

THE 1956 HUNGARIAN REVOLUTION AND THE SOVIET BLOC COUNTRIES: REACTIONS AND REPERCUSSIONS

edited by
JÁNOS M. RÁINER
and
KATALIN SOMLAI

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The Institute for the History of
the 1956 Hungarian Revolution
Historical Archives of the Hungarian State Security
Budapest



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Revolution and the Soviet Bloc Countries:
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INTRODUCTION

The Budapest 1956 Institute and the Historical Archives of the Hungarian State Security held a conference on September 22–3, 2006, one month before the 50th anniversary of the 1956 Hungarian Revolution. Historians of 15 countries took part and 26 lectures were heard. The conference was opened by Katalin Szili, speaker of the Hungarian Parliament, and introduced by the writer of these lines. The concluding words came from Thomas Blanton, director of the National Security Archive, Washington DC. This volume selects ten of the contributions, which appear in an expanded, edited form. Part I of this introduction follows the line of argument advanced in the introduction to the conference. Attention is then drawn to some results of the conference, but without intending to draw up a final balance.

I

Two aspects were examined before the subject-matter of the anniversary conference was decided. One was where the historiography of the Hungarian Revolution stood (primarily in Hungary itself) fifty years after the event and a good decade-and-a-half after Hungarian and East European transition to democracy. The other was what specific problems faced by today's historians of 1956 were particularly relevant to international historical discourse.

1. The historiography of the Hungarian Revolution had more than three decades behind it in 1989. Right up until the system changes in Hungary and Eastern Europe, it had been subject to three deciding factors:

- a) Linguistic difficulties meant that most of the works had been written by Hungarians, or at least the longer and more decisive contributions.

- b) Discourse in the West, strongly influenced by the Hungarian émigré community, had hardly any contact with the communist historiography at home, but both sides felt themselves to be in situation of constant debate.
- c) The dominant frame of interpretation for the history of '56 was political history and Kremlinology, with totalitarianism as its explanatory paradigm.

The events of 1989 brought immediate fundamental change in several respects. Research and public discourse about the past became freer and more varied within Hungary as well. The archive sources for the period became accessible for the whole period since 1945. Contacts were made with international research into the contemporary period.

The memory of '56 played a key part in Hungary's change of system. The legitimacy of the Kádár regime rested on a complex system of concessions, freedoms and benefits for society. That legitimacy weakened when it proved impossible to sustain these for economic reasons (above all the steady increase in the standard of living). The process became apparent through open discourse on the recent past. The charge sheet listed crimes from the past, but the accused was the present Kádárite system. Its main crime had been to crush the '56 Revolution and to execute participants in it, including the emblematic figure of Imre Nagy. In part, the exceptional situation that developed in 1989 still determines the historiography of '56 to this day.

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After 1989, there was an explosive increase in the quantity of knowledge about the revolution. Fifty-six has become in the last 15 years perhaps the best most studied juncture in 20th-century Hungarian history, these being the most important and fruitful fields of research:

- a) The first to mention is the international context of '56. The documentation of Soviet and American perceptions and decision making became available through a so-called *archive revolution*. Fifty-six as a crisis in the Cold War has been central to the new Cold War historiography. The peak came with the 1996 international historians' conference in Budapest and publication and interpretation of the so-called Malin Notes.
- b) Individual and collective biographies of several of the main actors appeared (Imre Nagy, Géza Losonczy, Pál Maléter, armed insurgents, etc.)
- c) Broad source-publishing activity took place, including records of the central authorities (the party, the government, the commands of the armed forces), press reports and radio broadcasts, documents of central and local revolutionary bodies, and documents produced during the reprisals.
- d) Treatment has started of the live experiences, the oral history of '56. Great attention was turned at the beginning of the 2000s to tendencies in the way the revolution is recollected.

- e) Apart from that, there have appeared a large number of summaries of '56, of varying standard. Fifty-six has been included in the new summaries and textbooks of 20th-century Hungarian history.
- f) Historical research has served as the basis for innumerable documentaries, television programmes and Internet websites. The new popular media have generated a huge demand for research findings. Many historians of the contemporary period are carrying out extensive *service* activities. A veritable recollection industry or history industry has emerged, with its own professionals.

2. What sharp conceptual differences can be seen in scholarly interpretation of '56, especially since the change of system? In fact *scholarly* interpretation shows fewer strong differences. The writings of today essentially follow, under different conditions, a line of discourse stretching back for 40–45 years. The main dividing line developed back in the 1950s and 1960s, when left-wing, post-Marxist historians did not see the history of Soviet-type socialism as something closed, and the Hungarian Revolution as one of the most hopeful attempts to move away from Stalinism. Those who saw the history of Soviet socialism as closed, on the other hand, saw '56 as an anti-totalitarian and/or national uprising, revolution, or struggle for liberty. Even in that early literature, the greatest effect was exerted by writings of a chronicle character, depicting a chain of events in bright colours, striving to present individual and collective participants, and above all, human values seen to be universal. These accounts were written mainly by eye-witnesses, or those gaining most attention and success were. This was the pattern followed by most of the historiography after 1989. Most of the historical narratives about '56 were slotted in among the various chronicles. The history of the Soviet system and its reforms had ended and Marxist contemporary history was pushed onto the defensive, so that the dominant framework of interpretation of '56 derived from the theory of totalitarianism.

When choosing the subject for the conference, we decided we did not want to reiterate the overall history of the Hungarian Revolution on this occasion. We started out from the fact that 1956 was a *common experience for East-Central Europe*. Everywhere west of the Soviet Union, the Stalinist system established very similar structures after the Second World War, and everywhere experienced some relaxation of these after Stalin's death. The shift from the classical (Stalinist) system towards reforms began in 1953 and continued to advance in the Soviet Union up to October. The Twentieth Congress of the Soviet party everywhere caused a strengthening of

the critical voices, in the party intelligentsia and the party leadership, and almost everywhere, an appreciable change of mood in the whole of society.

The Hungarian Revolution fits the definition of a political revolution, since it brought down a political system, if not permanently. The new that it put in place of the old remained unformed, its beginnings crushed by Soviet intervention and restoration. Despite its failure, it was an influential event, I think partly because it was short and concentrated. Budapest in '56 was an overture to the media age. Sound and picture had almost, but not quite come together. A little country suddenly rendered distant and inaccessible by the Iron Curtain was undergoing a political revolution that bore 19th-century features, with classic participants and classic contents. Its short duration, immediate unexampled success (for events could be construed for some days to mean that the Hungarian rebellion had caused the Soviet Union to retreat), and subsequent defeat were open to a range of explanations. The Hungarian Revolution remained forever an *open* story, through which everybody's own view of the world could be vindicated. It could be seen at once as an obviously anti-totalitarian revolution, an experiment in building a new type of self-managing socialism, or simply as a rebellion against all types of tyranny, a battle for national liberation. Its effects—in terms of what it ended or what it began—were delayed and limited. Fifty-six is one of the main bases of comparison for the social *learning and adaptation* process that occurred in the East-Central European variants of the Soviet system, but it is not the only such basis.

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This interaction between imposed elites and subdued societies lasted from the Sovietization of the region to the end of the Soviet system there. The essence of it was an attempt to complete the Stalinist project (or so the chosen leaders who arrived with the Red Army thought), and then an effort to move away from that by seeking local variants and strategies. (The search for a road occupied from the outset the minds of those such as Imre Nagy, who mistook Stalin's political manoeuvrings, a couple of years after 1945, for a chance to think in terms of real national variants of communism.) So '56 did not bring classical Stalinism to an end (even after a delay or to a limited extent), but it presented a strong argument to those who would have liked to end it. Fifty-six, broke out just as a short and rather ineffectual period of reform, was giving way to limited re-Stalinization, which was only to be followed by further initiatives for reform.

All these questions point to the *importance of comparative researches*. This led to the idea of focusing the conference on the history of the influence of 1956, or within it, its influence on the countries of the Soviet Bloc. We would try to examine how the crisis was experienced by the communist leaders and the societies of the East-Central

European region. What leadership discussions had mentioned 1956, Budapest, national communism, the mass movements, and so on? What was the social reception and how did the memory of '56 survive? Especially interesting were the reactions of Hungarian minorities in neighbouring countries, and how events in Budapest affected official policy towards them.

II

The first question central to the conference in effect continued the discourse on “the new Cold War history” that followed the archive revolution of the 1990s. But rather than wanting to know *how* the decisions on the Hungarian Revolution were made, it was more concerned with *why* those decisions had been reached and what consequences they would have. So it was about the *perception* and *reception* of the crisis that shook the communist world. The papers in this selection that attempted most closely to deal with that are those of Dragoş Petrescu, Oldřich Tuřma, Shen Zhihua, and (partly, on a more local level) Juraj Maruřiak and István Tóth, and (on a specific matter, the problem of Hungarian refugees) Katarina Kovačević.

Petrescu simply sees the turning point of '56 in Romania's separate road, the specifically Romanian brand of national communism: “The '56 Hungarian Revolution of 1956 proved an unexpected support for the Romanian communists in the sense of offering them a chance to display total loyalty to Moscow while desperately seeking to avert de-Stalinization and retain absolute power.” Tuřma sees a much more limited influence of '56 on the Czechoslovak party leadership of the 1960s: “The false interpretation of the Soviet decision to intervene militarily in Hungary became one source of unrealistic strategy by the reform CPCz leaders, as it faced the mounting Soviet pressure and threats. The belief that '56 could not be repeated in Czechoslovakia was one reason why the CPCz leaders made no serious preparations for facing a possible intervention and why so little was done to avert it. The ‘Hungarian factor’, perceived in that way, may not have been dominant in 1956 or 1968, but it was a factor of importance.” Shen, on the other hand, sees the effect of 1956 as decisive in making the Chinese communist leadership an active contributor in the world political and international communist contexts: “China played a dominant role, first in pulling the Soviet troops out of Budapest and then in bringing them back. [...] It is more apposite to say that Mao Zedong attained his goal of criticizing the great-power chauvinism of Moscow and that of maintaining the unity of the socialist camp, than that China helped the Soviet Union tide over its crises. In that sense, the author agrees with scholars who say that one of

Khrushchev's decisive acts in handling the crises of 1956 was to bring China into Europe. In starting to become involved in East European affairs, the CCP symbolically ascended a new flight of steps in its position and role in the international communist movement. Thereafter Moscow's leadership of the communist world began to be challenged from Beijing."

The other focal point is that the reactions of the public in countries with a Soviet-type system first raised the question of sources. How is it possible to know what opinion people hold in a closed society, where publicity is strictly controlled? The special conditions of 1956 allowed the phenomenon of détente at least to open cracks in this wall. Under normal conditions in the Stalinist period, the press and publicity could not operate anywhere in East-Central Europe. Only temporarily and in certain places could more be written about the crisis of communism than previously. What did operate normally was the secret-police mechanism for sampling opinion in society. The reports of state security service informers and digests made of these have become available in recent years in several countries. Instructive examples of how to use this particular type of source have been given by Renáta Szentesi for East Germany, Juraj Marušiak for Slovakia, and Łukasz Kamiński for Poland. (Kamiński has also provided a compilation of texts to illustrate what he has to say.) All these sources, coupled with subsequent recollections provide at least a measure of insight into the reactions of society, which can obviously not be reconstructed in full. The sample over-represents the intelligentsia, of course. They were best able to exploit the limited opportunities for publicity, and the state security devoted particular attention to some intellectuals and groups they belonged to. This is well exemplified in the case studies of Szentesi and Alexandr Stykalin. Among the special cases of social reaction can be placed active demonstration of solidarity. This happened with the greatest force and largest, most conscious participation in Romania—the student movements there are the subject of Ioana Boca's study. Similar, though more sporadic and disorganized reactions are reported from the Hungarian-inhabited areas of Czechoslovakia by Marušiak, and from the Subcarpathian area of Ukraine (likewise with a partly Hungarian population) by Tóth.

No conference can aim to provide a comprehensive, conclusive response to the questions it raises, least of all in this case, where the intention was to concentrate on the areas less studied hitherto. Yet it seems that the leaders and at least the most active and best informed parts of the societies of the countries with Soviet-style systems were aware that 1956 really was common history. The Hungarian Revolution did not merely promise Hungary a way of breaking out of the Stalinist

empire (an empire in both the state political and the intellectual/ideological senses). The break-out failed, but the fate of the uprising served as a lesson and a legacy on the long road that would last more than thirty years longer. The people who fought in Budapest in 1956 were struggling for the freedom of the whole region under the Soviet system. Those who suffered repression for 1956 and Budapest, whether in Temesvár (Timișoara) or Moscow, East Berlin or the villages of Subcarpathia, were likewise victims of the Hungarian Revolution.

THE '56 HUNGARIAN REVOLUTION AND SOVIET PUBLIC OPINION

New sources

Speaking of the response in the Soviet Union to the Hungarian Revolution of 1956, it is necessary first of all to consider the enormous pressure of the propaganda machine and the shortage of reliable information in the Soviet Union about the events in Hungary. Suffice it to say that such an important pre-revolution event as the October 6 reburial of László Rajk was ignored in the Soviet press. The Soviet papers on the morning of October 24 likewise made no mention of the events in Hungary the day before, the first day of the revolution. It may be assumed that the propaganda staff of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) were proceeding from the false assumption that the revolt in Budapest would be suppressed in a few hours and it would be better to postpone until then any mention to the Soviet public of what was gauged by the Kremlin as a “counterrevolutionary putsch”. On October 25, *Pravda* published a short TASS report, meaningfully headed “Collapse of anti-popular adventure in Hungary”.¹ The central papers published several reports under similar headings in the next few days, giving a false impression of how the events in Hungary were progressing. Even the Hungarian communist paper *Szabad Nép* took issue with *Pravda* on this.² The situation in Hungary at the end of October

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1 Proval antinarodnoy avanturi v Vengrii, *Pravda* October 25, 1956.

2 Híven az igazsághoz, *Szabad Nép* October 28, 1956. On October 30, the *Szabad Nép* correspondent in Moscow, Gyula Kékesdi, and the Embassy first secretary, László Rosta, visited the offices of *Pravda* and presented the relevant issue of *Szabad Nép*, proposing that *Pravda* publish a short note acknowledging it had wrongly appraised the events in Hungary for want of reliable information from Budapest. They considered this important as the opinion of *Pravda* was seen by many Hungarians as that “of all the Soviet people”. The *Pravda* editor-in-chief, P. Satukov, reported that day to CPSU Secretary P. Pospelov that *Pravda* did not consider it expedient to enter into polemics with the Hungarian paper. Orehova–Sereda–Stykalin 1998, 453–4.

did not change the official Soviet assessment of the nature of the events, but it forced the Soviet leaders to discard their optimism that the “counterrevolution” had already been suppressed. At the beginning of November, a party resolution was adopted calling for intensification of the propaganda connected with the Hungarian events. By November 3, the Soviet press was filled with slanted articles about “counterrevolutionary outrages”, designed to shape Soviet public opinion. Soviet leaders had no doubt the propaganda campaign was effective and the public taking the official version on trust. For instance, Mikhail Suslov, a member of the CPSU Presidium, told a meeting of party officials in Moscow on November 6 to mark the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution, that the whole Soviet people rejoiced at the victory of the Hungarian working people over the counterrevolution.³ The flow of misinformation did influence public opinion to a large extent, but Suslov and his comrades suffered from wishful thinking. The various sources (inter-party correspondence, KGB reports, diaries, memoirs) show a mixed Soviet public response to the Hungarian events.

It cannot be denied that the official propaganda allegations were given some credence by most Soviet citizens. World War II was fresh in the minds even of younger generations, and the most effective, persuasive propaganda strokes were those that recalled the war. According to the press, the Soviet involvement in Hungary had prevented a new world war. This argument employed so frequently in Soviet propaganda was also used by Khrushchev when talking to Western politicians and journalists.⁴ Soviet citizens who believed official dogma saw the events primarily as a Western attempt to detach Hungary from the Soviet sphere of influence: “Why would the Soviet Union give Hungary to the Americans? After all, a lot of Soviet soldiers were killed liberating the country from the Germans.”⁵ Soviet policy in Hungary was assessed by many as a natural reaction to an attempt to revise the results of World War II. Those who had liked the Stalinist regime supported the military action but criticized Soviet policy after Stalin’s death, especially the rapprochement with Tito’s Yugoslavia and the revelations of the 20th Congress of the CPSU. The antecedents of the Hungarian events were seen in Khrushchev’s revision of Stalinist foreign policy.

3 *Pravda* November 7, 1956.

4 E. g. at a meeting with a correspondent of *Il Messaggero* on January 5, 1957. See: The Russian State Archives of Modern History (Rossiisky Gosudarstvenny Arkhiv Noveishey Istorii, hereafter RGANI), f. 5. op. 30. d. 225. l. 73. Earlier, at the CPSU Presidium session on October 31, where the decision had been made to overthrow the Imre Nagy government, Khrushchev noted there would be no big war (“bolshoy voini ne budhet”). Orehova–Sereda–Stykalin 1998, 480. He took account of the US policy of non-interference in affairs in the Soviet sphere of influence.

5 For analysis of Soviet public opinion on events in Hungary, see Aksutin 2004, 186–98.

According to the record of the October 31 session of the CPSU Presidium, the existence of such an attitude to the Hungarian events was for Khrushchev an important argument for resolving the Hungarian situation by force.⁶ Many ordinary party members intensely disliked any sign of weakening of the Soviet Union as a superpower, and the Hungarian events were taken as such a sign. They thought that only the power of the Soviet army and the firmness of the Soviet position in East-Central Europe stood in the way of a new world war.

However, there was another kind of disagreement over the Kremlin's policy. The propaganda did not persuade everybody and doubts about the effectiveness of a military solution were expressed in many quarters. These sources record statements by ordinary Soviet citizens saying that the Soviet Union should not force its will on other countries or meddle in their internal affairs, but leave other peoples to resolve their own problems. Others said the Hungarian question should be resolved by peaceful means to prevent innocent victims on both sides.⁷ Some sources reveal ambivalence in Soviet contemporaries, including youth, towards the Hungarian events and Moscow's policy towards them. For example, such reactions by Moscow teenagers have been recorded by the well-known historian and literary critic Igor Volgin, only 15 years old at the time: "There was sincere sympathy for the Hungarian insurgents, we desired their victory; we had no information about the Hungarian events except official statements, but we instinctively felt: Soviet tanks in Budapest—is evil; there is enormous falsehood in all this." On the other hand, he continues, they did not want the Soviet bloc to collapse.⁸ Awareness of their own helplessness was typical of intellectuals of various generations. The well-known philosopher and orientalist Grigory Pomerants remembers he and his friends were very ashamed of Soviet policy in Hungary but their helplessness predominated over their shame and their feelings of protest degenerated into a tinkling of glasses.⁹

Disagreement with Soviet policy on Hungary did not always lead to protest action, but historians are aware of several cases where it did. A teenager in the city of Yaroslavl, the son of a senior manager in industry, raised a self-made poster in the streets on November 7, calling for the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Hungary.¹⁰ Leaflets were distributed widely in Moscow, Leningrad and many other places, espe-

6 As he put it, "Our party would not understand us." ("nas ne poimet nasha partiya"). See Orehova-Sereda-Stykalin 1998, 479.

7 Aksutin 2004, 186–98.

8 Polikovskaya 1997, 37–8.

9 Pomerants 1990, 143–4.

10 See the KGB report RGANI, f. 5. op. 30. d. 141. l. 67–8.

cially by students.¹¹ In Moscow and Leningrad, there were illegal groups of students who met to discuss the Hungarian Revolution and sharply criticized Soviet policy. Criticisms of the Soviet government were expressed even at legal student meetings, where some saw the actions of young Hungarians as a model to follow. At one legal student meeting in Moscow, participants shouted that there was a revolution going on in Hungary and that the Soviet Union needed the same kind.¹² The criticism of the Soviet government did not necessarily mean anti-socialist thinking. Many students who subscribed to the socialist idea emphasized the variety of socialism models and displayed interest in the Yugoslav model, as well as the Hungarian workers' councils.¹³

Soviet workers also paid attention to the Hungarian events and were influenced by the Hungarian example, which prompted them to protest. In some factories in various parts of the Soviet Union, workers demanded pay rises and improved living conditions. There were calls for strike action in some industrial regions. Some radical protest actions resulted in monuments to Stalin being destroyed. National anti-Soviet movements intensified activities in various parts of the Soviet Union, notably Lithuania¹⁴ and Trans-carpathian Ukraine, with its large Hungarian minority.¹⁵

KGB agents recorded several critical statements by famous intellectuals. The world-famous physicist and future Nobel laureate Lev Landau told friends and colleagues the Hungarian Revolution was an encouraging event and the heroism of the young Hungarians fighting for freedom deserved admiration, while the action of the Soviet leaders was a crime resulting in bloodshed. He was also very critical of Kádár, whom he considered a Soviet puppet. Landau recalled the Hungarian Revolution of 1848 and called the young people of '56 the real descendants of the great revolutionaries

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11 For the text of one, see RGANI, f. 5. op. 30. d. 141. l. 14–5. See also the memoirs of some who distributed leaflets and were arrested and convicted to years in prison: B. Pustintsev: *Piat let za "nashu i vashu svobodu"*, *Obshchaya gazeta* 1996. 31. oktiabr–5. noiabr.; Anohin 1996.

12 See Pizhikov 2003, 78–9 and see also Burtin–Lyubarsky 1997. As early as November 4, the CPSU Presidium was discussing the situation in schools and universities and “hostile attitudes” among students. It was decided to act against those who spread opposing views. See Fursenko 2003, 202.

13 A typical example was the L. Krasnopevchev group in the History Department of Moscow University. “Dhelo” *molodhih istorikov*...

14 On Friday, November 2, a Catholic holiday, thousands of people marched through the streets of Vilnius and Kaunas, the main cities of Lithuania, and the authorities feared they could get out of control. See Alekseeva 1992, 41.

15 Dupka–Horváth 1993; Dupka 2006.

of the past.¹⁶ Professor A. Lyubishchev from Leningrad also drew a parallel to the revolution of 1848. As he wrote in his diary, Emperor Francis Joseph in 1849 had legal grounds for ruling Hungary, but Kádár had no grounds at all.¹⁷ Professor S. Dmitriev, a historian from Moscow University, predicted in his diary on November 3, the day before the Soviet aggression in Hungary, that there would be a new bloody intervention similar to that of 1849.¹⁸ November 4 he named Black Sunday and wrote that he was ashamed that Russian people were not protesting against the evil deeds, and behaved like a nation of slaves. According to Dmitriev, the struggle for national liberation in Hungary had gained victory, the whole political system had collapsed, and new structures had been established. Only by force of arms could the Soviet Union restore order, but after such action it would be impossible to speak of real unity in the socialist bloc. The Hungarian events prompted Dmitriev to think of the deeply anti-democratic nature of the Soviet political system, despite Lenin and all his declarations of socialist democracy and collective leadership, or Khrushchev and his subjective desire to improve the Soviet system. The 20th Congress, Dmitriev opined, had brought no change but in superficial political forms and methods. Khrushchev and his team were concentrating on criticism of the past and trying to stop attempts to criticize the present regime and find the roots of the so-called cult of personality in the Soviet political system. According to Dmitriev and Landau, real democratization was impossible without a multi-party system and real freedom of press. Otherwise the vacuum left by Stalin's death would simply be filled by somebody else.

Soviet policy in Hungary was criticized not only by the conservative Dmitriev and the liberal Landau, but by some intellectuals loyal to the socialist idea. Lyubishchev, mentioned earlier, quarrelled with the concept of counterrevolution, writing in his diary that a progressive movement had taken place in Budapest, progressive despite the presence of a lot of hooligans on the streets of Budapest. The Stalinist "partocracy" was the ruling elite in the Soviet Union, and overthrowing it was a progressive task, even if private business would take the initiative in Hungary for some time. In Hungary and everywhere else, the people, as Lyubishchev put it, preferred to deal with capitalists rather than Stalinists, because businessmen paid in money and property if they made mistakes, but party bureaucrats felt no responsibility for their deeds. Both Dmitriev and Lyubishchev noted in their diaries that tanks and special courts could not be effective arguments for the communist idea. Lyubishchev saw the Hungarian

16 Ilizarov 1999, 151–61.

17 Lyubishchev 1991, 41.

18 Iz dnevnikov S. S. Dmitrieva, 149.

events as internationally significant because the strongest blow had been struck against Stalinism not by capitalists, but by workers and progressive youth.

It was being rumoured in Moscow in early November 1956 that the unrest would spread from Hungary to neighbouring countries, above all Czechoslovakia. Landau saw such prospective developments as positive signs: the Hungarian experience was worth borrowing and the revolution in Hungary had opened the possibility of revolutions in other countries of the Soviet bloc, including the centre of world communism, the Soviet Union. Lyubishchev also wrote that nobody, before the Hungarian events, had taken seriously the possibility of active resistance to Soviet power in East-Central Europe; the Hungarians had shown that the resistance could occur. The KGB reports show that many Soviet people under the influence of the Hungarian events were thinking of the possibility of revolution in the Soviet Union as well. An old Bolshevik in the town of Vladimir, for instance, who was invited to the Komsomol conference, noted that a revolt of the workers had taken place in Hungary and this possibility could not be excluded in the Soviet Union either, because the standard of life was low.¹⁹ Others assessed the prospects for the Soviet system more realistically. Dmitriev wrote that spontaneous manifestations of mass indignation could not endanger powerful party and state mechanisms, including propaganda. It must be added that the possible unrest of workers was received by many people with anxiety, as the beginning of civil war, for older generations still remembered the civil war of 1918–20. The lack of objective information on the situation in Hungary only increased the fears that a turn to sharp confrontation was also possible in the Soviet Union.

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The consolidation of the new power in Hungary was supported by the Soviet Stalinists and gave them the added self-confidence to try to take the political initiative. The party meetings in Moscow University at the end of 1956 reminded Dmitriev of the Stalinist years. At a Central Committee meeting in December 1956, Khrushchev expounded his concept of domestic policy after the Hungarian events. He was sure many communists had mistaken the ideas of the 20th Congress and socialist democracy, and had ceased to struggle against enemies of socialism who should be persecuted and arrested.²⁰ He repeated this in May 1957 at a meeting with writers and artists, adding that the campaign of criticism of the cult of personality had lost its topicality.²¹ One participant, the writer Venyamin Kaverin, noted in his memoirs that he and his colleagues had expected arrests among writers, all the more

19 Aksutin 2004, 193.

20 See RGANI, f. 2. op. 1. d. 197. l. 114–5.

21 Vistuplenie N. S. Khrushcheva..., 77–88.

as Khrushchev said the Hungarian events could have been prevented if two or three demagogues had been arrested in time.²² It must be said that Khrushchev stood by what he said: the number arrested and sentenced on political grounds in 1957 was greater than in the previous year.²³ There were also some groups of dissident students and young intellectuals: a group round L. Krasnopevchev in Moscow, another around R. Pimenov in Leningrad, and some others. These young people interpreted the Hungarian events differently from the official point of view. Those arrested for expressing sympathy for the Hungarian revolt were sentenced to several years in prison—usually three to seven, but in rare cases ten.

Soviet intellectuals responded also to the Imre Nagy trial in June 1958. Dmitriev noted in his diary that the methods of eliminating political opponents used by Stalin had not passed away; they could still be used by successors who had sharply criticized Stalin at the 20th Congress. The prosecutions of so-called communist revisionists could not be effective, he said, because the alternative ideas had not been refuted and the methods used against them showed only weakness of power.

To sum up, not everybody in the Soviet Union took on trust the imposed stereotype of the Hungarian events, despite the propaganda efforts. Various views were held, including sharp criticism of Soviet policy, even if not everybody dared to protest in public.

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22 Chuprinin 1989, 375.

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MAO AND THE 1956 SOVIET MILITARY INTERVENTION IN HUNGARY

24

Sino-Soviet relations entered a honeymoon period when Khrushchev came to power. Friendship and cooperation were unimpaired despite worries on the part of Mao Zedong about some of Khrushchev's actions at the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU). In fact, Khrushchev's bold criticism of Stalin suited Mao Zedong because it relieved some pressure on him. Generally speaking, the guiding principles of the 20th Congress of the CPSU were identical with those of the 8th National Congress of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP),¹ to whose views Moscow attached great importance at the time. *Pravda* went so far as to translate into Russian and reprint a CCP article entitled "On the historical experience of proletarian dictatorship", which was also issued as a pamphlet in Russian in 200 000 copies, for study by the whole party.² When another CCP article, "More on the historical experience of proletarian dictatorship", was published, Soviet radio used its star announcer to broadcast the piece repeatedly.³ Moreover, the Soviet Embassy in Beijing suggested in its 1956 annual report that the CPSU Central Committee send people responsible for party affairs to gain experience of the work of the Chinese party and government, for "the CCP has accumulated rich experience in building the party and government and in mass work."⁴ Against this background, Khrushchev recalled that at a critical moment in the Polish/Hungarian developments, his first thought had been "to consult with the fraternal Chinese Communist Party".⁵

1 For a detailed exposition, see Shen 2004.

2 Wang Fu's report on the situation in certain aspects in the Soviet Union, April 25, 1956. Jilin Provincial Archive, 1-12/1-1956, 101st leaf; *Renmin ribao* July 6, 1956.

3 Rong 1991, 19-20.

4 Center for the Storage of Contemporary Documentation, Moscow (Tsentr khraneniya sovremennoy dokumentatsii, hereafter: TsKhSD), f. 5, p. 49, d. 41, l. 16-17.

NO CHINESE ROLE IN THE FIRST SOVIET INTERVENTION

China knew nothing of the Hungarian crisis when it broke out on October 23. The CCP leadership did not react immediately, even after Soviet troops occupied Budapest in the small hours of the following day. Both the reformists and the conservatives in Hungary were very friendly towards China and its principle of doing more listening than talking, and not to expressing any opinion rashly. Despite the negative attitude of Ambassador Hao Deqing towards the mass movement in Hungary, believing it was out to break away from the leadership of the communist party or even overthrow it, the Chinese Embassy remained silent on what were treated as Hungary's internal affairs. As soon as the disturbances began, the Chinese Embassy in Budapest shut its iron gate fast and rejected any direct contact with any side in the confrontation, including former close friends. Hao Deqing, speaking through the guards at the entrance, politely asked officials of the Rákosi government seeking refuge to go to the Soviet Embassy instead. For security reasons, the embassy staff worked together at the dormitory compound. They learnt of the situation only by listening to the radio and gathering leaflets and posters in the streets.

Documents from the Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of China (AMFAC) confirm that Mao knew nothing of what was happening in Budapest. At eight and nine in the evening on October 23, the Chinese Embassy in Budapest sent two telegrams to Beijing, reporting the conditions at the demonstration taking place there and of Ernő Gerő's radio address. No comments were appended. After that, the embassy sent no further word. At four on the afternoon of October 24, the Foreign Ministry sent three consecutive telegrams ordering its embassies in Budapest and other East European countries to report promptly on Hungary's political situation, especially on Nagy. One read, "You must avoid in reporting any subjectivity or bias, or unthinking repetition of the words of others." The ministry also asked the embassy in Budapest to send a well-informed Hungarian-language interpreter to Moscow without delay—to give a detailed report to Liu Shaoqi, of course.⁶ But

5 Khrushchev 1988, 599–600.

6 Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of China, Beijing (hereafter: AMFAC), 109–01041–01, 3–4. Report on demonstration of university students in Budapest, October 23, 1956; *ibid.*, 5–6. Report on Gerő's radio statement of October 23, 1956; *ibid.*, 8. Role of newly reorganized party and government leadership of Hungary, October 24, 1956; *ibid.*, 9. Please give quick report on current developments in domestic politics of Hungary and on the HCP CC, October 24, 1956; *ibid.*, 14. Send counsellor and a Polish-language [sic] interpreter to Moscow immediately, October 24, 1956.

Beijing got no response, as communications with the embassy were broken. The embassy had no transceiver and messages up to then had gone through the post office. All international telecommunications and telephone lines were cut off at midnight on October 23, and the Chinese Embassy could neither send reports to Beijing nor receive instructions. Not until the afternoon of October 25 were telecommunications restored, but even then the telephone remained disconnected. The embassy had sent a telegram on the morning of October 24 reporting that the demonstration had “developed into a counter-revolutionary rebellion” the night before, the Hungarian government had declared the martial law, and Soviet military forces had entered Budapest, but the Foreign Ministry failed to receive it until the early morning of October 26.⁷

26 The first news the Chinese had of the Hungarian events came from Moscow. Information in the Russian archives and the recollections of Shi Zhe concur in saying that Liu Shaoqi, after arriving in Moscow on the afternoon of October 23, had talks with Khrushchev, in the guest house where the former was staying, punctuated by successive phone calls from Gerő, the Hungarian leader, and from Marshal Georgy Zhukov, reporting on the disturbances. After briefing Liu on the situation in Hungary, Khrushchev added, “You are not familiar with the developments in Hungary and there is no time to consult with you in advance. We request your presence at the meeting of the Presidium tomorrow.” Then he left. At the meeting of the Presidium of the CPSU Central Committee that Liu attended the following afternoon, Khrushchev announced that Soviet troops had entered Budapest, public order had been basically restored, and all problems were resolved, except that rebels still held a few positions. People had welcomed the Soviet Red Army and the Soviet tanks. He hoped the Chinese comrades would understand the deployment of Soviet forces, which was quite necessary. He then stressed that whereas the Polish problem had been one within the party, about a conflict between right and wrong, the developments in Hungary had threatened to become a counter-revolution and had to be treated differently.⁸ Liu made no comment on this. According to Liu’s report on his Moscow

7 Ibid., 7. Embassy staff safe and sound after outbreak of counterrevolutionary riot in Budapest, October 24, 1956; *ibid.*, 16. Reasons for inability to send reports in time, October 24, 1956; *ibid.*, 10–11. General situation with reactionary disturbance in capital of Hungary, October 24, 1956. Thanks to subsequent deterioration of situation, communications interrupted again, thus Embassy had to contact Ministry of Foreign Affairs of China via Foreign Ministry of Hungary and Hungarian Embassy in Beijing.; *ibid.*, 23. Further developments in capital of Hungary, October 26, 1956; *ibid.*, 27. Items for attention in current situation, October 27, 1956.

8 TsKhSD, f. 3, op. 12, d. 1005, l. 52; Shi 1997, 13–4.

trip, to the Second Session of the 8th National CCP Congress, Liu phoned Beijing and consulted with Mao after Khrushchev had left.

Apart from some articles in the October 27 *People's Daily* (Renmin ribao), reporting that “reactionaries” had used the peaceful student demonstration to stir up armed disturbances and that the Hungarian authorities had called on Soviet troops stationed in Hungary to help restore public order, the Chinese government and leadership did not make known their position on the crisis before October 30, an omission that has been overlooked in historical sources and scholarly studies.⁹ This silence from Beijing can probably be attributed to developments in Hungary. The Chinese ambassador reported in an October 27 telegram to its superiors in Beijing that “the counter-revolutionary armed forces have been eliminated.” On the following day, another message was cabled to Beijing about the statement Nagy had made that afternoon, announcing the enforcement of a general ceasefire and arrangements for reshuffling the government. The embassy reported, “After Nagy made the statement, the sounds of gunfire gradually faded away.” It seemed hopeful that order would be restored.¹⁰ The situation developed in a highly complex and convoluted way in October 24–8. The Soviet leadership, after hearing on the night of October 28 from Mikhail Suslov, who had just returned from Budapest, was inclined to support the new government of Kádár and Nagy (omitting Gerő and András Hegedüs), accept Nagy’s declaration, and withdraw troops from Budapest and other occupied areas.¹¹

On the same day, the Soviet Military Command in Hungary ordered plans to be made for Soviet withdrawal from Budapest and replacement by the Hungarian army. The plan envisaged the Hungarian army deploying between 8 p.m. on October 29 and 6 a.m. on October 30.¹² What the Chinese leaders thought of this is unknown,

9 According to the biography of Mao, Liu Shaoqi learned of the uprising in Hungary during negotiations with Soviet leaders on October 23, then passed on the message to Mao immediately by phone. During October 24–30, Mao convened a series of high-level meetings to discuss the Polish and Hungarian crises, while liaising directly with Liu by phone, with no details disclosed. See Xiang-Jin 1998, 604.

