

Miklós Horváth

ONCE AGAIN
SOVEREIGNTY

Studies from the History of
Hungary after 1945

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Hungary after 1945

Argumentum

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1. STUDIES ABOUT THE PERIOD OF DEVELOPING AND STABILISING THE DICTATORSHIP

Repressive organisations in building and maintaining the communist system of terror (1945–1953)

The war ended, the losses were horrific. In Hungarian political life two powers representing two contrasting concepts fought in order to be able to define the country's future. One of them aimed at creating a parliamentary democracy corresponding to democratic traditions and West European examples, as well as protecting Hungarian national independence. The "Left-wing Block"¹ led by the Hungarian Communist Party (HCP) subordinated national independence to the Soviet Union and wanted a future based on the Soviet model. The Soviet occupying army and the Allied Control Committee² operating with Soviet leadership, which in fact directed the country until the Armistice Agreement, prepared a Soviet-type transformation.

Repressive organisations in the service of the Communist Party

Under Soviet instructions the political police was set up in the framework of developing a new administrative system. The Provisional National Government's minister of internal affairs, Ferenc Erdei,³ appointed András Tömpe⁴ to execute the task. In the capital the Budapest National Committee,⁵ simultaneously but independently from Tömpe, authorised Gábor Péter⁶ to start organising it. In May the decision was made that, supporting the efforts to gain power on the part of the Communist Party by all means, Tömpe and Gábor Péter would direct the activity of the Political Policing Department (PPD) at the Provincial Chief Headquarters of the Hungarian State Police and the Budapest Chief Headquarters respectively. Officially, the task of the organisation, which became notorious and feared within a short time, was to find and bring war criminals to court. However, from the beginning it was also engaged in preparing the HCP's takeover on the instructions of the Communist Party. Members of staff were primarily selected from among the tried-and-tested people of the illegal movement, the members of the Communist Party. In February 1945 the number of people employed in the PPD led by Tömpe, who in the meantime had moved to Budapest, was 91, while the section directed by Gábor Péter at 60 Andrassy Avenue had a staff of 98. The ratio of HCP members in the two organisations amounted to 36%.

The Military Political Department (Katpol) was set up on 12 March 1945 (it was directly preceded by the Defensive Department of the Ministry of Defence set up on 3 March 1945. "Its tasks included informing the HCP leadership, fending off officers delegated from the Smallholders' Party and the Social Democratic Party (SDP) due to coalition pressure relating to essential cases, and unearthing and averting possible hostile activity or actual conspiracy on the part of military personnel who were excluded during the political screening. The PPD and Katpol already applied a full array of operational methods from the summer of 1945, [for example] watching, observation of surroundings, checking of mail and telephone tapping".⁷

The Independent Smallholders' Party won 57% and the Hungarian Communist Party 17% of the votes at the general election in 1945, but the Allied Control Committee did not agree that a government be formed without the communists. In order to acquire exclusive power the HCP responded to the election failure by applying all means, from political murder to intimidating the population, using the political police and the Military Political Department.

According to the evaluation of the head of Katpol, György Pálffy,⁸ directly after the elections, the organisation was "an island in the middle of a reactionary sea," i.e. the army. "If the deluge also flooded this island it would be hopeless to realise democracy within the army. (...) The democratic elements are almost exclusively pursuing a defensive policy today. It is us who are still holding the fort. And hold it must, for the battle has not yet been decided, we do not know who will have the army."⁹

The selection committees set up to cleanse the army of "reactionary elements" dismissed 15,000 officers¹⁰ by April 1946. According to another source, "of the 19,271 persons under investigation" by the B-list Committee, "4257 were regarded suitable to continue serving in the army, 3900 were moved to inactive status with the stipulation that they could be called back in the case of mobilisation, and 11,114 were finally dismissed".¹¹

In order to establish officer corps that unconditionally carried out the instructions of the Communist Party, György Pálffy, who at that time was already the army's inspector, gave the following order at the beginning of 1948: "We must finally eliminate the remnants of the past in the thinking and behaviour of the officers, warrant officers and the ranks. Our disguised enemies, who have to be exposed and removed, are still lurking among us. Therefore, and also because the enemies of our people's democracy will do their best to work their way into our ranks and hinder our constructive work, we must increase our democratic vigilance and waken the democratic fighting spirit."

In accordance with Pálffy's instruction in the summer of 1948, it was decided that the former military gendarme amounting to some 20-25,000 living in the territory of Hungary, including 10-14,000 former officers, were going to be put on file and their groups regarded as dangerous put in labour camps.¹²

By uniting the Budapest and provincial political security departments, the

State Security Department (ÁVO) headed by Gábor Péter was set up in October 1946. 60 Andrásy Avenue remained its headquarters. The ÁVO's tasks included liquidating the democratic parties and gathering the intelligence connected with that task. Its members and agents infiltrated every party. They expended care on wiping out the communities of emigrants, and also infiltrating the churches. To destroy these communities was one of their important political aims. They inspected correspondence and tapped telephone conversations. Their informers and agents encompassed the whole country and worked their way into homes. They kept records on and trailed hundreds of thousands of citizens who were proclaimed political enemies. Their chief officers were taught to ruthlessly hate "the class enemy"¹³ at the courses of the Soviet political police and at the Budapest Dzerzhinsky¹⁴ Academy. The Hungarian political police – like the CHEKA¹⁵ it regarded as its ideal – became the support and guarantee of the communist dictatorship. Hence they called it the "fist of the Party".

The Soviet leadership left nothing to chance. Soviet "advisers" who "helped", in reality directed and controlled, the activity of ministries and the repressive organisations. The Hungarian army was also turned around to match the Soviet model. Arrests took place and political trials were organised with the assistance of Soviet interior officers.

Both in Hungary and Moscow the communist leaders left no stone unturned in order to seize power. On 25 February the Soviet authorities arrested Béla Kovács,¹⁶ general secretary of the Smallholders' Party and an MP, and then shortly afterwards they organised a coup against Prime Minister Ferenc Nagy,¹⁷ who was forced to resign, and the parliament was dissolved.

Elections were brought forward and in 1947, led by Interior Minister László Rajk,¹⁸ the Communist Party gained 22% by terrorising the electorate and employing all kinds of deception. This was the notorious "blue card" elections when hundreds of thousands were deprived of their votes and about a hundred thousand false blue card votes were cast. Since the electorate still ensured a majority for the bourgeois parties, another nearly seven hundred thousand votes were destroyed.

The foundation of the Information Bureau of the Communist and Workers' Parties (COMINFORM)¹⁹ also indicated that the direct goal in countries ruled and controlled by the Soviet Union was to establish the exclusive power of the communist parties. During this period opposition leaders still at liberty were exiled abroad or imprisoned. By uniting the HCP and the Social Democratic Party, a new and uniform workers' party was established under the name of Hungarian Workers' Party (HWP), which essentially meant the liquidation of Hungarian social democracy, which had a great past.

A total state party dictatorship was formed. The party prepared the country for a third world war, while it waged war against various groups of society. In this war the terror organisations of the Communist Party – the PPD, ÁVO and later the State Security Authority (ÁVH) – played a major role. Regarding its top leadership and later lower rank levels, officers of the Soviet state security service,

the NKVD,²⁰ later the KGB²¹ as advisers supervised and directed the activity of the state defence organs. The single leader of that organisation, which operated as a chief authority and was formally under the Council of Ministers, was Mátyás Rákosi,²² who was at the peak of his power between 1949 and 1953.

In 1950 the Military Border Guards of approximately 18,000 (widely known as “the green ÁVO”) and the military intelligence service became subordinated to the ÁVH. Its interior body for maintaining order, the Special Police, was set up on the lines of the Soviet model. They took over guarding the most important Party and state buildings, as well as several prisons, and forced labour and detention camps (e.g. in Recsk and Kistarcsa).

Highlighting the essence of the changes almost naturally occurring as a result of the character of the dictatorship, Sándor M. Kiss states: “In the beginning the ÁVH was [Mátyás] Rákosi’s Communist Party’s political police led by [Gábor] Péter, and later by Rákosi and Péter. Besides the arguable continuity in the history of the ÁVH, a basic change took place by the beginning of 1950 – with the help of Rákosi, Péter succeeded in withdrawing his organisation from the supervision of the state and the Party and connecting it directly to the general secretary. This resulted in the almost unlimited extension of the ÁVH’s power”.²³

According to a situation report of February 1950 made by an “adviser” from the Soviet state security, the following main “reactionary” forces existed in Hungary:

“...more than 1500 bankers, landowners of large estates and capitalists; approximately 20,000 regular officers removed from the army for political reasons and warrant officers of the former Horthy²⁴ army; more than 17,000 officials of the state apparatus and the Horthy system’s penal bodies; a large number of former members of fascist parties and organisations; some 30,000 right-wing social democrats who were expelled from the Party; reactionary elements of the government coalition parties (Independent Smallholders’ Party and National Peasant Party) who represented the interests of the kulaks, while the country has more than 80,000 kulak farms.

The Catholic Church remained nearly untouched. Its influence extends to the majority of the population and is highly respected by the believers. This force is not small, since the country has 4000 churches and 800 monasteries, priests and monks who represent a ramifying network of agents experienced in conspiracy and in work with the masses for the benefit of the Vatican and the American intelligence service.

In addition, various foreign industrial plants, trading companies and representative bodies with mainly British and American capital can be found in Hungary; 18,000 citizens of capitalist states also live in the country. This circumstance creates favourable conditions for imperialist intelligence agents to pursue active spying against Hungary and the Soviet Union. (...)

Tito’s clique sends a large number of spies, terrorists and saboteurs to Hungary, who capitalise on the reactionary elements among the Serbs and Croats who live

in the territories along the border to organise an attack against the activists and the institutions of the workers' party..."²⁵

The Soviet colonel's report of 1950 also states that major hostile forces "relying on external support have recently shown more determination in stepping forward against the new system. Thus in December 1949 alone, 23 armed attacks were recorded against local Party and social activists; as well as more than 50 acts of sabotage in transport, primarily on the transport route connecting the Soviet Union with Austria, with shots fired at 15 trains. During 1949 several hundred acts of diversion, sabotage and damage were executed."

Colonel Kartashov regarded the chief reason affecting the success of the "struggle against reaction" was that the

"ÁVH was basically filled with communists, [but] a large number of social aliens, mostly of Jewish nationality, some of whom have relatives and other contacts in capitalist countries, have infiltrated the security organs. The situation concerning cadres is even worse in military intelligence and the police. (...)

The Party leadership seems to underestimate the role of the security organs as the sharp weapon of the Party, since it has not taken the necessary measures to clear the penal organs of alien elements and strengthen them with working communists who are loyal to the cause of the Party."

War against the Hungarian people

The Soviet advisers not only criticised but provided "help". Their presence at more important interrogations ensured "unbiased expertise". Soviet interior officers were instrumental in arrests and in organising political trials, which were conducted on the Soviet pattern.

Show trials involving the accused admitting to fantastic criminal acts as a result of torture became part of everyday life. On average, proceedings were taken against every third Hungarian adult. Mátyás Rákosi and the criminal organisations wanted to break the spine of Hungarian society by internment and displacement of people, forced labour, confiscation of property, hundreds of thousands of proceedings, thousands of trumped-up charges and false trials, prison sentences and executions.

Internment,²⁶ that is "placing someone under police surveillance", enabled the system to isolate the real or alleged enemy and ensure their removal from public life. Communists aspiring to absolute power were able to violently do away with their political opponents. On the proposal of the PPD and the ÁVO, more than 40,000 people were interned nationwide in hardly three years, between 1945 and 1948. Several thousand prisoners underwent forced labour in inhuman conditions in four central internment camps – Recsk, Kistarcsa, Tiszalök and Kazincbarcika

– which were established by the political police up to the spring of 1950. The internees, who were isolated from everyone and everything, were at the mercy of the guards’ despicable instincts. Among the guards “The prisoners do not have to be accounted for” became a common saying.

The persecution of so-called “class-alien elements”²⁷ continued after the introduction of total dictatorship. On the basis of a central plan, the ÁVH gathered thousands of families and transported them in cattle trucks to the Hortobágy steppe in several waves from the night of 23 June 1950. In the camps the internees did forced labour under armed guard, while they scraped by amidst inhuman, almost brutal conditions.

The fate of those internees who were locked up in agricultural forced labour camps, which were surrounded by barbed wire, ÁVÓ soldiers and police dogs, was the hardest. They were placed in covered sheep pens and barracks, and were made to work under terrible conditions. Due to the lack of food, harsh conditions, strenuous work and the absence of doctors and medicine, many died or sustained long-term medical impairment. Nearly 15,000 people were engaged in forced labour in camps near Hortobágy between June 1950 and October 1953. In the eastern part of the country twelve so-called closed camps operated, where families were transported mainly from the southern and western border regions from 1948. The internees were selected according to their origin or they were included in the lists simply because they had a nice house or apartment. Among the outcasts there were people who had formerly been in Nazi concentration camps. Many chose suicide instead of another deportation.

Tens of thousands of people who were regarded as kulaks were forced to leave their homes and land. In 1951, then in the summer of 1952, part of the population living along the Yugoslav border was also resettled. In many cases under the cover of night, the “untrustworthy elements” were taken to enforced living quarters or locked up in labour camps in other parts of the country, while they had to leave all their belongings behind. Those resettled in enforced living quarters lost their civil rights, their pensions were withdrawn and they were not allowed to leave their assigned domicile without permission. They were under surveillance day and night.

