

The Queen of the Danube

By IVAN LAPONOGOV

THE first thing the traveller from the east sees when approaching Budapest is a tall monument. On a pedestal of grey granite a dying Soviet officer, his face to the city, is raising himself with his last strength, his hand still holding the white flag of truce. A soldier supports him with his right arm, the left is raised in a gesture of wrath, as though demanding that the firing should stop.

This is a memorial to Captain Shteinmets, Soviet negotiating envoy, shot down by the Nazis. South of the city, in the suburb of Budaörs, stands a monument to another envoy—Captain Ostapenko.

These statues call to mind an incident in the battle of Budapest. In order to avoid the destruction of the city and the needless death of civilians, the Soviet Army carried out a bold manoeuvre to encircle the Nazi forces at Budapest and on a cold December day in 1944, when the ring was about to close, it sent envoys with white flags to the German command with a proposal for them to surrender.

The Nazi reply was to kill the envoys. Where they died, these granite monuments have been erected. And from early spring until late autumn, the bases of the pedestals are covered with flowers—gorgeous hothouse blossoms and simple field

flowers brought by the working people of Budapest and the villages round about.

Budapest Today

BUDAPEST is a city with a history going back two thousand years. All that is left from those distant times is the ruins of the ancient Roman military settlement Aquincum, still standing in Obuda, on the northwest fringe of the city.

Ten years ago, the day after Budapest was liberated by Soviet troops, I saw fresh ruins alongside those ancient ones—the destruction wrought by the modern vandals, the Nazis. Almost two-thirds of the city was destroyed or badly damaged. As a parting salute when they retreated from Pest to Buda, Hitler's troops blew up all the seven bridges spanning the Danube. The explosions shook the whole city, and I saw tears in the eyes of people as they looked at the ugly, mutilated uprights projecting from the water, and the tangle of twisted girders.

"They're destroying our queen of the Danube," whispered the people, who loved their city dearly.

... Then came new battles—the battles of peacetime, battles to conquer difficulties, to create afresh. A thousand and a half Hungarian workers went out to build the first bridge, to which—even before it



Memorial to the Soviet soldiers killed in the liberation of Hungary

stood—the name of the national hero Lajos Kossuth was given. Undeterred by the biting cold, Budapest metalworkers, Csongrád navvies, Békés carpenters, soldiers and students set to work. And Soviet sapper units gave a helping hand.

Today, eight fine bridges cross the Danube and one of them, Stalin Bridge in the northern part of the city, is the biggest in Central Europe.

All traces of wartime destruction have disappeared. Thousands of new buildings have risen in place of the ruins; twelve whole blocks are going up just now.

A rebuilt theatre stands on St. Stephen Prospect. A huge stadium seating 100,000 has been laid out on the eastern border of Pest.

Ancient Buda too, which bore the brunt of the destruction, has recovered from the ravages of war. New buildings have risen and architectur-

