world can no longer have the slightest doubt as to what Russia's intentions are. The people in the satellite nations and in the uncommitted countries now know that Soviet Russia is their mortal enemy. For Hungary has laid bare the great Russian lie. In the pages that follow, the people of Hungary—many of them Communists—will relate what Communism really means.—J.A.M.

1. Young Josef Toth

ON TUESDAY, October 23, 1956
—a day which the world will
be slow to forget—a boy of
18 entered his foreman's office in
the locomotive factory on Kobanyai

Street in the Hungarian capital of
Budapest.

"You must attend more meetings
of the Communist study group," his
foreman warned him abruptly.

"The Bridge at Andau," © 1957 by James A. Michener is published at \$3.50
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Because the boy was young, he was tempted to argue back, but something in the foreman's cold stare warned him and he accepted the reprimand. Outside the office he thought, "I work ten hours a day and get not enough food. Why should I have to attend Communist meetings after work?"

He was a handsome youth, blond, straight, gray-eyed. He wore cheap corduroy pants, a very cheap wind-breaker with a zipper that rarely worked, and heavy, warm shoes. In his locker he had a stiff overcoat that was not warm, and a cap. Apart from one very thin Sunday suit at his father's, those were all the clothes he owned, although he had worked for nearly four years. Bad food, trolley fare and a little money to help his father accounted for all his wages, which were pitifully low.

Josef Toth had no mother. She had died two years before, mysteriously, and her death had been not only a family tragedy but an economic hardship as well. It had happened this way. His mother was a big, jovial, talkative woman who could never resist a joke, and one of the reasons why her son Josef had such a ready smile was his long acquaintance with this warmhearted woman.

But one day she had said, sitting in a casual group which had been having supper in her home, "Everywhere you look you see the Russian flag. I long for the old Hungarian flag."

Someone in the group that night, some trusted friend, had sought tem-

porary advantage in Budapest's bitter struggle for food by reporting Mrs. Toth to the AVO, the secret Communist police. Next day, a small truck called at the Toth home and two AVO agents hauled Mrs. Toth away.

Nobody saw her for six months. When she returned home she smiled and assured her family that nothing had happened to her while she was in the hands of the AVO. But when she fell sick from the exhaustion, starvation and torture she had suffered in prison, and when it quickly became apparent that she was certainly going to die, she let drop a few hints—not enough to imperil the safety of her family, but enough to give her son Josef some idea of what had happened.

Once she said to him, "I had to stand on one foot for hours every day." That was all she told him, but the look of terror on her face was unforgettable and soon she was dead. Young Josef tried standing on one foot for 15 minutes, and he was not plump the way his mother had been before she entered prison. Even so, the pain quickly became unbearable and he could not imagine how his mother could have stood that way for hours.

Now, as he left the foreman's office, he kept his thoughts to himself, for no one knew who the AVO men were in the factory. They were there, of that he was sure. A man down the line from him had said, some time ago, "This damned wrench. It must be a Russian wrench." For this

the man was spirited away, badly beaten and sent back to work. Josef also knew of a man in his mother's village, outside of Budapest, who had fallen behind in his taxes. Unfortunately he mentioned, to friends, that he had a brother in America and the AVO heard of this and gave the village six weeks to get the money from America, and when he failed, he was dragged off and nobody ever saw him again.

Fear of the AVO kept young Josef Toth attentive to his talk, his actions and his associations. So this evening he went to where his coat long, slipped into it and started out the door of the factory, heading for the trolley car which would take him across the city to where his father lived. "Tomorrow I'll go to the Communist study group," he resolved, keeping his bitter resentment to himself, because he felt that perhaps the foreman was the AVO man in his gang.

But as he stepped into the brisk night air he was swept up by a group of young people who shouted simply, "If you are a Hungarian, join us!"

HE HAD NO IDEA what these young men—they were all under 25—were

How This Book Came To Be

ON THE DAY when Josef Toth was embarking on the great adventure of his life, Pulitzer Prize-winning author James Michener arrived at the airport in Rome, on his way home from a round-the-world trip to Asia.

Michener expected to leave for New York in a few days. He left instead for Vienna, and there he became involved in the same great event that was gripping Josef Toth and millions of his countrymen.

Many Hungarians who escaped the Russian terror will remember that one of the first things they got on Austrian soil was a card (James Michener's) bearing an address where they could get a glass of beer and some hot food. Many a refugee family will remember a quiet, bespectacled American who, at the risk of his life, crossed into Hungary and helped to guide them safely to freedom.

In the preparation of this book James Michener spent many days and nights at the Hungarian border. He talked with hundreds of men, women and children who had fought inside the beleaguered city of Budapest. Aided by interpreters, he checked and documented the stories they had to tell. Every word of this remarkable book is fact, except the names of the people involved. For obvious reasons, the identities of the heroic Hungarians, whose story this is, must remain concealed.

doing, but something in the electricity of the moment caught him and he joined them. Soon he was shouting to other workers coming out of the factory, "If you are a Hungarian, join us!" And other boys, as ignorant as he, joined the crowd.

Then the fateful word, the exila-

rating word, the word of hope and passion they had long awaited, was spoken. A student cried, "We are going to drive the AVO out of Hungary." This Josef Toth could understand.

In one wild surge they stormed into a police station, where the bewildered officers tried to maintain order. "Give us your guns!" some young men shouted, and to his amazement young Toth shouted in the face of a red-faced officer, "Give me your gun!"

"What for?" the policeman stuttered.

Toth looked at him with no answer, then stared about him and a student cried, "We are going to finish the AVO!"

The policeman's jaw dropped and Josef grabbed at his pistol but an older boy took it for himself. Soon

the entire police arsenal was confiscated and the young men returned to the street.

At this moment a Russian tank, manned by Hungarian troops with two AVO men giving directions, wheeled into the narrow street and rumbled toward the very spot where Josef Toth was standing. It was an old-fashioned tank, a T-34, with noisy treads, a high turret and holes for a forward machine gun. Against men armed with pistols, it was a formidable thing.

As it approached the young men everyone had a moment of terrifying indecision. The soldiers in the tank were unwilling to fire into a horde of young people. The young men were afraid to fire their puny weapons at a tank. Then perhaps an AVO man gave an order. Anyway, the tank's machine gun tipped out a volley, and several young workers fell in the street.

With a cry of revenge, the boys and young men hurled themselves at the tank. Those with pistols fired at the turret. Those without weapons threw rocks or clubs or bottles at the vulnerable treads. Two daring boys of less than 16 ran under the guns of the tank and tried to wedge bricks into



the treads, and at last they, or others like them, succeeded, and the tank ground to a halt with its machine gun spraying bullets ineffectively over the heads of the young men.

A boy standing near Josef grabbed a submachine gun from a wounded companion and, with unfamiliar power throbbing in his hands, began blasting at the turret of the tank. Finally, as the halted tank fired ineffectively at its tormentors in the way a wounded beetle fights off attacking ants, one brave worker with a pistol leaped onto the flat-topped turret, pried open one of the hatches and through this hole pumped a volley of bullets. Soon he was joined by an equally intrepid fighter with a machine gun, and after this there was no movement inside the tank.

Josef Toth, not really knowing what tremendous adventure he had embarked upon, had helped to stop a tank. It lay a broken, wounded hulk in the middle of the street, and now the excited, encouraged crowd surged on to a greater adventure—to the hated radio station.

Radio Budapest, a nerve center of the Communist regime in Hungary, was housed in a large complex of buildings on Brody Sandor Street, near the museum park. More than 1200 Communist artists and technicians worked here, broadcasting the daily propaganda upon which Communism lives.

As one of the most important factors in the control of Hungary, Radio Budapest was constantly guarded by 80 crack AVO men with

machine guns and was almost impossible to penetrate without endless written permissions and security checks. It was guarded not only by the fanatical AVO men but also by two thick wooden doors fortified by oaken beams and studdings.

As the crowd began to gather in the street in front of Radio Budapest, Josef Toth, who was in the crowd, saw AVO men inside the building dispose themselves at vantage points and he saw the massive doors open for the entrance of large numbers of AVO reinforcements carrying fresh supplies of ammunition. The building would now be twice as difficult to capture.

At nine o'clock that night, while the crowd still hovered near the station, a group of university students arrived at the great wooden doors and demanded the right to broadcast to the people of Hungary their demand for certain changes in government policy. These young men sought a more liberal pattern of life. The AVO men laughed at them, then swung the big doors shut.

The crowd, observing this defeat, became more menacing and, joining the students, tried to push the doors down. The AVO men were well prepared for such a threat and promptly tossed scores of tear-gas bombs into the crowd, which chokingly retreated.

But that night the mood for freedom was so great in Budapest that soon the entire crowd was again pressing at the doors, and was again driven off by tear gas. This time a

new AVO weapon was brought into play, for from the corners of the roof two immense floodlights were suddenly flashed on, so that the AVO men inside the building and their spies in the crowd could start identifying and listing the troublemakers.

A loud cry of protest rose from the crowd and stones began to fly toward the offending beacons. This the AVO men could not tolerate. They began firing into the crowd.

"They are killing us!" women screamed.

"They are crazy dogs!" students shouted from the front ranks. "Fight them!"

The unhurried AVO men, secure inside thick walls, continued firing into the crowd and many people fell, whereupon an officer in the Hungarian Army made a difficult decision. He had sworn to protect Hungary—and this meant particularly the Communist government—from all enemies, but these enemies attacking Radio Budapest were neither foreigners nor the capitalist dogs he had been warned against. They were his brothers and his children and the women he loved. In despair he watched such people being shot down, and then he made his choice.

Leaping onto a truck he shouted to the murderers, "You swine! What people are you killing? You are crazy!"

A fearful hush came over the crowd as they listened to this military man risk his life in the bright light of the beacons. "You swine!"

he shouted. "Stop this shooting."

From somewhere in the darkened building a machine gun rattled, and the army officer fell dead. He was the first soldier of Communist Hungary to die fighting for freedom.

A sullen roar rose from the crowd and those nearest the radio station began to beat senselessly on the doors and the stones of the building. Wiser leaders saw that the crowd—they were not yet revolutionists—had no hope of assaulting the station unless arms of some kind arrived.

AT THIS MOMENT A decisive event in the battle for Budapest—and in modern world history—took place. It was one that college students and intellectuals in their craziest dreams could not have anticipated, for up from the southern part of the city a line of trucks began to appear, and from them climbed down workmen, just average workmen in working clothes.

An observer from some country outside of Hungary would not have comprehended the astounding thrill that swept the crowd that night when these workmen appeared; for they were men from Csepel, the industrial suburb of Budapest, and with their arrival, the lies of Communism were unmasked.

