

Out of Hungary— The Defiant Exiles

Young heroes of the 'revolt of a generation'
still look toward freedom for their land.

By ELIE ABEL

EISENSTADT, Austria.

THEY come across the muddy fields and over the back roads from Hungary these wintry days, stripped of everything but the shabby clothing on their backs and at best a briefcase stuffed with papers, family mementos, a bit of bread or a heel of salami.

Old Europe has seen many an exodus of the dispossessed, call them refugees, displaced persons or what you will. This latest exodus is different. These are proud men, for the most part young men with useful lives ahead of them and an astonishing moral victory behind.

Their heads are high, even as they go into exile.

The names used in this report are fictitious because these youngsters must protect the relatives they left in Budapest and Gyor and Dunapentele. But the actions they fought were real enough, as thousands of Russian dead can prove.

This was, beyond the shadow of doubt, the revolt of a generation and a shattering defeat for the Soviet Union. For these were the young Hungarians who must have been the hope of communism. For twelve years they were forced to kneel before the icons of Marx and Stalin. Yet their private heroes were of a different stripe, men like the nineteenth century poet-patriot Sandor Petofi and the leader of Hungary's 1848 revolution, Lajos Kossuth.

YOU meet them in the muddy courtyard of the refugee reception center at Eisenstadt, seat of the princely Esterhazy family. During the ten years that the Soviet Army occupied Austria, the drafty building was a barracks. A whitewashed Cyrillic inscription over the door reads "Long live our Glorious Red Army." Today, the doorway leads to freedom for thousands of young Hungarians who have made their choice.

Here, the refugees go through a provisional registration: name, age, trade or profession, relatives abroad, if any. The Austrian Red Cross provides a hot meal, for many the first in several days, along with dry socks, warm underclothing and emergency medical care. Few of the refugees, sensibly shod in ski boots or heavy work shoes, arrive with much more than the clothes they fought and shot in.

Geza, a lieutenant in the regular Hungarian Army at 25, has just walked across the frontier with his wife Franciszka, a registered nurse four months

pregnant, and a half-dozen of the freedom fighters who hurled back the Russians in a Budapest street-corner battle. The young lieutenant shed his uniform when he joined the patriots. He is in riding boots and breeches, a thin sweater and a skier's parka. He introduces his fellow-fighters: Nandor, a Budapest street car conductor who fought and then fled the country in the uniform of his calling; Janos, a lanky, red-haired student in the Technical High School; Sandor, a factory worker in a tattered trench coat and dingy white beret with a week's stubble on his drawn but smiling face, and Ferenc, an office boy whose deep set eyes are pouched from the accumulated fatigue of three sleepless weeks.

"We don't want to be separated," Geza says. "We fought the Russians together and we want to stay together. We have friends in Canada and Australia but, so long as there is hope that the Russians will leave Hungary, we don't want to be too far away. If there's any possibility at all, we will go back to Budapest."

THERE is no bitterness in the young soldier as he describes the five-day stand of his "kids" against the massed power of the Soviet Army. "Tell the West not to be afraid of the Russians," he says. "The troops they sent against us were cowardly and weak. If help had reached us in time we could have beaten them. Only cowards would have shot down the civilians hiding in cellars who took no part in the fighting." Gyorgy, just 23 years old, comes in with the latest news from Budapest. "The Russians are rounding up all the youth of Hungary for deportation," he says. "They know that otherwise there can be no peace." An engineering student, Gyorgy fought on for a full week after the Soviet troops reoccupied the capital. But when the deportations started he fled to Austria. He made his way as far as Gyor, halfway between Budapest and Vienna, screened by the boxes on a bakery truck. Eleven times the truck was halted by Russian soldiers. At Gyor, the bakers hid him behind sacks of flour. He came the rest of the distance on foot.

"YOU can't use my name," he says. "My parents stayed in Budapest and I don't want to cause them more trouble. I was in the student movement from the start and I can tell you we had no idea it would end this way. It started at the university on Oct. 22. No more than 5,000 of us were planning to demonstrate our solidarity with the people of Poland who had made a brave stand (Continued on Page 32)



INTO EXILE—Hungarian refugees leave a Red Cross train at a Swiss frontier station. An old woman weeps—because she is safe and also because the relatives she left behind are not.

ELIE ABEL, The Times correspondent in Belgrade, has been covering the revolt in Hungary from near-by Austria for the past month.

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for independence from Russia. Somehow, the discussion shifted to freedom for Hungary, too. We drafted a set of demands, and twelve of us stayed up all night to prepare leaflets for the next day's demonstration.

"The next morning, Oct. 23, we stuffed our pockets with leaflets and delivered them all over Budapest. The workers joined us and we started to march toward the Foreign Office in Buda. It seemed that half the city was suddenly on our side. But there was no violence. We were unarmed. Then the A. V. H. [Hungarian security police] started to shoot and Gero [Communist party secretary] called out the Russians. So I joined the freedom fighters."

FROM all accounts, Gyorgy fought well. Standing in the barnyard muck of Eisenstadt, a stocking cap on his head and a Boy Scout rucksack slung over his shoulder, he tells how the Communists taught him to handle weapons during month-long military training courses at the end of his freshman and sophomore years. "All they accomplished was to teach us how to shoot," Gyorgy says grimly. "We used this knowledge against them."

This is a strange migration. These are not the huddled, storm-tossed masses, yearning for relief from the quarrels and oppressions of Europe. There are remarkably few old people or invalids. At least three-quarters of them are less than 35 years old. Now

that they are safe in Austria, with time for contemplation, many seem somewhat astonished at their own wild courage of only a few days ago. They left their homes because they were marked for deportation or death, once the Russians re-established control. But they look ahead, not behind, and the future as they see it does not exclude going back to fight once again if their country can somehow be wrenched from the Russian grip.

