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GIPSY MUSIC'S PLAYING AS THE DECKS ARE CLEARED—

BUDAPEST, Hungary's capital, is to-day one of Europe's gayest cities, a little Paris behind the Iron Curtain.

Gipsy orchestras and jazz bands play from smart cafes on the banks of the Danube, and in restaurants where food in pre-war abundance is served in the famous highly-spiced Hungarian style.

Attractive Hungarian women, in latest urchin cut and newest of Paris "looks," throng the wide boulevards that are ablaze with neon lights and crammed with large cars.

Yet Hungary is well behind the Iron Curtain, in the heart of Russian-controlled Eastern Europe.

Since the Hungarian Communists seized power three years ago they have purposely kept up this gay front.

Discontent

HUNGARY, and especially its capital, Budapest, has so far been the gay spot behind the Iron Curtain. But the bright facade hides something more sinister, says

DAVID LEE

Journal Special Correspondent

MAIN reason was for Budapest to act as an attractive show window for Communism to Western Europeans, who have found it easier to obtain visas to visit Hungary than for any other satellite country.

Then the Reds wished to curry favour with the pleasure-loving Hungarians while they carried out the first phases of the Communist plan for Hungary.

To-day the Hungarian honeymoon is almost over, and the gay country is being rapidly moulded into the dull, hard life of a Communist satellite.

The half-gay, half-sad gipsy music barely drowns the growing murmur of discontent from nine million Hungarians.

This is one of the reasons why the Hungarian Communist

Government has now changed its former moderate attitude to Britain, imprisoning a legitimate British businessman, and demanding the reduction of the British Legation which is, the Hungarian Communists allege, "a centre of espionage."

The Hungarian Communists want the West's diplomats to leave the country before they crack down on the peasants, and so that military preparations against Yugoslavia may be carried out in secret.

Aimed at Tito

THE Russians in Hungary are already reported to be lengthening airstrips and metal-ling strategic highways as well as moving ammunition up the Danube.

Russian officers have been introduced into the Hungarian army down to battalion level.

This military activity is seen as being aimed at Marshal Tito's Yugoslavia. In the event of an attack, forces from Hungary

would be the spearhead to advance across the flat plains towards Belgrade.

Hungary fell into the lap of the Communists, while licking its war wounds, without the average Hungarian realising it. As members of a Coalition Government in 1947 the Reds soon swallowed the other Parties, starting with the Socialists, and have reigned since.

Hungary is mostly a great rolling plain. Its biggest asset is the rich black soil of its farmlands. Hungary's red peppers (paprikas), fine fruits and grapes, from which comes the potent sweet Tokay wine, are famous throughout Europe.

Rich wiped out

BEFORE the war all this rich earth was in the hands of a few fabulously wealthy land-owners; one half of the productive soil of Hungary was in the hands of about 2,000 people.

A post-war land reform programme broke up the large estates, and some 700,000 poor,

landless peasants found themselves overnight owners of small farms.

Although most parties supported the programme, the Communists took credit for the land reform scheme, and won a temporary popularity with the peasants.

This move wiped out Hungary's rich. To-day former land-owners

work at any odd job they cannot pick up. Also, for their "re-education," they must "volunteer" to go out every day for three hours selling subscriptions for the Hungarian "Daily Worker" ("Szabad Nep," which means "Free People").

Next the Communists annihilated the industrial rich and middle-class with nationalisation of all businesses employing more than four people. Small one-man businesses found it impossible to obtain raw materials or supplies to compete with the Government co-operatives.

Food plentiful

AT present the ordinary worker is not badly off. He earns a good wage and gets cheap food and clothes from the factory co-operatives.

Food is plentiful, and reasonably-priced for the Hungarian worker (though not for the visiting Briton with his poor official rate of exchange).

In relation to his pay, the worker pays the following prices: milk, twopence a pint; bacon, shilling a pound; sugar, shilling a pound, all unrationed.

But there is a snag; to hold a job you need a red card. To obtain that, you must be a member of a Communist organisation. Without a job a man cannot use the co-operatives, and must buy on the outside market, where bacon costs 7s a pound, instead of 1s. where a piece of soap costs three times as much as in the co-operatives.

Glasspool, a 31-year-old builder and decorator, pleaded not guilty to having obtained from Jean Whitwell the sum of £100 at Hove on August 4, 1948, with intent to defraud, by pretending that he was owed £700 by the Westminster Bank, Jersey.

He also pleaded not guilty to having obtained, on October 17, 1948, at Hove, with intent to defraud, a cheque valued at £500 from Jean Whitwell by falsely pretending that he was the owner of a house in Jersey, known as "La Falaise," which he was about to sell for £18,500.

Mrs. Whitwell, cross-examined by Mr. Pensotti, denied that she was in love at any time with Glasspool.

"When one has a smashed marriage, one does not fall in love again easily. We had a strong bond of friendship and were on intimate terms."

NOT IN BOX

Mr. Pensotti: I suppose you would describe yourself as a perfectly immoral woman? It certainly would not.

Mr. Pensotti said that he was not going to put Glasspool in the witness-box, and, addressing the jury, submitted that it was not safe to rely on the evidence of someone who was "a worthless woman." It might well be that Mrs. Whitwell had become a

21 March 1950

Letters

SHE SAW A DIFFERENT HUNGARY

DAVID LEE'S article made depressing reading. His Hungary is so different from that which we remember, who were in Budapest last year. Has it indeed changed so much, or is it perhaps that your correspondent has misinterpreted what he has seen?

Why does he not report that the Gellert Hotel, shown in the foreground of your picture, is patronised as much by the people

as by the "Communist bosses" and their wives? How is he able, in any case, to pick the latter out from among the crowd? What are his grounds for calling them "the new aristocracy" and "highly paid"?

One wonders, too, whether he has actually seen much of what he reports, for "... so that military preparations may be carried out in secret..." "the Russians... are reported..." "... is seen as being aimed at..." "..." are sentences which savour of surmise rather than certainty, and his general conclusions are completely at variance with what I am told in letters from my friends in Hungary.

Incidentally, the hair-raiser about Andrassy-utca was a chestnut even last August, and we cracked it for ourselves while we were there.

MADELEINE A. SHARP.

Glenesk, The Oval,
Benton.