Spring 1975

Imre Nagy and the First Phase of the Hungarian Revolution

William B. Liverman
Old Dominion University

IMRE NAGY AND THE FIRST PHASE

OF THE HUNGARIAN REVOLUTION

by

William B. Liverman
B.A. August 1967, Old Dominion University

A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of
Old Dominion University in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

HISTORY

OLD DOMINION UNIVERSITY
April, 1975

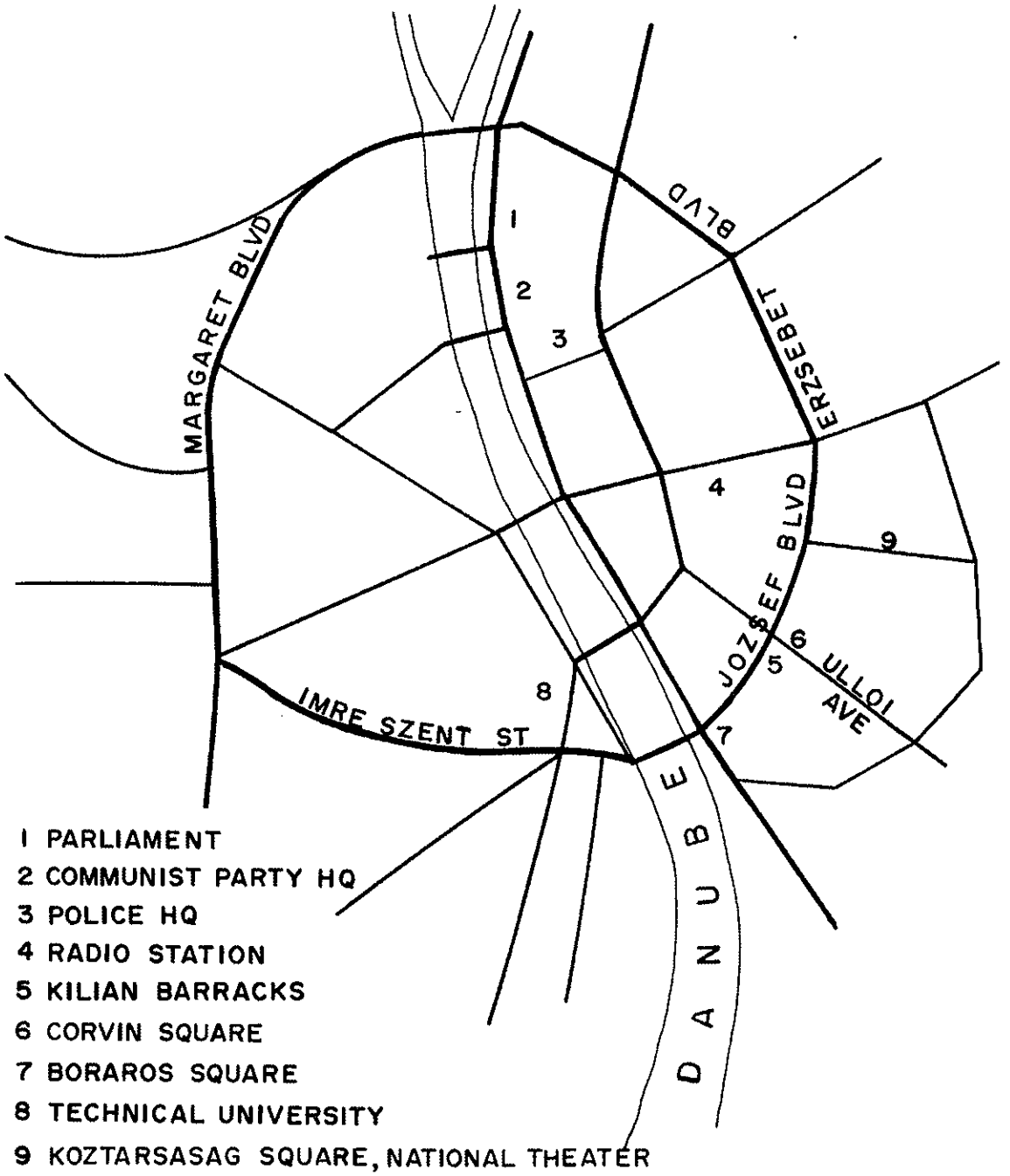
Approved by:

Dr. Heinz K. Meier (Director)

Patrick Rollins

Ralph F. de Bedte


CZECHOSLOVAKIA
USSR
AUSTRIA
MISKOLC
DEBRECEN
TISZA
DANUBE
SOPRON
GYOR
TATA
BUDA
PEST
CSEPEL
PAPA
HUNGARY
ZALAEGERSZEG
DANUBE
SZEGED
PECS
RUMANIA
YUGOSLAVIA



1 PARLIAMENT
2 COMMUNIST PARTY HQ
3 POLICE HQ
4 RADIO STATION
5 KILIAN BARRACKS
6 CORVIN SQUARE
7 BORAROS SQUARE
8 TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY
9 KOZTARSASAG SQUARE, NATIONAL THEATER

CENTRAL BUDAPEST

ABSTRACT

IMRE NAGY AND THE FIRST PHASE
OF THE HUNGARIAN REVOLUTION

William B. Liverman
Old Dominion University, 1975
Director: Dr. Heinz K. Meier

This thesis is an analysis of the relationship between the national communists and "Moscow emigres" in the government of Hungary, between the Hungarian government and that of the Soviet Union, and between the Hungarian government and the various insurgent groups in Budapest and the Hungarian provinces immediately preceding and during the Hungarian Revolution of 1956. An attempt is made to evaluate the effect of each of these forces on the course of revolution and its final outcome. The study is based on traditional sources and on interviews with leading figures involved in the revolution.

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

Contrary to the claims of the post-revolutionary Hungarian government and of the Soviet Union that the Hungarian revolution of 1956 was fomented by "forces of imperialist reaction, first and foremost imperialist circles in the U.S.A." their purpose "to tear away Hungary from the socialist camp and to turn it into a hot-bed of war in central Europe,"[1] the Hungarian revolution was in fact a spontaneous rebellion, born without leaders or organization,[2] that found its inspiration, according to some writers, in the "liberal

---

[1] Ezhegodnik: Bolshoi Sovetskoi Entsiklopedii, 1957 /Yearbook: Big Soviet Encyclopedia, 1957/, ed., B. A. Vyedenskii (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe Nauchnoe Izdatel'stro, 1957), p. 265. Apparently this became the "official line." According to a resolution of December 7, 1956, of the Central Committee of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party the revolution was caused by international imperialists with "their final aim . . . to foment a new hot-bed of war in Europe," and in January, 1957, a joint statement of Kadar and Chou En-lai credited Soviet-Hungarian efforts with preventing Hungary "from becoming a hot-bed of war in Europe" defeating "the imperialist attempt to drive a wedge in Hungary." See Herbert Aptheker, The Truth About Hungary (New York: Mainstream Publishers, 1957), pp. 248-9. Krushchev in a speech of April, 1958, maintained that the Soviet Union could not accept "the conversion of this country into a new hot-bed of war." See Robert A. Goldwin, ed., Readings in Russian Foreign Policy (New York: Oxford University Press, 1959), p. 639.

[2] John MacCormac, New York Times, November 1, 1956, p. 26. MacCormac called the absence of organization or leaders the "unique thing about this revolution." See also Ferenc Vali, Rift and Revolt in Hungary: Nationalism Versus Communism (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1961), p. 320.

and socialist ideals of the nineteenth century."[3]

Because the Hungarian revolution was spontaneous, it lacked a revolutionary organization to supplant the existing government which all but disintegrated in the first days of the revolution. In the course of the revolution, however, there began to develop revolutionary institutions, workers' and revolutionary councils which would assume authority vacated by the legal government and would thereby challenge the authority of the government. In addition to this external challenge to its power, the ruling Hungarian Workers' Party (Communist) also suffered an internal division which, in fact, precipitated the revolution and lasted through the first phase of the revolution. Study of the power struggle within Hungary is complicated by the fact that prior to the revolution Hungary did not act independently, but in accord with the interests of the Soviet Union. Thus the interference of the Soviet Union in Hungarian political affairs must also be considered. In addition, the situation was confused by the fact that the revolutionary councils acted independently of one another and sometimes at cross purposes and, therefore, could not fulfill the role of a rival government

---

[3]"The Heritage of Imre Nagy" in Tamas Aczel, ed., Ten Years After: A Commemoration of the Tenth Anniversary of the Hungarian Revolution (London: MacGibbon and Kae, Ltd., 1966), pp. 161-2. See also Michael Polanyi, "The Message of the Hungarian Revolution," in The American Scholar, XXXV (Autumn, 1966), 662.

in a dual power system in the traditional sense.[4] Still another complication resulted from the lack of coordination between the forces of coercion of the revolution, the armed insurgents, and their political counterparts in the councils. The fighting groups most often acted independently of the councils or with the support of the councils, rather than the reverse. The armed insurgents therefore played an independent role in the political struggle.

In the pages to follow a study will be made of the struggle between the various forces contending for power within the government and without. The activities of each of the more important insurgent organizations and of the important revolutionary leaders will be examined, and, in so far as possible, their influence on the government of Premier Imre Nagy will be evaluated.

---

[4]On the dvoevlastvie, dual power or dual sovereignty, see Crane Brinton, Anatomy of Revolution, Revised and expanded edition (New York: Vintage Books, 1965), pp. 132-4. See also Vali, Rift and Revolt, p. 320. According to Vali, a dual power system did exist in Hungary during the revolution. The failure, however, of the councils to consolidate their power or to gain control of Budapest suggests something less than dvoevlastvie. Although some of the councils did exercise significant power as pressure groups no single council arose to challenge the government as had the Petrograd Soviet in the Russian Revolution.

I. DE-STALINIZATION IN HUNGARY

As elsewhere in East Europe, the postwar communist party in Hungary, the Hungarian Workers' Party, was forged from national communist elements and Moscow-trained "Muscovites" or Moscow "emigres," and as elsewhere a split was thus inbred within the party. Before the death of Stalin, however, Rakosi had purged the party leadership of national communists, some of whom, for example Lazlo Rajk, were executed as "Titoists" while others, like Janos Kadar, were imprisoned. Soviet control in Hungary was exercised through the "Moscow emigres" who for the most part followed Moscow's directives voluntarily, but who on occasion violently objected, even though they always acquiesced in the end.[1] Following the communist consolidation of power in 1947 and until the death of Stalin in 1953, Hungary was firmly ruled in the manner of the Soviet Union by the "Moscow emigres" led by Matyas Rakosi who, in Hungary, was called "Comrade Stalin's best Hungarian disciple."[2]

After Stalin's death, no single leader immediately emerged to take firm control of the Soviet communist party;

---

[1] On the "Moscow emigres" and their allegiance to the Soviet Union, see Tamas Aczel and Tibor Meray, The Revolt of the Mind: A Case History of Intellectual Resistance Behind the Iron Curtain (London: Thames and Hudson, Ltd., 1960), p. 9.

[2] Ibid., p. 175.

leadership instead becoming the province of a "collective leadership." The adoption of the Leninist concept of "collective leadership" and an end to the "cult of personality" were also demanded of the "satellite" countries of East Europe.[3] In addition, the Soviet Union embarked on a campaign of reform, a return to "socialist legality," closely interrelated with foreign policy initiatives intended to normalize relations with Yugoslavia and to lessen tensions with the West.[4] Although the Soviet leaders apparently were unanimous in their conviction that reform was desirable, agreement as to how far they could safely go toward replacing repression with conciliation was lacking.

In Hungary, "de-Stalinization," the return to socialist legality, was even more threatening to the leaders than in the Soviet Union itself. Stalin was dead, but Matyas Rakosi, who, emulating the Soviet leader, had developed his own "cult of personality" and violated the principles of socialist legality, was still in power, occupying both the positions of first secretary of the party and Premier. He therefore ill-fitted the new image Moscow hoped to project to the West. Also Rakosi's vituperation against Tito and "Titoism, unequalled elsewhere in the socialist world,

---

[3]Paul Ignotus, Hungary in the Nations of the World series (New York and Washington: Praeger Publishers, 1972), p. 220.

[4]See Aptheker, The Truth, p. 156.

would be a hindrance to normalization of relations with Yugoslavia. Rakosi's position was further damaged by his purge of the national communist elements of the party. Hungary was faced with the paradoxical situation in which a government lacking a liberal wing was required to pursue a liberal policy, and de-Stalinization was to be accomplished by a Stalinist leadership. Imre Nagy, a nominal "Moscow emigre," once Minister of Interior and Minister of Agriculture, but expelled from the Politburo of the Hungarian Workers' Party in 1949, was because of his long absence from government relatively free of the Stalinist stigma. Thus when reinstated as Vice Premier in 1952 Nagy was in an excellent position to gain advantage from the shift in Soviet policy.[5]

In June, 1953, Rakosi was ordered to Moscow with specific instructions to bring Nagy. In Moscow, Rakosi and his followers were vilified as "adventurers" and as a "gang of Jews." Rakosi was removed as premier of Hungary and replaced by Nagy, yet he retained the leadership of the Hungarian Workers' Party as its first secretary.[6] The Soviet leaders

---

[5]For concise biographies of Imre Nagy, see Congress for Cultural Freedom, The Truth About the Nagy Affair (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1959), pp. 120-2, and Ignotus, Hungary, pp. 220-5.

[6]Tibor Meray, That Day in Budapest: October 23, 1956, Trans. by Charles Low Markmann (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1972), pp. 47-8. According to Meray, he was given the particulars of the meeting in Moscow by Nagy himself. Concerning

outlined a broad, new program of liberalization and de-Stalinization. Although this program was for the most part formulated in the Kremlin, Nagy later would come to consider it "his own, a triumph of his ideals." Actually, the choice of Nagy to implement the new policy was a matter of fitting the right person to the job, Nagy having previously as Minister of Agriculture demonstrated a propensity for just such a program.[7]

In his inaugural speech as Premier, Nagy sharply attacked past management of Hungarian affairs under the Rakosi government and outlined the new program which was to become known as Nagy's "new course to socialism."[8] Despite resistance from Rakosi, Nagy, supported by the Soviet Union, instituted numerous reforms which gained him a large degree of popularity with the people. Political prisoners were freed, industrial norms were lowered, censorship was relaxed, collectivization was discontinued, and, under certain conditions, peasants were even permitted to leave the

---

the meeting, see also Imre Nagy, On Communism: In Defense of the New Course (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1957), p. 66. See also Ignotus, Hungary, p. 220. According to Ignotus, Rakosi was informed of the Soviet plan to install Nagy as premier in May 1953.

[7]Miklos Molnar, Budapest 1956: A History of the Hungarian Revolution, Trans. by Jennetta Ford (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1971), p. 28.

[8]On Nagy's inaugural address, see Paul E. Zinner, Revolution in Hungary (New York: Columbia University Press, 1962), pp. 163-5.

cooperatives.[9]

Nagy's tenure as Premier was short-lived, however. In February, 1955, Malenkov, who had been the architect of the new policy in Hungary, was charged with "rightist deviation" and purged from Soviet leadership, his policy discredited. Nagy, Malenkov's protege in Hungary,[10] was removed in April, 1955, and ultimately expelled from the party. The precariousness of the relationship between Soviet and Hungarian leadership is seen in the fact that Malenkov, and thereafter, Nagy, fell not really because of policy issues but as the result of political intrigues of Khrushchev in the Kremlin.[11]

---

[9]On Nagy's reforms see "Resolution adopted by the Central Committee of the Hungarian Workers' Party, July 18-21, 1956" in Paul E. Zinner, ed. National Communism and Popular Revolt in Eastern Europe: A Selection of Documents on Events in Poland and Hungary, February-November, 1956 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1956), pp. 347-52. See also Tibor Meray, Thirteen Days that Shook the Kremlin, Trans. by Howard L. Katzander (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1959), pp. 17-19. See also Meray, That Day in Budapest, p. 103. According to Nagy it was Molotov who advanced the idea of allowing peasants to leave the cooperative.

[10]See Hannah Arendt, "Totalitarian Imperialism; Reflections on the Hungarian Revolution," in The Journal of Politics, XX, No. 1 (February, 1958), p. 7. According to Arendt the Hungarian leaders who formerly had sought the patronage of Stalin, attempted to "line up" with one or the other of the collective leaders. Nagy became a "protege" of Malenkov and Kadar of Khrushchev.

[11]See Carl A. Linden, Khrushchev and the Soviet Leadership, 1957-1964 (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1966), pp. 30-1. On the relationship between the fall of Nagy and the fall of Malenkov, see Ignotus, Hungary, pp. 224-6; Meray, That Day in Budapest, p. 49; and Andre Marton, The Forbidden Sky (Boston: Little, Brown and Co. 1971), pp. 16-17, 90. See also Bela K. Kiraly, "Budapest, 1956--Prague, 1968" in

Having accomplished the removal of Malenkov, Khrushchev, himself a reformer, returned immediately to Malenkov's former program and continued the policy of liberalization almost unabated.[12] But in his ploy for power, Khrushchev had caused the purge of the only leader in Hungary who would willingly and enthusiastically follow his lead. Nagy could have retained his position by the expedient of submitting fully to the ritual of "self-criticism," but refused to do so.[13] His removal placed Hungary again in the paradoxical position in which a government without a liberal was required to pursue a liberal policy and de-Stalinization was to be implemented by a Stalinist leadership.

Although Rakosi succeeded in some measure in reimposing his control,[14] since he was denied full recourse to

---

Problems of Communism (July-October, 1969), p. 53. According to Kiraly, such "internecine feuding" within the Soviet leadership "absorbed much of the new leaders' energies, loosening direct control over the satellites." See also Aczel and Meray, Revolt of the Mind, p. 324.

[12]Marton, The Forbidden Sky, pp. 53, 55-8.

[13]Ibid., p. 55. See also Meray, Thirteen Days, pp. 34, 54-5. On separate occasions Nagy was visited by Suslov, Mikoyan and Andropov, each of whom sought to make him change his mind, but Nagy refused to confess his errors. See also Current Digest of the Soviet Press, VIII, No. 40 (November 14, 1956), p. 16. In his letter seeking readmission to the party, Nagy still refused to fully recant. The full text of the letter appeared in Pravda (October 17, 1956), p. 5.

[14]For example, the number of political and "economic"

terrorism and censorship, he was unable to check the flood of criticism that poured forth in the Communist press. Release and rehabilitation of "Titoists," necessitated by the Soviet Union's policy of normalization of relations with Yugoslavia, had to continue, and Rakosi was forced to accept back into the party people like Janos Kadar whom Rakosi himself had subjected to imprisonment and torture. Others also returned from prison, among them Geza Losonczy, former Deputy Minister of Culture; Ferenc Donath, former secretary to Rakosi and Deputy Minister of Agriculture; Gyula Kallay, former Minister of Foreign Affairs; and Istvan Szirmai, former head of Hungarian Radio.[15] All were national communists and all nurtured a very personal hatred of Rakosi. The nationalist-Moscovite division within the Hungarian communist party, once dispelled by Rakosi's purges, was renewed with a vengeance.[16]

---

prisoners in Hungary had decreased from 144,743 in 1952 to 69,532 in 1954. During Rakosi's attempt to reimpose authority, the number again rose to 97,643. See Meray, That Day, pp. 106-7.

[15]See Aczel and Meray, Revolt of the Mind, pp. 245-7. For a more complete list of rehabilitated prisoners see Zinner, National Communism, p. 351.

[16]See Paul E. Zinner, "Revolution in Hungary: Reflection on the Vicissitudes of a Totalitarian System," Journal of Politics, XXI (February, 1959), 4. Zinner counts this "deep fissure within the ruling Communist party which sapped it both of the ability and the will to continue imposing its rule on the country" as one of the two "essential preconditions" without which the revolution probably would not have occured, the other being simply "massive, pent-up hatred

The release and rehabilitation of the national communists had a profound effect on the Hungarian intellectual community. The indictment of Rakosi by these men who were talking freely all over the country was "probably the most important factor in the conversation of writers and journalists."[17] And according to Tamas Aczel and Tibor Meray both prize winning communist writers, themselves guilty of having supported Rakosi's Stalinist regime, "the writers saw with horror . . . that they had been helpers, agitators, and propagandists in all that had happened." They now "wriggled desperately in the throes of a deadly shame."[18] The "alienation of the intellectuals" which had begun with the first trickle of returning prisoners from Rakosi's dungeons culminated by November 1955, in the complete "transfer of allegiance of the intellectuals" not to a rival party or conspiratorial group or even to another form of government,

---

toward the regime. See also Arendt, "Totalitarian Imperialism," p. 23. Arendt cites the "inner-party split" between "Muscovites" and "nationalists" and the "general mood" as common factors causing the uprisings both in Poland and in Hungary in 1956.

[17]Marton, The Forbidden Sky, p. 91.

[18]For this bit of "self-criticism" see Revolt of the Mind, pp. 244-69. See also Foreword, p. x, "The authors of this book were worse than communists. They were Stalinists. They not only believed in the system, but they also fanatically supported it." See also Molnar, Budapest, pp. 63, 71.

but to a "cause".[19] That cause was the reform of the communist party itself, its purification, its dedication to truth and justice--in communist terminology, to "socialist legality."

