

La Cicciolina's dove gives life for Hungary peace

Eyewitness

Susan Viets in Kiskunhalas

YESTERDAY, the dove of peace did not survive. Ilona Staller, the Italian MP better known as La Cicciolina, had released her symbolic white bird the instant the engines started.

Then, the first tank of the first

regiment of the Soviet Southern Army Group 13th division to withdraw from Hungary roared up the concrete loading platform towards the railway transporter — and right over the dove, perched picturesquely en route.

This is how history will remember the beginning of the Soviet Union's unilateral troop withdrawal.

Yesterday's departing 2,000 officers and soldiers are just some of the forces to be withdrawn from Hungary this year.

The Soviet plan is to rid Hungary, East Germany, and Czechoslovakia of 500,000 troops within two years.

An American-made docu-

mentary now showing in Budapest opposition circles captured the horror of the events of 1956 as Soviet units swept in to reinforce the troops that had been in Hungary since 1945.

Hungarians greeted the tanks rolling through Budapest with shotguns and petrol bombs. When it was over, corpses littered the central squares. More than 20,000 people had been killed.

Yesterday, the tanks were muzzled. The barrels were tied with thick cable wires. Bolted down and with dirty treads, they were tamed and tired-looking.

Thirty-one tanks, each manned by a team of four,

were lined up in a neat row to be loaded for the 24-hour journey to the Soviet Union.

In the field on the edge of Kiskunhalas, a hamlet 2½ hours south of Budapest, soldiers, mostly 19 and 20-year-olds, guided the tanks on to the transport, raising the red flag to signal stop, and the white flag to advance — stop, advance, stop, advance.

Vladimir, aged 19, an ambulance operator from the Ukraine, is half-way through his two-year army stint and happy to be leaving. "I am happy to be going home to my motherland. Hungary is nice but my homeland is where I belong."

Villagers stood by watch-

ing as the motors hummed and the tanks moved on.

Janos Marosan from the post office rested on his rusty bike, separated from the tanks by a gully of stagnant rain water. He had come because he had time off from work and nothing else to do.

"Yes yes, the soldiers have been here since I was a boy. We see them sometimes in town; they're quiet, they don't bother us," he said.

But in her emerald green outfit, lace petticoat and ornate headband, Italy's visiting MP of Hungarian origin still stole the show. "We're not here for the tanks. We're here to see Cicciolina," an observer said.