10 AMFAC, 109-01041-01, 24. The counterrevolutionary armed forces in Hungary basically eliminated, October 27, 1956; *ibid.*, 36. Please give instructions on what stand to take on Hungarian events, October 28, 1956.

11 TsKhSD, f. 3, op. 12, d. 1005, l. 54–61; Volkov 1998, 439–441; according to András Hegedüs, Nagy returned from the Soviet Embassy at 11 a.m. on October 28 and told him and Ernő Gerő that the Soviets had assented to the proposal for transforming the government of Hungary. See Hegedüs 1992, 310; according to a Chinese Embassy report, the Soviet troops began to withdraw from Budapest on the evening of the 28th. AMFAC, 109-01041-01, 54. Demands of the Revolutionary Council of University Youth, published in *Szabad Nép*, October 29, 1956.

but reports in the *People's Daily* on October 28 and 29 gave the impression the storm would soon be over. The Hungarian government had given the rebels a deadline for laying down their arms, which many had already done. The mobs had requested talks and a temporary ceasefire was in effect in Budapest. The government and people were trying to restore peace. Negotiations were under way, etc. Perhaps these developments led Mao Zedong to the idea that there was no more need for the Warsaw Pact and he could support Polish and Hungarian demands for Soviet troops to leave.

MAO AND THE SOVIET DECISION TO SEND IN TROOPS FOR THE SECOND TIME

28 Yet the Hungarian authorities, when facing the frenzied masses, stalled in restructuring the government and the concessions made gave chances for militant trouble-makers, rather than calming matters. As the situation in Budapest became ever more complex, Moscow had reports from Ivan Serov on October 29, and that night from Anastas Mikoyan and Suslov, indicating the situation in Hungary was out of control. As word of this reached the Kremlin, Khrushchev was in talks with Liu Shaoqi on how problems in Soviet relations with the East European countries could be resolved. Liu explained Mao's view that the Soviets should give Eastern Europe more political, economic and military freedom. The talks continued into the night. The Soviets finally agreed to draft a declaration on equal relations, to be adopted next day.¹³ Here Khrushchev's memoirs square with the Chinese sources, only adding the issue of Hungary. According to Khrushchev, the meeting lasted until early next morning, discussing developments in the Hungarian crisis and various solutions. Khrushchev briefed the Chinese on the messages from Budapest. On a basis of full trust, the Soviet and Chinese delegates weighed repeatedly what measures to take. At one point, they supported the idea of sending in troops, but after further deliberation, they decided to refrain from a military approach. Then came Mao's suggestion of "letting it go further". So the Soviets decided that military means would not be used. The situation in Hungary would be allowed to develop in its own way and the new government there would hopefully settle the crisis.¹⁴

As the situation in Budapest further deteriorated on October 30, Moscow received morning reports from Mikoyan and Suslov: "The party organizations are in the process of collapse. Hooligan elements have become more insolent, seizing district

12 Györkei-Horváth 1999, 70-1.

13 Shi 1997, 15-6; Xiang-Jin 1998, 604.

14 Khrushchev 1988, 359-60.

party committees, killing communists. The organization of party volunteer squads is going slowly. The factories are stalled. The people are sitting at home. The railroads are not working. Hooligan students and other resistance elements have changed their tactics and are displaying greater activity.” The radio had been occupied. “The insurgents declare that they will not give them up until Soviet troops leave Budapest.” The Hungarian army takes a wait-and-see attitude and is likely to ally itself with the rebels.¹⁵ At 2 p.m. on the same day, the Council of Ministers decided to abolish the one-party system in Hungary, and this was announced in a broadcast speech by Nagy at 2.28. He also called for the withdrawal of Soviet armed forces from Budapest. Hungary would immediately start negotiations with the Soviet government on the withdrawal of Soviet troops and local democratic self-governing bodies set up during the revolutionary process would be recognized.¹⁶ Acting on the October 28 plan, the Soviet army stopped fighting at 4 p.m. and began to pull out of Budapest.¹⁷ Meanwhile the exacerbation of the situation was felt by the Chinese Embassy as well. Fearing for the safety of embassy staff and Chinese students in Budapest, the embassy began to dispose of its documents and to make preparations to leave.¹⁸

At that point, the Presidium of the CPSU Central Committee held a meeting in Moscow on October 30, to focus on the declaration of equal relations among socialist countries, drafted at the suggestion of the Chinese party. Influenced by this draft declaration, the meeting was inclined to adopt a compromise stand on the Hungarian question too. According to the minutes, discussion of the situation in Hungary had just begun when Khrushchev entered and reported on his conversation with Liu Shaoqi the previous night. He said that in view of the opinions of the countries where the Soviet troops were stationed, it would be better to adopt on that very day the draft declaration that the CCP was proposing. As for withdrawal from the people’s democratic countries, that would be discussed at the meeting of Warsaw Pact states. All the Presidium members present agreed. At the subsequent discussions, the Bulgarian delegate, while agreeing to the appeal and declaration being sent to Hungary, complained, “The Chinese comrades lack a correct understanding of relations between the USSR and the people’s democratic countries.” Molotov proposed immediate talks on withdrawing the troops from Hungary and later discussions on the Warsaw Pact with all other member-countries. With the Chinese proposal to

15 Archive of the President of the Russian Federation, Moscow (Arkhiv Prezidenta Rossiiskoy Federatsii, hereafter: APRF), f. 3, p. 64, d. 484, l. 122–4.

16 Volkov 1998, 470–1. Originally published in the CWIHPB no. 5: 32 (Spring 1995).

17 *Renmin ribao* November 1, 1956.

18 AMFAC, 109–01041–01, 56. Sequential report on situation in Hungary, October 30, 1956.

base relations among socialist countries on “five principles of peaceful coexistence”, Molotov argued that inter-state relations and inter-party relations had to be built on different foundations. Kliment Voroshilov and Lazar Kaganovich held identical views with Molotov’s. Dmitri Shepilov said, “This incident revealed a crisis in relations between us and the people’s democratic countries. Anti-Soviet sentiment is spreading. We should expose its causes in depth.” He also proposed “adhering to the principle of non-interference and preparing to withdraw the troops with Hungarian government agreement.” Zhukov agreed to the withdrawal and saw lessons, military and political, in the handling the Hungarian crisis. Things were worse with the troops stationed in Democratic Germany and Poland—no one could know what would happen if troops stayed there. Finally, Khrushchev said all had agreed to make a declaration first, after which the Presidium discussed the draft declaration.¹⁹ Towards evening, the Soviet side sent Liu Shaoqi a copy of the draft, the contents of which were basically what Liu had said, with some phrases and sentences copied directly from his statements. The declaration was to be finalized at 8 p.m., and the Chinese delegation returned once more to the meeting.²⁰ So the Chinese proposal for a declaration on equal relations, put forward with the Polish problem in mind, led to a peaceful approach to the crisis in Hungary. It can be inferred that after two days’ hesitation on October 29–30, the Soviets decided to rule out armed intervention in Hungary, and the CCP had played a decisive role in that decision.

So far, neither the Chinese nor the Soviets had any further thought of sending troops into Hungary, but things changed dramatically in the next few hours. According to Khrushchev’s report to the CPSU Central Committee plenary in June 1957 and to his memoirs, published later, he had left Liu Shaoqi’s suite for his home in the early morning of October 30 having decided not to resort to armed intervention in Hungary. But on his return home, he saw new intelligence about the worsening situation in Hungary. The Presidium discussed the matter again and decided to send troops in after all. As he had already agreed with the Chinese not to use force, Khrushchev led all the Presidium members to the airport on the evening of October 31 to inform Liu Shaoqi of the sudden change at talks before he boarded. Quite unexpectedly, the Chinese gave their full support and said they thought the same way.²¹ According to Khrushchev, the Soviets had decided quite on their own to dispatch troops after all.

19 TsKhSD, f. 3, p. 12, d. 1006, l. 6–14.

20 Shi 1997, 16.

21 Khrushchev 1997, 359–60.

But the Chinese side gives a rather different story. Shi Zhe described the process in detail in his recollections. The Soviets sent Mikoyan's report on the deteriorating situation in Hungary to Liu Shaoqi on the morning of October 30. The under-informed Chinese delegation was taken by surprise, discussed the matter all day and put forward two solutions.²² One was to pull the Soviet troops out of Budapest, and the other was suppression. Liu Shaoqi made a phone call in the evening to Mao Zedong for instructions. Mao said both approaches could be raised and discussed with the Soviets. He inclined towards armed suppression, but it should be delayed until the reactionary elements had exposed themselves further and people could see their nature more clearly.

In the evening, the Chinese and Soviet leaders held an emergency meeting at the request of the Chinese, where Liu Shaoqi and Deng Xiaoping clearly indicated that political power in Hungary could not be surrendered to the enemy and the Soviet troops should turn round to protect people's power strongly. The problem in Hungary was different from that in Poland, because it had degenerated into a counter-revolutionary action and the utmost had to be done to save the situation. But Khrushchev felt he was put in a very awkward situation and thought bringing the Soviet troops back would entail a complete occupation of Hungary. So the Soviet side preferred not to do so and the Chinese delegation did not urge them any further.²³

Based on Minute 49 of the CPSU Presidium meeting on October 30, Pavel Yudin, at some time in the night (after the body had decided not to intervene militarily in Hungary and passed the declaration on equal relations), reported on the conversations with the Chinese delegate. The Chinese had expressed fears about the situation in Hungary and put some questions. Would Hungary break off from our camp? Who was Nagy? Could he be trusted? Later still, Khrushchev arrived at the meeting with Liu Shaoqi. According to his working notes, Liu gave it as the opinion of the CCP leaders that "troops should remain in Hungary and Budapest." The records of Khrushchev's subsequent words read: "There are two paths: a military path—one of occupation; a peaceful path—withdrawal of troops, and negotiations." Molotov seemed inclined towards the Chinese proposal: "The political situation has taken

22 Not until November 1 did the Chinese Foreign Ministry receive the telegrams dated October 29 and 30 from its Embassy in Budapest, reporting on the deteriorating situation there. See AMFAC, 109-01041-01, 51. Report on the incident in the street in front of the dormitory compound of the Chinese Embassy, October 29, 1956; *ibid.*, 57-8. Sequential report on situation in Hungary, October 29, 1956.; *ibid.*, 56. Nagy's announcement in an address, October 30, 1956.

23 Wu 1999, 51-2; Shi 1997, 16-7; Xiang-Jin 1998, 604-5; Jin 1998, 805-6.

clearer shape. A counter-revolutionary government, a transitional government has been formed.”²⁴ This suggests the CCP leaders had clarified their new position on the night of October 30, while the Soviet leaders were still hesitant and indecisive.

The minutes of the October 31 session show that the Soviet leaders had made up their minds by this time. Khrushchev took the view that they had to re-examine their evaluation of the events in Hungary. Soviet troops should not withdraw from Hungary or Budapest and firm steps had to be taken to restore order. “If we depart from Hungary, it will give a great boost to the American, British, and French imperialists,” Khrushchev said, adding that the Soviets could not afford to hand Hungary over to the West after what had happened in Egypt, and that there was “no other alternative”. He also presented the specific measures needed for a new military intervention, including a provisional revolutionary government headed by János Kádár (with Ferenc Münnich as prime minister and defence and interior minister, and Imre Nagy as deputy prime minister, if he would agree), negotiations with Tito, and briefings of China, Czechoslovakia, Romania, and Bulgaria. Khrushchev’s proposals were unanimously approved by the Presidium, where the former Hungarian leaders Mátyás Rákosi, Ernő Gerő and András Hegedűs were presented and also supported the decision.²⁵

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On the evening of October 31, Liu Shaoqi received a phone call from the Kremlin requesting the Chinese delegation to arrive at the airport an hour earlier, so that another talk could be held. When they met, Khrushchev told Liu that after a whole day’s discussion, the Presidium had reached a new decision to adopt an offensive policy in Hungary. Liu Shaoqi gave his agreement and then proposed two preconditions for Soviet armed intervention: a request to it from the Hungarian government, and support from the Hungarian masses.²⁶

WHY MAO SUPPORTED SUPPRESSION IN HUNGARY

Mao’s change of attitude to the Hungarian crisis on the night of October 30, or rather his attitude to the Nagy government, clearly had a profound effect on the Soviet decision to intervene in Hungary a second time. One factor encouraging Mao to shift his ground may have been Mikoyan’s telegram of October 30, forwarded by Liu Shaoqi. There are data to show the situation reports from the Chinese Embassy in Budapest were also influential. According to recollections by János Radványi,

24 TsKhSD, f. 3, p. 12, d. 1006, l. 6–14; Volkov 1998, 457–63.

25 Ibid., 479–84.

26 Shi 1997, 16–7; Xiang-Jin 1998, 604–5; Jin 1998, 805–6.

a Hungarian diplomat, and by Luo Yisu, Ambassador Hao Deqing was on very good personal terms with Kádár. He told Kádár later he had seen long before the incident how Nagy's policies would lead to capitalism being restored in Hungary. He thought Mikoyan's association with the Nagy government and the pull-out of Soviet troops from Budapest were wrong, and firmly believed that only military intervention could save the day. A few years later, Mao Zedong personally confirmed it was Hao Deqing's advice that shifted his stand. During talks on May 5, 1959, Mao Zedong stressed that the Chinese leaders had watched the Hungarian events of 1956 closely. He pointed at Hao Deqing, sitting behind Chen Yi, saying that the ambassador's reports and proposals were most useful for evaluating and handling the rapidly evolving situation in the Hungary of 1956. At the end of October that year, Mao recalled, the Chinese Embassy reported that the reactionary forces were gaining support and warned that if the Soviet Union could not oust the government controlled by Nagy, capitalism would inevitably be restored. Thanks to the reporting and information received from East European communist parties, Mao Zedong said, he decided to call on Khrushchev at once to take military action against the Hungarian revisionists.²⁷

Ironically, Nagy pinned his hopes on China at the crucial moment, just as Mao made the decisive move that would push the Hungarian leader and his government into the abyss. At 10 p.m. on November 1, Nagy made an urgent appointment with Hao Deqing. The conversation lasted for two hours. Nagy first pointed out, "This is a tragedy rooted in serious mistakes committed by the [Hungarian] party in the past," and "The peaceful protest movement indicates that the people are discontented." But the movement had been dubbed a counter-revolutionary revolt, which had intensified the conflict. Subsequent Soviet military intervention had pushed the situation "towards extreme deterioration". "Certainly, in such grave circumstances, some counter-revolutionary and Nazi-type activities have emerged, but these have only been perpetrated by a small minority." His government had brought things to the attention of the Soviet authorities several times and negotiated with Mikoyan and Suslov continually. "Their evaluation and judgement of the situation matched ours." At the focus of the problem, Nagy noted that the Soviet government had declared willingness to negotiate and conceded that the continued presence of Soviet forces could only make the situation much worse. But eventually, things turned out to be the opposite. According to Hungarian intelligence report, "Since yesterday afternoon, the Soviet forces have not been leaving at all, but reinforced with two new tank divisions." This violated "the agreement made through negotiations between the Hungarian government and Mikoyan" and "went against the Soviet government

27 Radványi 1970, 123 and 126.

declaration". Nagy stated very emotionally that we should use every means of preventing an inconceivable tragedy: "We are communists. Half our cabinet members are communists. The chairman of the Council of Ministers is a communist. We all want to build socialism. But now, the situation has become very grave. Why on earth are we being drawn into such situation? [...] We have no option but to submit the problem to the UN for debate, withdraw from the Warsaw Treaty Organization, and declare our neutrality." The Soviet tanks, Nagy said, were only 60 km from Budapest, and all airports in the country had been occupied by them. This was clearly planned military aggression. At the end of the conversation, Nagy undertook with deep feeling to withdraw the UN complaint immediately if the Soviet troops retreated: "Things are very serious. Please convey to Chairman Mao and Premier Zhou that we request the Chinese government to intervene and help resolve the problem of Soviet military withdrawal."²⁸ It was beyond all Nagy's imaginings and expectations that Mao could have made a quite opposite decision by that time.

34 Of course there were further external factors affecting Moscow's decision to send troops into Budapest again. One was the Americans' repeated assertion that they did not regard the Soviets' satellite countries as potential military partners, and another was the Suez Crisis. In the latter case, Moscow felt it was unthinkable to lose ground in Eastern Europe just after the Middle East had slipped from its influence. The crisis hardened Soviet determination to resort to military intervention in Hungary, because it saw that the West was preoccupied with Egypt. Some scholars have also seen a destructive impact from the Hungarian crisis on other East European states, notably East Germany and Czechoslovakia, which worried the KGB deeply. Unless the disturbances were put down fast, there could be chain reactions across the socialist camp.²⁹ Yet all these factors behind Moscow's decision seem secondary compared with the change in the attitude of Mao.

Khrushchev faced a dilemma in managing affairs in Eastern Europe. If the Soviets pursued a line of political and economical reforms in those countries, they would have reappoint previously ousted non-Stalinists if they wanted to preserve the unity of the socialist camp. But such reformers in Eastern Europe made up a force against Soviet control, backed by the masses in their societies. Such developments would shake the Soviet Bloc to pieces and threaten the security of the Soviet Union itself.

The CCP leaders stuck to two principles as they coped with the Polish and Hungarian crises. One was to seize the opportunity to criticize Stalinism, by joining

28 AMFAC, 109-01041-01, 90-91. Items Ambassador Hao Deqing reported by telephone, November 2, 1956; *ibid.*, 97-101. Several issues Nagy talked about in his interview with Ambassador Hao, November 2, 1956.

hands with the East European states in opposing Soviet great-power chauvinism and the primacy of the Soviet party, stressing the principles of independence and equality in relations among the socialist states. That epitomized especially the Chinese handling of the Polish issue. It was not so much that the Chinese helped the Soviets fix the problem of Poland as that they used the crisis to make Soviet leaders confess their previous mistakes and issue a general statement on the framework for relations within the communist world. The other principle was to try to coordinate the relationships between the Soviet Union and its satellites, emphasize the unity and stability of the socialist camp, and oppose all measures and tendencies that deviated from socialism. The second was more evident in Beijing's stance on the Hungarian crisis.

Scholars have wondered why China, having opposed Soviet armed intervention in Poland, condoned Khrushchev's revised decision to send troops back into Hungary.³⁰ In Poland's case, Mao Zedong and the CCP leadership believed the target of attack was Moscow's "great-power chauvinist" policy, while in Hungary's it was socialism. Mao was all for targeting the former but dead against targeting the latter. And just as Moscow misjudged the situation in Poland, so did Beijing in Hungary. Nagy and his regime were short-sighted and made unwise moves, but they did not betray socialism. Hungary's decision to withdraw from the Warsaw Pact was largely a result of the Soviet armed intervention, not a cause of it.

As for China's role in the Polish and Hungarian affairs, it can safely be assumed that the decisions to give up armed intervention in Poland and to dispatch troops to Hungary after all were made by the Soviet leaders alone. Yet China played a dominant role, first in pulling the Soviet troops out of Budapest and then in bringing them back. But this paper is concerned more about something else. To this author's mind, it is more apposite to say that Mao Zedong attained his goal of criticizing the great-power chauvinism of Moscow and that of maintaining the unity of the socialist camp, than that China helped the Soviet Union tide over its crises. In that sense, the author agrees with scholars who say that one of Khrushchev's decisive acts in handling the crises of 1956 was to bring China into Europe.³¹ In starting to become involved in East European affairs, the CCP symbolically ascended a new flight of steps in its position and role in the international communist movement. Thereafter Moscow's leadership of the communist world began to be challenged from Beijing.

(Translated by Guo Jie, East China Normal University, Shanghai.)

29 Kramer 1996-7, 370-1; see also Hu 2004, 118-20.

30 Crankshaw 1963, 54.

31 Ibid., 53; Chen 2001, 161-2.

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IOANA BOCA

ROMANIA

AFTER THE HUNGARIAN REVOLUTION OF 1956

The reaction of the authorities to student protests

The student protest movements in the autumn of 1956 came as a genuine shock to Romanian communist leaders. There was an immediate reaction from the decision-making bodies in Bucharest to this open opposition to the communist regime itself by young people educated—at least in theory—according to the new ideology, including repression.

38 It is important to note there were hotbeds of protest in all the major university centres of Romania in the autumn of 1956, and the demands voiced by the students in each were broadly the same. Only a brief overview of these student movements will be given here. The first signs of discontent with the regime had appeared among students in the spring and summer of 1956 and sometimes been expressed openly, at meetings of the Union of Working Youth (Uninea Tineretului Muncitoresc, UTM) or in roundabout ways, at discussions in university corridors or hostels. The authorities then made moves to keep student circles under surveillance and forestall a crisis. In August 1956, the leaders of the Romanian Workers' Party (RWP) decided to set up a new umbrella organization: the Union of Student Associations. Though the new body proclaimed itself apolitical in public discourse, it was controlled directly by the RWP. This was exemplified by the fact that its leader designate was a secretary of the Politburo of the UTM Central Committee.

When students returned to their studies in September 1956, it became plain that these measures had not had the expected effect. Instead of discontent easing, the crisis intensified against a background of the ongoing events in Hungary and Poland. Issues considered taboo up to then were brought up by students at UTM meetings and gatherings organized by party activists to “clarify” what was going on in Hungary and Poland. Among these were relations between the Soviet Union and Romania, the presence of Soviet troops in Romania, forced collectivization of agriculture, events in Poland and Hungary, and demands made by the Poles and Hungarians.

Several student meetings began to be held in September, some organized and some spontaneous, where students voiced open discontent. The very harsh speeches raised unprecedented matters such as the peasantry question, the hardships of students, the habitual deceit in the UTM, and falsifications being peddled by the leadership and the official press, both of which were at odds with reality. The students expressed discontent about the new system for awarding grants, and criticized excessive politicization of the education programme and bureaucratization of UTM structures. They demanded access to forbidden books in the libraries. A UTM meeting on September 27 in the Philology Faculty at Bucharest led to several students being expelled a month later and sanctions against the entire organization, under orders from the RWP Politburo.¹ On October 24, an unofficial meeting was held at the Institute of Fine Arts in Cluj. Its two initiators were arrested next day, as were other students, from the Bucharest Philology Faculty, for having submitted to *Scânteia Tineretului* (“The Spark of Youth”) a piece criticizing the party leadership for retaining aspects of the “cult of personality”. A group of students in Timișoara proposed on October 27 a meeting on October 30 that attracted about 3 000 students, which 2000 were detained and 30 sentenced to prison terms of up to eight years for “public incitement”. Students of the Bolyai University in Cluj gathered at the city cemetery on November 1 to mark All Souls’ Day with tributes to those fighting in Budapest.

The crisis at Bucharest University peaked on November 5, when groups gathered in University Square at 3 p. m. for a scheduled demonstration. The demonstration failed, as its instigators had been rounded up on the previous day, there were large law-enforcement forces in the square, and there was no one brave enough to step forward as leader, but that did not end the crisis. A wave of arrests starting that evening involved dozens of students of medicine, philology, law, polytechnics, architecture and theatre, who were interrogated by the Securitate. Another protest planned for November 15 was thwarted when its organizers were arrested. Further arrests took place in mid-November of students from the faculties of Philology and History in Cluj and Philology in Bucharest (the Paul Goma group).

It can be seen that the students sought various channels to transmit their demands. They tried an institutional framework to convince the authorities to resolve at least a part of their grievances. Other methods of exerting pressure included a strike and street protests, but no specific action was induced in the authorities. But there was an initiative to foster open protest that might involve other sections of the population. These actions were all thwarted by the presence of informers even in the students’ ranks, by close official surveillance of student circles, and as a determining factor, by

1 For more detail see Boca 2001.

the Soviet invasion of Hungary on November 4, 1956. But as one of the student leaders arrested at the time declared, the significance lay in the aims, not the success or lack of it. And the reactions of the decision-makers in Bucharest at the time of the student crisis demonstrate in a way that the students were achieving some of their aims.

Despite some degree of inadvertence, inadequacy and naivety, the student movement of autumn 1956 was the only one to organize protest action backed by a well-defined programme of demands aimed at the whole of Romanian society. Young people showed that although they had been subjected to “education” by the Party and were expected to form a primary constituent of the regime, they were not inclined to accept the lies and misinformation the leadership was promoting or put up with the prevailing conditions of poverty. The student movement was defeated, while many dissidents were arrested and given heavy prison sentences, and many others were expelled from their faculties. But student unity and a common desire to reform society had been shown.

Common grievances were expressed in all the university centres, although they were not drafted by the same persons, which emphasized the urgent needs of youth and Romanian society in general. The students understood the need to have cohesion in the student body and attract the public to their side. Their failure came because they lacked a centre of coordination and support from other groups in society, and the authorities took strong anticipatory action to thwart them.

The aftermath of these movements was felt in subsequent years. The arrests after 1956 demonstrate that there remained dissident groups among the students, who were not intimidated by the coercive measures. But the lives of those arrested or expelled from university were scarred. Only after 1964 did some of them managed to complete their university studies, and even then, their files as former political detainees would pursue them for the rest of their lives.

The actions of the Bucharest leadership were directed in the first place at brutal repression of protest. The official reactions were swift in the midst of the student crisis, and intended to prevent solidarity developing among the hotbeds of protest. The RWP Politburo took an immediate decision to arrest the protesting students, and in the case of the Timișoara students, to suspend their courses.

On November 12, 1956, the rectors of higher educational establishments sent all faculties instructions to monitor their students closely. Teachers were advised to

2 The Archive of Bucharest town, Fond Institute of Medicine and Pharmacy (Arhivele Municipiului București, fond Institutul de Medicină și Farmacie, hereafter AMB, IMF), file 10/1956, f. 6.

3 Ibid.

spend more time with students and above all to probe all aspects of student life, from academic activity to personal matters, paying special attention to cultural and sporting activities and gatherings of various kinds.² Measures were to be taken in order to avert unauthorized gatherings, such as those that had taken place at the Institute of Fine Arts at Cluj on October 24 or Timișoara Polytechnic on October 30. According to an Education Ministry order, deans' offices were to post the regulations on higher learning for students' attention and impose sanctions for failing to abide by them.³ Punctuality at courses, for teachers and students, became a priority.

One of the main directions in which educational policy developed after 1956 was in the admission requirements for university, in an effort to "purge" the students. The Politburo meeting on November 13, 1956 instructed the Ministry of Education to draft measures to "improve the social composition" of the student body.⁴ On November 19, 1956, the Ministry circulated all institutions of higher education instructing them to send to the General Board of Higher Education within seven days reports of readmissions in the period 1955–6, adding that these must specify students with political convictions.⁵ Romania had been admitted to the United Nations in 1955 and Romanian domestic policy had also been influenced at that time by the so-called "spirit of Geneva", which produced a relaxation of the repressive policies. Dozens of political detainees were released under amnesties in 1955–6, many of them students, who were readmitted to university. These students were the first collateral victims of the student protests, though the vast majority of them were not involved. There was a return to the practise of the early 1950s, when university admission was based on an applicant's "file" of declarations on their parents' means and political affiliations.

Expulsion of those whose "files" were unsatisfactory was carried out with immediate effect in December 1956–January 1957, without any account being taken of academic results,⁶ by direct order of the Ministry of Education. (The Ministry order stipulated expulsion for anyone found guilty of a variety of misdemeanours.)⁷ The tone of this

4 Lungu–Retagan 1996, 243.

5 AMB, IMF, file 3/1956, f. 159.

6 The fifth-year medical student Mircea Selten, for instance, was arrested in 1947 as a member of the National Peasant Party youth movement and sentenced to ten years in prison, but released in 1956 and readmitted to the Faculty of Medicine. Three months later he was expelled again by order of the Ministry of Education. In a memorandum to the minister in February 1957, Selten requests that since "I have three terms left until graduation and bearing in mind that I am 32, an age at which it is very hard to start training for another profession, I request you to reconsider my expulsion, allow me to follow a career and complete my degree, for which I do not have long to go." AMB, IMF, file 18/1956, f. 23.

campaign of expulsion was set by one of the members of the Political Bureau of the Party Central Committee, Nicolae Ceaușescu, who, in a speech given in Bucharest on November 15, 1956, urged the immediate elimination of all former political detainees from university faculties (“it can no longer be permitted for second year students to have six students released from prison in their ranks. How can such a thing be permitted?”⁸), but also of any students critical of the regime, in order to set an example for all the other students. “Let it be clear to the others what are the consequences of incorrect behaviour and that our party is keeping a watch over their attitude.”⁹

In 1957, in a further attempt to “improve the social composition of students” and, at the same time, to “cleanse” the student body of any element that might endanger the restoration of “calm” (in the context created after the student protests of autumn 1956), decision 1003/1957 was issued, which imposed strict criteria for admission to university. Thus, in the 1958–59 university year, one year after the decision entered into force, two hundred students were ex-matriculated for “false declarations and disciplinary transgressions”, according to an official text of the Ministry of Education.¹⁰ The aftermath of 1956 continued to be felt in the waves of expulsions in 1958–59.¹¹ For example, Nicolae Frecuș, Alecu Cuturicu and Emil Bîlcea were expelled in 1958 from the Faculty of Mathematics and Physics at Bucharest University for “dubious conduct during the events in Hungary.” Elena Dumitrescu, studying philosophy, was expelled because “she displayed an inappropriate attitude during the events in Hungary” while studying in the Soviet Union. There were many similar cases. Those arrested in the autumn of 1956, on the other hand, were expelled on the grounds of “absence without cause”.¹² Many expulsions took place during UTM

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7 AMB, IMF, file 18/1956, f. 27.

8 Lungu–Retagan 1996, 255.

9 Ibid.

10 Cf. information dated 1959 from the General Board of Higher Education of the Ministry of Education and Culture addressed to the PMR Politburo. The Romanian Central National Historical Archives, Central Committee Fond of the Romanian Communist Party, Bucharest (Arhivele Naționale Istorice Centrale, fond Comitetul Central al Partidului Comunist Român, hereafter ANIC, CC of the RCP), Chancellery, file 16/1959, f. 63; Moraru 2000, 864.

11 Berciu–Drăghicescu–Bozgan 2004, 297–301.

12 Maria Someșan mentions finding in the Bucharest University Archives expulsion orders for Christl Depner, Mihai Derdena, Dan Onaca, Dumitru Constantin, Paul Goma, Alexandru Calciu, Mihai Rădulescu, Teodor Lupaș, Ștefan Negrea, Marcel Petrișor, and Horia Popescu. Someșan 2004, 324. All were arrested in November or December 1956 and convicted of agitation or public incitement.

meetings or student gatherings that were turned into public witch hunts.¹³ The decisions taken at these meetings, chaired by party or UTM leaders, were then implemented by the heads of faculties.¹⁴ A first meeting of the UTM was held at the Faculty of Medicine on December 20, 1956, at the height of the student arrests. Ten students who had been political detainees were summoned before 25 UTM officials, and told there was no further place for them in view of their pasts. The official order of expulsion came over the telephone from the Ministry of Education, and a list of expelled students was posted two days later, on December 24, “following the decision by the Ministry”.¹⁵

The student protests of 1956 were also followed by frequent meetings for denunciations and exclusions from the UTM. There students, and sometimes even teachers, were subject to violent accusations, which usually resulted in exclusion from the UTM and expulsion from their faculties. Student UTM activists were coerced into “unmasking” their fellows, making serious accusations against them and demanding their expulsion on the basis of ostensible evidence.¹⁶

Arrests of students continued in subsequent years. A group of students and former students of the Bucharest University Philosophy Faculty were rounded up in December 1957–February 1958, for having distributed manifestos around Bucharest in October 1956, calling for the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Romania. Their sentences ranged up to 18 years’ hard labour.¹⁷ In March 1958, four former students of the Bucharest University Philology Faculty were arrested for “shows of enmity

13 For an example of a denunciation meeting, see Mihalcea 1994, 17–20, 59–63.

14 On March 14, 1959, the executive of The Institute of Medicine and Pharmacy (Institut de Medicină și Farmacie, IMF) decided to expel four medical students: “On the basis of the meeting of the IMF association at Floreasca [the Floreasca Hall in Bucharest] and following approval of the general assembly, the rector’s office approves the expulsion from the IMF.” These were Edgar Savin, a fourth-year student (readmitted on June 23, 1959, by a decision of the executive), Lili Ștefan, a fourth-year student (readmitted for the 1959–60 academic year, on condition that she worked in production until her readmission), and Mihai Dimitriu and Ovidiu Dimitriu, sixth-year students. AMB, IMF, file 38/1956, f. 39v.

15 *Ibid.*, file 18/1956, f. 35v.

16 “In the expulsions, Hangiu Gheorghe was the one to identify and accuse those in question, inasmuch as he had been called before the party earlier and criticized.” The Archive of the Romanian National Council for the Study of the Former Securitate Archives, Bucharest (Arhiva Consiliului Național pentru Studierea Arhivelor fostei Securități, hereafter: ACNSAS), Fond Information, file 1269, I. f. 141v.

17 The first arrests occurred in December 1956. On 24 June 1958 the Military tribunal Bucharest passed sentence no. 585 in the case in which the philosophy students were involved. ACNSAS, Penal Fond, file no. 845, vol. I. See also Boca 2001.

during the events in Hungary”.¹⁸ In August 1958, the Securitate in Cluj made arrests among students of Bolyai University, accusing them of having displayed solidarity with the Hungarian revolutionaries in October–November 1956.¹⁹

There were a number of specific developments in 1957–9. Student circles had been monitored by the authorities more closely after the protests of autumn 1956. The Securitate used every means possible—informers, infiltrators, spying—to identify “hotbeds of reaction” and eliminate them from the student body. Those arrested in the period often found that their conduct at the time of the events in Hungary was brought up as an aggravating factor. The Securitate could be seen to build up its cases very slowly, rather than making immediate arrests. The mood of terror among students was sustained through the denunciation meetings mentioned already, which caused exclusions from the UTM and expulsions from university. Arrests came as the final sanction, after an incriminated student had been “unmasked” in a process reminiscent on another level of the “Pitești phenomenon”.²⁰

The repressive campaign after 1956 was on a large scale. Official data suggest that 2431 persons were arrested in 1956, including 528 who were only investigated, not brought to trial.²¹ Hundreds of students were arrested in November 1956–January 1957, some for only a few days, and underwent investigation by the Securitate. Some were tried and others used as witnesses at such trials.

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The waves of expulsions from university involved not only former political detainees (seen as a source of possible contamination of the student body) but those who had dared to display the slightest gesture of solidarity with the Hungarian revolutionaries. Philology student Gloria Barna was expelled in January 1957 for showing solidarity with the arrested students and was examined during the Goma trial.²² Two years later, Barna was arrested in her turn and sentenced to three years in prison. At the end of November, a meeting of territorial instructors of the RWP Central Committee heard that 60 students had already been convicted and their exclusion from the UTM was proposed. The magnitude of the protests that gripped student circles in the autumn of 1956 is confirmed even by one of the leaders of the party, Petre Lupu, who declared that if all who had an enemy attitude had been eliminated, “it would have meant eliminating a very great number of young people.”²³

18 ACNSAS, Penal Fond, file 1060.

19 Ibid., file 915.

20 The so-called Pitești experiment was a savage prison regime applied to young intellectuals in the early 1950s.

21 ACNSAS, Documentary Fond, file 55, LXIII. f. 170.

22 Ibid., Information Fond, file 3654, I. f. 188.

At a meeting of the Ministry of the Interior of December 1957, Minister Alexandru Drăghici gave a broad account of the “work of the Securitate” during 1957, referring directly to events of autumn 1956. He said that during 1957, “242 elements suspected of enemy activity”²⁴ had been identified and 169 arrests made among “counter-revolutionary elements”.²⁵ Among student groups, there were 33 arrests, 29 of them students and four others teaching-faculty members.²⁶ Department III of the Securitate reported during 1957 “liquidating” ten counterrevolutionary organizations and making 142 arrests.²⁷ Official statistics for 1957 show 852 persons arrested on charges of “plotting against the social order” (compared with 327 in 1956), 1017 under accused of “public agitation”, and 78 persons of “distributing manifestos.”²⁸

The discontent expressed even by party members during 1956, of which the RWP Central Committee had been informed, obliged Romanian communist leaders to take measures to eliminate “intruders”. One leader to adopt an intransigent position at the CC plenary was Nicolae Ceaușescu. This set the tone for a campaign of purges targeting broad swaths of society. Ceaușescu declared, “It was seen [during the events in Hungary] that there remain in the party inappropriate, former Iron Guard [fascist] elements. The party must be cleansed of such elements. Likewise, in connection with admission to the party, social background must be tightened and more workers admitted”²⁹ In fact, Ceaușescu set the tone for the campaign of expulsions from university.