In the summer of 1951 resettlement *en mass* also began from Budapest and large provincial towns such as Győr, Szombathely, and Székesfehérvár. More than 5000 families, nearly 15,000 people, were removed from the capital in two months.

The agency as an important tool of the “class struggle”

A host of informers, a shadow army, watched and recorded people’s thoughts at work benches, in editorial and other offices, universities, churches and theatres. No single part of life could be safe from them. Someone from every third family was taken away and abused. On many occasions their parents, siblings, sweet-

hearts, friends, former comrades-in-arms, moreover their fellow soldiers were also arrested, tortured and sometimes beaten to death.

The number of people who were arrested between 1951 and 1953 “as a result of agency operation” – the “tool of class struggle” that was declared to be of key importance – did not exceed one tenth of the total number arrested by the state security organs. 4.5% of people arrested for political reasons in 1951 (9% in 1952 and 12% in 1953) were arrested on the basis of agency operation. Disregarding concrete cases, this also means that, for example, in the first seven months of 1953 the state security organs had to “maintain” 75 network informers in order to arrest a single person who could be suspected of committing a political crime. The “efficiency indicator” of employment by the agency declines further if following the arrest the number of suspects who were released given the lack of a criminal act or evidence, or acquitted by the court, is also taken into account. This was 21% of those arrested in the period under review.²⁸

The number and composition of people in the network continuously fluctuated between approximately 35,000 and 46,000. Between 1951 and 1953 a total of 11,182 people were expelled from the agency, 132 because of disinformation, 1118 for revealing secrets, 8726 because of ineptitude, 180 due to arrest and 1026 for other reasons.²⁹

On 1 August 1953 at the time of the establishment of the unified Ministry of Interior, of the network of state security organs (involving 45,521 people) there were 5556 agents, 5027 residents, 33,036 informers and 1902 owners of flats reserved for secret meetings. 51% of agency employees were members of the HWP. The number of people in the agency who were organised in “enemy contingents” remained relatively low at 10%, despite all the efforts of the authorities and the use of violent means. On 1 August 1953 the number of network people included in this category amounted to 2456, 5.4% of the entire agency (223 clergymen, 535 kulaks, 367 right-wing social democrats, 225 right-wing Smallholders, 32 Trotskyists, 918 members of the former Horthy armed forces and 156 members of the former ruling class). 54.67% (24,888 people) of the whole agency belonged to military intelligence. Of the other part (20,633 people) of the agency, 39% (8047 people) and 61% (12,586 people) were active under the direction of the state security organs in Budapest and the provinces respectively.³⁰

A “new phase” (!?) in operating the system of terror

A stop to resettlement and the elimination of internment camps were ordered on 6 June 1953. However, many could not return to their homes, many were imprisoned and some of those released were forced to move to other dwellings.

On publication of the measures concerning the amnesty, 478 and 5075 people were held in internment camps of the police and of the state security organs respectively. The distribution of those “under the effect of other measures limiting

freedom” was the following: 7281 people released from Hortobágy (including underage family members), 13,670 who were expelled from Budapest and had to reside in enforced dwellings and 1194 who were banned from residing in provincial towns.

The following data also show the depth of the dictatorship. The amnesty measures involved approximately 760,000 people.

Amnesty measures

<i>According to the authorities concerned</i>			<i>Total by groups (persons)</i>
<i>grouping</i>	<i>classification</i>	<i>number (persons)</i>	
I. “confined and released persons”	From civil and military prisons	15,761	21,968
	From internment camps of the police	478	
	From internment camps of the state security organs	5,075	
	From remand centres of the Ministry of Justice	654	
II. “those under the effect of other measures limiting freedom”	Released from Hortobágy (including underage family members)	7,281	22,145
	Expelled from Budapest, compelled to enforced dwelling	13,670	
	Banned from residing in provincial towns	1,194	
III. “affected in other respects”	The criminal courts annulled the fine	21,181	709,811
	Courts of minor offences ceased the proceedings or annulled the punishment	640,534	
	The criminal courts terminated the procedure	21,141	
	The prosecution stopped the proceedings	7,646	
	The criminal courts exempted from punishment	11,591	
	The criminal courts granted one third remission	574	
	Police supervision was absolved	4,570	
	Acquitted from corrective work	2,574	
IV. released with one third or half remission after 1 October	from civil prisons	3,573	4,714
	from military prisons	1,141	
Overall total			758,638 ³¹

A report also shows that the number of those arrested in prisons and internment camps was 22,577 on 29 September 1953. They planned to bring to court 400 persons from among the 545 who had not yet been released, while letting the others free by 1 October. In the Hortobágy 3374 deported people were still held captive in this period.³² The police registered the “ordinary criminals and hostile elements who were freed as a result of the amnesty” and “began their supervision both through the network and via those responsible for a region”. They organised the operative surveillance of 7438 people from the 16,542 who were registered up to 17 September 1953.³³

The 1953 changes did not concern the institution of military forced labour. Young people of military age who were regarded by the system as “class alien”, i.e. enemy, were compelled to undertake forced labour under inhuman conditions in Hungary’s mines and on construction sites. In 1952 their number amounted to 10,899, which rose to 12,511 a year later. The institution of forced labour was eliminated only in 1956.

The situation did not essentially change in the field of “class struggle” even after Stalin’s death³⁴. At that time the Interior Ministry and the State Security Authority were merged and a so called “unified” Interior Ministry was established in line with a Soviet proposal – note, order – and model. Yet the terror organisations of the Communist Party merely changed in name. According to the relevant measures, the state security organs discovered persons who pursued “hostile activities directed at undermining and preventing government policy and building socialism”. They detained and took into custody those involved in anti-state organisation. They discovered and eliminated illegal anti-state organisations and movements which operated in the territory of the country and, among other activities, they also ensured “the protection and safety of the Party and government leaders”.

Millions of the population shuddered at and dreaded them. If an order was given they unfalteringly killed, robbed, embezzled or got their victims to the gallows or into prison with confessions that were extracted with torture.

Leaders of the Interior Ministry intended primarily to reinforce the operative network of the state security organs and the police by reorganising the central and regional (county and Budapest) organisations. According to the relevant decision of the Political Committee, the central staff number – 8759³⁵ – of the two chief authorities had to be reduced by 2500-2600. The new number of employees in chief departments and units of the “unified” Ministry of the Interior was defined at 4550. At the time of the merger the number of state security staff in the central organs amounted to 48% of the total number.

In hardly half a year, by March 1954 the number employed in the central organs – excluding the category “other” – had increased from 4574 to 7736, 169% of the original number, while within that the number in the state security organs grew from 2214 to 3500, i.e. to 158%. Taking into account the number of policemen assigned to Chief Department VII in the state security organs, the increase (4890 people) was double, 221%. The number of staff in the central internal and

external organs of the Interior Ministry was 9026, namely 267 higher than the total number (8759) working for the two chief authorities before the merger.

As a result of the reorganisation, the number of state security organisations increased from 105 to 151, in which the number of operative employees was raised from 1150 to 1607, i.e. nearly 30%.³⁶

According to the decision, the whole reorganisation had to be executed in such a way that the number of people assigned to the provincial organs of the State Security Authority had to be increased by 611 to 1598, namely to 162% of the existing number. Furthermore, the number of operative employees planned for the districts and towns had to be doubled at the expense of the proposed number working in the police and penal institutions. In Budapest the number employed in the municipal districts was intended to be increased by an operative staff of 50 at the expense of the Budapest Chief Department.

In 1953 and in the following period, the task of the state security organs continued to include “to carry out tasks connected to the state security of the Hungarian People’s Republic, (...) to protect the interests of the working class and the working people, and to abide by socialist legality”.³⁷

“Anti-democratic elements” in the state security records

The attitude and partly the content of the state security and police operative network activity can be most appropriately demonstrated by presenting the categories which were defined by the state security organs, according to which people were put on file as a “result” of this work.

According to an assessment made in 1956, the data of 1,200,000 people were included in the operative records of “anti-democratic elements”.³⁸ 95,452 people were put on record as “class alien”.³⁹ As a “result” of revision executed in 1954, the number of those on record was reduced to 420,000. Other data show this figure as 610,000, of whom 460,000 represented “anti-democratic elements”, and the number of those arrested who were on record amounted to 150,000.⁴⁰

As criticism it was stipulated that the number of those who did not pursue “hostile activity” or could not be considered from this point of view was high in the records. The fact that the incriminating or compromising data concerning some people were not appropriately checked and documented was included among the “mistakes” of the records. Those against whom the confidential investigation by the agency was terminated due to the absence of evidence or criminal activity were not erased from the records, and neither were these people’s contacts who were also on the records. Rehabilitated people and some of their contacts, former internees or people under police surveillance remained on the records “whether or not the measures applied against them were legal”, as well as a large number of those “who continuing to be on the records was in discord with the policy of our

Party and government. For example, landowners with properties along both sides of the national border, Yugoslav citizens, etc.”⁴¹

In order to eliminate the condition which was classified as unlawful, the submitters proposed that “with the aim of closely watching the movement and activity of persons in the hostile category” those who “at present or in the past pursued active hostile activity” should be kept or be put on the state security operative records of the Interior Ministry”; so should “the regular officers and members of Horthy’s oppressive armed organisations”; “persons who were in leading positions in the state apparatus during the Horthy-Szálasi regime⁴², and strengthened the counter-revolutionary system with their activity”; those “who are the enemies of our people and people’s state due to their class position or hostile activity”; and “all those clergymen who, using their church status, pursue or pursued hostile activity against the people’s democratic state.”⁴³

According to the proposal, of persons who “belong to the listed hostile categories” those did not have to be put on the records whose “pre- or post-liberation behaviour and actions have proved that they are loyal to the working people, and those who have worked in their posts for the progress of our working people; thus especially those who actively participated in the resistance movement before the liberation and actively participated in building and consolidating the people’s democracy after the liberation”, as well as those who worked in leading posts and are Party members.⁴⁴

According to the above, they planned to re-examine the files of the “anti-democratic elements” (approximately 460,000) and of the arrested (some 15,000). On that basis they would propose deletion of the files of persons who were put on the records illegally and on the basis of unverified materials, as well as enter in the subsidiary research material the files of those about whom no legally condemning document could be issued on the basis of such files, but “can be used from a state security aspect.”⁴⁵

Methods applied during the “class struggle”

The methods did not change, either. The investigatory organs of state security usually held the interrogations at night, in line with Soviet customs. The suspects were not allowed to sleep for days, and were often not given food or drink for several days.

All varieties of torture and psychological or physical abuse were deployed against the victims. Then prosecutors who were selected by the state security organs asked for an exemplary sentence for the captives who had been tormented by hunger, cruel cold, the constant lack of sleep and physical and psychological abuse, which the judges, enjoying the trust of the ÁVO/ÁVH, granted.

“Class jurisdiction” directed and supervised by the state security service – with direct Soviet intervention in cases declared more important – meant that the

court considered the social origin of the accused, or as it was referred to, which class the convict belonged to, as an aggravating or mitigating factor. A kulak, a middle-class person or an aristocrat was sentenced far more harshly for the same act than a poor peasant or a worker. Hungarian jurisdiction also took over the Soviet principle of law which abolished the presumption of innocence. In many cases they were satisfied with the confessions which had been extorted with torture instead of evidence. It was not the accuser who had to prove guilt, but the accused who had to prove innocence.

In the years between 1948 and 1956 the number of the politically convicted fluctuated in the range of 3681 (1954) and 12,979 (1949). On average, more than 7300 political prisoners a year served their sentence in prison. Nearly 400 people were executed for political reasons between 1945 and 1956.

Political trials were used by dictatorships to make life impossible for political opponents or destroy them by keeping the appearance of the enforcement of the law. On the basis of false accusations – for example, treason, murder, spying – the sentence was reached even before the trial. At the trial, which was sometimes public, the accused were persuaded to make confessions against themselves with the help of torture, deception, drugs, etc. The sentence, if it was death, was carried out rapidly and in secret. This required the abolition of the judges' independence. More than a thousand judges were removed without much ado and they were replaced by Party servants who were coached during "crash courses". Dozens of political show trials were held. The torture as well as physical and psychological intimidation of the victims who stayed alive continued in prisons supervised by the ÁVO/ÁVH. Medical care was hardly provided for prisoners. They were locked up in punishment cells for the smallest "offence" and they were severely abused.

Every thought, idea and opinion which differed from the Party's guidelines was seen as hostile and had to be eliminated. The Party's ideology, which was referred to as Marxism-Leninism or Stalinism, permeated the economy, culture and education, as well as everyday life.

The system did not recognise any other authority, therefore it regarded religion and the churches as among its chief enemies. In parallel with wrecking and liquidating their political opponents, an attack against the churches was launched after 1945. By means of internal coups, compelling people to emigrate, manufactured trials, prison, threats and intimidation, they ensured that leaders who were ready to cooperate with the dictatorship would head the churches.

Corresponding to the Soviet model, attacks were pinpointed at the "kulaks". Lists of kulaks were compiled with the most prominent farmers of a village being included. They were those who managed their farms most efficiently. They burdened kulaks with extra taxes, raised delivery obligations, and used psychological and physical terror. The police and state security forces assisted forced deliveries. Brigades went from village to village to terrorise the population with public threats and beatings. 400,000 peasants were sentenced merely for "public supply crime".