As the embodiment of their cause and as the champion to lead them into the political arena, the intellectuals chose a reluctant Imre Nagy whose reforms had made him quite popular and whose condemnation by the Rakosi government had only heightened that popularity.[20] The former Premier's popularity was also enhanced by circulation among the intellectuals of copies of Nagy's "dissertation," a proposed program of government for Hungary. Writing during his period of expulsion from the party, Nagy based his views on the five basic principles set forth at the Bandung Conference by Chinese and Indian leaders in 1955, namely; national independence, sovereignty, equality of rights, non-interference, and self-determination.[21] Nagy warned that "the country and the cause of socialism are being brought to the brink of

---

[19]See Aczel and Meray, Revolt of the Mind, pp. 345-54 on the "Writers' Memorandum" of November, 1955, an "open challenge to the clique dominating the country . . . a slap in their faces." On the "transfer of allegiance of the intellectuals" see Brinton, Anatomy of Revolution, p. 46.

[20]See Marton, The Forbidden Sky, pp. 94, 96. Nagy was a reluctant leader at most and apparently did nothing to encourage the movement that was developing around him. See also Meray, That Day, pp. 74-6 and Ignotus, Hungary, p. 227.

[21]Imre Nagy, On Communism, pp. 20-22.

catastrophe if radical political and personal /personnel?/ changes are not carried out quickly," and that the policies of the Rakosi government were driving the people "into the arms of reaction."[22]

Despite post-revolutionary claims of the Kadar government that Imre Nagy and his circle had organized a "secret, anti-state organisation" in December 1955, for the purpose of "overthrowing the Hungarian People's Republic" and had "played a leading role in preparing and launching the counter-revolutionary uprising"[23] and Herbert Aptheker's claim that following Nagy's ouster from the party he "took his disagreement to the country at large and carried on a strong and bitter campaign against the line and leadership of the party,"[24] it should be noted that Nagy's "dissertation" was addressed not to the people, but to the Hungarian Workers' Party and to the leaders of the Soviet Union. Although copies of the "dissertation" were circulated among a close group of Nagy's friends, there is absolutely no evidence that Nagy ever considered carrying his appeal

---

[22]Ibid., p. 40.

[23]Hungarian People's Republic, Council of Ministers, The Counter-Revolutionary Conspiracy of Imre Nagy and His Accomplices /Hereafter cited as Hungarian Government, White Books, Vol. V./ (Budapest: Information Bureau, Council of Ministers, n.d.), p. 13.

[24]Aptheker, The Truth, p. 162.

to the people.[25] Nagy, however reluctantly, had become the leader of a "conspiracy which was not a conspiracy and yet existed without form, without cells, without organization."[26] He had become the focus of a conspiratorial mood. But it was the intellectuals, not Nagy, who carried the cause to the people. Upon his own release from Rakosi's prisons in 1956, Andre Marton found "an entirely different country" from the one he had left behind. "Communists denounced Communism, they demanded reform, and the Communist-run newspapers and magazines, intoxicated by their unprecedented freedom, spearheaded this strange, almost feverish trend."[27]

Faced with increasingly violent attack from the press and denied recourse to repression, Rakosi's position grew increasingly precarious. That position was further undermined by Khrushchev's "secret speech" at the Twentieth Party Congress in February 1956.[28] In this scathing denunciation of Stalin, Khrushchev could as easily have been describing the crimes of Rakosi as Stalin. De-Stalinization in Moscow was paralleled by an open attack on the Rakosi regime in Hungary. This attack, the first challenge to the communist

---

[25]See Meray, Thirteen Days, pp. 43-4.

[26]Molnar, Budapest, p. 31.

[27]Marton, The Forbidden Sky, p. 7.

[28]See Nikita S. Khrushchev, "Crimes of the Stalin Era," in Robert A. Goldwin, ed., Readings in Russian Foreign Policy (New York: Oxford University Press, 1959), p. 522.

hierarchy in Budapest since its consolidation of power in 1948, came not from outside but from within the party itself, from communist intellectuals, and was centered in the communist party section of the Writers' Union and in the Petofi Circle, a "debating club" sponsored by the DISZ, the Association of Workers' Youth (the Young Communist League).[29] According to Miklos Molnar, the Writers' Union and the Literary Gazette, of which Molnar was editor, "really became the mouthpiece of Imre Nagy and the opposition,"[30] and the Petofi Circle "a second parliament."[31] "Once more for a historical moment, perhaps for the last time, poets, dreamers and thinkers prepared the social and national uprising of a people."[32]

Under attack from the intellectuals, the Hungarian government, for months prior to the revolution, was in "open crisis," presenting the world "the astonishing spectacle of a Communist capital where the government and the official party leadership were denounced day in and day out

---

[29]On the activities of the Writers' Union and the Petofi Circle, see Aczel and Meray, Revolt of the Mind, pp. 329-363, ff.

[30]Budapest, p. 63.

[31]Ibid., p. 85.

[32]Miklos Molnar, "The Heritage of Imre Nagy," in Tomas Aczel, ed., Ten Years After, p. 162.

in newspapers and public meetings."[33] In desperation, Rakosi, without Kremlin approval, prepared to resort to terror to silence his critics. To this end a purge list of four hundred names was prepared for presentation and approval in an emergency session of the Central Committee on July 17. The Kremlin, however, was secretly informed of Rakosi's plan. The emergency session was interrupted by the arrival of Anastas Mikoyan, First Deputy Chairman of the Soviet Council of Ministers. Rakosi was ordered by Mikoyan to resign which, after some hesitation, he did.[34] The Nagy group had won its first victory.

---

[33]Paul Kecskemeti, "Decompression in Hungary," in Robert A. Goldwin, ed., Readings in Russian Foreign Policy, p. 588. Kecskemeti credits this "spectacle" to the Kremlin ban on the use of "police and judiciary terror against rivals and opponents."

[34]Rakosi first insisted on telephoning Khrushchev for verification of Mikoyan's demand and to argue his viewpoint. Summaries of the meeting of July 17 are contained in Meray, That Day, pp. 51-2, and in Ignotus, Hungary, pp. 233-4. See also Aczel and Meray, The Revolt of the Mind, pp. 413-17. The writers were told of the meeting by Kalmon Pongracz, mayor of Budapest, who sat in the Central Committee.

II. EVENTS LEADING TO THE PREMIERSHIP OF IMRE NAGY (October 6-24)

The initial victory was more one of appearance than substance; however, Erno Gero, Rakosi's closest collaborator,[1] was named First Secretary. Nevertheless, the intellectuals were encouraged and they intensified their agitation for reform. More and more the protest became public. On October 6, Lazlo Rajk, a national communist and a number of his "accomplices", executed as Titoist agents by the Rakosi regime and posthumously rehabilitated in late March 1956, were reburied with full honors, in a ceremony that has been called the "dress rehearsal" for the revolution, attended by over 200,000 persons, a fifth of the entire population of Budapest.[2] This massive demonstration on behalf of a former communist Minister of the Interior, a man whose primary virtue in the eyes of the people lay in his having been murdered by people even less virtuous than himself, demonstrated both the antipathy of the people for their government and also the extent to which the

---

[1]For a concise biography of Gero see Meray, That Day, pp. 45-7.

[2]Marton, The Forbidden Sky, p. 87. See also Ignotus, Hungary, p. 235.

intellectuals' revolt had freed them to express their hostility toward that government.

Resentments of the people, however, were far deeper than those of the intellectuals. It was the students, the least reserved and intimidated, the most optimistic and idealistic segment of the population, who, having adopted the program of the intellectuals, went further still and came closest to voicing the hopes and aspirations of the thousands who gathered for the reburial of Lazlo Rajk. On October 18, over a thousand students participated in a "stormy" meeting in Szezed in southern Hungary. Student meetings at which the government was roundly criticised were held in several towns from October 19 through October 22 And on October 22 at a meeting attended by 4,000 students, engineers and workers at the Building Industry Technological University in Budapest a list of demands, the "sixteen points," was formulated and adopted.[3]

Until this time the conflict had been between Hungarian intellectuals and the government in Budapest. Seven of the

---

[3]The list of demands is variously referred to as the "Sixteen Points," the "Fourteen Points," the "Ten Points" and as the "Student Manifesto." After adoption the demands were published clandestinely at a number of locations. Although basically the same in content, in some cases points made separately in one edition were combined in another. See "Hungary, 1956: The Hungarian Students' Manifesto" in Goldwin, ed., Readings in Russian Foreign Policy, pp. 602-4. See also Vali, Rift and Revolt, p. 266, and Meray, That Day, pp. 59-61 and pp. 65-127 for a point by point analysis.

student demands, however, were directed at the real power in Hungary, the Soviet Union. The students demanded the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Hungary, political and economic equality with the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia and assurance of non-intervention in each other's affairs between Hungary and the Soviet Union and Hungary and Yugoslavia. They also asked for publication of foreign trade and reparation figures and information on uranium resources with assurances that Hungary's uranium would be sold "at world market prices" in the best interest of Hungary, repatriation of Hungarian prisoners of war and civilians detained in the Soviet Union. Release of political prisoners, removal of Stalin's statue in Budapest to be replaced by that of a national hero, and re-adoption of the Kossuth coat of arms and traditional Hungarian military uniforms to replace the Soviet style uniforms then in use were among their other demands. The students also expressed their "solidarity" with the "Polish national independence movement" that seemed to be in progress at the time. Other demands were directed at the Hungarian party leadership. The students wanted election of new leaders of the Communist Party by secret ballot, public trial of Mihaly Farkas, a past Minister of the Interior, dismissal of all members of the government closely associated with the Rakosi clique, and formation of a new government under Imre Nagy. The students also sought

freedom of opinion, expression, press and radio. One demand challenged the leading role of the Communist Party itself. The students also asked for general elections for a new general assembly by secret ballot with universal suffrage on a multi-party basis. The "Manifesto" finally called for convocation of a "Youth Parliament" in Budapest on October 27 and proclaimed a demonstration to be held the following day to express sympathy with the uprising in Poland.[4]

By this time, the intellectuals were no longer in the vanguard of the anti-government opposition. Events had passed them by. The program of the intellectuals, although revolutionary in scope, aimed not to overthrow the system but to reform it, to rebuild the communist structure within the old framework. The students sought, if not to destroy, at least to radically re-structure the framework itself. One need only contrast the demands of the student "Manifesto" of October 22 with a petition of the Petofi Circle of the

---

[4]Other demands were of a purely economic nature; the right to strike; revision of industrial norms; adjustment in wages; guaranteed living wages; revision of delivery system for agricultural products; and, equal treatment for peasants not on the cooperatives. See "Student Manifesto," Goldwin, ed., Readings in Russian Foreign Policy, pp. 602-4. Election of a new national assembly by universal suffrage and secret ballot on a multi-party basis could not but have resulted in defeat for the Communist Party. In the last "free election" prior to communist consolidation of power, the Communist party received only 17% of the vote. See Ferenc Nagy, The Struggle Behind the Iron Curtain, trans. by Stephen K. Swift (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1948), p. 152.

following day to note the differences of intent. The demands of the Petofi Circle published on the morning of October 23 in Szabad Nep, the organ of the Hungarian Workers' Party, seem relatively mild when compared with the "sixteen points."

The Petofi Circle demanded convention of the Central Committee "with minimum possible delay" with Imre Nagy in attendance, with "Nagy and other comrades who fought for socialist democracy and Leninist principles to occupy a worthy place in the direction of the Party and the Government." The petition also called for the expulsion of Rakosi from all party and national offices, for public trial of Mihaly Farkas, for factory self-administration, workers' democracy, and publication of even "the most delicate questions" concerning the economy and Hungarian uranium. The Petofi Circle refrained, however, from broaching such "delicate questions" as Soviet troop withdrawal, reparations payments, return of war and civilian prisoners from the Soviet Union, removal of such symbols of Soviet authority as the Stalin statue or Soviet-style uniforms, and made no mention of solidarity or sympathy with the Polish cause. Nor did the Petofi Circle demand free elections, secret ballots or a multi-party system. The Petofi petition did, however, call for even "closer relations with the Soviet Party, State and people, on the basis of the Leninist principle of complete

equality."[5]

The relative mildness of the Petofi petition may be explained, at least partially by the greater circumspection of the intellectuals and by their reluctance for a confrontation with the Soviet Union. This again though demonstrates the variance in intent of the two groups, the revolutionary mood of the students being quite apparent. On the day of the planned student demonstrations, the government, fully realizing the danger that such a massive gathering, incited by events in Poland, could result in disorder, vacillated again. The government first refused to acknowledge that a demonstration was to occur, finally announced it, then banned it, and then, when the demonstrators gathered anyway, rescinded the ban.[6] Participants in the demonstration, numbering as many as 250,000 people, a figure representative of half the population of Budapest between twenty and forty years of age, were at first peaceful.[7] Within a few hours,

---

[5]For complete text see Melvin J. Lasky, ed., The Hungarian Revolution: A White Book (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1957), p. 47. Italics added. Also included in Zinner, National Communism, pp. 391-2.

[6]See Molnar, Budapest, p. 110. According to Molnar, most writers on the revolution failed to note that a brief announcement of the "silent demonstration" was broadcast on the morning of October 23. On the ban and rescinding of the ban, see The Revolt in Hungary: A Documentary Chronology of Events Based Exclusively on Internal Broadcasts by Central and Provincial Radios; October 23, 1956 -- November 4, 1956 (New York: Free Europe Committee, 1956), p. 3-4.

[7]Molnar, Budapest, p. 114.

however, these masses of people, feeling power simply from their numbers, their emotions excited, prodded first by a pompous and threatening lecture by Gero and then inflamed by the first firing of shots by threatened and nervous security police at the studio of Radio Budapest, erupted into open rebellion.[8]

When fighting erupted, the intellectuals, whose program had never encompassed violence, but who had served the leadership function almost until the very eve of the revolution, instead of seizing control of the revolution when it began used their influence to moderate differences between the government and the people. The intellectuals, "thoroughly frightened" by the outbreak of violence, adopted a course of moderation and attempted to "steer events into a peaceful course."[9] It has been observed of intellectuals in general that in the course of a revolution "their desire for power yet their inability to side with one or the other side prompts intellectuals to adopt a third posture, namely that of interposing themselves between the revolutionary and

---

[8]Gero's speech was aired by Radio Budapest. See Documentary Chronology, p. 5. On the effects of the speech see Ignotus, Hungary. See also Vali, Rift and Revolt, p. 268. According to Vali, Gero's speech "is generally regarded" as the "greatest single incitement to bloodshed." The text of Gero's speech is also included in Zinner, National Communism, pp. 402-7.

[9]Paul Kecskemeti, The Unexpected Revolution: Social Forces in the Hungarian Uprising (Stanford University Press, 1961), p. 108.

anti-revolutionary forces."[10] Although such a sweeping generalization is subject to numerous exceptions, as a group the Hungarian intellectuals acted predictably. Andre Marton observed that following the peaceful demonstration on the afternoon of October 23 he did not thereafter "see any of the writers and journalists who were responsible for the ferment and who were expected to lead."[11]

The defection of the intellectuals to more peaceful pursuits left the revolution devoid of leadership. Ferenc Vali, an advisor to the Hungarian government during the revolution and whose history of the revolution is one of the best yet written, called the absence of a revolutionary organization to serve as the "formal embodiment" of the insurgents the "almost unique characteristic of the Hungarian Revolution."[12] And John MacCormac, a correspondent who covered the revolution for the New York Times, observed that "the unique thing about this revolution has been that it was born without leaders and without organization," and once "miraculously born . . . it is looking for leaders

---

[10]Zbiegniew Brzezinski, "Revolution and Counterrevolution," New Republic, CLVIII (June 1, 1958), p. 24. On the continued activity of the intellectuals in their negotiations with Imre Nagy and their moderating influence, see also Mark Gayn, "The Misreported Revolution," The Nation, CLXXXIV (June 15, 1957), pp. 527-9.

[11]Marton, The Forbidden Sky, p. 132.

[12]Vali, Rift and Revolt, p. 265.

and organization."[13]

It was the students who, having joined the struggle in the pre-revolutionary period, and whose actions touched off the revolution, now, in the absence of leadership from above, were the first to begin developing revolutionary organizations from below. The students had the advantage of having had their own organizations prior to the revolution. Now they converted these organizations to the revolutionary cause. Within the student organizations, units were formed to carry out specific functions, such as publication and distribution of leaflets and liason with other revolutionary bodies and with the government. The students found "easy access to all strata" of society; workers and peasants, professionals, government and army officials, and they used that advantage "in order to coordinate revolutionary policies and activities."[14] By October 24, university students in Budapest had organized themselves into a Students' Revolutionary Council which on that same day was able to put organized fighting units into action. The Students' Revolutionary Council would later combine with other revolutionary bodies in central Pest to form the Revolutionary Committee for National Defense which would become

---

[13]New York Times, November 1, 1956, p. 26.

[14]Kecskemeti, Unexpected Revolution, pp. 113-14.

the organizing body for the National Guard.[15]

While the students were organizing the insurgents into effective fighting units, the government's primary coercive forces, the army and the regular police, were proving themselves less than reliable. For the most part, they remained neutral throughout the revolution, but in some cases actively participated on the side of the insurgents.[16] Only the AVH (State Defense Authority),[17] the political police, so thoroughly despised by the population that they had no choice but to fight in self-defense, remained at the disposal of the government.

The AVH alone, numbering perhaps as few as 10,000 men, was no match for the tens of thousands of well armed

---

[15]Janos Decsi, private interview, New York, August 7, 1974. Decsi was Deputy Military Chief of the Regional Officers' Training Program of university students and was also military commander of the university students. After the revolution began, he was elected commander of the Revolutionary Central Committee of University Students. Later he was one of the twenty to twenty-four members of the Revolutionary Committee for National Defense. On the organization of university students, see also Vali, Rift and Revolt, p. 327.

[16]See Gordon Shepherd, Daily Telegraph (London), October 26, in Keesings Contemporary Archives, November 10-17, 1956, p. 15189. According to Shepherd, several military officers had shown themselves "benevolently neutral" by taking no part in the revolution "but offering the rebels free pick of their arsenal."

[17]Also referred to as the AVO (State Defense Section).

insurgents.[18] During the night of October 23, the building which housed the printing plant and editorial offices of Szabad Nep fell to the insurgents, and by morning the Budapest Radio building, despite strong AVH resistance, was also taken. Numerous other government buildings were under attack.

Concurrent with the defection of the army and the police was the collapse of the Communist Party itself. The Hungarian Workers' Party, prior to the revolution boasting a million members, "disintegrated within a few hours."[19] All that remained was the isolated leadership at the top, the Gero clique, "purporting to speak in the name of the

---

[18]Post-revolutionary apologists for Soviet intervention have cited the almost instantaneous arming of the insurgents to prove the rebellion had been planned in advance by counter-revolutionary organizations centered in the West. For example, see Aptheker, The Truth, pp. 216-7. Aptheker, himself, however, elsewhere (pp. 188-9) discloses the primary sources of weapons, munitions dumps and small arms plants that were raided by the insurgents. See also Hungarian Government White Books, III, pp. 110-12. According to the White Books, insurgents captured 150 "lorries" on the night of October 24 and attacked eight centers and firing ranges of the Hungarian Home Defense Union, seizing 500 weapons. According to General Kiraly, weapons were delivered by the "truck-load" from munitions works in Csepel. Interview, August 7, 1974. The Corvin group raided the Incandescent Lamp Factory in Budapest on the night of October 23 to get arms. Pongracz interview, September 4, 1974, verified by White Books, III, p. 113.

[19]Tibor Meray, "The Sources of Power: The Origin and Developments of the Party," in Aczel, ed., Ten Years After, p. 135.

Central Committee and the formerly all-powerful Politburo"[20] which persisted, notwithstanding its lack of support from any quarter, in its efforts to rule the country. To that end, the communist hierarchy met in an emergency session in the late night and early morning hours of October 23-24 and took two decisive steps, the first repressive--the calling of Soviet troops to squash the rebellion, the second conciliatory--the inclusion of Imre Nagy and three of his supporters, Ferenc Donath, Geza Losonczy and Gyorgy Lukacs in the government. Any advantage that might have been gained by the second move had already been more than offset by the first.

A great deal of controversy has surrounded the ordering of Soviet troops into Hungary. Although the order was attributed to Nagy, there can no longer be any doubt that Soviet troops already were in action in Budapest hours before Nagy was included in the government. The announcement on Radio Budapest of the reorganization of the government to include Nagy as premier was made at 8:13 on the morning of October 24 and was followed shortly thereafter by an announcement that Soviet troops had been called in to assist the restoration of order, thus giving the

---

[20]George Ginsburgs, "Demise and Revival of a Communist Party: An Autopsy of the Hungarian Revolution," Western Political Quarterly, XIII (Spring, 1960), 781-2.

impression that Nagy's government had issued the call for Soviet assistance.[21] Nagy himself, perhaps motivated simply by the communist compulsion toward the appearance of unanimity, but more likely responding to Soviet pressure, seemed also to assume part of the responsibility when on October 25 in a radio address he said that the call for Soviet help had been necessitated "by the vital interests of our Socialist order."[22] Later, however, Nagy denied having called for Soviet assistance[23] and Janos Kadar verified that the call for Soviet help had come not from Nagy but from Premier Andras Hegedus, with the approval of Gero, prior to Nagy's appointment.[24] Hegedus himself has since "voiced his regrets for having been the person who asked for Soviet intervention."[25]

---

[21]Documentary Chronology, p. 7. The announcement of the calling of Soviet troops was at 9:00 o'clock (Budapest time).