The purges were to include all the party and state structures, to ensure that all “counter-revolutionary” hotbeds were eliminated. In previous years, some persons from the old elite had been allowed to reintegrate into public life, especially in the field of economics, where the shortage of specialists had been acute. Moreover, released political detainees had managed to occupy various unimportant functions or been admitted as students. These were to be the authorities’ prime targets in the new campaign of repression.³⁰

23 ANIC, RWP CC, Organization Section, file 45/1956, f. 49.

24 ACNSAS, Documentary Fond, file 114, f. 226.

25 Ibid., f. 230.

26 Ibid., f. 226.

27 Ibid., f. 267.

28 ACNSAS, Documentary Fond, file 53, f. 79.

29 ANIC, CC of the RCP, Chancellery, file 139/1956, I, f. 77.

30 “The problem of the use of old specialists: attempts were made in a series of factories to apply these CC guidelines in a liberal manner, which might cause harm... as some of them have displayed enmity to party members and strike out at them in all kinds of ways.” Ibid., f. 55.

The wave of arrests in 1958–9—unleashed as a reaction to the protests of 1956 and as a preventative measure in the context of the withdrawal of Soviet troops—was reminiscent of the terror of the early 1950s. The victims of this belated Stalinist repression included intellectuals, students, peasants and former political prisoners. To give one statistic as an indication of scale, 18 529 persons were arrested between 1957 and 1959, according to official figures.³¹ To this number can be added a further 3659 persons who, in the period 1958–1963, had obligatory places of work imposed upon them, in accordance with the provisions of the Romanian National Assembly Decree no. 89 of 17 February 1958³² (which completed the order of 12 September 1957³³, whereby obligatory places of domicile were imposed upon all those who, by their actions, endangered the regime of the people's democracy).

The unrest in Romanian society in the autumn of 1956, which culminated in the open protests of the students, demonstrated that, ten years after taking power, and in spite of an aggressive policy to inculcate new values, Romanian society still had the potential to revolt, even if this did not manifest itself on the scale of the revolts in Hungary, Poland or Germany.³⁴

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31 Compare data compiled by the Council for State Security on April 17, 1968 in: Maritiu 1998, 763.

32 Oprea 1998, 755.

33 Ibid., 754–5.

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FIFTY-SIX AS AN IDENTITY-SHAPING EXPERIENCE

The case of the Romanian communists

METHODOLOGY AND CONCEPTS

48

Nineteen fifty-six was indeed a year that left its mark on world communism. Three major events—Khrushchev’s secret speech to the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU), the “Polish October”, and the Hungarian Revolution—showed that communism was not so “victorious” in East-Central Europe as the region’s communist leaders would have their peoples believe. This paper focuses on a rather under-researched side of Romanian communism: what influence 1956 had on values and on attitudes to the political system, among the Romanian communist elite.

The issue is approached from the angle of political culture, for cultural values and attitude patterns are essential to any thorough analysis of the communist regime in Romania that seeks country-specific attributes of Romanian communism. In other words, it is argued that values, beliefs and emotions marking not only the political elite but the ordinary people were factors determining the characteristics of the political regime in power from 1945 to 1989, as were the patterns of compliance and conflict with authority discernable in the public. As Gabriel Almond once noted, the relation between structure and culture is interactive: “One cannot explain cultural propensities without reference to historical experience and contemporary structural constraints and opportunities, and that, in turn, a prior set of attitudinal patterns will tend to persist in some form and degree and for a significant period of time, despite efforts to transform it.”¹ This certainly applies to the communist elite and the public.

Thorough analysis of recently published documents, memoirs and eye-witness accounts indicate that Romanian communists such as Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej and his followers did not come to power with a clear agenda. Their main political purpose was to gain and retain power at all costs. The issue was the political survival

1 Cited by Almond 1990, 157–8.

of a tiny, frustrated, uneducated group of ex-prisoners, as Vladimir Tismăneanu aptly remarked, also known as “Dej’s men”, dependent on the Red Army, which had brought it to power, unprepared to govern, with simplistic ideas of what politics meant, and equally importantly, with no popular support. The only chance for such a group to stay in power lay in subservience to Stalin. Until Soviet troops were withdrawn from Romania in the summer of 1958, it was an issue of paramount importance to Dej and his men to legitimize the party leadership in Moscow’s eyes, not the eyes of the population. After July 1958, the situation changed entirely: the party and its paramount leader now had to legitimize themselves in the people’s eyes. The experience of 1956 was a factor that shaped the strategy of Romanian communists for taming and co-opting the population, to ensure political survival.

The political socialization undergone by the general public under the communist regime showed two contrasting sides, in Romania as in the rest of East-Central Europe. Traditional values were handed down in childhood within the family environment, while new, “sound” values were inculcated during adolescence and adulthood by schooling, the socialization processes of official organizations, and the centrally controlled mass media. Some traditional values, concealed and preserved, nurtured political cultures of resistance and led to silent or overt opposition to the regime. The process by which the regime co-opted various social groups was eased by adding new values to certain old, enduring “dissimulative postures”.

This writer agrees with Archie Brown’s assertion that the concept of political culture is especially useful for analysing the relationship between values and political structures in a communist society, where there has been (1) “a radical break in the continuity of political institutions,” and (2) “an unusually overt and conscious attempt to create new political values and to supplant the old.”² Kenneth Jowitt has argued that many approaches to communist regimes “tended to discount or neglect the role of culture, largely because the relationship between regime and society was viewed simply as a pattern of domination–subordination.”³ One can add that in reality, the picture was much more complex, especially because the communist regime in Romania, as elsewhere in East-Central Europe, lasted long enough to evolve and change (in terms of ideology, party membership, and social, cultural and economic policies) after the moment of “breakthrough”.

To this writer, Archie Brown’s definition seems the more appropriate, especially for studying former communist regimes in East-Central Europe. He interprets political culture as “the subjective perception of history and politics, the fundamental

2 Ibid., 12.

3 Jowitt 1992, 51.

beliefs and values, the foci of identification and loyalty, and the political knowledge and expectations which are the product of the specific historical experience of nations and groups.” He also puts forward an analytical framework for studying communist political cultures, based on such (1) previous political experience, (2) values and fundamental political beliefs, (3) foci of identification and loyalty, and (4) political knowledge and expectations.⁴

Jowitt insists on the necessity, when studying communist regimes, to analyse “the visible and systematic impact society has on the character, quality, and style of political life,” in order to explain the nature of communist structures and cultures. He argues that the violent character of the 1989 Romanian revolution was determined by the “character, quality and style of political life” in communist Romania. He defines political culture as “the set of informal, adaptative postures—behavioral and attitudinal—that emerge in response to, and interact with, the set of formal definitions—ideological, policy and institutional—that characterize a given level of society.” He goes on to identify three types of political culture, related to the different levels of society: elite, regime, and community political culture. *Elite* political culture is defined as the set that emerges “as a response to and consequence of a given elite’s identity-forming experiences,” *regime* political culture is the set emerging “in response to the institutional definition of social, economic, and political life”, and *community* political culture as the set emerging “in response to the historical relationships between regime and community”.⁵

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Drawing on the conceptual frameworks just discussed, this writer would argue that two of the political subcultures—regime and community—are essential to explaining the specific features of Romanian communism. The 1956 Hungarian Revolution was a major identity-forming experience for the Romanian communist elite and so had a significant impact on what has just been termed the regime political culture. In the terms of the present paper, regime political culture is understood to be the official political culture and defined as the *political culture of Romanian communism*. As far as community political culture is concerned, the most significant for this discussion are the sub-cultures of it that can be defined as the *political cultures of resistance* against the regime. Yet it should be said from the outset that thorough analysis of both political sub-cultures—the political culture of Romanian communism, and the political culture(s) of resistance to the regime—would go far beyond the scope of this paper.

4 Brown 1997, 16–20.

5 Jowitt 1992, 51–2 and 54–6. Some criticized Jowitt’s taxonomy. For instance, Ronald H. Chilcote argued that Jowitt’s three types of political culture “are described in jargonistic terms and not effectively utilized in his analysis.” Cf. Chilcote 1994, 197.

So it will be confined to the impact that the year 1956, and in particular the Hungarian Revolution, had on the political culture of Romanian communism.

THE POLITICAL CULTURE OF ROMANIAN COMMUNISM

Analysis of the identity-forming experiences of the elite of the Romanian Communist Party (RCP) is of paramount importance to understanding the main attributes of the political culture of Romanian communism. Tismăneanu, in his *Phantom of Gheorghiu-Dej*, has provided a masterful analysis of the power relations within the party, by pointing to three centres of power within the RCP after 1933: (1) the Muscovites—the Romanian communist émigrés in Moscow, (2) the Central Committee led by Ștefan Foriș, and (3) the “ex-prisoner centre” led by Gheorghiu-Dej.⁶ He rightly asserts that psycho-biography makes a useful tool for explaining Gheorghiu-Dej’s leadership style and the intricate relations within the RCP (old and new hatreds, shifting alliances within the party, etc.) A further task is to identify the hidden mechanisms (characteristic of a sect or secret society) that enabled the Stalinist experiment in Romania.⁷

Tismăneanu argues that the Romanian communists suffered from an inferiority complex and a legitimacy complex. Lack of legitimacy remained “the open wound of Romanian communism, from its inception to its ghastly demise.” He puts forward as the third main feature of Romanian communist political culture the failure to de-Stalinize. Real de-Stalinization and the emergence of Marxist revisionism in Romania were hindered, he says, by the weak tradition of Marxism in Romania, combined with a low intellectual profile and an unsophisticated mentality in the overwhelming majority of the communist elite. This also explains the salience of Stalinism (primarily cultural and economic) as the operational ideology of the Romanian communist elite, up until the regime’s collapse in December 1989.

Another important aspect of the identity-forming experiences of the RCP elite relates to the period of common socialization of those who were to compose that elite. Sociologist Pavel Câmpeanu has recently given insightful analysis of the prison terms served by a group of communist militants that included Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej, Gheorghe Apostol, Iosif Chișinevschi, Miron Constantinescu, Nicolae Ceaușescu,

6 See Tismăneanu 1995a, 91–3. Tismăneanu’s seminal work on Romanian communism is *Stalinism for All Seasons: A Political History of the Romanian Communist Party*, Tismăneanu 2003. Of his studies of the political culture of Romanian communism, see especially Tismăneanu 1991 and Tismăneanu 1992. Other works in Romanian: Tismăneanu 1998 and 1995b.

7 Tismăneanu 1993.

and Câmpeanu himself.⁸ His detailed account explains how important the period of common socialization in prison was in determining the nature of the political culture of the Romanian communist elite, especially for the present analysis, as the crucial features of regime's political culture remained unchanged until the demise of the system. As already mentioned, the Romanian communists, after their takeover, had no other way of retaining power than to be subservient to Stalin and emulate the Soviet model. Drawing on the interpretations of the power relations within the RCP mentioned, this writer considers that the demise of Romanian communism is best explained by two concepts characteristic of its political culture: (1) the monolithic nature of the party, and its self-assertiveness.

Preserving the party's monolithic nature was central to the regime's political culture. Factionalism was to be avoided at all costs. This precise feature of the Romanian communist regime precluded any negotiated solution between an enlightened party faction and opposition elites, so predetermining the sudden, bloody collapse of the regime in December 1989. In Ceaușescu's case, his fear of the mortal sin of "factionalism" survived unaltered until the very end of his rule.⁹

Born of a "pariah communism" developed in the underground years, the tiny sect of Romanian communists that had gained power made a strong myth out of self-assertiveness. Of prime importance to exploring this are the testimonies of members of the *nomenklatura* closest to Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej (1948–65) and Nicolae Ceaușescu (1965–89). These concur to the point of acknowledging the existence of two conflicting camps within the Politburo: Muscovites—blind appliers of Soviet policy—and locals (*pămînteni*), proponents of the "national line", headed by Dej himself. Once the Muscovites were defeated, Dej and his followers could pursue their policy of emancipating the RCP and communist Romania from Soviet hegemony. But the process could still be hampered by the "Moscow centre" and by neighbouring communist regimes. Fears of alleged "imperialistic" stances by Moscow and "irredentist" action by Budapest remained major features of the political culture right up until December 1989. Crucial reinforcement of this feature was given by 1956.

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8 Câmpeanu 2002. Câmpeanu also provided an original analysis of the communist system, *The syncretic society*, which was sent abroad and published under the pseudonym Felipe Garcia Casals. See Câmpeanu 1980, the Romanian version Câmpeanu 2002. This was published in Romanian only recently. He saw Stalinism as the only economic and social organization of society to offer stability to a "syncretic society": prematurely implemented socialism as envisaged by Lenin in Russia, based on political grounds, not a result of historical evolution, as Marx once foresaw.

9 An old-timer himself—though not so important earlier as he claimed—Ceaușescu was afraid up to his

FIFTY-SIX IN ROMANIA: ELITE REACTION TO THE HUNGARIAN REVOLUTION

The Romanian communist elite condemned the Hungarian revolution at once and succeeded in convincing the Soviets of their deep loyalty. After all, the 1956 events in Poland and Hungary favoured the efforts of the Romanian Stalinist leader, Gheorghiu-Dej, to retain personal power and avoid de-Stalinization. The Romanian communists took rapid measures to stanch information about the real significance of events in Hungary.

On October 24, 1956, a meeting of the Romanian Workers' Party (RWP) CC Politburo devised an 18-point plan for keeping the situation under strict control. Top communist officials were sent to Transylvania to discuss the situation in Hungary with the public. Miron Constantinescu, for instance, was sent to Cluj, while János Fazekas was sent to the Hungarian Autonomous Region. Other *nomenklatura* members were sent to calm the German community, which was agitated by rumours that reunification of families—mass emigration to West Germany—was to be allowed by the Romanian communist authorities as a result of the events unfolding in Hungary (Point 10).

The party was facing for the first time the major problem of ignorance of the public state of mind. Point 13 stated that the situation in Hungary should be explained to the workers through the trade unions, but this had to be done gradually, to assess the reaction, and the official approach later amended to avoid unrest. Special heed was to be paid to young audiences, especially students. But it was specified that supplies of staple foodstuffs such as bread, meat and cooking oil were of prime importance (Point 14).¹⁰

Gradually, from October 26 onwards, Romanian communists to refer plainly to events in Hungary as a “counter-revolution.” Meetings were ordered throughout Romania, where workers and clerks, young and old, would condemn the “reactionary and fascist forces in Hungary and express solidarity with the heroic struggle of the Hungarian working class to crush the counter-revolution as soon as possible.”¹¹ The RWP had sided unhesitatingly with the Soviets and given immediate support.

downfall not of popular revolt, but of an intra-party coup, as Silviu Curticeanu—Ceaușescu's presidential secretary from 1975—aptly observes: Curticeanu 2000, 322 and 363.

10 Protocol No. 54 al Ședinței Biroului Politic al CC al PMR din 24 octombrie 1956 (Minutes of RWP CC Politburo meeting, October 24, 1956). See Stănescu 2003, 396–402.

11 This was stated clearly on October, 26 1956: Protocol No. 55 al Ședinței Biroului Politic al CC al PMR din 26 octombrie 1956 (Minutes of RWP CC Politburo meeting, October 26, 1956). Ibid., 403.

Gheorghiu-Dej could proudly claim at the Politburo meeting of December 1, 1956, “We are happy to say that we did not look passively as spectators on the events in Hungary. We were directly interested that the unfolding of events should be in the interest of the Hungarian people and the future of socialism in Hungary, as well as in the interest of our camp; so we did not stay passive or let the Soviet Union manage as it could, and we therefore contributed a lot.”¹²

Among the most telling documents about the reaction of the Romanian communist elite to the Hungarian Revolution is a report by two senior officials, Aurel Mălănașan and Valter Roman, on the visit by a RWP delegation to Hungary, to assess the course of events in Budapest.

On November 2, 1956, Roman emphasized before the RWP Politburo two major elements that had, in his view, contributed to the “counter-revolution”: (1) The HWP under the leadership of Mátyás Rákosi had failed to gain the acceptance of the Hungarian people, because of its arrogance and disregard for national traditions, and its total subservience to Stalin and the Soviet Union. (2) The HWP leadership had displayed an “anti-Romanian spirit” and “never taken a rightful stance on Transylvania.” On this, Roman quoted János Kádár, whom he had met during his Budapest, as advising, “Give autonomy to Transylvania!”¹³ These statements furthered what are outlined below as major elements in the political culture of Romanian communism: fear of Moscow and distrust of Budapest.

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But the Romanian public displayed sympathy for the Hungarian revolutionaries and numerous individuals expressed solidarity with the revolution at the time,¹⁴ most virulently in the city of Timișoara. As one participant confessed, students were listening avidly to foreign radio stations, including Radio Budapest, seeking news about the events in Hungary. Unrest developed slowly from October 23 to 30, when a mass meeting was called. The regime then reacted swiftly and ruthlessly to hamper the spread of the protest. The army and secret police occupied the student campus on October 30–31 and arrested about 3000 students, of whom 31 were put on trial and sentenced to terms of 2–8 years imprisonment.¹⁵ Despite the savage suppression,

12 Stenograma Ședinței Biroului Politic al CC al PMR din data de 1 decembrie 1956 (Minutes of RWP CC Politburo meeting, December 1, 1956). *Ibid.*, 472.

13 Stenograma Ședinței din data de 2 noiembrie 1956 cu tov. Aurel Mălănașan și Valter Roman (Minutes of meeting of November 2, 1956 with Comrades Aurel Mălănașan and Valter Roman). *Ibid.*, 409–27.

14 See especially reports by Securitate informers on popular reaction to the Hungarian Revolution: Lungu-Retegan 1996.

15 A valuable eye-witness account of '56 events in Timișoara: Baghiu 1995, esp. 7–24.

the people of Timișoara kept alive a spirit of anti-communist resistance, and it was there that the Romanian Revolution began in 1989.

NATIONAL COMMUNISM: FEAR OF MOSCOW, DISTRUST OF BUDAPEST

The monolithic nature and the self-assertiveness of the party have been shown to be crucial concepts in the political culture of Romanian communism. It can also be argued that the events of '56 increased two Romanian communist perceptions of enemies within the communist camp: fear of Moscow and distrust of Budapest.

To be sure, these perceptions rested on a long process of Romanian identity building from the mid-19th century onwards, in opposition to two strong neighbouring empires—the Russian and the Austro-Hungarian. But these features were strongly reinforced by the strategy of political survival devised by Gheorghiu-Dej in 1956, in the aftermath of the CPSU 20th Congress and the Hungarian Revolution, which was based on returning to traditional values associated with the Romanian identity and on extensive industrialization. This strategy was strictly adhered to by Ceaușescu, who had internalized the crucial elements during a long process of political socialization in Dej's inner circle, although he was less imaginative and flexible in his domestic and international policies than Dej had been.

As Ronald H. Linden correctly observed, “Romanian leaders have successfully capitalized upon the non-Slavic identity of the population.”¹⁶ It should be added that this nationalism, combined with a slight living-standard improvement beginning in the early 1960s, gained some appreciation from most of Romania's population. But to understand the roots of Romanian national communism and the way fear of Moscow and distrust of Budapest developed in the Romanian communist elite it is necessary to explore the elite's relationship to nationalism, or more precisely, Romanian national identity.

Here the accounts given after 1989 by former members of the *nomenklatura* are revealing, but at the same time puzzling, as they present the so-called internationalist phase of Romanian communism as far less “internationalist” than had been thought. For instance, Romanian communists were already being pushed into nationalist arguments by controversy over contested territories—notably Transylvania—even before they came to power in 1948. One former high-ranking communist official, Gheorghe Apostol, recalls a meeting with Stalin in December 1944, at which only he, Gheorghiu-Dej and Ana Pauker were present. The Romanian delegation prepared

16 Linden 1981, 229.

its plea for Transylvania on the grounds of history, from the Roman conquest onwards. That cut little ice with Stalin, but he decided Transylvania should go to Romania anyway, as a reward for switching sides in the war in August 1944. But Apostol's story is significant because it shows that even in front of Stalin, the Romanian communists were basing their arguments not on the theses of the 5th RCP Congress, but on a short-lived union of Transylvania with Moldavia and Wallachia under the medieval ruler Mihai Viteazul around 1600.

Such accounts raise doubts about the depth of the Romanian communists' commitment to the Comintern-instigated theses of the 5th Congress of 1931, which emphasized the multinational character of Greater Romania. Another prominent *nomenklatura* member, Ion Gheorghe Maurer, himself no ethnic Romanian, stressed he had never heard any Romanian communist apart from Ana Pauker and the Muscovites argue that Bessarabia should be Soviet or Transylvania Hungarian.¹⁷ The former problem was obviously more delicate than the latter. Clear references to Soviet-occupied Bessarabia could have damaged relations with the Soviet Union, yet recent testimonies show the Romanian communist elite still saw the territory as part of historical Romania.

56 As mentioned before, another crucial moment for the Romanian communists' strategy of taking an "independent road" within the world communist movement was the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Romania in 1958. Apostol remembered the issue being first raised in 1955, after the Soviet troops had been from Austria. It was not Dej, but Emil Bodnăraş who opened the discussion, during a private talk in the garden of Dej's villa. Bodnăraş was ideal for the purpose, as he enjoyed the trust of Dej, as a member of the Muscovite ex-prisoner group and a defecting officer of the Romanian army, who had left for the Soviet Union between the wars. The Romanian communist request enraged Khrushchev at the time, but he permitted the withdrawal in the summer of 1958. But regardless of how the decision was reached, it marked a new era for the RCP.

As the party cast desperately around for support to legitimize its independent stance, it found some unexpectedly in one of Karl Marx's works. Some light has been shed on the illuminating circumstances in which Karl Marx's *Notes on the Romanians* were published. Paul Niculescu-Mizil was heading the Propaganda Section of the RCP Central Committee at the time and became directly involved. He provides interesting detail on how the manuscript was discovered in 1958 by a Polish historian in Amsterdam, translated for the use of the party leadership, and finally, published in 1964 with an elaborate critical apparatus recommending the book as a purely

17 For Apostol's story, see Betea 1995, 160. For Maurer's affirmation: *ibid.*, 147.

scholarly work. It should be mentioned, however, that Marx's critical stances towards Russia were in line with Romanian communists' strategy of independence from Moscow, as stated in the Declaration of April 1964.¹⁸

Thus the major issues related to Romanian national identity, especially emotional attachment to lands seen as part of the "national territory" from time immemorial, were internalized by the communist elite very much along interwar lines, i. e., in the time of Greater Romania. Reading between the lines reveals elements of continuity between the identity politics of Greater Romania and that of Gheorghiu-Dej's Romania as early as February 1949. For instance, concern about communist Romania's cultural policy towards the Hungarian minority in Transylvania was expressed at a meeting with a delegation of the RWP headed by Gheorghiu-Dej, Ana Pauker, Vasile Luca and Iosif Chișinevschi, by a delegation of the Hungarian Workers' Party, led by Mátyás Rákosi, Ernő Gerő and László Rajk, and the answers received were rather unconvincing.¹⁹

At the famous RWP CC plenum of November–December 1961, which issued a definitive version of Gheorghiu-Dej's vision of party history, top communist officials made recurrent references to "just" stances over Transylvania, i. e., along the lines of national communism. Gheorghiu-Dej himself stated bluntly that "the chief preoccupation of Rákosi and his group" immediately after World War II had been the question of "who Transylvania would belong to."²⁰

More importantly, some people took the opportunity to refer to the '56 Hungarian Revolution in the context of the savage power struggle within the RWP taking place at that time. CC Secretary János Fazekas, addressing the plenum on December 4, 1961, recalled that Iosif Chișinevschi had taken an equivocal position during the '56 Hungarian Revolution and been reluctant to define the events as a "counter-revolution", whereas he, Fazekas, and Nicolae Ceaușescu had taken the "correct" stance at the time and squarely identified them as such. But Miron Constantinescu, sent by the party to address students in Cluj, had not dared to "unmask" events in Hungary as a "counter-revolution."²¹ It should be added that Constantinescu and Miron Constantinescu, and another top communist official, Josif Chișinevschi, had

18 See Marx 1964.

19 Stenograma ședinței Biroului Politic al CC al PMR la întâlnirea cu delegația Partidului celor ce muncesc din Ungaria, condusă de Mátyás Rákosi—19 Februarie 1949 (Minutes of RWP CC Politburo meeting with HWP delegation led by Mátyás Rákosi—February 19, 1949). *Arhivele Naționale ale României...* 85–115.

20 Neagoe-Pleșa–Pleșa 2006, 251.

21 *Ibid.*, Vol. II, 187–8.

criticized Gheorghiu-Dej's Stalinism in the aftermath of Khrushchev's "secret speech", but had lost the battle within the Party and been demoted in 1957. What is important here is that in 1961, at the most important RWP plenum of the Dej regime, Fazekas referred to the 1956 events in Hungary in relation to the fierce power struggle within the RWP. This supports once more the assertion that the '56 Revolution had a major influence on the Romanian communists' mindset.

Let us turn to Nicolae Ceaușescu and look more closely at how he applied the lessons of 1956 once in power. In August 1968, ten years after the withdrawal of Soviet troops, Ceaușescu gave his famous "balcony speech", condemning the invasion of Czechoslovakia by Warsaw Pact forces. Historically, it can be argued that this had an enormous effect on the Romanian public, offering, for many, proof that Ceaușescu had charismatic qualities.²² Simply put, this author agrees that Ceaușescu's "charismatic leadership"—to use Reinhard Bendix's concept—did indeed emerge under the dramatic conditions of that time.²³

After that juncture in August 1968, far stronger emphasis was put on the Romanian ancestors' heroism and struggle for independence. The equation was simple: Romanians had had to fight against the Ottomans, and now, under Ceaușescu, they had to oppose the Soviets, while more oblique reference was made to alleged irredentism in Hungary. As George Schöpflin aptly says: "Mythic and symbolic discourses can thus be employed to assert legitimacy and strengthen authority. They mobilize emotions and enthusiasm. They are a primary means by which people make sense of the political process, which is understood in a symbolic form."²⁴

Resorting to historical myths came almost naturally in Ceaușescu's Romania. Ceaușescu displayed from the outset his interest in the heroic deeds of the medieval rulers of the Romanian principalities, and his appreciation for them. Furthermore, his style of leadership differed from that of his predecessor in being based on a systematic programme of domestic tours that regularly included the main monuments and historic sites in each area.²⁵

22 Max Weber defined charisma as "a certain quality of an individual personality by virtue of which he is set apart from ordinary men and treated as endowed with supernatural, superhuman, or at least specifically exceptional powers or qualities." Quoted in Bendix 1973, 619. Ceaușescu's speech of August 21, 1968 appeared in the party daily *Scînteia*, August 22, 1968, 1, and in Ceaușescu 1969, 415–8.

23 For detail, see Bendix 1973, 616–29.

24 Schöpflin 1999, 89.

25 In the period when Ceaușescu was consolidating personal power (1965–9), such visits were meant to convey an image of a popular leader always ready to consult his people, especially workers and peasants. For more, see Petrescu 1997, 107–9.

In the aftermath of the Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia, Ceaușescu began what can be termed “itineraries of national cohesion”, designed to ensure popular backing for the RCP’s independent policies. More importantly still, Ceaușescu’s strategy was heavily influenced by the lessons the RCP elite had learned from the Hungarian Revolution of October 23–November 4, 1956. Let us follow the events through.

The balcony speech of August 21, 1968, condemning the invasion of Czechoslovakia by the troops of five “fraternal” countries, the Soviet Union, the GDR, Hungary, Poland and Bulgaria, was followed next day by an extraordinary session of the Romanian Grand National Assembly (GNA). There Ceaușescu said, “In our opinion, a great and tragic mistake has occurred, with heavy consequences for the fate of the unity of the socialist system and the international communist and workers’ movement.”²⁶ Two days later, on August 24, Ceaușescu had talks with the Yugoslav leader, Josip Broz Tito. (Ceaușescu had visited Yugoslavia on May 27–June 1 that year.)²⁷

On August 26, 1968, Ceaușescu embarked on an extensive domestic tour. It is important to note that the regime’s propaganda efforts were aimed primarily at Transylvania. Romanian communists had learnt from the ’56 Hungarian Revolution and the responses to it among Romanians that Transylvania’s Hungarian minority needed close watching, as a source of potential unrest. So Ceaușescu’s attempt to enhance “national cohesion” began there. On August 26 alone, Ceaușescu visited three counties with large ethnic Hungarian communities—Brașov, Harghita and Covasna (the second two with Hungarian majorities)—and held four mass meetings—in the cities of Brașov, Sfîntu Gheorghe, Miercurea Ciuc and Odorheiul Secuiesc.

After the lessons of the ’56 Hungarian Revolution, Ceaușescu seems to have feared in August 1968 that the Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia would stir up unrest among Romania’s Hungarians. This sounds reasonable, as he ended his speeches at the mass rallies in Sfîntu Gheorghe, Miercurea Ciuc and Odorheiul Secuiesc with a few words of Hungarian—the only occasions on which he is known to have spoken the language.²⁸

26 On the same day, the GNA adopted a document of importance equalled only by that of the Declaration of April 1964: *Declarația Marii Adunări Naționale a R.S.R. cu privire la principiile de bază ale politicii externe a României* (Declaration of the Great National Assembly of the Socialist Republic of Romania on the fundamental principles of Romania’s foreign policy). See *Principiile de bază ale politicii externe a României...* 21.

27 Constantiniu 1997, 509–10.

28 Cuvîntare la mitingul din municipiul Brașov—26 august 1968 (Speech at rally in Brașov), see Ceaușescu

In terms of reviving historical myths as a means of gaining popular support for RCP policies, the most important rally was held in the Transylvanian city of Cluj on August 30, 1968. Ceaușescu, in a flamboyant speech before a huge crowd, referred for the first time to the RCP as the direct continuer of the heroic deeds of such medieval Romanian rulers as Stephen the Great, Mircea the Old and Michael the Brave.²⁹ Thereafter, the cult of ancestors and manipulation of national symbols became important ingredients of Ceaușescuism. At the same time, he made appreciable efforts to attract Romania's national minorities and convince them that his party's minority policy was not aimed at assimilation. A further tour followed on September 21–22, 1968, in the ethnically mixed region of the Banate, to the counties of Caraș-Severin, Timiș and Arad, where he delivered speeches at the mass rallies in the cities of Reșița, Timișoara and Arad.³⁰

Statesmen, politicians and scholars alike seem to have been misled by Ceaușescu's posture of defiance towards the 1968 Soviet intervention in Czechoslovakia. With the Romanian majority, Ceaușescu was aiming at radical reinforcement of ethnic ties, a stance made clear in his "Theses of July 1971". This rather brief document including 17 seventeen points, issued on July 6, 1971, embodied Ceaușescu's rigid attitude towards education and cultural productions. He reiterated the document's main ideas on July 9, at a meeting of the party agitprop activists. The "Theses of July 1971" constituted a radical attack on cosmopolitan, "decadent" and pro-Western attitudes in Romanian culture,³¹ and a return to cultural autochthonism. Thereafter,

1969, 422–30; Cuvîntare la mitingul din orașul Sfîntu Gheorghe—26 august 1968 (Speech at rally in Sfîntu Gheorghe), Ceaușescu op. cit., 431–8; Cuvîntare la mitingul din orașul Miercurea Ciuc—26 august 1968 (Speech at rally in Miercurea Ciuc), *ibid.*, 439–48; Cuvîntare la mitingul din municipiul Odorheiu Secuiesc—26 august 1968 (Speech at rally in Odorheiu Secuiesc), *ibid.*, 449–54.

29 Cuvîntare la marea adunare populară din municipiul Cluj—30 august 1968 (Speech at rally in Cluj—August 30, 1968), *ibid.*, 478.

30 Cuvîntare la mitingul de la Reșița—20 septembrie 1968 (Speech at rally in Reșița), *ibid.*, 506–16; Cuvîntare la mitingul de la Timișoara—20 septembrie 1968 (Speech at rally in Timișoara), *ibid.*, 517–21; Cuvîntare la mitingul de la Arad—21 septembrie 1968 (Speech at rally in Arad), *ibid.*, 521–31.

31 Propuneri de măsuri pentru îmbunătățirea activității politico-ideologice, de educare marxist-leninistă a membrilor de partid, a tuturor oamenilor muncii—6 iulie 1971 (Proposals for measures to enhance political-ideological activity, for Marxist-Leninist education of party members and of the entire working people) and Expunere la Consfătuirea de lucru a activului de partid din domeniul ideologiei și al activității politice și cultural-educative—9 iulie 1971 (Exposé at meeting of party activists in the fields of ideology and political and cultural-educational activity), see Ceaușescu 1971. For more on this Petrescu-Petrescu 1996.

the regime placed still greater emphasis on the importance of historiography in building the “socialist” nation. The most important step to take was to provide party guidelines for writing a “national” history.

The founding document of Romanian national communism appeared three years later: the Romanian Communist Party Programme.³² Thereafter, the debates on the Romanians’ ethnic origins became still more prominent.³³ In fact, the 1974 Programme laid down a template for writing and teaching national history, based on four conceptual “pillars”: the Romanians’ ancient roots, continuity, unity and independence.³⁴ For historical studies, the problem was that these four aspects were imposed as a standard, a yardstick for historical interpretation. So one of the major lessons of national history as taught up to December 1989 was that the Romanian unitary nation-state had been continually contested and threatened, and all responsible Romanians had a patriotic duty to defend it at all costs. The RCP gained appreciable popular backing by depicting itself as sole guarantor of Romania’s independence and national sovereignty and warning against the perceived inimical stances of the neighbouring Soviet Union and Hungary.

32 See Programul Partidului Comunist Român... For a teleological approach to “national” history, see *ibid.*, 27–64.

33 Communist historiography went through three stages between 1948 and 1989 in its explanation of Romanian ethnic genesis. In the first, 1948–1958, the Russification campaign brought emphasis on the Slavs and their role in the formation of the Romanian people. The second, 1958–74, displayed relative ideological relaxation and a return to the theses of the interwar period, on the role of the Romans and how they mixed with the local Dacian population to produce the essentially Daco-Roman character of the Romanians. The third stage, 1974–89, was one of “Dacomania”: emphasis on the “autochthonous” Dacian element in the formation of the Romanian people. On the subject of politics and Romanian historiography in 1944–77, see Georgescu’s pioneer study: Georgescu 1991.

34 None of the four sacred themes of Romanian historiography was brand new. All had been present ever since the institutionalization of history as a discipline in Romania. The first two—ancient roots and continuity of the Romanians—developed out of late 19th-century polemics with historians from neighbouring countries, notably Hungary. Since the processes of state-building and of turning history into a professional discipline coincided in the second half of the 19th century, the third theme—unity of the Romanian people—was always present in historical writings of the period. But not until the advent of Ceaușescuism did it become axiomatic. The fourth theme—ceaseless struggle for independence—was typical of the historiographies of all small countries in East-Central Europe that were continually confronted with far more powerful neighbouring empires. As Romania strove for its independence within the communist camp, the way the struggle for independence became central to national-communist historiography was a natural reflection of current politics.

What the regime failed to foresee was the advent of Mikhail Gorbachev. By 1985, Ceaușescuism was undergoing structural economic and moral crisis, when the launch of Gorbachev's domestic perestroika radically reshaped the public image of the Soviet Union and its leaders. "Gorbimania" began to spread among Romanians exasperated by economic crisis and the orthodox socialist vision of the self-styled "Genius of the Carpathians". When Gorbachev paid an official visit on May 25–7, 1987, many nursed a vain hope he could persuade Ceaușescu to introduce economic reforms. Most importantly, Romanians ceased to see the Soviet Union as a real threat to Romania's sovereignty and began to look upon it as a potential liberator from the domestic tyranny of the Ceaușescu clan.³⁵ Gorbachev's reforms had robbed RCP nationalist propaganda of its key legitimating argument: the need for independence from Moscow.