"Here come the men from Csepel!" a woman shouted.

"They bring arms and ammunition!" cried a student.

"Look at them!"

And they were, indeed, a miracle, for they had come from the very

heartland of Communism, and now they were determined to fight against it. They came from the factories the Communists had organized first, from the workshops where there had not been a capitalist for 11 years. Once these men had been known simply as "The Reds of Csepel." Now they climbed stolidly down from their trucks and began erecting machine-gun emplacements. Without these fiery men nothing substantial could have been accomplished; with them even freedom was within reach.

Their first act epitomized their tremendous role in the revolution. They set up a heavy gun in the back of a truck, trained it on the roof, and calmly shot out the eastern beacon of the AVO. With that symbolic shot the glaring lights of Communism began to go out all over the city of Budapest.

But now new proof of the terror under which Budapest had been living in Communist days was provided, for from nearby Rakoczi Street an ordinary ambulance, white and with a red cross, moved slowly toward Radio Budapest. It was temporarily stopped by some students who cried, "We are glad to see you have come for the wounded." And the crowd made a path for the ambulance.

But it drove right past the rows of wounded who had been pulled aside for just such medical aid.

"Where are you going?" the students shouted. "Here are the wounded!"

The lone driver replied, with some hesitation, "My orders are to pick up the wounded inside the building."

"No! No!" the people in the street cried, and Josef Toth joined the protest.

"I must go there," the driver said. "Orders."

He tried to force his ambulance through the crowd, but in doing so ran over the foot of one of the fighters, who shouted in pain. This caused Toth and a group of watchers to rip open the ambulance door and drag the driver into the street. But as they did so, they uncovered a cargo, not of medicine and bandages, but of machine guns for the AVO.

"My God!" a woman screamed.

"Look at the grenades!" Toth shouted to the people surging up in back of him.

There was a moment of horrified silence, then a hoarse whisper, "We have an AVO man."

Later Toth tried to explain what had happened. "A thousand hands grabbed for that man. They began to tear this way and that. I heard him pleading that he was not an AVO man, but new hands grabbed at him."

Young Josef, at eighteen, had witnessed a terrible sight. "Finally," he explained quietly, "someone took a gun from the ambulance and shot him. It was better."

When the body of the AVO man had been kicked aside, young men unloaded the ambulance and passed the cache of arms out to the workers from Csepel who, with the weapons

they already had, said, "We think we can storm the building."

From the upper windows fresh volleys of AVO machine-gun fire warned the Csepel men that the job would not be easy. One Csepel man, assuming leadership, said simply, "All you without guns, go back." As the crowd retreated, he said, "Some of you men stay and build barricades, here and here." The real fight for the radio station was about to begin, but Josef Toth, who was in at the beginning of the fight, was not destined to see the end.

From the roof of the radio building an AVO man fired a random blast with his machine gun and one of the bullets penetrated Toth's left leg. It was very painful and shattering and blood spurted out of Toth's pants. He fell to the street and the last thing he saw was some of the AVO men trying to run away in the confusion, but one of the Csepel men burped his machine gun and the AVO men pitched into the street. From the opposite direction there was a loud roar as grenades struck the heavy wooden doors leading into the radio building.

"The doors are going down!" a voice from far away shouted, and young Josef Toth lost consciousness.

2. The Intellectuals

THE ASPECT of the Hungarian revolution which must cause consternation in Russia is the fact that it was the young men whom Communism had favored most who most savagely turned against it. It was the Com-

munist elite who led the revolution against Communism.

Despite its propaganda about a classless society, the Communist system is actually built upon a horde of subtle class distinctions. Certain Party members get all the rewards—the good apartments, the good radios, the good food, the best clothing—and it is by these constant bribes that Communism builds an inner core of trusted leaders. The rest of the people can starve, for they are not of the elite; since they lack power, they can do nothing to harm the movement.

I should like to report how two young Hungarian Communists, chosen by their Party for top honors, reacted when faced by a choice between Communism and patriotism. In the histories of these two men the leaders of Russia will find just cause for nightmares; and young intellectuals from free countries, who sometimes think that Communism might be fun as an alternative to what they already know, can see how they would probably react if a Red dictatorship actually did engulf them.

ISTVAN BALOGH got to the top because he loved books. He was the son of a laborer and therefore eligible for education beyond high-school level; and it was a memorable day for his family when a high Party official said, "We've been watching Istvan. He's got a good head. We need young men who like books. How old is he?"

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THE BRIDGE AT ANDAU

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"I am sixteen," Istvan replied. "To earn the right to a university education," the old Communist explained, "you must have work experience."

Istvan Balogh was accordingly given a job working a drill press in the Contakta electrical factory in Budapest. Although he was less strong than some of the men around him, he applied himself with extraordinary energy and month after month exceeded his quota. He became a favorite of the Communist bosses and was soon appointed leader of the study group which after working hours was picking its way through Karl Marx, Lenin and Stalin.

By the time he was 22 Balogh was a thin, wiry young man with jet-black hair that he wore rather long about the ears, fanatical black eyes and a great capacity for work. He was a highly praised member of the Communist Party and was accordingly judged fit to enter law school at the University of Budapest, in Pest. There he was given special consideration; his professors were informed that he was headed for an important post in the government. He began to study Russian and was on his way to becoming a leading Communist lawyer when he got mixed up in a group of meetings which changed his whole life.

The meetings started simply enough on October 19, 1956, when informal bands of Buda and Pest students met to announce their solidarity with the students then revolting in Poland against their Russian masters. Istvan Balogh participated in the meetings, and his behavior caught the eye of his fellow law students. On October 21 they nominated him to be their representative at talks which were going to be conducted by students from schools of higher learning in Budapest. These young men were concerned with several burning problems: (1) get the Russians out of Hungary; (2) improve living conditions; (3) provide more economic goods; (4) stop the forced teaching of Russian; and (5), a point very close to their hearts, re-establish the crest of Louis Kossuth, a great Hungarian patriot from the revolutions of 1848, as the emblem of Hungary, in place of the universally detested hammer and sickle of Soviet Russia.

On October 22 Istvan Balogh, not yet aware that he was going to help launch a climactic revolution against Communism, went across the Danube to the Technical High School in Buda, where by noon a brilliant group of Communist intellectuals had gathered. They set immediately to drawing up a list of grievances, and a public meeting was announced

for three o'clock that afternoon. Law student Balogh was astonished when he got there to find hundreds of young people, including workers from Csepel, waiting to applaud the work his committee had done.

But his excitement subsided when speaker after speaker rose and made stiff, formal comments. Balogh thought, "Nothing will happen. In a way, that's a relief."

But toward evening a man who has never been identified rose from the rear of the audience and said powerfully, "I would like to ask one question: Under what right are Russian troops stationed in our country?"

Immediately the meeting exploded. Students leaped to their seats and shouted, "Out with the Russians! Out with the Russians!"

Others whistled and yelled, and under this impulse the speakers became inflamed and began to deal with the sad tyranny that had been forced upon them. Istvan Balogh, caught up in the patriotism of the moment, found himself shouting from the rostrum, "Russia must leave Hungary!"

When the flood had subsided, Istvan Balogh's committee began drawing up a series of questions it wanted the Communist government to answer. Balogh made a motion which carried unanimously, that on the following day, October 23, a public meeting of sympathy would take place at the statue of General Jozsef Bem, the Polish volunteer who in 1848 had supported the Hungarian

revolution against the Hapsburgs, who had called in volunteers from Russia. The chairman declared the meeting ended.

THAT NIGHT Istvan Balogh returned to his quarters in Pest in a state of great excitement. "What will happen if the AVO had spies in that meeting?" he kept asking himself. Then he tried recalling what bold and thoughtless things he had shouted from the platform. "I'm a Communist," he repeated. "Russia is our friend, and if we leave her leadership, the fascists will take over again." He concluded that his wild night was all a wretched mistake. "What we want," he said, "is merely a few changes. Say, more food and things like that."

But next day this faithful young Communist was caught up in a powerful whirlpool of popular feeling. At the Jozsef Bem statue there appeared not a handful of students but more than 50,000 patriots. The excitement of the crowd was infectious, and Istvan found himself again shouting, and meaning it, "The Russians must go!"

That evening, somewhat against his better judgment, he became part of an even larger crowd assembled at the square in front of Parliament. Here, with one of the most graceful buildings in Europe looking down from its noble position on the banks of the Danube, more than 80,000 Hungarians had met to beg for political justice. Istvan noticed hundreds of new flags—the old Com-

munist flag with the red crest of Soviet Communism ripped out. He saw men wild with fervor for Hungarian independence and women shouting, "Down with our leaders! Long live freedom! We want Imre Nagy!"

Istvan heard this last cry with hope, for Imre Nagy was a faithful Communist, one who had known power a long time but who almost two years ago had been deposed for being too liberal. With Imre Nagy in power, Hungary would know more freedom, but it would still remain a good Communist nation.

He was astonished, therefore, when Imre Nagy appeared on the balcony of the Parliament buildings and addressed the crowd, "Dear comrades!" The crowd screamed a violent protest. "We're not comrades! Don't use that term on us."

Accepting the rebuke, old Communist Nagy started over, "Dear friends." The crowd shouted its approval, and Istvan Balogh retreated into a kind of stupor as he heard Nagy make one concession after another. It was shocking to hear an old Communist make such a surrender. "What's happening?" Balogh asked.

A chant sprang up among the people, a phrase from an old Hungarian poem, "*Now or never! Now or never!*" and amid this passionate rhythm Imre Nagy held up his hand for silence. Then, to the delight of the crowd, he voluntarily began, in a trembling voice, the Hungarian hymn, long forbidden by Communist edicts and never heard in pub-

lic places: "*God Protect Hungary.*"

In exaltation the crowd began to fan out over Budapest, but as they left, an ominous word reached them: "There has been shooting at the radio station." Istvan thought that the AVO had probably had to subdue a group of rioters, but more news arrived, exciting news: "Students and workers are destroying the AVO."

In a wild rush, patriots started running toward the radio building. Others, including thin, dark-eyed Istvan Balogh, worked their way toward Budapest's largest gathering place, the Stalin Square at the southern edge of the main park in Pest. There in the flare of torches and automobile lights, Istvan found thousands of people chanting slogans against the Russians.

"The Russians steal our uranium!" was a major chant.

"They tell the AVO to persecute us!"

"The Russians starve us!"

