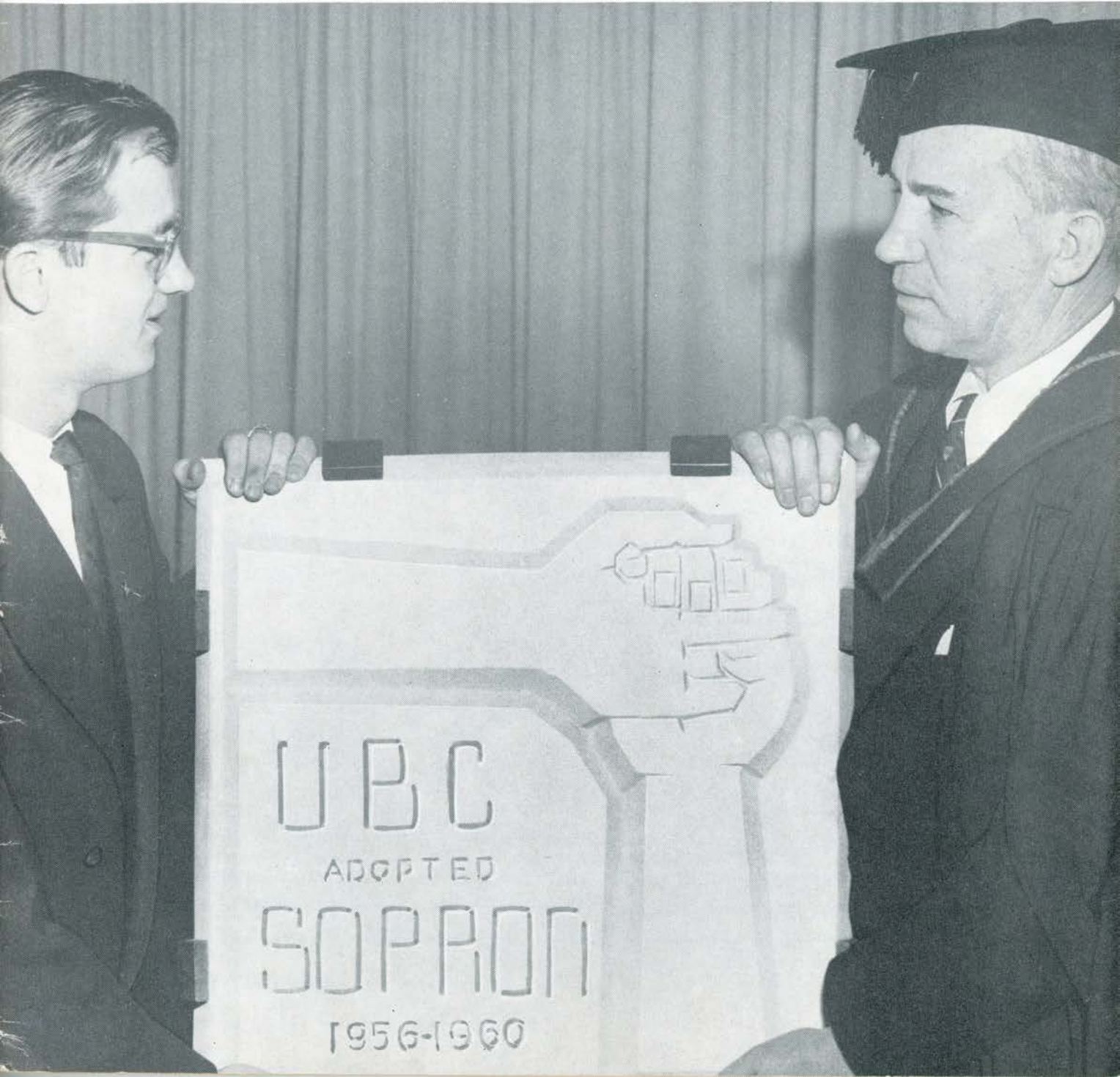


# THE U.B.C. ALUMNI CHRONICLE

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## SOPRON HIGHLIGHTS

In the winter of 1957 the 300 Hungarians shown in the group photograph on the opposite page gathered on the steps of the U.B.C. physics building to have their picture taken. The group comprised 196 students, 29 professors and their wives and families who had fled from their native land a few months earlier in the wake of Russian tanks sent to crush the Hungarian revolt of 1956. In September of 1957 the faculty and students of the Sopron division of the Faculty of Forestry began a new life at U.B.C. under many difficulties, not the least being the language barrier. Over the years they have adjusted to these difficulties and today 85 per cent of the original class have graduated with U.B.C. degrees and have found jobs in the forest industry and allied professions. While at U.B.C. the Sopron students annually commemorated the revolution of October, 1956, by marching to the War Memorial Gymnasium and placing a wreath in the memorial lobby in memory of their fallen comrades. They are shown doing this in the picture at the top of this page. Life in Canada also had its lighter moments for the exiles. In 1958 the Animal Rescue League of Berks County, Pennsylvania, sent a mascot—a pure-bred Komondor sheepdog, a breed used by Hungarian shepherds to protect their flocks. In the picture at left two Sopron students and a professor are shown greeting the dog at Vancouver International airport.

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## 'We shall remember the good that has come out of adversity'

*On May 25 the final chapter of a modern exodus was written at the University of British Columbia when the last 23 Hungarian students of the Sopron division of the Faculty of Forestry knelt before the chancellor to receive their degrees. On April 24 the exiled students presented a plaque to the University commemorating their stay at U.B.C. (See picture on cover.) The plaque hangs in International House and shows a pair of hands linked in friendship with a simple inscription reading "U.B.C. Adopted Sopron, 1956-1961". The remarks which follow are those of Dean Geoffrey C. Andrew, U.B.C.'s deputy president, who spoke at the ceremony when the plaque was presented to the University.*

Universities are among the rare human institutions which set aside national boundaries to engage in the free exchange of men and ideas. We who work and teach at the University of British Columbia will always be particularly proud of the fact that it was our privilege to receive, assist and support the faculty and students of the forestry school at Hungary's Sopron University.

May I for a moment recall some of the events which led to the transfer of Sopron to our own campus—a unique event, I think, in the history of universities.

The University of Sopron has a proud and dignified tradition, dating back more than 150 years, and specializing in forestry, geology, mining and geodetics. The courage of Sopron University students had already been established when, in