That left the regime in the mid-1980s with one effective target: the Hungarian minority in Romania and its "external mother country", communist Hungary. Again, the identity-forming experiences of the Romanian communist elite led Ceaușescu to search outside for ostensible causes of the country's deep problems. On December 20, 1989, Ceaușescu claimed that the revolt in Timișoara, which had sparked the 1989 Romanian revolution, was the result of activity by "hooligan elements, working in with reactionary, imperialistic, irredentist, chauvinistic circles... for the territorial dismemberment of Romania."³⁶

Such an assertion was supported in Ceaușescu's eyes by the fact that the popular uprising in Timișoara had begun on the night of December 16–17 with a peaceful demonstration by a small group of ethnic Hungarian religious believers, gathered outside the home of the rebellious Reformed Church minister László Tőkés. Tőkés was to have been evicted from his home, which belonged to the Reformed Church, by order of the diocesan bishop of Oradea, László Papp.³⁷ Tőkés announced to his

35 People were eager to know more of Gorbachev's reforms. Pamphlets and brochures published in Romanian in the Soviet Union by Novosti Press Agency circulated especially in Bucharest as a kind of dissident writing. People in 1988–9 avidly read Soviet publications with "restructuring", "renewal", "innovative", and "new vision" in their titles, e. g.: *Conferința a XIX-a a PCUS...*; *Cea de-a XIX-a conferință a PCUS...*; *Congresul deputaților poporului din URSS*; Smeliov 1989a; Smeliov 1989b.

36 For the text of Ceaușescu's televised evening discourse of December 20, 1989, see Perva–Roman 1991, 38–9.

37 Behind the decision lay Tőkés's religious activism and militant stance on Hungarian minority rights. Such activity erked the communist authorities and the collaborative leaders of the Reformed Church, leading to open conflict with the bishop. See Papp, László: "Scurtă caracterizare a preotului Tőkés László" (Short description of Rev. László Tőkés), August 14, 1989. In Mioc 2002, 144–5.

congregation after the church service on December 10, 1989 that he was required to leave his parsonage on Friday, December 15, 1989 and invited them to witness the eviction.³⁸ A fairly small group of ethnic Hungarians duly turned up before the three-storey parsonage and parish office in Timotei Cipariu Street on the 15th, to show support for their spiritual leader.³⁹

An eye-witness account recalls a crowd of about 100 in the front of the house: a few Hungarian-Romanian families and some Romanians, mainly men. At about 7 pm, some began to sing *Deșteaptă-te române* (Awake thee, Romanian!), a song of the 1848 revolution, but seen as dissident until the end of Ceaușescu's rule, after which it became the anthem of post-1989 democratic Romania. Many revolutionaries affirm that the point when the song was first heard proved to be crucial.⁴⁰ Yet there were few who could foresee how events would develop. Tőkés himself confessed his actions were not intended to provoke the downfall of the regime: "I am ashamed of not having such a bold-spirited idea, all the more so that the minority churches did not envisage such ideas. Our scope was to survive."⁴¹

After the long process of political socialization undergone by the Romanian communists since coming to power, events in Timișoara seemed to them clear proof that Transylvania's Hungarians were irredentists backed by neighbouring Hungary. Up to the last moments of his rule, it had not occurred to Ceaușescu there could be a genuine uprising of his people. It was all a plot engineered by Hungary and the Hungarian minority in Romania.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

National ideology in communist Romania provided a strong and enduring focus of identification with the regime and loyalty towards it. This did not build up overnight. It was a process initiated in response to the wave of de-Stalinization unleashed by Nikita Khrushchev at the 20th Congress of the CPSU. In this respect, the Romanian communists were skilful in exploiting the issue of national identity, which they rightly perceived as an enduring element of prime symbolic importance. The '56 Hungarian Revolution of 1956 proved an unexpected support for the Romanian communists in the sense of offering them a chance to display total loyalty to Moscow while desperately seeking to avert de-Stalinization and retain absolute

38 Ibid., 19. See also Milin 1990, 46.

39 For a description and photograph of the building: *ibid.*, 100–101.

40 See Daniel Vighi's comment in Milin 1997, 27–8.

41 "A Dialogue with László Tőkés." Interview by Marius Mioc (Timișoara, November 2, 2001). *Ibid.*, 77.

power. This worked wonderfully: Soviet military forces were withdrawn from Romania in the summer of 1958. Thereafter the RCP leader, Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej, and his inner circle managed to pursue a bold strategy of independence from Moscow combined with a programme of extensive industrial development that gained the communists some legitimacy in the eyes of the public and kept them in power until 1989.

But it can be argued that Romanian communists deeply internalized the lessons of 1956, especially the Hungarian revolution. They were appalled to see a communist regime simply vanish in two weeks and communism restored by Moscow-led military intervention. This had a twofold effect on the Romanian communist mentality: (1) It increased old fears of Moscow, especially putative Muscovite intervention in struggles at the top of the RCP, leading to restoration of a faction faithful to the Kremlin. (2). It fuelled distrust of Romania's Hungarian minority and its "external mother country", communist Hungary. Right up to the regime's demise in December 1989, the Romanian communists took anti-Hungarian positions in foreign policy (especially in the 1980s) and devised assimilation strategies towards national minorities (of which the Hungarians were the largest). These effects on the Romanian communist mentality were arguably felt strongly even after the collapse of the regime.

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THE IMPACT OF THE HUNGARIAN REVOLUTION ON CZECHOSLOVAKIA, 1956–1968

Any paper on Czechoslovakia and the Hungarian Revolution of 1956 must consider briefly the question of why Czechoslovakia stayed calm, why the Czechs and Slovaks did not join the anti-Stalinist revolt launched by the Poles and Hungarians. Such a view of 1956 is apposite, because if they had, the Soviet bloc might have dissolved 33 years earlier than it did. Although that assumption is all too full of retrospective rationalization and wishful thinking, it is commonly met with in papers by historians and political scientists, and in works of fiction. The novel *Under the Frog*, by the British Hungarian Tibor Fischer, also has insurgents on the streets of Budapest discussing whether the Czechs will make a move too. So the question of why no move was made, or none that completed the circle of revolt, has become a topic of research and consideration by historians at home and abroad, such as Muriel Blaive, Karel Kaplan, Jiří Pernes and Jacques Rupnik.¹ Their conclusions are not identical, but they can be summed up in a simple way.

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Czechoslovakia was in a generally different situation, notably because the outcome of World War II was perceived positively, not negatively, as in Hungary. There was a perceived hope that big changes in international politics would eventually bring the communist regime to an end, but also a potential threat that the situation attained in 1945 might be reversed. In border regions particularly, there was felt to be a threat from the situation created by displacement of the country's German population.² German revanchism and militarism remained a bogey in the regime's propaganda, and it has to be said, the tactic was quite an efficient one. On the other hand, historically conditioned antipathy to the Russians was not a factor of importance for Czech or Slovak society. Though the generally pro-Russian sympathies in 1945 were

1 Blaive 2001; Kaplan 1996; Pernes 2000; Rupnik 1996.

2 However, the issue may not have had quite the importance Blaive ascribes to it.

eroding and the official propaganda praising everything that came from the Soviet Union was counterproductive, but the surge of anti-Soviet feeling was not to come until 1968.

Fifty-six in Czechoslovakia did not bring a combination of political and socio-economic crisis. The communist regime had diverted, or rather postponed the imminent economic problems in the spring of 1953, with drastic currency reform and a drop in living standards that affected all sections of the population. The strong protest and widespread unrest elicited in some parts of the country were brutally suppressed, but the measures opened the way to visible increases in living standards in several subsequent years. Retail prices of foodstuffs and many other consumer goods were lowered six times between the autumn of 1953 and the autumn of 1956—twice in 1956 alone, accompanied by strident propaganda. Wages in most jobs, pensions and certain other social benefits were increased. Supplies of consumer goods were increased at last.³ In the end, Khrushchev himself put Czechoslovakia forward as an example in this, in an October 24, 1956 speech, where he contrasted it with Poland and Hungary.⁴

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The regime of Antonín Novotný already had quite a firm grip of the situation and managed to respond adroitly and effectively in 1956 to the perceptible movement inside society and party. The 20th Congress of the CPSU produced mounting discussion, moves to convene an extraordinary congress of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (CPCz), and calls to identify those responsible for the faults and crimes of previous years. The regime staved off the first wave of criticism. Appeals for an extraordinary party congress were stilled, and an all-state party conference was held instead, with delegates nominated by regional committees, not elected by party branches. One high official—Alexej Čepička, a Politburo member and defence minister (and Klement Gottwald's son-in-law)—was chosen as a scapegoat. Although “breaches of socialist legality” and show trials had to be mentioned in the atmosphere produced by Khrushchev's revelations of Stalin's crimes, this was done in a cynical way, pinning them on Rudolf Slánský, former party general secretary, and a construct that came to be called “Slánskyism”. That was a neat solution as Slánský had been hanged in 1952, a victim of methods and conditions for which he himself was responsible. That conveniently left nobody to be punished or rehabilitated.⁵

The movements and criticisms were not confined to the party in the spring of 1956. CPCz policy (in culture particularly, but not exclusively) was boldly criticized

3 See Kaplan 1993; Pernes 2000.

4 Pernes 2000, 613.

5 See Blaive 2001, 102–105; Madry 1994, 26–32, especially 27.

in speeches at the 2nd Congress of Czechoslovak Writers. To this the regime did not initially dare to react. Although the desire to re-establish party control was clear in the criticisms made of writers at the party conference in June, no further measures of any note were taken.⁶ Radicalization also occurred among students in the spring of 1956. During the May rag days in Prague and Bratislava, there were protests in the form of happenings and processions, and the politically formulated demands were reinforced by a threat of a students' strike.⁷ The regime's response was cautious compared with what would have happened a few months earlier. Calm was restored in the universities by negotiation, false promises and selective intimidation, at least until the vacations.

The social movements in Czechoslovakia had culminated by the spring, so that communist regime could more or less control the overall situation through the summer and early autumn of 1956. But society was expecting big changes and eyeing developments in Poland, and still more then in Hungary, with close interest. The regime's response to events in Hungary was much sharper from the outset. All security units were placed on full alert on October 24 and the secret police activated its network of informers, with daily reviews of events and of the public mood being sent from the provinces to the centre.⁸ On October 25, it was decided to deploy army units along the Hungarian border. This was no easy task. The Second (Eastern) Military District consisted mainly of cadre (skeleton) and training units, making up only 5 per cent of the peacetime strength of the Czechoslovak army. The units were too weak and ill-armed with heavy weapons to handle the task of manning a frontier almost 700 km long. Higher army units from western areas were redeployed in Slovakia by the end of October.⁹

These measures were intended to isolate Hungary and prevent armed detachments penetrating Czechoslovakia. Meanwhile the Hungarian communists were supported with propaganda, supplies of leaflets, broadcasts and arms deliveries. Temporary refuge was given to Hungarian Workers' Party functionaries and ÁVH (Hungarian secret police) officials and their dependants. Apart from the measures aimed to assist the Hungarian communist regime, there were others aimed at the country's own population. There was grave anxiety that unrest might break out among the Hungarian minority in South and East Slovakia. The regime saw with fear the approaching anniversary on October 28 of the emergence of independent Czechoslovakia:

6 Cf. Pernes 2000, 602–604; Blaive 2001, 89–92.

7 Matthews 1998; Pernes op. cit., 606–608; Blaive 2001, 93–95.

8 Pernes 1996, 512–26; Blaive 2001.

9 See Dufek–Šlosar 1994; Bílek–Pilát 1996.

on the eve of the holiday, armoured units were brought up to Prague in case of street protests and tanks took over protection of some public buildings.¹⁰

Most seats of anti-communist resistance had been mercilessly dealt at the beginning of 1950s. Some groups had survived or revived, but most openly anti-communist resistance in Czechoslovakia in 1956 was weak and fragmented among groups out of contact with each other. But some activity grew from the developments in Hungary. The secret police reported from various places increased numbers of “anti-state” leaflets and inscriptions. The grapevine telegraph distributed reports of an imminent reversal. A group of eight attacked an arms dump near Jičín in Eastern Bohemia, but it failed. A group of people prepared to demonstrate in Prague on October 28, believing this could escalate as in Budapest, but the secret police had agents among the conspirators, who were arrested on October 27.¹¹ The secret police liquidated some other clandestine resistance groups in November.

72 The forces active against the Czechoslovak regime remained isolated. High expectations among Czechoslovak exiles in Western Europe gave way in November 1956 to disillusionment, indignation, and a realization that the way back to the native land, which seemed so near to reopening in the dramatic days after October 23, might be closed forever.¹² The overwhelming majority of society remained passive, following the Hungarian events with interest, but more with discomfort than with sympathy. They were anxious that there might be military conflict, breakdown, or food shortages. The public mood was worsened particularly by news of atrocities in the streets of Hungarian cities, a side of events emphasized in the Czechoslovak media.

The propaganda drives aimed at the Hungarian events were by no means awkwardly handled and were quite effective. The media paid intensive attention to the events from the outset, depicting them as a counterrevolution and an orgy of fascist violence. The insurgents were indiscriminately portrayed as *déclassé* elements, hooligans, prostitutes or criminals. The papers published ghastly photographs of lynch victims. Even at the end of 1956, brochures were being published on Hungary’s ostensible counterrevolution, all of them with long print runs. The so-called White Book was promptly translated into Czech and Slovak and edited in several volumes.¹³ Incidentally, a second wave of ’56 publications in Czech and Slovak came in the early 1970s, after the suppression of the Prague Spring had made the earlier

10 Madry 1994, 30.

11 See Pernes 1996, 515.

12 E. g. Goněc 2006; Kosatík 2000, 238.

13 *Kontrarevoluční síly v maďarských říjnových...*

events in Hungary topical again. Works by János Molnár, Ervin Hollós, and János Berecz that were translated and edited offered more sophisticated explanations and apologies than the propaganda that appeared right after the revolution and intervention.¹⁴

It is interesting to compare explanations by Czechoslovak journalists with those found in the translated works. They shared to the utmost the information about street atrocities and associated pictorial material. The same 10 or 15 photographs of lynch victims, executions in Köztársaság tér, and the storming of the Budapest party committee building were repeated. Czechoslovak authors made unobtrusive references to lower living standards in Hungary, remarking, for instance, that Budapest people were more smartly, but less adequately dressed than people in Prague.¹⁵ Above all, their interpretation of events becomes uncompromising, to match a template chosen beforehand. They did not have to reckon with detailed background knowledge among their readers as those catering to the Hungarian public did. While the latter had to admit the initial force came from discontented and misled or mistaken students and youth, with real reactionaries and fascist elements emerging later, in point of fact only after October 28, Czechoslovak authors felt no need to complicate their accounts in that way. For them, it was fascist flotsam and scum who took over the streets from the outset. The *Rudé Právo* correspondent was pretty sure that in the early hours of October 24 (as he allegedly noted in his diary), “Some of the armed men are regular criminals,” and he read at first sight “crimes in many faces of armed men, perhaps even murders”.¹⁶

Ridiculous though such arguments may seem now, they managed at the time to feed people’s feelings of fear, discomfort and condemnation of the violence. The memoirs of Zdeněk Mlynář, later a protagonist in the Prague Spring, give a pregnant account of the atmosphere in Czechoslovakia at the time: “We communists were worried at that time. [...] I obviously do not know how far this may apply to specific individuals who would later represent the stream of reform communists in the CPCz, but as for me, I would be lying if I claimed today that I had only been interested in the political and ideological aspects of the so-called Hungarian events, for apart from those, there was a vivid image of a crowd lynching and hanging communists from lamp posts. And from personal discussions with many communists of various generations, I recall that this occupied them as well.”¹⁷

14 Molnár 1972; Hollós 1972; Berecz 1970.

15 Rossová–Zavřel 1956, 6.

16 Ibid., 25.

17 Mlynář 1978, 52. Similarly, Císař 2005, 434–436.

So fears and worries about violence, breakdown and conflict were not confined to communist minds; they also had a marked influence on Czechoslovak public opinion, enabling the regime to achieve a final pacification of Czechoslovak society. The critical spirit had peaked in the spring of 1956 and been followed by moderation or a halt in development in the summer. The real watershed came at the turn of October and November. The techniques to pacify society included misrepresentations and biased, distorted presentations and perceptions of events in Hungary. Novotný rather wore these techniques out later, but cautious liberalization appeared only at the beginning of the 1960s, after which events in Czechoslovakia picked up remarkable speed, catching many people unprepared.

Reflections on the '56 Hungarian crisis, particularly the Soviet military intervention and the reasons for it, became major considerations for Czechoslovak politicians and journalists during the dramatic developments of the spring and summer of 1968, as Czechoslovakia sought to avert similar use of Soviet tanks. Labelling Dubček the “Czechoslovak Nagy” was part of the standard repertoire of expressions among leaders of the CPCz, who soon began to fear the speed of events and then conspire to bring about military intervention. At the May plenary of the CPCz Central Committee, Alois Indra and Vasil Biľak made comparisons between the current situation in Czechoslovakia and that in Hungary in the autumn of 1956.¹⁸ Dubček was again labelled a “Czechoslovak Nagy” by Vasil Biľak in a speech at the September 1969 Central Committee plenary, which ultimately settled accounts with the Prague Spring.¹⁹ The CPSU representatives and those of other “fraternal parties” mentioned the Hungarian experience repeatedly in criticizing what was happening in Czechoslovakia. János Kádár himself warned his Czechoslovak comrades to avoid at all costs repeating of Imre Nagy’s mistakes, during consultations in Dresden in March 1968, where the CPCz was first subjected to concerted criticism by its allies.²⁰ There were some more apposite references to the '56 experience as well. The fate of Imre Nagy served to show that the Soviets could not be trusted and further escalation of their demands could be expected, it was remarked at the first Central Committee meeting after the party leadership returned from talks in Moscow that led to the signing of the Moscow Protocol on August 28, 1968.²¹

The complexity and importance of reflecting on '56 Hungary in relation to the Prague Spring can be summed up and illustrated by an article entitled “Another

18 Vondrová–Navrátil 2000, 433–434.

19 Ibid., 574.

20 Vondrová–Navrátil 1995, 433 and ff. Cf. Pauer 2004, 40.

21 Vondrová–Navrátil 2001, 133.

anniversary”, published for the tenth anniversary of Imre Nagy’s execution by the enormously popular and influential Writers’ Union weekly *Literární listy*.²² The author, Osvald Machotka, had been press attaché at the Czechoslovak Embassy in Budapest and presented Imre Nagy in a highly positive way, labelling him repeatedly as the precursor of Czechoslovak liberalization and reform. The article, unsurprisingly, aroused deep antagonism in the Hungarian Socialist Workers’ Party (HSWP) leadership, especially as it appeared shortly before a scheduled visit by CPCz leaders to Hungary. It was translated into Hungarian and circulated in the confidential bulletin of the Hungarian News Agency MTI. The HSWP Political Committee was also concerned in the matter from a Central Committee secretary, Árpád Pullai, to the then CPCz ideological secretary, Čestmír Císař. Kádár and Jenő Fock both mentioned the article repeatedly during their talks with the Czechoslovak delegation and on other occasions.²³ The CPCz regime made apologies: Dubček and others criticized it repeatedly as an example of media malfunctioning.²⁴ Certain authors have even seen this publication of an article on Imre Nagy’s execution as a decisive factor behind a change in the hitherto more restrained Kádár’s attitude to the Czechoslovak developments. For at the beginning of July 1968, the Hungarian party leadership openly sympathized with the sharply critical approach of other Warsaw Pact countries, and finally joined in the military intervention. However, this seems to be too one-sided an interpretation.

Yet the *Literární listy* article is important evidence of how ’56 was seen in 1968 Czechoslovakia. As said earlier, Machotka had a highly positive opinion of Imre Nagy, whom he criticized only for his inability to restore order in the streets swiftly and effectively, and on paying too little attention to international diplomatic realities when leaving the Warsaw Pact. The reform politicians within the CPCz administration perceived the 1956 experience in the same way, along with the Czechoslovak public. In other words, they presumed (incorrectly, as we know today) that the decision for the second Soviet intervention in Hungary was taken because of the continuing street terror, whereas the decisive reason for military intervention was Hungary’s proclamation of neutrality.

That was exactly the mistake the leading CPCz reformers did not want to commit. Their unshakable loyalty in international politics towards the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact was to become the hallmark of their foreign policy, thereby ensuring room to carry out the necessary economic and political reforms in safety. Based

22 *Literární listy* 16: 13 (1968).

23 Vondrová–Navrátil 2000, 249–251.

24 *Ibid.*, 205 and 241.

on that logic, the CPCz regime did not even attempt to seek international support against the mounting Soviet pressure, apart from more or less inoffensive coquetry with Yugoslavia and Romania, aimed in any case to calm domestic opinion and largely meaningless in reality. The peace in the streets of Czechoslovak cities in the summer of 1968 gave a false illusion of security, allowing it to be thought that the massive military preparations around the Czechoslovak borders were just attempted political and psychological constraints. If there was no counter-revolution, there was no need to organize military intervention.

When Dubček gave his emotional report to the CPCz Politburo on the night of August 21, he probably still could not believe that the Soviets had acted as they did because of him: that was the logical conclusion from his false premises about the Soviet moods, calculations and decisions. But hundreds of thousands of Czechs and Slovaks shared the same illusion as they besieged the Soviet tanks in the streets on August 21, 1968, attempting to explain to the Soviet soldiers that they had blundered: “Why have you come? There is no counterrevolution here!”

The notions—or rather distorted and mistaken interpretations—of what had happened in Hungary in that autumn of 1956 played a relatively important role in how events developed in neighbouring Czechoslovakia. The regime’s propaganda succeeded in convincing the Czechoslovak public, at least partially, that the Hungarian events had been, above all, an eruption of uncontrolled violence and street atrocities. The shock this gave to the Czechoslovak public made it a relatively simple matter for a virtually unchanged, still Stalinist leadership to regain full control of the situation. The dawn of half-hearted liberalization was postponed for several years. The false interpretation of the Soviet decision to intervene militarily in Hungary became one source of unrealistic strategy by the reform CPCz leaders, as it faced the mounting Soviet pressure and threats. The belief that ’56 could not be repeated in Czechoslovakia was one reason why the CPCz leaders made no serious preparations for facing a possible intervention and why so little was done to avert it. The “Hungarian factor”, perceived in that way, may not have been dominant in 1956 or 1968, but it was a factor of importance.

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SLOVAKIA AND THE 1956 HUNGARIAN REVOLUTION

A comparison with Slovak perceptions of the Polish October

Reactions by Slovak, or more precisely Czechoslovak society and its political elite to the 1956 Hungarian Revolution need analysing on two levels. The first is the immediate reaction of the public and the leaders of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (CPCz), and the second the context of internal political development in Czechoslovakia in 1956 and the impact of the Hungarian Revolution on Czechoslovakia's political conflicts. As the revolution began, Czechoslovakia was already undergoing a process of reorganizing CPCz control over society, after a short political thaw that followed the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU). This process had culminated in April and May 1956.

Party leaders were already concerned about developments in Poland and Hungary by the summer of 1956. In June, strict state censorship began to apply to articles in the Czechoslovak press about these countries and about Yugoslavia.¹ Newspapers from Hungary became very popular among the Hungarian minority in Southern Slovakia and Slovaks who understood Hungarian.²

The Hungarian and Polish factors played big roles in Czechoslovak policy in the autumn of 1956, for foreign and domestic policy reasons. The CPCz leaders viewed political developments in Poland with great anxiety, for their effect on the Polish minority in the Czechoslovak area of Upper Silesia, for the approval for Polish intellectual discussion shown in Czech and Slovak intellectual circles, and not least for fear of decomposition of the Soviet bloc.

1 See the daily reports of the administration of press control of the Commissary of the Interior. The Slovak National Archives (Slovenský Národný Archív, hereafter SNA), f. Povereníctvo vnútra (PV) sekretariát, denné hlásenia Správy tlačového.

2 SNA, A ÚV KSS, f. PÚV KSS (Presidium of Communist Party of Slovakia Central Committee), kr. 931. Zasadnutie BÚV KSS 18. 10. 1956. Niektoré ideologické problémy práce strany na Slovensku.

Czechoslovaks were told nothing in the official media about the workers' revolt in Poznań or pressure to rehabilitate Władysław Gomułka, a victim of Stalinist persecution in 1949. What made Polish developments look so dangerous to Czechoslovak party leaders was the reform movement growing up within the ruling Polish United Workers' Party (PUWP). Demands to rehabilitate the victims of political trials threatened the legitimacy of some CPCz Presidium members. So the official media and party spokesmen preferred to ignore the events in Poland.

The turbulence in Hungary and in Poland caught Czechoslovak communists unprepared. On October 19, 1956, the CPCz Central Committee sent a telex to regional party committees on "shortcomings in the Polish press", also criticizing the Hungarian press, even *Szabad Nép*, the central daily of the Hungarian Workers' Party, the distribution of which was banned in Czechoslovakia on the same day, while other press imports from Hungary were restricted. The CC Secretariat of the Communist Party of Slovakia (CPS) began investigating the youth daily *Smena* after it published a photo of Gomułka.³ On the day before—October 18, the eve of the 8th Plenary of the PUWP Central Committee—Soviet leaders informed the leaders of the CPCz of plans for a military intervention in Poland. On the day the Secretariat meeting began, a Soviet delegation led by the First Secretary Nikita S. Khrushchev visited Warsaw. The Soviet delegation in the Warsaw castle of Belweder awaited the response of allied communist parties. According to Polish historian Krzysztof Persak, the Soviet communists already had endorsements of military intervention from the CPCz and the German Socialist Unity Party (SED).⁴ But in the next few days, the Czechoslovak party leadership was not distracted from developments in Poland and avoided polemics in the press, due to the outbreak of the Hungarian Revolution and the conclusions drawn at the bilateral Polish-Soviet negotiations.

A ban on imported Hungarian press materials was imposed on October 24, 1956, after the Hungarian Revolution broke out.⁵ The CPCz first secretary, Antonín Novotný, had a meeting in Moscow with the CPSU first secretary, Nikita Khrushchev, during the night of October 24–5, 1956, and both sides concurred in describing the uprising as a counter-revolutionary upheaval and the insurgents as bandits. The same opinion was voiced by the rest of the CPCz Politburo⁶ at a meeting on October 25.⁷ The CPS first secretary, at a Slovak party leadership meeting on October 24, said

3 Ibid., f. Sekr. ÚV KSS (Secretariat of CPS CC), kr. 143. Zasadnutie SÚV KSS 19–20. 10. 1956. Správa o nedostatkoch v poľskej a maďarskej tlači.

4 Persak 1997, 109–10.

5 SNA, A ÚV KSS, f. PÚV KSS, kr. 932. Zasadnutie BÚV KSS 24. 10. 1956. Situácia v Maďarsku.

6 The Political Bureau (Politburo) of the Central Committee was the name used then for the supreme

that neither in Poland nor in Hungary was the ruling communist party “firm enough against the counter-revolutionary forces. [...] In Poland, the cadres of the PUWP had been weakened in the period of [German] occupation” and there were various petty-bourgeois elements in the party.⁸ According to an order issued by Defence Minister Bohumír Lomský, military units of the Czechoslovak Peoples’ Army in Slovakia would move up on October 25 to reinforce military units of the Interior Ministry on the Slovak–Hungarian borders.⁹ The CPCz Central Committee of CPCz sharply condemned the political developments in Hungary and the policy of the new government of Imre Nagy in internal telex messages to regional party organizations, although it refrained from criticizing it publicly until the decision on the second Soviet intervention in Hungary was taken.¹⁰ The leaders of the Slovak party decided on October 24 to keep a close watch on students, writers, and researchers from the Slovak Academy of Sciences. Jozef Valo, a member of the CPS Bureau, suggested focusing the attention of the army and security services on the big cities. The directors of CPS CC departments were sent to the Slovak–Hungarian borders, as were some Bureau members.¹¹ They were officially charged on October 27, 1956 with coordinating the work of regional party and state officials with that of the central organizations in Prague and Bratislava.¹² On October 24, a defence alert was declared for the CPCz CC-controlled People’s Militia.¹³ Party officials in the Slovak–Hungarian border districts received instructions to establish regular contacts with adjacent districts and regions in Hungary.¹⁴ An extraordinary meeting of the CPCz Politburo on October 25, 1956 accepted Novotný’s report on his Moscow

decision-making body of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, later known as the Presidium. The CPS used the expression Bureau for what became its CC Presidium.

7 Bílek–Pilát 1996, 500–501.

8 SNA, A ÚV KSS, f. PÚV KSS, kr. 932. Zasadnutie BÚV KSS 24. 10. 1956. Situácia v Maďarsku.

9 Bílek–Pilát 1996, 505–6.

10 SNA, A ÚV KSS, f. P. David, kr. 2223, a. j. 532. Diaľnopisy ÚV KSS za rok 1956.

11 Ibid., f. PÚV KSS, kr. 932. Zasadnutie BÚV KSS 24. 10. 1956. Situácia v Maďarsku.

12 The Bratislava regional CPS committee was headed by CC Secretary Pavol David. The Nitra committee was chaired by Slovak Trade Union Council Chairman Vojtech Daubner. The Banská Bystrica committee was headed by Jozef Valo and the Košice committee by Interior Commissioner Oskár Jeleň; *ibid.*, f. P. David, kr. 2252, a. j. 39. Udalosti v Maďarsku (1956).

13 Ľudové milície—paramilitary units directly subject to the CPCz CC.

14 SNA, A ÚV KSS, f. P. David, kr. 2223, a. j. 532. Diaľnopisy ÚV KSS za rok 1956. The paper analyses the military side of reactions by Czechoslovak bodies to the Hungarian Revolution. See: Pešek 1993, 430–42; Bílek–Pilát 1996, 500–11; Štaigl 1997, 165–79.

meeting with Khrushchev. According to Novotný, the Czechoslovak party leadership saw as the crucial reason behind the crisis in the Polish and Hungarian regimes shortcomings in the standard of living. This was why Czechoslovakia had avoided such a crisis. Such arguments were also accepted by the public. On the same day, the Czechoslovak party leadership proposed “consultation with the Ministry of Interior of the USSR on the possibility of sending volunteer forces to Hungary” to combat the counter-revolution, and decided to reinforce the Czechoslovak-Hungarian borders.¹⁵

The CPS Central Committee established a special “headquarters” of Secretariat members, army officers (General Dittrich) and security personnel (Deputy Interior Minister Josef Kudrna, and Houska, the Interior Ministry director of regional administration in Bratislava). The main coordinator was Bruno Köhler, a member of the CPCz Politburo.¹⁶ CPS CC Secretary Pavol David dealt with Hungarian refugees in Slovakia and later with aid to the Kádár regime.¹⁷ One eminent Hungarian refugee in Slovakia was István Kossa, deputy head of the Hungarian State Planning Office, and from November 1956, Kádár’s minister of finance.

The stance of the Czechoslovak communist leaders to events in Poland and the Polish perception of Czechoslovakia 1956–7 are exemplified by cases where Czechoslovakia became a refuge for dogmatic Polish party officials. On January 5, 1957, for example, Żofia Przeczek, a Polish citizen, crossed the border near the resort of Oravice with her son Jan, according to a transcript of Czechoslovak Security Ministry officials.¹⁸ She stated she had been in the resistance during World War II, worked in the communist apparatus after 1945, and been a journalist on *Chłopska Droga* (Peasant’s Way), *Głos Ludu* (Voice of the People) and *Rolnik Polski* (Polish Peasant), when she had also attended political trials. She asked for political asylum on the grounds that “Poland and the Polish nation, due to Gomułka, are being dragged steadily towards restoration of capitalism and fascism.” Her case was unusual, complicated and sensitive for the CPCz representatives. An offer of asylum

15 National Archives, Prague (Národní Archiv, hereafter NA), Archive of CPCz Central Committee (A ÚV KSČ), f. 02/2, sv. 120, a. j. 150, b. 1.

16 Pešek 1993, 431; SNA, A ÚV KSS, f. PÚV KSS, kr. 933. Zasadnutie BÚV KSS 29. 10. 1956. Zápis zo zasadnutia Byra ÚV KSS dňa 29. 10. 1956.

17 Ibid. Návrh na organizovanie ďalšej politickej pomoci maďarským súdruhom.; *ibid.*, f. Sekr. ÚV KSS, kr.143, Zasadnutie SÚV KSS 2. 11. 1956. Prerokovanie uznesenia Politického byra ÚV KSČ vo veci poskytnutia pomoci potravinami maďarským súdruhom.

18 *Ibid.*, f. Pavol David, kr. 2221, a. j. 370. Správa zo služobnej cesty v Žilinskom kraji (1957).

would mean open confrontation with the new PUWP leaders, which was not in the interests of Moscow or of Prague by January, when the priority was to restore the unity of the Soviet Bloc. Granting asylum would be an admission that there was no such unity, that communism had failed in Poland, and that Czechoslovak communists were supporting anti-government forces there. Having postponed a decision until early February, the Interior Ministry reached one that was hardly to Przewczek's liking. To avoid undesirable publicity, the security organizations wished to move her to the Polish-speaking Czechoslovak region of Ostrava. Alternatively she might remain in Slovakia, in the Žilina region, as "a worker in a factory". In either case, she would not be allowed to continue her political or journalistic activities. Emigration to Czechoslovakia had brought social demotion, but Przewczek had few choices. She was afraid to return home. According to the security officers in Žilina, this "could have negative consequences", after she had spent more than a month in Slovakia, not only for herself, but for bilateral Czechoslovak–Polish relations.

The Czechoslovak party leadership fully supported the Soviets over the second intervention in Hungary. After a meeting of communist-party representatives of the Soviet Union, East Germany, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Romania, Bulgaria and China on the night of November 1–2, 1956 in Moscow, the CPCz Politburo declared on November 2 its full support for the decision of the Soviet Communists: "The Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the CPCz [...] agrees with the realization of all necessary measures to preserve people's democracy in Hungary in a case of necessity; we are not only agree with them, but we will actively take part on them."¹⁹ The most radical was Czechoslovak Prime Minister Viliam Široký, who saw Imre Nagy "in the position of an enemy" and the only legitimate Hungarian government as that of the previous prime minister, András Hegedüs. Although Czechoslovak party leaders declared readiness to take part in Soviet armed intervention in Hungary, no practical instructions to prepare for this were given to Defence Minister Bohumír Lomský. Neither Interior Minister Rudolf Barák received any practical instructions to preparing Czechoslovak military forces on it, their instruction dealt only with the ensuring of the southern borders of Czechoslovakia. Czechoslovak President Antonín Zápotocký prepared a speech against the Hungarian Revolution and Imre Nagy, which he delivered at 1 p. m. on November 3.

In the event, all the Soviet Union required Czechoslovakia to do was to close its borders with Hungary: 14,000 reservists were sent to Southern Slovakia for a four-week military exercise. Only men of Czech or Slovak ethnic affiliation were sent—no members of the Polish or Hungarian minorities. The concentration of armed forces

19 NA, A ÚV KSČ, f. 02/2, sv. 120, a. j. 151, b. 1.

peaked on November 10, and the units were drawn back from the border in the first half of December.²⁰

The Slovak party leadership organized a massive propaganda campaign on behalf of the Hungarian communists loyal to Moscow. The CPS Central Committee established a centre for propaganda to Hungary and a press commission to oversee the press, the radio, and the publication of the leaflets for Hungary, in which two refugees—members of the HWP Central Committee—participated. Several centres of agitation were established in Slovak border districts, including two big radio transmitters and four smaller ones.²¹ Large numbers of copies of the newspaper published in Hungarian in Slovakia were distributed in Hungary.²² Leaflets, official Soviet documents, etc. were published in large numbers of copies at district and regional levels.²³ District party officials received instructions to establish informal contacts with Hungarian regional politicians. This was done rapidly between the district party committee in Filákovo and party officials in Salgótarján and Nógrád County.²⁴ Similar contacts were established in other fields as well. For example, Oskár Jeleň, a CPS Bureau member and commissioner in Košice sent a telex on October 31, 1956 to Karol Bacílek, first secretary of the CPS Central Committee, about his meeting with a delegation from Borsod County.²⁵ Other contacts were made with representatives from Miskolc and Sátoraljaújhely.²⁶ The purpose of such contacts was to receive information about political developments and public opinion, and to “neutralize” the influence of Budapest on regional leaders. Jeleň established contact with the workers’ council in Miskolc as well. The distribution of the press and leaflets in Hungary was entrusted to Slovak party officials who spoke Hungarian.²⁷ For example, the CPS Regional Committee in Košice sent 30–40, or sometimes 80 agitators to Hungary

20 Bílek–Pilát 1996, 505–9; Pešek 1993, 434–7.

21 SNA, A ÚV KSS, f. PÚV KSS, kr. 933. Zasadnutie BÚV KSS 9. 11. 1956. Udalosti v Maďarsku.; *ibid.*, 29. 10. 1956. Návrh na organizovanie ďalšej politickej pomoci maďarským súdruhom.; Pešek 1993, 438.