Now Balogh saw two young men perform a daring deed. They were climbing high toward the top of the massive metal statue of Josef Stalin. They were trailing light ropes, and when they reached the top they used these ropes to pull up heavier ropes, which they attached to the head of the statue. The crowd roared its approval, and as the two young men scrambled down, hundreds of hands started pushing against the statue, while powerful workmen pulled on the ropes. Masses of people watched intently.

They were to be disappointed. The Russians had made Stalin of such thick iron that he could not be pulled down, and women began to beat upon the ugly statue with their fists, until three young workers appeared with a more effective protest. They had acetylene torches, and the crowd set up a great shout of approval as these torches cut into the back of Stalin's knees.

Now the other workers pulled mightily and the monolithic monster began to incline forward like a skater falling slowly on his face. The metal at the knees began to crack, and some young men jammed a crowbar into one joint and swung up and down.

Slowly, through the October night air, this huge and expensive statue, which the people of Hungary had paid for, fell from its pedestal until at last, with a swift rush that was greeted with mad cheering, the dic-

tator pitched head-first into the public square.

What happened next amazed Istvan Balogh. The people of Budapest crushed in toward the fallen idol and began spitting at it. Men and women who had suffered under the Stalin rule had a momentary revenge when they were able to defile the fallen monster. "Roll him over, so we can spit in his face!" people shouted.

"Stop pushing, old woman, everyone will have a chance. You must take your turn."

A workman appeared with a mallet and began banging at the metal. "We'll melt him into bullets," he said. But he was pushed away by the triumphant Hungarians who insisted upon spitting at the fallen Soviet dictator.

"You can all come back tomorrow," a student announced, as he pushed the crowd away from Stalin's head. He had a rope, and Istvan recognized him as a fellow law student.

"What are you doing?" Istvan cried.

"We are going to give the great robber a ride," the law student replied.

When a truck backed up, the rope was lashed to it, and Istvan leaped aboard. Up Stalin Square the driver went with ugly

Josef Stalin grinding along behind. Down Stalin Street toward the center of town went the gruesome procession, with the metallic dictator a giant of a statue, even though he had broken off at the knees—clanking along to the curses of the people.

At the main boulevard that circles Budapest, the truck turned south. Where the boulevard crosses Rakoczi Street a group of students had massed before the curious tier of iron balconies marking the offices of the Communist propaganda newspaper, *Szabad Nép* (Free People). Here a riot was in progress as young people began an assault on Budapest's major propaganda press.

Istvan Balogh, the good Communist, the one chosen for preferment, joined his people wholeheartedly in their fight against the lies and oppression of Communism. Next to the *Szabad Nép* offices were the big windows of the official salesroom for Communist propaganda, the *Szabad Nép* bookstore. Here some university students had broken the windows and were tossing all the Communist rubbish into the street.

With vigor Istvan Balogh joined the crowd, helping pitch out the stupid books and looking on approvingly as a workman from a truck poured gasoline over the pile and set it ablaze. From time to time Istvan had a sickening feeling. To be burning books! But then, in the wild light of the fires he would see the ugly face of Stalin as it lay in the gutter, leering up in metallic wonder. And at such times he pitched

more books onto the fire, until his arms were tired.

Istvan Balogh was no hero, no flaming patriot fighting for Hungary's freedom. It was partly by accident that he defected from Communism, and being a most intelligent young man he knows that had circumstances been different, his actions would have changed. Running his thin fingers through his black hair, he confesses, "If the riots had not occurred, I would still be a Communist willing to support a regime whose horror I never admitted to myself." Listening to him, you feel that only a bad break of luck caused the Russians to lose their prize pupil, Istvan.

BUT LUCK did not enter into the case of the young intellectual, Peter Szigeti, a handsome, polished young man of 27. "From the age of 16," he says, "I was a devoted Communist. My parents were starving peasants, and one day I stumbled upon the writings of Karl Marx. His ideas struck me like a whip and made everything clear. Then, in 1946, a Communist 'talent-searching party' came to our village and heard about me.

"They talked with me for a long time and were amazed that I knew more about the theory of Communism than they did. They said, 'You are exactly the kind of man we want.' I was taken right into the Party as one of the youngest members.

"I made a rather great career," Peter says in excellent English. "I



was trained for foreign service; that's the best plum of all."

The life of such a young man was most appealing. He was given spending money, was allowed to read foreign books, was kept informed of what was happening in the world and had a large, clean place in which to live.

Nevertheless when the revolution against Communism came, Peter Szigeti not only joined it, he led it. How this happened is difficult to explain.

"It started, I think," he reflects, "when I first realized the tremendous gap that existed between the promises the Communists made when they were trying to gain power, and what they actually did when they had it. Communist slogans always sound good when the Reds are trying to take over a nation."

Szigeti, an acute young man, looks like the stereotype of a Communist. He has piercing eyes, eyebrows that meet far down the bridge of his nose, a wiry build, a sharp tongue, a dedication in his entire manner.

"It was what the Communists actually did to the economy of Hungary that made me first question the system. Our country was being used as an indecent experiment to strengthen Russia. I cannot recall a single decision that was ever made in terms of Hungary's good. I cannot recall a single unselfish act by a Communist. With our productive capacity and our hard work we ought to be able to provide our people with a good living. We used to,

when we knew less and worked less. But now everything goes to Russia."

It was this gloomy discovery that drove Peter Szigeti to some hard thinking. "Finally I looked at the life of fear we led and I concluded: 'Life under Communism has no hope, no future, no meaning. Yesterday, today and tomorrow are all lost!' The day I decided that, I joined the Petofi Club."

In 1848, when the Hungarians revolted against their Austrian masters, their spirits were kept alive by the poems of an inspired young man, Sandor Petofi. He became then, and has remained, the beacon light of Hungarian patriotism and the symbol for all who seek freedom. He led a heroic life on the battlefield and wrote a series of poems which exactly mirror the Hungarian patriot's yearning for freedom. Therefore, when a dedicated young Communist like Peter Szigeti decided to join a club named after Sandor Petofi, it was a milestone in his life.

The Petofi Club in Budapest was definitely Marxist, and its members were Communists. Chiefly poets, playwrights, novelists and artists, they believed that what Hungary needed was a liberal, Hungarian Communism divorced from Russian domination. Specifically, they wanted Hungarian wealth to stay in Hungary, and secondly, Soviet secret police to stay in Russia.

In the summer of 1956, when Peter Szigeti joined the club, discussions of the economic and moral ruin of Hungary under Commu-

nism were drawing to a head. By mid-October 1956 it was apparent to all Petofi Club members that some kind of change was inescapable. Hungarian Communists would have to break away from Russia. Peter Szigeti was one of the first to acknowledge this openly.

"I was ready for the revolution," he says. "I was even ready to launch it."

It was with cold satisfaction, therefore, that Szigeti heard about the riots on October 23. And he was expecting trouble toward noon on the 25th when he joined an immense crowd that had begun shouting freedom slogans in front of the great Neo-Gothic Parliament building. "The people won't leave this time without some kind of assurances from the government," he mused.

No officials appeared, so he idled the morning away studying the square. "I could see the AVO men with machine guns on the roof of Parliament. To the north more guns lined the top of the Supreme Court building, and right above where I was standing the offices of the Agricultural Ministry were bristling with guns."

Although Szigeti could not see them from his position at the back of the crowd, along the foot of Parliament building was clustered a nest of powerful Russian tanks manned by crack Russian troops, whose officers were beginning to wonder if their men had not begun to like the Hungarians too much,

after long tours of duty in that hospitable land.

In spite of the menacing guns, people began calling for Imre Nagy. But whenever those in back, like Szigeti, tried to push forward, those in front came face to face with the Russian tanks and pushed back.

There were no cries, no menacing gestures, but nevertheless, out of the blue October sky, an AVO sharpshooter atop the Supreme Court building grew nervous and fired a single shot into the crowd.

With fantastic ill luck this bullet hit a baby in the arms of its mother and knocked both the dead child and the mother onto the pavement. In wild grief she raised the baby high in her arms and rushed toward a Soviet tank. "You have killed my child. Kill me!" she screamed. Her anguished protest was drowned by the sound of the AVO firing more shots into the crowd.

It is absolutely verified that the tank captain, who had grown to like Hungarians, raised his cap to the distraught woman and then turned away to wipe the tears from his eyes. What he did next made a general battle in Budapest inevitable, for he grimly directed his tank guns against the roof of the Supreme Court building, and with a shattering rain of bullets erased the AVO crew stationed there. Now even the Russians were fighting the AVO men.

Peter Szigeti was standing near the Ministry of Agriculture on the opposite side of the square from the

Supreme Court building, and he could see on the faces of the AVO men stationed above him the horror that overcame them when they realized what the Russians had done. They were more horrified when they saw the Russian tank commander track his guns toward them, so with a nest of heavy machine guns they started spraying bullets haphazardly into the defenseless square. They had to fire directly over Szigeti's head, and he could hear the bullets screaming past.

More than 600 citizens fell in those terrible moments, and after that everyone knew that this fight of the AVO men against the people of Budapest would know no truce.

Proof came when an ambulance, which had been stationed in Bathory Street to the south, rushed its doctors toward the dying who cluttered up the square. No sooner had the doctors moved into the crowd, trying to drag wounded to safety, than the AVO men cut them down with bullets.

Peter Szigeti, who from the year 1946 had been the fair-haired boy of Hungarian Communism, who had reaped the riches that the dictatorship offered and who could logically aspire to the highest posts, saw this massacre of the doctors with overpowering revulsion. In a kind of senseless rage, something he had learned never to indulge in, he began screaming at the AVO men above him: "Assassins! Dogs! Swine!"

Then, seeing a Russian soldier

who had moved away from the line of tanks and who was not firing his rifle, he rushed up to the man and begged for the weapon. The Russian hesitated a moment, then saw the increasing mounds of bodies in the square and, acting on the spur of the moment in defense of a people he liked, handed Szigeti his rifle.

The chosen young man of Communism, unable to stomach it any longer, hefted the rifle to his shoulder and started blazing away at the AVO men in the Ministry of Agriculture.

3. At the Kilian Barracks

WHEN COMMUNISM faced its first great test in the satellite countries, it found that young people whom it had indoctrinated—like Josef Toth—turned against it. Next it discovered that dedicated intellectuals whom it had pampered with promise of high position not only rejected it but took arms against it.

Russian leaders must surely have been depressed by such evidence of failure. But more evidence was to come. The Kremlin dictators must have been shaken with fear when they heard how the trusted soldiers of Communism reacted when the Red system came under attack. For years the Red-satellite armies had been given special consideration, special pay and supervision by special Communist commissars. Here is how they defended Communism in its moments of peril.