The sections of the state security later established political investigatory organs and then made records of letters posted or received from abroad, for example. They checked the correspondence of prisoners, internees, and soldiers and generally everyone who got in the line of vision of the state security organs. Letters which were considered politically dangerous were confiscated and investigations began against the letter writer.

The borders were hermetically closed and mined. Those who still tried to cross could expect a severe prison sentence at best, but there were people who were blown up or shot, and others were executed. It is still unknown how many people lost their lives while trying to escape.

The Party demanded that the Hungarian people identify with the goals and interests of the Soviet Union. Family members were turned against each other, they and relatives being compelled to report on each other. Those who were unwilling to accept it all were struck by the machinery of terror, which entangled and controlled everything and kept everyone in fear. Terror and fear operated the system.

Resistance including all strata of society unfolded against the communist dictatorship. Forms of opposition such as religious practice, participation in religious instruction, refusal to assume a role in public life, prevention and refusal of compulsory delivery or organising agricultural cooperatives became everyday occurrences. Students whose schools were closed, whose teachers were taken away and whose parents were intimidated opposed the system. So did the officers who could not accept being a satellite of the Soviet Union. So did workers who defended their achieved rights. So did peasants who were wrecked with kulak lists, compulsory deliveries and enforced searches of lofts. So did teachers, lawyers and doctors who did not resign themselves to their political rights being abolished. Many took on organising armed resistance, producing and distributing leaflets, establishing contacts with Western powers, moreover sabotage. Quite a few faced certain death when caught producing leaflets or organising armed resistance. There were people who gathered and hid weapons left from the war and made preparations should there be a chance to fight for freedom. Even in the case of clemency, they could expect a life sentence.

The brave who defied the fearful system of terror were killed, buried in unnamed graves, because they were dreaded even in their death. We do not know even the names of many of them.

Notes

1. The primary goal of the political alliance formed by the Social Democratic Party, the National Peasant Party and the Trade Union Council on the initiative of the Hungarian Communist Party on 5 March 1946 was to win the elections in opposition to the Independent Smallholders' Party. The Left-wing Block was dissolved after the elections held on 31 August 1947.
2. An organisation in which exclusively Soviet influence was effective operated from the conclusion of the armistice treaty to the peace treaty. In Hungary, besides the Soviet mission, British, American, Czechoslovak and Yugoslav representations operated with smaller influence and numbers.
3. Ferenc Erdei (1910–1971) was one of the founders of the National Peasants' Party; one of the organisers of the Hungarian National Independence Front in Szeged, in October and November 1944; minister of the interior in the Provisional National Government formed on 20 December 1944; vice-president of the National Peasant Party from 1945 and its general secretary from May 1947; minister of agriculture from summer 1949 and minister of justice between 1953 and 1955. (www.rev.hu)
4. András Tömpe (1913–1971) joined the Hungarian Social Democratic Party in 1931 and later the youth organisation of the Hungarian Party of Communists (HPC). From 1934 he was a member of the HPC and from 1935 a member of the Czechoslovak Party of Communists. He fought in the International Brigades on the side of the Republicans in the Spanish Civil War from 1937 to 1939. He also became a member of the Spanish Communist Party in 1938. He fled to France in February 1939, from where he returned to Hungary in October 1941. From May 1944 he was a soldier. He went over to the Soviet troops at the front. After parachute training from October to December 1944, he fought as the political commissioner of Sándor Nógrádi's partisan group in Upper Hungary and in the vicinity of Salgótarján. He headed the Political Policing Department of the Provincial Chief Headquarters of the police until the summer of 1946. He was a resident of Soviet intelligence in Buenos Aires between 1947 and 1959. After returning to Hungary he was one of the chiefs of Dept. II/3 (intelligence) in the Ministry of Interior, then he headed the Administration Department of the Central Committee of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party between February and November 1962, when he resigned. In 1963 he was appointed director of the Corvina Foreign Language Publishing House and in 1967 he became Hungary's ambassador in Berlin. He resigned from his post in August 1968 because he did not agree with the intervention in Czechoslovakia. From 1970 until the end of his life he was

president of the Association of Hungarian Publishers and Book Distributors. (www.tortenelmitar.hu)

5. The Provisional National Government's Decree of 4 January 1945 authorised the national committees to reorganise the local authorities and public administration. The Budapest National Committee presided over by Zoltán Tildy as the local organisation of the Hungarian National Independence Front was set up on 21 January 1945. All the democratic parties and the trade unions were represented in it.
6. Gábor Péter (1906–1993). A tailor's apprentice by trade. A member of the Hungarian Party of Communists (HPC) from 1931 and a member of the leadership of the Peace Party from 1943. He played a prominent role in the preparation of the show trials and the execution of illegal procedures. In 1952 he was dismissed from his post and expelled from the Party. He was arrested on 3 January 1953 and sentenced to life imprisonment in 1954. In a new legal procedure he was sentenced to 14 years' imprisonment in 1957. He received individual clemency in January 1959 and worked as a librarian until his retirement. (www.rev.hu)
7. Imre Okváth, "Sziget egy reakciós tenger közepén" [Island in the Middle of a Reactionary Sea] in *Államvédelem a Rákosi-korszakban*, ed. György Gyarmati, (Történelmi Hivatal, Budapest, 2000) p. 81.
8. György Pálffy (1909–1949). Due to his anti-German political views he resigned from his rank and left the army in 1939. After the outbreak of World War II, he joined the civic section of the Independent Smallholders' Party on the instruction of the Communist Party and was engaged in anti-war propaganda. In autumn 1944 he was appointed to head the Military Committee of the Communist Party. He was head of the military political (intelligence) department and the commander of border security in the rank of general from 1946. He was supervising the army as lieutenant general in 1947. From the end of 1948 he was deputy minister of defence and the head of military training. A member of the Central Leadership of the Hungarian Workers' Party. He was arrested on 5 July and executed on 24 October 1949. After his partial rehabilitation in 1955, he was ceremonially reburied together with László Rajk, Tibor Szőnyi and András Szalai on 6 October 1956. He was fully rehabilitated on 27 September 1963. (www.rev.hu)
9. Okváth, "Sziget egy reakciós tenger közepén", p.82.
10. *Demokrácia* [Democracy], 14 April 1946. Quoted in Okváth, "Sziget egy reakciós tenger közepén", p. 83.

11. Military History Archive, HM. 1947/el. 20.509. Quoted in Okváth, “Sziget egy reakció tenger közepén”, p. 83.
12. Okváth, “Sziget egy reakció tenger közepén”, p. 89.
13. See notes 40 and 41.
14. On 17 December 1917, the All-Russian Extraordinary Commission (Cheka) to combat counter-revolution was founded on the proposal of Felix Edmondovich Dzerzhinsky (1877–1926), who became its head. From the end of 1921 he headed the State Political Directorate (GPU) set up to replace the Cheka and later, from 1923 to the end of his life, an independent organisation with the new name OGPU, which separated from the Interior People’s Commissariat.
15. See note 13.
16. Béla Kovács (1908–1959) was a member of the Smallholders’ Party from 1933, then the leader (general secretary) of the party’s Baranya County organisation. From 1939 he was national deputy general secretary and the general secretary of the Hungarian Peasants’ Federation from 1941. He was state secretary of the Ministry of Interior from 1944 to 1947 and minister of agriculture until February 1946. As the general secretary of the Smallholders’ Party he was arrested by the Soviet authorities on 25 February 1947 and sentenced without trial to forced labour of 20 years. He returned to Hungary in autumn 1955. He was in captivity in Jászberény until spring 1956 and released in May. During the revolution he was elected a member of the re-established Smallholders’ Party’s Executive Committee and the president of the party on 3 November 1956. He was the minister of agriculture from 26 to 31 October 1956 and state minister from 2 November in Imre Nagy’s government. After 4 November he sought compromise with the Revolutionary Worker-Peasant Government and had talks with János Kádár. In November 1958 he consented to become an MP as a representative of the People’s Front. (www.rev.hu)
17. Ferenc Nagy (1903–1979) joined the Smallholders’ Party of István Nagyatádi Szabó and was its president in Baranya County between 1928 and 1930. He was one of the founders of the Independent Smallholders’ Party in October 1930 and the party’s general secretary up to August 1945. He was the president of the Peasants’ Federation from April 1945 and the president of the Independent Smallholders’ Party from August 1945. From April 1945 he was an MP, minister of reconstruction from 11 May, vice-president of the National Land Ownership Managing Council, a member of the National Economic Council and the Supreme Defence Council. On 7 October 1945 he was

elected to the Municipal Law Authority Council. From 29 November 1945 he was president of the National Assembly and a member of the National Chief Council at the same time. After the election of Zoltán Tildy as president of the republic, he was prime minister from 4 February 1946. Following the arrest of Béla Kovács, Mátyás Rákosi accused him of complicity in an anti-republic plot. His child taken as a hostage, he was blackmailed and forced to resign on 2 June 1947. The following day he was excluded from the Independent Smallholders' Party and deprived of his Hungarian citizenship in October. He settled in the USA. (www.rev.hu)

18. László Rajk (1909–1949) joined the illegal communist movement in 1930 and became a member of the Hungarian Party of Communists (HPC) in 1931. He was arrested for his illegal political activity several times. He was fighting in Spain between 1937 and 1939, then fled to France from where he returned to Hungary in 1941. He was arrested and interned. Following his release in September 1944 he became secretary of the Party's Central Committee, one of the leaders of the Hungarian Front and one of the main organisers and decision makers in the resistance. In December 1944 the Arrow Cross Party arrested him, took him to Sopronkőhida and then Germany, from where he returned to Hungary on 13 May 1945. He became a member of all the leading bodies of the HCP as well as the Provisional National Assembly. He was an MP. From May to November 1945 he was the secretary of the Budapest Party Committee, then the deputy general secretary of HCP until March 1946. He was minister of interior from March 1946 to August 1948. In this position he banned and dispersed several religious, national and democratic spirited institutions and organisations on the pretext of pursuing fascist and reactionary groups. He organised the first show trials. In August 1948 Rajk was relieved from his post and appointed minister of foreign affairs. On 30 May 1949 he was arrested on trumped-up charges. He was charged with anti-people crime and treachery and on 24 September the People's Court sentenced him to death. He was executed on 15 October. Rajk was rehabilitated in 1955 and reburied in the Kerepesi Cemetery on 6 October 1956. (www.rev.hu)
19. The international organisation led by the Soviets was formed in September 1947 with members of the Albanian, Bulgarian, Czechoslovak, Yugoslav, Polish, Hungarian, Romanian, Soviet, French and Italian Communist Parties. Its headquarters was situated in Belgrade in 1947-48, then after the condemnation and exclusion of the Yugoslav Communist Party the centre of COMINFORM moved to Budapest on 27 June 1948. The organisation consisting of the representatives of the parties ceased with the founders' unanimous decision on its dissolution on 7 April 1956. (www.rev.hu)

20. The NKVD, i.e. the Interior People's Commissariat, was a central organisation with interior and state security tasks in the Soviet Union between 1934 and 1954.
21. The Committee for State Security, KGB, was an organisation with state security tasks in the Soviet Union between 1945 and 1991. It was formally subordinated to the Council of Ministers of the Soviet Union, but it was in fact directed by the Communist Party of the Soviet Union.
22. Mátyás Rákosi (1892–1971) joined the Social Democratic Party in 1910. He became a founding member of the Hungarian Party of Communists (HPC) in November 1918. During the 1919 Hungarian Council Republic he took part in the leadership in various fields. On 1 August 1919 he fled to Vienna where he was interned until 1920. He left Austria for Soviet Russia and joined the work of the Executive Committee of the Communist International, then became a secretary of the organisation from 1921. He returned to Hungary illegally in 1924. He was elected a member of the Central Committee at the renewing congress of the HPC in Vienna in 1925 and was appointed to lead the secretariat in Hungary. He was arrested in Hungary in September 1925 and sentenced in August 1926 to eight and a half years of imprisonment. In 1935 he was sentenced to life imprisonment for his activity during the Council Republic. In 1940 he was released on condition he immediately left for the Soviet Union. He was a leading figure in the Hungarian communist emigration in Moscow. He returned to Hungary on 30 January 1945. He became the general secretary of the Debrecen and Budapest united Central Leadership of the HCP on 22 February 1945. Following the 1945 elections Rákosi was a state minister. After the 1947 elections he became deputy prime minister and state minister. On 12 June 1948 he was elected the general secretary at the founding congress of the Hungarian Workers' Party (HWP). On 1 February 1949 he became president of the then forming Hungarian Independence Front and president of the State Security Committee – keeping all his other posts – after the 1949 elections. Parliament elected him president of the Council of Ministers on 14 August 1952. He was relieved from that position in June 1953. At the 18-21 July 1956 meeting of the Central Leadership of the HWP he was released from his position of first secretary with reference to his deteriorating health and was not included in the members of the Political Committee. He travelled to the Soviet Union for medical treatment. He was deprived of his mandate of MP on 5 May 1957. The Political Committee of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party (HSWP) suspended his Party membership on 1 November 1960, then he was expelled from the Party on 16 August 1962. Rákosi died in Gorky (Soviet Union) in 1971. His ashes were brought back to Hungary in secret on 16 February. (www.rev.hu)