[22]See Mikes, Hungarian Revolution, pp. 92-3. According to Mikes, Nagy had wanted to deny responsibility but was prevented from doing so by Suslov and Mikoyan backed by two armed Soviet "counter-espionage" officers. The complete text of Nagy's statement appeared in the New York Times, October 26, 1956, Section I, p. 6, and in Lasky, The Hungarian Revolution, pp. 74-5. Taken here from Documentary Chronology, p. 14.

[23]Radio Vienna and RIAS (Berlin) interview with Imre Nagy in Lasky, ed., The Hungarian Revolution, p. 156.

[24]Kadar interview published in Il Giornale 'd Italia (Rome), November 2, 1956, in Lasky, ed., The Hungarian Revolution, p. 178.

[25]Molnar, Budapest, p. 124.

The circumstances surrounding the appointment of Nagy and his supporters to the government suggest that for once a major reorganization of government in Hungary was accomplished without Soviet interference. When the demonstration of October 23 had threatened to get out of hand, Nagy had reluctantly come to the parliament building, uninvited by the communist leaders, and had spoken to the crowd in an attempt to reduce tension.[26] Only following this speech was he summoned to the nearby Communist Party headquarters. There he was berated by Gero and Hegedus for having caused the disturbance and was left in an ante-room with Geza Losonczy, Ferenc Donath and other supporters while the Central Committee met in emergency session.[27] Because Nagy was asked to remain it seems apparent that a decision had already been reached to include him in some capacity in the government, a measure that could be expected to appease the people to some extent. After several hours of deliberation a decision was reached to appoint Nagy premier with Hegedus as his first deputy and Losonczy and Donath in lesser capacities in the government. But at the insistence of Gero and his supporters, Nagy was forced to include

---

[26]Tamas Aczel, "The Story Behind Hungary's Revolt," Life, February 18, 1957, pp. 112-17. Aczel drove to Nagy's home and convinced him to return with him to the parliament building.

[27]This account of the proceedings is from Meray, That Day in Budapest, pp. 283-92.

"reliable Stalinists" also.[28] The governmental and party reorganization of October 24 was not intended to grant real power to the Nagy group. Nagy and his followers were simply added to the existing Central Committee as was Ferenc Munnich, a supporter of Gero and member of the Soviet NKVD, as was Gero himself.[29] Although the Nagy group was now in the majority in the Central Committee, the Gero group retained a "slight but decisive edge" in the Politburo, and Gero could expect to maintain control from his position as first secretary and through the cooperation of Hegedus who was named first deputy premier.[30]

---

[28]Dezzo Kosak, Franc-Tireus (Paris), December 18, 1956, in Lasky, Hungarian Revolution, pp. 64-5. See also Zinner, Revolution, p. 267. According to Zinner, Losonczy and Donath were "elected in absentia and without their knowledge," and "assumed their duties at Party headquarters" only after a day's delay. Other sources, however, indicate as did Meray that Losonczy and Donath were present at the meeting of the 24th.

[29]On the membership of Gero in the NKVD see Meray, That Day in Budapest, p. 45 and Ignatus, Hungary, p. 200. On Munnich see Meray, That Day in Budapest, p. 291.

[30]The political sympathies of the membership of the Central Committee and Politburo are analysed in Ginsburgs, "Demise and Revival," pp. 782-4.

III. THE FIRST DAYS OF NAGY'S GOVERNMENT

(October 24-28)

Unlike past governmental changes in Hungary in which Soviet involvement was later to be widely publicized the reorganization of October 24-25 appears to have been accomplished without Soviet interference. On this occasion the Soviet Union was apprised of the reorganization only after the fact. Gero is reported to have consulted only General Thikonov, "the local counter-espionage chief" rather than the ambassador or the Kremlin.[1] There is evidence, however, that Gyorgy Marosan, a Politburo member "quietly" informed the Kremlin of the action the Hungarian party had taken.[2]

On the evening of October 24, Anastas Mikoyan and Mikhael Suslov arrived in Budapest and began an entirely new reorganization. Leslie B. Bain, in an article appearing in the Washington Evening Star on October 31, 1956, cited an unidentified official present at the meeting between the two Soviet officials and the Hungarian leaders

---

[1]Mikes, Revolution, p. 86. According to Mikes, Thikonov was "of much greater importance than the Ambassador." This evaluation is probably incorrect. The ambassador, Y. V. Andrapov, later became head of the NKVD and most probably out-ranked Thikonov in the organization at the time.

[2]See Kovrig, The Hungarian People's Republic, p. 115.

that Mikoyan and Suslov "flew into a rage" at Gero, berating him for having "exaggerated and distorted" the situation and thereby having "stampeded" Moscow into an "ill-advised" intervention in Hungary. The Soviet leaders demanded Gero's resignation, which was forthcoming after some protest, and "acceded" to Nagy's appointment at premier.[3] Gero was replaced by Janos Kadar, as first secretary. Together with Hegedus, who was removed as Nagy's first deputy, he went into exile in the Soviet Union.

The new government nominally under Imre Nagy proved a great disappointment to the people. Shortly after taking office on October 24, Nagy had broadcast an appeal to the insurgents to stop the fighting and had promised amnesty

---

[3]The article appearing in The Evening Star is entitled "Witness Tells How Soviet Dicated to Budapest Reds." Taken here from Raymond L. Garthoff, "The Tragedy of Hungary" in Problems of Communism, January-February, 1957, p. 4. See also Lasky, The Hungarian Revolution, p. 78 and Leslie B. Bain, The Reluctant Satellites: An Eyewitness Report on East Europe and the Hungarian Revolution (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1960), pp. 134-5. See also Meray, That Day, pp. 340-41. Meray's account of the same meeting, which according to Meray is "from Nagy's own account," is so striking in its similarity to that of Bain as to suggest that at least the wording of Meray's account may have been suggested by Bain's work rather than by Nagy. By way of comparison see also Meray's Thirteen Days, p. 105. In his earlier work, Meray said that Gero was removed because he had "shown himself to be a poor politician, . . . had not instituted the changes demanded by the spirit of the Twentieth Congress," he had not sought the assistance of Nagy and his radio speech had inflamed the people. See also Mikes, The Hungarian Revolution, p. 91. Mikes, like Bain, cites an undisclosed source. According to Mikes, "Mikoyan . . . was beside himself with anger. He blamed Gero for all that had happened; first because of Gero's speech . . . , and secondly, because of his decision to call in Russian troops."

and vague reforms.[4] Later that same day, an announcement in Nagy's name was broadcast which enumerated certain crimes including "acts of revolt, incitement, appeal and conspiracy to revolt . . . , possession of explosives . . . , use of force against the official authorities . . . and the illegal possession of arms" to be classed as categories of crimes "coming under summary jurisdiction" and "punishable by death."[5] On the following day in another broadcast, Nagy reported that "a small group of counterrevolutionary provocateurs launched an attack against the order of our People's Republic, an attack . . . supported by part of the workers of Budapest because of their bitterness over the situation of the country." Nagy then deplored past errors of the government, promised a revival of the Patriotic People's Front, the pre-war coalition, and promised to negotiate with the Soviet Union concerning withdrawal of Soviet troops from Hungary. Again Nagy promised amnesty for those who immediately laid down their arms and rigorous action against those who did not.[6]

It has been a widely held view that in these first two days of the Nagy government, Imre Nagy was virtually a prisoner, if not a prisoner in fact, of the Gero clique. The

---

[4]Radio Budapest, in Lasky, ed., The Hungarian Revolution, pp. 59-60.

[5]Ibid., p. 61.

[6]Documentary Chronology, pp. 13-14.

Special Committee of the United Nations which investigated the revolution, for example, concluded that during the time of the first Soviet intervention, that is on October 24, Nagy was "detained" at party headquarters, and that only after the replacement of Gero by Kadar was Nagy "free to move to the Parliament Building" where "he formed a Government into which he invited both communists and non-communists."[7] True, Nagy was at communist party headquarters when the first intervention occurred. But he was not a prisoner, he was simply awaiting a decision of the Central Committee concerning the reorganization of government. Nor does the creation of a new government of the Patriotic People's Front constitute such a radical change as to suggest, as does the United Nations' report, that Nagy had for the first time been free to pursue his own policy. As has been noted, Nagy in his speech of October 25 had promised such a move--at a time when he was still characterizing the "freedom fighters" as "counterrevolutionary provocateurs."[8]

---

[7]United Nations, in Kovacs, ed., Fight for Freedom, p. 113. See also American Hungarian Federation, Anatomy of Revolution: United Nations Report, p. 34. The United Nations report cites a witness that Nagy delivered his first radio speech "with a gun in his back." See also Marton, p. 163. According to Marton, during the first two days of the revolution, Nagy was a virtual prisoner at party headquarters.

[8]See above, p. 34.

Nor was the creation of a Patriotic People's Front a drastic departure from past communist planning. Nagy had proposed a popular front during his first term as premier but had been prevented from creating such a front by the Rakosi clique.[9] Later, however, following Nagy's fall, Rakosi's supporters, hoping to attract some measure of popular support for the government, had approached Anna Kethly, a leader of the Social Democrats, about joining a popular front. Kethly was again approached during the first days of the revolution by Geza Losonczy with the same proposal. When Kethly asked for assurances that the Social Democrats would be permitted to resume political activities and that free elections would be held, however, Losonczy replied "that his friends and he were determined to maintain the hegemony of the Communist Party" and "the political monopoly enjoyed by that Party."[10]

---

[9]Molnar, Budapest, pp. 47-50. See also Kovrig, Hungarian People's Republic, p. 100. In 1954, Nagy, lacking a majority in the Central Committee and "seeking an alternative power base" had proposed revival of the Patriotic People's Front, arguing that to do so "would mobilize the mass support the party had failed to muster." He was overruled at the time by the Rakosi group.

[10]Congress for Cultural Freedom, The Truth, pp. 74-5. See also Jozsef Kovago, You Are All Alone (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1959), pp. 133, 137-40. According to Kovago, a leader of the Smallholders Party and revolutionary mayor of Budapest, the communists were considering inclusion of members of other parties in government as early as September, 1956.

According to General Kiraly, Nagy himself opposed the creation of a multi-party system because such a move would be "an open invitation to Soviet reprisal."[11] And according to Andre Marton, Nagy remained "the opponent of everything that would weaken the Communist Party's role as the country's sole leader."[12] That the adoption of a government of the Patriotic People's Front constituted little more than a ploy to gain popular support without sacrificing the essence of the one party system can be seen from the government list presented on October 27. Twenty of twenty-seven ministerial positions were to be held by communists. Of the non-party members, Jozsef Bognar and Ferenc Erdei, both deputy premiers, had colloborated with the communists for years as had Zoltan Tildy, Minister of State prior to his imprisonment in 1948. Bela Kovacs, Minister of Agriculture, a genuine anti-communist who had been deported to the Soviet Union for ten years, was included on the list without his knowledge or permission.[13] In an interview with Leslie B.

---

[11]Bela K. Kiraly, Budapest--Prague, p. 55.

[12]Marton, The Forbidden Sky, p. 163. See also Zinner, Revolution, p. 265. Nagy "vehemently rejected" a proposal of Miklos Gimes advocating a genuine multi-party system.

[13]For the government list see Lasky, ed., The Hungarian Revolution, p. 96. The analysis of non-party members is from Marton, The Forbidden Sky, pp. 163-4. See also Andor Heller, No More Comrades (Chicago: Henry Regnery Co., 1957), p. 62. According to Heller, the free radio at Pecs announced that Kovacs was in Pecs and not in Budapest. See also Kovago, All Alone, pp. 172, 189-90, 202 on Kovacs' reluctance to come to Budapest.

Bain on November 4, Kovacs said that he had refused to have anything to do with the Nagy government until it freed itself of control by the Communist Politburo.[14]

The story of Nagy's imprisonment probably had its inception in an incident at the Writers' Union on the night of October 23 when Nagy was awaiting the results of the Central Committee meeting. A number of "well-known writers" who had gathered at the Writers' Union office attempted to reach Nagy by telephone. Told on several occasions by "army men" who answered the phone that "Imre Nagy is busy," the writers began to worry whether he had "been isolated, mistreated, or was . . . still at liberty." When finally they were "allowed" to speak, first to Losonczy and then to Nagy, both men spoke cryptically and at little length, further heightening fear that the leaders' lives were in danger.[15] A similar group, gathered at the Hungarian News Agency, were unable to reach Nagy by telephone at all on the following night.[16] Some of Nagy's supporters who did

---

[14]"Budapest: Interview in a Basement Hidaway" in Richard Lettis and William E. Morris, The Hungarian Revolt: October 23--November 4, 1956 (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1961), pp. 167-70.

[15]Meray, That Day, pp. 287-90. According to Meray, Nagy and Losonczy could not discuss the situation on the phone because they knew the telephone was "tapped."

[16]Kosak, Franc-Tireur, in Lasky, ed., The Hungarian Revolution, pp. 63-5. See also Hungarian Government White Books, Vol. IV, p. 84. Poet Zoltan Zelk probably also contributed to the rumor. Zelk in a radio address said he

manage to see him between the night of October 23 and October 26 "saw him only briefly under unfavorable circumstances" and "found him brusque to the point of rudeness and unreceptive to their ideas."[17]

Thus the writers, with seemingly high regard for their own importance, assumed that Nagy's isolation from them, his unresponsiveness, and his failure to adopt a program they liked resulted from his imprisonment by the Geroists in the government. More likely Nagy, his country involved in revolution, he himself in constant negotiations with Suslov and Mikoyan after Gero's dismissal, simply had little time for the writers. Neither was he apt to be swayed by their advice at a moment in which he was negotiating with representatives of the Kremlin.

Rather than a prisoner, either virtual or in fact, it seems more reasonable to expect that Nagy followed his own convictions, influenced more by the Soviets with whom he negotiated and the party apparatus and governmental officials with whom he worked than by the writers or the mob. His primary aim at the moment must have been to restore order, not to implement new policies. According to Zinner, although Nagy's "freedom of movement might well have been controlled . . . he was at least as much a prisoner of his own attitudes

---

had gone to Party Headquarters to see Imre Nagy. Not seeing him he assumed Nagy "was actually held prisoner there."

[17]Zinner, Revolution, p. 265.

as of the hostile forces surrounding him."[18] In the assessment of Miklos Molnar, at the time editor of the Hungarian writers' journal, Irodalmi Ujsag (Literary Gazette), Nagy actually did not understand what was happening and really believed reports reaching him through the party apparatus that the government was under attack by fascists and reactionary groups. According to Molnar, Nagy was "prisoner of his own wrong attitude and lack of decision . . . hence the UN report according to which Nagy is supposed to have made his speech /of October 24/ with tommy-gun in his back." In reality, according to Molnar, Nagy bent to "another kind of coercion," that of the Geroist and the centrist group led by Kadar.[19]

The dismissal of Gero did not signal an abrupt change in governmental policy however. The United Nations Special Committee, perhaps attempting to reconcile Nagy's actions during the first few days of the revolution with those of the early days of November, following the dismissal of Gero, reported Nagy to be in the grasp of the AVH until October 29.[20] It seems inconceivable, however, that nameless security policemen, acting on their own volition, would or could have dictated their will to the Premier. The first

---

[18] Ibid., p. 249.

[19] Molnar, Budapest, pp. 151-2.

[20] "United Nations Report," in Kovacs, ed., Fight for Freedom, p. 113.

real changes in policy of the Nagy government, the ordering of a cease-fire, declaration of amnesty for all fighters, the promise of prompt Soviet withdrawal from Budapest and the promise that the AVH would be abolished as soon as order was restored, were in fact announced on October 28, the day before the AVH was actually ordered to disband.[21]

Nagy's failure up to October 28 to live up to the expectations of the people or to display the independence of action he would later demonstrate can better be explained by Nagy's continued reluctance to join the revolutionary cause, his continuing negotiations with the Soviet Union, and his dependence on and faith in the communist party than by the theory of his captivity. An emergency committee formed on October 28 to direct the affairs of the Hungarian Workers' Party consisted of six members, Nagy, Kadar, Zoltan Szanto, Antal Apro, Karoly Kiss and Ferenc Munnich, the first three anti-Stalinists and the others Stalinists. The composition of this committee no doubt represented the wishes of the Soviet Union and probably also to some degree a compromise within the Hungarian party. Although the removal of Gero

---

[21]See Nagy's policy announcement of October 28, 1956, in Lasky, ed., The Hungarian Revolution, p. 115. See also Gaskill, "Timetable of a Failure," The Virginia Quarterly Review, pp. 165-6. Although in agreement with the United Nations report that Nagy was a prisoner of the AVH, Gordon Gaskill in The Virginia Quarterly Review apparently noted the inconsistency. "It is not yet clear whether on this day--October 28--Nagy was still controlled . . . by Communist Police guards. . . . On October 29 he appeared for the first time without them, unquestionably a free agent at last."

and Hegedus shifted power somewhat toward Nagy, the preponderance of power rested now with the centrists and Kadar, "essentially partisans of a hard-line policy towards the revolt."[22] Nagy himself according to his "close associates", "remained the loyal party man, the Moscow-trained Communist, the opponent of everything that would weaken the Communist party's role as the country's sole leader."[23]

Until the cease-fire of October 28, battle raged in Hungary between the insurgents on one side and a coalition of Soviet and AVH troops on the other. Indications are that both the AVH and Soviet troops were directed by Hungarian authorities, the Soviet commanders exercising "immediate control of their units," but "ultimately subject to Hungarian orders." According to Miklos Molnar the apparent lack of a battle plan upon arrival of Soviet tanks in Budapest and the inconsistency of action, inaction and even fraternization from one area to another in the provinces suggests local control.[24] It might also be noted that Nagy's order of a cease-fire which would not have been binding on the Soviets

---

[22]Molnar, Budapest, p. 154.

[23]Marton, The Forbidden Sky, p. 163.

[24]Molnar, Budapest, pp. 147-9. Molnar also points out that had the Soviet units been acting under orders "they would have given battle whatever their personal reservations--as indeed they did on November 4th." The lack of a battle plan might better be explained by the expectation that a simple show of force would be sufficient to stem the revolt, that lightly armed insurgents would not attack Soviet tanks.

otherwise was, in fact, immediately observed. If indeed the Soviet troops were placed under Hungarian command, then it would appear that the revolution had brought, however temporary, a change in the power relations between Hungary and the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union left it to the Hungarian government to extricate itself from the problem which the Soviets helped to bring about. Indications are that the steps taken by the Nagy government on October 28 were approved by the Soviet government acting on the advice of Mikoyan and Suslov who had returned to Moscow on October 26. Thereafter according to Molnar, "the Soviet Government virtually abandoned the Hungarian Communist Party."[25]

The struggle for power between October 28 and November 4 was between the government and the insurgents with minimal Soviet interference. The withdrawal of Soviet troops and the abolition of the AVH left the government with absolutely no means of coercion. The critical point at which the transfer of sovereignty from the legal government to the rival government occurs in the course of a successful revolution had thus been passed. For the moment, the revolution was a success. The means of coercion remaining in the country were either in the hands of numerous insurgent groups, each acting autonomously under organizations which Nagy had by now been forced to accord some

---

[25]Ibid., p. 158.

measure of legality, or in the hands of scattered AVH forces which thereafter exercised force "illegally." Hungary was thus a nation in which power was divided between a legal government lacking coercive force and by coercive forces lacking guidance of a central government.

The ruling party in the legal government did not have a solid political base from which to operate. The Hungarian Workers' Party vacated its headquarters following the ouster of Gero. Many of its members, of those who had not already gone over to the side of the insurgents, either went into hiding or followed Gero and Hegedus into exile.[26] Of 800,000 party members prior to the revolution only 95,000 remained after November 4.[27] According to Meray, "one could sense, without knowing explicitly, that no central authority any longer governed this country." The government "would voice its views, issue proclamations, give orders that it would change or alternate with counter-orders . . . none of its proclamations would be taken seriously, none of its orders . . . carried out."[28] By the end of October, John MacCormac

---

[26]Zinner, Revolution, p. 276.

[27]Molnar, Budapest, pp. 251-2. Estimates of the number of party members previous to the revolution range to as many as a million people. See Meray, "Sources of Power," p. 135. See also William Shawcross, Crime and Compromise; Janos Kadar and the Politics of Hungary Since Revolution (New York: E. P. Dutton and Co., Inc., 1974), p. 111. Shawcross quotes the figures as 900,000 for October, 1956 and 96,000 for December of the same year.

[28]Meray, That Day, pp. 333-4.

of the New York Times quoted two "prominent Communists" in parliament that the Communist Party "had virtually ceased to exist." According to MacCormac, "now that the Russians have left Budapest no one seems to know who rules Hungary. But everyone is certain it is not the Communists who rule."[29]

From October 28 until the revolutionwas crushed by Soviet intervention the government would preoccupy itself with attempts to establish a new political base and new forces of coercion, without which it could not govern. The insurgents, meanwhile, were preoccupied with efforts to consolidate their forces into a body of sufficient strength to control the government in Budapest. To this end both the government and the insurgents sought to recruit the same forces to their respective causes. And in doing so the cause of the government if it were to succeed would necessarily draw closer to that of the insurgents.