In the southern section of Pest, inland a few blocks from the Danube,

where the circular boulevard intersects Ulloi Street, stands the ancient Kilian Barracks, a rugged brick-and-white-plaster building four stories high with walls more than four feet thick. Here, in prewar days, lived the selected soldiers appointed to the defense of Budapest. Under Communism, the barracks housed a large administrative staff of tested officers and served as a processing center for recruits from the Budapest area. It was staffed by a small guard of crack soldiers, and although it could in an emergency house about 2500 soldiers, it customarily held only about 400, plus members of the labor battalion, who were not armed. It mounted no heavy guns or tanks.

On October 23 a delightful, hell-raising sergeant named Laszlo Rigo occupied Room 19 on the second floor of the Kilian Barracks. I think anyone would instinctively have liked this 22-year-old Hungarian farm boy. His friends called him Csoki (Little Chocolate Drop) because his face was unusually tanned. He had dark eyes, heavy eyebrows, wavy black hair which he used to comb in public, a very large mouth and white teeth. He looked like a tough young kid trying to be Marlon Brando, but he spoiled the attempt by periodically breaking into joyous laughter. He had a good time in life and was so lean and muscular that he was always ready for a fight.

Around nine o'clock that night young Csoki was killing time in the museum park, hoping to meet a pretty girl, when he heard shots over

toward the radio station. Thinking some soldiers might be in trouble, he hurried over to find that AVO men in the radio building were firing at the crowd.

He stood in a doorway in Brody Sandor Street and watched the fight, and he thought, "I better get back to the barracks and get some guns."

At that point he did not know on whose side he ought to fight, or even what the sides were, but he felt instinctively. "If anyone's going to shoot at AVO men, I'd like to be in on it."

It was only about four blocks to the barracks, and he ran at top speed and dashed into his room, crumpled things up a bit looking for whatever weapons he could find. Suddenly he heard a suspicious sound in the hall. Poking his head out gingerly, he saw a man in plain clothes point a pistol at the head of a soldier who was trying to grab him. The civilian fired and the soldier dropped dead.

Sergeant Csoki—his name is pronounced as if spelled Chokey—ducked back into Room 19, slammed the door and thought, "That must be an AVO man!"

Quickly he grabbed an armful of grenades, pulled the pin on one and, crawling along the floor, opened his door gently and pitched the grenade at the gunman. There was a shattering explosion as the sound of the grenade echoed back and forth along the hallway. Running to the fallen gunman, Sergeant Csoki rifled his pockets and found he was Major Szalay of the AVO. Shouting at the

top of his voice, he warned the rest of the soldiers, "The AVO are trying to take over."

The soldiers instantly mobilized for an AVO hunt, and had they started a few minutes later, Kilian Barracks would have been lost, for they intercepted some 150 AVO men moving in to take over the headquarters and the ammunition it housed. There was a furious fight, for the AVO men were highly skilled in rough tactics, but in the end Csoki and his companions beat back the assault.

"We killed a good many of them with grenades," the sergeant says. "Some were captured, and if anybody recognized them as particularly bad, we beat them up. But most of them escaped."

At this point the Kilian Barracks was infiltrated by a different kind of intruder. Hordes of civilian fighters, driven off from the assault of Radio Budapest, pushed their way into the barracks crying, "There's a great fight on. We've got to have arms."

The Kilian officers were naturally distrustful of all civilians—it was their job to keep civilians in line—so they rejected the pleas. But one elderly man with blood on his face said sternly, "The AVO are killing us."

A young boy wormed his way through the crowd and caught Csoki by the hand. "The AVO have big guns on the roof," he pleaded.

Still the officers refused to issue guns, until a soldier in uniform ran

up shouting, "It's a very big fight. They've got to have some guns."

Csoki and some of the enlisted men shouted, "Let's give them guns!" And under this pressure the headquarters staff yielded and handed out machine guns and ammunition. When this was completed the crowd withdrew and the men of Kilian were free to contemplate the course they had launched upon.

There was no elation, no childish celebration over their defeat of the AVO. "We knew the Russians would attack us in the morning," Csoki says, "and our officers said, 'When they come, they'll come in tanks.'"

The Russian leaders of the Hungarian Communist Army had not given the troops any weapons heavy enough to fight against tanks. So all that night Csoki and his companions made gasoline bombs. They filled bottles with benzine—their name for gasoline—and capped them tightly. Then, through a small hole in the cap they forced eight inches of cloth tape, which would serve as a fuse. No one in the barracks had any illusion. This was going to be a bitter fight.

At four o'clock that morning a lookout on the fourth floor shouted: "Here they come! Tanks!"

HE WAS WRONG. It was not tanks, but only one. And it was not a tank proper, but a heavily armed reconnaissance car, with machine-gun hatches, plate armor and six rubber-tired wheels. Coming through the

darkness, lit only faintly by accidental lights from nearby houses, the armored car seemed more like a boat wandering inland from the Danube. But it was a deadly boat, manned by Russians who were determined to put down any possible rebellion at the Kilian Barracks.

As it drew near the barracks, coming down Ulloi Street from Calvin Square, Sergeant Csoki and six silent soldiers stood in the darkness of the barracks roof, waiting tensely with gasoline bombs ready, for the Russian reconnaissance car to come beneath them. At the last unbearable moment Csoki whispered to his men, "Now they get it!" They lit their fuses, held the bombs for a second more, then pitched them into the black night air.

The first bomb hit the pavement of Ulloi Street and exploded like a giant night flower blooming suddenly from the asphalt. It must have blinded the Russian driver, for the car lurched toward the wall of the barracks, where it absorbed in quick succession three bombs, which set the entire vehicle ablaze.

Like a foundering boat, the car staggered down Ulloi Street beyond the barracks, where its own gasoline tank exploded. This was the first recorded Russian casualty.

Sergeant Csoki realized that Russian pressure would increase with daylight, and at nine o'clock on the morning of October 24 the battle for Kilian Barracks began in earnest. In the next two hours 15 Russian reconnaissance cars assaulted

the barracks, but with little luck.

"We couldn't understand why the Russians didn't use tanks," Csoki says, "because we murdered the cars. With practice we could pitch our bombs right into the cars, and inside of two hours we destroyed nine of them."

But when the tanks did arrive, the young men in Kilian had on their side a tested leader of enormous courage. Csoki first saw him on the roof at Kilian, a whip-thin man with a brown belt across his chest and a Russian-type fur cap outlining his deeply etched face. It was Col. Pal Maleter, a soldier with a wild, heroic background. He had first been an officer for the Fascist Horthy but had drawn away from such dirty business in disgust, becoming, in 1944, a leader of the underground fight against the Nazis in Hungary. He emerged from this experience something of a national hero and was carted off to Moscow by the Russians as the typical Hungarian army man fighting for Communism. More than any other Hungarian soldier, he was petted and pampered by the Russians, but now, when he had seen them driving their tanks against his own people, he had come of his free will to Kilian Barracks to take command.

Sergeant Csoki smiled at his grim, jut-jawed visitor and said, "Lots of gasoline on this roof."

Maleter studied a few of Csoki's bombs and said, from deep experience gained in Russia, "The fuses should be longer for tanks."

"You think they'll send tanks?" Csoki said.

"Soon," Colonel Maletier said. This brave officer, who was to play so striking a role in the revolution, looked down the silent avenues and said, "They'll come up here, sergeant. Be ready." And he disappeared down the steps.

But before the first tank arrived, Kilian Barracks received yet another kind of visitor. Tough young kids from all over Budapest, carrying old guns, handmade bombs, even swords, streamed into the barracks as if reporting for duty. At the same time another large group of would-be defenders took up positions in the Corvin Cinema block, just across Ulloi Street, and these recruits were to be of crucial importance in the fight ahead, for some brave young mechanics dashed from the cinema into Ulloi Street and began dismantling a Russian vehicle that had not been completely destroyed. From it they managed to salvage a high-velocity anti-tank gun and a quantity of ammunition. Hauling the gun into the moviehouse, this gang of desperate young men shouted, "Somebody fix it. Then bring on the tanks!"

For several hours the Kilian men awaited the inevitable attack, and in time they grew almost impatient to test their skills. Then a boy, serving as lookout on the street below, shouted, "Here it comes!" Hoarse cheers greeted his ominous news.

Across Petofi Bridge, which separates Buda, on the west bank of the

Danube, from Pest on the east, came a single creaking, groaning menacing Russian tank. It was armed with two heavy machine guns, thick armor plate and a huge protruding rifle. Many soldiers from the Ulloi Street side of the barracks ran over to the boulevard side to see the enemy come, and they licked their lips in dry fear as the monster approached, its gun silent. But the watchers had no time for nervous speculation, for now a great shout went up from the Corvin Cinema, where watchers had detected two more Russian tanks coming down the boulevard.

And then, to cap the terror, Sergeant Csoki, maneuvering his bomb throwers in the barracks, looked down Ulloi Street toward Calvin Square to the west and saw four more giant tanks bearing down upon the barracks. Kilian was now about to be brought under direct fire from seven tanks, each 34 tons of destructive power.

"Here they come!" Csoki said solemnly. This time there was no cheering.

IT WAS A BRIGHT afternoon, and the October sun made the roofs of Budapest shine warmly. Some of the soldiers in Csoki's crew were in shirt sleeves, and they waited tensely as the seven tanks drew into position. For the first ten minutes, the Russians had everything their own way. The heavy guns did terrible damage to the barracks and practically shot away one of the corners. More than 70 defenders were killed,

and at least 150 were badly wounded. It looked as if the Russians would win easily.

But at the very moment when it seemed as if the tanks could stand off with impunity and methodically rip the barracks apart, a streetcar conductor, still wearing his municipal uniform, saved the day. For some time this undiscovered genius had been sweating in the archway of the Corvin Cinema over the anti-tank gun from the burned-out Russian vehicle. At first the gun seemed beyond salvation, but this demon streetcar conductor stayed at his job.

Now he announced tentatively, "I think it'll work." A gang of young mechanics wheeled the gun into position but the streetcar man said, "You better stand back, because it may explode." Then he laboriously trained his masterpiece upon a Russian tank and let go.

Csoki says, "Best thing I ever saw! The tank hoisted up in front, hesitated a minute and exploded inside."

This action so astonished the Russians that they momentarily withdrew. But they could see no sign of the Corvin gun, which had been hastily drawn back by hundreds of young men acting as horses.

Cautiously the Russians advanced a second time, and now determined Kilian marksmen with high-powered rifles started finding weak spots in their armor. They put one more tank out of action. But five Russian monsters, still hammering away at the barracks, remained. They

poured a punishing fire of shells and bullets into the Kilian walls, until the four-foot-thick masonry threatened to collapse.