23. Sándor M. Kiss, “Péter Gábor Államvédelmi Hatósága. 1950–1953.” [Gábor Péter’s State Security Authority, 1950–1953] in *Gyarmati Államvédelem a Rákosi-korszakban*, pp. 138-139.
24. The political system before 1945 when Miklós Horthy held the position of Regent of the Hungarian Kingdom between 1 March 1920 and 16 October 1944.
25. Sections from the report made by Colonel Kartashov, adviser ordered from the State Security Ministry of the Soviet Union to the State Security Authority on 10 February 1950. (Rossiskiy Gosudarstvenniy Arkhiv Sotsialno-Politicheskoy Istorii RGASPI f. 82. op. 2. gy. 1154. Typed original.) Outlined by Magdolna Baráth, “Szovjet tanácsadó feljegyzése Magyarországról” [A Soviet Adviser’s Note about Hungary] in *Betekintő* 2008/4. (www.betekinto.hu. Accessed 28 February 2013)
26. See Barbara Bank, György Gyarmati, Mária Palasik, “Állami titok.” *Internálóság és kényszermunkatáborok Magyarországon 1945–1953*. [“State Secret”. Internment and Forced Labour Camps in Hungary, 1945–1953] (Historical Archive of the State Security Services – L’Harmattan, Budapest, 2012), p. 118.
27. See notes 40 and 41.
28. Central Records (KI) of the Interior Ministry (BM), Material of the Interior Ministry board meeting, 8 September 1953. Report about the network activity of the state security organs, Budapest, 31 August 1953, p. 1.
29. *Ibid*, p. 2. Presumably due to a statistical error, the number of those excluded from the agency was given as 11,652. According to another source, on 31 December 1955 the network number of the Interior Ministry’s state security organs was 35,793, of whom there were 7134 agents, 3819 residents and 22,519 informers. 17% of this number was enlisted from the hostile category, 17% from the loyal, and 66% from the faithful to the system categories. The number of agents decreased by 11,824 according to data of 30 September 1956. The major change occurred in the group declared as faithful to the system – 9249 leaving or being reorganised. The numbers enlisted from the “hostile” and “loyal” categories became 968 and 1707 fewer respectively. The data are published without providing the source by Rolf Müller, *Politikai rendőrség a Rákosi-korszakban* [Political Police in the Rákosi Era] (Jaffa, Budapest, 2012), p. 161.
30. KI BM Material of the Interior Ministry board meeting, 8 September 1953. Report about the network activity of the state security organs, Budapest, 31 August 1953, p. 2.

31. Record about the data of implementing the amnesty measures. 23 November 1953. Signed by László Piros, deputy interior minister. Published in *Iratok az igazságszolgáltatás történetéből* [Documents from the History of Jurisdiction] Volume 1, eds. Ibolya Horváth, Pál Solt, Győző Szabó, János Zanathy, Tibor Zinner (Közgazdasági és Jogi Könyvkiadó, Budapest, 1992), pp. 430-431.
32. At that time the number of POWs in custody amounted to 1269. Report to Ernő Gerő, minister of interior. Signed by József Győre, deputy minister of interior. Published in *Iratok az igazságszolgáltatás történetéből*, Volume 1, p. 428.
33. Report about the supervision of the released. Signed by Károly Kutika, police colonel, deputy chief of the National Police Office. Published in *Iratok az igazságszolgáltatás történetéből*, Volume 1, p. 426.
34. Yosif Vissarionovich Stalin died on 5 March 1953.
35. KI BM Submission with reference to the number of staff of the Interior Ministry – II-3272/1953.
36. KI BM Material of the Interior Ministry board meeting, 25 August 1953. Proposal for establishing the Interior Ministry's unified regional (provincial and Budapest) organs.
 According to an annex of the draft, the following numbers of staff were proposed to be raised: by 275 (to 355) in counterintelligence (spying), by 86 (to 117) in counterintelligence concerning interior reaction, by 71 (to 280) in industrial and agricultural counterintelligence, by 29 (to 101) in investigations, from zero to 18 in reconnaissance, by 43 (to 101) in surveying the environment and tailing, by 20 (to 47) in the operative record departments and by 59 (to 93) in the "T" (secret) organs. The number of operative assistants would have been reduced from 34 to 32.
37. KI BM Orders of the Minister of the Interior, 1955. The principles of agency work of the state security organs, 1954–1955, pp. 1-2.
 In the same order the tasks of the state security organs were stipulated as follows:
 1/ To fight against the agencies of the imperialist intelligence organs. To discover the intentions and plans of the imperialist intelligence agencies, as well as the channels and connections of their getting into the country. To unmask and prevent the undermining work of the imperialist intelligence agencies in the appropriate time.
 2/ To discover and prevent the activity of spies, terrorists, saboteurs and other anti-state criminals in the territory of the country. To discover the con-

nections of the underground reactionary organisations and groups with imperialist intelligence agencies and hostile organisations outside the country.

3/ To protect the armed forces from the penetration of spies, saboteurs, terrorists and reactionary elements.

4/ To prevent the penetration by spies, saboteurs, terrorists, harmful and other hostile elements and criminals of industrial objects (primarily military industrial objects), rail and water transport and agricultural objects, scientific institutes, organisations, organs of domestic and foreign trade and other important objects of the people's economy with the aim of carrying out undermining activities. To discover and prevent such activities.

5/ To preserve and promote the protection of state secrets in the country. To prevent hostile elements from getting into secret objects. To discover and prevent such undermining activities of the enemy.

6/ Arresting, taking into custody, unveiling and passing over to the courts such anti-state criminals...

38. KI BM materials of the State Security Board, 25 July 1956. Submission No. 93-11743/56 of Department X of the Interior Ministry about the revision of keeping anti-democratic elements on file, and the modification of the operative filing regulation.

39. Made by the Interior Ministry's Policing Department IV – Police Authority Department VI.

40. KI BM materials of the State Security Board, 25 July 1956. Submission No. 93-11743/56 of Department X of the Interior Ministry about the revision of keeping anti-democratic elements on file and the modification of the operative filing regulation, p. 6.

According to another source, since 1 December 1953 of the then registered 1,149,659 persons on file, 1,129,865 persons were reviewed and as a result 666,728 were deleted from the records. László Piros's submission to the Political Committee of the HWP about the revision of state security operative records, 13 April 1955. MOL M-KS 276. f. 53/225. ő. e. Published in Magdolna Baráth, "Államvédelem az egységes Belügyminisztériumban" [State Security in the Unified Ministry of Interior] in *Betekintő*, 2010/4. (www.betekinto.hu; Accessed 28 February 2013).

41. The period between March 1920 and April 1945. After Regent Miklós Horthy resigned – on 16 October 1944 – Ferenc Szálasi emerged as the "leader of the nation" by the support of Adolf Hitler.

42. KI BM materials of the State Security Board. 25 July 1956. Submission No. 93-11743/56 of Department X of the Interior Ministry about the revision of keep-

ing anti-democratic elements on file and the modification of the operative filing regulation, p. 1.

43. *Ibid.*, pp. 2-4. The submission proposed to divide the persons who were put on records on the basis of the document into two groups. The first would have included those who “have carried out active hostile activity or can be activated by the enemy due to their class position and the jobs they had in the past”. The following were regarded as possible enemy. “A) Those class alien, former exploiting persons who are hostile towards the people’s democratic state system and for whom the liberation and the firmly established people’s state made it impossible to live at the cost of the working people, either from exploitation or in some other way. Since they can be activated by the enemy, these persons must be put on record, albeit that their present hostile activity is not known or cannot be proved. B) Persons who pursue hostile activity and confidential investigation by agents is conducted against them. On the basis of already checked data these persons are proved to be conducting hostile activity or can be soundly suspected of that. Persons who removed themselves from the supervision of the state security organs due to escape must also be included here. Furthermore, all those for whom a preliminary supervising file has been opened by the state security organs on the basis of still unverified data. C) Every person who has been sentenced by the court due to anti-state activity.”

According to the submission, it was proposed that the second group would include persons who “deserve attention from an operative viewpoint, although records about them are such for which they cannot suffer any disadvantages”. The ancillary investigative file system to be set up about these persons could have been used by the state security organs when they recruited them for the purposes of operative actions or the recorded material was regarded as usable for an operative goal “in the case of the persons or categories becoming repeatedly active”. They wanted to include the following persons into the ancillary investigative records: a) against whom confidential investigation was conducted in the past on the basis of their activity, but the state security organs could not prove hostile activity; b) those engaged in hostile activity (Arrow Cross, Volksbund, etc.) in the past, yet they could not be held responsible legally; c) those who engaged in hostile activity, but discontinued following a warning from the state security organs; d) those who returned home on the basis of the amnesty decree. No official condemnatory opinion was given about the persons included in this group “since they cannot be held responsible on the basis of their materials” or the materials were proposed to be discarded in the sequence of their becoming lapse. *Ibid.*, pp. 4-6.

44. *Ibid.*, pp. 5-6. According to Annex II of the document, during the revision the files and materials of persons included in the following categories were pro-

posed to be taken out and selected, and deleted on permission due to illegal recording:

1/ Those fascist henchmen who did not commit war crimes and there is no damning evidence against them.

2/ Relatives and non-criminal contacts of the recorded members of the fascist armed forces.

3/ The recorded members of the official warrant officers and rank and file of the Horthy Army – police, army and penal institutions (excluding the gendarmerie), provided there is no other damning evidence against them apart from belonging to the category.

4/ Horthyist reserve officers.

5/ The recorded lower-rank officials, notary publics and those in lower positions of the previous system who did not participate in anti-people crimes and we have no damning data about them.

6/ The ordinary members of the National Association of Hungarian Physicians, the National Association of Hungarian Lawyers, the National Federations of Hungarian Engineers and Architects and the Baross Society.

7/ The inactive, ordinary members of the Independent Smallholders' Party, with the exception of those who can be included in the records of hostile elements due to their class position.

8/ Persons who were excluded from the HCP, SDP and the HWP, except for those against whom legal procedure was conducted.

9/ All those without exception must be deleted from the records who were included because of some suspicion (alleged member of Arrow Cross, Volksbund; suspicion of an anti-democratic statement, etc.). Those need not be deleted against whom a legal procedure was conducted, but were acquitted for lack of evidence.

10/ All those persons and their contacts who were acquitted for lack of evidence must be deleted.

11/ All those persons and their contacts against whom we do not have data of damning evidence, by which we could include them in the hostile or operative category.

12/ Those priests and their contacts who have not pursued hostile activity.

13/ Persons who have been qualified as politically unreliable, as well as persons with an attitude against work competitions.

14/ Persons who were mistakenly declared as kulaks, as well as those who expressed anti-cooperative statements or behaviour. The files of persons who were made responsible for anti-cooperative incitement do not have to be deleted.

15/ Persons who were put on the records because of correspondence with relatives or friends living abroad, unless the foreign contact is significant from a state security aspect or an employee of a capitalist intelligence service or

agency. In this case they must be included in the ancillary investigative category.

16/ Persons who used to live abroad (in the West) as communist emigrants or persons who emigrated for other reasons and returned home after the liberation.

17/ All those persons must be deleted who were put on the files for having been to capitalist countries or Yugoslavia.

18/ The foreign citizens living in Hungary against whom there are no damning data must be deleted from the records.

19/ Those persons who were included in the records for their contact with persons suspected of spying, but are not under processing.

20/ POWs who returned from the Soviet Union and there are no damning data against them.

21/ The relatives of those who fled to the West after the liberation, but did not play any role in the escape and do not have contact at present.

22/ The relatives of those who were sentenced for serious political crimes, but were not in criminal contact with the condemned and were not aware of their criminal activity.

23/ All those who were relocated but got included in the records only because of their relocation, and neither are they included in the category of hostile elements nor the ancillary investigative category.

24/ Persons who were included in the records for being dual landowners alongside the national border must be deleted without exception.

25/ On an individual basis, those persons who were on the records for unauthorised possession of arms must be deleted (e.g. a poor peasant has hidden his weapon and there was no procedure against him).

26/ Persons who were dismissed from the Interior Ministry by disciplinary action or those who committed another offence in the service.

27/ Persons who have died. (Their files can be eliminated only if they exclusively refer to the deceased or if they have no state security value.)

28/ All those who are included in the catalogue system without data and cannot be identified must be deleted, with the exception of those against whom we have severe damning information and there is a possibility of identifying them.

29/ Those who left for the West during the military operations and returned after the liberation, with the exception of those who returned home with amnesty. Their files will be included in the investigative file system.

30/ Those who have been suspected of committing a political crime, but against whom no criminal procedures were enacted or those who were acquitted for lack of evidence.

31/ All those persons and their contacts who were put on records in connection with the Yugoslav case, with the exception of those who were sentenced for political crimes.

32/ Those who were under police supervision, but the nature of their crime was not discovered and, apart from the rule of police supervision, no other material is at our disposal.

33/ Persons of kulak origin who themselves are not regarded as kulaks according to the present regulations.

34/ Foreign citizens who have been to Hungary in an official capacity, provided we have no damning data about them and they are of no interest from an operative aspect. (They are included in the KEOKH [National Central Authority for Supervising Foreigners] records.)

35/ Those whom the verifying committee barred from promotion or decided about them being dismissed from their jobs, if they cannot be included in the hostile categories or the ancillary investigative material.

36/ Those who committed corrupt electoral practices.

37/ Those who confessed themselves as having German as their mother tongue.