---

[29]New York Times, November 1, 1956, p. 26.

IV. THE IMPACT OF THE REVOLUTION IN THE PROVINCES

While Imre Nagy struggled to overcome his difficulties in Budapest, Workers' and Revolutionary Councils, inspired perhaps by similar institutions existing in Yugoslavia since 1950, by models going back to the French Revolution, or more likely by those of the Russian Revolution itself, arose almost as spontaneously as had the revolution to fill the vacuum created by the collapse of central authority.[1] The first such council was established on October 24 at the Incandescent Lamp Factory in Budapest at the same time the students were organizing into fighting units, within hours following the outbreak of the revolution. By October 27, similar organizations had appeared throughout the country.[2]

The spontaneity of the creation of the councils is evidenced by the various methods of their creation. In some cases membership was selected quite democratically by

---

[1]See Molnar, Budapest, p. 175. According to Molnar, "They followed the Soviet models of 1905 and 1917, exactly as they had been taught in Marxist courses." See also Kecskemeti, Unexpected Revolution, pp. 114-16. According to Kecskemeti, the Hungarian councils seemed to be modeled on those in Yugoslavia. According to Arendt, On Revolution, pp. 265-6, "no tradition, either revolutionary or pre-revolutionary, can be called to account for the regular emergence and re-emergence of the council system ever since the French Revolution."

[2]Kecskemeti, Unexpected Revolution, p. 114. See also Molnar, Budapest, pp. 174-5.

secret ballot, while at the other extreme individuals simply proclaimed themselves leaders without benefit of election and established the councils as they saw fit. In other cases, members were selected by professional organizations or by acclamation in general assemblies. Membership quite often reflected local conditions. In industrial areas, for example, membership in a local council might consist predominantly of workers, while in a university town, students might participate in establishing the councils and dominate their membership. In general, political affiliation played little part in the selection of the council membership, the exception being that in areas in which communist resistance to the creation of such bodies was strong, communists were excluded from membership. In other areas, Communist Party members themselves took the lead in establishing the councils.[3]

Throughout Hungary, the councils assumed responsibilities vacated in the absence of central authority. In general the revolutionary councils fulfilled primarily political functions, while the workers' councils concerned themselves with economic matters. The immediate task of the revolutionary councils was the maintenance of order, a

---

[3]Vali, Rift and Revolt, p. 324. See also "U.N. Report," in Kovacs, Fight for Freedom, p. 112. According to the United Nations report, in most cases the councils assumed power without opposition.

function which, considering the revolutionary atmosphere, they performed admirably.[4] In provincial cities the councils negotiated directly with the Soviet commanders and in most cases arranged cease-fires prior to the general cease-fire announced on October 28.[5] More important, however, than their local functions, the councils were able to exercise "collective pressure" on the government in Budapest.[6]

Yielding to such pressure, the government, lacking means to exercise authority on its own, was forced to recognize the de facto existence of the councils, and, on October 26, recommended the election of workers' councils in all plants, such councils to "decide on all questions concerning production, administration and plant management" and also to be charged with responsibility for setting wage scales and defending the plants.[7] It should be noted that the government authorization extended only to very limited

---

[4]Arendt, "Totalitarian Imperialism," pp. 28-9.

[5]On provincial councils negotiating directly with the Soviet army, see Peter Fryer, Hungarian Tragedy (London, 1956) in Lasky, Hungarian Revolution, pp. 111-12. The agreement between the council in Gyor and the Soviet military commander was broadcast by Radio Free Gyor. See Lasky, Hungarian Revolution, pp. 106, 112. See also Lasky, Hungarian Revolution, pp. 102-3.

[6]Molnar, Budapest, p. 175.

[7]Radio Budapest, October 28, 1956, in Documentary Chronology, pp. 21-2. See also Meray, Thirteen Days, p. 121. Nagy, according to Meray, hoped to use the councils to "polarize authority and help him bring some order out of the chaos."

functions, much smaller than those already being exercised, and that it was given only to the workers' councils, not to the revolutionary councils.

The government made further concessions on October 28 when Nagy accorded implicit recognition to the revolutionary councils by entering into direct negotiations with the insurgent organizations. Then, on October 30, Nagy was compelled to "announce, on behalf of the national government, that it recognizes the democratic organs of local autonomy which have been brought into existence by the revolution, that it relies on them and asks for their support."[8] Encouraged by the central government, formation of workers' and revolutionary councils accelerated. Such councils, even took control of departments within the central government, including ministries, courts, the Chief Prosecutor's office, the National Bank, the police and railway administration. Revolutionary councils also established themselves in Hungarian foreign missions abroad.[9] In addition, "neighborhood councils which . . . grew into county and other territorial councils," councils of writers, artists, students

---

[8]Vali, Rift and Revolt, p. 321. (Italics added by Vali.)

[9]Ibid., p. 328. See also Zinner, Revolution, p. 288. Zinner notes that after October 30, councils were formed in the Ministery of National Defense and at headquarters of the regular police. "Until then, the nerve centers of these organizations had been left intact by the revolution."

youth, military and civil servants were established.[10] Despite this proliferation of councils, or perhaps because of it, there lacked the cooperation and communication to form these various bodies into a single revolutionary authority which could act as a counter-government or exercise authority in a dual-sovereignty system. According to Meray, "there could be no question of a unified command; the various insurgent groups were able to communicate with each other only occasionally. Each of the rebel movements operated independently, reflecting the spontaneity of their origins."[11] And on October 28, the Associated Press predicted failure of negotiation between the regular armed forces and the insurgents because "communications and coordination among the rebels made it doubtful that negotiations would represent all insurgent units throughout Hungary."[12] Of a number of attempts by various revolutionary groups to consolidate the revolutionary forces into a single council only two, the Transdanubian National Council centered in Gyor and led by Attila Szigeti and the Hungarian National Revolutionary Committee in Budapest, headed by Jozsef Dudas enjoyed appreciable success in their efforts.

---

[10]Arendt, "Totalitarian Imperialism," p. 31.

[11]Thirteen Days, p. 127.

[12]New York Times, October 28, 1956, pp. 1, 30.

As early as October 26, rumors began to circulate that a rival government was being organized at Gyor in western Hungary. On that day it was reported from Gyor that the AVH barracks had been stormed by insurgents and that "the Prefect, Szegethy /Szigeti/, was inside the town hall . . . with his military commander Szabo organizing a government independent of the one in Budapest."[13] On the following day a man identified only as the "commandant of the Gyor District /Szabo?/" told western reporters that soldiers', workers', and students' councils had been formed, but that as of yet they had not "proceeded to set up a formal table of government organization," the implication being that such was at least under consideration. The "commandant" also reported that they had "nothing in common with the present Communist Government," but that they were "not in touch with the other rebel-held areas."[14] On that same day, John MacCormac quoted Western newsmen who had been to Gyor to the effect that rebel forces had proclaimed an independent government there.[15] Although such an independent government had not been officially organized, a national council, identified by Radio Free Gyor as a "Provisional

---

[13]Anthony Rhodes, "Hungary 1956: Journey to Budapest," in Aczel, Ten Years After, p. 79.

[14]New York Times, October 28, 1956, pp. 1, 31.

[15]Ibid., October 27, 1956, p. 1.

National Council,"[16] comprised of revolutionary and workers' councils throughout western Hungary was in effect acting in the manner of a rival government to that of Nagy in Budapest.

On October 28, Szigeti telephoned Nagy to present a four-point program and an ultimatum. The council at Gyor demanded free elections, a "Western type democracy," a multi-party system, a cease-fire, and withdrawal of Soviet troops. Szigeti informed Nagy that "tens of thousands of Nationalists at Gyor, 67 miles from Budapest, were ready to march."[17] Shortly after noon on October 28, Radio Free Gyor announced that the Gyor Country National Council had called on Nagy "to issue instructions at the latest by 1900 /seven P. M./ . . . on the 28th of October, 1956, to stop the fighting." It further demanded that Nagy "request the commander-in-chief of the Soviet troops to cease fire."[18] Radio Budapest responded within the hour with a proclamation by Nagy of an immediate cease-fire.[19] Perhaps encouraged by this success, Radio Free Gyor demanded less than half an hour later that

---

[16] Documentary Chronology, p. 32.

[17] Jeffrey Blyth, Daily Mail (London), October 29, 1956. Taken here from Lasky, The Hungarian Revolution, p. 114. Blyth quotes a statement of Szabo who was present in Szigeti's office during the telephone call. See also Giorgi Bontempi, Il Paese (Rome), October 29, 1956, pp. 113-14. Bontempi who was also present at the time of the call verifies Blyth's account of the threat but fails to reveal the substance of the demands.

[18] Documentary Chronology, p. 31.

[19] Ibid.

"the government turn over Kossuth Radio to the Hungarian writers,"[20] and shortly after three P.M. demanded "dissolution of the Warsaw Pact" and free and secret elections.[21] The council had thus by this time begun to formulate a program of revolutionary change and had at its disposal sufficient means to threaten the legal government.

Meanwhile, in Miskolc, an industrial area in Borsod County in northeast Hungary, another revolutionary center was developing. Whereas the Gyor revolutionary council had excluded all communists from membership, in Miskolc the Communist Party was well represented.[22] Consequently the original demands broadcast on Radio Free Miskolc reflected a desire to reform the party rather than to replace it. On October 25, Radio Free Miskolc demanded the removal of "all persons . . . compromised by the cult of personality," an "open trial" of Mihaly Farkas, the past Minister of Interior, dismissal of economic planners and reinstatement of traditional Hungarian holidays, in effect re-voicing

---

[20] Ibid., p. 32.

[21] Ibid., p. 31.

[22] On composition of national committee in Gyor, see Bruce Renton, New Statesman and Nation (London), in Lasky, Hungarian Revolution, p. 198. On the workers' council of Miskolc see Documentary Chronology, p. 17. A list of demands was presented on Radio Free Miskolc on October 26 in the name of the workers' council and the party committee. See also Zinner, Revolution, p. 263. Rudolf Foldvari, a former regional secretary of the communist party was the leader of a Miskolc delegation to see Nagy on October 26.

the least provocative of the students' demands of October 23. In addition, the Miskolc radio demanded an increase in workers' wages.[23]

On the following day, Radio Free Miskolc added further demands on behalf of the workers' council of Borsod County and Greater Miskolc calling for the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Hungary, the formation of a new government, the right to strike, and amnesty for those involved in the revolution. The demands were accompanied by calls for formation of councils in plants and enterprises "with utmost urgency, without regard to party affiliation," and for a general strike to continue until the demands were fulfilled.[24]

Then on October 28, the position of Miskolc drew closer to that of Gyor when the "workers' councils and student parliament of Borsod County" demanded, in addition to previous demands, free elections with multiparty participation to be held within two weeks and a new provisional government to be formed in the interim.[25] These demands were backed on the following day with the threat that "in several cities in the country, workers' councils, students and peasants who agree with our demands possess power and

---

[23]Documentary Chronology, pp. 15-16.

[24]Ibid., p. 17.

[25]Ibid., pp. 32-3.

control armed forces."[26] In an article datelined November 1, Henry Giniger reported that there "appeared to be almost complete solidarity with the Revolutionary Committee" in the Miskolc area and that leaders of the council were confident that the few districts that had not already done so would soon "be won over."[27] Thus revolutionary organizations centered in both Miskolc and Gyor brought considerable pressure on the central government in Budapest by means of the general strike and by threat of force. And both boasted considerable forces at their command.

On October 30 they joined their forces. On that day a "parliament of revolutionary councils" met in Gyor and created the Transdanubian National Council, a federation of councils which included not only the councils of the revolutionary centers in Gyor and Miskolc, but also the national council in Bacs-Kiskun, south of Budapest east of the Danube, and the workers' council of Csepel Island, an industrial suburb of Budapest. Radio Free Gyor announced the formation of the National Council on October 31 and called on other councils to join.[28] On the following day, Free Radio Kossuth (previously Radio Budapest) reported that the Transdanubian National Council welcomed "the military units of Papa, Gyor,

---

[26]Ibid., p. 37.

[27]New York Times, November 2, 1956, p. 15.

[28]Documentary Chronology, pp. 50-1. See also Vali, Rift and Revolt, pp. 294-5.

Tata and Zalaegsrszeg."[29] The Transdanubian National Council now controlled a large part of the Hungarian countryside and might well at this point have established itself as a counter-government in opposition to the government in Budapest, but chose rather to persist as a pressure group and to work its will through the legal government. This decision resulted in some measure from the fact that Attila Szigeti, leader of the Gyor national council and newly elected leader of the Transdanubian National Council, spoke against the establishment of a counter-government.[30] News from Budapest that the Soviet Union had agreed to withdraw its troops from Budapest, that a new cabinet had been formed to include members of opposition parties and that the government was in the process of reviving the multi-party system were probably more important, however, in influencing the council to refrain from forming a rival government.[31] It chose instead to continue pressure on the central government by offering to support it only under certain conditions.

On October 31, the demands of the Transdanubian National Council were broadcast by Radio Free Gyor. They included demands for Soviet troop withdrawal, the creation

---

[29]Documentary Chronology, p. 60. This is in reference to regular Hungarian military units that promised military support to the council.

[30]Hungarian News Agency, in Lasky, Hungarian Revolution, p. 148.

[31]Vali, Rift and Revolt, pp. 324-5.

of a "uniform military command," general and secret elections on a multi-party basis no later than the end of January 1957, the inclusion of Freedom Fighters in the government, neutrality, and freedom of speech, press and religion. In addition, the council announced the organization of local armed forces under command of the council. If the government did not carry out these demands the Transdanubian National Council threatened not to recognize it "even tentatively." A delegation would "go to Imre Nagy immediately" with the purpose of bringing about the "formation of a new government."[32]

---

[32]Documentary Chronology, p. 51.

V. JOZSEF DUDAS, AN IRREPRESSIBLE INSURGENT

While the insurgents were consolidating their forces in the provinces, fighting continued in Budapest until the cease-fire of October 28 and sporadic fighting thereafter rendered communications and consolidation of forces in the capital extremely difficult. In Budapest lightly armed insurgent groups, acting independently of one another, defended isolated pockets where topographical features provided greatest protection against poorly-maneuverable Soviet tanks which were completely devoid of infantry protection.

Only in central Pest, where Lieutenant Decsi led the first charge against the Soviet tanks at dawn on October 24, and the area round Szena Square in Buda, was the fighting widespread. By the time of the cease-fire, the Decsi group and similar groups composed primarily of university students led by young officers and cadets operating in the same vicinity, had "secured" an area extending from Boraros Square along the Danube past the main police headquarters at Deak Square and eastward as far as the National Theater, including also the vicinity around the Technical University on the Buda side. These groups, having a combined strength of between 1,200 and 1,800 fighters, became the organizing body of the Revolutionary Committee for National Defense,

headquartered at Deak Square Police Headquarters.[1]

On the Buda side of the Danube the most important unit, operating in the Szena Square area, has been described as a "motley group of youngsters" who were commanded by Janos ("Uncle") Szabo, a "kindly, elderly, unpretentious" man about whom little is known.[2] A second group commanded by a Colonel Marion of the army training command operated in an area that included Buda Castle Hill. Also in Buda some fighters were commanded by Jozsef Dudas whose main activities, however, were in Pest. Altogether approximately 1,200 troops operated on the Buda side.[3]

The most effective fighting unit in the capital was headquartered at Corvin Square opposite Kilian Barracks at the intersection of Ulloi Street and Jozsef Boulevard in southern Pest. From forty people at the beginning of the revolution, the Corvin group had grown to 2,000 by October 28.[4] No single leader emerged to take command of the

---

[1]See Molnar, Budapest, p. 174. According to Molnar, the Decsi group ranged "as far afield as the East Budapest station." The "defense line" described above is from Decsi, interview, August 7, 1974. On Decsi leading the first assault against the Soviet tanks, see Molnar, Budapest, p. 129. The incident is also recounted in Meray, That Day, pp. 312-3.

[2]Zinner, Revolution, p. 291.

[3]Concerning the Szena Square group, the activities of the Dudas' group in Buda and estimated insurgent strength, see Molnar, Budapest, pp. 129, 134. On Szabo, see also Vali, Rift and Revolt, p. 322.

[4]Molnar, Budapest, p. 132.

Corvin group, and until the cease-fire the group was largely unorganized. Volunteers for specific tasks followed a number of leaders prominent among whom were Lazlo Evan-Kovacs and Gergely and Odon Pongracz.[5]

During the course of the revolution a small force of regular army troops under command of Colonel Pal Maleter was dispatched to the Kilian Barracks. Maleter has been universally accepted by writers and historians as one of the heroes of the revolution, and the Kilian soldiers included among the important revolutionary groups. Evidence is lacking, however, that Maleter ever joined the revolution. For this reason and because Maleter became a leading figure in the Nagy government the activities at Kilian Barracks will be studied at some length in a chapter to follow.

The activities of an insurgent group commanded by Jozsef Dudas also will be treated at some length because this group became politically important following the

---

[5]Odon Pongracz, Interview, September 4, 1974. See also Hungarian Government, White Books, Vol. III, p. 79. According to the White Books, Lazlo Evan-Kovacs was the leader until November 1 when he was replaced by Gergely Pongracz. See also Molnar, Budapest, p. 132. Molnar identifies Evan-Kovacs as the commander and the Pongracz brothers as leaders of the Corvin group. Zinner, Revolution, p. 290, confuses Kalman Pongracz, a former may of Budapest, whom he describes as a "Lumpenproletariat," with the Pongracz brothers at Corvin Square. According to Odon Pongracz, interview, September 4, 1974, there was no single leader, but several leaders operating in the same area. Neither Kalmon Pongracz nor the Pongracz brothers at Corvin could be described as "Lumpenproletariat," roughly meaning the "dregs of society." The Pongracz brothers six of whom fought at Corvin Square were sons of a High Court Justice.

cease-fire of October 28.

Dudas who commanded insurgent forces on both sides of the Danube has been described variously as "the most illustrious of the self-appointed leaders of the revolution," a "natural leader, combining personal magnetism, visionary characteristics, and a penchant for demagogery,"[6] as the "most remarkable condottiere of the Revolution," and as the "most enigmatic and troubling figure of the Revolution."[7] According to Meray, "some foreign correspondents . . . considered him one of the heroes of rebellion, others . . . a fascist adventurer."[8] John MacCormac described him as a man of a "strong personality and evident qualities of leadership."[9] Whatever else he may have been, Dudas was ambitious. According to Meray, he combined "a sincere desire for freedom with a strong personal ambition . . . he nurtured some abortive Napoleonic tendencies."[10] He was, according to Kiraly, "incredibly brave" and a "good man," and "undoubtedly considered himself a man of destiny."[11]

Dudas' group was, according to Zinner, the only one

---

[6]Zinner, Revolution, pp. 291-2.

[7]Vali, p. 328.

[8]Meray, Thirteen Days, p. 226.

[9]New York Times, November 1, 1956, p. 26.

[10]Meray, Thirteen Days, p. 227.

[11]Interview, August 7, 1974.

with "sizeable quantities of arms."[12] He is estimated to have commanded an army of as many as 3,000 men.[13] Dudas employed this considerable force to advance his own political ambitions. Apparently Dudas at first recognized three possible avenues by which he might enhance his own personal power. By simple brute force he might have been able to "bully" the weak Nagy government into awarding him a ministry, or he might "insinuate" himself into a position of authority simply by the expedient of assuming the responsibility of such a position. A third alternative open to him was the establishment of a rival government. He appears to have countenanced all three options simultaneously.

On October 29, the day following the cease-fire, Dudas captured the offices and printing plant of Szabad Nep and established his headquarters there.[14] The party which nominally ruled Hungary was therefore forced to find for itself new space and equipment to publish its official newspaper or to negotiate with Dudas for permission to use their own presses.[15] Turning this captured party machinery to his

---

[12]Revolution, p. 259.

[13]Ibid., pp. 291-2. See also Meray, Thirteen Days, pp. 226-7. Dudas commanded an army of "considerable strength" according to Meray, but he estimates the number only at "several hundred."

[14]On Dudas' seizure of Szabad Nep, see Zinner, Revolution, p. 291 and Meray, Thirteen Days, p. 227.

[15]See Djuka Julius, Politika (Belgrade), November 1, 1956, in Lasky, Hungarian Revolution, pp. 159-60. According

own use, Dudas published his own newspaper, Magyar Fuggetlensag (Hungarian Independence), in which he advanced his own programs and attacked the Nagy government. In his newspaper, Dudas published an "ever-changing list of demands"[16] as well as contradictory editorials, which can possibly be explained by the conflicting options which he pursued simultaneously.

To finance his publishing enterprise and other activities Dudas looted the Hungarian National Bank of several million forints.[17] It is to his credit, that Dudas permitted other organizations, including some with which he violently disagreed to use the Szabad Nep presses. According to Odon Pongracz, however, Dudas "censored every word" with which he disagreed.[18]

Control of the Szabad Nep headquarters also placed at Dudas' disposal two or three "K-line" telephones which were part of a special network connecting various governmental

---

to Julius, the communists reached an agreement with Dudas by November 1 under which the Hungarian Workers' Party was permitted to use their own presses.