Just as it seemed that no Hungarian power could reach these tormentors, the boys hiding in the cellars put into operation one of the nearest maneuvers of the battle. These boys had strung a thin rope across Ulloi Street—from the cellar of the barracks to the cellar of the Corvin block—and in the bowels of the cinema they had strung together, on one end of this rope, a batch of five large hand grenades.

Now was the time to use their secret weapon. As a tank, after having cleared the upper stories of both buildings with deadly machine-gun fire, started down Ulloi Street, the boys pulled their grenades into the path of the tank. The grenades exploded with a mighty whoosh, the tracks were blown off the cogs and the tank ground to a helpless halt.

In an instant, daring men rushed back to the windows of the barracks and rained gasoline down upon the crippled monster. Then a grenade ignited the gasoline and from the cellars boys began to chant, "It's going, it's going!" Finally the burning gasoline reached the interior, and the tank erupted in a vast explosion. In 90 minutes of desperate fighting three Russian tanks had been destroyed.

It would not be correct to say that the men and boys of Kilian Barracks had driven off seven fully armed Russian tanks. It is true that

the four remaining vehicles did withdraw, but this was probably because their ammunition had been expended in the furious bombardment of the barracks. But it is also true that, although there was more fierce fighting, the Russians never captured the Kilian Barracks; they never occupied the Corvin Cinema.

The miracle of the fight at Kilian Barracks was not the triumph of Hungarian patriots over Russian tanks. Nor was it the heroism of men and boys fighting with make-shift weapons. It lay in this simple fact: of the 400 Communist soldiers in the barracks on the night of October 23—and they were men both trained and pampered by the Russians—not a single one remained faithful to Communism.

Throughout all of Hungary the percentage among the soldiers was about the same. Many experts believe that 100 percent of the soldiers in Bulgaria, Rumania, Poland would, if given a chance, turn their guns on Communism. As a Hungarian soldier who fought against the Russians observed after the battle was over, "Russia won, but they'd better keep two of their soldiers in Budapest for every Hungarian they give a gun. Let the Kremlin sleep on that."

4. Brief Vision

THE FIRST PART of the battle for Budapest, which began on October 23, ended October 29 when the Russians, alarmed by unexpected resistance and wishing to withdraw for

tactical reorganization, practically surrendered the city to the freedom fighters.

For five days Budapest reveled in the mistaken belief that Hungary was at last free of Russian domination and that some kind of sharply modified Communism would replace the AVO terror.

Now there was a kind of festival in Budapest. Nobody stopped to clean up the debris, which littered every street, nor even to bury the Russian bodies in the burned-out tanks, nor the AVO men. Freedom fighters, of course, were buried in improvised graves that lined the public parks, but the hated enemies of the people were left exposed in final and complete contempt.

All Budapest seemed affected by the evidence of the heroic fight. "Do you mean to say that people with no weapons destroyed all these tanks?" women marveled. And a quiet surge of patriotism possessed the city, for it had been Hungarian patriots, fighting alone and with no help from the world, who had evicted a cruel conqueror, Soviet Russia.

One of the most touching proofs that freedom had really arrived—and you could see men and women all over the city fingering these proofs with actual affection—was the appearance, almost as if by magic, of many different kinds of newspapers. There were socialist papers, peasant-party papers, labor-union papers and organs proclaiming this or that sure pathway to national prosperity.

The radio, too, gave proof of freedom. On All Saints' Day the radio announcer said that in honor of the brave men and women who had died winning Hungarian freedom the radio would play music that had not been heard in Hungary for many years. And there poured forth the golden music of Mozart's "Requiem Mass," rarely performed publicly in the days of Communism. Hungarians felt exalted that they were again able to hear the music of the West.

In the early days of the revolution students had demanded that the government shut down its jamming stations, and now the flow of news from London and Paris and Munich could come in strong and unimpeded. It was a luxury beyond belief to be able to sit in one's own room and listen to news from the West. Little by little, the Hungarian people began to think, "We are part of the world once more."

Rumors infected the city, and none was more tragic than that which claimed that the United Nations would shortly intervene in Hungary's behalf. Those who, earlier, had listened regularly—and illegally—to the BBC from London and to Radio Free Europe, which broadcast American news from Munich, had convinced themselves that not only the United Nations but the United States as well, would land paratroopers in Budapest, followed by tanks and an expeditionary force. When time proved that these rumors were false and that no outside agency had any intention of underwriting the

already successful revolution, a foreboding sense of having been left isolated crept over the city.

This was partially dispelled, however, by the many jokes which the irrepressible Hungarians circulated. For example, the ruined Stalin statue in Stalin Park was now an object of ridicule. One joke went: "You know, they didn't pull the statue down at all. They just dropped a wrist watch in front of it, and like any Russian fool, Stalin bent down to get it."

The most appreciated jokes were those directed against the stupidity of the Communist government. During the revolution the prisoners had been set free, and now a mocking voice broadcast this plea:

"Persons serving prison sentences for murder, willful manslaughter, robbery, burglary, larceny or theft and who have left prison since 23rd October for any reason without having served at least two thirds of their sentences should report back immediately to the nearest police headquarters."

In this light spirit several profound changes were made in Hungarian life. The word "comrade" was officially banned, and it became offensive to call another man by that name. October 23 was proclaimed a national holiday, and the Kossuth crest became the great seal of Hungary. In the schools Russian was dropped as a compulsory subject.

More important, political parties started to function. "Now we will be able to vote for the men we like," people said over and over. It was

strange how simple things that the free world took for granted gave Hungarians so much pleasure in those brief days: newspapers, political parties, a promise of free elections, of a booth in which you could vote in secret.

So joyous was the atmosphere that from all over Hungary delegations of miners and farmers and students came to Budapest bearing lists of proposals for a more democratic nation. The new Hungary, if it had been allowed to survive, would have been a socialist state devoid of absentee land ownership, large concentrations of private capital, or private ownership of important industries. One might have termed it a modified Communism lacking dictatorship features. The world in general would have welcomed the new state as a hopeful step in the gradual de-Communization of Eastern Europe, for compared with what had existed up to October 23, 1956, the new nation would have been a model of liberalism.

The philosophers of the country had begun to talk about the genesis of a true national spirit that would reflect Hungary's love of freedom, her courage and her determination to exist as a sovereign power. There was a great deal of talk about making Hungary the Switzerland or the Sweden of Eastern Europe. "We are a small country," many people said. "We should be neutral."

Then came ominous news from the east. A boy came running into the street crying that hundreds of

Russian tanks were in motion at the airport. "Not little ones like before. Big ones."

Men confirmed the evil news. "It looks as if the Russians are going to come back in force," a soldier said.

There was a rumble to the east, a cold wind blowing from the steppes of Russia.

5. The Terror

AT FOUR O'CLOCK on Sunday morning, November 4, the Russians returned to Budapest.

First they took command of Gellert Hill, a rocky height which rises 770 feet in one sheer sweep up from the western shore of the Danube. To the top of this hill they sped mobile heavy artillery and enormous stores of ammunition. From here the guns could command the entire city: the eight main bridges across the Danube, the university buildings, railway stations, museums, the radio studio, the factories in Csepel; and one spot whose continued resistance infuriated the Russians: the sagging remnants of Kilian Barracks.

These massive guns on Gellert Hill could by themselves have subdued Budapest. But the Soviet commander had in addition about 140,000 of the most ruthless foot soldiers in the Russian Army, plus another 60,000 available in the immediate vicinity, if the going got rough. Each soldier was equipped with a sub-machine gun and huge supplies of ammunition. They would be given one simple order: "Shoot!" It would not matter whether the moving tar-

get was a student with a gasoline bomb or a housewife with a loaf of bread. "Shoot!"

Next, the Russians brought into the city 2000 new tanks. These were not the vulnerable, old-style T-34's, but low-slung, swift, super-armored and well-gunned T-54's. They could do 40 miles an hour, run over a trolley car or crush an automobile and they carried a powerful gun which could destroy a house.

In the air, the commander had jet planes and propeller-driven bombers which could be called in to hit specific targets or to bomb whole areas. Most of these planes were armed with rockets carrying high explosives; one rocket could rip out a factory wall.

Against this concentration of Soviet power the Hungarians had some homemade gasoline bombs.

Even so, the brave Russians were not willing to take any chances. Before the battle started they lured, with false promises of safe passage and truce, Colonel Maletier, now a major general because of his amazing skill in defending Budapest, to a meeting "to discuss the withdrawal of all Soviet troops from Hungary." Glowing with satisfaction, Maletier went to the meeting, at which the Russians, stalling for time so that their last gun could be drawn into position, made concessions which amounted to a total Hungarian victory.

Hardly able to believe what he heard, Maletier accepted the Russian surrender. "Come back later and

we'll sign the papers," the Russians said. "In the meantime, no fighting."

During the truce thus obtained, the Russians consolidated their stranglehold on the city, and when General Maletier returned for the subsequent meeting, safeguarded by a flag of truce, the Russians promptly brushed aside the flag, arrested the hero of Budapest and whisked him off to prison, possibly in Siberia.

The heroic Russians spent Sunday shelling the city from the safety of Gellert Hill. Between bombardments they sent out squads of swift tanks to shoot up the boulevards. They kept their foot soldiers in reserve. Their plan was to terrorize the Hungarians so completely with big weapons that mopping up could begin on Monday.

THEY MADE a bad guess. The Hungarians stayed indoors during the worst part of the shelling and tried to dodge bullets during the swift tank forays. Even so, courageous freedom fighters did manage to erect barricades across many of the streets of Pest, and there were some teams of young boys and girls who tackled with gasoline bombs any tank that slowed down.

At one important intersection, the Moricz Zsigmond Square in Buda, a college student who had been forced by the Communists to study military science cried, "It looks to me that if we can hold this square, the Russians will be tied up. Let's barricade it."

Assuming command, he devised a

masterful defense plan, but before he could complete his work a boy shouted, "Here come five cars of soldiers!"

The college student ordered his best men onto the nearby roofs, and when the reconnaissance cars swung into the partially barricaded square, he gave a signal and brought the cars under very heavy fire. Sixty-seven Russians were killed, and the three cars that were able to turn about fled back toward Gellert Hill.

Before the next Russian attack came, the college student directed his forces to overturn all the street-cars in the area. They interlaced them with timbers, and blocked themselves in. They gained unexpected support from some Hungarian soldiers who delivered two captured Russian tanks to the square, and these formed the main artillery of the defense.