38/ Radio amateurs have to be taken out of the records and their files must be handed over to Chief Department IX.

39/ Those who were rehabilitated and persons who were put on the records in connection with their cases.

40/ The files and materials of those who were put on records because of public criminal activity must be deleted from the records and these files must be handed over to the police office of the Ministry of Interior.

2. CHAPTERS FROM THE MILITARY HISTORY OF THE 1956 REVOLUTION AND FREEDOM FIGHT



Protesters marching in Budapest – 23 October 1956

The demonstrations become a revolution

The events in Poland in 1956 undoubtedly took effect on the situation in Hungary, and in several respects. News of the Poznan events¹ and subsequent reprisals, and the events of the second half of October, spread through Hungary. In addition, what the Soviet leadership had learned in “solving the Polish crisis” affected the political plans for “settling the Hungarian question”.

Khrushchev had indicated several times before 1956 that the Soviet Union was prepared to employ any means that might be necessary in Hungary’s case.

Some Hungarian political leaders also knew that Soviet military forces could be used for security purposes in the country if necessary.

On 16 October, an initiative modelled on the Youth of March of 1848² started out in Szeged, under the slogan, “What does the Hungarian Nation wish?” Foreign

policy demands included a review of Soviet-Hungarian foreign trade treaties on an equal basis and the withdrawal of all Soviet forces under the terms of the peace treaty. The students also demanded a new national coat of arms and military uniforms.

On 23 October 1956 the organisation of demonstration continued according to the decision of the student group of the Budapest University of Technology. The minister of the interior, however, prohibited it and threatened to use armed force to prevent it. Party and government leaders played with fire. At the meeting of the Political Committee of the Hungarian Workers' Party (the official name of the Communist Party at the time), György Marosán and József Révai stated openly: "If necessary, we shall give the order to fire."³ Others did not share these extreme views, and supported a political compromise, primarily by recalling Imre Nagy.⁴ "Nor were the leaders of the Party opposition enthusiastic about the demonstration. They suspected a provocation, fearful that Ernő Gerő would hold them responsible and have them arrested. Therefore they advised leaders of the youth movement to 'act with discipline and order'.⁵

The Writers' Association, the Petőfi Circle⁶ and the students sent several delegations to Party Headquarters to demand revocation of the prohibition. Nevertheless, the radio network broadcast the declaration of the Ministry of the Interior, prohibiting all public demonstrations "until further notice". The hesitation of the top leadership, however, is illustrated by the revocation of the prohibition 25 minutes later.

The students were not concerned about the prohibition. On the contrary, it provided an encouragement to action. One group of demonstrators assembled at the Petőfi statue and proceeded via Margaret Bridge to the Bem statue. University of Technology students marched in closed ranks, observing silence, along the Danube to Bem Square. Subsequently, a group voicing increasingly radical demands proceeded to Dózsa György Avenue to dismantle the Stalin statue, while others marched to the Radio building, intending to broadcast the demands of the 16 points. The demonstration broke down the inhibition of fear. The demands for reform became more radical: "Rákosi into the Danube, Imre Nagy into the government!", "If you are Hungarian, support us!" and "Russians go home!" were some of the slogans voiced by 200,000 demonstrators at the Parliament building. Thousands assembled at other points of the city.

At 8 p.m. on 23 October Ernő Gerő, secretary of the Communist Party Central Committee, made the following statement on Hungarian radio.

"Our Party organisations are instructed to oppose unequivocally all attempts to disrupt order, nationalist propaganda and provocation. Comrade workers! Working men! It must be stated clearly; the question is: do we want socialist democracy or bourgeois democracy? Do we want to build socialism in our country or to split socialism in order to allow the restoration of capitalism? The question is: will you allow the undermining of working-class power, the union of workers and peasants, or

will you unequivocally defend in alliance with all our working people the achievements of working-class power and socialism.”⁷

The pronouncement of Gerő created considerable ill feeling and hostility. At the request of the Party leadership, Imre Nagy spoke to the crowd assembled at the Parliament, but he was unable to pacify the demonstrators. Although he was the favoured Party leader among the opposition groups, he called on Hungarian youth demanding socialist democracy to preserve order and act with discipline. He promised that their legitimate demands would be considered and reforms enacted without delay. He emphasised the point that all problems must be resolved within the Party system, and called on the crowd to disperse.⁸

Events followed in rapid succession. While Nagy was speaking, demonstrators dismantled the Stalin statue and secret police detachments fired on unarmed demonstrators at the Radio building. Gerő and Khrushchev agreed that the units of Soviet forces stationed in Hungary were to enter Budapest.

On the afternoon of 23 October police and county secret police forces fired on demonstrators in Debrecen, resulting in three dead and many wounded. This was the first instance of open fire by state police on demonstrators. Demonstrators at the Radio building in Budapest had no knowledge of the events in Debrecen, due to the shortness of time. In contrast, the political leaders in Budapest and Moscow, kept informed by their communications systems, had full knowledge of those events and the use of force. The Hungarian political leadership, in fact, never repudiated the application of violence in Debrecen and failed to modify its regulations on the obligatory use of arms.

Under the impact of the shooting involving losses of life at the Radio building in Budapest, some demonstrators undertook a systematic collection of weapons in the city, in order to achieve their demands and in self-defence against violence by the secret police. The search for arms focused on military installations, police stations and arms depots, resulting in the confiscation and distribution to civilian protesters of substantial numbers of weapons and ammunition.

The Soviet military strategy with the codename *Volna* (Wave), prepared in the summer of 1956, was designed to use Soviet forces in Hungary for the suppression of unrest.⁹ It provides unequivocal evidence of the Soviet intent to use military power in dealing with a political crisis in Hungary. A select group of Hungarian leaders were aware of the availability of Soviet military forces for such a purpose, if they considered such a step to be necessary.

Soviet leaders did not have a ready solution to the Polish and subsequently the Hungarian question. Decisions were reached by the Presidium. But specific actions with regard to Hungary were influenced by the views of leaders in other socialist countries, especially those of China and Yugoslavia.

The majority of the presidency of the Soviet Central Committee supported the proposal of Khrushchev “to order Soviet troops to occupy Budapest,”¹⁰ on the basis of unconfirmed reports, such as that stating that participants in “the

hundred thousand-strong” demonstration had “set fire to the Radio building” and in Debrecen had “occupied the building of the county Party committee and of the Ministry of the Interior’s county authority”.¹¹ Mikoyan¹², familiar with Hungarian affairs, was the only one to recommend the employment of the Polish “solution” in Hungary. In his opinion, the assistance of Imre Nagy was indispensable for mastering the “movement” in Hungary, while the Hungarians were responsible for establishing order. “If our troops march in, we shall not succeed. Let us try political steps first and only then send in troops,” argued Mikoyan.¹³ But Khrushchev agreed with him only on the matter of involving Nagy in the political solution.¹⁴

The decision of Khrushchev – “let us not appoint [Imre Nagy] chairman for the time being”¹⁵ – is a clear example of Soviet personnel policy in the countries of the socialist camp. Several members of the presidency of the Central Committee argued with Mikoyan and contended that in Hungary “the government was being overthrown,”¹⁶ and therefore the troops “must be sent in.”¹⁷

Minister of Defense Georgy Zhukov recommended the following action: “Martial law must be declared and a curfew must be introduced in the country.” In order to execute the decisions of the Soviet leadership, the presidency of the Central Committee commissioned Mikoyan and Suslov¹⁸ from its membership, along with the first deputy of the chief of staff of the Soviet armed forces, General of the Army Malinin, and Serov, president of the KGB, to go to Hungary.¹⁹

Prior to the final decision, Khrushchev called in Mátyás Rákosi, then residing in Moscow. Rákosi stated, without reservation, that the employment of Soviet troops was necessary and justified. As noted in the memoirs of Rákosi, the question was raised at the time whether it was necessary for the Hungarian government to request the sending in of troops. “It was my opinion that the government will request it, but a substantial number of the comrades were not convinced. I remember the angry statement of Kaganovich: if they do not request our assistance, they are trash.”²⁰

The presidency of the Central Committee of the Soviet Communist Party held the session discussed above at 9 p.m., Hungarian time, on 23 October. At 8 p.m. on the same day, one hour prior to the decision, the Soviet Ministry of Armed Forces issued a state of alert for the two mechanised divisions of the Soviet Special Army Corps in Hungary and ordered its major units to enter Budapest, occupy the principal facilities and restore order. An additional order specified that the Soviet command dispatch units to the Austro-Hungarian border to secure its operations.

At 8.10 p.m. on 23 October, Lieutenant General P. N. Lashchenko ordered a full alert for units of the 17th Mechanised Guard Division, stationed in the garrisons of Szombathely, Kőszeg, Körmend, Győr and Hajmáskér (along the Austrian border).

At 10 p.m. on 23 October, Soviet troops of the garrisons of Kecskemét, Cegléd, Szolnok, Székesfehérvár and Sárbogárd began the march to Budapest. The high command arrived in Budapest at midnight. An operational command under

Colonel Malashenko directed military operations. The high command of the Soviet Armed Forces realised, however, that their forces were inadequate for the suppression of the uprising. Their primary mission was the suppression of armed insurgents and the restoration of order, in contrast to the military strategy of *Volna*, which had as its objective the defence of installations.

The deterioration of the military situation, coupled with the lack of joint action with the Hungarian police and army, forced the Soviet command to revise its plans. Their primary objectives were accordingly to regain control of major facilities occupied by the insurgents, to establish defensive measures for the most significant facilities of the capital, and to disarm the insurgents.

As operational units arrived, they entered into immediate combat. They regained control of several facilities, the railway stations, bridges and storage depots. Armoured units took control only of one radio building. They were unable to occupy the others without infantry support. At this location, the insurgents destroyed four Soviet tanks.

By noon on 24 October the Soviet command was able to evaluate the overall situation. It became clear to them that the insurgents controlled several major installations and that the police forces were disorganised, and Hungarian military units were not given definite battle orders, while many soldiers and several military units had taken the side of the insurgents. According to Soviet command estimates, armed insurgents numbered 2,000, of whom the most active were those in the 8th and 9th districts of Budapest.

At this time – on 24 October – Soviet troops in Budapest numbered less than a division. Soviet forces in combat against the insurgents included 6,000 soldiers, 290 tanks, 120 armoured vehicles and 156 cannons. They proved to be inadequate.²¹ In addition, 159 fighter planes and 122 bombers were available. Fighter planes covered the marching troops. The planes of the 177th Air Bomber Guard Division executed 84 demonstration and reconnaissance flights over Budapest and other cities on 24 October.²²

Responses of the Hungarian and Soviet governments to the events of 22-28 October

During the night of 23-24 October the Hungarian Communist Party's top leadership was in session and, despite the ambiguous Soviet position, it decided to invite Imre Nagy to assume a leadership post. The Party leadership recommended the appointment of Nagy as chairman of the Council of Ministers and András Hegedüs as his first deputy. The central leadership "acknowledged without debate and apparently without a vote the request for Soviet military assistance" and accepted the resolution calling for "the provision of weapons to workers and Party functionaries [and] the declaration of a state of emergency", as well as the establishment of the Military Committee. The leadership also considered necessary

“the occupation and strict control of print shops, the closing of universities, and prohibition of a multi-party system.”²³ The majority of the central leadership agreed without argument that the ongoing events were counter-revolutionary.²⁴

Mikoyan and Suslov, after arriving in Budapest, consulted with the Soviet Special Army Corps command stationed in Budapest and the Military Committee of the Hungarian Ministry of Defence. Based on these consultations, they expressed their view that the “uprising against the established system can be liquidated within 24 hours.”²⁵

Soviet and Hungarian Party leaders considered as their most important task, along with the liquidation of insurgent groups, the collection of weapons in the possession of the civil population. Mikoyan also agreed with the decisions of the central leadership: the establishment of the Military Committee, the declaration of a state of emergency and the arming of workers, primarily the most reliable Party members. The Political Committee recommended, at its 24 October meeting, that workers be involved more actively in liquidating the insurgents: “...the workers must be called upon to provide assistance with the restoration of order. It is important to create a sense of cooperation between the people and the government in the interests of restoring order.”²⁶

On the following day, 25 October, Kossuth Radio informed listeners at 6.23 a.m. that “as a result of the order of the Council of Ministers, the attempted counter-revolutionary coup was liquidated during the night of 24-25 October,” that “the counter-revolutionary forces” were destroyed, and that “there are only localised small armed groups and isolated sharpshooters in existence.”²⁷

None of this was true, of course. The irresponsible policy of the political leadership is equally evident from the appeal of the government to the people to assist in the resumption of the transport system and to return to work in offices, institutions and factories.²⁸

At the Parliament building on 25 October, the indiscriminate firing at unarmed demonstrators by the Hungarian ÁVH (secret police) occurred. There were 61 dead and 284 wounded, of whom 14 persons later died in hospital.²⁹

Another significant event of the day was the dismissal of Ernő Gerő from the post of first secretary of the Communist Party and the appointment of János Kádár³⁰ by the Political Committee, presumably on the initiative or with the consent of the Soviet delegates. Kádár made the following evaluation of the current situation at that time: “...as a result of counter-revolutionary destruction, an ever-deeper agreement emerges on several important issues from hour to hour between the demonstrators and the working masses.”³¹

The Military Committee, established by the Party leadership, was actively involved in establishing control over the activities of armed organisations. Above all, it attempted to “strengthen the armed capability” of the Hungarian army and the arming of Communists and workers. It also made efforts to coordinate cooperation between Hungarian and Soviet forces.



