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• A sort of punchdrunk madness possesses Hungary, says DOUGLAS WILKIE, The Sun's special commentator. Even one of the "new intellectuals" admitted . . .

'We Are Mad—But Proud And Tough'

BUDAPEST: Budapest is at once the gayest and saddest city beyond the Iron Curtain.

THE laughter is falsetto. The tears are not of the sentimental sort once evoked by swooning gipsy orchestras.

A sort of punchdrunk madness possesses Budapest — and the whole of Hungary.

On Vaczi Utca, the Fifth Avenue of Budapest, one can still buy—at a price—Paris model hats, vintage Rhine hock, and rich hunks of butter, cheese, pate de foie gras, and pots of caviare from Russia.

In high-priced cafes there are waiters in tail-coats, and a few smartly dressed patrons who talk politics to a tinkle of coffee-spoons and titter of suppressed, ironical laughter.

Among both waiters and patrons is a residue of the old Magyar aristocracy, self-nourished on a forlorn

hope of a Hapsburg restoration and a rankling hatred of the "Jewish Marxists" who sit in office in the Hungarian capital. There are even cabarets in Budapest.

Elsewhere, amid the ruins of Buda, and the lesser ruins of Pest, the people tend to be shabby and listless.

In the crowd one sees a heavy sprinkling of shawled women from the surrounding countryside. Most of them are poor peasants who have come into Budapest to beg. They are the victims of the terrible overpopulation of the land, which last year's drought did so much to aggravate.

reasons why Hungary's Reds hold power. One reason is the Red Army. The other is that the Hungarian Communists use economic arguments which are sufficiently reasonable, on the surface at least, to bring a whisper of hope and sanity to Hungarian workers who have never before heard anything of reason. The workers are impressed, if not against their better judgment (they have little judgment), at least in spite of their traditional prejudices.

The Hungarian Socialists, the saddest victims of Hungary's madness, are usually honest, but seldom clever, and certainly not united or forceful enough to compete with the Communists.

The right-wing leaders are usually clever but seldom honest.

This is the present plight of a Hungary which finished the war the most disorganised and miserable country in Europe. It had been stripped by the Nazis,

looted by the Russians, and fought over and massively destroyed by both. It had lost half its industrial capacity and reserves of raw materials, and two-thirds of its livestock and farm equipment.

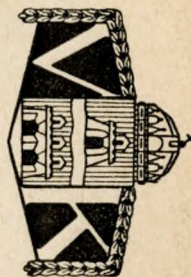
The Hungarians have also suffered psychologically. They are a proud people who have become sorry for themselves—and very lonely. Although Hungary has a seat on Moscow's bandwagon, bound for the Marxist Utopia, the fellow-travellers lack brotherly love.



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Budapestre vonatkozó újságcikkek

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A few are peasant women with money to spend — wads of newly printed florints (as Hungary's currency is now called), more than an industrial worker could earn in a month of overtime.

These are the wives of the "kulaks," the small farmers who did very well under Hitler, and who are doing very well in the present food shortage. Around them a new national crisis—economic, political and religious—is boiling-up.



AT the vast Manfred Weiss factory at Csepel, outside Budapest, one-third of the workers were ardent Nazis during the war, and today nearly half of them profess to be Communists—a transformation which nobody has yet succeeded in analysing to anyone's satisfaction.

Everyone in Hungary, it seems, hates either the Communists or the Jews, or the so-called "new intellectuals," or the "Pro-Russian clique."

Yet the Government at Budapest comprises all four of these.

It weilds power, and retains power, by playing-off hate against hate, fear against fear, and by exercising a political and administrative skill unique in a country where honest and diligent politicians and administrators have always been murdered on sight or driven into the wilderness—first by the Hapsburgs, then by Horthy, and then by Hitler.

There are two other

RACIALLY, the Hungarians are a Mongol enclave in the Slav half of Europe. Their only blood brothers are the Finns (and to a smaller extent the Estonians), whom the cold northern twilight seems to have converted to Slav patience and fatalism.

The Hungarians, on their sunny Danubian plain, retained their individualism, but let it be warped by a feudal aristocracy and a poor, illiterate peasantry.

Today the Hungarian minorities in Slovakia, Rumania, and Jugoslavia are ill-treated or cajoled, according to the twists and turns of Moscow demagoguery.

The quarrel with Jugoslavia has made things worse.

The fact that the Hungarians have an armaments industry but not much of an army, whereas the Jugoslavs have a big army but no armaments industry, is not the sort of joke that raises a roar of merriment in either Budapest or Belgrade.



ITALKED about Hungary with a Hungarian, one of the "new intellectuals." He began ominously by saying—

"You must understand, all Magyars are mad.

"But we are very proud, very tough. One day, perhaps very soon, we shall instil a method into our madness.

"Just now it is a Marxist method which attracts a majority of our more energetic and intelligent youth. It is the only method, as applied to political science, in the true meaning of the phrase, which they have had a chance to learn."

TUESDAY: New Hopes—And Fears—In Hungary.