[16]Meray, Thirteen Days, p. 227.

[17]Zinner, Revolution, pp. 291-2. Zinner seemed inclined not to believe the report of Dudas' robbery of the national bank. According to Kiraly, interview, August 7, 1974 and Pongracz, interview, September 4, 1974, the story is true.

[18]Interview, September 4, 1974. On Dudas' permitting other groups to use the Szabad Nep presses, see also Molnar, Budapest, p. 288.

offices independent of the central telephone offices. In Hungary there were approximately 200 such phones, each in possession, at least before the revolution, of high governmental officials. Simply by telephoning various governmental offices on the K-line, Dudas was able to speak with what appeared to be a voice of authority.[19] Dudas insinuated himself further into the affairs of government by attempting to negotiate directly with the Kremlin. In an interview with Viktor Waroszylski of Nowa Kultura (Warsaw), Dudas said the primary problems facing Hungary were "to establish the date for the withdrawal of their /Soviet/ troops from Hungary, to fix the date of free, general, and secret elections . . . /and to/ . . . re-establish peace and order in the country." According to Dudas, "in connection with all these problems I established contact with Moscow last night, and I suggested joint measures to straighten out the situation."[20] According to Meray, Dudas' contact with Moscow was actually through a Szabad Nep correspondent in Moscow, who, unaware that the Szabad Nep offices had been captured, called for information and was ordered by Dudas to present Dudas' proposals "to

---

[19]Zinner, Revolution, p. 292. The estimate of the number of K-line phones actually at Dudas' disposal is from Kiraly, interview, August 7, 1974. See also Dezso Kosak, Franc-Tireur (Paris), December 18, 1956, in Lasky, Revolution, p. 65. Kosak estimates that the special network consisted of 200 K-line phones.

[20]See Lasky, Hungarian Revolution, p. 196.

Khrushchev and Bulganin."[21]

Dudas apparently also attempted to negotiate directly with the United Nations, seeking U.N. intervention in Hungary.[22] On October 30, in an editorial in Magyar Fuggetlensag, Dudas sought United Nations' recognition of his Hungarian National Committee and his Fighters for Freedom as "belligerents" in the struggle in Hungary and asked that an armistice commission be sent to Hungary. Dudas also sought "material, and if need be, military aid" from the United Nations Security Council. He declared Hungary's neutrality "on the pattern of Austria," and denounced the Warsaw Pact.[23] Also on October 30, Dudas met with Donath and Losonczy and demanded United Nations intervention, a demand "strongly opposed" by the two communist leaders.[24]

On that same day, Dudas also arranged a meeting with Imre Nagy in which he sought recognition as leader of the insurgent groups and proposed that the insurgents, under his command be given the task of maintaining order "in collaboration with the army and the police," demands

---

[21]Thirteen Days, p. 227.

[22]See Molnar, Budapest, p. 168. Molnar mentions a message to the United Nations, but fails to disclose its contents.

[23]The complete text of the editorial is published in Journal of Central European Affairs, XVII, No. 2 (July, 1957), pp. 177-9.

[24]Testimony of Balazs Nagy in Congress for Cultural Freedom, The Truth, pp. 79-80.

previously set forth in Dudas' newspaper. It has been speculated that Dudas was attempting to secure for himself either the portfolio of Minister of Defense or that of Foreign Minister.[25] According to Balazs Nagy who was present during the negotiation between Dudas and Imre Nagy, the premier refused the demands put forward by Dudas but did agree to the publication of a communique at the insistence of Dudas. The communique stated that "negotiations are proceeding in an auspicious atmosphere on the basis of proposals made by Jozsef Dudas . . . the proposals put forward . . . will be submitted to the government by Imre Nagy."[26]

According to Balazs Nagy, Imre Nagy "obviously accorded little importance to the whole affair."[27] It is

---

[25]Ibid., p. 79. According to the Congress for Cultural Freedom, Dudas sought the Ministry of Defense for himself. According to the Hungarian Government, White Books, Vol. II, p. 107, Dudas "from the start . . . demanded six ministerial posts" for his committee, including the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Defense. See also Zinner, Revolution, p. 292. According to Zinner, Dudas would have accepted either the Ministry of Defense or of Foreign Affairs. On Dudas' demands, see also John MacCormac, New York Times, November 1, 1956, p. 26.

[26]Congress for Cultural Freedom, The Truth, p. 80. See also Hungarian Government, White Books, Vol. V., pp. 99-100. Mrs. Ferenc Molnar testified at Nagy's trial that she had transcribed the text of Dudas communique on the orders of Nagy and that Nagy had accepted the wording of the text as "all right." This communique was widely distributed through Magyar Fuggetlensag, the Hungarian News Agency and Radio Free Kossuth. See Lasky, Hungarian Revolution, p. 164.

[27]Congress for Cultural Freedom, The Truth, p. 80.

inconceivable, however, that a seasoned politician, such as Imre Nagy, could fail to attach importance to a communique which implied that Nagy was seriously considering implementation of a program already much publicized in Dudas' newspaper. Nagy's agreement to publication of the communique probably indicates that Nagy did not feel his government strong enough to resist Dudas' demands in their entirety. By this time Dudas claimed to control "the majority of the revolutionary groups, including civilian armed patrols and former soldiers . . . in the capital."[28] On his own authority, Dudas was issuing gun permits immunizing the holders from arrest by anyone other than a member of "his own formation," and was proclaiming the authority of his fighters to "intervene in defense of freedom . . . anywhere, at any time, and against anybody."[29] He also was issuing "permits for free passage" through Budapest on his own authority.[30] Whatever the actual forces at Dudas' command, he certainly was presenting the appearance of a formidable threat to the Nagy government.

It is possible also that Nagy agreed to the Dudas communique because he actually contemplated adoption of

---

[28]John MacCormac, New York Times, November 1, 1956, p. 26.

[29]Jozsef Dudas, editorial in Magyar Fuggetlensag in Journal of Central European Affairs, pp. 177-8.

[30]Vlado Teslic, Borba (Belgrade), November 1, 1956, in Lasky, Hungarian Revolution, p. 154.

the Dudas proposals. In fact, Nagy did adopt the main points outlined in Dudas' editorial of October 30 only two days later, when he declared Hungary's neutrality, announced Hungary's withdrawal from the Warsaw Pact and asked the United Nations to guarantee Hungary's neutrality. By then, circumstances had changed, however. On October 30 it appeared that Soviet troops were withdrawing from Hungary--on November 1, they were returning.

That Dudas was unable to gain promise of a ministerial position for himself through negotiations with Nagy is evidenced by an incident on the night of November 2. On that night, insurgents, apparently under orders of Dudas, attacked the foreign ministry. It is speculated that Dudas planned to "install his headquarters there and thus gain for himself a hand in the supreme direction of the country's affairs."[31] While demanding a ministerial position and simultaneously acting as if he already occupied one, Dudas was also attempting to consolidate his forces in Budapest by diverting insurgents from other groups to his command. The abortive attack on the foreign ministry was not under Dudas' personal command, but under that of a young soldier who carried identification papers of an army corporal, but who

---

[31]Meray, Thirteen Days, p. 227. On Dudas' intentions, see also J. J. Leblond, Le Dauphiné Libéré (Grenoble), November 3, 1956, in Lasky, Hungarian Revolution, p. 197. On the part of Dudas in the attack on the ministry see Hungarian Government, White Books, Vol. II, p. 108 and Meray, Thirteen Days, p. 226.

wore the uniform of a lieutenant-colonel. He also carried papers signed by Dudas promoting him to the rank of lieutenant-colonel. The young "lieutenant-colonel" and the very young troops he commanded were originally from the Szena Square group commanded by Szabo in Buda.[32]

Dudas also attempted, either by force or persuasion, to enlist the workers' and revolutionary councils, both in the capital and the provinces, into his own organization. On October 31 Dudas complained in an editorial that workers' councils had been established "clandestinely" by "circumventing" the Hungarian Revolutionary National Committee. Dudas refused to recognize such councils and announced his intention to have them "re-elected in the spirit of genuine democracy." According to Dudas, his Hungarian Revolutionary National Committee already had "quite properly interfered" with councils in two districts of Budapest.[33] According to Paul Zinner, Dudas' committee simply "posed as a roof

---

[32]Kiraly, interview, August 7, 1974. An account of the battle at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is also contained in Meray, Thirteen Days, p. 226. Meray's account corroborates that of Kiraly, but Meray misses the important fact that the attackers now under orders of Dudas were originally of the Szabo group. See also Hungarian Government, White Books, Vol. II, p. 35. Perhaps because of this incident, the official interpretation of the revolution by the post-revolutionary government lists the Szabo group as part of the Dudas organization. See also White Books, Vol. II, p. 106.

[33]Jozsef Dudas, editorial in Magyar Fuggetlensag, October 29, 1956. Taken here from Hungarian Government, White Books, Vol. IV, p. 97.

organization for all national councils throughout the country" but in fact "represented no one but himself and his immediate entourage."[34] If this assessment of Zinner is correct, it would appear that Dudas was dealing with the provincial councils as he was with the central government, claiming authority by the simple expedient of pretending that he already possessed that authority.

In an interview with John MacCormac on October 31, Dudas announced that he had "rejected a proposal from the revolutionary committees at Gyor and Sopran to join a new anti-Nagy administration," explaining that "there should not be two Hungarian Governments." Instead Dudas said he would "urge that a new provisional government be formed to include Mr. Nagy and Mr. Kovacs, with two or three ministries going to the Social Democrats, Smallholders and National Peasants," with other ministries to "be held by the revolutionaries." At the very time of MacCormac's interview with Dudas, in which Dudas was proclaiming his opposition to the Transdanubian National Council, MacCormac had in his possession a pamphlet issued by Dudas summoning "all national revolutionary organizations to an assembly in Budapest sports palace" on November 1 to organize under his own auspices an organization much the same as that already existing at Gyor, the primary difference being that Dudas

---

[34]Revolution, pp. 291-2.

would be in command of the organization in Budapest.[35] On the same day that Dudas granted MacCormac the interview, Radio Free Kossuth reviewed an editorial written by Dudas and published in Magyar Fuggetlensag convening a "congress of national revolutionary forces for Thursday morning [November 1]." It was the contention of Dudas that "the local revolutionary organs which formed spontaneously in Trans-Danubia" and throughout Hungary still lacked a central organization and therefore could not "summon the required authority for their positions vis-à-vis the government."[36] Also on November 1 a representative of Dudas approached the committee at Gyor about forming a counter-government, but was "turned down."[37]

Although a leader of men, Dudas was not a leader of leaders. On November 1, no one gathered at the sports palace, and Dudas himself was placed under arrest by General Bela Kiraly, commander of the newly formed National Guard, a force composed of military, police and insurgents, the very forces which Dudas had himself hoped to command. Dudas

---

[35]New York Times, November 1, 1956, p. 26. See also Vali, Rift and Revolt, p. 328. According to Vali, this was to be a "provisional parliamentary body" to "elect a countergovernment." Vali erroneously dates the conference as being called for November 2 instead of November 1.

[36]Documentary Chronology, p. 53. See also the Hungarian News Agency review in Lasky, Hungarian Revolution, p. 164.

[37]Vali, Rift and Revolt, p. 294.

was released after a few hours, and on November 2 his forces attacked the Foreign Ministry. But in a confrontation between Dudas and Kiraly at a meeting of insurgent leaders the details of Dudas' abortive raid on the Foreign Ministry using troops from the Szena Square group were disclosed. Dudas was discredited and relieved of command by his lieutenants.[38]

Although Dudas joined the revolution in its early stages, the exploits for which he became best known, his occupation of Szabad Nep, his attack on the Foreign Ministry and the looting of the National Bank, occurred after the cease-fire, at a time when other major revolutionary groups were supporting the Nagy government. While other leaders were submitting their groups to government control under the National Guard, Dudas was attempting instead to recruit these same forces into his own army and therefore rendered the organization of the National Guard more difficult. Dudas' much publicized and ill-timed appeal to the United

---

[38]Kiraly, interview, August 7, 1974. Some confusion still exists concerning the arrest of Dudas. According to the Congress for Cultural Freedom, The Truth, p. 80, Dudas was arrested on the orders of Nagy by Sandor Kopasci for "illegal activities." According to Kiraly, he himself arrested Dudas on November 1 for his part in the attack on the Foreign Ministry, but released him for lack of sufficient evidence. According to other sources, however, the attack on the Foreign Ministry occurred on the night of November 2. Although insistent, Kiraly was probably simply confused about the dates. See also Zinner, Revolution, p. 292. According to Zinner, Dudas was "taken into protective custody" and shortly thereafter released.

Nations for intervention in Hungary, at a time when the Soviet Union appeared to be already withdrawing, and his further demand that Soviet forces humiliate themselves by withdrawing "instantly" carrying "hoisted white flags"[39] could serve no positive purpose and might well have contributed to the Soviet fear of "counterrevolution" and thereby to renewed Soviet intervention. The net effect of Dudas' activities was at best disruptive and counterproductive to the restoration of Hungarian stability, and at worst disastrous to the cause of the revolution as expressed in the demands of the various workers' and revolutionary councils. The inability of Nagy to effectively deal with Dudas exhibited to the Soviet Union the weakness of the Hungarian government and must certainly have contributed to the decision in favor of intervention.

Following the massive Soviet intervention of November 4 Dudas displayed again incredible though foolhardy courage, intense patriotism, stubborn tenacity, and the irrepressible personal ambition which would finally bring his end. Faced with insurmountable odds Dudas, rather than join the near 200,000 others who were fleeing toward the Austrian border, chose instead to stand and fight. He led his fighters in the narrow streets and alleys of Budapest

---

[39]Magyar Fuggetlensag in Journal of Central European Affairs, p. 177.

until late November when, lured to the Prime Ministry "to negotiate" with Kadar, he was arrested. Along with Janos Szabo of the Szena group he was executed on January 19, 1957.

VI. THE PAL MALETER MYTH

More controversial even than the part played by Dudas in the revolution is that played by Colonel Pal Maleter who emerged by October 30 as a hero of the revolution. Maleter was a professional soldier who served in the Hungarian army as a lieutenant during World War II. Following his capture by Soviet forces, Maleter underwent training in the Soviet Union, joined the Communist Party, and retained his commission under the communist government after 1947.[1] Early in the revolution Maleter took command of the Kilian Barracks across Ulloi Avenue from Corvin Square. After the cease-fire Maleter, as a hero of the revolution and as a symbol of the government's acceptance of the revolution, was promoted from colonel to general and finally to Minister of Defense in five days, between October 30 and November 3. Evidence is lacking however that Maleter ever joined the revolution and in fact the evidence indicates the opposite, that Maleter actively opposed the insurgents until after the cease-fire. If such is the case--if Nagy knowingly promoted from colonel to Defense Minister a man who fought the revolution to the end--then the widely held view that Nagy joined the revolution at the time of the cease-fire

---

[1]On Maleter's early career see Congress for Cultural Freedom, The Truth, p. 123. See also Ignotus, Hungary, p. 241 and Bain, The Reluctant Satellite, p. 158.

must also be questioned.

Maleter, in an interview with newsman on November 1, 1956, said that he had been ordered by the Ministry of Defense to "relieve the Kilian Barracks" in the "early hours of last Wednesday /October 24/." When he arrived at the barracks, Maleter "became convinced that the freedom fighters were no bandits but loyal sons of the Hungarian people." Maleter then informed the Ministry of Defense that he would "go over to the insurgents."[2] Except that by most accounts Maleter was sent to the barracks at a later time than indicated in his press conference, Maleter's statement of November 1 has been generally taken at face value.[3]

---

[2]"Pal Maleter's Press Conference," Free Radio Kossuth, in Lasky, Hungarian Revolution, p. 176.

[3]According to Congress for Cultural Freedom, The Truth, p. 38, Maleter "did in fact join the insurgents on 24 October, 1956." The hour is not indicated however. See also Marton, The Forbidden Sky, p. 146. Marton who "interviewed" Maleter on November 1 says that Maleter was ordered to the barracks on October 25. Marton accepts the story of Maleter's immediate conversion to the side of the revolution, however. See also Vali, Rift and Revolt, p. 315. Vali's account is similiar in wording and substance to that of Marton and seems to share a common source in Maleter's statement of November 1. According to both Vali and Marton, Maleter arrived at the barracks on October 25 instead of October 24 however. See also Ignotus, Hungary, p. 241. Ignotus is basically in agreement with Marton and Vali concerning Maleter's immediate conversion to the side of the insurgents, but dates Maleter's arrival at the barracks as the night of the "24th-25th." Vali, Marton and Ignotus agree that Maleter was sent to re-occupy the Kilian Barracks which had fallen to the insurgents although other evidence suggests that Maleter was sent to hold the barracks

Maleter's conversion was not immediate however. At Maleter's trial following the revolution Janos Tari, in whose tank Maleter rode to the Kilian Barracks, the colonel was sent to the barracks on the afternoon of October 25 with several tanks. Maleter was not sent "to relieve the barracks" however, but to "mop up the groups of armed men" at Corvin Alley and to occupy Corvin Alley. According to Tari, Maleter "fired several rounds at the counter revolutionaries in Corvin Alley." At some undisclosed time after this, "Maleter ordered a cease-fire . . . ordered us to climb out the the /sic/ tanks and turn the cannons in the opposite direction."[4]

Tibor Meray notes also that Maleter at first fired on the Corvin insurgents when he arrived at Kilian Barracks, which, according to Meray, was on October 26. After interviewing captured insurgents who were being held in the barracks Maleter effected a truce. Later when more Soviet tanks entered Budapest Maleter joined the insurgents.[5] Miklos Molnar also records that Maleter did not immediately join the insurgents. According to Molnar, Maleter was ordered to Kilian Barracks at noon on October 25. His loyalties, according to Molnar, "veered towards the rebels

---

which was still in control of the government and to attack the Corvin groups.

[4]White Books, V, p. 70.

[5]That Day in Budapest, pp. 348-9.

on October 27th or 28th . . . at one moment he had fought the revolution, but then had concluded a cease-fire and joined them in fighting the common enemy, the Soviet tanks." It is not of "great importance" according to Molnar to know whether Maleter's conversion occurred on October 27 or October 28.[6] It should be noted, however, that October 28 was the day of the cease-fire. The question is therefore raised, did Maleter join the revolution only at the eleventh hour when the revolution seemed to be a success or did he join the revolution at all?

According to Odon Pongracz, who observed Maleter's arrival at Kilian Barracks and whose group exchanged fire with the soldiers in Kilian Barracks for two days, Maleter never joined the revolution. Maleter arrived at Kilian Barracks "with four or five tanks" on the afternoon of October 25, as reported by Janos Tari, and as would be expected had Maleter left the Defense Ministry at noon on the 25th as recorded by Molnar. According to Pongracz one tank, Maleter's, backed into the gateway of Kilian Barracks thereby blocking the only large entrance. The other tanks disappeared behind the barracks. Maleter entered the barracks where he found "sixteen to eighteen kids" from the Corvin group along with a "working force" of people the government considered unreliable, "kulaks, sons of

---

[6]Molnar, Budapest, p. 141.

landowners," and a small guard force. Maleter "ordered the civilians out." From that time until October 30 Maleter permitted no one to enter or leave the barracks except a negotiating team from Corvin Square that entered under a flag of truce on October 28.[7]

Maleter's men did not fire on the Corvin insurgents until the following day, October 26, according to Pongracz, at a time when the Corvin group was also engaged by Soviet tanks. Sporadic fighting continued between Kilian Barracks and the Corvin group for two days. A truce was called between Kilian Barracks and Corvin Square on October 28 when negotiations for a general cease-fire were in progress. At that time Maleter advised Pongracz to surrender, saying that the Corvin block was surrounded by 350 Soviet tanks.[8] If Pongracz's story is true, then Maleter obviously had not as of that time joined the insurgents. But if not, a new question arises as to Maleter's elevation to heroic stature during the course of the revolution.

The myth of Pal Maleter, the revolutionary hero, probably had its origin in confusion caused by the proximity of Kilian Barracks to Corvin Square, the scene of the heaviest

---

[7]Pongracz, interview, September 4, 1974. That the barracks was sealed-off is corraborated by a bus driver whose activities during the revolution brought him in proximity to the barracks. The bus driver asked not to be identified. See also Bain, The Reluctant Satellite, p. 113.

[8]Ibid.

fighting of the revolution. A visitor to the scene following the cease-fire would have found in the neighborhood of Kilian Barracks the charred remains of a number of Soviet tanks. It would be natural to assume that the tanks had fallen victim to the defenders of Kilian Barracks, a two-century-old, four-story fortress with four-foot-thick walls.[9] The Corvin block, a complex of seven and eight story apartment buildings much like other apartment buildings throughout Budapest would seem of no special significance.

