

Blood Clings To Tall Rushes Along Hungarian 'Terror Curtain'

Swampland Frontier Last Refugee Hope

By JACK MEEHAN
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On the Austro-Hungarian Frontier—Tall rushes frozen into flint-hard spikes thrust their way upward through the ice of this swampland frontier. There was blood on those reedy bayonets today.

They call it the "iron curtain," this swampy bit of borderland chosen by Hungarian refugees in their flight to freedom. But it should be called the "terror curtain" for that is what it is.

The only sound in the sere dawn is the whispering of the wind through the frozen reeds. And then there is the shriek of a woman in despair. Her voice rises in terror and pain too fierce for silence.

You see nothing except an occasional Communist border guard swathed in an overpadded coat as he caddles into view across the treacherous ocean of ice that is the frontier. You know he is there, for you can see his hands together for warmth. There is no warmth in this icy

world that is one of the main underground railway stations on the road from Budapest to Vienna, and still the refugees come through. It is one of the most bone-and-soul-battering roads chosen and conquered by man. Thousands have chosen this path and won. Some have failed, killed by Communist border guards within a Russian rifle shot of neutral Austria's beleaguered frontier.

Signs of their passing, tinsel with frost, lie scattered about like crazy remnants around some mad-man's Christmas tree.

Signs of the Time

A tiny tot's red zippered snow suit with its faded label from a Budapest department store lies huddled near the reeds. Two patched-in rubber tubes to which men and women clung and paddled through the bone-numbing waters of a border canal.

A baby's picture book whose nursery rhyme illustrations are the same the world over though the words are in Hungarian. A child's blue knitted woolen hat and mittens held together by a piece of tattered cord.

In the tall rushes where the woman screamed the ice thickness varies. The water depth varies, too. Many of the refugees fighting through, to freedom here have plunged neck deep into the water through the ice.

The sudden chilling shock has driven some, already buffeted by fatigue, to the verge of shrieking hysteria. More hardy ones have dog trotted circulation and warrily into frostbitten limbs on the safety of Austrian soil.

War-hardened American news-

men sometimes weep openly as they watch the tortured and pathetic parade of refugees. A French photographer smashed his camera to the ground in a fury of frustrated rage. A television cameraman kept his camera whirring although he was unable to focus through his tears.

Sobbing Mass

In one fantastic dash for freedom scores of men, women and children hurled themselves across the border in a sobbing mass, stumbling, crawling and smashing through the reeds that

stabbed their clothes and tore their flesh.

A rustle stirs the reeds and the woman who screamed staggers into sight, drenched to her hips with muddy swamp water and clutching her heaving breast. She is 60, she says, and she has walked half the 150 miles from Budapest although she has a weak heart. She says she screamed when she fell through the ice and felt herself fainting.

The reeds part and our men slip through, followed by a woman with a child in her arms. The woman is silent, numb, and is offered a drink of brandy. The silent numbness gives way to hysteria and she screams that her baby is dead. But the child, numbed with cold, is safe.

Plod Across Field

The refugees plod across the open field toward a Red Cross station a mile away. One man wears heavy boots of the Hungarian army, but the others have only broken leather bound together with rags that are no match for the reedy bayonets.

Seven more refugees have joined the 93,000 sheltering in Austria and the fresh blood on the reedy bayonets freezes in the wind that sweeps the Hungarian plains.

The Family Council

Editor's note: The Family Council consists of a judge, a psychiatrist, three clergymen, a newspaper editor, a women's editor and two writers. Each article is a summary of an actual report. The Family Council does not give advice; it merely reports on problems that have been dealt with by responsible agencies and counselors.

Mrs. Sally D. — My mother refuses to come to live with us. Mrs. D. W. — Sally takes too much on herself.

Mrs. Sally D. — I wonder what makes old people so stubborn. My widowed mother, who is in her 70's and not very well, absolutely refuses to come to live with us, despite the fact that my husband and I have begged her.

I tell my mother it would be much easier if she lived with us because she is ill so often that I have to keep running back and forth between my apartment and hers to care for her.

My mother says her neighbors are willing to help her if she really needs help, but I don't want to trust my mother to the care of strangers when she is not well.

Mrs. D. W. — I always promised myself I would not become a burden on my children. My own mother lived with me in the last years of her life and I know it was very hard on me and the family.

My neighbors are not strangers, but good friends. They really do everything necessary for me. Anyway, Sally bothers me when she takes care of me. She can't seem to do enough. She takes too much on herself.

Sally is really afraid that I'll die alone in the middle of some night. She can't believe that I'm not afraid.

The Council: If Sally really wants to know what makes some old people so stubborn, it is the insistence of many young people, like herself, who project their fears and anxieties on older ones.

It is understandable that Sally should not want to leave her

mother to the care of strangers and that she would fear that her mother would be alone in the midst of crises at night, but from both accounts it appears that Sally shows her anxieties much too readily — to the point where it disturbs her mother.

Mrs. D. W. appears to be trying to protect herself from Sally's oversolicitude. She is the kind of woman who feels strong as long as she is allowed to use her own inner resources and courage. Sally, who has less mother's ability to stand up to her trials.

If Sally really wants her mother to come to live with her, she should try to build up her own strength and show her mother that she will not try to render the elderly woman helpless by overdoing her care. She should show her mother she can have a large degree of independence and will not be "hovered" over.

As long as Sally shows she is unable to accept the difficulties of old age with some calm, her mother is right to keep as much independence as she can — even if it is hard on Sally that way.

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McMinnville Woman Showing Improvement

Portland — (U.P.) — The condition of Mina McKimms, 57, McMinnville, was reported as "improving" today in a local hospital. She was injured Nov. 17 in an auto accident here and suffered a possible skull fracture when thrown 25 feet by the impact.

The bite of the short-tailed shrew is poisonous, owing to a secretion in the salivary glands.

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