Russian retaliation was not long delayed. Seven large tanks came screaming down from Gellert Hill and as they came, machine guns sprayed bullets into the surrounding houses. Out of range of the fighters in Moricz Zsigmond Square the tanks halted, rounded up 20 street boys, and executed them in one titanic burst of bullets.

Inside the square the college student said to his men, "We will die here today."

The seven swift tanks, having completed their first act of revenge, now rushed at Moricz Zsigmond Square, but the defenders were so well dug in, so well-armed and so

daring that all the tanks were destroyed. The November Sunday then settled down into a brutal battle between more and more tanks and the fiery young men inside the square. It was here, facing youngsters, that the Russians learned that their grand plan for a quick humiliation of Budapest was not going to work. They would have to dig out the Hungarians man by man.

Among the freedom fighters inside the barricades at Moricz Zsigmond Square was a 20-year-old youth, tough as nails but almost boyishly eager to be a story-book hero. His name was Imre Geiger, and his great sorrow was that throughout the entire revolution he never acquired any weapon larger than a rifle. He felt that if he had been able to get hold of a machine gun the outcome of the fighting might have been different.

Geiger was a handsome fellow, dark, chunky, with fine teeth and jet-black hair, which he wore in a crew cut. He wore a turtle-neck sweater, kept a cigarette dangling from the left corner of his mouth and tried to talk in a snarl.

At one point Geiger and the other young rebels were under fire from Gellert Hill, from tanks lining the perimeter of the square, from armor-piercing mobile guns that methodically shot down the buildings of the square and from mortars that lobbed phosphorus incendiary bombs all over the fighting area. The young Hungarians withstood this massed assault for two hours and retreated

only when there was no square left to defend.

When the Soviets finally marched in, the streets nearby were blocked with crushed streetcars, burned-out tanks, ruined vehicles and collapsed houses. As for Imre Geiger, he had squirmed his way out to fight at a more important post.

NORTH of Gellert Hill stood Castle Hill, a warren of handsome old medieval streets with houses to match. Most of these streets were on a steep incline, with treacherous turns, and here a group of dedicated young Hungarians had gathered to defend Buda to the end. After the fall of the Square, they were augmented by a handful of experienced fighters who had tasted all that the Russians had to offer. But the fight at Castle Hill was different from that at the square in one respect: here many young girls assisted in the fighting. They were to prove heroic.

The cautious Russians approached the problem of Castle Hill as if it were defended by a powerful army rather than by a bunch of young men and girls. First the mighty guns on Gellert Hill laid down an hour-long barrage of high-explosive shells. It seemed unlikely that any human being could have lived through this destruction.

But not wishing to take any risks, the commander next sent in tanks to annihilate any remaining organized opposition, and these would be followed by companies of foot soldiers with machine guns. Their job was

to wipe out the isolated survivors.

But the soldiers didn't get there, not just then. For as soon as the sullen barrage had ended, young men and girls mysteriously appeared from their hiding places and under volunteer supervision took steps which would make the defense of Castle Hill a memorable page in the history of military improvisation.

Among the recruits which Castle Hill acquired from Moricz Zsigmond Square was crew-cut Imre Geiger, still lugging a rifle and still burning for a fight. "We had a simple problem," he says. "How to destroy tanks."

"There were three main ways. The first way was to make them slip sideways and crack up. Sometimes we were able to do this when they were going uphill. Girls would spread liquid soap on the street, and the tank's tracks would either spin or slide. Maybe the tank would jam into a building, and then we would pounce on it. A man who worked in a garage showed us how to smear grease and oil at corners, and the tanks would slide sideways into a tree or a building, and we would have it trapped.

"Our second trick was to make them stop for a minute—anything to make them stop. One clever girl spread brown plates upside down, and they looked exactly like land mines. The Russians would come up to them, hesitate and then start to back up. That's when we got them."

Getting a tank stopped, of course, was merely the easy part of the bat-

tle, for even a trapped tank could spit fire from its three heavy machine guns, all of which could seek out attackers by revolving in almost a complete circle. In addition, the Soviets were quite prepared to fire their heaviest cannon point-blank at even a single Hungarian, if by so doing they could prevent an attacker from reaching the tank with a gasoline bomb.

The young men of Castle Hill were equal to the occasion. They discovered many ways to kill wounded tanks. One energetic worker filled an entire depression in the cobblestone pavement at the top of a hill with gasoline. He just left it there and hid in a doorway until a tank reached the middle of the gasoline. Then he pitched a grenade into the open gas and engulfed the tank in a wall of flame.

Another worker ran a high-tension electric wire onto a tank and electrocuted the occupants. At the bottom of the hill a determined motorman set his trolley car in motion, got it up to high speed and leaped off just before it rammed headfirst into a tank, which was then set ablaze.

Gasoline bombs in the hands of incredibly brave young men and women did most of the damage to tanks. "I didn't think girls could do what I saw them do," Imre Geiger says. "They would hide in doorways with one bomb apiece. If the tank went by without stopping, they didn't move. Some of them, of course, were killed by machine-gun

fire when the tanks shot into the doorways. Many girls were killed in this way. But if the tank slipped or ran into a wall or was stopped for a second, out would dart these girls and blow it to hell."

A Presbyterian minister who saw the fight on Castle Hill says simply, "I have never known such heroism as the girls of Budapest displayed."

It fell to the lot of one 12-year-old boy, whose name is not known, to achieve the ultimate in his fight against the Soviets. He lashed grenades to his belt, carried others in his arms and ran into the lead tank in a column, blowing up its tracks. He also blew himself to pieces, but he stopped the column for older fighters. The same minister says of this child, "It should not have happened. Somebody should have stopped such a child. But he knew against whom he was fighting."

In the end, of course, the Russians captured Castle Hill. A full two days behind schedule, the ruthless foot soldiers marched up as planned and finished the mopping up. But as they marched, cautiously and with the maximum weapons, they passed the burned-out hulks of more than a score of Russia's finest tanks. Not one heavy gun had been used against these tanks, only the improvised weapons of young Hungarians who were fighting for personal and national freedom.

When the victorious Soviets finally entered the castle itself, the final bastion, only 30 young Hungarians were alive to walk out proudly un-

der the white flag of surrender. For three days they had withstood the terrible concentration of Soviet power, and they had conducted themselves as veritable heroes. The gallant Soviet commander waited until they were well clear of the walls, then with one terrifying burst of machine-gun fire he executed the lot.

ACROSS BUDAPEST the same terror prevailed. Early in the fighting the Soviet Army had evolved a simple rule of thumb: "If there is a single shot from any house, destroy the whole house. If there are many shots from a street, shoot down every building in the street."

From then on this clear-cut rule was applied with savage force. No part of Budapest was safe from the tanks, and if any commander heard a single shot, he would stop his tank—it was now safe to do this—wheel it into position and shoot off the upper coping, so as to kill any snipers on the roof. He did not then fire at the upper stories, but only at the bottom one, pulverizing it with heavy fire until the house fell down upon itself. In this way more than 10,000 Hungarians were buried alive.

Besides the tanks, the Soviets used rockets against any building that attempted to hold out. Usually one volley was enough to collapse a building and kill all occupants.

And for "mopping up" the Russians had a sure technique. Squads of men with flame throwers moved throughout the city, burning down

large areas and incinerating the inhabitants.

Had the Russians in their fanaticism been warring against a non-Communist people, their uncontrolled fury might have been understood. But in Budapest the Soviets perpetrated their horrors upon a people who had originally been their peaceful associates, who had been good Communists and who had cooperated almost to the point of sacrificing their own national interests.

The worst barbarism was still to come. Russian tanks had been superb against revolvers, and now they paraded their might by roaring through the city and firing at random. In areas already subdued, they shot up any groups of civilians they saw. There were three instances in which women in queues were shot to death.

Ambulances and Red Cross workers—probably because the Soviets themselves use these internationally recognized welfare agencies as blinds for military action—were mercilessly shot down. Nurses attending the wounded were executed by point-blank rifle fire. All the blood and blood plasma at the Hungarian central depot on Daroczi Street was confiscated by the Russians and taken to the Szabolcs Street hospital, which they had reserved for themselves.

Children were killed, hospitals were fired upon and young men were executed merely upon suspicion. A squad of flame throwers attacked the National Archives and

burned it out. When patriotic firemen tried to save the building, they were shot.

The sack of Budapest was senseless and unnecessary. It was an act of blind revenge because the people of the city had grown tired of Russian lies, Russian terror and Russian expropriation.

But when the ruin was complete—when the girls and young men were liquidated—there remained one outpost of fighting which must have infuriated the Russians beyond endurance. And it was to this final redoubt that cocky young Imre Geiger went, lugging his rifle and his drooping cigarette.

SOME MILES SOUTH of the city, only a quarter of an hour away by high-speed railway, lay the big island of Csepel, crowding the center of the Danube River. The southern end of the island was composed of vegetable gardens, in whose rich soil grew most of Budapest's produce, but the northern end was a special ward of the Communist governments both in Budapest and Moscow, for this was Red Csepel, the sprawling industrial center where the heavy industry of Budapest was concentrated. This was the heartland of Communism, the center from which the Soviets had captured Hungary. Communist orators could grow fearful when they referred to Red Csepel, and it was almost a requirement for any Red Hungarian orator to cry, "Csepel is Hungary and Hungary is Csepel." But, in

fact, in none of their high-flown philosophizing were the Communist leaders so completely wrong as in the case of Csepel. For the men of Csepel, the workers in heavy industries, not only refused to fight for Communism; to the last man they fought *against* it.

From the moment when the big guns on Gellert Hill began bombarding the city, one of their favorite targets had been Csepel. Into it they pumped many tons of high explosives, and it was against the sprawling workshops that the Russians jets directed most of their rockets, but these weapons were no more successful in subduing the Csepel men than they had been in cowering the college students. So the Soviets were faced with the dismal job of going into the island with tanks and infantry.

The tragic story of the other centers of Hungarian resistance was repeated here, but with many strange overtones. Because the Russians despised the Csepel workers for having turned against them, the assault was particularly bitter; and because the Csepel men knew that surrender was impossible, the defense was extremely tough.

When young Imre Geiger and his futile rifle reached Csepel, an acute ear could have heard the death rattle of freedom. The workmen, barricaded in great factories that had been the pride of Josef Stalin, had little ammunition. They possessed one anti-aircraft gun, a few cannon and a lot of gasoline, for the oil-cracking

plant was on their island. They possessed no inspiring leader, no grandiose ideas. In fact, they had only one substantial weapon: their consuming hatred of Russians and their stooges, the AVO.