Actually the Corvin block was strategically superior to the Kilian barracks. According to the White Books of the post-revolutionary Kadar government the strategic advantages of the Corvin block were recognized early in the revolution by a man who seemed "to have been a military expert." Immediately after his arrival at Corvin Square the "military expert" decided that

---

[9]Such confusion is seen in photographs published by the Free Europe Committee in its summary of radio broadcasts concerning the revolution. See Documentary Chronology, p. 96. A photograph of a building identified as the Kilian Barracks is actually across Jozsef Boulevard from the barracks according to a bus driver of ten years experience in the area. See above, p. 79, note 7. The building wrongly identified as Kilian Barracks has one corner completely demolished to the height of six floors and gaping holes appear along the walls, indicating that the building had been under heavy attack by large guns. Kilian Barracks itself, a building of entirely different architectural style, is pictured and correctly identified in another photograph. See p. 99. Unlike the heavily damaged building erroneously identified as Kilian Barracks the actual building discloses only slight, superficial damage of the type caused by small arms fire. It is perhaps significant that the fascade thusly damaged faces the Corvin block.

> Corvin Alley can be defended even against tanks. The street is narrow; it is a good vantage point for attacks against armoured cars; the street has many exits so that, in case of trouble, we can easily escape. This place must be made the general headquarters.[10]

As described by Odon Pongracz, Corvin Square was a courtyard surrounded by tall, seven and eight-story apartment buildings, and accessible only by a narrow corridor, the Corvin Passage, opening on Jozsef Boulevard and a narrow arcade opening on Ulloi Avenue opposite Kilian Barracks. Both passages to the courtyard were too narrow to be entered by Soviet tanks. A school cafeteria directly behind the Corvin Cinema which was situated in the center of the square provided quarters for the insurgents. Also the block contained a gasoline station which was broken into early in the fighting and which supplied fuel for "Molotov cocktails." Unable to penetrate the square with tanks, and lacking infantry support, the Soviets could only have routed the insurgents by completely leveling the apartment complex which surrounded the square (which, in fact, they did after the second intervention). The insurgents, using an anti-tank gun salvaged from a disabled tank, fired through the Corvin Passage at passing Soviet tanks with relative impunity. According to Pongracz, the Corvin group destroyed eleven tanks in a single day, October 26, when they also were

---

[10]Vol. III, p. 78.

fighting the soldiers of Kilian Barracks.[11]

Kilian Barracks, on the other hand, although designed as a fortress two centuries earlier, lacked the advantages enjoyed by Corvin Square for battle with Soviet tanks. Moreover the Kilian Barracks lacked suitable weapons, such as the Corvin gun, for attacking Soviet tanks.[12] It must be supposed then that the burned-out Soviet tanks which lined Jozsef Boulevard in front of Corvin Square and the Kilian Barracks were destroyed not by the Kilian soldiers but by the insurgents at Corvin Square. This conclusion is supported also by the testimony of Odon Pongracz. Nevertheless writers who visited the area and found "dozens of destroyed tanks shot to pieces" credited the destruction to the fighters at Kilian Barracks.[13] By October 30 the fame of

---

[11]Interview, September 4, 1974. According to Pongracz the Corvin cannon was set up to fire directly down the Corvin Passage from the front of the cinema, the steps of the theatre absorbing the recoil. See also Hungarian Government, White Books, Vol. III, p. 81. According to the White Books, the Corvin group captured two cannons on October 27.

[12]Reports that Maleter's men destroyed Soviet tanks by throwing nitroglycerin bottles must be considered dubious at best, nitroglycerin being an extremely unstable compound and dangerous to handle even under laboratory conditions. See Time Magazine, January 7, 1957, pp. 18-22. Neither should reports of tanks being destroyed by "Molotov cocktails" be accepted as fact. It was necessary first that tanks be disabled. The crews could then be forced from the tanks by setting the tanks and street around on fire using gasoline bombs. "Molotov cocktails" would be useless against moving tanks.

[13]Eugen-Geza Pogany, Ungarns Freiheitskampf, Vienna, 1957, in Lasky, Hungarian Revolution, pp. 96-7. Pogany described the people in the barracks as "soldiers, students,

Pal Maleter and the Kilian freedom fighters was widespread and thousands marched to the barracks in a mass demonstration of their support of the revolution. Maleter had become the symbol of a revolution he had not yet joined. His reputation as an insurgent hero already established, Maleter joined the government on October 30 and, despite violent objection on the part of the Corvin insurgents, took part in organizing the National Guard.[14] On November 1, Maleter, accepting the honors already bestowed upon him, indicated to newsmen in an interview that he had actually joined the revolution at the very beginning on October 23.[15]

Once Maleter's reputation as a hero of the revolution was established, it became the problem of chroniclers of the revolution to fit him somehow into that role. James

---

young workers, remarkable youngsters" all of whom he took to be part of the Kilian fighters. Gyorgy Paloczi-Howath, a writer for Irodalmi Ujsag visited the barracks on October 30, at the time of an organizational meeting of the National Guard and found the "neighborhood . . . guarded by the famous Corvin regiment." Inside the barracks he found military men, "university students, young girls, old and young workers. . . ." Possibly this was also the occasion of Pogany's visit. See George Paloczi-Howath, The Undefeated (Boston and Toronto: Little, Brown and Company, 1959), p. 298. See also John MacCormac, New York Times, October 31, 1956, in Lasky, Hungarian Revolution, pp. 137-8. MacCormac visited the scene and found a similar group of "youthful insurgents" and assumed them to have been members of the Kilian group.

[14]Pongracz, interview, September 4, 1974. The violent objections of the Corvin leaders to Maleter's part in organizing the National Guard was also noted by Kiraly, interview, August 7, 1974.

[15]See above, p. 76.

Michener, for example, in his Bridge at Andau includes a story related by a young soldier, a Sergeant Csoki, who claimed to have fought at Kilian Barracks. In the middle of the narrative a single paragraph concerning Maleter is inserted. totally irrevelant to the story being told and of no significance except to demonstrate Maleter's presence at the barracks.[16] The editors of the Hungarian White Books apparently were as hard pressed to link Maleter with the insurgents as was Michener. A draft prepared by Maleter was edited freely to this end. According to the White Books "Maleter enumerated in this draft the tasks to be executed including 'strengthening' the army with 'honourable officers (insurgents)'." And again "The army Personnel Department shall make proposals for reinforcing the army with honest officers (insurgents, individuals who have been reinstated, etc.)." The parenthetical expressions were added by the editors of the White Books.[17] Maleter was obviously

---

[16]James A. Michener, The Bridge at Andau (New York: Random House, 1957), pp. 45-6. In essence Colonel Maleter arrived at the scene, told Csoki the "fuses" on his gasoline bombs "should be longer for tanks," and "disappeared down the steps"--nothing overly heroic. The reader is further mystified by Mitchener's apparent need in an afterword to his book, entitled "Can These Things be True," to state that the story concerning Maleter's part in the battle was verified by other witnesses. See p. 268. Actually there was nothing to verify except Maleter's presence and his one inane remark concerning fuses.

[17]White Books, V, p. 74. Italics added.

referring to regular army officers rather than insurgents, however.

In fact Maleter's loyalty to the regular army and his opposition to the insurgents never wavered. Encountering representatives of the Corvin groups who had come to parliament to negotiate with Nagy on October 30, Maleter berated them as being "nothing, . . . punks, . . . civilians."[18] And testifying at his trial following the revolution Maleter said he "did not approve from the beginning of organizing special police units from the insurgents."[19] Neither was Maleter willing to accept a government that seemed to be acquiescing in the demands of the insurgents. On October 28, when Maleter was urging the Corvin insurgents to surrender, Maleter himself was refusing to turn over his arms to the government.[20] Maleter promised Nagy the support of the Kilian soldiers and "the other army units" if Nagy "accepts and fulfills our demands." Maleter continued "We Freedom Fighters will not surrender our arms but, with the rest of

---

[18]Pongracz, interview, September 4, 1974.

[19]White Books, Vol. V, p. 74.

[20]Documentary Chronology, p. 28. A single message was broadcast by Radio Budapest on the morning of October 28 rejecting the demands of the "resisters in the Kilian Barracks and Corvin District." Despite this joint appeal the Corvin groups and Kilian soldiers had only one thing in common at this time, their refusal to accept the Nagy government. On the evening of that same day, following the general cease-fire, the Corvin and Kilian groups negotiated a cease-fire between themselves. Pongracz, interview, September 4, 1974.

the army . . . shall take over police powers to assure peace and good order until a new police has been organized."[21] Apparently reassured by Nagy, Maleter joined the government on October 30 and was promoted to general on that same day. Promoted to Deputy Defense Minister three days later Maleter remained the spokesman of the army. According to Elie Abel of the New York Times, Maleter told foreign newsmen that "The Hungarian army's continued support of the Nagy regime hinged on the success of current talks to take the country out of the Warsaw Pact."[22] The Nagy government had capitalized on the original confusion concerning Maleter in order to gain support from the insurgents and had thereby further confused the situation. The Kadar government added again to the confusion by attempting to show Maleter's early conversion to the side of the revolution.

The Maleter myth thus bred in the confusion of the revolution and perpetuated for political gain by both the

---

[21]Sefton Delmer, Daily Express, London, October 31, 1956, in Lasky, Hungarian Revolution, pp. 178-9. Italics added. See also Eugen-Geza Pogany, Ungarns Freiheitskampf, in Lasky, Hungarian Revolution, pp. 96-7. According to Pogany who interviewed Maleter at Kilian Barracks, Maleter expressed "confidence in Imre Nagy," but continued, "we will lay down our weapons only to regular Hungarian troops." Italics added. Maleter is also quoted in Igazsag, the organ of the "revolutionary youth and the army," that "just as we have confidence in the government, the government has confidence in us. Therefore we are not surrendering our arms, but together with the Army units . . . will help safeguard public order in Budapest. See Lasky, Hungarian Revolution, p. 60. Italics added.

[22]November 3, 1956, p. 5.

Nagy and Kadar governments was further insured by the execution of both Maleter and Nagy following the revolution. Both became martyrs and thus beneficiaries of the protection of champions of the revolutionary cause. It must be suspected that some writers are by now aware that Maleter had not joined the revolution prior to November 1, but continue to support the myth of Maleter's heroism because to do otherwise would be to destroy one of the more heroic chapters of the revolution. Tibor Meray for example goes to great length to show that prior to the cease-fire both the Nagy government and Soviet Union planned a major offensive against the Kilian Barracks. According to Meray by October 27 "word of the resistance at Kilian Barracks had spread through the country . . . the defenders of Kilian Barracks became at this stage a symbol of the continuing struggle." Supposedly citing the "third volume of the Kadar government's later-published White Book," Meray continues to relate how "a common plan of action had been drawn up for October 28 . . . to coordinate the Hungarian Army and the Soviet units," the "mission . . . the total destruction of Kilian Barracks and of the buildings surrounding the barracks on Corvin Passage." Informed of the plan, Nagy threatened to resign if the plan were carried through, because, according to Meray, "if the bloodbath before the Parliament were now to be followed by a massacre at Kilian Barracks and at other centers of resistance, the agonizing

memory of such an attack would cost him the confidence of the masses forever."[23] The White Books however tell a different story. According to the source cited by Meray, "a joint action of Hungarian and Soviet military units for the liquidation of the Corvin group had been scheduled to start at 6 a.m. /October 28/." Imre Nagy telephoned the ministry of defense at five-thirty a.m. and threatened to "resign if the Corvin group is attacked."[24] The White Books do not mention Kilian Barracks with respect to the planned attack of October 28. In Volume V of the White Books, Nagy is accused of preventing "loyal forces from annihilating the counter-revolutionaries entrenched in Corvin Alley or forcing them to surrender."[25] According to the testimony of Karoly Janza, Minister of Defense, on October 28:

> The military council discussed a suggestion to mop up the armed counter-revolutionaries fighting in and around Corvin Alley, for they were inflicting tremendous casualties and material damages; that was the strongest center of resistance and it would make it easier to crush the other seats of resistance. The military council accepted the suggestion, and commissioned Major-general Istvan Kovacs of the operational staff of the General Staff and colonels Miklos Szucs and Zolomy to draw up the operational plan. . . .

---

[23] Thirteen Days, pp. 127-8.

[24] White Books, Vol. III, p. 82. Italics added.

[25] P. 89. Italics added. See also Congress for Cultural Freedom, The Truth, p. 78. According to the French edition of the White Books, Nagy prevented the attack "by threatening to resign." These words were deleted in the English edition.

> Imre Nagy rang me up and told me that to carry out that plan was out of the question.[26]

Again there is no mention of resistance at Kilian Barracks, but a testimonial to the effectiveness of the Corvin group, as was the testimony of Lajos Toth, a former chief of staff of the Hungarian army. According to Toth, "the military operation scheduled for October 28" had been "designed to mop up the counter-revolutionary fighters in and around Corvin Alley." Nagy "threatened to resign his post as prime minister, should the plan be carried through." Because "this operation was not carried out, Corvin Alley and vicinity grew into an even larger counter-revolutionary base."[27] Again, the importance of Corvin Passage is noted and Kilian Barracks is unmentioned.

More telling perhaps than any other evidence that Maleter never joined the insurgents is the fact that Maleter was included in the Nagy government on October 30, at a time when that government apparently had the approval and blessings of the Soviet Union.[28] It is inconceivable that the Soviet Union would have knowingly accepted a government which included a genuine hero of the anti-Soviet resistance. If the Kilian Barracks was a stronghold of that resistance,

---

[26] White Books, Vol. III, p. 90. Italics added.

[27] Ibid., italics added.

[28] On Soviet acceptance of the Nagy government as of October 30, see below, p. 108.

apparently the Soviet Union was unaware of that fact.

Maleter seems to have been motivated by his loyalty to the army and the principles of communism.[29] In addition, like Dudas, he was personally ambitious. But, unlike Dudas, he realized a great deal of personal success. From an obscure colonel, he rose within a week to Minister of Defense. Ironically, Dudas, who joined the revolution from the beginning, can only be considered a detriment to the revolutionary cause, while Maleter, who never accepted the cause of the revolution, became a stabilizing factor in the Nagy government and thus served the revolutionary cause.

---

[29]On Maleter's continued loyalty to communist principles see Molnar, Budapest, p. 142. According to Molnar when one of the insurgents addressed Maleter as "Sir" following Maleter's inclusion in the government, Maleter "pulled him up sharply: 'There is no longer such a thing as "Sir" in the People's Army, only comrade'." According to Molnar, Maleter "declared . . . with great enthusiasm that he remained a partisan of the people's power and socialism."

VII. NAGY'S ATTEMPT TO CONSOLIDATE HIS POWER

(October 28-November 1)

As of the cease-fire of October 28, the forces of the insurgents and the government were neutralized. Without means of coercion at his disposal, Nagy was faced with the almost insurmountable problem of restoring order and of maintaining supremacy of an almost non-existent and thoroughly discredited communist party.[1] It was also mandatory that Nagy convince the Soviet Union of his ability to accomplish these tasks or else face the possibility of renewed Soviet intervention. Nagy thus found himself cast in the classic role of the "moderate," pressed between the more radical revolutionary committees and the conservatives, the Soviet Union, but lacking those options normally available to a government in that position, the choice of suppressing the illegal government, attempting to control it, or leaving it alone.[2] Nagy lacked power to accomplish the first of

---

[1]On the lack of coercive forces, see Jean Roman, "The Nagy Government Might Soon Give Way to Anticommunist Formation," Le Monde, November 2, 1956, p. 6, in Wilbur Schramm, ed., One Day in the World's Press: Fourteen Great Newspapers on a Day of Crisis, November 2, 1956 (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1959), p. 22. "The Nagy government had practically no forces at its disposal after about the entire army went over to the insurrectional movement and after the retreat of the Russians and the disintegration of the state police."

[2]See Brinton, Anatomy of Revolution, pp. 177-8.

these options and the Soviet Union would not permit the third. Nagy could only succeed by joining and then gaining control of the revolution.

To this end, Imre Nagy, on October 28, for the first time proclaimed the revolution a "popular movement," rather than a counter-revolution, approved the creation of the workers' councils, "those new organs of democratic self-government," promised government support for the councils and promised to "strive to find a place for them in the administrative machinery." In addition Nagy announced that agreement had been reached for Soviet withdrawal from Budapest and that negotiations were being conducted toward Soviet withdrawal from Hungary. Nagy also promised "after the re-establishment of order" to dissolve the AVH and to create new armed forces "from units of the Army, . . . the police, and . . . the armed workers' and youth groups."[3]

In keeping with Nagy's promise to create new armed forces to include insurgents, the government began immediately to organize a "temporary national committee" to create a National Guard, its membership to be composed of regular army units, police and workers.[4] On the night of October 28, negotiations between government officials and insurgents were conducted, and by the following day the Corvin group

---

[3]Radio Budapest in Documentary Chronology, p. 33. Italics added.

[4]Radio Budapest in Documentary Chronology, p. 28.

had agreed to join the new armed force.[5] On October 29, Nagy instructed Sandor Kopacsi, the commander of the regular police, to organize the new special police under the authority of the Revolutionary Committee of the Special Police which itself had been organized on the previous night at the Deak Street headquarters.[6]

Although Zinner and Vali both contend that Kopacsi joined the revolution on October 24, other sources suggest that Kopacsi, like Maleter, never fully embraced the revolutionary cause. According to Vali, Kopacsi gave orders on October 24, "after initial hesitation, to provide the insurrection with weapons."[7] Zinner, in basic agreement with Vali, wrote that Kopacsi was persuaded by a group of writers including his brother-in-law, Gyorgy Fazekar, to join the revolution on October 24.[8] Other sources differ,

---

[5]Pongracz, interview, September 4, 1974. Pongracz was one of the negotiators who took part in a meeting on the night of October 28 at AVH headquarters. The meeting lasted until four a.m., after which negotiations continued with military leaders at the Ministry of Defense and finally with Nagy himself at Parliament. According to Kiraly a meeting was taking place at the same time at Deak Street police headquarters to prepare a proposal for the new police force. See Bela K. Kiraly, "How Russian Trickery Throttled Revolt," in Life, February 18, 1957, pp. 119-20.

[6]Testimony of Kopacsi in White Books, Vol. V, p. 56.

[7]Rift and Revolt, p. 307.

[8]Revolution, p. 250. See also Zinner, "Revolution in Hungary," p. 29. In the later work, Zinner credits Kopacsi with "the almost instantaneous supply of arms to the population." According to Zinner, "the impulse on which he acted remains unexplained."

however. According to Tamas Aczel, one of the writers present at the Deak Street police headquarters on October 24, the writers persuaded Kopacsi not to fire on the insurgents. Kopacsi, however, issued orders to the several precincts to destroy their weapons if necessary to prevent their falling into the hands of the insurgents.[9] According to a volume published by the Congress for Cultural Freedom, Kopacsi actually "fired at the insurgents with a rifle" from the balcony of police headquarters on October 24, the same day when, according to Vali and Zinner, he was arming the insurgents.[10]

Although a precinct commander whose headquarters was threatened by "counter-revolutionaries" testified at Kopacsi's trial following the revolution that Kopacsi had ordered him to "hand over the weapons and move to Central Headquarters," Kopacsi confessed only that he had issued orders to three precincts "to lay down arms" and to three others "to march in with their arms to central headquarters."[11] From this it would appear that Kopacsi was attempting to prevent capture of the police weapons if

---

[9]In Meray, That Day in Budapest, pp. 266-7.

[10]The Truth, p. 125. See also Meray, Thirteen Days, pp. 155-6. According to Meray, when thousands of demonstrators appeared before police headquarters, Kopacsi "appeared on the balcony and calmed them, averting an attack."

[11]White Books, Vol. V, pp. 54-5.

possible but was unwilling to scrifice the lives of his men to protect the weapons. And according to Meray, Kopacsi "succeeded in protecting police headquarters and his armory of weapons throughout the revolution."[12] Kopacsi testified that "during the first few days" he had supplied arms to two "workers' detachments," but had ceased to provide them arms under instructions from Nagy.[13] Because the workers' detachments proved unreliable during the revolution, it would appear that Nagy had stopped their arming to prevent weapons reaching the insurgents, not, as indicated by the post-revolutionary government, to prevent the arming of loyal communist troops. Kopacsi confessed at his trial that he had turned over arms to the insurgents, but only after the cease-fire, to insurgents who were being inducted into the National Guard under control of the government.[14] The official Hungarian government White Books indirectly admit as much. According to the White Books, the "revolutionary centre in the Budapest headquarters of the police commissioner . . . disrupted a considerable section of the police force, disorganized it and later armed the counter-revolutionaries, by agreement between Sandor Kopacsi and representatives of the insurgents and on the instructions

---

[12]Thirteen Days, pp. 155-6.

[13]White Books, Vol. V, pp. 54-5.

[14]Ibid., p. 58.

of Imre Nagy."[15]

In assessing the activities of Sandor Kopacsi prior to the cease-fire it must be remembered also that Nagy himself was fighting the insurgents. It is hardly conceivable that he would have continued in office a police commander who was arming his adversaries. According to the Congress for Cultural Freedom, Kopacsi "simply carried out the orders of legal governments. . . . /Kopacsi/ is condemned for having obeyed his superiors,"[16] and according to Aczel, "faithful to his oath, Kopacsi obeyed to the end the orders of the legal Hungarian government."[17] It would probably be more accurate to state that, lacking orders in the early stages of the revolution, during the period when Gero placed his confidence in the AVH and Soviet troops, Kopacsi, under the influence not of the insurgents, but of the writers, the moderates, out of indecisiveness more than sympathy for the revolution, adopted a neutral policy.[18] By the time Nagy gained power the police force had already ceased to be

---

[15]Ibid., p. 51. Italics added. Obviously Kopacsi's arming of the insurgents took place after the cease-fire in the process of formation of the National Guard.