There can be no question, after spending a few days with these youngsters, that the October uprising was of the people and for the people. These are not the "reactionaries" or the



A Hungarian refugee child in Swiss exile.

"counter-revolutionary elements" whom, so Moscow pretends, the Soviet Army had to crush to safeguard Hungary's "Socialist achievements." These are, in fact, the people, Hungary's best and bravest.

The sons and daughters of Hungary's workers and peasants—for they alone were allowed to enroll in the universities—were the first to fight the Russians. Patriotic officers of the Hungarian Army, ordinary soldiers, workers from factories and Government offices joined them. Once the Soviet troops opened fire on civilians in the streets of Budapest, the uprising became a simple matter of the Hungarian people against the Russian Army.

THE only clear exceptions were the men of the universally detested A. V. H., whose own atrocities of the past ten years were at last repaid in kind. The young refugees tell of A. V. H. men being hung from the nearest lamp-posts, or of their being thrown from third floor windows. Retribution of this kind is never pretty, no prettier than the tortures carried out by the A. V. H. during Matyas Rakosi's rule of terror, and no more excusable. The revolution, it is now clear, never had a definite political program nor any real leadership. A flame-haired laboratory assistant of 28, whose medical studies in Budapest were cut short by an eighteen-month prison sentence in 1951 "for political reasons," says the student revolutionary council's main demands were clear enough. "We asked



THE WAIT—This is a corner of the camp at

for the withdrawal of Russian troops, free elections and the dissolution of the A. V. H. While Imre Nagy was Premier everyone was in a fever of forming new political parties. It was simple anarchy but it was exciting."

The Russians stormed back into Budapest with hundreds of tanks on Nov. 4. "We were bound to be crushed, of course, but surrender was out of the question," he says. "My own group fought from Sunday [Nov. 4] to Friday



Traiskirchen, Austria, where transient refugees await immigration visas for other lands.

[Nov. 9]. We had no choice. Five of our number surrendered their arms only to have the Russians cut them down with machine guns. For the rest of us there was nothing left but to go on shooting. In the end, we hid our weapons and left Budapest. But we could find them again if need be. I want to remain in Austria and complete my studies here. Perhaps one day it will be possible to go back to Hungary and to fight again for freedom."

Not all the refugees are heroes, of course. There are among them wives, mothers, young children and some of the middle-aged. A Budapest tailor in his fifties, who escaped with his 22-year-old son, confesses: "I'm afraid. My wife and my elder son are still in Hungary. We became separated and we had to leave them. The boy wants to stay in Vienna and go to the university. But this is still too close to the Russians. I can't believe that they will respect Austria's neutrality. When have the Russians ever respected a border? I have a brother in Canada. There I would feel safe."

A MINER from Komorn, who trudged across the wintry fields to Austria with his wife and tow-headed twin boys of three, is willing to go almost anywhere. "I am 34, in good health, and I expect to work hard," he says. "In



A boy and his sister, refugees together.

Hungary under the Communists it was a constant losing struggle to support my family. I want these boys to have a better life than Hungary ever offered me. Maybe Australia is the place."

The children, rosy-cheeked from the bitter wind, are handed bananas by a Red Cross worker. They stare suspiciously at the fruit. The mother explains that her boys have never seen a banana before. They are offered puréed potatoes instead and rediscover their appetites.

FROM Eisenstadt, the refugees move on to Traiskirchen, near Wiener Neustadt, where a former Austrian imperial cadet school, also occupied by the Soviet Army from 1945 until a year ago, has been converted into a transshipment camp for the Hungarians. Here the migrants wait for their visas to Western Europe, the Americas or Australia. They are jammed in, as many as twenty-eight to a room. But Traiskirchen offers warmth, solid food and safety. Not two refugees in a hundred fail to express their gratitude to the Austrians for the help they have given without stint. They crowd around a visitor, eager to tell their stories and to put their questions: "Would Canada be a better place for an emigrant without a trade than the United States? Would Radio Free Europe please broadcast to Budapest that I am safe in Austria? My parents would like to know. Don't let the Communists tell you that this was a civil war; we can't consider those A. V. H. beasts our brothers. The Austrians have been wonderful. Tell the world that all night, while our train was moving from Eisenstadt to Traiskirchen, they kept bringing in warm milk for the babies aboard."

You ask the younger ones why they took up arms against the Russians and the answer comes back in the words of Petofi a century ago, words which everyone seems to have memorized:

Arise, Hungarians, the Fatherland calls you!

The time is now! Now or never!

Live oppressed—or live in freedom.

That is the question to be decided!

By the God of all Hungarians, we swear that we will nevermore be under the yoke!

Hungarian Exiles (Continued)



HOPE—To this young Hungarian mother, refuge in Austria means safety for her 4-month-old baby. She hopes, too, to see her husband again someday. He stayed behind to fight on.



HATRED—This man is filled with hate for the Russians and their reign of terror. He left everything behind in flight, but somehow his small dog found a way out, too.



REFUGE—Faced with death or deportation had they remained in Hungary, young "freedom fighters" register at the refugee reception center at Eisenstadt, Austria.



CHOW LINE—Austrian Red Cross workers provide a hot meal for some of the thousands of Hungarians who crossed the border. Austria was unstinting in its warm welcome.



WAY STATION—While many of the refugees wish to remain here in Austria, near the homeland, others will begin new lives in other countries. The United States promised to receive 5,000 Hungarian exiles, under speeded-up entry regulations.