Hungarians fraternising with Soviet soldiers mounted on vehicles and headed for the Parliament – a journey that proved fatal for many of them (FORTEPAN 40078 – Gyula Nagy)



Demonstrations at the Parliament on 25 October (FORTEPAN 39767 – Gyula Nagy)



Participants in the “bloodstained flag” demonstration, a protest against the shooting at the Parliament on 25 October, proceed along Andrassy (formerly Stalin) Avenue.
(FORTEPAN 39754 – Gyula Nagy)



Protesters with black flags in front of the Parliament
(FORTEPAN 79424 – Pál Berkó)

The Military Committee³² utilised primarily ministerial orders in its efforts to influence the activities of armed organisations, and participated in the planning of military actions in Budapest. In addition, it acted as mediator of the requests of Soviet and Hungarian military leaders *vis-à-vis* the Hungarian government.

On 25 October, Antal Apró, a member of the Political Committee, replaced István Kovács as director of the Military Committee. In this context it is important to note that the decisions to make personnel changes in the committee and to defend public buildings and centres of political power using armed actions, even at the cost of human lives, were made on the evening of 25 October, following the indiscriminate shooting at demonstrators and their dispersion in Kossuth Square. This made it evident that the top political leadership, fully aware of events in Kossuth Square, was giving a free hand to armed organisations to obstruct efforts directed against the government.

On 26 October the Party leadership rejected the political proposal of Ferenc Donáth³³ and Géza Losonczy³⁴. The most significant point of their proposal was the rejection of the evaluation of the October events as a counter-revolution and their recognition as a “democratic mass movement”. Changing the official evaluation of the events would have excluded the application of violence in resolving outstanding issues and facilitated political solutions to conflicts between the Party and society.³⁵

The Party leadership under János Kádár and the government under Imre Nagy pursued two principal objectives in the period up to 28 October. 1) To separate the demonstrators from the armed insurgents engaged in sustained fighting against the Party and Soviet forces by agreeing to political compromises, and partial fulfilment of popular demands – or making promises to that effect. 2) The principal objective was to liquidate armed resistance, primarily by reliance on Soviet forces.

In the meantime, during the night of 23–24 October, orders had been issued for the movement to Hungary of three Soviet divisions stationed in Romania (Timișoara) and the Carpathian Military District. These military units crossed into Hungary between a quarter past midnight and 7 a.m. on 24 October. According to Soviet sources, these forces, placed on alert status and activated to “establish order,” comprised 31,500 soldiers, 1,130 tanks and self-propelled guns, 616 artillery guns and mine throwers, 185 anti-aircraft guns, 380 armoured carriers and 3,830 vehicles.

Soviet forces intervening in Hungary in 1956, on instructions from the highest-level political leadership, employed the procedures “successfully tested” during the 1953 Berlin events.³⁶ Their essential element was to intimidate and weaken the combat commitment of spontaneously formed, disorganised, highly mobile armed groups, equipped with rudimentary weapons, by demonstrating the technologically advanced weapons and superior power of Soviet forces.

Persons making decisions in Moscow and in Budapest respectively



Nikita Sergeevich Khrushchev,
First Secretary of the Communist
Party of the Soviet Union



Anastas Ivanovich Mikoyan,
member of the Presidium of
the Communist Party



Mikhail Andreyevich Suslov,
member of the Presidium of
the Communist Party

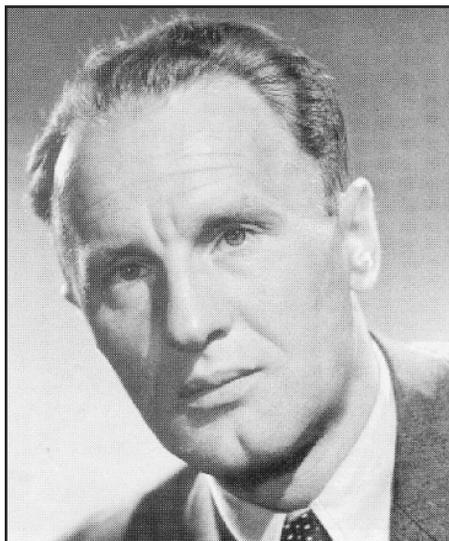


Yuri Vladimirovich Andropov,
Soviet Ambassador to Hungary

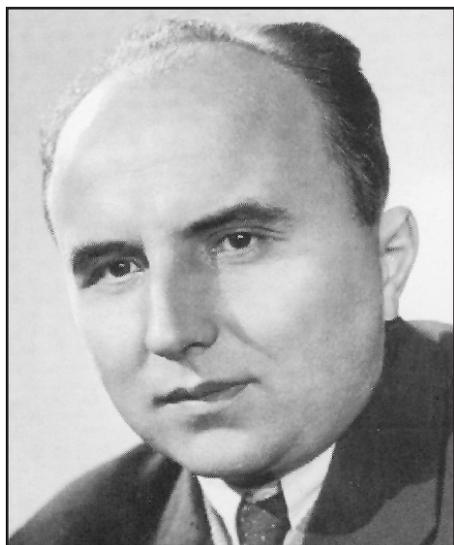
And those who executed their decisions in Hungary



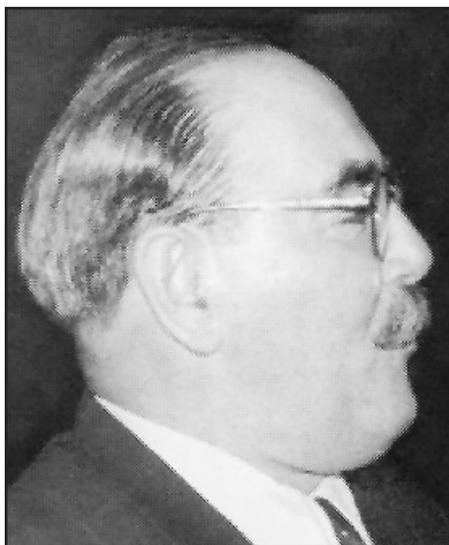
Ernő Gerő, premier of the Hungarian Workers' Party (MDP) until 25 October



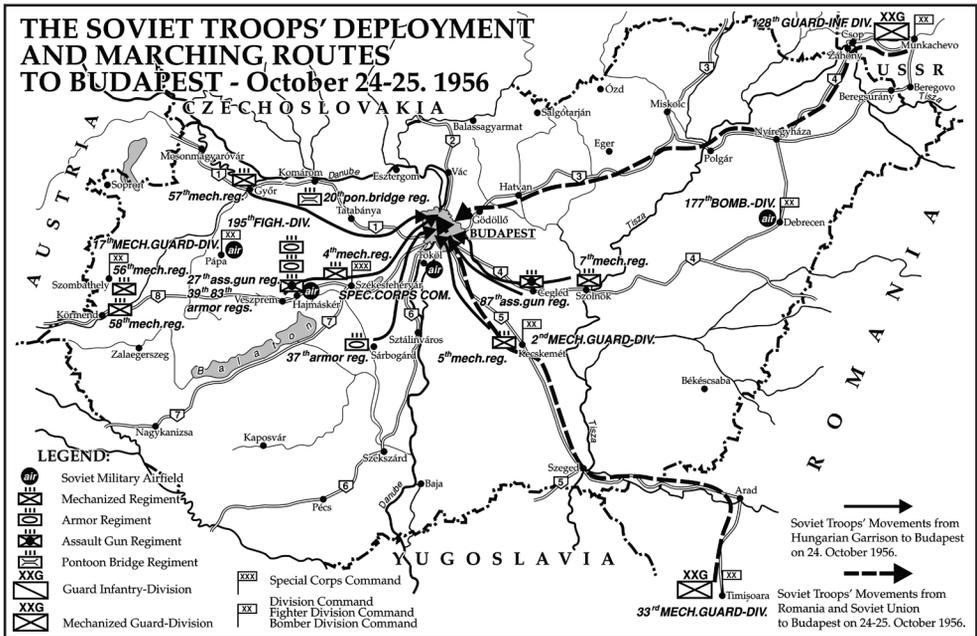
János Kádár, his successor,
from 4 November
Prime Minister of the government
appointed by the Soviets



András Hegedüs, Prime Minister
until 24 October



Imre Nagy, Prime Minister
from 24 October



From 24 October, bridges were under the control of Hungarian and Soviet armoured troops
(FORTEPAN 12835 – Zsolt Házy)

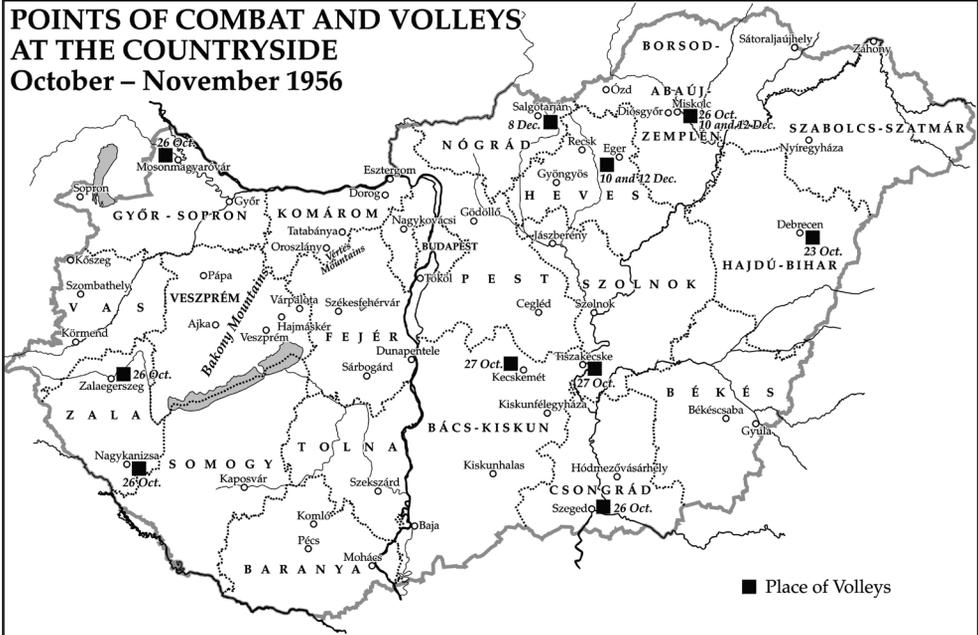


Soviet combat car on fire in Rákóczi Street, Budapest
(FORTEPAN 12830 – Zsolt Házy)



Subject picture from after the fighting
(FORTEPAN 39843 – Gyula Nagy)

**POINTS OF COMBAT AND VOLLEYS
AT THE COUNTRYSIDE
October – November 1956**



“Russians Go Home!,” says the graffiti
(FORTEPAN 23684 – Pesti srác)



A definite “NO!” to the Soviet occupation
(FORTEPAN 40064 – Gyula Nagy)

This was the essential strategy of the Soviet Special Army Corps armoured units, arriving in Budapest in the small hours of 24 October. They initiated their “intimidating”, but in fact self-destructive, circulation along the main arteries and central areas of the city. Totally neglecting the most fundamental principles of combat in urban areas, the Soviet command dispatched tanks and armoured transport vehicles, lacking defensive armoured protection on the top, and without engaging in reconnaissance and infantry support, into the narrow streets of the city lined with high-rise buildings that provided excellent battle conditions for the insurgents. The Soviet and Hungarian leadership was not prepared for a forceful and determined resistance. They failed to understand, for a long time, that the very tactics successfully used in Berlin were responsible for the poor performance of Soviet forces in Budapest.

Since Soviet political and military leaders concluded that Soviet forces stationed in Hungary and those forces sent to Budapest on 24 October were inadequate, they decided to call for the commitment of additional divisions.³⁷

28 October: victory of the revolution

Following the initial confusion, the political and military leaders obtained a more accurate picture of the strength of the insurgents. They concluded that the insurgents could be weakened decisively by a concentrated attack on the positions of the most significant armed groups. They believed that the destruction of the groups in the area of the Corvin Cinema was the primary means of liquidating the uprising.

Preparation for the attack began in the Ministry of Defence in the evening of 27 October, between 7 and 8 p.m. Soviet and Hungarian military leaders agreed that the commander of the Soviet division stationed at Dimitrov Square should be appointed commander of the action; he would also provide tanks and armoured transport vehicles for the attack. The 128th Infantry Guard Division, stationed in Buda, was also assigned to the action. The Hungarian Chief of General Staff agreed to commit a sub-unit of 300-350 men as infantry support for the Soviet division command.

At dawn on 28 October, the planned time of the attack, the Soviet commander dispatched three T-34 tanks on Üllői Street in the direction of the Ring Boulevard with the mission of reconnaissance regarding the Corvin area. Since the dispatched units failed to return in an hour and a half, the commander sent an additional three T-54s to the same location. One hour later one of the tanks returned unharmed, another in a damaged condition. The commander of the tank units reported that the other tanks were on fire near the Corvin Cinema, and that the insurgents had disabled one of his own tanks. Following these significant losses, the Soviet forces postponed their attack for an undetermined period.

The insurgents continued to inflict considerable losses on Soviet forces. They captured Soviet tanks, artillery and other equipment. They also disarmed individual Soviet soldiers and small fighting units.