[16]The Truth, p. 38.

[17]Statement of Tamas Aczel in Congress for Cultural Freedom, The Truth, July 11, 1958, p. 72.

[18]See Vali, Rift and Revolt, p. 308. According to Vali, "general confusion and uncertainty presumedly prevented Gero from taking any stern measures against Kopacsi."

a viable force. The point to be made, however, is that Kopacsi, like Maleter, never joined the revolution but after the cease-fire was delegated authority to organize the forces of the revolution.

Kopacsi was entrusted by Nagy also with the task of selecting "an experienced, well-trained military man, possibly among the persons rehabilitated, to head the Committee of the Special Police."[19] Selected for this position was General Bela K. Kiraly, from 1949 until his arrest and imprisonment in 1951, commander of the infantry of the Army of the Hungarian People's Republic. Kiraly was confined in a hospital until October 28 when he was invited to the Deak Street headquarters to take part in the work of the Revolutionary Council for National Defense,[20] and therefore, like Kopacsi and Maleter, had not joined the insurgents prior to the cease-fire. On October 30, Maleter joined the Nagy government and became commander of the regular army. Kiraly was named commander of the National Guard with Kopacsi as his deputy. By October 30, the National Guard was established and eventually included an estimated ninety per cent of the insurgents. The major insurgent leaders, with the exception of Dudas, were included in the National Guard as

---

[19]Testimony of Kopacsi in White Books, Vol. V, p. 56.

[20]Kiraly, "Russian Trickery," p. 19.

regimental commanders under Kiraly and Kopacsi.[21]

Nagy then had succeeded in subordinating the revolutionaries to the command of loyal officers of the army and police. It is interesting that, contrary to what might be expected, the function of the National Guard would be to "stand by in case of Russian aggression" while "the regular army would keep order in the streets."[22] Had the Soviet Army withdrawn from Hungary as a result of negotiations being conducted between Nagy and the Soviet Union, the National Guard, having ceased to have a function, would have been neutralized, leaving Maleter in command of internal police functions.

There is also evidence that despite Nagy's promise to disband the AVH and an announcement of the Ministry of the Interior on October 29 that the security police had been abolished[23] in fact Nagy was converting the AVH to his own use. One of the most widely publicized and yet most clouded incidents of the revolution concerns an attack on the Greater Budapest Communist Party headquarters at Koztarsasag Square on the morning of October 30, an attack that culminated in the massacre of a number of military officers, AVH

---

[21]Kiraly, interview, August 7, 1974. According to Kiraly, the Dudas group also joined the National Guard after removing Dudas from command on November 2.

[22]Kiraly, "Russian Trickery," pp. 119-20.

[23]The dismissal of the AVH was announced on Radio Budapest on October 29. See Documentary Chronology, p. 36.

personnel and of Imre Mezo, a personal friend and close supporter of Imre Nagy.[24] Perhaps because the attack and attendant atrocities constituted the ugliest incident of the revolution, there has been reluctance on the part of students of the revolution to adequately explore the incident. In any event, there are questions concerning the incident that have not been adequately answered.

Contrary to some reports of the incident, that the attack was staged by the Dudas group,[25] it appears that the attack on the Greater Budapest Party Headquarters was actually conducted by members of the National Guard joined by other unidentified insurgents. Despite its assigned task of defending the country against foreign aggression, some units of the National Guard had begun on October 30 a search for AVH personnel. The attack on the party headquarters building was part of this operation and was conducted by a coalition of small groups in the vicinity.[26] No doubt, some

---

[24]According to Zinner, Revolution, p. 288, Mezo who was "brutally murdered by the insurgents" was "one of only two fairly high functionaries who consistently and sincerely supported Imre Nagy."

[25]See Zinner, Revolution, p. 291. According to Zinner, the attack was directed by Dudas using "several" captured tanks.

[26]Pongracz, interview, September 4, 1974. That an AVH hunt was underway is also seen from a Radio Free Kossuth broadcast of the night of October 30. See Documentary Chronology, p. 46. The Revolutionary Council of the Police Force announced that "along with the insurgents, we have begun the immediate demobilization . . . of security police members. We guarantee to detain the criminals until they

members of Dudas' group took part. The Szabad Nep building in which Dudas was headquartered was at one corner of Koztarsasag Square next to the National Theater, from which the attack was staged. But there is no evidence that Dudas or his group played a major part in the attack. In fact, Dudas condemned the attack in his newspaper.[27] A major role was played by the Corvin group, but only after the initial offensive had proved unsuccessful. Odon Pongracz, serving as a regimental commander in the National Guard, received a phone call on the K-line at the Deak Street headquarters advising him of the attack. Pongracz called the Corvin group to send assistance to the attackers, and two tanks and two armored cars were dispatched to the scene to assist the attackers.[28] According to the Hungarian government White Books, the defense of the building had been successful until the arrival of the tanks and armored cars.[29] Under barrage from the tanks and armored cars, the defenders of

---

are brought before the courts." It was also announced that thirty security policemen captured by insurgents were in custody.

[27]Dudas' statement in Magyar Fuggetlesneg is cited in Meray, Thirteen Days, pp. 154-5.

[28]Interview with Pongracz, September 4, 1974. On the participation of the Corvin group in the attack, see also White Books, Vol. III, p. 83. See also Meray, That Day in Budapest, p. 376. According to Meray, three Hungarian armored cars were sent by the Ministry of Defense.

[29]Vol. I, pp. 28-9.

the building surrendered, but as they emerged from the building, Mezo, two army colonels and several others were brutally murdered by the attackers.

The defenders of the building included approximately forty AVH men and the two army colonels, under the command, apparently, of Imre Mezo, and about forty members of the staff of the Budapest party.[30] According to the official White Books of the Hungarian government, the two military officers had come to the party headquarters building "on the business of organizing a working people's militia."[31] According to Molnar, however, the army colonels were at the building to organize "the formation of armed units of bureaucrats and communist militants."[32] According to Meray for several days trucks had been supplying the party headquarters with "weapons and food," and on the day of the attack "several AVH units were inside, changing their uniforms and coming out as 'grey cops' [regular police]."[33] This

---

[30] Ibid., on Mezo being in command see Meray, That Day in Budapest, pp. 375-6.

[31] White Books, Vol. I, pp. 28-9. See also Meray, Thirteen Days, pp. 154-5.

[32] Molnar, Budapest, p. 166.

[33] That Day in Budapest, pp. 375-6. According to Meray, trucks "unloaded 'grey cops', weapons, and food." Then, "AVO units were inside, changing their uniforms and coming out as 'grey cops'." Despite the inconsistency, other evidence indicates that the AVH was indeed being uniformed as regular police. In an earlier work Meray contended that the AVH men, all young conscripts with "nothing in common with the torturers of that infamous organization,"

interpretation of events has at least circumstantial support from other sources. On the night of October 30, the Revolutionary Council of the police force announced that "certain security police officers" had "illegally acquired uniforms" of the regular police.[34]

It is obvious from the preceding, that on the day following the "dissolution of the AVH" a new military force of some description was being organized, separate from the regular army and the national guard. The presence of AVH personnel at the building in which discussion concerning this new military force was underway suggests that the new military force involved use of the AVH. And the presence of Mezo suggests that the new force was being organized under Nagy's instructions. According to Vali, commenting on the Kadar government which followed the revolution:

> It appears . . . that the AVO did not really vanish. It only stopped being a separate section, and without leaving the Ministry of the Interior was placed in toto within the section that controlled the regular police. It acted, henceforward, as the 'Political Investigation Division' of the Central Office of the Police. We can also assume that most of its functionaries continued in their jobs. . . . The enormous task of repression and investigation of the 'counter revolutionaries' and other opponents of the regime had made the maintenance and stability of the government dependent on the operation

---

had taken up positions at the party headquarters early in the revolution and had remained there "not daring to venture into the streets." See Thirteen Days, p. 153. According to Kiraly, interview, August 7, 1974, the AVH troops were sent to defend the building on October 23 and had taken refuge there.

[34]Radio Free Kossuth in Documentary Chronology, p. 46.

of trained and seasoned Security Police personnel.[35]

While attempting to improve the military position of the government at the expense of the insurgents, Nagy also sought to improve his political position vis-à-vis the revolutionary and workers' councils with which he was forced to share political power. Although Nagy commanded the support of the Hungarian people, the collapse of the Communist Party deprived him of a solid political base. According to Molnar, "what remained of the Communist Party was nothing without Nagy; the state did not exist outside his office."[36] It was imperative then that Nagy seek political support outside the party at least until the Communist Party could be revitalized. To this end, Nagy turned not to the workers' and revolutionary councils, the de facto political power in the country, but to the old post-war coalition of political parties, the Smallholders, Petofi (Peasant's) Party and the Social Democrats.

Although free election on a multi-party basis had been from the beginning of the revolution an almost universal demand of the councils, Nagy's announcement of the end of the one-party system on October 30 was met with some misgivings. The young people and the workers who had constituted the main body of insurgent forces during the

---

[35]Rift and Revolt, pp. 436-7.

[36]Budapest, pp. 188-9.

fighting were less than enthusiastic about the emergence, after the fight appeared to be won, of post-war political figures. The failure of the old parties had resulted first in Nazi and then in Soviet domination of the Hungarian government. Their programs threatened also such positive achievements as land reform which had been accomplished under communist rule.[37] The councils themselves, possessed of political power that was about to be stripped away, also opposed the reinstatement of the old parties. A "Parliament of Budapest Councils" on October 31 condemned the re-organization of the old parties as did a second "vast meeting" of councils on the following day. The Borsod Workers' Council also "resolutely" condemned the re-organization of the post-war parties and protested "against all attempts to restore the bourgeoisie and land-owners," and on November 2, Jozsef Kiss of the Miskolc councils protested the "creation of new political parties" and proposed creation instead of a national revolutionary

---

[37]On the antipathy of the students toward reviving the old parties see Zinner, Revolution, p. 306. "Being for the most part too young to have had any prior affiliation with political parties . . . the students were excluded from any influence in them." See also p. 312. "The contribution made by the parties to the revolution was nil. . . . They seemed ready to partake in a division of the spoils without commensurate contribution to the struggle." See also Meray, Thirteen Days, p. 212. By early November "the insistence on the continuation of 'socialist gains' became more and more dominant. Delegation after delegation voiced firm opposition to any attempt to restore the bourgeois system."

council to replace the National Assembly.[38]

Although Nagy was supported by the councils following his announcement of Soviet troop withdrawal, he chose to lend his office to the re-organization of the largely discredited political parties. This decision must have been predicated at least to some extent on Nagy's fear that because the councils had real power he would not be able to control them and also on the fear that to ally himself with the councils would be to invite Soviet intervention. The political parties would be more amenable to compromise than would be the insurgent councils and had already, in the post-war coalition, proved their willingness to cooperate with the communists. In fact, Nagy is reported to have told General Thickonov on October 31 that the coalition parties had already agreed to "maintenance of the basic economic socialist structure."[39]

According to Jozsef Kovago, Secretary General of the Smallholders Party, the coalition parties expected the Communists to take "a leading political role" in the government. This was not only desired, but "demanded by the great non-communist majority" because it was recognized that the

---

[38]Molnar, Budapest, p. 179. On the demands of the Miskolc Councils, see also Documentary Chronology, p. 68. The demands of the Borsod Council were presented to Nagy and Tildy and were broadcast on Radio Free Kossuth on the morning of November 2.

[39]Indro Martonelli, Corriere della Sera (Milan), November 29, 1956, in Lasky, Hungarian Revolution, p. 156.

nationalist communists had played a leading role in the revolution and because it was "essential in order to pacify the anger of the Soviet leadership." The "key idea" according to Kovago "was that it would be worth every sacrifice if Hungary could rid herself of Soviet domination." For that reason "we . . . had to recognize . . . that the interests of our country demanded our participation in a political settlement which of necessity veered more to the left than we would have liked."[40] Indications are that Nagy expected the power of the coalition parties to be strictly limited in the new multi-party structure. According to Molnar "at no time" did Nagy "give any hint that . . . free elections would involve parties other than those of the coalition," and in his negotiations with the councils, "Nagy promised them everything--except a parliamentary democracy."[41]

That Nagy initially intended to grant little real authority to the coalition parties can be seen from the composition of the coalition formed on October 30. The "inner cabinet" included three Communists, Nagy, Losonczy and Kadar, and three non-communist members, Bela Kovacs, who still was not in Budapest, Zoltan Tildy, who had collaborated with the communists in the post-war coalition

---

[40]Joseph Kovago, "Have They Died in Vain?; The Lost Concept of the Hungarian Revolution" (unpublished manuscript prepared in October, 1966), p. 5.

[41]Budapest, p. 186.

and in the coalition of October 27 and Ferenc Erdei, who had collaborated with the communists since the post-war coalition. Nagy became Foreign Minister as well as Premier in the new government and the other ministers were made Ministers of State, without portfolio. Following removal of the ministers of the October 27 coalition, the ministries were left under the direction of deputy ministers already in the government.[42] The new ministers-without-portfolio therefore became ministers without real authority. In his dual role as Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, Nagy retained for himself and for the Communist Party sole responsibility for negotiations between Hungary and the Soviet Union.[43] Nagy is quoted as having told opponents of the Warsaw Pact that they should "Be satisfied with what you have. . . . In offering as security the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, we shall be able to liberate ten million Hungarians from a concentration camp . . . and it is I, a Communist, who will have to play the role of the imprisoned Minister of Foreign Affairs."[44] Nagy was thus, in the interest of

---

[42]Declaration of governmental reorganization of November 2, 1956 on Radio Free Kossuth. See Documentary Chronology, p. 76.

[43]According to Jozsef Kovago, the Soviet Union would have accepted no one except a communist as foreign minister. The coalition parties would have accepted no communist other than Nagy. Interview, November 12, 1974.

[44]Martonelli, Corriere della Sera, in Lasky, Hungarian Revolution, p. 156.

preserving some measure of independence, granting the Soviet Union a hand in the direction of Hungarian foreign policy.

Assurances given by Imre Nagy apparently proved acceptable to the Soviet Union at least through October 31. On that day a declaration was published in Pravda in which the Soviet Union admitted error in its relations with other socialist countries "which demeaned the principle of equality in relations" among those states. The Soviet government announced also that it was prepared to negotiate with other members of the Warsaw Treaty the question of Soviet troops stationed within the borders of those states. Admitting that "further presence of Soviet military units in Hungary could serve as an excuse for further aggravation of the situation," the Soviet government also announced that Soviet military commanders in Hungary had been issued orders to withdraw from Budapest "as soon as this is considered necessary by the Hungarian government."[45] Meray attributed the Soviet declaration to "objective reports" sent back to Moscow by Mikoyan and Suslov who arrived in Budapest on October 30 and returned to Moscow the following day. According to Meray, Nagy was given assurance of the "unqualified confidence" of the Soviet leaders and was promised that no new troops would be sent into Hungary.

---

[45]Published in Pravda and Izvestia, October 31, 1956, p. 1. Here from Current Digest of the Soviet Press, VIII, No. 40 (November 14, 1956), pp. 10-11.

Nagy also was assured by Suslov and Mikoyan that negotiations concerning the Warsaw Pact would be "initiated without delay." The Soviets also accepted Nagy's new "multi-party system" according to Meray.[46] According to Molnar, all of Nagy's decisions from October 27 to October 31, including troop withdrawal and revival of the political parties "seemed to have been ratified by Moscow."[47] Andre Marton reported that he had "recorded at least five versions of what went on in the forty-eight-hour talk with Khrushchev's two emissaries" and that all of the versions "agreed on one point; Mikoyan and, to a somewhat lesser degree, Suslov were understanding and sympathetic."[48] Apparently Mikoyan and Suslov were not alone among Soviet leaders who placed confidence in the assurances of Nagy. At a reception at the Turkish Embassy in Moscow on October 29, Marshal Zhukov told foreign newsmen that in Hungary "A government has been formed which is enjoying our support and the support of the Hungarian people,"[49] and Khrushchev is reported at the same reception to have gone "so far as to envisage a neutral

---

[46]That Day in Budapest, pp. 384-5.

[47]Budapest, p. 159.

[48]The Forbidden Sky, p. 168.

[49]T. Popovski, Borba (Belgrade), October 30, 1956, in Lasky, Hungarian Revolution, p. 133.

status for Hungary similar to that of Finland."[50]

This early inclination in favor of the Nagy government must have been based on the collective opinion of Soviet leaders either that the considerable Soviet interests in Hungary, interests of economic, political, military and ideological natures, would be protected by the Nagy government or that the cost of renewed intervention in actual losses and in world opinion would outweigh other considerations. If so, the decision in favor of renewed intervention must reflect either a loss of confidence in Nagy's ability to protect Soviet interests or a re-evaluation in view of the changing world situation of the costs of intervention in terms of world opinion.[51] The futility of attempts to determine Soviet motivation in terms of political blocs and individual personalities within the Kremlin has already been noted. It is interesting, however, that in his "memoirs", Khrushchev noted that the decision to intervene in Hungary a second time was made while Mikoyan and Suslov, the two Central Committee members most likely to speak against

---

[50]Brugere-Trelat, Budapest, ed. La Table Ronde (Paris), 1966, pp. 207-8. Taken here from Molnar, Budapest, p. 190.

[51]On the effects of the Suez crisis, pressure from the other Warsaw Treaty states and from the Republic of China, see Janos Radvanji, Hungary and the Superpowers; The 1956 Revolution and Realpolitik (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1972), pp. 10-13.

intervention, were absent, negotiating with Nagy in Budapest.[52]

The decision of the Central Committee was not irreversible, however, and, in fact, according to Khrushchev, following the initial decision in favor of renewed intervention, the Soviet leaders "sat up the whole night weighing the pros and cons of whether or not we should apply armed force to Hungary." After changing their minds a number of times, the Soviet leaders decided against intervention, but then on the following day again decided in favor of intervention.[53] Considering the indecisiveness of the Kremlin leaders at the time, it is reasonable to suspect that even after the deployment of new Soviet troops beginning by November 1, the decision to intervene might still have been countermanded had the Soviet Union seen cause to do so. Between the first calling of Soviet troops on the night of October 23 and the re-deployment of November 1, the situation had been drastically altered. No longer were the Soviet tanks aiming their guns at insurgents in support of the government. They now trained their weapons on the government itself. Devoid of other support and threatened by the Soviet Union, Nagy could only move closer to the

---

[52]Nikita S. Khrushchev, Khrushchev Remembers, with introduction, commentary and notes by Edward Crankshaw, trans. by Strobe Talbot (Boston and Toronto: Little, Brown and Co., 1970), p. 417.

[53]Ibid., p. 418.

insurgents. To forestall renewed Soviet intervention, Nagy had, broadly speaking, two options open to him, to reassure the Soviet Union of his good intentions toward the Soviet Union and of his ability to control the situation in Hungary and, secondly, to raise the cost of intervention in terms of world opinion to an unacceptable level. Nagy attempted to exercise both options which were not mutually exclusive, at once.

On November 1, Nagy notified the Soviet Ambassador of the intention of Hungary to withdraw from the Warsaw Pact, while simultaneously reassuring the Soviet Union that Hungary's withdrawal would not necessarily result in dissolution of the pact.[54] To reassure the Soviet Union that Hungary would not defect to the West, Nagy also proclaimed Hungarian neutrality and, to bring world pressure on the Soviet Union to accept Hungary's new status as a non-aligned nation, appealed to the United Nations and to the "four

---

[54]See Elie Abel, New York Times, November 1, 1956, pp. 1, 26. According to Abel, Nagy told foreign newsmen that "he believed it was possible for Hungary to withdraw without the whole of the Communist alliance being dissolved. That was the position he would taken in the forthcoming negotiations with the Soviet Union, he said." For the text of the Hungarian note to the Soviet Union proclaiming Hungary's withdrawal from the Warsaw Treat, see Lasky, Hungarian Revolution, pp. 183-4 and Documentary Chronology, p. 62.

great powers" to guarantee Hungary's neutrality.[55] In seeking the protection of the four great powers, Nagy introduced the prospect of western influence in Hungary, but, at the same time, assured the Soviet Union of continued influence as well.

On November 2 the Hungarian government addressed three verbal notes to the Soviet government protesting the continued movement of Soviet troops into Hungary and proposing the convocation of two Soviet-Hungarian committees to discuss political and military problems. To demonstrate the willingness of the coalition parties to cooperate with the Hungarian communists and with the Soviet Union the political committee was to be comprised of one leader from each of the coalition parties. They were to be joined by a representative of the army. Geza Losonczy was to head the political delegation.[56]

Hungarian communist leaders also began a drive to gain support from the people. On November 1 Janos Kadar in a

---

[55]Nagy's declaration of neutrality was broadcast on the night of November 1, 1956, on Radio Free Kossuth. See Documentary Chronology, p. 64. Also included in Zinner, National Communism, pp. 462-3, and in Lasky, Hungarian Revolution, p. 207.