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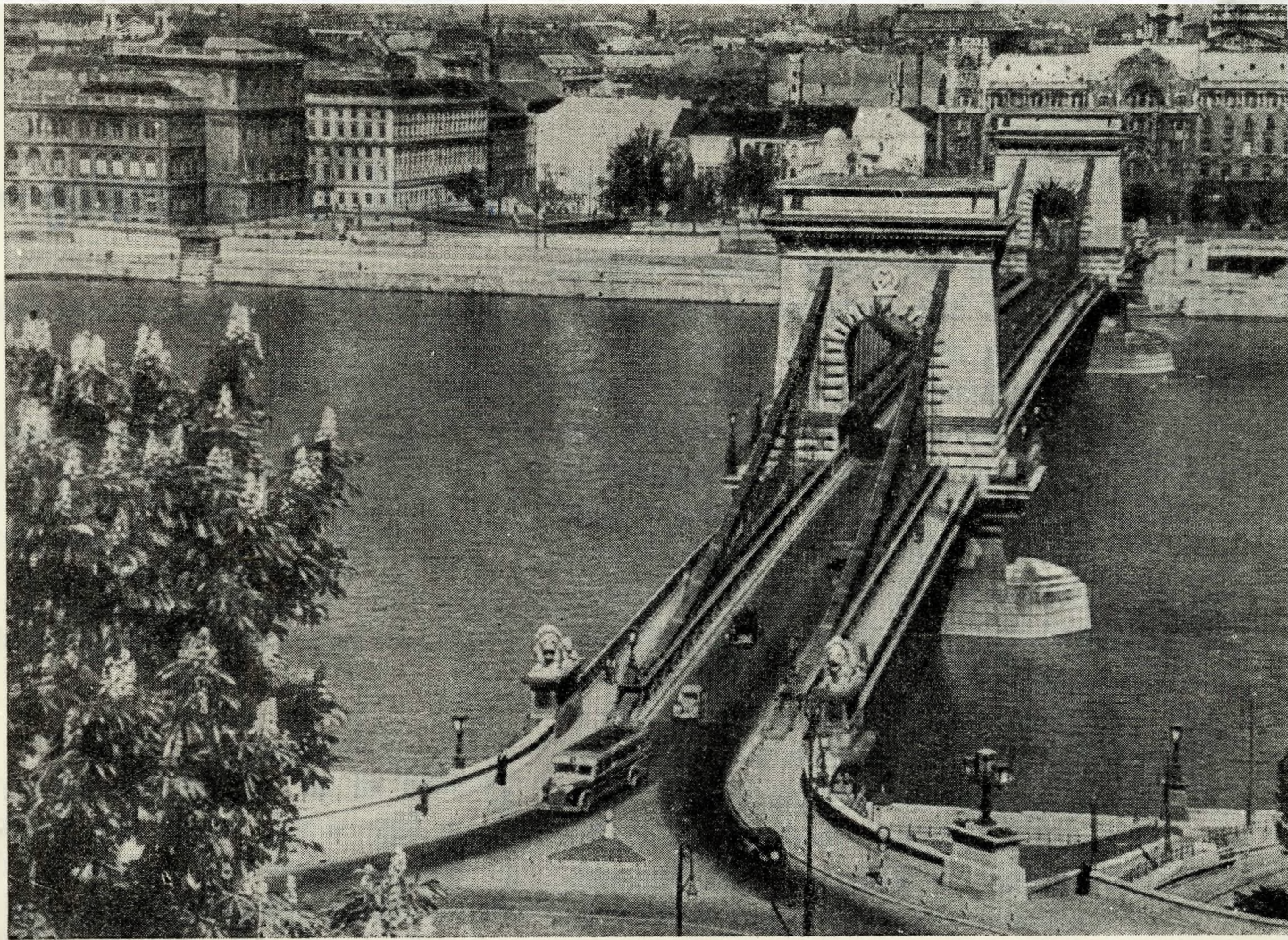
al treasures are being restored. A little while ago restoration work was completed on the Buda Fortress, which is linked with so much in the bygone history of Hungary.

The high cliff of Geilert Mount overlooking the Danube, where for long years a half-ruined citadel had stood, is now crowned with a majestic monument in granite and bronze—the figure of a woman, symbolising free Hungary, holding the palm branch of peace.

The Elysian Fields

THERE used to be bitter irony in the name Angyalföld—the Elysian Fields—for this was the city's slum district. Only a few years ago it had not even a water supply or a drainage system. Today it boasts new blocks of modern flats.

Csepel, which before the war was the most neglected suburb, has become one of the best planned and best built districts of Greater Buda-



Budapest. One of the eight new bridges over the Danube

pest. The small huts and barracks have made way for four-storey apartment houses, and the dusty, narrow streets for wide, asphalted roads. Csepel, which is linked with the centre of the city by electric railway, has its own polyclinic, high school, specialised secondary school, parks, gardens, a huge stadium, not to mention its own Palace of Culture, built some years ago, on whose stage the best actors and concert performers often appear. The Csepel Vasas sports club is one of the country's leading clubs in football, fencing, gymnastics and rowing.