The successes of the insurgents, the ineffectiveness of Hungarian troops and the losses of Soviet forces strengthened the position of those in the Hungarian leadership who argued for a political solution to the crisis.

There were two alternatives at this point. One was the continued rejection of popular demands, retention of the existing composition of the government and continuation of the armed struggle with reliance on Soviet forces. This would have meant the loss of confidence of those social groups who had not yet joined the fighting, but sympathised with the insurgents; continued losses of life and destruction would deepen the split between the population and the government. Since this alternative appeared impractical – even the Soviet political leaders Mikoyan and Suslov agreed with this view at the time – the Hungarian leadership was forced to choose the second alternative: concession to popular demands.

However, an important question arises in this connection: if the Party leadership was committed to the policy of unconditional repression on 27 October,

what were the compelling circumstances, in addition to its military setback, which forced the Political Committee to reverse itself?

In my opinion, the basic reason for this dramatic change of policy was, as the Party leadership and János Kádár admitted, a joint declaration of 27 October by the National Trade Union Presidency, the Revolutionary University Students' Committee and the Hungarian Writers' Association, stating that they regarded the current movement in Hungary as "a national democratic revolution"³⁸

The Party leadership learned of this declaration and prohibited its publication immediately. János Kádár made the following statement regarding the matter at the 27-28 October meeting of the Political Committee of the Hungarian Workers' Party, with the approval of the Soviet delegates.

"We learned at midnight that the National Trade Union Council conducted negotiations with a student organisation, ... [and] ... they seemed to regard [the] entire movement as 'a national democratic revolution.' The fact that the National Trade Union Council and the students issued an independent declaration, without the Party and the government being included, implies a dissolution of our political system ... it is quite certain that the enemy supports it. The independent declaration means the separation of the working class from the Party... This is in principle unacceptable; in practice it means that the authority of the central leadership and the government is destroyed.

If we state that those who have fought in the past are revolutionaries, then the workers and students do not accept as their authority the Party central leadership, but the leadership of the National Trade Union Council or some other authority. We consider this situation to be urgent; we must clarify this statement ... it is simply unacceptable to characterise the movement as a national revolution, since this would mean that all our opponents are revolutionaries and we are counter-revolutionaries. It is imperative to find an acceptable solution..."³⁹

Kádár also stated that the declaration of the National Trade Union Council and the students "includes also some correct points," but "the Party is totally excluded from it," and it is imperative "that the Party play a role in it..."

The intentions motivating the Party's change of policy are illustrated by János Kádár's statement concerning the most important popular demand, the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Hungary:

"We stated to the people that we called in the Soviet troops. We also stated that, as we requested their support, we can request their withdrawal ... But it is the exclusive decision of the Soviet Union whether to withdraw or not..."⁴⁰

At the same meeting, Imre Nagy commented thus:

“In the present tragic situation, the discussion of issues on an incidental basis shows the bankruptcy of Party policies.” Then he added: “It is imperative to direct the great popular forces that are in motion and establish a ceasefire as quickly as possible. This morning there was the greatest uncertainty. There were plans to initiate the military operation at 6 a.m. We must withdraw Soviet troops from combat; at the same time, Hungarian troops must be activated. Our military forces should include the Hungarian army, democratic police forces and workers, and the students should not be excluded ... We have to discuss the question of secret police. They are to be withdrawn from the fighting now, but no evaluation is to be made at this time. An amnesty is to be approved.”⁴¹

The remarks of Nagy were interrupted frequently.

János Kádár prepared a draft resolution, which stated that the Political Committee accepted the programme that he had proposed and would abide by it. The committee also agreed that a governmental statement be issued and that the government would function and act in agreement with the Party. It also agreed with the steps taken by János Kádár and others to block the resolution of the National Trade Union Council. The Political Committee therefore accepted the above points and decided to change the name of the central Party executive from “directorium” to Party presidency.

Following the 28 October meetings of the Political Committee and the Central Party Executive, a series of events followed in rapid succession. At 1 p.m. on 28 October, the government ordered a general and immediate ceasefire in a radio statement.

In a broadcast at 5.25 p.m. the government programme statement, read by Imre Nagy, drafted according to the decision of the Political Committee and approved by the Council of Ministers, responded to the issue “Counter-revolution or national democratic revolution?” thus:

“The government rejects those views that regard the current, powerful popular movement as a counter-revolution. It is unquestionable that, as in other great popular movements, pernicious groups have utilised the past few days for committing common crimes. It is also a fact that reactionary, counter-revolutionary groups have become involved and have attempted to use this opportunity to overthrow the people’s democracy. But it is also unquestionable that these public demonstrations created a great, national, democratic movement affecting and unifying our entire people with an overwhelming force. This movement proclaimed as its objective the assurance of national independence and sovereignty, and the development of democracy in social, economic and political life, since this is the only basis of socialism in our homeland.”⁴²

Following his characterisation of the movements of the past few days as a national democratic movement, in accordance with the revised governmental programme, Imre Nagy announced the following official governmental policies.

“The government has ordered a general, immediate, ceasefire to prevent further bloodshed and secure peaceful consolidation. It has ordered the military authorities to fire only in self-defence. At the same time, it calls upon all who have taken up arms to refrain from all military action and to turn in their weapons without delay.

In order to establish order and restore public safety, a new public safety force will be organised without delay, based on Hungarian army and police units, including also armed groups of workers and youth.

The Hungarian government has agreed with the Soviet government that Soviet forces will begin their withdrawal from Budapest immediately and leave the capital as soon as the new public power is established.

The Hungarian government will initiate negotiations concerning the future relationships between the Hungarian People’s Republic and the Soviet Union, including the withdrawal of Soviet forces stationed in Hungary.

Following the restoration of order, we shall establish a new state police and terminate the secret police. No one shall be harmed for having participated in the armed struggle.”⁴³

The revolution achieved victory. On 28 October the political leadership pronounced the movements of the preceding several days a national democratic movement and announced the immediate withdrawal of Soviet troops from Budapest, the beginning of negotiations concerning the full withdrawal of Soviet forces, the termination of the secret police, an amnesty, the re-introduction of the so called Kossuth coat of arms⁴⁴, proclamation of 15 March as a national holiday, a general wage increase, reforms of the wage and promotion system, and termination of the use of force in the collective farm system.

Simultaneously with the dissolution of the secret police, an attempt was made to assign personnel of the dissolved organisation to the police force and a smaller group to the armed forces. Both the police and the army strongly protested against this measure; it was therefore withdrawn. On 30 or 31 October the decision was made to dissolve the secret police along with the withdrawal of the Soviet forces.

Those members of the secret police who reported voluntarily, or had been arrested and whose record did not include major transgressions or violent actions during the revolution, were released.

Creation of the National Guard

Historical recollections and studies of the revolution provide rather general accounts of the military arm of the revolution, the National Guard, established on the pattern of its predecessor during the 1848-49 Hungarian Revolution and War of Independence.

In order to clarify the origins of the National Guard, we must provide a brief account of the attempts of the Hungarian Party and government to establish new security organisations. Steps in this direction were taken at the beginning of the revolution. Initially, central Party authorities instructed Party organisations of local areas and places of employment to support the creation of such organisations. The Military Committee, at its meetings of 23-24 October, received as one of its important duties the arming of workers, in reality of Party functionaries and the “most reliable” Party members.

These armed organisations, however, failed to meet the expectations of the central authorities. The composition of the guard units established between 24 and 26 October by local Party organisations at the place of work, collective farm, or village levels changed constantly. In addition to the identity of political efforts, there was free mobility between all these organisations.⁴⁵

Among the three kinds of efforts to establish the most important armed force of the revolution, one capable of maintaining law and order, the first was that of the old regime. They wished to use the new forces to re-establish their rule. That gradually failed. Their most significant failure occurred on 30 October at the Köztársaság Square Party headquarters, where freedom-fighter units destroyed the seed of such counter-revolutionary armed units.

The second line was the university students’ decision to call their freedom-fighter units a “National Guard”. With this decision they intended to demonstrate their intention to serve the revolution of 1956 in the same way as their forefathers did in 1848, when the youth voluntarily joined the National Guard to serve their nation and the revolution of 1848-49.

The third line was basically the continuation of the second: namely, the freedom-fighter groups began to send representatives to the Budapest Police Headquarters, where the commander, Police Colonel Sándor Kopácsi, took them under his protection. These representatives were convinced that while on 28 October they had achieved victory for the revolution without central leadership, the consolidation of this victory and the protection of the revolutionary leadership headed by Imre Nagy against counter-revolutionary attacks could only be achieved if the isolated freedom-fighter groups joined a centrally led new armed force, the National Guard. That was realised by the establishment of the Revolutionary Council for Public Safety.

29 October: establishment of the Preparatory Committee for Public Safety

This governmental intent was implicit in the programme statement of 28 October. That programme confirmed the ceasefire and regulated the use of arms of military units: “firing only when attacked.” Of special significance in the context of our discussion was a third element: “Those who have taken up arms ... are to terminate all fighting activities and turn in their weapons immediately.”⁴⁶

The latter appeal referred to insurgent/freedom-fighter groups, including a statement on the composition of the new governmental police force, but did not yet include the political intention of liquidating armed insurgents. Yet in fact it was quite evident that the most important objective of the political leadership was to secure the remaining power status of the Workers’ Party. In effect, the governmental programme of 28 October offered only two options to the insurgent/freedom-fighter groups: 1) to trust in the veracity of promises made by the government, as a result of armed resistance and mass demonstrations, and surrender their arms; 2) to accept the authority of the newly established “National Guard” and “workers’ detachments”, to be directed by leaders selected by army and police officers. These organisations were more acceptable to both the old and the new political leadership.

In view of these circumstances, it is understandable that the insurgents refused to accept a ceasefire without acceptable and accountable guarantees, not to mention the voluntary surrender of weapons. This would have given a major advantage to the government. In addition, neither the insurgents/freedom fighters nor the demonstrators demanding urgent changes and using radical methods of protest were satisfied with the promise of withdrawing Soviet troops and terminating the secret police “after the restoration of order”.

The principal goals of the majority of Hungarian society were the immediate withdrawal of all Soviet troops, the immediate dissolution of secret police organisations, initiation of judicial investigations of the responsibilities of the secret police, establishment of the unquestioned authority of revolutionary organisations to supervise and control Hungarian police and military forces, and, as the strongest guarantee of implementing the above demands, the establishment of the National Guard, constituted by insurgent/freedom-fighter groups.

The determined resistance of insurgent/freedom-fighter groups and their refusal to surrender their weapons, forced the government to change its original conception of the composition of a new security organisation. This process reached a decisive turning point with an organisational meeting on 30 October,⁴⁷ with the participation of the army and representatives of the insurgent groups, held in the building of the Budapest Police Command. The purpose of the meeting was to formulate the definite organisational structure of the National Guard as the armed authority of the revolution, and to establish a new central, coordi-

nating command of the defensive and security activities of all insurgent/freedom-fighter groups, the police and the army.

On the initiative of Vilmos Oláh,⁴⁸ it was decided to call on Major General Béla Király, who was then recuperating from minor surgery in the Central Army Hospital. After his arrival, Major General Király participated actively in the preparation of a coordinating command for the security activities of insurgent and other forces supporting the Revolution.

Béla Király recalls these events as follows in his published memoirs.⁴⁹

“The freedom fighters escorted me to the large conference room of the Police Command in Deák Square ... Representatives of the Ministry of Defence, the General Staff, the State Police, the workers, youth and revolutionary groups negotiated. By general acclamation they elected me chairman. Our objective was to establish a central command for the freedom-fighter groups formed and fighting spontaneously and separately from each other. The committee was called upon to consolidate all freedom fighters and armed forces loyal to the revolution in a single armed organisation, the National Guard, thereby blocking Stalinist or other counter-revolutionary forces from imposing their influence on revolutionary forces.”⁵⁰

Béla Király agreed with those proposals that supported the establishment of the “Committee” according to the statements of Imre Nagy of 28 October and 30 October. The position of Béla Király was that the proposed central command would receive its legitimacy primarily from the existing National Guard sub-units and insurgent groups. Related to this position was his proposal to elect representatives to this command who were trusted and supported by National Guard and insurgent groups, while a delegation should inform Imre Nagy, the chairman of the Council of Ministers, and the government of proposed plans and obtain their approval.

Béla Király listed as the priority task of the “operational committee” the replacement of “Soviet guard units” in Budapest with “joint guard units”, consisting of Hungarian army, police and National Guard units, and the peaceful withdrawal of Soviet troops from Budapest. He also proposed that the committee enact a resolution calling for the disarming of “looting groups” and the accession of all armed groups to the National Guard. He also believed it justified that the National Guard should force compliance of those groups that refused to surrender their arms or “refused to join the National Guard”.

The participants of the organisational meeting unanimously elected Major General Király as chairman of the Preparatory Committee. It was also to locate the seat of the “Revolutionary Defence Committee” in the building of the Budapest Police Command. Under the direction of Major General Király, members of the organisational meeting drafted a statement, which a delegation immediately carried to the Parliament building for approval.

Béla Király comments as follows on further events at the organisational meeting.