1848, they fought with the Hungarian patriot, Louis Kossuth, in the Hungarian War of Independence. In October, 1956, the faculty and students of the University were again called upon to display their courage and determination, for in that month the Russian armed forces moved into Hungary and the University fell under Russian control.

After a series of acts against the aggressor, in November some 300 members of the University fled into Austria. Dr. George Allen, dean of the Faculty of Forestry here, and Mr. Fred McNeill, public relations officer for the Powell River Company, flew to Vienna at the invitation of the then minister of citizenship and immigration, the Honourable Jack Pickersgill. After appropriate consultation, it was decided to invite the entire group to come to Canada, this with the assistance of the Honourable James Sinclair who was then minister of fisheries. Mr. H. S. Foley and Mr. M. J. Foley of the Powell River Company agreed to accommodate the faculty and students of Sopron division in a construction camp at Powell River. They spent the spring and summer in the camp and came to this campus for the academic year 1957-58.

Those were not easy days for our Hungarian colleagues. Having left a beloved homeland and nearly everything they possessed in the world behind them, they were now committed to making a new life for themselves in a strange land. There were many problems and many difficulties to be faced and resolved.

To begin with, they had to undertake the fairly lengthy process of learning a language that was foreign to them and, at the same time, they had to adapt to a new social and cultural atmosphere. Financial difficulties confronted them at every turn, but we at the University did whatever was within our power to relieve their plight.

Dean Allen and his colleagues were tireless in their efforts on behalf of Sopron and they, together with other generous colleagues at the University, worked long hours to make the buildings and facilities available so that teaching could go on without interruption. It would be difficult for me to mention by name all those colleagues who gave of their time and energies in making this venture a successful one. So many people co-operated, so many people rallied to meet the challenge. Since that day, nearly five years ago, 139 Sopron students from the original 196 have graduated, and at our coming Spring Congregation another 23 will receive their degrees. This I consider a remarkable achievement and one of which we are all justly proud.

The plaque we are dedicating today is the gift of Sopron division to that University which was in a very real sense their **alma mater**. It symbolizes the understanding, the friendship and the goodwill which has characterized the relationships between Sopron and U.B.C. since our Hungarian friends first came here. Our association with Sopron we shall always cherish and we shall remember the good that has come out of adversity . . . .