Similar changes have come to pass in other of the industrial suburbs.

It is very pleasant on a hot Sunday in summer to go up the Danube to the northern part of Greater Budapest, to the big swimming and boating centre on Roman Embankment. Roman watchtowers once stood there; today new life pulsates. From morning till

night boats of all kinds—rowboats, canoes, sailing boats and motorboats—glide over the Danube while people bask in the sun, or splash gaily in the water, or gather in groups for a singsong under the trees.

The Larder of Budapest

SOUTH of the city on the bank of the Danube stretches the Central Market. A friend of mine, a local reporter, dragged me there one day.

"This is the larder of Budapest," he said. "And you can see we don't suffer from lack of appetite."

Wherever I looked I saw great piles of vegetable marrows, potatoes, the famous Hungarian paprika, boxes of tomatoes, apples and pears. The huge glassed-in warehouse hummed like a beehive as people sorted, weighed and dispatched to the shops all this produce.

Every day about four hundred boxcarloads of fruit and vegetables



A winter evening in Budapest

Mutual Understanding—The ~~An Important~~ ~~Thing~~

arrive in the Central Market from various parts of the country.

There are many other markets, where the farmers bring meat, poultry and milk. In recent months the amount of produce in the Budapest markets has increased 25 per cent—a result of the development of fruit and vegetable growing around the city. The food industry is producing more, too. Prices have been reduced three times in the past year and a half, which has made for a greater demand. The sale of milk in the city, for instance, is double what it was before the war.

The biggest food store, at the corner of Rákoczy and Nagykörut avenues—the busiest part of the city—is open day and night. It serves 70,000 customers daily. The prepared meat department sells many hundredweight of pork fat, ham and sausage a day. The fresh fruit in which Hungary is so rich can be bought here all the year round.

Budapest today is a city pulsating with activity and gaiety.

Professor Baliga (left) views an exhibition arranged in the Moscow Hall of Columns, where the Surgeons' Congress was held



Interview with Professor Anappa Baliga

Professor Baliga, eminent Indian surgeon and President of the Indo-Soviet Cultural Society, attended the 26th U.S.S.R. Congress of Surgeons, held in Moscow January 20 to 27, at which he was elected an honorary member of the Soviet Surgical Society.

Below we publish an interview given by Professor Baliga to a NEWS correspondent shortly before his return to India.

FIRST of all I would like to say a few words about the work of the congress, which impressed me as being conducted on a high scientific level. Attended by 2,500 delegates and foreign guests, including surgeons from Britain, China, France, Czechoslovakia, Sweden, Yugoslavia, Brazil, Argentina, Poland and other countries, the congress was marked by a genuinely friendly spirit. We all had an opportunity to exchange views on surgery with colleagues from Moscow, Leningrad, Kiev and other Soviet cities.

I found the papers presented at the congress and the discussion that followed highly interesting.

They covered surgical treatment of the heart, cancer of the lungs, tuberculosis, etc. In Moscow I visited the Vishnevsky Surgical Institute and other special institutions, and also the surgical departments of various Moscow hospitals, where I watched heart operations being performed. In the course of these visits I had occasion to observe that experimental research is being conducted on an extensive scale in the Soviet Union.

Exchange of medical experience produces splendid results: it brings us nearer to our common goal—the humane and lofty goal of ridding mankind of all disease. It was therefore most gratifying to me that my paper on heart operations was followed with interest by my Soviet colleagues at the congress.

As President of the Indo-Soviet Cultural Society I would also like to say a few words about the Society's aims and tasks and its achievements in reaching closer understanding between the peoples of India and the Soviet Union.

The Indo-Soviet Cultural Society was formed at the beginning of 1952. Interest in Russia and later the Soviet Union has always been great in India, whose intellectuals have closely followed the development of your country's art and literature and have studied its history. India's scientists, writers and theatre people were the initiators of cultural