22 SNA, A ÚV KSS, f. PÚV KSS, kr. 934. Zasadnutie BÚV KSS 7. 12. 1956. Správa o činnosti KSS a uplatňovaní jej vedúcej úlohy na Slovensku počas udalostí v Maďarsku.

23 Pešek 1993, 437–8.

24 SNA, A ÚV KSS, f. PÚV KSS, kr. 933. Zasadnutie BÚV KSS 29. 10. 1956. Udalosti v Maďarsku.; *Ibid.* Návrh na organizovanie ďalšej politickej pomoci maďarským súdruhom.

25 *Ibid.*, f. P. David, kr. 2223, a. j. 532. Diaľnopisy ÚV KSS za rok 1956.

26 *Ibid.*, f. PÚV KSS, kr. 934. Zasadnutie BÚV KSS 7. 12. 1956. Správa o činnosti KSS a uplatňovaní jej vedúcej úlohy na Slovensku počas udalostí v Maďarsku.

27 Czech State Archives, Prague (Státní ústřední archiv, hereafter SÚA), A ÚV KSČ, f. 02/2, sv. 125, a. j. 160, b. 14.

a day, with the aim of restoring the fragmented party organizations there. The work made use of personal and familiar ties across the border.²⁸ As the revolution died down, Czechoslovak propaganda was turned towards undermining the strikes, but the efficiency of that was very low, according to Jozef Valo.²⁹

Czechoslovakia's support for the Kádár government was not confined to propaganda. There were also aid shipments to a value of 90 million Czechoslovak crowns. Regional party officials became so active in this respect that they were criticized for it by a meeting of the CPS Bureau by CC Secretary Pavel David: "I think our regional secretaries in Banská Bystrica and Košice are more of secretaries in Hungary than at home. That is why they always want to solve Hungarian problems more than their own."³⁰ The aid to Hungary primarily took the form of food, and exceptionally of textiles, shoes and other goods.³¹ In February 1957, the Politburo of the CPCz Central Committee decided after negotiations between the two countries' Interior Ministries to supply weapons, military and operative technical instruments and other items for Hungarian security.³²

Some of the many reports of border violations by Hungarian insurgents were unconfirmed and several described by Pavel David as rumours. But the report on a meeting of Soviet army officials with their Czechoslovak counterparts on November 10, 1956 is credible enough. On November 8, a group of 40 people had penetrated 5 km into Czechoslovakia and shelled the railway station at Čierna nad Tisou on the Czechoslovak-Soviet border. According to this report, there had been another case of infiltration, by Hungarian insurgents attempting to cross into Poland and to record the positions of Czechoslovak military units.³³ On October 27, 1956, three tank grenades shot from Esztergom fell near the Slovak village of Kamenica nad Hronom.³⁴ Some tank grenades fell on the railway station of Čierna nad Tisou on November 4, as well, causing some injuries.³⁵

28 SNA, A ÚV KSS, f. PÚV KSS, kr. 935. Zasadnutie BÚV KSS 14. 12. 1956. Stenografický záznam z besedy, ktorá sa konala 17. 11. 1956 na ÚV KSS so slovenskými spisovateľmi.

29 Ibid., 9. 11. 1956. Udalosti v Maďarsku.

30 Ibid. Zhodnotenie práce strany počas udalostí v Maďarsku (záznam z diskusie členov Byra ÚV KSS).

31 SNA, A ÚV KSS, f. Sekr. ÚV KSS, kr. 144, Zasadnutie SÚV KSS 23. 11. 1956. Diaľnopis KV KSS Bratislava, Banská Bystrica, Košice – pokyny o postupe pri organizovaní pomoci pracujúcim Maďarska.

32 SÚA, A ÚV KSČ, f. 02/2, sv. 129, a. j. 169, b. 12.

33 The State Archives of the Russian Federation (Gosudarstvenny Arkhiv Rossiiskoy Federatsii), f. 9401, op. 2, d. 482, l. 57–9.

34 SNA, A ÚV KSS, f. P. David, kr. 2237, a. j. 73. Správy krajských prokuratúr počas udalostí v Maďarsku (1956).

35 Ibid.

Officially, CPCz and CPS leaders presented Czechoslovakia as an island of stability in Central Europe. Certainly there were no mass public protests against the Czechoslovak communist regime. This its leaders saw as evidence that their policy was correct, leading as it had to a higher standard of living than in Poland or Hungary. CPCz and CPS leaders heaped praise on the Hungarian minority in Slovakia for its political stance, which was seen as evidence of deep patriotism. But in the author's view, it more probably resulted from experiences during and after World War II. According to a speech by Pavel David, there were no withdrawals from collective farms: "The Party was never so well knit and consistent as it is now over the events in Hungary."³⁶ These comments were quite well founded. Living standards were higher and public discontent not apparent beyond the intellectuals centred on the journal *Kultúrny život*. But the idyll was not the whole truth, though it was presented as evidence for the correctness of party policy and a preventive against events like those in Poland or Hungary. According to Slovak historian Jan Pešek, criminal charges were brought against 655 people by November 5, 1956,³⁷ Hungarian historian Pál Germuska gives a figure of 674.³⁸ The exact number is not known, nor how many were from Slovakia. There were 130 soldiers investigated for voicing disapproval of official Czechoslovak policy, 84 of them officers, 33 dismissed from the army, and some of them charged.³⁹ Most of the last were accused of "verbal delinquency"—verbal solidarity with the Hungarian Revolution and sympathy for violence against communists. Most such utterances were made in private conversation, in pubs or on public transport. Many of those charged were workers. There were a few violent attacks on local communist officials, whose windows were broken or who were reminded about similar events in Hungary. Often the threats came for personal, non-political reasons. There were cases all over Slovakia of peasant discontent at compulsory delivery of produce to the state, and of instances of anti-Semitism, irrespective of Slovak or Hungarian nationality, as much of the public saw the reason for the Hungarian Revolution in the presence in Hungary of "the Jews at the head with Rákosi in power." Many people wanted or predicted similar events in Slovakia. There was frequent invective against state officials. One report by Interior Ministry organizations noted that people are very sensitive now and react to every bagatelle. As the Hungarian Revolution began, people were discussing developments in Poland, especially intellectuals, who had much sympathy for them, and for

36 Ibid., f. PÚV KSS, kr. 933. Zasadnutie BÚV KSS 9. 11. 1956. Udalosti v Maďarsku.

37 Pešek 1993, 432.

38 Germuska 1997, 161.

39 Bílek–Pilát 1996, 509.

rehabilitation of László Rajk in Hungary. Although the leaders of the CPCz did not intend this, people expected rehabilitation of Rudolf Slánský and Gustáv Husák to ensue. It is typical of societies lacking a free exchange of information for false rumours to circulate, consisting in this case of predicted leadership changes involving First Secretary Karol Bacílek being replaced by Jozef Valo and of communists in the countryside burning their party membership cards. People expected Pavel David, Augustín Michalička (CPS CC Secretary responsible for ideological issues), and others to be ousted. Another rumour was of political power going to a National Front from which the CPCz would be excluded. It was also rumoured that the Hungarian army would occupy Southern Slovakia and annex it to Hungary. There was widespread gossip about a forthcoming strike of railway workers.

More educated people were discontented with the slow progress with democratization, the limited chances of travelling abroad, etc., and workers and the less educated spoke mainly of low pay and high food prices. Farmers criticized low producer prices and often expected the collective farms to disintegrate. On the other hand, many people assumed the country's higher living standard meant that steps like Hungary's were unnecessary.

At the beginning of the Hungarian Revolution, there were some signs of sympathy for it on the Kráľovský Chlmec District Committee of the CPS, in a district with an ethnic Hungarian minority. Excited discussions on the situation in Poland and Hungary were noticed in several places of work. Groups of local Hungarians were also seen on the streets of towns in Southern Slovakia, publicly listening to Hungarian Radio, which was generally listened to more often than usual. Hungarian employees in some places of work did not work all day.

The CPCz leaders were vigilant on October 28, anniversary of the establishment of independent Czechoslovakia, especially in the Czech lands.⁴⁰ The advice was "not to provoke futile conflicts."⁴¹ A large number of political jokes were circulating,⁴² but when mention was made of initiating activity, people replied that the best thing to do is to keep working and not meddle in political matters. Most people, irrespective of national affiliation, saw the Hungarian events as futile: nothing could be achieved by them and innocent people would suffer. But the attitude to Soviet intervention was another matter.

40 Pernes 1996, 515; NA, A ÚV KSČ, f. 02/2, a. j. 149, sv. 120, b. 12.

41 SNA, A ÚV KSS, f. P. David, kr. 2223, a. j. 532. Diaľnopisy ÚV KSS za rok 1956.

42 Ibid., kr. 2237, a. j. 73. Správy krajských prokuratúr počas udalostí v Maďarsku (1956).; *ibid.*, kr. 2252, a. j. 39. Udalosti v Maďarsku (1956).; *ibid.*, kr. 2253, a. j. 40. Maďarsko, Poľsko.

The sympathy for the Hungarian Revolution in Slovakia was not confined to members of the Hungarian minority, although the latter were more enthusiastic not only for national reasons, but because they were better informed, by Hungarian radio. Germans and Hungarians in Bratislava attempted on October 31, 1956 to organize a collection to support the people of Hungary. Three days later, a Hungarian teacher in Podunajské Biskupice attempted to organize aid for the injured in Hungary in the form of medicines, dressings and sugar. Hungarian students in Bratislava repudiated an official declaration of support for Soviet intervention made by the leaders of CSEMADOK, the cultural organization of the Hungarian minority in Slovakia. Local CSEMADOK groups in Baka, Šamorín and a few villages in the district of Šamorín reacted similarly. CSEMADOK's office in Štúrovo was used to copy anti-Soviet leaflets. People in a few villages sang the Hungarian anthem. According to a report by the regional department of the Ministry of Interior in Bratislava, the general mood of citizens of Hungarian nationality in the villages of Southern Slovakia is unsatisfactory; they expect similar events in this country to those taking place in Hungary.

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Both sides noticed, of course, instances of chauvinism and of hostility between Slovaks and Hungarians. Hungarians talked of Southern Hungary being returned to Hungarian rule and Slovak immigrants being expelled. On the other side, for example, graffiti against Hungarians appeared on walls overnight on November 4–5, 1956, and Hungarian shields on shops were painted out. Slovak priests reacted negatively to the Hungarians.

Nonetheless, marks of sympathy for the Hungarian Revolution were widespread among Slovaks as well, in mixed cities and villages, and in purely Slovak areas. Leaflets and slogans were noticed, for example, in Zemianska Olča, Komárno, Dunajská Streda, Liptovský Hrádok, Kubrá, Bratislava, Trnava, Spišská Nová Ves, Myjava and Žihárec. There were some cases of public listening to Western radio in pubs, for example in Borský Jur and Bučany. In Vyšná Radvaň, the local Orthodox priest translated leaflets from Hungarian in the pub. Employees in some enterprises repudiated official resolutions, for example in Filakovo, Veľké Rovné, and Martin, and in a few enterprises in Bratislava, Piesok and Kysucké Nové Mesto. Disapproval of official CPCz policy was manifested by individuals in Trnava, and by secondary-school students in Bratislava, where was the greeting “čépé” (“čakáme prevrat”—“we’re awaiting the coup”) spread. This sympathy was not inspired solely by political factors. Social factors were also important. At factories in Vrbové, Komárno and Piešťany, workers demanded higher salaries, while at others, discontent was observed, for example in Nitra, Pezinok, Skalica, Holíč, Nové Mesto nad Váhom, and

Oščadnica, and among Slovak workers in the Czech town of Hodonín. In the city of Topoľčany, doctors were demanding higher pay.

Discontent was also observed among peasants. Those of purely Slovak villages near Bratislava refused to make the compulsory October 25 deliveries of produce to the state, and in some villages and towns, there were leaflets in Slovak and Hungarian against these (Šahy, Revúca, Záhorská Ves). Members of some collective farms stopped work and attempted to secede. Workers on the state farm of Balvany near Komárno rejected the resolution stating that Hungarian insurgents are counter-revolutionaries.

The party and security organizations were especially concerned about attitudes of young people. Students at Košice Technical University, instead of approving the resolution against the Hungarian Revolution, paid homage to the victims of Soviet intervention. The organizers, students Roman and Leško, were excluded from studies. Students of the Medical Faculty of the Comenius University in Bratislava demanded restoration of old academic titles and cancellation of exams in Marxism–Leninism. Students of Nitra Agricultural University demanded an end to the teaching of Russian. Secondary-school students in Bratislava asked at a meeting of the Czechoslovak Youth Union why Hungary could not be a neutral state like Switzerland or Sweden. No secondary-school principal or teacher could give them an answer. The most turbulent event was a students' meeting in the Electro-technical Faculty of the Slovak Technical University in Bratislava, on November 2, 1956. There students said Czechoslovakia had the right to nationalize the uranium mines at Jáchymov, just as Egypt had right to nationalize the Suez Canal. They said there was no equality in relations between Czechoslovakia and the Soviet Union, just as there was not in the case of Hungary, and they asked official speakers from the CPS and youth organization if the Kádár-led government was a government of workers or not. Hungarian undergraduates in Bratislava supported their colleagues in Hungary, as did Hungarian secondary-school students in Lučenec.⁴³ Solidarity with the Hungarian people was expressed by members of the Slovak Gold Eagle group of pacifist Scouts with a Christian orientation. In issues of their secret journal *Táborák* (Campfire), they rejected Soviet intervention and declared that each country had a right to choose its own path.⁴⁴ Ten members of the organization were imprisoned.

However, Slovak writers during the Hungarian Revolution judged it “better not to discuss, not to be against, and to express reservations later”. Many thought it was

43 SNA, A ÚV KSS, f. P. David, kr. 2237, a. j. 73. Správy krajských prokuratúr počas udalostí v Maďarsku (1956); *ibid.*, kr. 2252, a. j. 39. Udalosti v Maďarsku (1956); *ibid.*, kr. 2253, a. j. 40. Maďarsko, Poľsko.

44 *Ibid.*, kr. 2249, a. j. 401. Obžaloba proti Jánovi Manasovi a spol. (1957).

useless to engage in open conflict with the regime, including the editor of *Kultúrny život*, Juraj Špitzer.⁴⁵ The party group in the Central Committee of the Slovak Writers' Union rejected the official October 24 interpretation of events in Poland, seeing the cause in tardy progress with democratization, not in democratization itself, and preparing a resolution demanding the abolition of censorship, freedom of literary work, freedom for travel, and cultural exchange.⁴⁶ A protest was also prepared against the dissolution of its Hungarian counterpart, on the initiative of Špitzer. But other members did not want to address the issue, and there was no public support for the Hungarians from Slovak writers. Leaders of the Czechoslovak Writers' Union, meeting at Budmerice on October 26, adopted the official position after "intervention by the Party", with the Czech writer Pavel Kohout the only one abstaining.⁴⁷ The same writers who criticized Czechoslovak Stalinist policy defended Soviet policy against the Hungarian Revolution at public meetings in Southern Slovakia,⁴⁸ proving unable to step out of the frames of communist ideology. But such compliance did little to help Slovak writers, whom Rudolf Strechaj, chairman of the Board of Commissioners said were silent only for fear of more radical persecution.⁴⁹

The mood of Slovak society became apparent in various ways. One was a run on the shops⁵⁰ and the banks, especially in big cities.⁵¹ Another was the passivity and low attendance at Czechoslovak Youth League meetings.⁵² An attempt to recruit more young Hungarians into the organization was unsuccessful.⁵³ The State Security was also looking for Hungarian speakers in Southern Slovakia. Many of those approached refused to become involved out of fear, because of the general hostility towards security people, under the influence of their wives, etc.⁵⁴ At public meetings, people

45 SNA, A ÚV KSS, f. P. David, kr. 2267, a. j. 43. Uznesenie Sekretariátu ÚV KSS zo dňa 9. novembra 1956 o kultúre.

46 Ibid., kr. 2253, a. j. 40. Maďarsko, Poľsko.

47 SNA, A ÚV KSS, f. PÚV KSS, kr. 946, Zasadnutie BÚV KSS 5.–6. 4. 1956. Niektoré otázky práce strany medzi inteligenciou.

48 Ibid., f. Sekr. ÚV KSS, kr. 144, Zasadnutie Sekr. ÚV KSS 23. 11. 1956. Návrh na zvolanie besedy niektorých straníckych funkcionárov so spisovateľmi o skúsenostiach zo straníckej práce v dňoch pokusu o kontrarevolúciu v Maďarsku.

49 SNA, A ÚV KSS, f. PÚV KSS, kr. 933, Zasadnutie BÚV KSS 9. 11. 1956. Udalosti v Maďarsku.

50 Ibid.

51 Ibid., kr. 2252, a. j. 39. Udalosti v Maďarsku (1956).

52 Ibid.

53 Ibid., kr. 950, Zasadnutie BÚV KSS 19. 5. 1957. Návrh na zvolanie 6. valného zhromaždenia Kultúrneho zväzu maďarských pracujúcich v ČSR

asked the questions: “Why did the events in Poland and Hungary take place?” “Was the Soviet intervention in Hungary right?” “Why is uranium ore from Hungary and Czechoslovakia exported to the USSR?” etc.⁵⁵

As violence escalated in Hungary and the second Soviet intervention took place, public sympathy for the Hungarians began to decline. There was disappointment with the policy of Western states, which was branded as “betrayal on the Hungarian nation.” Most people had expected American intervention on the revolution’s behalf, and later criticized Western radio propaganda for arousing such expectations.

Manifestations of solidarity with the Hungarian Revolution fell largely to passive resistance or individual views expressed in private. Most Slovaks stayed loyal to the regime, wooed by measures to improve the living standard (consumer price cuts). They lacked any lengthy experience of greater political freedom and there was no sizeable reform (or critical) wing in the top structures of the communist party. So it was impossible for pressure for democratic reforms to build up. Negative or indifferent attitudes to the Hungarian Revolution were helped along by the national stereotypes found in most of Slovak society and by the view that communism regime was there to stay and it was fruitful to expect changes. People had adjusted themselves to the communist regime. Although signs of discontent and of sympathy with the Hungarians continued into November 1956, official occasions to mark the anniversary of the Bolshevik revolution on November 7 went ahead smoothly.⁵⁶

The CPCz leadership saw the Hungarian events as a vindication of its policy—confirmation of the correctness of its persecution. Pavel David put great emphasis on the decisive role that young people were ostensibly playing on the “counter-revolutionary” side. This perception in the CPCz leadership led it to focus its repression on youth and the intelligentsia. At the meeting of the CPS Bureau, Rudolf Strechaj demanded purges not only in the cultural field, but in the central state offices in Slovakia.⁵⁷

The Peoples’ Militia was reinforced. A document entitled “Some knowledge of the work of the Hungarian Workers’ Party” was drawn up by the CPCz leaders at the beginning of December 1956, to present its views on the causes of the Hungarian Revolution and the lessons to be drawn from it in Czechoslovak domestic policy.

54 NA, A ÚV KSČ, f. 02/2, sv. 125, a. j. 160, b. 14.

55 SNA, A ÚV KSS, f. PÚV KSS, kr. 934. Zasadnutie BÚV KSS 7. 12. 1956. Správa o činnosti KSS a uplatňovaní jej vedúcej úlohy na Slovensku počas udalostí v Maďarsku.

56 Ibid., f. P. David, kr. 2237, a. j. 73. Správy krajských prokuratúr počas udalostí v Maďarsku (1956); *ibid.*, kr. 2252, a. j. 39. Udalosti v Maďarsku (1956); *ibid.*, kr. 2253, a. j. 40. Maďarsko, Poľsko.

57 *Ibid.*, kr. 933. Zasadnutie BÚV KSS 9. 11. 1956. Udalosti v Maďarsku.

The roots of the events were found in the period of the 1953–5 Imre Nagy government, when views hostile to the regime were presented and never denied after his removal. The results were economic difficulties as well as a struggle among factions within the party. The crucial conclusions for Czechoslovak domestic policy were that applying a “professional” approach to decisive areas of the economy or state administration, rather than one based on “class principles”, was dangerous, and ignored in the long term the economic demands of the working people. The CPCz leadership saw as the big mistakes made by Hungarian communists the failure of their work with intellectuals and their “liberal approach to ideological chaos”.⁵⁸

As mentioned before, the turbulent developments in Hungary drew the attention of the CPCz leaders away from events in Poland and led them to avoid polemics in the press. However, relations with Poland remained strained. In November 1957, the “Polish October” was seen as resulting from the anti-Soviet campaign after the 20th Congress of the CPSU. The Czechoslovak consulate in Szczecin reported that Gomułka’s speech at the 8th Plenary of the PUWP Central Committee had negative consequences. Open conflict between Czechoslovak and Polish diplomats broke out at a reception at the General Consulate of the USSR in Gdańsk, on the November 7, 1956 anniversary of the Bolshevik Revolution, when the new regional secretary of the PUWP, Laski, asked the Czechoslovak consul when democratization would occur in Czechoslovakia.⁵⁹

On the other hand, monitoring of Poland by security and party organs continued. An important role was played by regional Party committees in the border regions. Although the CPCz leaders officially approved of Gomułka’s policies, the internal evaluation was rather different. Czechoslovak communists sought information mostly from dogmatic groups and from security structures that had a negative attitude to liberalizing the regime. They established discreet links with regional party and security officials unknown to the top leaders of the PUWP.

According to Barák, Poland had been building a national brand of socialism “like Yugoslavia’s”, so that leading positions were going to people that have “nothing to do with the construction of Socialism.” Czechoslovak communists to see the dissolution of the monopoly youth organization and the collapse of collective agriculture, and most of all, the campaign against the Polish state security and the liberal attitude to free movement of Hungarian refugees in Poland. Despite officially declared moderate

58 SNA, A ÚV KSS, f. PÚV KSS, kr. 934. Zasadnutie BÚV KSS 7. 12. 1956. Správa o činnosti KSS a uplatňovaní jej vedúcej úlohy na Slovensku počas udalostí v Maďarsku.

59 NA, AÚV KSČ, f. 02/2, sv. 124, a. j. 159, b. 7, Politické byro ÚV KSČ 17. 12. 1956. Informace o Polsku.

support for Gomułka's policies, the report of Czechoslovak Interior Ministry told of conspiratorial meetings of Stalinists "ready to resist even by force".⁶⁰

Very active in developing regional political contacts with dogmatic groups within the PUWP was the regional CPS secretary of CPS in the Prešov region of North-Eastern Slovakia, Vasil Biľak.⁶¹ He continued his activities even after the Polish parliamentary elections.⁶² He met on the Slovak–Polish border with Władysław Kruczek, regional PUWP secretary of Kraków, at the latter's request. Although his attitude to Gomułka's policy had become positive by March 1957, he told to his Slovak host that the parliamentary elections had let "a lot of rabble" into the Sejm. Biľak went on to classify him as an "honest comrade." Kruczek was interested in Czechoslovakia's evaluation of the international situation. According to Biľak's report, the PUWP was "literally paralysed" and lacking firm leadership. In his recommendations of how the CPCz should develop its policy towards Poland, Biľak included stronger cooperation with party officials of Poland's border regions. In fact, his suggestions are the "soft variant" of the CPCz policy on the Slovak–Hungarian border in the autumn of 1956.

Although the views of Czechoslovak Communists on Poland changed after the "flawless elections", problems were still seen in the situation there. Zdeněk Fierlinger, a CPCz Presidium member and speaker of the National Assembly, stated in April 1957, "It will take a long time before the influence of bourgeois nationalistic prejudices has been minimized."⁶³ Poland was still viewed negatively even in December 1957. A State Security report on the situation on the "ideological front", sent by Pavol David to Antonín Novotný, first secretary of the CPCz and to other CPS secretaries, considered that there was chaos, now intentionally increased. The expectations of the report's author, and indirectly of David were rather pessimistic: "It is impossible to predict the subsequent developments, all the more because the Party organizations are operating only formally; there is no Party discipline or Party life [...] The damage caused among students by the ideological chaos could not be repaired even after successful restoration of the leading role of the party."⁶⁴

60 Ibid.

61 SNA, A ÚV KSS, f. Pavol David, kr. 2252, a. j. 10. Záznam o prítomnosti poľských štátnych príslušníkov v kraji Prešov (1957).

62 Ibid., kr. 2267, a. j. 50. Správa o stretnutí so súdruhmi z PĽR (1957).

63 NA, AÚV KSČ, f. 02/2, sv. 135, a. j. 176, b. 1b), Politické byro ÚV KSČ 9. 4. 1957. Neověřený záznam z diskuze na schůzi Politického byra ÚV KSČ dne 9. 4. 1957ke zprávě ÚV KSS o činnosti a dalších úkolech ze zjezdu KSS.

After the end of 1957 and suspension of the weekly *Po Prostu*, the situation in Poland fell from the agenda of the CPCz leadership. Unlike the situation in Hungary, that of Poland was not a priority. The CPCz felt no need to develop its own policy on the country, although it rated the situation there poorly, especially in relation to certain liberal reforms.

The Hungarian Revolution had an influence on the Hungarian ethnic community in Southern Slovakia. The circulation of home-grown Hungarian-language newspapers and periodicals increased after press imports from Hungary were stopped.⁶⁵ The cultural life of the Polish minority, however, was curtailed and there was even talk of dissolving its cultural institution, the Polish Cultural–Educational Union (Polski Związek Kulturalno-Oświatowy).⁶⁶

As with Poland, cultural exchange with Hungary was restricted, for neither Kádár's nor Gomułka's policies were seen as orthodox. Moreover the authorities saw curbs on communications with their “mother countries” as a means of binding the minorities more closely to Czechoslovakia, if not of ethnic or linguistic assimilation. The cultural and political aim was to turn them into Hungarian or Polish-speaking Czechoslovaks. After the fall of the Hungarian Revolution, some press imports from Hungary were permitted again, but in smaller quantities than before—in some cases less than 50 per cent. Most copies were distributed in big cities and centres of tourism and only minimal numbers reached districts where the Hungarian minority was concentrated. That applied not only to daily papers, but to professional, scientific, technical and arts journals as well. Wider propagation of the press from Hungary was forbidden.⁶⁷ However, there was some rejuvenation among the leaders of CSEMADOK, who would later play a role in the reform process in Czechoslovakia in the 1960s.⁶⁸

The '56 Hungarian Revolution caused no upheaval in CPCz policy. Any idea of altering the political course towards reforms and democratization had been rejected

64 SNA, A ÚV KSS, f. Pavol David, kr. 2252, a. j. 11. Správa o hospodárskej a politickej situácii v Poľsku (1957), 6. 12. 1957.

65 Ibid., f. PÚV KSS, kr. 933. Zasadnutie BÚV KSS 16. 11. 1956. Návrh na zmeny vo vydávaní maďarskej tlače na Slovensku.

66 NA, f. 05/3, sv. 32, a. j. 249. List pracovníka Ministerstva školstva a kultúry Rudolfa Tomisa pracovníkovi oddelenia agitácie a propagandy Otokarovi Zemanovi, 11. 12. 1956.,

67 SNA, A ÚV KSS, f. Sekr. ÚV KSS, kr. 154, Zasadnutie SÚV KSS 13. 6. 1957. Návrh zásad pre dovoz a distribúciu tlače z Maďarska.

68 Ibid., f. PÚV KSS, kr. 950, Zasadnutie BÚV KSS 19. 5. 1957. Návrh na zvolanie 6. valného zhromaždenia Kultúrneho spolku maďarských pracujúcich v ČSSR.

by Novotný at the National Party Conference in June 1956.⁶⁹ Some decisions, such as removal of Juraj Špitzer from the journal *Kultúrny život*, were reversed due to the Hungarian Revolution, as the CPCz leaders would not risk conflict at home while events in Hungary and Poland were escalating. But the previous political course was intensified, not altered. As for *Kultúrny život*, it was not suppressed until later than planned, in April 1957, after the CPS Congress.⁷⁰

Hungary's revolution and Poland's October had an influence on Czechoslovakia that extended beyond the situation of the two national minorities. The CPCz leaders had been ready before October 1956 to suppress the reform movement, but held back for fear of domestic political conflict. When the awaited liquidation of the group of Slovak reform intellectuals around the journal *Kultúrny život* took place only in April 1957, its informal leader, Ondrej Pavlík, was expelled from CPCz, and although he sympathized more with Gomułka, he was accused of seeking to play an "Imre Nagy role in Czechoslovakia".⁷¹

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69 Celostátní konference KSČ. *Nová mysl* June (1956).

70 SNA, f. PÚV KSS, kr. 949, Zasadnutie BÚV KSS 25. 4. 1957. Stanovisko ÚV KSS k niektorým nesprávnym názorom a zjavom na ideologickom úseku.

71 Niektoré otázky práce stany medzi inteligenciou. Ibid., kr. 946, Zasadnutie BÚV KSS 5.-6. 4. 1957.

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THE HUNGARIAN REVOLUTION OF 1956 AS REFLECTED IN THE POLISH SECURITY SERVICE ARCHIVES

To prepare for this paper, a search was made of the various archives of the Institute of National Remembrance in Poland. These still contain documents produced by the communist security apparatus, but the results of the archive search failed to live up to expectations. All that were found were isolated documents on the reactions of Polish society to the Hungarian Revolution of 1956, special reports in the main.¹ The reports of the security apparatus for the fourth quarter of 1956 have not survived (and were probably never compiled) and either district or provincial level. Nor have any administrative documents (orders, circulars, etc.) connected with events or more thorough analyses been preserved.

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This situation is quite different with the less dramatic events of the Prague Spring and the Warsaw Pact intervention in Czechoslovakia. There are hundreds of volumes of files of various types preserved from the period, from administrative documents to reports and analyses, allowing research to be done on social attitudes and on how the state security apparatus operated during an internal crisis for the communist regime.² With the Hungarian Revolution, it is only possible to investigate the first.

The reason can be sought primarily in the position of the communist security apparatus in Poland in the autumn of 1956. It had entered into a crisis as early as 1954. Several months after Colonel Światło, a vice-director of the 10th Department of the Ministry of Public Security (dealing with intra-party surveillance), had escaped from Poland to the West, he began to take part in Radio Free Europe broadcasts, which was used as a convenient excuse to restore party supervision and control over the security apparatus. In November 1954, the Ministry of Public Security was

1 In three cases (the Institute of National Remembrance in Katowice, Kielce and Kraków) searches by archivists yielded no results.

2 Majchrzak 2004; Kamiński 2005.

dissolved and its all-powerful head, Stanisław Radkiewicz, became minister for state farms, while a Soviet-style Committee for Public Security was headed by a party activist, Władysław Dworakowski. There began a gradual process of reducing the number of officers and secret informants, and the number of those in exposed positions was reduced significantly. Several officers who had shown exceptional cruelty were subjected to criminal investigation. All these events frustrated the officers of what had been an all-powerful apparatus. The internal decline intensified in the autumn of 1956, when many agents refused to cooperate. In November, the Committee for Public Security and its field structures were disbanded, and the Security Service formally became part of the Ministry of Internal Affairs. Thereafter the number of officers and secret informants was reduced even further. This all explains why there are no surviving documents for the final weeks of 1956 and why documents from subsequent months are extremely scarce.³

98 Most of the surviving documents contain information on the comments of Polish society on the situation in Hungary. What clearly dominated was approval, the simplest stating that, "Good things are taking place in Hungary." It was commonly thought that the revolution was a manifestation of the struggle for freedom. In Poznań, among workers at the Cegielski factory (where a strike had started in June 1956), the opinion was heard that Hungarians "are doing the right thing in getting rid of them [the Soviets] from their country and we should do the same, because as long as there are Russians in our country, it will do no good to us." Some comments were more direct: "We in Poland should also murder the communists, who are hated by the nation." The outrage caused by the Soviet intervention found an outlet in such statements such as, "I would willingly take part myself in shooting Soviets who are taking part in suppressing the revolution in Hungary."

Some people expressed satisfaction that events had developed differently in Poland than in Hungary: "If the changes in the Central Committee Bureau had not been speeded up in Poland, there would have been the same bloodshed here as in Hungary." The following opinions were reported from the city of Zielona Góra: "Poland has been the first to start thinking of improving the relations in politics and economy and of a different and better road to socialism, a kind of individual Polish road, and it has turned out to be serious and gained the approval of the whole world, and it has ended without significant riots, otherwise than in Hungary, and so despite our hot Polish blood, we have managed to pass the test of political maturity." Others, though, thought the threat of Soviet intervention had not passed and "there is a need to do something or the Russian tanks will crush us, as has happened in Hungary." Some

3 Ruzikowski 2003, 124; Zblewski 2003.

thought the Poles too should contract out of the Warsaw Pact as the Hungarians had. Some expected, “When the Russians have finished the job in Hungary, they will come to Poland and no one will be able to stop them, as the West is engaged in Egypt, and the Soviet Union does its job in its own territory.”⁴

Rumours spread all over the country about the situation in Hungary, usually about the scale of the Soviet atrocities, the possibility of the outbreak of war, etc. Students in Poznań reported, “A hospital with injured insurgents inside has been blown up and the Russian army is shooting at ambulances.” One rumour was that some of the Soviet troops had gone over to the insurgents, providing them with 200 tanks, and in their place the Soviets had deployed Kalmyks,⁵ who “are treating the people of Budapest in a bestial way, and many insurgents have been hung from the bridge over the Danube.” There was news of lynch law being employed against officers of the ÁVH, in connection with which it was rumoured in Poznań that the participants of the June uprising in Poland had singled out officers of the Office of Security (Urząd Bezpieczeństwa, UB), and “if need be, each will know what to do with them, as the Hungarians are doing now.”⁶

Although the Polish newspapers in October and November 1956 enjoyed a freedom unprecedented in the history of communism, many people found the published information on Hungary insufficient.⁷

Leaflets and graffiti appeared all over the country, expressing solidarity and support for Hungary. Examples in Lower Silesia read, “Hands off Hungary,” “Death to the invaders,” “No more shameful aggression by the USSR in Hungary,” “Murderous hands—off the Hungarians.” In Lwówek (Poznań Province), there were graffiti reading, “No more Soviet Army” and “Let’s follow Hungary’s example.” In Kościan in mid-November came the legends, “Down with Russians,” “Help for Hungary,” “Bulganin is a good scumbag” and “Down with Bolsheviks”. Apart from leaflets devoted solely to the revolution in Hungary, there were others where the Hungarian

4 Archives of the Institute of National Remembrance in Poznań (Archiwum Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej w Poznaniu, hereafter: AIPN Po), sign. 06/71–26, 140–41. Daily report, 30 October 1956; *ibid.*, 149–50. Emergency report 69, 5 November 1956; *ibid.*, sign. 060/44–62, 35. Information 7, 29 October 1956; *ibid.*, sign. 06/71–26, 160. Emergency report, 3 November 1956; Archives of the Institute of National Remembrance in Gdańsk (Archiwum Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej w Gdańsku, hereafter: AIPN Gd), sign. 0046/22/1, 167. Emergency report 1215; *ibid.*, 191, 193. Emergency report 1425, 6 November 1956.

5 Soviet soldiers of Asian descent.

6 AIPN Po, sign. 06/71–26, 153, 156, 160. Emergency report, 3 November 1956; *ibid.*, 165. Emergency report 72, 9 November 1956.