[56]The political delegation was to include in addition to Losonczy, Jozsef Kovago of the Smallholders, Ferenc Farkas of the Petofi Party, Vilmos Zentai of the Social Democrats and Andras Marton of the army. The military delegation headed by Pal Maleter included also Ferenc Erdei of the Petofi Party, Major General Istvan Kovacs and Colonel Miklos Szucs. The three verbal notes were read on Radio Free Kossuth on November 2. See Documentary Chronology, p. 71.

radio address announced the dissolution of the thoroughly discredited Hungarian Workers' Party and the creation of a new Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party composed of "Communists who fought against Rakosi's despotism." Calling the revolution "a glorious uprising," Kadar went so far as to claim communist credit for the revolution. "We can safely say," according to Kadar, "that . . . those who prepared this uprising were recruited from our ranks." Kadar called on "every Hungarian worker who is inspired by affection for the people and the country" to join the new communist party.[57]

To further enhance the government's position with the people, a new coalition was formed on November 3, including in addition to Nagy, Losonzy and Kadar, three Smallholders, three Social Democrats and two Petofi /Peasant/ Party ministers. Pal Maleter, who despite his continued adherence to communist principles[58] was listed as an Independent, was named Minister of Defense. As was the case in the governmental reorganization of October 30, the non-communist members of the government were named Ministers of State. Nagy retained the portfolio of Minister of Foreign Affairs. Thus only Maleter and Nagy actually directed ministries, the two

---

[57]Radio Free Kossuth, November 1, 1956, in Documentary Chronology, pp. 64-5.

[58]According to Congress for Cultural Freedom, The Truth, p. 102, "though siding with the insurgents he /Maleter/ remained none the less a member of the communist party."

most important at the time. A number of Hungarian military officers who arrived in Budapest on November 1 from the Voroshilov Academy in Moscow were placed in high positions in the military. One of the officers from Moscow, Major General Uszta, became liason officer between the Soviet authorities in Hungary and Maleter's ministry and, as such, attended meetings of the inner cabinet. Uszta was promoted to Deputy Defense Minister after the second Soviet intervention.[59] As previously noted, Nagy found it expedient to retain for himself the Ministry of Foreign Affairs so that he could provide assurances to the Soviet Union concerning Hungarian foreign policy. It must be suspected that Maleter was named Minister of Defense and his staff augmented with communists loyal to the Soviet Union for a similar reason.

According to Jozsef Kovago, the Hungarian government did indeed find it necessary to provide certain assurances to the Soviet Union in the fields of military and foreign affairs.[60] Although the political committee which was to negotiate with the Soviet Union was never convened, Kovago, who was to represent the Smallholders on the committee, did meet with Minister of State Tildy to discuss the position to be taken by the Hungarian delegation at the planned conference. Basically, the Hungarian government was prepared,

---

[59]Vali, Rift and Revolt, p. 318.

[60]Jozsef Kovago, Interview, November 12, 1974.

following withdrawal from the Warsaw Pact, to guarantee a friendly foreign policy toward the Soviet Union. This would have been accomplished either by signing a bilateral agreement with the Soviet Union or by maintaining the consultative agreement of the Warsaw Treaty on matters of security. The Hungarian government also would have provided constitutional guarantees for maintenance of the socialist system. Land reform and nationalization of mines, banks and heavy industry, accomplished under the communists, would be guaranteed by the constitution. The constitution would also provide however for "free individual or cooperative enterprise" and for private ownership within "guarantees against exploitation." The basic freedoms would be guaranteed. A multi-party system would govern but a constitutional court would prevent any party from infringing on the guarantees already mentioned.[61]

The political committee never had the opportunity to prevent the government's plan to the Soviets. On November 3 the joint Soviet-Hungarian military committee met to discuss withdrawal of Soviet troops from Hungary. At approximately midnight the conference was interrupted by General Ivan

---

[61]This plan became known as the "Bibo Plan" following the second Soviet intervention. It was presented to the Kadar government by Istvan Bibo, Minister of State, on November 9, 1956. See Congress for Cultural Freedom, The Truth, pp. 139-42. According to Kovago this was in essence the program which would have been offered to the Soviet Union had the political committee convened. Interview, November 12, 1974.

Serov, head of the Soviet NKVD. The Hungarian delegation, headed by Maleter, was placed under arrest. Before dawn Budapest was under attack. The second Soviet intervention was under way.

CONCLUSION

Neither Nagy's assurances to the Soviet Union nor his appeal to world opinion was able to forestall Soviet intervention. From this it must be assumed that Nagy was not able to convince Soviet leaders that he could or would protect their interests in Hungary. Although Nagy was able to superimpose upon the insurgents a hierarchy of loyal officials, the AVH hunt and the attack on Greater Budapest Party Headquarters proved that Nagy's authority did not extend to the ranks of the insurgent forces. The insurgent groups still acted autonomously under orders from their leaders, now regimental commanders in the National Guard. Thus, when informed of the attack on the municipal communist headquarters, Pongracz called his brothers at Corvin Square to reinforce the attackers. Kopacsi, informed of a call for assistance from the defenders of the building, could do no more than "shrug his shoulders in resignation."[1]

Although Nagy's personal political philosophy in many ways paralleled that of the insurgents, he was not free to accept their cause as his own. Only by promising complete independence from the Soviet Union could Nagy command the loyalty of the insurgents, and only by assuring the Soviet

---

[1]Vlado Teslic, Borba (Belgium), October 31, 1956, in Lasky, Hungarian Revolution, p. 136.

Union of Hungarian cooperation in the key areas of military affairs and foreign relations could he prevent Soviet intervention. Thus while publicly proclaiming the dissolution of the AVH, Nagy was secretly maintaining that same organization; while publicly proclaiming Hungary's neutrality, Nagy was privately offering the Soviet Union assurances concerning Hungarian military and foreign affairs; while organizing the insurgent forces into the National Guard, he was surreptitiously imposing control and preparing the demise of that body as an active force; and, while publicly proclaiming the end of the one-party system, he was maintaining Communist hegemony in the government. Thus Imre Nagy, the most celebrated martyr of the Hungarian revolution, never really joined that revolution. He became a martyr instead to a cause which, although far less ambitious in scope than the cause of the insurgents, was perhaps more worthy because it was more realistic and therefore held some prospects for success.

Like Nagy, Maleter also is celebrated as a martyr of the revolutionary cause, and like Nagy, Maleter never adopted that cause as his own. From all evidence, Maleter's only activity during the early phase of the revolution was to occupy the Kilian Barracks to prevent its falling into the hands of the insurgents. This he did by sealing the gates and waiting out the fighting--firing only sporadically and then at the insurgents from Corvin Square. Maleter, "the

revolutionary hero" nevertheless became useful to the Nagy government as a symbol of the government's acceptance of the revolution. At the same time Maleter could be relied on by Nagy to assist in bringing the insurgents under government control. His personal loyalties seem to have remained with the army and with the communist party.

The revolutionary and workers' councils in the provinces were generally a stabilizing influence locally in that they maintained order and performed administrative functions vacated by the collapse of the communist party. Nationally, the councils, especially the Transdanubian National Council and the Miskolc Workers' Council, by withholding support and by threatening to form a counter-government, forced Nagy to move closer to the revolutionary cause. But by demanding more than Nagy could deliver, they forced him to conceal his accommodation with Moscow and perhaps to go further in his concessions to the councils than the Soviet Union would permit.

With the exception of the Dudas group, the insurgents seemed amenable to compromise with the government. Even the Corvin insurgents, despite their hostility toward Maleter, assisted Maleter in formation of the National Guard, although they never fully submitted themselves to its control. The AVH hunt and the resulting massacre at Greater Budapest Party Headquarters, in which the National Guard was involved, more than any other single incident, must have demonstrated

to the Soviet Union the failure of Nagy to gain control of the revolution.[2] The intransigence of Dudas, his seizure of the Communist Party newspaper after the cease-fire and continued occupation of that building and his attack on the Foreign Ministry on November 2 also demonstrated the weakness of the Nagy government.

From the beginning the decisive increment of force that would decide the fate of Hungary waited on the Hungarian border. The failure of the Nagy government and the insurgents to resolve their differences in a manner acceptable to the Soviet Union signalled that force into action on November 4, 1956.

---

[2]Ezhegodnik: Bolshoi Sovetskoi Entsiklopedii 1957, p. 265. Official Soviet sources cite a "bloody white terror" which erupted on October 30 following departure of Soviet army units as one of the reasons for Kadar's break with the Nagy government and subsequent "appeal" for Soviet assistance.

SOURCES CONSULTED

BIBLIOGRAPHIES

Barlay, Stephen. "Bibliography of the Hungarian Revolution." Ten Years After: A Commemoration of the Tenth Anniversary of the Hungarian Revolution. Letchworth and London: MacGibbon and Kee, Ltd., 1966, pp. 209-32.

Halasz de Beky, I. L. "A Bibliography of the Hungarian Revolution, 1956." The Hungarian Revolution in Perspective. Edited by Francis S. Wagner. Washington: F. F. Memorial Foundation, 1967, pp. 255-344.
Excellent bibliography containing over 1300 entries.

Excellent bibliographies are also contained in Kecskemeti, Paul. The Unexpected Revolution: Social Forces in the Hungarian Revolution. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1961, pp. 169-72 and in Zinner, Paul E. Revolution in Hungary. New York and London: Columbia University Press, 1962, pp. 365-70.

COLLECTIONS OF DOCUMENTS

American Hungarian Federation. Anatomy of Revolution: A Condensation of the United Nations Report on the Hungarian Uprising. Washington: Public Affairs Press, 1957.

Congress for Cultural Freedom. The Truth About the Nagy Affairs: Facts, Documents, Comments. Preface by Albert Camus. New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1959.
A rebuttal of the communist charges against Nagy and his "accomplices." Excellent work containing also biographical notes on Nagy, Maleter, Kopacsi and others charged with counterrevolutionary crimes.

Goldwin, Robert A., ed. Readings in Russian Foreign Policy. New York: Oxford University Press, 1959.
Of special interest "The 'Camp of Socialism': Hungary," pp. 577-656.

Hungarian People's Republic, Council of Ministers. The Counter-Revolutionary Conspiracy of Imre Nagy and His Accomplices. Budapest: Information Bureau, Council of Ministers, n. d. Five volumes.
A "White Book" on the Hungarian Revolution published by the post-revolutionary Kadar government.

Kovacs, Imre. Fight for Freedom: Facts About Hungary. New York: The Hungarian Committee, 1966.

Lasky, Melvin J., ed. The Hungarian Revolution: A White Book; The Story of the October Uprising as Recorded in Documents, Dispatches, Eye-Witness Accounts, and World-Wide Reaction. New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1957.
Excellent collection.

The Revolt in Hungary: A Documentary Chronology of Events Based Exclusively on Internal Broadcasts by Central and Provincial Radios: October 23, 1956-November 4, 1956. A special edition of News from Behind the Iron Curtain. New York: Free Europe Committee, December, 1956.

Zinner, Paul E., ed. National Communism and Popular Revolt in Eastern Europe: A Selection of Documents on Events in Poland and Hungary, February-November, 1956. New York: Columbia University Press, 1956.
Excellent collection.

ARTICLES

Aczel, Tamas. "The Story Behind Hungary's Revolt." Life. February 18, 1957, pp. 112-17.
Eyewitness account of the events of October 23, 1956.

Arendt, Hannah. "Totalitarian Imperialism: Reflections on the Hungarian Revolution." Journal of Politics, XX, Number 1 (February, 1958), 5-43.

Bain, Leslie B. "Budapest: Interview in a Basement Hideaway." The Hungarian Revolt: October 23-November 4, 1956. Edited by Richard Lettis and William E. Morris. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1961.
Interview on November 4, 1956 with Bela Kovacs, a leader of the Smallholders Party and Minister of State.

Brzezinski, Zbigniew. "Revolution and Counterrevolution." New Republic, CLVIII (June 1, 1958), 23-5.

Gaskill, Gordon. "Timetable of a Failure." The Virginia Quarterly Review, XXXIV (Spring, 1958), pp. 165-6.
Excellent article demonstrating how the events developed step by step from demonstration to revolution and finally to Soviet intervention.

Gayn, Mark. "The Misreported Revolution." The Nation, CLXXXIV (June 15, 1957) pp. 527-9.
A critique of news coverage and of the early books on the Hungarian Revolution.

Ginsburgs, George. "Demise and Revival of a Communist Party: An Autopsy of the Hungarian Revolution." Western Political Quarterly, XIII (Spring, 1960), 780-802.

Garthoff, Raymond L. "The Tragedy of Hungary." Problems of Communism. (January-February, 1957), pp. 4-11.

Kecskemeti, Paul. "Decompression in Hungary." Readings in Russian Foreign Policy. Edited by Robert A. Goldwin. New York: Oxford University Press, 1959, pp. 587-601.

Kiraly, Bela K. "How Russian Trickery Throttled Revolt." Life (February 18, 1957), pp. 119-20.

_____. "Budapest--1956: Prague--1968." Problems of Communism (July-October, 1969), pp. 52-9.

Meray, Tibor. "The Sources of Power: The Origins and Developments of the Party." Ten Years After: A Commemoration of the Tenth Anniversary of the Hungarian Revolution. Edited by Tamas Aczel. Letchworth and London: MacGibbon and Kee, Ltd., 1966, pp. 122-36.

Molnar, Miklos. "The Heritage of Imre Nagy." Ten Years After: A Commemoration of the Tenth Anniversary of the Hungarian Revolution. Edited by Tamas Aczel. Letchworth and London: MacGibbon and Kee, Ltd., 1966, pp. 153-74.

Polanyi, Michael. "The Message of the Hungarian Revolution." American Scholar (Autumn, 1966), pp. 661-76.

Rhodes, Anthony. "Hungary 1956: Journey to Budapest." Ten Years After: A Commemoration of the Tenth Anniversary of the Hungarian Revolution. Letchworth and London: MacGibbon and Kee, Ltd., 1966, pp. 77-92.

Zinner, Paul E. "Revolution in Hungary: Reflections on the Vicissitudes of a Totalitarian System." The Journal of Politics, XXI (February, 1959), 3-36.

BOOKS

Aczel, Tamas and Meray, Tibor. The Revolt of the Mind: A Case History of Intellectual Resistance Behind the Iron Curtain. London: Thames and Hudson, Ltd., 1960.
A first-hand report of the intellectual revolt by two of its leaders.

Aptheker, Herbert. The Truth About Hungary. New York: Mainstream Publishers, 1957.
The communist view point as propounded by an American scholar and writer.

Arendt, Hannah. On Revolution. New York: The Viking Press, 1963.
Good background reading on revolution in general.

Brinton, Crane. The Anatomy of Revolution. Revised and expanded edition. New York: Vintage Books, 1965.

Heller, Andor. No More Comrades. Chicago: Henry Regnery Co., 1957.

Ignotus, Paul. Hungary. One volume of The Nations of the World series. New York and Washington: Praeger Publishers, 1972.
A history of Hungary by an eyewitness to the revolution.

Kecskemeti, Paul. The Unexpected Revolution: Social Forces in the Hungarian Uprising. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1961.
A study dealing with the interrelation of social and political forces preceeding and during the revolution. Includes a good bibliography.

Kovrig, Bennett. The Hungarian Peoples' Republic. One volume of The Integration and Community Building in Eastern Europe series. Edited by Jan F. Triska. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1970.

Linden, Carl A. Khrushchev and the Soviet Leadership, 1957-1964. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1966.
An excellent analysis of the power struggle in the Soviet Union following the death of Stalin.

Meray, Tibor. That Day in Budapest: October 23, 1956. Translated by Charles Low Markmann. New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1972.

Unlike his earlier work, Thirteen Days that Shook the Kremlin, this work depends a great deal on first-hand information. Inexplicably this first-hand information sometimes contradicts the earlier work.

_____. Thirteen Days that Shook the Kremlin. Translated by Howard L. Katzander. New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1959.

Meray was a participant in the writers' revolt and a close friend of Imre Nagy. His work depends primarily on sources published after the revolution, however.

Michener, James A. The Bridge at Andau. New York: Random House, 1957.

A "popular" version of the revolution based on interviews with refugees in Austria. Of little value.

Mikes, George. The Hungarian Revolution. London: Andre Deutch, 1957.

Molnar, Miklos. Budapest 1956: A History of the Hungarian Revolution. Translated by Jennetta Ford. London: George Allen and Unwin, Ltd., 1971.

Excellent history of the revolution by an editor of Irodalmi Ujsag (Literary Journal) and participant in the intellectual revolt.

Nagy, Imre. Imre Nagy on Communism: In Defense of the New Course. New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1957.

Nagy, Premier from July, 1953 to March, 1955, was re-instated as Premier for eleven days during the revolution. His "dissertation," written after his first fall from power attacks the Rakosi government.

Radvanji, Janos. Hungary and the Superpowers; The 1956 Revolution and Realpolitik. Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1972.

Analysis of Hungary's international position by a Hungarian diplomat.

Shawcross, William. Crime and Compromise: Janos Kadar and the Politics of Hungary Since Revolution. New York: E. P. Dutton and Co., Inc., 1974.

Vali, Ferenc A. Rift and Revolt in Hungary: Nationalism Versus Communism. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1961.

Vali worked in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs during the revolution. Although Vali was an eyewitness to the revolution his book is a scholarly work, well documented from diverse sources. Includes excellent bibliography.

Zinner, Paul E. Revolution in Hungary. New York and London: Columbia University Press, 1962.

An excellent study sponsored by the Columbia University Research Project on Hungary (CURPH). Zinner draws heavily from more than 10,000 pages of transcripts of interviews and other material collected by the project. Excellent bibliography.

MEMOIRS

Bain, Leslie B. The Reluctant Satellites: An Eyewitness Report on East Europe and the Hungarian Revolution. New York: The MacMillan Co., 1960.

The recollection of a western correspondent in Hungary during the revolution.

Kovago, Jozsef. You Are All Alone. New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1959.

Kovago, a leader of the Smallholder Party was following a long imprisonment re-instated as mayor of Budapest during the revolution. He was in frequent contact during the revolution with Imre Nagy and Nagy's deputy Zoltan Tildy.

Khrushchev, Nikita S. Khrushchev Remembers. Introduction, commentary and notes by Edward Crankshaw. Translated by Strobe Talbot. Boston and Toronto: Little, Brown and Co., 1970.

Marton, Andre. The Forbidden Sky. Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1971.

Interesting memoirs of an Associated Press correspondent in Budapest. Marton covered the revolution from the beginning until well after the second Soviet intervention.

Nagy, Ferenc. The Struggle Behind the Iron Curtain. Translated by Stephen K. Swift. New York: The MacMillan Co., 1948.

An interesting account of the communist post-war "take-over" of Hungary by a former Prime Minister. Good background reading.

Paloczi-Howath, George. The Undefeated. Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1959.

Autobiography of a writer for Irodalmi Ujsag (Literary Journal).

INTERVIEWS

Decsi, Janos. Personal interview. New York: August 7, 1974.

Decsi was an insurgent leader in central Pest and an organizer of the National Guard.

Kiraly, Bela K. Personal interview. New York: August 7, 1974.

Kiraly a general in the post-war Hungarian army was imprisoned during the Rakosi period. Released during the pre-revolutionary period he was made commander of the National Guard during the course of the revolution.

Kovago, Jozsef. Telephone interview. Atlantic City: November 12, 1974.

A leader of the Smallholder Party and mayor of Budapest, Kovago was named to a special committee to negotiate with the Soviet Union. Although the meeting with the Soviet delegation never occurred, Kovago was briefed by "vice-premier" Tildy on the government's position immediately preceeding the second Soviet intervention.

Pongracz, Odon. Telephone interview. Boston: September 4, 1974.

Pongracz was a leader of the Corvin Square insurgents and later a regimental commander in the National Guard.

Also of great help was an interview with a former bus driver of Budapest who assisted in identifying areas in photographs and in describing events during the revolution. The bus driver asked not to be identified further.

NEWSPAPERS

New York Times. October 23-November 5, 1956. Of special interest are articles filed from Budapest by John MacCormac and Elie Abel.

Schramm, Wilbur, ed. One Day in the World's Press: Fourteen Great Newspapers on a Day of Crisis, November 2, 1956. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1959.

Selected articles from the world press also appear in Lasky, Melvin J., ed. The Hungarian Revolution: A White Book; The Story of the October Uprising as Recorded in Documents, Dispatches, Eye-Witness Accounts, and World-Wide Reaction. New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1957 and in Keesings Contemporary Archives, November 10-17, 1956.

CHRONOLOGIES

Barlay, Stephen. "Hungary: Chronology of Events, 1953-65." Ten Years After: A Commemoration of the Tenth Anniversary of the Hungarian Revolution. Letchworth and London: MacGibbon and Kee, Ltd., 1966, pp. 233-53.

The Revolt in Hungary: A Documentary Chronology of Events Based Exclusively on Internal Broadcasts by Central and Provincial Radios: October 23, 1956-November 4, 1956. Special edition of News From Behind the Iron Curtain. New York: Free Europe Committee, December 1956.

OTHER SOURCES

Ezhegodnik: Bol'shoi Sovetskoi Entsiklopedii, 1957 /Yearbook: Big Soviet Encyclopedia, 1957/. Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe Nauchnoe Izdatel'stro, 1957. pp. 265-6.

Kovago, Joseph. "Have They Died in Vain?; The Lost Concept of the Hungarian Revolution." Unpublished manuscript, 1966.