In the brutal fighting young Imre Geiger had a weird experience. He was busy making a fresh supply of gasoline bombs when he stopped to stare at a young man who was working from the same barrel. "God, he looked funny," Geiger says. "I thought he was a new kind of Russian soldier who had slipped in with us. You know what he turned out to be? A North Korean. After the Korean War the Chinese Communists sent several dozen selected North Korean Communists who had fought against America to study in our universities. Every one of them turned against Communism and fought on our side."

Geiger's next encounter was of a more pathetic kind. On the line where the Csepel men handed out their meager stores of ammunition, Geiger met up with two boys of 18 who could speak little Hungarian. "They could hardly make themselves understood. But they wanted to talk to me and give me something. They had two letters to their families. They wanted me to mail them if I got out. And what do you suppose those letters were written in? Greek. They said there were several Greek kids in the factories. These were the ones whom the Communists kidnaped from Greece during the civil war there. They were made

into good Communists and given everything they wanted . . . the best jobs in Csepel. But when the chance came, they fought against the Russians."

In its last stages the fight for Csepel became a horrifying contest between unparalleled mechanical power on the one side and bare human determination on the other. The defenders of Csepel tried everything.

Whenever a group of Csepel men found an isolated tank which they could not destroy, some young workers of incredible daring would leap upon the turret where no gun could fire at them, and plant there a Hungarian flag. If the Russians inside opened their hatches in an effort to dislodge the flag they were killed and the tank immediately destroyed. But if they allowed the flag to fly, the next Russian tank they met would blaze away at a supposed enemy and blow it apart. Obviously such a trick could work only a limited number of times but until the Russians caught on, it was a daring and beautifully simple maneuver.

When the Soviets swarmed onto the island the Csepel men ignited the gasoline plant to fight them off, and writhing pillars of fire illuminated the deathly scene. But it was no use. Huge Soviet guns sent volleys ricocheting through gaunt factory buildings. Railroad cars were blasted by low-flying rocket planes, and everywhere the mournful whoomp! whoomp! of Red mortars brought destruction. The time came

on the sixth day of battle when further resistance was impossible.

Then the men of Csepel did not surrender. They quietly vanished. They swam the river and lived on to participate in what was to be the bravest continuing act of the revolution—the general strike—which would forever prove to the world how completely Soviet Russia had lost control over its men in the heavy industries. As the Csepel workers slipped away, young Imre Geiger and his drooping cigarette went with them.

WHEN THE RAPE of Budapest ended, some freedom fighters tried to cast up a report of what had happened. Their figures must of necessity be haphazard, and I would not want to give final approval to any of them, but it seems likely that the facts are something like this: the Russians totally destroyed 8000 houses and shot out about 60 percent of all the windows in the city. About 30,000 Hungarians were killed or wounded, plus another 10,000 who were buried alive in collapsing buildings. Many Hungarians insist that total casualties numbered nearer 80,000. The Russians lost not over 8000 men and about 320 tanks.

To patrol Budapest, the Russians called in Mongol troops from the Central Asian Republics. They behaved like animals, and the murders they piled up were frightening. Why had they been brought in to terrorize the city? Because the original troops, from Russia proper, could not be

depended upon to shoot civilians. There were several confirmed instances, in addition to the tank commander at Parliament Square who had shot AVO assassins, of Russians who had voluntarily sided with the Hungarian freedom fighters. One of the reasons for the five-day peace had been to provide Russian Army commanders with time to replace these doubtful troops with uncontaminated Mongols.

At the height of fighting, when students and writers and workers were laying down their lives, Soviet apologists in Budapest had the effrontery to offer this explanation of what was happening in Hungary:

"Ferocious fascist beasts wanted to restore the power of capitalists. We are convinced that the Hungarian people in order to protect peace will possess sufficient strength to crush the fascist gangs. All over the world led by the Soviet Union, the unity of the countries of the socialist bloc has the greatest significance. If Hungary will restore order with the help of the Soviet Union then it will again return to constructive socialist work. The rapid victory won against the anti-revolutionary forces proves that these anti-revolutionary forces consisted only of the scum of the nation. It also proves that they were not supported by the masses!"

There was to be a more honest, and a more honorable requiem for the people of Hungary. From an unknown freedom station, an unknown fighter cried to the conscience of the world:

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"Civilized people of the world, on the watchtower of 1000-year-old Hungary the last flames begin to go out. The Soviet Army is attempting to crush our troubled hearts. Their tanks and guns are roaring over Hungarian soil. Our women, mothers and daughters, are sitting in dread. They still have terrible memories of the Red Army's entry in 1945. Save our souls, S.O.S. . . . S.O.S. "People of the world, listen to our call. Help us—not with advice, not with words, but with action, soldiers and arms. Please do not forget that this wild attack of Bolshevism will not stop. You may be the next victim. Save us. S.O.S. . . . S.O.S."

"People of Europe whom we defended once against the attacks of Asiatic barbarians, listen now to the alarm bells ringing from Hungary."

"Civilized people of the world, in the name of liberty and solidarity, we are asking you to help. Our ship is sinking. The light vanishes. The shadows grow darker from hour to hour. Listen to our cry. Start moving. Extend to us brotherly hands."

"People of the world, save us. S.O.S."

"Help, help, help. God be with you and with us."

After this there could be only silence.

6. The Bridge at Andau

THERE WAS a bridge at Andau, and if a man could reach that bridge, he was free.

It wasn't much, as bridges go—not wide enough for a car nor sturdy

enough to bear a motorcycle. It was just a footbridge made of rickety boards with a hand railing which little children could not quite reach.

The bridge did not cross a river of importance. It did not even cross a stream or a sizable gully. It merely crossed the First Canal, which had been built generations ago to mark the boundary between Austria and Hungary and also to drain the swamps of each nation. No roads led up to the bridge, no railroads. It had been erected merely as a convenience for local hay farmers who gleaned the rich grasses that luxuriated on the swamplands.

You can see that the bridge at Andau was about the most inconsequential bridge in Europe, but by an accident of history it became, during a few flaming weeks last fall, one of the most important bridges in the world: for now many thousands of refugees headed for it, coming from all parts of Hungary. Fleeing the Russians, with only a paper bag or nothing, they headed for this insignificant bridge and freedom.

To understand the drama of Andau, it is necessary to visualize the border area, for it is unique. Here Austria resembles a low-lying football field, in the middle of which a border guard stood with me one night and said, "Over there to the east is Hungary, but up there to the north is Hungary too. We're in a tiny corner of freedom, with Hungary all around us."

To the south, down the long side of the football field, ran a high canal

bank, and it was in Hungary. South of that, the bank dropped sharply into the sluggish First Canal, too wide to jump, too deep to wade. Still farther south lay the Hungarian swamps, completely covered in reeds and rushes and cattails. It took a good man to escape through this border of Hungary.

Along the shorter, eastern side of the Austrian football field, things were different. Here Austria ended in a drainage ditch which could be crossed if a man were willing to wade up to his armpits in the deepest spots, or only up to his knees if he were lucky. But in order to get to this ditch he first had to penetrate a formidable Hungarian swamp choked with reeds head-high.

At the point where the ditch to the north emptied into the canal to the east—the corner of the Austrian field—stood two Hungarian border guards, and about half a mile beyond them rose a tall, gloomy machine-gun tower manned by AVO

men. A few hundred yards beyond the foot of this tower stood the Andau bridge.

In spite of these obstacles, there were occasional days at Andau bridge when escape was easy. Then the AVO guards were, for some reason, absent from their towers, the bridge was open, the marshes were frozen, and Russian snipers were not operating. Refugees were free to walk boldly down the broad canal bank. It was in the extreme corner of the Austrian football field that I began to have one of the most amazing experiences of my life.

In my day I have observed many emigrations—pathetic Indians struggling out of Pakistan, half-dead Korean women dragging down from Communist-held North Korea, Pacific island natives fleeing the Japanese—but I have never witnessed anything like the Hungarian exodus.

The most striking fact was the age of the emigres. In all other

evacuations the refugees were mainly old people. Here some of the finest young people of the nation were leaving, their average age being only 23. They were not defeated or beaten or maimed or halt. In considerable joyousness they were turning their backs in contempt upon the Russians and their Communist fraud. And they were young people with a purpose. They wanted to tell the world of the betrayal of their nation. It was difficult to find among them any reactionaries, any sad, defeated human beings looking toward the past. World Communists are trying to convince themselves that only fascists, capitalists, American spies, Catholic priests and reactionaries fled Hungary. I wish they would ask any one of us who greeted these refugees what kind of people fled their evil system. They were among the best people in the nation.

Consider, for example, eight groups that I personally met somewhere along this border.

1.) At the university in Sopron, 500 students, 32 professors, and their families simply gave up all hope of a decent life under Communism and came across the border. (Canada's University of British Columbia in Vancouver accepted many of them.)

2.) The finest ballerina of the Budapest opera walked out with several assistants.

3.) The three best-known gypsy orchestras came out in a body and have begun to play around the restaurants of Europe.

4.) Some of the top mechanics in the factories at Gsep left and were eagerly grabbed up by firms in Germany, Switzerland and Sweden.

5.) A staggering number of highly trained engineers fled. I myself must have met at least 50 engineers under the age of 30. A careful census would probably reveal more than 5000.

6.) The Budapest symphony came out almost in a body, and several of the best conductors came with them.

7.) Many of Hungary's leading artists and many of her notable writers crossed the border.

8.) Most impressive of all were the young couples with babies. At a point 15 miles inside of Hungary doctors of amazing courage passed among the refugees and gave each mother sedative pills for her children, so that they would be quietly asleep during the critical attempt to pass the Russian guards.

The human drama at Andau never ended. Robert Gray, the hard-working officer of the Intergovernmental Committee for European Immigration, guided into camp a nine-year-old boy and his mother. The boy's story was so ridiculous that Gray checked his age several times. Said the child, "When we ran out of gasoline we used water in our bombs. They worked just as good, because when we threw them into a tank, the Russians would get scared and try to get out and older boys would shoot them."

The child's mother said, "On the first two mornings after he had stayed out all night I gave him



spankings. A nine-year-old boy out on the streets all night! He said, 'But Mother, I've been blowing up tanks.' How can you spank a child who has been blowing up tanks?"

THROUGH THE DARKNESS the refugees came, men who had walked interminable miles, and often they carried with them some single document that would testify to their honorable participation in the fight for freedom. Under some flickering light they would produce a torn and sweaty piece of paper, which they had carried in a shoe, stating, "Lajos Bartok fought at the Kilian Barracks for three days.—The Revolutionary Committee. He has a brother in Los Angeles, 81 Queen Street."