7 AIPN Po, sign. 06/71–26, 153. Emergency report, 3 November 1956.

revolution was mentioned. One leaflet in the Agricultural Machinery Factory in Poznań put forward 22, including “Poles, let’s commemorate those who lost their lives in the fights for the freedom of Hungary.”⁸

Some of the leaflets went beyond protest to call for more radical steps. In Lwówek Śląski, leaflets were found urging that Hungary be taken as a model and an armed rebellion started. In Mielec, leaflets read: “Comrades, let’s help our friends, the Hungarians, who fight justly against Soviets for their freedom and independence from Russia—Long live freedom” and called for starting common struggle. In the city of Jelenia Góra, leaflets called for a strike in solidarity with the workers of Budapest. When news came of the second Soviet intervention, the walls of Gdańsk were decorated as early as the afternoon of November 4 with 29 anti-Soviet leaflets calling for armed combat and support for the fighting Hungarians.⁹

The leaflets appeared in villages as well as towns and cities. For example, an “anti-Russian” leaflet posted in Różanka in the Strzyżów district took the form of a letter from the students of Warsaw to those of Hungary.¹⁰

Some reports mention Hungarian flags being displayed in solidarity, for instance by students from Łódź. The workers of the Pafawag factory in Wrocław tore down a red star displayed on the factory wall and replaced it with Polish and Hungarian flags. The display of flags seems to have been much more popular than the security service files suggest.¹¹

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8 Archives of the Institute of National Remembrance in Wrocław (Archiwum Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej we Wrocławiu, hereafter: AIPN Wr.), sign. 053/772, 38. Information note on examples of hostile activities in territory of Legnica District in 4th quarter of 1956 and reaction of security service, 28 March 1957; AIPN Wr., sign. 053/459, 144. Special Bulletin, 26 October 1956; AIPN Wr, sign. 053/459, 3. Special bulletin on situation and attitude of society in territory of province of Wrocław in connection with events taking place in Poland in the wake of political transformations after 8th Plenum of the Central Committee of the Polish United Workers’ Party, 5 November 1956; AIPN Po, sign. 06/71–26, 148. Daily report, 30 October 1956; AIPN Po, sign. 06/71–26, 164. Emergency report 72, 12 November 1956; *ibid.*, 170. Emergency report 73, 14 November 1956.

9 Archives of the Institute of National Remembrance in Rzeszow (Archiwum Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej w Rzeszowie, hereafter: AIPN Rz), sign. 04/40, 196. Report 103/56, 7 November 1956; AIPN Wr., 053/459, 149. Special bulletin on situation and attitude of society in territory of the province of Wrocław, 5 November 1956; *ibid.*, 4. Information on anti-state activities in 4th quarter of 1956 in the territory of the province of Wrocław, 4 April 1957; AIPN Gd, sign. no. 0046/22/1, 188. Emergency report, 5 November 1956.

10 AIPN Rz, sign. 04/40, 199. Report 105/56, 12 November 1956.

11 AIPN Wr., 053/459, 149. Special bulletin on situation and attitude of society in territory of the province of Wrocław, 5 November 1956.

Only a few of the pro-Hungarian demonstrations and solidarity meetings are reported in the security reports. For instance, the largest demonstration in the province of Wrocław took place in the city of Wałbrzych, but the reports mention only the solidarity march in Jelcz. On October 27, the workers of the car factory held a rally “at which anti-Russian slogans were chanted and the banners expressed solidarity with the Hungarians.” They planned to attack the Soviet barracks in the nearby city of Oława, but this was prevented. Another rally, held on November 2 in the Cegielski Factory in Poznań was also very heated.¹²

A report from Gdańsk states, on the basis of intelligence from an informant, that the crew of a ship loading in Hamburg was approached by activists of a Russian emigré organization called the NTS, claiming that armed struggle would be “the best way to help Hungary.”¹³

Only isolated information was found in archive sources, for instance, on reprisals against people who had shown support for the Hungarian Revolution. Three people were arrested in Łódź on November 10, 1956: Stanisław Kłąb, A. Chyliński and Hanna Kowalska. Two first had printed about 40 leaflets entitled “Hands off Hungary” using a primitive techniques, and stuck them up around the city. Hanna Kowalska had painted up the graffiti “October 1918–1956”, “Long Live Hungary” and “Russians Out of Hungary”, and next to them a symbol of Fighting Poland—an anchor. They were released after a several dozen hours.¹⁴

The sources yielded no information about the aid operation for Hungarian combatants, in which tens of thousands of Poles were engaged, other than a meeting on October 30, 1956 at a pottery in Dobrzechów (Rzeszów Province). When the fund-raising began, one worker declared “he would give nothing, because the money would be taken by Russia.” This probably resulted from a widespread rumour that the aid shipments were being intercepted by the Soviet army.¹⁵

Only isolated statements about Hungary were recorded in 1957, mainly in the form of comparisons between the gradual pacification in Poland and the revolution in Hungary. One former partisan commanders from Lublin Province said “he recognizes a need to create in Poland the kind of situation that occurred in Hungary—people would face up to the communists then.” The Hungarian context also appears in

12 Ibid., 148; AIPN Po, sign. 06/71–26, 152. Emergency report, 3 November 1956; AIPN Gd, sign. 0046/22/1, 164. Emergency report, 29 October 1956.

13 AIPN Gd., sign. 0046/22/1, 205. Emergency report, 10 November 1956.

14 Archives of the Institute of National Remembrance in Łódź (Archiwum Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej w Łodzi, hereafter: AIPN Ld), sign. 10/315, 215–17. Special report, 14 November 1956.

15 AIPN Rz, sign. 04/272, 166. Daily report 1173/56, 31 October 1956.

connection with riots that followed the October 1957 closure of a weekly paper called *Po Prostu* (Simply). One activist of the United Peasants' Party (Zjednoczone Stronnictwo Ludowe) in Bydgoszcz Province called these riots "stupidity", as "they give the USSR an excuse and the USSR, if it only wanted, could do the same with Poland as it had done with Hungary." But he added that world events should be carefully monitored, and "when a favourable opportunity appears, we should start combat and face up to the oppressor."¹⁶

Interesting information appears in a security-service report from Puławy for the second quarter of 1957. The director of the Institute of Cultivation and Fertilization of Soils, based there, had brought with him from Warsaw a documentary film on the Hungarian Revolution, provided by the US Embassy, and shown it to trusted persons. It is unclear whether this was a single event or part of an organized operation by US diplomats.¹⁷

Censorship of mail brought various materials about the events in Hungary into security-service hands, such extracts from a UN report on Hungary, translated into Polish.¹⁸

The last time broad coverage of public reactions to events in Hungary appeared in the security archives was in June 1958, with the execution of Imre Nagy. The Poles were unanimous on this. Poznań Security Services reported to headquarters, "All information received on the subject indicates a negative attitude of speakers to the sentence. Among these are vulgar expressions used in reference to the Soviet Union." A subsequent report reads, "The sentence is seen as unjust and its severity a lack of sense of justice. The conviction that the sentences were passed by order of the USSR is clear." Those sentenced would have to be rehabilitated sooner or later.¹⁹

16 Archives of the Institute of National Remembrance in Lublin (Archiwum Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej w Lublinie, hereafter: AIPN Lu), sign. 0110/2, 39. Information note of second in command of Lublin Provincial Security Police, 27 April 1957; Archives of the Institute of National Remembrance in Bydgoszcz (Archiwum Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej w Bydgoszczy, hereafter: AIPN By), sign. 055/1, 4. Quarterly report on work of Dept of Security Service of Radziejów District Police for period 1 October 1957 to 21 December 1957.

17 AIPN Lu, sign. 041/54, 159. Report of work of Dept of Security Service of Puławy District Police in 2nd quarter of 1957, 27 June 1957.

18 Archives of the Institute of National Remembrance in Warsaw (Archiwum Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej w Warszawie, hereafter: AIPN), sign. BU MSW II 4560, 1–4. Extracts from Report of UN Special Commission on the Hungarian Uprising, 195.

19 AIPN Po, sign. 06/71–142, 42. Report 14, 19 June 1958; *ibid.*, 44. Report, 20 June 1958; *ibid.*, 46–7. Report, 21 June 1958; *ibid.*, 50. Report, 22 June 1958; *ibid.*, 54. 23 June 1958; *ibid.*, 57. Report, 24 June 1958.

Further information on the attitude of the Poles to the Hungarian Revolution can be obtained from communist security apparatus materials, mainly thanks to publications by János Tischler. But as mentioned initially in this paper, the material is too scanty to give a complete picture and comparisons with other sources are required. Unfortunately, these too are incomplete. It will probably remain impossible to reconstruct many aspects of the solidarity shown by Polish society or the full spectrum of its reactions.

ADDENDUM

*Inhabitants of Poznań Province on the sentence in the case of Imre Nagy (extracts from reports)*²⁰

[...] Several pieces of information were received about the communiqué of the Ministry of Justice of the Hungarian People's Republic, intimating that:

- ♦ The communiqué evoked heated debate among the workers of the Hipolit Cegielski Factory in Poznań (HCP). Among others, Stachowiak (the ringleader in the case) used very vulgar language about the Polish and Hungarian governments in connection with the sentence meted out, stating, among other things, "The communists remove everybody. Imre Naggi has not been the person they describe; they have killed him now, but in six months' time, they will give him post-war awards. It was the same with the June events. They told us the workers were guilty of everything, when the government was to blame. Damn such rules.
- ♦ The workers of W-7 HCP said the charges were far-fetched. Some of them asked why they should care and avoided discussing the subject [...]."²¹

The informant codenamed Walewski states that "the inhabitants of Poznań have been concerned with the sentence in the case of Imre Naggi since yesterday. According to Przybył and Szulc, Poznań society has been outraged by the sentence, expecting there would be demonstrations over it in Hungary in the immediate future[...]."²²

20 The various spellings of the name of Imre Nagy have been retained (Naggi, Nagy, etc.).

21 AIPN Po 06/67-118 z 130, 68. Reports and information on M. T. P., 1958, Information note of Dept 3, signed by dept. head, Major K. Modelewski: 1st copy to second in command of Army Security Service, 2nd copy to Major Ciastoń, 3rd-5th copies to case files, 19 June 1958.

22 Ibid., 69.

18th this month. At a meeting of HCP workers with Comrade Rapacki, they asked about the stance of the Polish government on the Naggi case [...].²³

[...] What can be concluded from the information received is that the sentence on Imre Nagy is still being widely discussed. Among other things, we were informed:

The workers of Stomil are seriously moved by the Nagy case. They have expressed their outrage in discussions, and consider it lawlessness and a proof that Kadar has not kept his promises. Everyone agrees that the sentence was ordered by the Russian authorities. People talked ironically of Moscow's interference in Hungary's internal affairs. Some also stated that Gomułka could not do anything either without asking Moscow's leave and there was no hope of the situation improving; they were ordering them about exactly as they had done under Stalin's regime. They said no one would believe Moscow now, which would be reflected in international relations, etc. The statements were critical and firm, and additionally there were no statements supporting that act [...].²⁴

The workers at the HCP stated that Imre Nagy was sentenced unjustly. According to previous communiqués, he was unjustly sentenced. It did not derive from earlier communiqués that he aimed at a change of the regime, but rather that he wanted to separate from the Soviet Union and start his own politics. The Russian army interference in Hungary's affairs should not be a basis for sentencing anyone to death [...].²⁵

The workers of the PM, commenting on the Nagy case, stated, "They were executed only because of Moscow. It is Khrushchev who should be blamed. The Soviet Union has sent so many soldiers to Poland to prevent similar events in Poland. Poor Gomułka cannot get out of the hands of the Soviets and if this continues, they will destroy him, along with the nation. They will crack down on us because of the June events." The speech of Minister Rapacki on Nagy is interpreted as: "Imre Nagy was a good man and we do not know why he was executed."²⁶

One HCP worker compared the trial of Imre Nagy with that of the Rosenbergs [Julius and Ethel Rosenberg] claiming, "the trial is a great secret in this country, no one knew about that trial. Those were two trials for treason to the nation—it was heard openly there, but in that country they had no evidence and wanted to get rid of a man, so they sentenced him secretly. Socialism disgraced itself; the sentence was unjust."²⁷

23 AIPN Po 06/67-118 z 130, 68.

24 Ibid., 19 June 1958, 73.

25 Ibid.

26 Ibid., 73–4.

27 Ibid., 74.

“The informant codenamed Maciej reports on comments on the communiqué from Hungary in the case of Imre Nodega. Professor Studtterhe from the stand of GDR 122 (Lauzer Enterprise) said the news shook him. He had expected Imre Nagy to be interned to the Soviet Union. He thinks the death penalty is a warning to all others, and the revelation of this matter at this particular moment has to do, in his opinion, with a tightening of policy towards Yugoslavia [...].”²⁸

[...] The following information was obtained from the student body when they heard news of the execution of Imre Nagy and other people in that circle—there were no discussions noted among students apart from students of Poznań Polytechnic (Politechnika Poznańska) in a dormitory in Słowackiego Street. It can be assumed from data from the informant codenamed Arski that after the announcement of the communiqué, students of the Polytechnic living in that dormitory were to some extent outraged, as “the execution of Imre Nagy amounts to a violation of international law,” which was justified by the fact that “Imre Nagy was taken from the Yugoslav Embassy on the understanding that he would come to no harm.” In the course of that discussion, the following view was heard: “Nagy did not deserve such a punishment and it is one more proof that the basic principles of communism are not being followed”. Among those active in the discussions, the informant lists the following third-year students of construction: Maciejewski Konrad, Lass Romuald, Makojan, and Chmiel Ryszard. These students are still under agency surveillance [...].”²⁹

[...] Discussions on the sentence against Imre Nagy are still being held among workers in several factories. All information received on the subject indicates that discussion participants take a negative view of the sentence. It is said, among other things, “Hungary cracked down on Imre Nagy in a non-humanitarian way; Prime Minister Kádár killed his opponent for fear of being killed, one can hear “similar comments and speeches.”

Engineer Hartman, codenamed Earl, said: “The sentence in the case of Nagy proves the demise of culture and civilization. Under no circumstances should people be killed for their ideological views. The sentence is a warning to others, and apart from that, it connects closely with the policy of the Soviet Union on top-level affairs.”

The informant codenamed Arski states that after the report in the Polish papers of the communiqué on the execution of Imre Nagy, the discussions on the subject

28 Ibid., 74.

29 Ibid., 75–6.

heard among students in the Słowackiego Street dormitory ceased. The same was observed among students of the Dożynkowa Street dormitory [...].³⁰

[...] Many negative opinions on the execution of Imre Nagy can still be heard. The following characteristic statements deserve attention:

- ◆ Opinions that the sentence was “murder” of political opponents.
- ◆ Opinions that the sentence was an international provocation, designed to forestall a possible conference between East and West.
- ◆ Opinions that the sentence was provoked by a group of political opponents of Prime Minister Khrushchev, to compromise him in the eyes of the West.

Here are some representative opinions on the subject:

“Workers of W-3 HCP state that the Soviet Union and Khrushchev are to blame for the sentence. They refer in conversation to the death of Bierut in Moscow and to the murder of Polish officers in 1941, and they blame the Soviet Union. It will complicate the meeting of heads of governments.”

Among PWP workers, there are opinions that “Kádár cracked down on his political opponent and his colleagues fearing he might be ousted by him. Yugoslavia handed them over under the condition that no harm would come to them, and now Tito will have an argument to use against Khrushchev and other heads: what they say is not what they do.”

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ZNTK³¹ (Rolling Stock Repair Shop): Barłogiej stated that “the creators of the October revival are sent to God in Hungary. It is hot again, as Russians start to rule again.” The PKP³² (Polish National Railways): “Western countries have suspended all treaties in protest at the sentence given. Hungary did it in consultation with the Soviet Union, and now Khrushchev has said on the radio that people arrested for such activity should not be sentenced to death.”

Pomet factory: “The sentence was certainly carried out much earlier, but it has been announced just before the summit conference, to frustrate the preparations and prevent the conference from happening.”

Budownictwo [Construction]: “[...] Workers and intelligentsia feel indignant at the sentence. They say he was unjustly sentenced to death. The sentence has discredited the socialist camp still further and complicated relations with Western countries. Allegedly, the sentence has been denounced by the People’s Republic of China and by Yugoslavia.”

30 AIPN Po 06/67-118 z 130, 20 June 1958, 80.

31 Zakłady Naprawcze Taboru Kolejowego.

32 Polskie Koleje Państwowe.

A journalist from *Trybuna Ludu*: “A group of Polish journalists was to go to Hungary. After the execution of Imre Nagy was announced, they refused to go in protest.”

Ginter—citizen of the GDR: “It is political murder. When Nagy took refuge in the Yugoslav Embassy, he was promised freedom, in the presence of the whole world. The politicians of the Soviet Union spoke most on the issue. The sentence is a political provocation against Yugoslavia, aimed at bringing conflict between Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union. The sentence was prepared by a group wanting to discredit Khrushchev and other top leaders of the Soviet Union, who spoke on the matter in 1956. It is designed to cause tensions in relations with Yugoslavia, to provoke indignation in the Soviet Union, and to hamper the summit meetings. It refutes the argument that the Soviet Union [...] (i) it did not interfere in the internal affairs of other states, and it confirms that (ii) it considers all socialist states as its satellites. Something unexpected may result out of it.”³³

[...] “The informant codenamed Waldemar reports on the position of the Catholic Church in the current political situation: Priest Fikus, characteristic of the record and operational case (a monk of the 20th Congregatio a Resurrectione Domini Nostri Iesu Christi) [...] stated that the US knows what it is doing and there will certainly be no summit conference, as “the Soviet Union cannot be trusted” and in general, it is odd that the US still tries to negotiate with them [the USSR], because “it was no other than the Soviet Union that guaranteed the life of Nagy, and look what they did to him in the end.”³⁴

[...] It may be concluded from data provided by the informant codenamed El-Zet that the medical community whom he has met have assessed critically the sentence in the case of Imre Nagy and others. Doctor Mataczyński and Psuja (Blood donation centre) called it a crime and mentioned the case of Katyń on that occasion. Doctor Mataczyński attacked the idea of material socialism and said on that occasion that such crimes arose from differences of opinion. The opponents were destroyed completely and he does not believe that socialism is humanitarian. He gave the example of Gomułka (who also gives no quarter). He rose to power, and despite many promises, cannot get rid of his Soviet protector or take a stance on the CPSU as Tito did, who did not want to subordinate himself to Russian directives, and rightly does not see as the best proof the fact that the promise given to him by Kádár was broken (that Imre Nagy would not be punished). Cardinal Mintschenty [Mindszenty] is still in the English [US] Embassy in Budapest.

33 AIPN Po 06/67-118 z 130, 21 June 1958, 83–4.

34 Ibid., 22 June 1958, 87.

There were also discussions on the subject among advocates, according to the informant codenamed Sas. Kozłowski stated he does not understand how Russia could allow such a sentence or communiqué reporting such a sentence to be announced in Hungary while the summit is being prepared. Kuleczka added that our revolution consumed its own children, and so it happened in Hungary. Another example is a leading activist of the Polish Peasant Party (PSL), Nowak, who said that it is a typical case of vicissitudes. Russia inspired the events in Hungary. Nagy was subordinate to Russia, and now Russia has discredited and executed him. The same fate will be shared by Gomułka and Cyrankiewicz, who are also subordinate to Russia, which will not forgive them for the “October events” [...].³⁵

[...] A ZNTK worker, Daubert J., who was one of the organizers of the committee to celebrate the anniversary of the June events last year said, “This year I have distanced myself from participating in the anniversary preparations. Last year I was stupid, but no one will convince me to do it again. Those who want to celebrate the 2nd anniversary will anyway be arrested by the secret police, because this year it is forbidden to celebrate it. I do not want to follow Imre Nagy of Hungary [...]”.³⁶

[...] The agent codenamed 738 states in connection with the announcement of the execution of Imre Nagy that the student body at the Medical University [Akademia Medyczna] from the dormitory in Grunwaldzka Street said, “The direct reason for the execution of Imre Nagy was the visit of Khrushchev in Hungary—China broke off diplomatic relations with Yugoslavia because of a discrepancy of opinions on the sentence.” The agent gave the names of students active in debates, including a leading figure, K. R. The group is still under agent surveillance [...].³⁷

The informant codenamed Janosik stated that in a conversation with citizen S. L., a worker at the Opera House, he received information that on the 21st of that month there was a leaflet displayed on the staircase with the following content: “Cross of Glory to the Hungarian heroes: Imre Nagy and Pal Maleter”. At the bottom of the page there was an inscription “We will not forget and we will avenge.” In the course of operation fulfilment, the data were not confirmed and the party and administrative supervisors of the Opera House know nothing of the above-mentioned information [...].³⁸

[...] The sentence in the case of Imre Nagy is still being commented upon in many factories. The statements on the subject are similar to those given in previous reports.

35 AIPN Po 06/67-118 z 130, 90.

36 Ibid., 23 June 1958, 94.

37 Ibid., 95–6.

38 Ibid., 96.

In general it is said that the sentence was unjust and it was carried out by order of Moscow, that it makes the summit talks difficult, and that many hostile comments on the subject can be heard [...].³⁹

[...] The following data was received on Imre Nagy: the agent codenamed 738 states that the leading figure in the record and observation case K. P. commented on the subject in his presence and that of two other students: “Comrade Gomułka is delaying on purpose the presentation of his stance on Imre Nagy, as he does not want to fall foul of Moscow.” The leading figure justified his opinion as follows: “he knows that Gomułka’s entourage take a negative view of the sentence on Imre Nagy, and only bitter Stalinists in the Central Committee support the decision.” Moreover, the leading figure said, “Postponement of the PZPR congress is being caused by the recent events in Hungary.”⁴⁰

[...] “The story that Gomułka will allegedly resign his post as First Secretary of the PZPR Central Committee is widespread and being commented on in factories, especially the ZNTK and PKP. The stories are corroborated by objections to the sentence on Imre Nogy, disagreement with the leaders of the KPZR, and the illness of Comrade Gomułka [...].”⁴¹

[...] “Last night a discussion about Imre Nogy was heard among 4 students of the Medical University living in Gospoda Targowa [Fair Inn]. The informant codenamed Barbara states that the said students condemned the execution of Imre Nogy in their conversation and said our papers had tried to hush up the case by making fuss about the Lebanese affair instead. There were calumnies said about the Soviet Union them including that “the Soviet Union is a specialist in removing unnecessary people.” The persons are still under agent surveillance [...].”⁴²

[...] “As far as the Catholic clergy is concerned, it may be assumed from materials obtained from the informant codenamed Zagórski that the curia clergy discuss the internal affairs of Poland as well as its foreign policy. The informant states that many priests “think well of” the government of the Polish People’s Republic “for its objective and very sober stance on the Hungarian trial.” The stance is a result of the fact that not all allegations about the case of Imre Nogy, enumerated in other sources, are presented on television and the radio. Priest Sikorski, a notary of the Curia and the leading figure in the record and observation case, called that type of approach one of several arguments “to prove the sovereign policy of our government.” There were

39 Ibid., 101.

40 Ibid., 26 June 1958, 110–1.

41 Ibid., 27 June 1958, 116.

42 Ibid., 116–7.

also opinions expressing doubts about those intentions. They wondered whether it is not a tactical move by the government, as it is hard to believe that Poles “want to fall foul of Moscow by adopting such a stance.”

The priest and mitred prelate Marlewski (leading figure in the record and observation case) stated that “the Hungarians certainly did not do it on their own; they must have been forced to do it by Moscow, which does not care about opinion in Hungary and has its own interests in mind [...]”⁴³

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THE REFUGEE PROBLEM IN YUGOSLAVIA

The events of October 1956 caused about 200,000 Hungarian citizens to flee, of whom about 180,000 sought refuge in Austria.¹ After the rebellion was crushed and reimposed controls along Hungary's western border made escape hazardous, about 20,000 people crossed the southern border. According to official data, 19,857 persons fled to the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia between October 23, 1956 and December 31, 1957, of whom 16,374 emigrated to the West, 2,773 were repatriated, and 634 were integrated into Yugoslav society. The whereabouts of 76 was unknown.² The Yugoslav authorities managed to solve the refugee problem early in 1958 only with decisive assistance from international organizations, notably the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the Intergovernmental Committee for European Migration (now the International Organization for Migration).

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1 Although these figures are also mentioned in recent literature based on Austrian archive sources (Schmidl 2003, 28.; Soós 1998), Professor Péter Rokay of the University of Novi Sad has expressed doubts about their accuracy, pointing out that thousands of Hungarian refugees in Austria at the time had been there since 1945 and that these too seized the chance to leave Austria with UN help during 1957. It can be assumed that Austria did not make a clear distinction between the two refugee groups, so as to maximize UN financial support. Though Soós does not express such doubts in her paper, analysis of her text and figures at least questions the possibility that 80000 refugees crossed over to Austria between October and mid-December 1956, followed, after closure of the Austro-Hungarian border, by 100000 more, in addition to 20000 Hungarians entering Yugoslavia in the first three months of 1957.

2 Diplomatic Archives of Foreign Ministry of Serbia and Montenegro (Diplomatski arhiv MIP SCG, hereafter DA MFA), PA, 1958, F-71, Mađ-320, No. 31121. Pregled jugoslovensko-mađarskih odnosa. 31 January 1958,

TREATMENT OF HUNGARIAN REFUGEES

The first newspaper accounts of the Yugoslav-Hungarian border situation reported that rail and road traffic had been interrupted. Once the uprising had started, only one train crossed the border, while a few peasants in carts visited relatives in Hungary. Otherwise Hungary's southern border was sealed. The railway stations at Subotica and Sombor became clogged with rolling stock. Witnesses reported that artillery fire could sometimes be heard from the direction of Baja and Pécs.³ The first records from the Border Office of the Federal Ministry of Internal Affairs refer to people from Hungarian border villages arriving at the border to seek arms for the insurgents. Some of these were disarmed by the Yugoslav authorities and sent to special shelters, while others were handed back directly to Hungarian colleagues. About 1200 were turned back from the border immediately during the entire crisis. These are not included in the total number of Hungarian refugees in Yugoslavia given already.⁴

Between the two Soviet military interventions, many inhabitants of the Hungarian border zone — mainly Hungarian Workers' Party members and local officials — tried to flee to Yugoslavia in fear of their lives. The Yugoslav authorities advised them to stay at home and fight for "socialism", although some managed to enter. For instance, 17 officers of the ÁVH (Államvédelmi Hatóság), the Hungarian state security, arrived from Szeged with their families on the night of October 30–31, crossed the border near Horgos and handed in their arms. The same night, 14 ÁVH officials, some with families, crossed the Slovenian section of the frontier, including border-guard officers from Nagykanizsa and party secretaries from Nagykanizsa and Lenti, who were separated from the other refugees and treated as guests. After their return to Hungary, many of them expressed gratitude for the help they had received from the Yugoslav authorities.⁵ The first Interior Ministry announcement on refugees was made on Radio Belgrade only on November 4, and no precise information was given.⁶ According to daily counts by Department 1 of the Yugoslav political police (Uprava drzame bezbednosti, UDB), only 178 persons, mainly ÁVH officials and soldiers, with family members, had crossed the border by November 3.⁷

3 *Bilten Tanjuga* November 5, 1956.

4 DA MFA, PA, str. pov., 1958, F-149, UN-594, No. 3719. Problem mađarskih izbeglica.

5 Ibid.

6 *Bilten Tanjuga* November 5, 1956.

7 Archives of Serbia and Montenegro, Central Committee of Communist Party of Yugoslavia (Arhiv Srbije i Crne Gore, Centralni komitet SKJ, hereafter ASCG, CC CPY), IX-75/V-62. Emigranti iz Mađarske.

Individual crossings of the Yugoslav border started right after the second Soviet military intervention, although large numbers continued to flee to Austria. Yugoslav policy initially was to turn the refugees back or hand them over to the Hungarian border officials, with no exceptions. The return of refugees from the border was difficult and often followed by incidents. Some refugees lay on the ground, refusing to go back to Hungary. Others simply reappeared in another sector. Experiences at the Yugoslav border were also related by refugees who eventually reached Austria. The fact that the Yugoslav authorities were not admitting refugees soon became public knowledge.⁸ Reports of Yugoslav treatment of refugees that questioned official reports appeared in some world newspapers in November and December 1956.⁹ When the Yugoslav-Hungarian agreement on repatriation was announced early in December, distrust of the voluntary aspect of the process was voiced in the West. The British Foreign Office voiced its concern over the fact that Western reporters were not permitted to attend the repatriation of the first group of returnees.¹⁰

By this time, the Yugoslav authorities had direct contacts with Hungarian border officials and with Hungarian embassy officials in Belgrade to pass information on the frequent crossing points and advice on how to secure the border from Hungary's side.¹¹ The advice was little use: the border could not be sealed. Closure of the Austro-Hungarian border caused a surge of refugees along the Yugoslav-Hungarian border, which precluded turning them all back. By early December, Yugoslavia was forced to accept them, and this applied still more in January and February 1957.

The Federal Government had not published a single report on the number of refugees from Hungary when the UN High Commissioner for Refugees made a formal request for information. Meanwhile on November 6, the UNHCR addressed to the permanent Yugoslav delegate to the UN Nations European Office an offer of assistance in handling the problem.¹² The Yugoslav reply in mid-November stated that the Federal Government had given shelter to about 300 Hungarian refugees and that no international aid was therefore required. Three weeks later, the permanent Yugoslav delegate in Geneva received an aide-memoire occasioned by Western media

8 DA MFA, PA, str. pov., 1958, F-149, UN-594, no. 3719.

9 On November 16, 1956 the Austrian paper *Tagespost* reported on a refugee who had arrived from Yugoslavia. He stated that the Yugoslav-Hungarian border was completely closed by the army; a tank division was used to guard the frontier; fear of the Soviets was so great that Yugoslavs opened fire on anyone who approached the border and many refugees were killed. *Bilten Tanjuga* November 17, 1956.

10 Ibid., December 8, 1956.

11 DA MFA, PA, 1958, F-149, UN-594, No. 3719.

12 DA MFA, PA, 1956, F-50, Mad-100, No. 419173.

rumours of severe Yugoslav treatment of refugees and of forced returns: the UNHCR was asking for precise data on the refugees.¹³ Continual pressure on the Yugoslav authorities from the United Nations and the Western press eventually forced the Federal Interior Ministry to issue its first official data on the refugee problem, after almost three weeks of avoiding all questions. By November 29, 471 refugees had entered Yugoslavia, followed on November 30 to December 6 by 442. Of these, 141 were repatriated, 302 expressed a wish to go to the West, and the remaining 470 of the 913 refugees were not mentioned in the report.¹⁴ The data surprised Western observers, whose calculations based on accounts of the local population had yielded higher figures of 2000 and 3000.¹⁵

Yugoslavia finally asked the UNHCR for assistance in mid-December, faced with a markedly higher immigrant flow. The number of refugees almost doubled in the second half of December, from 972 to 1748 on January 1, but the fortnight with the largest increase was January 15 to February 1, 1957, from 5391 to 15,321 (see table):

*The cumulative influx of Hungarian refugees*¹⁶

November 5, 1956	183
November 16, 1956	403
December 1, 1956	690
December 15, 1956	972
January 1, 1957	1748
January 15, 1957	5391
February 1, 1957	15321
February 15, 1957	17951
March 1, 1957	18313
March 15, 1957	18579

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13 DA MFA, PA, 1956, F-50, Mađ-100, No. 421778.

14 *Bilten Tanjuga* December 9, 1956. Presumably, the remaining 470 refugees had not passed through the administrative procedures discussed later before the report was submitted, and they were not mentioned in the report for that reason.

15 *Bilten Tanjuga* December 11, 1956. These 1200 returned refugees were not taken into account as most of them were sent back in the first two weeks. If they were included, the total would be similar to Western calculations. Some refugees, especially initially, managed to cross over to Yugoslav territory unnoticed and escape registration by the Yugoslav authorities, so that they did not appear on any official refugee list. This applies mainly to Hungarians with relatives or friends in Vojvodina.

16 DA MFA, PA, 1958, F-72, Mađ-430, No. 432638. Pregled mađarskih izbeglica u FNRJ.

There was a daily influx of 600–700 in the second half of January and the first half of February. Yugoslav capacity for care and accommodation was about 10,000, and appeals for aid intensified. The number of Hungarian refugees peaked in mid-March, with only 569 resettled in other countries and 1412 repatriated by that time.¹⁷ Luckily, daily influxes fell significantly in the second half of March. Although the UN high commissioner for refugees, Auguste Lindt, had announced at the end of January that the flow of Hungarian refugees into Yugoslavia was an international problem,¹⁸ hardly anything had been done about resettling them. Interior Minister Svetislav Stefanović told Yugoslav journalists in an interview this could be interpreted as pressure by Yugoslavia on the international community to facilitate migration from Yugoslavia of refugees who had expressed a desire to go to a Western country. He stressed that the problem of Hungarian refugees was far beyond Yugoslavia's capacity to solve and had to be addressed by the United Nations. By February 1957, Yugoslavia had still received negligible aid, and he added that many had chosen repatriation only for want of hope of emigrating to a Western country.¹⁹ This explanation may be seen as hypocritical in view of the widely known Yugoslav and Hungarian propaganda for repatriation.

From mid March until the end of 1957, about 1000 more refugees crossed the Yugoslav-Hungarian border, which was negligible in comparison with the influx at the beginning of the year. But the falling flow brought another shift in Yugoslav policy. The authorities ceased to shelter immigrants from Hungary and handed back almost all arrivals to the Hungarian border officials, under a secret Yugoslav-Hungarian agreement at the beginning of September. Nonetheless, a Szeged daily published an article about two returnees who were immediately put on trial.²⁰

Yugoslavia's capacity to accommodate refugees was certainly limited, and the demand for such accommodation increased continually in the first two months of 1957. Lack of immigration camps and the mass influx of refugees with a large number of children among them meant that the authorities had to lodge people in vacant tourist resorts. Between December 15, 1956 and early March 1957, the number of camps and facilities increased from 7 to 37: 21 tourist resorts with over 90 buildings, 4 temporary refugee camps, and 12 permanent refugee camps.

The largest camp was at Geroovo in Gorski Kotar, the mountainous region above Rijeka, away from major settlements and roads, but near the Italian border. It had no

17 Ibid.

18 *Bilten Tanjuga* January 25, 1957.

19 *Politika* February 17, 1957.

20 DA MFA, PA, 1958, F-149, UN-594, No. 3719.

running water, medical care or other facilities.²¹ From the Yugoslavs' point of view, Gerovo was ideal place to assemble arrivals in Yugoslavia in the 1950s—a temporary shelter and transit camp for further emigration to the West. When Hungarian refugees began arriving, they were directed there until it became overcrowded, for instance, with three refugees sleeping in two beds.²² The very poor living conditions in provisional camps and the start of the tourist season led to 9774 refugees being relocated by April.²³ Six camps were hurriedly restored, four of them being former barracks, at Bizeljsko, near Novo Mesto, Sokolac, near Sarajevo, Ilok on the Danube, and Kučevo in Macedonia. The existing camp at Čakovec was enlarged and the one at Gerovo refurbished with running water and a new kitchen. The adaptations increased camp capacity by another 4700 by April 1957, but the problem of accommodating the 5074 people in tourist resorts remained.²⁴ They were eventually transferred to camps throughout Yugoslavia, so that some camps remained overcrowded.

The Hungarian refugees were under the jurisdiction of the Federal Interior Ministry, which was responsible for choosing locations for camps, lodging the refugees, prescribing camp rules, etc. When the UN Temporary Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees was established, the Foreign and Interior ministries formed a Joint Commission for Refugees on March 6, 1957. This was supposed to liaise between the Temporary Office and the Yugoslav authorities handling the refugee problem.²⁵

Our knowledge of refugee life in Yugoslav camps is based on reports by international organizations and journalists. It can be concluded that the treatment of the refugees was in line with the nature of the communist regime. After crossing the

21 Kosanović 2005, 91.

22 *Bilten Tanjuga* September 12, 1957.

23 DA MFA, PA, 1958, F-72, Mađ-430, No. 432638. Pregled podataka o mađarskim izbeglicama u Jugoslaviji, 18 March 1957. Dušan Kosanović, employed at the time by the Federal Ministry of Internal Affairs as a medical technician and taking care of refugees on the island of Rab, testified that all hotels on the island were full with 700–750 refugees, although the official count was about 600 Hungarians on the island. There was no resident physician, although there were periodic visits by a doctor from the island Goli Otok (where pro-Soviet communists were held after the 1948 split). All these refugees were relocated to Sokolac, Bosnia at the end of March 1957. Kosanović 2005, 98.

24 DA MFA, PA, 1958, F-72, Mađ-430, No. 432638.

25 DA MFA, PA, 1957, F-57, Mađ-100, No. 46590. Among the commission members Olga Milošević, secretary-general of the Yugoslav Red Cross, and Colonel Ljubivoje Stefanović, an Interior Ministry official and high official of the Yugoslav political police.

border, the refugees were placed in nearby transit camps, such as Koprivnica and Palić. There they were registered and interrogated in detail by the Yugoslav political police, then separated: only parents were allowed to remain with their children. Families were usually sent to hotels or similar facilities on the Croatian coast, particularly near Rijeka, or to the country, whereas singles were assigned to less comfortable camps such as Gerovo or Čakovec.²⁶ Later, depending on the refugees' choice, they were moved to emigration, repatriation or integration centres.

The quality of the camps varied considerably. Most were fenced with barbed wire and under constant police surveillance, with refugees insulated from the local population.²⁷ Nobody could leave the camp or visit refugees without special Interior Ministry permission. Visits were permitted only in the presence of guards, making open conversation impossible. Furthermore, refugees had no freedom of movement or connection with the outside world; they did not even receive newspapers. Although officials claimed that the food supplied the prescribed 2 600 calories per day, refugees complained of hunger. All this, with the long wait for further migration, weakened their desire to emigrate.²⁸

A group of foreign journalists managed to visit refugee camps from May 28 to June 3, 1957 at the invitation of the UN high commissioner for refugees, but as hosts of the Federal Information Ministry. They travelled by bus over Yugoslavia, visiting Bela Crkva, Osijek, Gerovo, Rijeka, and Opatija. They were preceded at each camp by Interior Ministry officials to supervise final preparations for the foreign journalists.²⁹ Yet the impressions of the group were dismal: the headlines in the Austrian and German press were *Refugee or concentration camps*.³⁰ Gerovo was judged to have the worst living conditions and Bela Crkva, mainly for children and young people, the best. To keep up the spirits of youngsters waiting for visas, camp officials organized

26 *Bilten Tanjuga* January 31, 1957.

27 Mrs. M. Popović of Slankamen, where some tourist facilities served as provisional shelter for refugees, reported that refugees were not isolated everywhere or all the time. Some were put up in a building near her house. Though the yard was fenced and under surveillance, younger refugees would leave through basement windows facing the street and make contact with locals. She befriended a young man and kept up with him until his departure for Switzerland. Her family later received a gift from Switzerland expressing his gratitude for her help and support during his stay in Yugoslavia. Private communication, January 1994.

28 DA MFA, PA, 1958, F-72, Mađ-430, No. 432638. Memorandum o zapažanjima jedne američke delegacije, koja je posetila neke izbegličke logore, 22 July 1957.

29 *Ibid.*, Beleške sa sastanka Komisije za izbeglice.

30 *Bilten Tanjuga* June 4, 1957.

classes in English and French, sports competitions with local children, and other entertainments.³¹

According to incomplete ICEM statistics, over 50 per cent of the Hungarian refugees in Yugoslavia were 18–35 years old, between the age of 18 and 35, 30 per cent under 18, and a small percentage over 55. A census of about 11,000 refugees showed there to be over 3000 skilled and 1900 unskilled workers among them, along with 500 farmers and 1600 students and pupils.³² These data are similar to the Yugoslav statistics.³³ Using ICEM forms, Yugoslav officials completed a census of the Hungarian refugees who had expressed a wish to emigrate to the West.³⁴

Yugoslavia, as one of the two countries that had accepted refugees from Hungary, undertook a heavy financial burden which it was unable to shoulder in full. At the end of 1956, the Yugoslav government informed the UN European Office in Geneva that \$50,000 a day was being spent, which was \$3 per refugee per day, including not only food and lodging, but clothing, medical aid, border-to-camp transportation, and transportation to the border for further migration.³⁵ The exceedingly high influx of refugees took the aggregate expenditure to \$1,108,763 by the end of January 1957. For example, the expenses on January 30 came to \$25,000 for 14,105 refugees.³⁶ In mid-March, the Federal Government authorized the Interior Ministry to borrow 3 billion dinars (about \$5 million) at 6 per cent interest, for financing accommodation and care of refugees.³⁷ A count of Hungarian refugees made by the Federal Government yielded an estimated expenditure of \$2 million for the March 1–July 1 period, so that the need for the ministry loan was clear. Fortunately, daily spending per refugee had fallen to about \$1, thanks to savings in provisioning and food spending through aid from the International Red Cross and other international organizations.³⁸ In the first half of 1957, the expenditure was \$5,756,763, while the estimate for the second half of the year exceeded \$8 million. By mid-1957, the United Nations had

31 *Bilten Tanjuga* September 12, 1957.

32 DA MFA, PA, 1958, F-72, Mađ-430, No. 432638. Izveštaj ICEM direktora, 22 March 1957.

33 Ibid.

34 Ibid.

35 DA MFA, PA, 1956, F-50, Mađ-100, No. 422556. Telegram jugoslovenske vlade stalnom predstavniku u Ženevi, 26 December 1956,

36 DA MFA, PA, 1957, F-58, Mađ-100, No. 415422. Pitanje troškova i problem emigracije mađarskih izbeglica.

37 ASCG, 130-15-100.

38 DA MFA, PA, 1957, F-72, Mađ-430, No. 432638. Pregled podataka o mađarskim izbeglicama u Jugoslaviji, 19 March 1957.

reimbursed only 7.4 per cent of Yugoslav outgoings.³⁹ Financial reimbursement of Yugoslavia remained a central problem related to Hungarian refugees almost a year after their resettlement.

REPATRIATION OF REFUGEES

From the outset, the Yugoslav authorities sought to repatriate the Hungarian refugees as fast as possible. That seemed to be the best way to resolve an already obvious problem, if the influx could not be stopped. The Yugoslav conduct suggests that they wanted to avoid involving Western countries or international organizations. They turned to the United Nations for aid only under pressure from heavy financial burdens.

The Hungarian authorities first showed interest in their expatriates in the second half of November 1956, when a delegation was formed at the government's request to go to Yugoslavia and discuss the refugee problem.⁴⁰ Three meetings with Yugoslav representatives were held: on November 22 and 23 in Zagreb and on November 28 in Belgrade.⁴¹ During the Zagreb negotiations, it was agreed to form subcommittees that would visit the camps and talk to the refugees. These visits took place on November 23–7,⁴² after which the delegation members met in Belgrade and compiled a list of 141 persons who had opted for repatriation.⁴³ On the following day, November 29, an agreement was signed on repatriation and the manner and place of handing over the refugees over to Hungarian officials, in the sectors where joint border commissions had already been formed, at Kotoriba–Murakeresztúr and Horgos–Reska. Initial repatriations occurred on December 7 and 9, and everything the refugees had brought into Yugoslavia was returned, most importantly arms, as the property of the People's Republic of Hungary.⁴⁴ The November agreement was also observed for all

39 DA MFA, PA, 1957, F-58, Mađ-100, No. 414478. Telegram jugoslovenske vlade stalnoj jugoslovenskoj misiji u Njujorku i Ženevi, 28 June 1957.

40 Ibid., No. 415422. Beleške o pregovorima dve delegacije, 9 November 1956.

41 Ibid. The Yugoslav delegation consisted of Slobodan Šakota (head), Colonel Vice Selak, Anton Kacijan and Milan Milanko, and the Hungarian of Colonel Pál Mányik (head), Elemér Terek and Miklós Barity.

42 Ibid. There is an interesting note by A. Kacijan who visited two camps with Barity, one in Borl near Ptuj with 39 refugees, and the other in Osijek with 65 refugees. Fourteen refugees at Borl, mainly soldiers and officers, opted to repatriate, but none at Osijek, where large numbers of students and workers were held. Most refugees at Osijek refused even to speak to Barity and some threatened to throw him in the Drava. DA MFA, PA, 1957, F-50, Mađ-100, No. 420674.

43 Nine persons later declined.

subsequent repatriations. But the question of whether the repatriations were voluntary arose when Western journalists were not permitted to attend at Horgos on December 7. The news and comments on this were mainly negative. Distrust intensified as the Yugoslavs persistently refused to allow contact between refugees and UNHCR representatives.

Hungary requested a permit to send another commission in mid-December,⁴⁵ but nothing happened until the end of January 1957, when the request was urgently renewed by the Hungarian foreign minister, as the numbers of refugees was becoming disturbing. Permission was granted. Miklós Barity was warned that Amir Hoveyda, representative of the high commissioner, was in Yugoslavia and had expressed a wish to monitor further work by the Hungarian Commission for Repatriation.⁴⁶

The first meeting of the new Yugoslav–Hungarian Joint Commission was held on February 1. After the Hungarian representatives had been briefed on the main facts about the refugees, the presence of UNHCR observers was discussed, as well as Yugoslav–Hungarian cooperation on propaganda and cooperation to secure the border. Agreement was reached on attendance by foreign observers. The Hungarians were allowed to show films and distribute newspapers at the camps. Also discussed was exhaustion among Hungarian border units on the frontier with Austria. The southern border was being reinforced at the time,⁴⁷ but not enough to stop the mass influx into Yugoslavia, and the Hungarians asked indirectly for stronger border controls of the border from the Yugoslav side. At the end of meeting, five joint sub-commissions were set up to visit the camps again.⁴⁸

The next session of the Joint Commission, on February 12, 1957, was attended by Pierre Bremont, representative of the High Commissioner.⁴⁹ Srbobran and Osijek were designated as assembly points for repatriation and it was agreed that the joint border commissions would carry out the repatriation in the Subotica–Kelebia sector on February 14 and at the Beli Manastir–Magyarboly sector two days later.⁵⁰ According

44 DA MFA, PA, 1957, F–58, Mađ–100, No. 415422.

45 DA MFA, PA, 1956, F–50, Mađ–100, No. 422203. Beleška o razgovoru između jugoslovenskih i mađarskih predstavnika u Beogradu, 22 December 1956,

46 DA MFA, PA, 1957, F–57, Mađ–100, No. 41685. Beleška o razgovoru načelnika Prvog odeljenja, F. Babića sa M. Baritijem, 23 January 1957.

47 DA MFA, PA, 1957, F–58, Mađ–100, No. 415422. About 2000 people attempting to escape to Yugoslavia were caught in a few days.

48 Ibid.

49 DA MFA, PA, 1957, F–72, Mađ–430, No. 432638. Beleške sa sastanka zajedničke komisije, 14 February 1957.

to a later statement by the Yugoslav interior minister, 753 refugees were repatriated in those two days, making a total of 976 repatriated so far.⁵¹ The Joint Commission continued working in the camps in two groups, first without the UNHCR observers and from February 18 in their presence. The Hungarians made hypocritical-sounding objections to the conduct of the UNHCR observer Victore Jacot des Combes, who openly argued against repatriation.⁵²

Pál Mányik, former head of the Hungarian side of the Joint Commission for Repatriation, was in Yugoslavia in the first half of February with a trade delegation. He initiated a long discussion with the head of the First Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Filip Babić, cautiously requesting complete closure of the border with Hungary and the return of all refugees. He also suggested stronger repatriation propaganda for the refugees.⁵³ However, Yugoslavia did not comply with the Hungarian request to close the border until August 1957. Despite stronger pressure to return home, the repatriation process was hampered when some refugees recognized ÁVH officers on the Hungarian side of the Joint Commission. It was known that the first group of returnees had met with harsh treatment at the border, and emigrants often received letters from relatives and friends in Hungary warning them not to return.⁵⁴ Though the Yugoslav and Hungarian authorities expressed dissatisfaction at the weak take-up, published data show that the aggregate number of returnees doubled after Hungarian representatives were allowed to work in the camps, from 976 on February 16 to 2107 at the beginning of April.⁵⁵

After April 1957, the Hungarians did hardly anything more to hasten repatriation. The Yugoslav proposal for a new delegation was only taken up in August. The Yugoslav authorities believed Hungary had missed a great opportunity to increase the number of returnees, as there were few transfers to the West from April to July and many thought emigration to a Western country was impossible.⁵⁶ In July, the Hungarian Embassy in Belgrade verbally informed the Foreign Ministry that the Hungarian government had discontinued individual investigation of those who

50 Ibid.,

51 *Politika* February 17, 1957.

52 DA MFA, PA, 1957, F-72, Mađ-430, No. 432638. Beleške sa sastanka zajedničke komisije, 14 February 1957.

53 DA MFA, PA, 1957, F-57, Mađ-100. No. 43759. Beleške sa razgovora između F. Babića i P. Manjika, 7 February 1957.

54 DA MFA, PA, 1958, F-149, UN-594, No. 3719. Problem mađarskih izbeglica.

55 *Politika* April 2, 1957.

56 DA MFA, PA, 1958, F-149, UN-594, No. 3719. Problem mađarskih izbeglica.

sought repatriation, so as to speed up the process.⁵⁷ By that time 2 447 people had repatriated, according to an Interior Ministry report,⁵⁸ mainly because they had lost hope. By the time the long-awaited Hungarian delegation arrived in Yugoslavia on August 20, there were some commissions from Western countries working on resettlement, which contributed to the poor results for the new Hungarian Commission for Repatriation.

The Yugoslav authorities cooperated with the Hungarians on this, but there was never any real trust between them on the refugee question. At times, Hungarian intelligence sent agents into the camps disguised as refugees.⁵⁹ Hungarian Embassy officials were told, but disclaimed all connection with the agents who were exposed, who were handed over secretly to the Hungarian border officials, as the Federal Interior Ministry did not want the matter made public.

Yugoslavia also took part in repatriating Hungarian refugees from the West. Several refugees who had been detained in Italy with no documents were delivered to the Hungarians through Yugoslav border officials. In some cases the Yugoslav authorities enabled repatriation of Hungarian emigrés who had joined the Foreign Legion in Algeria, shipping them in Yugoslav vessels from Morocco to Rijeka and then by land across Yugoslavia.⁶⁰

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These are only examples of the involved relations between the two countries during the refugee crisis. Hungarian representatives, delegates and embassy officials pressed the Yugoslav side from the outset to supply lists of Hungarian refugees who had gone to the West, including biographies and foreign addresses. The Hungarian ambassador even discussed this with the Yugoslav interior and foreign ministers, who declined to cooperate. It is known that such lists were not provided before September 1958.⁶¹

Official statistics show there were 835 juveniles among the 2 766 returnees, whereas the total number of unaccompanied children and young people under 18 was 1 545. A specific problem arose with these.⁶² The Legal Council of the Foreign Ministry, in line with UNHCR recommendations, advised that the Yugoslav authorities place the juvenile refugees under the care of the Yugoslav Red Cross. The latter would contact

57 DA MFA, PA, 1958, F-58, Mad-100, No. 15422.

58 *Politika* July 6, 1957.

59 The Yugoslavs exposed four such agents. DA MFA, PA, 1958, F-149, UN-594, No. 3719. Problem mađarskih izbeglica.

60 Ibid.

61 Ibid.

62 Ibid.

parents through the Hungarian Red Cross and keep the International Red Cross informed. For children under 14, statements were needed from both parents (if alive), as to whether they wanted the children back. Then a decision on repatriation or another solution would be made by a Yugoslav custody body for each case, bearing in mind the wishes and interests of the child. With those aged 14–18, parents were to be informed, but the determining factor would be the youngster's own choice. If parents had objections to the young person's decision, they were to contact the appropriate Yugoslav bodies.⁶³

The problem of refugee children was given particular consideration at the repatriation negotiations in January 1957 and especially in February. The Hungarians insisted the juveniles be treated according to Hungarian law: all persons under 18 were incompetent to make decisions or be charged, and so they should all be repatriated.⁶⁴ But Yugoslav representatives insisted that these young people were subject to Yugoslav law on Yugoslav territory. In the spring of 1957, all unaccompanied Hungarian minors were assembled at Bela Crkva. The Yugoslav Red Cross set about repatriating them, and all children under 14 were returned without undergoing any procedure, on the written request of their parents. The deciding factors for repatriating those of 14–18 were parental request and own choice. If parents had not contacted the Red Cross within 60 days, the custody body in Bela Crkva would authorize the transfer of the minor in question to a Western country.⁶⁵

In April 1957, a representative of the Hungarian Red Cross visited the youth camp to insist again on the repatriation of all minors and request lists of all children, regardless of their choice on repatriation, but the Yugoslav authorities dismissed both requests.⁶⁶ Although the encouragement juveniles received to repatriate was not public, the UN high commissioner for refugees protested to the Interior Minister about disregard for procedure and pressure on Hungarian minors to opt for repatriation.⁶⁷

RESETTLEMENT OF REFUGEES

Yugoslavia finally requested urgent aid from the UNHCR at the beginning of December 1956.⁶⁸ The high commissioner for refugees, Auguste Lindt, appointed a special

63 DA MFA, PA, 1958, F-72, Mađ-430, No. 432638. Procedure sa mađarskim izbeglicama—decom.

64 DA MFA, PA, 1957, F-58, Mađ-100, No. 415422. Beleške sa sastanka zajedničke Komisije za repatrijaciju.

65 DA MFA, PA, 1958, F-149, UN-594, No. 3719. Problem mađarskih izbeglica.

66 DA MFA, PA, 1958, F-72, Mađ-430, No. 432638. Beleška o poseti predstavnika Mađarskog Crvenog krsta, 8 April 1957.

67 Ibid. Pismo Visokog komesara UN jugoslovenskom ministru unutrašnjih poslova, 7 May 1957.

envoy, Amir Hoveyda, to visit Yugoslavia for detailed information on the Hungarian refugee problem. Hoveyda spent two weeks in Yugoslavia visiting the camps and obtaining information on the numbers and conditions of the refugees. He would discuss their further actions before and after his camp visits. He affirmed in conversation with Foreign Ministry representatives that the UNHCR would reimburse all Yugoslav expenses, which particularly pleased his hosts.⁶⁹

124 In discussions with Yugoslav officials after the camp visits, on January 18 and 19, Hoveyda explained it would be to Yugoslavia's advantage to send observers to the meeting of the Executive of the UN Refugee Fund (UNREF) in Geneva at the end of January, where the Hungarian refugee problem would be given appropriate publicity. On the subject of repatriation, Hoveyda said the high commissioner was interested in participating in resolving the problem, by appointing representatives to the existing commissions. He pointed out that the United Nations handled not only the protection of refugees, but also their migration, and presented two possible ways of resettling the refugees: with the assistance of national commissions or with assistance of the Intergovernmental Committee of European Migration (ICEM). He recommended that Yugoslavia permit the ICEM to participate, as the only organization capable of resolving the problem in its entirety. He initiated the establishment of a temporary UNHCR office in Belgrade, within which the ICEM would operate. The Yugoslav representatives at the discussions, A. Kacijan and S. Šakota, told Hoveyda Yugoslavia could accept up to 10,000 refugees. In the light of this and the daily influx of about 500 at that time, it was clear that Yugoslavia needed urgent financial support for adapting existing facilities to accommodate large numbers of people. Kacijan and Šakota also requested an immediate evacuation of 5000 refugees. They warned Hoveyda that Yugoslavia would be compelled to close the border with Hungary, for lack of space to accommodate further refugees, and that was why it was doing its utmost to encourage repatriation, as there had not been any serious resettlement up to that point.⁷⁰

The high commissioner told the Yugoslav foreign minister that the UN intended to establish the UNHCR Temporary Office in Belgrade⁷¹ and sent a cheque for \$50,000 to the Yugoslav Red Cross for immediate aid. He appointed Pierre Bremont

68 DA MFA, PA, 1957, F-57, Mađ-100, No. 421502. Telegram Ministarstva inostranih poslova stalnoj misiji u Njujorku, 7 December 1956.

69 DA MIP SCG, PA, 1957, F-57, Mađ-100, No. 4628. Beleške o razgovorima između Hovejde, Kacijana i Šakote, 9 January 1957.

70 DA MFA, PA, 1958, F-72, Mađ-430, No. 432638. Beleške o razgovorima Hovejde i jugoslovenskih predstavnika, 18 January 1957.

to head the new office.⁷² At the meeting of the UNREF Executive Committee on January 29–February 4, 1957, attended by Yugoslav observers, it was decided that contributions for Hungarian refugees would be used for aid in both Austria and Yugoslavia.⁷³

Bremont arrived in Belgrade on January 30, 1957 and the office was formally established by an exchange of letters between the Yugoslav Government and the High Commissioner for Refugees on February 6 and 11, 1957.⁷⁴ The office promptly took steps to secure authorizations for resettlement in Western countries for Hungarian refugees who had chosen to do so and sought to resettle them as quickly as possible.

The high commissioner visited Yugoslavia several times while the UNHCR Temporary Office in Belgrade was operating. Lindt was seen by the Yugoslav authorities as a realistic, energetic, and tactful man, who tried harder to resolve the refugee problem than his predecessor had done. On a three-day stay in March 1957, he visited camps and met high Yugoslav officials, including President Tito. Strains in relations between Yugoslavia and the office prompted Lindt to visit Belgrade again in early May, after Bremont had proposed that France and Austria should temporarily take 4000 refugees each. This was rejected: Yugoslavia feared that Austria, as a first-asylum country, would not reimburse Yugoslavia for the expenses it had incurred so far.⁷⁵ This rejection was maintained, despite a conversation between Lindt and S. Stefanović on May 11, where Lindt also expressed disapproval of the way Hungarian children were being repatriated, as the International Red Cross had not been allowed to attend. Thereafter, Yugoslavia and the office cooperated without major tensions.

The Yugoslav government gave permission for representatives of various charity organizations and of the UNHCR Temporary Office to collaborate whenever necessary, and the ICEM began to work from the office on April 1957. The high commissioner had informed the ICEM director in January that the Yugoslav government were requesting that an ICEM representative should come to Belgrade and

71 DA MFA, PA, 1958, F-12, Mađ-430, No. 41890. Telegram jugoslovenskog predstavnika u Ženevi Ministarstvu inostranih poslova, 27 January 1957. The ICEM agreed to send an administrator to the UN Temporary Office in Belgrade.

72 Ibid., No. 42038. Kacijanov telegram Ministarstvu inostranih poslova, 28 January 1957.

73 Ibid., No. 42805. Beleška sa zasedanja Izvršnog komiteta UNREF-a, 6 February 1957.

74 Ibid., No. 44874. Sporazum o uspostavljanju Privremenog ureda UNHCR.

75 DA MFA, PA, 1957, F-58, Mađ-100, No. 41036. Telegram jugoslovenskog predstavnika u Ženevi ministru inostranih poslova.

assess the refugee issue. This happened on February 13–27.⁷⁶ Based on his report, the organization gained complete understanding of the situation with Hungarian refugees in Yugoslavia. The Sixth ICEM Council session on April 11, 1957 decided, with the support of all national delegations except Austria's, to send a group of ten representatives to join the UNHCR office in Belgrade. The Canadian and Swiss representatives made it known that their countries would accept a certain number of Hungarian refugees, and the Swedish, Norwegian and Australian delegations reported that their commissions were already working on this,⁷⁷ and so ICEM participation in the work of the UNHCR Office hastened the resettlement process. The office also supervised the work of organizations responsible for collecting relief for the refugees.⁷⁸

After numerous national commissions had seen the camps and selected potential immigrants, major movements of large refugee groups took place in the spring and summer of 1957. The largest numbers of refugees were taken by France, Belgium, Sweden, West Germany, and Canada. Of some 16,000 refugees in Yugoslavia in mid-March asking for asylum in Western countries, half were resettled within the next four months. According to an Interior Ministry report on July 25, there were still 8320 persons in Yugoslav camps awaiting resettlement.⁷⁹ Another 2000 refugees emigrated over the next two months, which left 6264 in Yugoslavia by mid-September 1957, with the US, Latin American, Australian, German, and Danish ICEM commissions still active in the camps.⁸⁰

By October 15, 1957, the UNHCR office had assisted 12,000 refugees to resettle in Western countries. Its representatives served on the repatriation commissions as observers. There was an office representative supervising the distribution of international relief. The High Commission spent \$1,085,646 on Hungarian refugees' needs in that period. Significant progress in resolving the refugee problem had been made by October 1957, when the Yugoslav government agreed to extend the operation of the office until the end of the year, to allow the remaining 4400 refugees to be settled. The Yugoslav government also requested the office to make determined efforts to

76 DA MFA, PA, 1958, F-72, Mađ-430, No. 432638. Izveštaj direktora ICEM-a, 23 March 1957.

77 DA MFA, PA, 1957, F-57, Mađ-100, No. 48445. Beleška sa Šestog zasedanja Saveta ICEM-a, 11 April 1957.

78 DA MFA, PA, 1958, F-72, Mađ-430, No. 432638. Beleška sa sastanka Koordinacionog tela, 11 March 1957.

79 DA MFA, PA, 1957, F-116, UN-594, No. 418067. Izbeglice u FNRJ, 8 August 1957.

80 DA MFA, PA, 1957, F-58, Mađ-100, No. 419264. Telegram Ministarstva inostranih poslova jugoslovenskoj ambasadi u Londonu, 11 September 1957.

secure compensation for Yugoslav expenses, which had reached \$6,300,000 by mid-October.⁸¹ News about compensation for expenses was received on November 21, when Bremont mentioned in conversation with Kacijan and Šakota that the US State Department had decided to award Yugoslavia \$3,000,000.⁸² He also said that the problem of the Hungarian refugees was almost resolved, and that all the refugees would have left Yugoslavia by the end of the year.

It was concluded at an UNREF Executive Committee meeting on January 13, 1958 that the issue of Hungarian refugees in Yugoslavia was resolved, as Sweden had agreed to accept the remaining 31 refugees.⁸³ As there was no further need for the temporary office, the process of closing it took place in January 1958, and Bremont left Belgrade at the beginning of February. A joint communiqué by the Yugoslav authorities and the UNHCR Temporary Office announced on January 27, a year after the international community had begun to participate, that the problem was over and the last group of refugees were obtaining visas.⁸⁴ The European country to accept the largest number was France (2445), followed by Belgium (2376), Sweden (1295), West Germany (1131), and Switzerland (744). Austria accepted 381 refugees, Denmark 212, Italy 170, Holland 80, Norway 344, and the United Kingdom 287. Scandinavian countries accepted 200 tuberculosis patients and other countries accepted all the disabled; 2509 of the refugees settled in the United States, 1765 in Canada and 1500 in Australia.

The final report on Hungarian refugees, composed at the Belgrade UNHCR office, states that Yugoslavia accepted 634 persons. There is no data on these available. They were under the jurisdiction of the Federal Interior Ministry, whose archives are still classified. Dušan Kosanović, a former Interior Ministry employee, stated in his notes that Yugoslavia had accepted over 830 refugees. The actual number cannot be precisely determined. As far as Kosanović knew, Yugoslav intelligence services were interested in Hungarians who had been educated in the Soviet Union and had studied radar systems, as the Yugoslav Army was in need of radar.⁸⁵ This is corroborated by telegrams exchanged between the Yugoslav army headquarters and the Budapest

81 ASCG, 130–72–1028.

82 DA MFA, PA, 1958, F–72, Mađ–430, No. 432638. Beleška o razgovoru između Šakote i Bremona, 21 November 1957.

83 DA MFA, PA, 1957, F–58, Mađ–100, No. 426741. Pismo podsekretara Ministarstva inostranih poslova stalnoj jugoslovenskoj misiji u Njujorku.

84 DA MFA, PA 1958, F–72, Mađ–430, No. 432638. Problem mađarskih izbeglica je rešen, 27 January 1958.

85 Kosanović 2005, 108.

Embassy. From these telegrams, it can be seen that Yugoslavs at the Budapest Embassy were under orders not to encourage emigration by their Hungarian acquaintances and friends, but to persuade them to remain at home, although if any of these appeared at the border, they were admitted into Yugoslavia.

The Yugoslav attitude to the refugee problem was in accordance with its reaction to the Hungarian Revolution as a whole. It was modified as Yugoslavia adjusted to the evolving situation in Hungary and according to the international reactions, but it remained characteristically ambivalent. After the failed attempt to close the border and turn the refugees back, Yugoslavia faced large numbers of arrivals, and reluctantly accepted them in response to international public reactions. The international relief and monetary aid received was crucial to resolving the problem.

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FIFTY-SIX IN SUBCARPATHIA

Influences, consequences and lessons

PLACE AND TIME

Subcarpathia, consisting of parts of the four historical counties of Ung, Bereg, Ugocsa and Máramaros, was ceded to the Soviet Union under a “pocket treaty” signed between the Soviet Union and Czechoslovakia on June 29, 1945,¹ some time before the peace treaty of Paris was signed by the Allied Powers and Hungary on February 10, 1947. Implementation was not very smooth.² The earlier agreement was designed mainly to serve Moscow’s political and military interests. Occupying Subcarpathia gave the land and air forces of the Soviet army direct contact with the army units stationed in Austria, Hungary and Romania, and gained them important strategic positions in relation to the West European powers and the United States, hitherto allies, but soon to become ideological, economic and military foes. The practicality

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1 The writer first heard this somewhat pejorative expression from István Vida, after the 1989–90 change of system in Hungary.

2 “A Soviet–Czechoslovak agreement of May 8, 1944 allowed areas behind the war zone to pass to the control of the Czechoslovak government and Beneš to send government delegations there to reorganize public administration and start life up. On August 21, 1944, a 24-member coalition delegation headed by the social democrat F. Nemeč set from London to Moscow, from there reached Besztercebánya (Banská Bystrica, Slovakia) on October 7, 1944, and on October 27, moved its base to Huszt (Hust) on the ex-president’s orders. Understanding the district would remain part of Czechoslovakia, the government delegation set about reorganizing the pre-1938 public administration in the area under its control, encouraged re-establishment of political parties, and sought to recruit soldiers for a Czechoslovak volunteer army.” Vida–Zselický 2004, 234. The Czechoslovak activity was resisted by the Soviet military authorities, with whose effective support a first congress of delegates of people’s commissions was convened in Munkács (Mukachevo) to elect the People’s Soviet of Trans-Carpathian Ukraine and publish in manifesto form the desire for the territory to “reunite” with Soviet Ukraine. The body sent an ultimatum to the Czechoslovak delegation on December 5 calling upon it to leave Subcarpathia.

of the situation for the Soviets was apparent in 1956 and in 1968, during the invasions of Hungary and Czechoslovakia respectively.

The first Soviet census after World War II, held in 1959, gave a population of 920,173, of whom 146,247 (15.9 per cent) were ethnic Hungarians.³

It soon became clear to the Hungarians of Subcarpathia at the end of the war that they had been detached from Hungary again. In addition, they underwent severe physical and mental traumas, as most of the men of military and working age (a total of 40,000 people) were driven off to forced labour in concentration camps. The Greek Catholic (Uniate) Church, which had some Hungarian members, was banned in 1949; 129 priests who refused to convert to the Orthodox faith were condemned to 25 years in labour camps. With atheism raised to the rank of a state ideology, many of the ministers of the Reformed Church received long penal sentences for anti-Soviet activity, attempting to overthrow people's power, misleading ("stupefying") people,⁴ and above all for anti-Soviet propaganda among young people. Many Roman Catholic priests suffered similarly.

There was discrimination against young men of Hungarian and German origin born between 1927 and 1930. They were liable for military service in 1947–52, but they were deemed unreliable for armed service in the Soviet Army, and sent instead for labour service in the Donyets Basin coalmines. Deserters fleeing from the miserable conditions were given prison sentences if caught.

Public education in Hungarian began to revive in 1953–5, when Hungarian middle schools opened again in towns and larger communities. Imports of books, newspapers and periodicals from Hungary, including the general sale of subscriptions, commenced in 1957. Subcarpathian Hungarians were able to keep up with events in Hungary in the early 1950s through radio broadcasts from Budapest, or with heavy interference, from Radio Free Europe in Munich. There were similar reception conditions for Hungarian-language broadcasts from the BBC and Voice of America.

3 The Hungarian census of 1941, based on declarations of native language, found 245,286 Hungarians, 28.8 per cent of the population. The reasons for the decrease after the war include the disappearance of the Hungarian-speaking Jews deported in the spring of 1944, the rounding up of male Hungarians in 1944–5 and consequent losses, and classing as Ukrainian the Greek Catholics among the ethnic Hungarians.

4 From the memoirs of Lajos Gulácsy, a Reformed Church minister convicted on March 19–20, 1949, and a bishop in the 1990s, see Dupka 1993, 97.

DURING THE REVOLUTION

The Hungarians of Subcarpathia were able to learn from the radio about the events of the Hungarian Revolution almost as they happened. The broadcasts from Budapest and Munich were received the joy and anxiety by most of them. Twelve years before they had still been Hungarian citizens and most of their personal and communal experiences of Soviet rule since had been negative. Even as they witnessed the massive Soviet troop movements, they still wanted to believe that Hungary would soon be independent again. They also nursed a faint hope that Subcarpathia might “return to Hungary again”. as leaflets distributed in various communities put it. Less delighted with the revolution were those who had entered political and public life after 1945 as members of the CPSU or won a middle-management position in a village *kolkhoz*.

Later criminal prosecutions show that anti-Soviet conspiracies were discovered and exposed in three Subcarpathian communities. Intermix published in 2006 a collection of Subcarpathian County Archives documents edited by György Dupka, *’56 és Kárpátalja* (‘56 and Subcarpathia), but in this author’s opinion, they exaggerate in treating as “anti-Soviet youth organizations” what were essentially emotional, sincere, natural manifestations not devoid of an element of the student prank.⁵ As a result, and presumably without the editor wishing it, they legitimize the exaggerated court processes and sentences of the time.

The inhabitants of the village of Mezőkaszony (Koson)⁶ on the Soviet–Hungarian border did not hear only from the radio about the revolutionary events in Budapest. People from the village of Barabás on the other side came up to the frontier and shouted—in a way difficult to imagine today—for help from the people of Mezőkaszony living under Soviet rule. This persuaded a brother and sister, István and Mária Ormos,⁷ and their cousin, Sándor Szécsi, to encourage people to help the Hungarians by making handwritten leaflets and posters, which they posted up in public places. These were soon taken down by the authorities and the case was reported to the KGB office for Beregszász (Berehovo) District. The official report was augmented by a report from a local informant and an investigation into these school-age children

5 Dupka 2006.

6 Subcarpathian place names appear here in Hungarian, followed on the first occasion by a transliteration of the current official Ukrainian name.

7 The children’s father, the carpenter József Ormos, was arrested for being a *kulak* in 1948 and given a long labour-camp sentence in Siberia. The main impulse behind the charges may have been his spacious family house, which was expropriated for “community purposes”.

began. When the evidence had been gathered—by which time Mária Ormos and Sándor Szécsi were students of the University of Ungvár (Uzhgorod)—the three young people were arrested on November 2, 1957, and sentenced on January 2, 1958. In all three cases, the charge was “writing and posting anti-Soviet leaflets”. The first defendant was Sándor Szécsi, who received six years in a labour camp, the second István Ormos, who received four years, and the third Mária Ormos, who also received four years. Szécsi and István Ormos were sent to the Mordvin Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic to serve their sentences, while Mária Ormos was sent beyond the Urals to the women’s political camp at Kemerovo.⁸

In the autumn of 1956 and the spring of 1957, young people in Nagyszőlős (Vinohradiv) who presumably sympathized with the revolution were likewise charged with writing, posting and distributing anti-Soviet leaflets and posters and writings. The five involved in the former seat of Ugocsa County were Hungarian secondary-school students: József Illés, János Varga, Zoltán Kovács, Sándor Milován and István Dudás. They were said to have written leaflets during the revolution calling for the withdrawal of the Soviet armed forces from Hungary, and probably influenced by the MUK campaign,⁹ “we resumed the activity in March 1957. But this time we made the leaflets using rubber stamps. That was primitive as well, because we first had to cut the letters with a razor blade and then stick them on singly; that’s how we did the sheets, and we posted them up and distributed them in the market place on Thursdays, because that was market day, that was when the most people gathered. The authorities could not imagine where they had come from, but they didn’t have to think very long because there was only one Hungarian middle school, and that’s where they began sounding people,” József Illés recollected in 1992.¹⁰ The sentences announced in August 1957 on the boys, then 19, 17 and 16 years old, were for four years in a remand institution followed by a remand labour camp. All of them but Milován, who was held at Dubno (Rovno District) in Western Ukraine, served their sentences in the Mordvin ASSR, but none of them had to serve in full.¹¹

8 All three had part of their sentences remitted. After their release, Szécsi and Mária Ormos completed their university courses in Ungvár and then worked as teachers. They both live in Hungary now. István Ormos works in Subcarpathia in his father’s trade of carpenter.