Others came out more dramatically at other places. Imre Geiger, the tough kid with the useless rifle and dangling cigarette, walked miraculously straight down the open railway track to Nickelsdorf, the most dangerous single escape route in Hungary, since it was patrolled by Russians. On the cocky young fighter came, lugging his rifle right toward an Austrian outpost, which under the rules of war would have had to arrest him, disarm him and send him back to Hungary.

Another refugee already safe inside Austria ran down the railway track to scream at Geiger, "Throw away the gun!"

"Never!" the wiry dead-end kid shouted back.

"They'll send you back to Hungary!"

Young Imre Geiger stopped dead in the middle of the Nickelsdorf tracks. Why he was not shot down I will never know. "They'll send me back?" he shouted, a standing target for the Russians.

"Run, run!" His adviser scrambled back to safety and watched in horror as young Geiger remained outlined against the barren sky, just standing there looking at his rifle. Finally, as if surrendering his dearest possession, he tossed it aside and continued his stroll down the tracks. No refugee came out of Hungary with greater bravado, and it is perplexing to think that while he came right through the Russians, lugging his rifle, more cautious groups, tracing their way through swamps in secrecy and silence, were being caught.

If a demon tram-car conductor became the hero of Kilian Barracks by rebuilding anti-tank guns, the hero of the evacuation was a daring railway engineer.

Mihai Kovacs, in the first days of Russia's reoccupation of Budapest, was ordered to haul a long train of sealed boxcars into Russia. He could guess what the cars contained. After he reached Russia he was certain that he was carrying many hundreds of Hungary's finest rebels to Siberia.

Then he did a most amazing thing. He got a sign painter to fix him up a real big sign in bold black letters. Then he turned his train around at a little-used siding, and came steaming back down the tracks, out of Russia and into Hungary. Through Budapest and Győr he kept

his train going, for the sign encouraged Soviet guards to step aside and let the train pass.

Kovacs took his sealed boxcars right to the Austrian border, where he jammed on the brakes, flung open all the doors and shouted, "Over there is Austria. I'll lead the way." He and his deportees all made it to safety, but he left behind his train and its dazzling big sign: "GOOD FOR HUNGARY FROM SOVIET RUSSIA."

I missed the most gallant incident at Andau, but Dan Karasik, the CBS announcer, not only saw this beau geste but photographed portions of it. On a rainy day, when the swamp to the east had become impassable, large numbers of Hungarians tried to penetrate the marshes to the north, and here, in the tall rushes, they became hopelessly lost. The AVO, discovering this, moved in under Russian direction, and started to pick up the would-be escapees and haul them off to prison.

At this point Karasik saw, coming through the head-high rushes to the north, a young Hungarian man of perhaps 20. He wore no cap, no overcoat. He was a husky chap, and when he reached the shallow drainage canal that separated the northern rush fields from Austria, he plunged heartily in, splashed his way across, and asked one question: "Austria?"

"Yes," Karasik said.

"Good," the young man grunted in German. He then turned, splashed back through the icy water,

and in about ten minutes led to safety some 15 Hungarians, blue with cold.

"Austria," the young man said, but before the refugees could thank him, he had disappeared into the rushes and for a while Karasik heard him thrashing around, after which he dramatically appeared with another convoy, muttering only the magic word, "Austria."

He made three more trips, but on his fifth the lookout in the tower near the bridge spotted him and by means of signals and gunshots, directed a team consisting of two guards and an AVO man into the very rushes where the young scout had gone for his sixth group. There were shots, a scuffle and then, to the horror of the watching Americans inside Austria, the three patrolmen appeared with the young bareheaded Hungarian as their captive.

They led him down the canal path to the tower, but before they got him there he broke away and dived into the rushes alongside the canal. There was a mad scramble, and after many tense minutes the young guide broke once more through the rushes and splashed to safety on the Austrian side. Karasik says, "A cheer went up. You couldn't help it."

BUT MANY BRAVE men faced equal perils in those days. What distinguished this particular young man was his next action. Says Karasik, "After the guards had gone back to their tower, the young man sat down, took off his soggy shoes, and

disclosed the fact that he had no socks. His feet must have been frozen. But from around his neck he took a spare pair of dry shoes and put them on. We thought he intended to use them for the hike to the village and some dry clothes.

"Instead he stood on the Austrian side of the canal and listened. Over in the rushes he heard a noise, and started back into Hungary. We pleaded with him not to take such a risk, but he said, 'Ungarn!' which meant, 'There are still some Hungarians lost in there.' And while we watched in silent wonder, he made three more trips through the bitter cold waters of the swamps and brought out all his countrymen."

But if I missed this remarkable performance, I did see one that will never be forgotten by those who saw it. When Russians guarded the bridge, and when the thermometer dropped to a paralyzing nine degrees above zero, we prayed that the deep canal which cut off the marshes to the south would freeze, thus providing another escape route. But stubbornly it refused to do so, only a thin film of razor-sharp ice forming on the surface. To this semi-frozen canal came a young man, his exhausted wife and two children. There was no way for them to cross to safety, and AVO with dogs could be expected along at any moment.

So this father, for some reason which we never understood, took off all his clothes, then lifted his little girl in his arms and plunged into the deep canal. Breaking the ice

with his chest and one free arm, he swam across, climbed up through the marshy slopes and deposited his child in Austria.

Then he returned to Hungary, rolled his clothes in a ball and handed them to his son, whom he lifted high in the air for his second trip through the freezing waters of the canal to freedom.

Once more he sloshed his way back through the deep canal to lift his weary wife in his arms and bring her to safety. Not one of his family got even so much as a foot wet, and if this man lives today—it seemed doubtful when I last saw his totally blue body—he is a man apart, a walking monument to the meaning of the word "love."

Out of the reeds and out of the rushes, out of the mud and the muck, through the swamps and across the canal, over the rickety bridge they came. At first in dozens, then in hundreds, then in thousands.

I had no business at the Andau bridge, yet the overpowering drama of this great exodus gripped me and I went back night after night to help bring in the fugitives. Most of the stories told here were acquired at Andau. Many of the Hungarians I speak of here I first met in the night watches at the bridge.

Young Josef Toth, who fell wounded at the attack on the radio station, was helped here by his friends and limped to freedom. Csoki, the Little Chocolate Drop, shuffled his way across the bridge, and so did Istvan Balogh, the university student.

In time even the Communist guards along the border seemed to get fed up with the evil system of which they were a part. I was standing there one day directing refugees as they came across the bridge, when a father appeared with two sons, the older a strong lad of about 13, the younger a boy of nine. The father was a sober-faced man in a fur shako, and the guards stopped him on the Hungarian side with his two sons.

One of the Hungarian guards, slinging his submachine gun over his back, came to speak in German to Claiborne Pell, an officer of the International Rescue Committee.

To Pell's astonishment the guard said, "The little boy is afraid to leave Hungary until his mother gets here, too. She may never get here. Won't you see if you can get the boy to join you? It would be better if he left Hungary."

The father and the older boy stepped into Austria and the Hungarian guard turned his face while I carried the weeping boy to join them. I had gone only a few steps when there was a shattering explosion of machine-gun fire, and I turned back panic-stricken. Claiborne Pell was laughing. He explained, "The guard wanted the AVO in the tower to think he was on the job. So he fired into the air."

When Pell and the shakoed father had left with the two boys, the Communist guard and I looked at each other for some time; after a while he took me by the arm and led me well into Hungary, right past the obser-

vation tower with its guns and across the bridge. There was a woman with two children, and one of the girls was unable to walk any farther.

Since the Russians might come along at any moment, the guard put the little girl on my shoulder. Then he hustled the woman and the other child over the bridge and led us all back into Austria. At the border he fired another volley to let his AVO bosses know that he was on the alert, and I carried the sick little girl to freedom.

THERE CAME one night at Andau when the frozen marshes and the crackling reeds formed unquestionably the most beautiful sight I have ever seen in nature. This was not only my opinion: five different reporters reported the same fact. It was also a night of unbearable emotional intensity.

For that afternoon the Russians had blown up the bridge at Andau. We knew that thousands of refugees must be huddling in the Hungarian swamps, only a few feet from freedom, seeking desperately some way to cross that final barrier. But the bridge was shattered.

For several hours we watched in agony as the escape route remained empty, the great flood of humanity cut off. I cannot explain the pain we felt that strange night, for in contrast to the empty foot-paths, the heavens were a thing of crowded glory. There was a shining moon, a wealth of stars—a white glaze over the world, for the night was bitter cold

and frost covered the rushes and the swamps. But most memorable of all was the tragic silence, for where there had been the excited laughter of hundreds of people finding safety from Communism, now there was only silence.

At this point a brave team of three Austrian college students decided that something must be done, and they lugged logs deep into Hungary and repaired the dynamited bridge—not well, but enough for a precarious foothold—and by this means more than 2000 people were saved that night alone.

It was at this time that I met a brave and daring photographer whose pictures helped tell the story of Hungary's mass flight to freedom. He would go anywhere, and for the next several nights we patrolled the border together, bringing in hundreds of Hungarians. Sometimes we went well into Hungary, always with an ear cocked for that sweetest of night sounds, the soft, tentative calls of men and women seeking freedom.

We were on watch toward dawn one very cold night when we heard curious sounds coming from the temporary bridge. We crept up as close as we dared and saw a revolting sight. The Communist guards, well liquored up, were chopping down the bridge and burning it to keep their feet warm. Then, as we crouched there observing them, we witnessed a tragedy that neither of us will ever forget.

A band of some 30 refugees, led by a man in a fur cap, appeared mysteriously out of the Hungarian swamps and walked directly toward the drunken guards. These unlucky people had no way of knowing that the bridge was no longer a route to freedom, and we were powerless to stop them. Quickly the guards grabbed their rifles and these last refugees to reach the bridge at Andau were rounded up and carted off to prison. They had walked all the way across Hungary and had come to within 50 feet of freedom. Heartsick, we crept back with the sound of Communist axes in our ears, and by the time we reached the Austrian border the bridge at Andau forever vanished.

I cannot guess by what twists of history Hungary will regain her freedom. I cannot yet see clearly by what means the Russian yoke will be lifted from the necks of the Hungarian people, but I am convinced that in that happy day Hungarians from their new homes all over the world will send in their money—their francs, their dollars, their pounds and their pesos—to erect at Andau a memorial bridge.

It need not be much, as bridges go: not wide enough for a car nor sturdy enough to bear a motorcycle. It need only be firm enough to recall the love with which Austrians helped more than 20,000 Hungarians over it to freedom, only wide enough to permit the soul of a free nation to cross.