9 The slogan MUK (the Hungarian initials of “Let’s Begin Again in March”) appeared first in January and February 1957, mainly in Budapest, but spread to communities elsewhere and across the border. Small groups of young people who had fought in the revolution and were unable to stomach its defeat planned to revive the armed uprising against the regime on the March 15 anniversary of the 1848 Revolution.

10 Dupka 2006, 21.

11 After release, József Illés (who died in 1996) graduated in Russian language and literature from Ungvár

The investigating authorities tried in each case to find an intellectual instigator for the actions of the young people, where possible a locally influential member of the intelligentsia, best of all a clergyman of one of the established churches. This, surprisingly, looked most promising in the small Ung village of Gállocs (Haloch), where the ostensible abettor was the native-born Endre Gecse, the Reformed Church minister. He was popular among his congregation for his puritan lifestyle, his sincere commitment to the church, and his work among young people. Three boys from the village—László Molnár and István Pasztellák (13) and Tibor Perduk (14)—were said to have written and distributed leaflets during the time of the revolution and to have concealed arms left over from World War II. According to the sentence on Pasztellák passed behind closed doors in Ungvár on January 30–31, 1959, the charges had included that “in 1957–8, he often visited the minister of the Reformed church of the village of Gállocs in Ung district, Gecse [Geche Andry Geyzovich if the surname/forename/patronymic form used for non-Russian names in official Soviet documents is transliterated], who died on January 4, 1959 while remanded in custody, and who lent him various books of literature and books on the history of bourgeois Hungary. Influenced by anti-Soviet discussions with Gecse [...] the accused Pasztellák embarked on the road of Hungarian bourgeois nationalism and struggle against Soviet power.”¹²

The Gállocs congregation seems to have been unable to support its pastor to Christian standards. Endre Gecse accepted a vacant post Huszt (Hust), where he was inducted in May 1958. But the KGB already showed strong interest in him, and he was not left to minister there for long. Arrested on December 2 that year, he was taken to Ungvár, where he was intended to be the lead defendant in a show trial, as the putative organizer and brains behind an armed anti-Soviet group with American ties, engaged in a broad conspiracy. The “material evidence” for the American connection was a new cope, received from the Huszt congregation, who had sewn it out of fabric that had arrived in a parcel from America. But his captors failed to bring the case to trial. After one month on remand, Gecse died on January 4, 1959, ostensibly

State University as a correspondence student and then taught in the school at Nevetlenfalu (Dakovo) in Nagyszőlős District. János Varga graduated from the Lvov Physical Education College and was at one point mayor of his village of Feketeadó (Chornotisiv). István Dudás worked in trade until his death in 1974. Sándor Milován completed the Munkács (Munkachevo) Technical School and was also in trade until 1989. Then on February 26, 1989, he accepted office in the Subcarpathian Hungarian Cultural Association (KMKSZ), of which he is currently general vice-chairman. The author has no information about what happened to Zoltán Kovács.

12 Dupka 2006, 37.

of heart failure, a disease that apparently decimated prisoners at the time. His funeral—simply a burial—was held in secret in the old Kapos Street cemetery in Ungvár. His wife was allowed to attend, but not the minister who was to conduct the service.¹³

But the authorities were not going to abandon the prosecution of the Gálocs boys accused of writing and distributing anti-Soviet leaflets and hiding arms. The first defendant, Pasztellák, received a custodial sentence of six years and the second, Perduk, of two. Molnár spent two days in custody and was then obliged for a year, like some dangerous political enemy, to report weekly at the village hall, with the KGB investigator would come out for the occasion.¹⁴

To draw some conclusions from these group prosecutions, the acts of anti-Soviet or anti-intervention protest were done by village or market-town children or adolescents, in great naivety and ignorance of the real political world. They follow examples in Hungary, and reflect how the Subcarpathian Hungarians saw themselves as part of the global Hungarian community, an assumption that permeated their ideas. The events that took place and the romantic acts of sacrifice entailed show that the instincts of solidarity with the Hungarians of the whole Carpathian Basin were still little damaged in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Discounting the collaborators in Hungary and beyond its borders, everybody in 1956 wanted Hungarian independence and an end to its satellite status and foreign occupation. The dark side of this glorious episode in history cannot be ignored either. The evidence in almost every trial included reports from informers who flouted ethical norms and betrayed their communities. The volume *'56 and Subcarpathia*, cited already, lists those who likewise wrote leaflets and made anti-Soviet statements in support of the revolution, and received longer or shorter custodial sentences.¹⁵ That fate overtook Ilona Balla of Eszeny (Esen) and Volodimir Margitich, János Dóri and Jenő Melnik of Ungvár.

Suspicion and mistrust of the Hungarians lessened in the early 1950s: young men were conscripted into the army, not sent to the coalfields of the Donyets Basin. When it came to intervening in Hungary, the Soviet command seems to have had no time or showed no interest in “cleansing” the intervention forces of ethnic Hungarians. It must have been hard psychologically for Hungarians enlisted in the Soviet Army to face Hungarian civilians and soldiers struggling for freedom and independence. Desertion or laying down arms is a grave crime for soldiers anywhere in the world, as everybody knew. To present knowledge, that risk was taken by two

13 Gecse was reinterred finally on October 24, 1992 in the cemetery at Gálocs.

14 Pasztellák still lives in his native village and Perduk in nearby Téglás (Tehlash).

15 Dupka 2006.

men of Subcarpathia: Mátyás Lukács of Munkács (Munkachevo) and József Bucsella of Fancsika (Fanchikovo), Nagyszőlős District. They were arrested and given sentences under martial law of four years in labour camp in Lukács's case and 15 in Bucsella's.

THE OPPOSING SIDE

A stratum of Hungarian “cadres” giving reliable support the communist regime was already developing in Subcarpathia in the 1950s, in agriculture, the arts and the press. The curious logic of the time led to such people being placed in “positions of trust” as farm brigade leaders. That trust took a different importance in the arts and the press, where their task was to turn the Hungarians now under Soviet rule in the “right direction”. They included Károly Lusztig,¹⁶ editor-in-chief of *Vörös Zászló* (Red Flag), the party paper in Beregszász (Berehovo) district, László Balla,¹⁷ editor-in-chief of the Hungarian office of the textbook publishing company in Ungvár, and László Sándor¹⁸ of the Hungarian department of Ungvár Radio. They were given the “honour” of translating from Russian to Hungarian and copy editing, and reading out at dawn on November 4, the appeal of János Kádár's self-styled Hungarian Revolutionary Worker–Peasant Government.¹⁹

16 Journalist and editor, born in 1922 in Ungvár. An editor, then editor-in-chief of the paper *Vörös Zászló*, then on the staff of the daily *Kárpáti Igaz Szó* (Carpathian Truth) until the early 1990s, he settled in Israel in 1992, but returned to Ungvár in 2005.

17 A poet, author and press editor, born in 1927 in Pálóc (Pavlovce nad Uhom, Slovakia). A hardline communist, he was editor-in-chief of the Hungarian-language party paper *Kárpáti Igaz Szó* until retiring in 1966. In 1992, he made a theatrical resignation from the CPSU in a public press statement protesting at the Baltic secessions from the Soviet Union.

18 A literary historian, critic and translator born in Budapest in 1909. He lived in Ungvár until the 1960s, then in Budapest. He became an editor with the publisher Gondolat in 1962 and curator of the State Gorky Library in 1966–78. He was decorated for his Hungarian (and possibly Soviet) cultural work with an award For Socialist Culture (1966), a gold grade Order of Merit of Labour (1969), an award For a Socialist Hungary (1979), and an Order of the Star of the Hungarian People's Republic with gold wreath (1989).

19 “I learned next day that the Szolnok transmitter was broadcasting the government statement and then I had news from over the border, mainly the Salgótarján and Diósgyőr districts, that big crowds had heard the two radio broadcasts, and what they heard had filled people with confidence in the future.” Reminiscences of László Sándor, see Dupka 2006, 76.

Those mentioned performed their tasks of historical note at work. Others took part in crushing the revolution under party orders. The Soviet army command in Hungary requested that 40–50 reliable party officials from Subcarpathia should be seconded for a few months to work beside the economic and political deputies of the commanders in restoring order. The other important criterion besides reliability being knowledge of Hungarian, this contingent of army officers was made up of ethnic Hungarian cadres. Though they were conscripted for duty, most of them did their task out of conviction and thought of it as an honour. In most cases, it involved translating and interpreting. Service in Hungary gave them added political prestige and a chance of important positions of trust on their return, although with some material privileges. They remained proud of that period in their life and would continue to refer back to it during the Soviet period. They thought it right that the revolution was reversed. They seem to have overcome quite easily any doubts they may have had about helping to crush their fellow Hungarians' revolution and struggle for independence. Among them were Vladimir Mihály, deputy editor-in-chief of *Kárpáti Igaz Szó* (Carpathian Truth), János Nemes, column editor on the same paper, Tibor Barzsó, editor of the publisher Kárpáti Kiadó, Borbála Szala, editor of the paper *Radanska Skola/Szovjet Iskola* (Soviet School), who later wrote children's poetry, and Gábor Veress, first secretary of the Beregszász District Party Committee, who after Ukraine's independence headed the international department in the County State Administration of Subcarpathia.

The positions held gave such people a decisive role in the Hungarian intellectual and cultural life of Subcarpathia. These were centrally controlled, heavily ideologized fields, and it would be hard to present what they did in a positive light. It involved suppressing their national identity and adopting communist ideology with the zeal of converts, so that their semblance of being “comrades of Hungarian national affiliation” became a kind of party assignment. Many examples could be given of how they sought to over-perform, but that would go beyond the purpose of this paper. One, however, is more closely tied to the revolution. Fifty-six was in fact the reason why greater scope came to be given in Subcarpathia to Hungarian book publishing and press imports from Hungary, as local leaders realized the need to popularize communist propaganda in Hungarian.²⁰ This realization was responsible, for example,

20 “A very important part is ideological work. To raise ideological work to a requisite standard means first reaching a position where all educational work can be done in the language of the people.” Contribution of M. V. Povzik, secretary of the Trans-Carpathian District Party Committee, 12th Beregszász District Party Conference, December 18, 1957. (Subcarpathia was and is known officially in Ukrainian as Trans-Carpathia.)

for the publication of an anthology entitled *Carpathians* by Kárpáti Kiadó in Ungvár in 1958. It contained some lines of verse summing up the aftermath of the revolution as then known, executions and all, written by László Sándor, then living in Subcarpathia, and later enjoying a high reputation in Hungary:

*The nation awakes once more, revives;
Its better men—on their feet again—
By the Soviets' side assigning five
Score lives from the gallows tree to hang.*

That was the year when Imre Nagy was executed by hanging.

THE CONDUCT OF LOCAL BODIES DURING AND AFTER THE REVOLUTION

The dictatorships of the Soviet satellite countries stood amazed at the events in Hungary, and perhaps aghast, envisioning their own fall. Their anxiety that the system might collapse were compounded by quite unfounded fears of territorial revision in Hungary's favour. These were increased at most on an atmospheric level by the organization, protests and leaflet demands being made by Hungarians. Such activity, mainly in border areas of Subcarpathia and also in Kolozsvár (Cluj) and Marosvásárhely (Tîrgu Mureş) in Transylvania, was met with incomprehension and confusion in local government, the secret services and the police. The incomprehension was partly because those running the local administration, secret service and police came in most cases from distant parts of the country, with high political qualifications but no local knowledge. Subcarpathia suffered the worst effects of that policy during the period of the revolution and subsequent reprisals. Local Ukrainians were also bypassed when the territory was annexed. The only officials thought reliable were ethnic Russians from inner areas of the Soviet Union, whose distorted picture of Subcarpathia and its history was gleaned at most from party pamphlets.

The most heed was paid to the events of the revolution and the political stance of the Subcarpathian Hungarians by the party committee of Beregszász District, where Hungarians formed a majority of the population. Documents in the Subcarpathian Regional State Archives in Beregszász were already warning in October 1956 that many visitors from "people's democratic countries" were distorting Soviet reality, making chauvinistic propaganda, and acting negatively on the feelings of the backward sector of the Hungarian population living in the district. The committee underlined the need to send out lecturers qualified to deal with international issues to deliver lectures in Hungarian to the workers and *kolchoz* members. The "backward

section”, as later historical events would show, had kept their heads and listened to their hearts. They still saw themselves as an integral part of the Hungarian nation.

The confusion is exemplified by the way the central and regional authorities failed to see eye to eye. At the Beregszász District Party Conference on December 1–2, 1956, Comrade Ocheretany, speaking on behalf of the CPSU Central Committee, objected to the existence, even among communists, of conflict between “local and non-local, Hungarian and Ukrainian”. One blow in the struggle against “deviations” was delivered by the Hungarian–Ukrainian paper *Kárpáti Igaz Szó/ Zakarpatska Pravda* (Carpathian Truth), in an article published on February 7, 1957 and entitled “Questions of news and ideological work”. This criticized the Beregszász Hungarian-language paper *Vörös Zászló* for ideological shortcomings. As the minutes of the February 19, 1957 meeting of the Ukrainian Communist Party’s Beregszász District Committee put it, “The materials in the paper dealing with ideological issues lack the requisite precision, party principle, loyalty to principle [...] The paper has not waged any struggle against the damaging ideology of the religions present in our district, it has not revealed the religious obstinacy of some workers, it has quite avoided unveiling appearances of Hungarian and other nationalisms.”²¹ The leadership in a resolution ordered “Comrade Lustig” to remedy the mistakes, and we can be sure Comrade Lustig did what he was told.

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Many of those involved in revolutionary activity and later convicted of it were of school age. This turned official attention on schools and teaching staffs as well. Lack of loyalty to the Soviet Union was found in teaching and education work. In a comment on the middle school at Mezőkaszony (Kason), Lieutenant Colonel S. E. Yevdokimov of Beregszász District KGB wrote, “It is impossible to refrain from remarking, in view of what has been said, that the teaching staff in our district includes large numbers of teachers from clerical, *kulak* or trading families, and families that include people convicted earlier of collaborating with the Hungarian occupiers.”²² The KGB also blamed local revolutionary events on the clergy. Yevdokimov told the district party conference on December 18, 1957 how “clerical ideology sometimes wins battles here; the clergy are so ungovernable they even draw young people into church rituals like confession and communion.”²³

After the reprisals, executions and consolidation that followed Kádár’s assumption of power, the Subcarpathian KGB found ever less grounds for concern. But mem-

21 Trans-Carpathian Regional State Archives (Kárpátaljai Területi Állami Levéltár, hereafter KTÁL), f. 15, l. 5, No. 36.

22 Ibid., l. 7, No. 36.

23 Ibid., l. 5, No. 28.

ories of the Hungarian Revolution and War of Independence were never expunged, much though the authorities wanted to do so.

‘REVOLUTIONARY TOURISM’: HUNGARIAN POLITICIANS, ÁVH MEN AND PRISONERS IN SUBCARPATHIA

The sour subtitle calls for some explanation. The Soviet Union in the 1950s was almost hermetically sealed from the outside world. Ordinary citizens could not dream of travelling abroad, even if they possessed a so-called “foreign passport”. There were no opportunities for private travels or visits to relatives, neither to the inimical West European countries or to the United States, or even to the ostensibly “friendly” or “fraternal” socialist countries. This applied also in Hungary, if not with quite such severity. The situation was made worse for the authorities by the fact that any citizen of the Hungarian People’s Republic leaving the country in any direction was likely to meet other Hungarians, as customs officers, or more probably still, simply walking down the street. The government, having given up the Hungarians outside the country entirely, was inclined to see in any such contact a prospect of reviving chauvinism coupled with anti-Sovietism.

Members of the Hungarian government or the Hungarian Workers’ Party politicians visiting the Soviet Union never stopped off in Subcarpathia. The presence there of a section of the Hungarian nation was among many taboo subjects in Hungarian–Soviet relations. No knowledge of them was shown by government or party delegates from Budapest. One incident, now confirmed but long secret, occurred as members of the Kádár government were chosen by the CPSU Central Committee, in the future prime minister’s presence, and the proclamation of the Revolutionary Worker–Peasant Government was prepared. This was read on Ungvár Radio on November 4, as the Soviet attack began. The opinion is still held in Subcarpathia that Kádár was staying then at the county party committee resort at Ókemence (Kamyantsa), near Ungvár, although incontestable evidence is still lacking.

The detested Hungarian State Protection Authority (Államvédelmi Hatóság, ÁVH) the notorious political police and perpetrator of state terror in the Rákosi period, was a major barrier to development and consolidation during the revolution. It was no accident that Imre Nagy remarked in a radio broadcast on October 28, “We will organize a new, unified state police during the restoration of order and disband the State Protection Authority.”²⁴ In fact the ÁVH fragmented during the revolution.

24 Varga–Kenedi 1989, 132.

Its members went into hiding and many of them fled to Czechoslovakia or the Soviet Union, including Subcarpathia.

The Soviet army command, which distrusted the Hungarians, thought it best to hold those arrested, including several of those had borne arms, in prisons in the Soviet Union, rather than Hungary, arguing that Hungarian prisons were not suitable for conducting “objective” interrogations. General Ivan Serov, who directed KGB operations in Hungary, wrote in the report cited earlier that 4700 people had been arrested during military operations, of whom 1400 had been imprisoned, and 860 transported to Ungvár or to Stribe, beyond the Carpathians. He went on to report, “In the early days, there were cases, as those arrested and imprisoned were being sent on, where commanders of military units sent those in custody to Chop [Csap] without reference to the Special Department or the state security organizations, and the Interior Ministry camps admitted them without consulting us and without their investigation materials. For instance, the commander of the Uzhgorod [Ungvár] concentration camp took in 68 industrial students who had been sent by the commander of a division stationed in Budapest. This group of adolescents was returned to Budapest and released on the orders of S. Konev.”²⁵

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Those rounded up had strong recollections of people being taken off for *malenky robot* during and after World War II. Their fears that they were bound for labour camps in Siberia were founded, insofar as they were rounded up in a very similar fashion.

But this time it was different. The captives managed to throw letters out of the goods wagons, telling their relatives where they were. Those in prison in Ungvár and elsewhere soon began to demand an explanation of why they had been arrested. The atmosphere was tense after the Soviet invasion, with absenteeism ubiquitous and strikes in many places. The Kádár government, seen by the public as illegitimate, was having talks with the workers’ councils and much hampered by the tense political situation. The deportations over the Budapest–Debrecen–Nyíregyháza–Záhony railway lines were interrupted several times by the strikes of railwaymen unwilling to see Hungarian prisoners borne off to the Soviet Union. News of the deportations prompted Hungarian revolutionaries to damage the railway tracks between Pásztó and Szurdokpüspöki and sympathetic workers made the rail route unusable. Soviet deportations were the last thing the Kádár government wanted as it tried to consolidate its power, and in mid-November, Kádár and Ferenc Münnich appealed to the Soviet army command and to Serov for an end to the deportations and the release of all such prisoners. The intervention succeeded in that some of the deportees were handed over to the Hungarian authorities.

25 Varga–Kenedi 1989, 132.

The Soviet decision to release the detainees was not motivated only by a desire to help the collaborating Hungarian government and prepare for the consolidation it sought. It was by no means to the liking of Moscow or the Hungarian Revolutionary Worker–Peasant Government that the UN Security Council had been convened in New York and a debate on the Hungarian question had been slated for November 12, 1956. The Soviet Union as a Security Council member was reluctant to see its self-promoted reputation as a “peace-loving country” reduced to tatters in front of the world. It had sensed that the United States did not want to intervene, but it did not want to press matters too far. So it resisted its own reflexes and abandoned plans to bring to the Soviet Union the Hungarians it had taken captive in the revolution.

The volume *'56 and Subcarpathia* quotes from recollections of the revolutionary period by István Árpá, a music teacher and music researcher, who relates how at dawn on November 3 there arrived in Ungvár in tarpaulined army lorries children of kindergarten age, presumably from orphanages in Hungary. This soon became widely rumoured, and members of Hungarian families from Ungvár went to the children’s centre in Szobránc Street, to see if they could foster a child. Nothing came of that, and according to the interviewee, the lorries soon drove off towards the Uzhok Pass. However, the story that Hungarian children were abducted has yet to be confirmed from any other source.

AFTER THE CHANGE OF SYSTEM

The 1956 Revolution and War for Independence was among the most important political factors legitimizing Hungary’s change of system in 1989–90. Hungary’s swing to democracy was also symbolic, instigating a domino effect in the so-called socialist countries of Eastern Europe. Social and political organizations of Hungarians were involved in the bloodless Czechoslovak and bloody Romanian changes as well. The same applies in Subcarpathia. The changes in the Soviet Union and the change of system in Hungary lent force, courage and enthusiasm for local Hungarians to play a regionally important political role. On February 26, 1989, the first organization for protecting a Hungarian minority in the Carpathian Basin was founded in Ungvár: the Subcarpathian Hungarian Cultural Association, which adopted the spiritual and political message of ’56 as its own. Significantly, the Hungarian Revolution was marked in Ungvár on October 23, 1991, while the Soviet Union was still in existence. Although the empire was on its last legs, those taking part in the event ran a personal risk.

After Ukraine became independent without notable social or political upheaval, the press began to lay the crushing of the revolution at Moscow’s door, as a historical

crime. Several anti-Russian articles sympathetic to '56 were published. Ukrainian national politics has been riven by wrangling in the last decade and a half. No steps have ever been taken to prevent '56 being celebrated. That neutral, unresisting stance shows that Kiev had no interest in event and the Subcarpathian cult of it.

It is welcome, however, that October 23 is marked by Ukrainians and Hungarians together in Subcarpathia (and among the Hungarian diaspora in Kiev), with representations of county, district and local government taking part. That also conveys the political message that the aims of the Hungarian Revolution and its moral impeccability are sincerely respected not only by the Hungarians, but by the Ukrainians and Rusyns. The memory of '56 is upheld in Subcarpathia in the same way as the Rákóczi War of Independence and the 1848–9 Revolution and War of Independence are celebrated.

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REVOLUTION AND THE INTELLIGENTSIA

How East German students received the '56 Hungarian Revolution

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News of the events of the Hungarian Revolution, right after political changes in Poland at the end of October 1956, threw the East German public into ferment. Walter Ulbricht, first secretary of the German Socialist Unity Party (GSUP)¹ Central Committee, was afraid of a repetition of the June 1953 uprising in Berlin and of the Hungarian and Polish efforts at reform might be acting as a catalyst. The state-controlled media spoke of counter-revolution and anti-state activity by Horthy-fascist bands shielded by Western provocateurs.² These official commentaries on counter-revolution and the Western broadcasts of revolution and a struggle for freedom from the Soviets were the two influences on East German public opinion.

Almost all strata in society contained some who took a great interest in the developments in Hungary, but the most active and receptive reactions came from members of the intelligentsia. It was groups of students in higher education and opposition communist intellectuals who constituted the greatest danger in the party leadership's eyes.

What effect did news and information about the revolutionary events have on the activity of students? Was there an enhanced risk in the autumn of 1956 of the kind of resistance dubbed "rebellion of the intellectuals"? After some consideration of the antecedents, these are the questions considered here, mainly through GSUP documents and recollections by witnesses.³

1 Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands (SED).

2 See, for instance, *Neues Deutschland* October 25 and 27, and November 6, 1956.

3 For more detail on reactions of the East German intelligentsia to the Hungarian Revolution, based mainly on German literature, see Cseh 1995.

THE REACTIONS OF STUDENTS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Of the various intellectual groups, the students were the most vehement in their reactions and the numbers involved. The East German press set about dampening or even silencing the reactions of sympathy with the Hungarian revolutionaries and efforts to take the demands of the Hungarian students as an example. The central GSUP daily, *Neues Deutschland*, reported on October 26 of outrages committed by bands of counter-revolutionaries, and of solidarity with the authorities from East German students and antipathy to the Hungarian counter-revolutionaries.⁴ There were indeed some college groups—and some industrial workers—who sent telegrams of sympathy to a Hungary “afflicted by fascist bands”.⁵ A Berlin school and a police station were among those proposing to raise international forces to crush the counter-revolution.⁶

After initial silence, *Neues Deutschland* published articles on October 25 and 27 describing how the authorities, the workers, and the Soviet troops rushing to their aid had jointly broken the resistance of the armed fascist rebels.⁷ These pieces infuriated several intellectuals. As Günter Zehm, a pupil of Ernst Bloch and by then an assistant lecturer at the Jena University, wrote to his friend Gerhard Zwerenz, “What our lamentable newspapers want to conceal is that clearly one of the biggest revolutions in modern history since 1917 has broken out in Hungary (dubbed by our press here as a ‘counter-revolution’), where the real revolutionaries have triumphed.”⁸

The Stasi (Ministry of State Security) also reported to the party leaders on the public’s “unpleasant” reactions. Some of the university discussion groups started at the beginning of the year were revived by the accession of Gomulka and the initial

4 *Neues Deutschland* October 26, 1956.

5 Cseh 1995, 74.

6 The Office of the Federal Commissioner, Ministry for State Security (Die Bundesbeauftragte für die Unterlagen des Staatssicherheitsdienstes der ehemaligen DDR, Ministerium für Staatssicherheit, hereafter BStU, MfS), Information on the Polish and Hungarian events (Kurzinformation zu den Ereignissen in Volkspolen und der Ungarischen Volksrepublik, hereafter Information...), Allg., 79/56., Berlin, November 11, 1956, 6.

7 *Neues Deutschland* October 25 and 27, 1956.

8 Stiftung Archive der Parteien und Massenorganisationen der DDR im Bundesarchiv, Zentrales Parteiarhiv (The Donation Archives of the Parties and Mass Organizations of the GDR in the Federal Archives, Central Party Archives, hereafter: SAMPO-BArch, ZPA) IV 2, 1, 182., 38. Analyse der Feindtätigkeit innerhalb der wissenschaftlichen und künstlerischen Intelligenz (Report on the enemy activity of the scientific and cultural intelligentsia, hereafter: Report...).

successes of the Hungarian uprising. According to a Stasi report of October 25, “hostile” leaflets were spread on the night of October 24 at the Humboldt University in Berlin, where students demanded more information on events in the world.⁹ According to the district leadership, Professor Robert Havemann, who taught at the university, had given a lecture “not in accordance with the party line”.¹⁰ Gatherings to discuss the Polish and Hungarian situation had been called for at a Berlin art college.¹¹

On October 25, leaders of the Free German Youth (FGY)¹² in the history department at Jena University compiled a ten-point draft entitled “FDY opinions and proposals on problems of democracy and university life in the GDR¹³”, which was posted up on the walls of the university.¹⁴ The proposed political remedies were 1) to change the one-sided reporting of the press, 2) publish fresher information and the papers’ own opinion, 3) have open and critical debate on basic questions of government policy and greater scope for the press, 4) not conceal disagreement among party and government leaders even if it conflicted with the majority opinion of the party’s Central Committee, 5) make West German university papers and more important dailies available at universities, 6–7) increase the rights of the Free German Youth and hold democratic university elections, 8) raise student stipends, 9) organize student exchange programmes with the FRG¹⁵, and 10) hold annual student congresses to discuss student matters, but with the main task of formulating a new programme for higher education.

In a writing of October 26, the Hungarian uprising was seen as a consequence of the Polish events.¹⁶ Some took positions against the counter-revolutionaries, but anti-Soviet and anti-party voices strengthened as well.¹⁷ According to reports on the public mood, much of the public and some party members listened to Austrian and Swiss stations, claiming domestic ones did not report the truth.¹⁸ People were bewildered, according to one report, which could be explained in part by the various conflicting rumours.¹⁹

9 BStU, MfS, Information..., Allg., 74/56., Berlin, October 25, 1956, 1.

10 Ibid.

11 Ibid., 1–2.

12 Freie Deutsche Jugend (FDJ).

13 Deutsche Demokratische Republik (DDR).

14 Fritsch–Nöckeln 2000, 13.

15 Federal Republic of Germany (Bundesrepublik Deutschland, BRD).

16 BStU, MfS, Information..., Allg., 75/56., Berlin, October 26, 1956, 4.

17 Ibid., 4–5.

18 BStU, MfS, Information..., Allg., 79/56., Berlin, November 2, 1956, 3.

The report of the situation on October 27 stated that the intelligentsia was still behaving in a restrained way and taking a wait-and-see attitude, but there was concern about situation in institutes of higher education.²⁰ Students of the Humboldt University, for instance, had intended to hold a demonstration, which the party had intervened swiftly to prevent. Students in Leipzig, Rostock, Dresden and elsewhere, and in the Humboldt, had publicized their demands. Their programme resembled Jena's in demanding independent student bodies and more objective information from the media, but went on to call for an end to courses in the Russian language and the course known as Bases of the Social Sciences.²¹ A Stasi document of October 29 reported that the idea of dismissing the party leaders, especially Ulbricht, had been raised at several colleges.²²

A comparison of these drafts with the demands compiled by the Hungarian students reveals that the East German ones were more put in a milder form and never brought before open plenary meetings. The most radical aspirations were to remove the Russian language from the syllabus, and if only by implication, to remove Ulbricht from office. By contrast, the Budapest students included the withdrawal of Soviet troops in a programme that was posted up in many parts of the city and even printed.

Although the reports said the district leaders thought the party capable of preventing any provocations, commando units formed at the time of the 1953 uprising were placed on alert outside the Humboldt University in Berlin.²³ There really were several student rallies at the end of October, in Berlin, Jena, Leipzig, Magdeburg, Greifswald, Halle and elsewhere, where the students reiterated their demands.²⁴ On October 30, the Politburo set up a university council, probably in response to the mounting pressure, as a way of calming the students.²⁵

The sources state that the most active group, the veterinary students of Berlin, wanted to hold a demonstration on November 2, but the Free German Youth secretary informed the commandos, who prevented it by lining up before the lecture halls

19 BStU, MfS, Information..., Allg., 77/56., Berlin, October 29, 1956, 2.

20 BStU, MfS, Information..., Allg., 76/56., Berlin, October 27, 1956, 3.

21 Ibid., 4.

22 Hoffmann 1993, 258–9.

23 Ibid., 260–1.

24 Prokop 2006, 56–7.

25 Brandt 2002, 162. That was never done; the measure was rescinded on November 20 under pressure from Ulbricht. Ibid., 197–8.

armed with rubber truncheons, in a show of strength.²⁶ Karl Schirdewan, a secretary of the GSUP Central Committee, disagreed with this, at least according to his memoirs, and would rather have won the young people over.²⁷

On November 5, the day after the revolution had been crushed, about 1000 students gathered at the Brandenburg Gate in Berlin for a sit-down protest against the Soviet intervention.²⁸ They too were dispersed by the commandos. The Politburo, at a meeting on November 8, drew up a plan in several stages for suppressing further “counter-revolutionary acts”.²⁹ Stasi forces would be used to prevent acts of provocation in the first instance, followed if they failed by the people’s army. In the last resort, Soviet troops would rush to the defence of the GDR.

SUMMARY

Partly due to the shortcomings in the East German news services, few people in the 1956 GDR knew much of Hungary beyond that it was a “fraternal socialist state”. It becomes clear from reading the recollections that some of the intelligentsia were no exception to that in the spring of 1956. Those receptive to Hungarian politics and culture tended first of all to admire Georg Lukács, many of whose works had appeared in the GDR. There was interest from several East German writers in the activities of the Petöfi Circle. The literary and political activity of the Hungarian intelligentsia were followed particularly by the intellectuals associated with the publishers Aufbau and the journal *Sonntag*. Significantly, one of the actions never carried out was a detailed plan to rescue Lukács.³⁰

The outbreak of the Hungarian Revolution was a catalyst for some intellectuals who had been activated politically by the 20th Congress of the CPSU, primarily for the hopes it raised of democratic change in the GDR. They showed great enthusiasm for Gomulka and in the early days of the Hungarian Revolution. Though most did not expect such democratic change to come by revolutionary means, some greeted the uprising warmly and were outraged at the media presenting it as a counter-revolution. Others feared the revolutionary events might spread and were alarmed at the street fighting in Hungary, and a few even supported the suppression.

26 Prokop 2006, 56–7.

27 Schirdewan 1994, 116.

28 Wolle 2001, 318–9.

29 Hoffman 1993, 263–4.

30 Janka 1989, 28–35.

Those to become most active in October 1956 were the university students, whose meetings to debate the Polish and Hungarian events yielded political demands, for instance for more authentic information, student self-government, and an end to courses on Russian and the bases of Marxism–Leninism. However, it would be an exaggeration to ascribe these student actions entirely to the events in Hungary. Most of the debating groups had formed after the 20th Congress and gained new strength from the events in Poland, before reaching a climax in late October and early November, during the Hungarian Revolution. There were also protests at the suppression of the revolution, but the state security service learnt of these plans and stepped in rapidly to forestall them.

The catalytic effect of the Hungarian Revolution applied in other intellectual circles as well. Philosopher Wolfgang Harich, for instance, had been encouraged by the 20th Congress and sought to gain his purposes by diplomatic means. He saw the autumn of 1956 as a good opportunity to reorganize the GDR in a socialist fashion, but his plan proved too radical for the party leadership, involving as it did reorganization of the whole party apparatus, including its leadership and a comprehensive programme aimed at German reunification. The party leadership itself contained some relatively liberal figures, such as Schierdewan, who criticized the personality cult surrounding Ulbricht and urged political reforms.

But the suppression of the Hungarian Revolution quashed any intention or hope of reform in the GDR. Ulbricht was especially outraged at the intentions of the communist intellectuals. Several-year prison sentences were given to Harich, Janka and other “rebellious intellectuals”, and many others were excluded from the party. A timely excuse for these reprisals came with the Soviet explanation of the Hungarian Revolution as something fomented by Western provocateurs and by fascist groups, who had mainly won support for their infamies among the Hungarian intelligentsia. A succession of articles on treacherous anti-state activity by Hungarian and then East German writers appeared in the East German press after the revolution had been suppressed.

According to Stasi documents analysing intellectuals’ behaviour in ’56, the East German intelligentsia had been spurred to action by the devilish ruses of “the enemy”. The reports told of conspiracy and espionage against the state and party. The Hungarian counter-revolution and Hungarian intelligentsia—e.g. Lukács and the Petőfi Circle—were especially prominent in the trial documents of Harich and associates as an ideological background with a detrimental influence on the conspirators’ thinking.

Several of the show-trial victims published memoirs after 1989. Although these differ in their accounts in many respects, they agree that after a brief period of détente

and the defeat of the Hungarian Revolution, the mood in the GDR “iced over” again. There were none of the long-awaited personnel changes at the top of the communist party; Walter Ulbricht remained the party’s first secretary, to the chagrin of many. For although Khrushchev was dissatisfied with Ulbricht in many respects, he concluded after the events in Poland and Hungary that he had the conservative East German leader to thank for the fact that no revolution had broken out in the GDR. Ulbricht, encouraged by the changed policy in the Soviet Union and bloody suppression of the Hungarian Revolution, went on in 1958 to exclude from the party leadership all who had dared to criticize its first secretary.

Contemporaries such as Gerhard Zwerenz also agreed that Ulbricht, paradoxically, had the Hungarian Revolution to thank for stabilizing his position. He had shown good tactical sense in using it against the none-too-dangerous 1956 opposition movement among the East German intelligentsia, which had been influenced by the Hungarian “counter-revolutionaries”. They were presented as having envisaged grave actions against the party and state and severely punished accordingly: “For Ulbricht, the tragic Hungarian events provided the chance of prevailing. The writers knew their bell had tolled when Wolfgang Harich was arrested. The dream of intellectual freedom was dispelled.”³¹

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31 Zwerenz’s article published in the West German paper *Der Telegraf* is quoted in Report..., SAPMO-Barch, ZPA, IV 2, 1, 182., 43.

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