“In the afternoon of 30 October we completed our deliberations. We elected a delegation, which I chaired and escorted to Prime Minister Imre Nagy. I drafted a statement prior to our departure. We planned to request Imre Nagy to sign the statement and thus to recognise in the name of the government the right of the committee to function. If this new revolutionary institution were to become an organic part of the government, it would have two sources for its authority: the revolution and the government. As a result, it would have a greater impact. This was our reasoning. In addition, we considered Imre Nagy to be the embodiment of the revolution. Therefore, we did not even think of doing anything without his approval...”⁵¹

Imre Nagy, Zoltán Tildy and Zoltán Vas received the delegation in Parliament. At the suggestion of Zoltán Vas, the term “Revolutionary Defence Committee” was changed to “Revolutionary Committee for Public Safety” (*Forradalmi Karhatalmi Bizottság*).

Imre Nagy accepted the proposal and acknowledged the formation of the Preparatory Committee. He issued the following public statement as chairman of the Council of Ministers.

“In the name of the Council of Ministers of the Hungarian People’s Republic, I acknowledge and confirm the formation on this day of the Preparatory Committee of the Revolutionary Committee for Public Safety, which consists of representatives of units participating in revolutionary battles, of representatives of the army and the police, and representatives of workers and youth groups.

It is the task of the Revolutionary Committee for Public Safety to organise a new security authority, based on units participating in revolutionary battles, the army and police, workers and youth groups. It is called upon to restore the domestic peace of our country and assure the conditions of implementing the governmental programmes of 28 and 30 October, utilising the services of the committee.”

The Revolutionary Committee for Public Safety is to function until the new government, established under the authority of free elections, assumes office.

“Budapest, 30 October 1956. Imre Nagy, Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the Hungarian Peoples Republic.”⁵²

Imre Nagy, by accepting the proposal of the delegation, confirmed in this public statement that the Revolutionary Committee for Public Safety, organised to establish a new public security authority, was to be based, along with forces of the army, police, workers and youth groups, on freedom-fighter groups fighting against Soviet and Hungarian troops.

Establishment of the Supreme Command of the National Guard

Following the visit of the delegation led by Major General Király to the office of Imre Nagy, the delegation returned to the Deák Square building and continued its efforts to establish the new public security organisation, the National Guard. The Preparatory Committee devoted primary attention to the agenda of the membership meeting, scheduled for noon, 31 October 1956, at the Kilián Barracks, which was to prepare proposed regulations for the National Guard.

The Preparatory Committee confirmed that the most important objective of the Revolutionary Committee for Public Safety was “the defence of all achievements of the victorious national democratic revolution against all restoration and reactionary attempts to subvert them”⁵³

The basic principles of the National Guard, as a public security authority, were affirmed in the 1 November statement of the Revolutionary Committee for Public Safety and the Budapest Security Authority, as announced by Major General Király.⁵⁴

“The Revolutionary Committee for Public Safety was established by armed organisations participating in the battles of the victorious national democratic revolution, industrial guard units in the process of formation, and representatives of the army and the police, for the purpose of coordinating the activities of all public security organisations in the interests of defending the achievements of our victorious national democratic revolution. This committee will function until the new government, based on free elections, assumes office.

On 31 October 1956, the representatives of the non-military and non-police armed organisations decided to form a new joint organisation, the National Guard, equivalent to the army and the police. With the exception of the army and the police, only members of the National Guard were entitled to carry arms.

The National Guard is the successor to the National Guard of the 1848-49 Revolution and War of Independence. It is the successor and follower of those heroic National Guards who defeated the aggressors in the victorious battles of Ozora, Pákozd and the spring 1849 campaign. Our National Guard complements the achievements of our heroic ancestors by the great deeds of our national democratic revolution, and has thereby earned the respect of public opinion in our nation and the world.

National guardsmen, soldiers, policemen! Strengthen your battle readiness in defence of our sacred homeland and the achievements of our glorious national democratic revolution, and the full maintenance of revolutionary order. Preserve your well-earned reputation by continued discipline.”⁵⁵

The organisational statutes of the National Guard, as approved by the membership meeting of 31 October, clearly defined the organisation and command structure of the organisation, stating that the National Guard is “a voluntary armed

service, an armed organisation”, directed by the Revolutionary Committee for Public Safety, but it cooperates with two independent organisations, the army and the police. The statutes also state the following:

“...it is established to defend the achievements of the victorious national democratic revolution against restoration and reactionary attempts to subvert them. It performs military services under the direction of the Revolutionary Committee for Public Safety in cooperation with the army and the police, in the interests of restoring and maintaining the domestic peace of the country. The Supreme Command of the National Guard is commander of all National Guard organisations. Each National Guard unit elects its commander by democratic election. The establishment or dissolution of National Guard units is authorised by the operational committee, according to decisions of the assembly of the Revolutionary Committee for Public Safety.”⁵⁶

Summarising the above, we can conclude that, according to the organisational statutes, the National Guard was conceived as an independent armed organisation, organisationally separate from the army and the police, which performed its activities under the direction of the National Guard Supreme Command elected by the assembly of the Revolutionary Committee for Public Safety.

In my opinion, the most essential change was that the major component of the National Guard had now become the insurgent/freedom-fighter groups, in direct contradiction to the conceptions and directives prior to 30 October. Other highly significant constituent groups of the National Guard were students, intellectuals and workers, who were members of National Guard sub-units, organised in universities, places of work, counties, cities, districts and villages. This diversified group supported the implementation of the 28 October government programme: restoration of public peace, defence of revolutionary achievements and a return to work. The fact that members of the army and the police provided invaluable services to the National Guard at all levels of activity, including command, organisation, equipment, services and training, in spite of their organisational independence, does not contradict this interpretation.

The complexity of these circumstances was mitigated by the fact that Béla Király exerted a predominant influence at almost all levels of leadership and command. As chairman of the Revolutionary Committee for Public Safety, subsequently supreme commander of the National Guard, elected by its assembly, military commander of Budapest and chairman of the Revolutionary Defence Commission of the Republic, he played a key role in the organisation and direction of public security operations and in the coordination of all organisations involved.

As military commander of Budapest, Major General Király was commander of all police and army forces in the capital, while at the same time, as commander of the National Guard, he acted as director of civilian armed organisations. It was a matter of some complexity that Béla Király, as military commander of Budapest,

was subject to the authority of the minister of defence. But since Imre Nagy did not specify the subordination of the Revolutionary Committee for Public Safety in the official approval document, it was obvious that he assumed a direct line of authority over this organisation, its sub-units and also its commander, General Király. Béla Király received assignments directly from Imre Nagy, to whom he reported directly.

About 100 people attended the meeting held in the Kilián Barracks, which was chaired by Béla Király. It was opened by the host of the meeting, Colonel Pál Maléter. Maléter stated that the first phase of the battles was completed, the revolution was victorious and the current task was the defence of the achievements attained. This required an organisation. Maléter proposed that the insurgent troops be incorporated in army and police contingents, while those under 18 should be sent to military training schools. Those who disagreed were to surrender their arms and return to work.

Béla Király then made his presentation. He first stated that the national democratic revolution had been victorious without a unified central command. But this victory could be maintained only if the participants in the revolution – youth, university students, working youth, fighting groups, industrial guards in formation, the army and police – accepted a unified command and maintained vigilance against any attempts at restoration and attempts of reactionary groups to subvert the achievements of the revolution.

Béla Király stated:

“It is important to understand that three factors endanger the achievements of the revolution: attempts at restoration, reactionary turmoil, which we shall suppress with armed detachments, and delay in the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Budapest, which we must speed up with all possible means. Therefore, we can defend ourselves against these dangers only if we organise quickly, decisively and with mutual agreement, the supreme command of the new public security authority, designated in the 28 October statement of Imre Nagy. The present situation is full of dangers. There are a great number of heroic freedom fighters and fighting units. All of these have a common aim, but they are scattered in small units. It is clear that we can preserve the achievements of the revolution only with unified leadership.”⁵⁷

He then referred to the historical traditions of the National Guard and reviewed the specific issues of the meeting’s agenda. He proposed that the meeting, as the assembly of the Revolutionary Committee for Public Safety, immediately create its operational committee, which was to be responsible for implementing the resolutions of the assembly, the preparation and transmission of directives, proposals for authorising and revoking the operation of National Guard organisations, and the command of National Guard, army and police organisations.

He made the following statement concerning the organisational statutes of the National Guard.

“The National Guard is a voluntary armed service, an armed organisation, established to defend the achievements of the victorious democratic revolution against restoration and reactionary attempts to subvert them. It performs public security services... in cooperation with the army and police, in the interests of restoring and maintaining the domestic peace of the country. Members of the National Guard take a solemn oath to perform armed service. Each National Guard unit elects its commander by democratic election.”⁵⁸

The majority of those present accepted the proposal of Béla Király. They approved a resolution stating that they would not surrender their arms until Soviet troops had left the territory of Hungary and that the insurgent groups were to take part in the restoration of order in Budapest and the disarming of secret police personnel.

At the meeting of the Revolutionary Committee for Public Safety on 3 November,⁵⁹ Major General Király stated that the most important purpose of the meeting was the election of the presidency of the committee, the supreme commander of the National Guard and the operational committee. He stated:

“The most decisive issue is that all established National Guard units strengthen their organisation to the utmost and execute the directives of the central leadership without exception.”⁶⁰

The meeting then heard reports and debated a number of organisational issues. Béla Király reported that he had arrested the commander of the Széna Square unit (János Szabó – aka “Szabó bácsi”) for the occupation of the building of the Foreign Ministry. He also stated that András Kovács, commander of the unit occupying the *Szabad Nép* building, had joined the National Guard and had recognised the authority of the Revolutionary Committee for Public Safety, and thus, as a result, the authority of József Dudás⁶¹ as commander over the unit was terminated.⁶²

There was a debate on the distribution of delegates. The representative of Corvin Passage argued that “the army and police were unreliable” and therefore he proposed that the National Guard should receive 21 delegates, while the police and army should receive ten each. He added that “only those who fought with weapons in their hands should be delegates.”⁶³

According to the delegate of the former political prisoners, those who were imprisoned should not be excluded; he therefore requested representation for former political prisoners. The representative of the Baross Square group commented that the liberated prisoners had participated in the fighting. But new National Guard units should not be authorised; rather, political prisoners should be assigned to existing units.⁶⁴ Several persons argued against continuing the strike, but they agreed that the return to work did not involve the termination or limitation of activity of the National Guard.⁶⁵

Following the debate, Béla Király was unanimously elected as commander-in-chief of the National Guard, while Police Colonel Sándor Kopácsi was elected as his deputy. The assembly then unanimously accepted the draft resolution of the Revolutionary Committee for Public Safety.⁶⁶ Free Kossuth Radio announced at 2.25 p.m. that the Revolutionary Committee for Public Safety had created the Supreme Command of the National Guard and elected as Commander-in-chief Major General Béla Király.

The assembly enacted the following resolution, announced on national radio.

“The Revolutionary Committee for Public Safety is committed to the independence and neutrality of our homeland. It will resist all armed aggression directed against our independence and neutrality. Until free, democratic elections are held, we shall support with all our resources the strengthening of order and faithfully execute the directives of the government to liquidate attempts at restoration and disturbances.

The current strike is a serious injury to our defensive capability. Therefore, we propose the termination of the strike and a return to work, on the condition that National Guard units continue to keep their weapons at hand while at work, in order to be prepared to fight in case of aggression.

Beginning this day, non-army and non-police persons may carry weapons only as members of the National Guard. We shall disarm all non-National Guard units, non-army and non-police persons in the interests of strengthening order.”⁶⁷

Following the meeting, Béla Király consulted with members of the command concerning the priority actions to be undertaken on the following day, 4 November. He summarised these actions as follows.

“We have to resolve numerous urgent issues. The organisation of provisions, coordination of groups and districts, direction and integration of provincial freedom-fighter groups, assignment of individual soldiers and policemen to National Guard units, assignment of army and police units joining with their commanders, coordination of army, police and freedom fighter units, the unified maintenance of order nationwide, but especially in Budapest, are responsibilities of the Supreme Command of the National Guard.”⁶⁸

Notes

1. On 28 June 1956 about fifty thousand workers went out to demonstrate in Poznan, Poland, demanding bread and free elections. Security forces dissipated the protesters with arms killing 70, wounding three hundred and arresting more than three hundred persons.
2. On 15 March 1848 the youth of Pest marched in the streets for their petitions to be fulfilled. This marked the outbreak of the Hungarian revolution and freedom fight.
3. György Litván, ed., *Az 1956-os magyar forradalom. Reform – felkelés – szabadságharc – megtorlás. Történelmi olvasókönyv középiskolásoknak* [The Hungarian Revolution of 1956: Reform – Uprising – Freedom fight – Reprisal. Historical Reader for Secondary Schools] (Tankönyvkiadó, Budapest, 1991), p. 38.
4. Attila Szokolczai, *Az 1956-os forradalom és szabadságharc* [The Revolution and War of Independence of 1956] (1956-os Intézet, Budapest, 2001), p. 25.
5. Litván, *Az 1956-os magyar forradalom*, p. 42.
6. The Petőfi Circle was originally established as the Bessenyei Circle in 1954. At the turn of 1955–1956 a veritable debating club developed. The name of Petőfi served as a revolutionary and symbolic vehicle in the struggle against Stalinist Party dictatorship. The debates sponsored by the Circle attempted to find a way out of the predicament of Stalinism and chart a new partnership. See Vera Bácskai, Robert Bohó and András B. Hegedüs, eds.-in-chief, György Litván and János Rainer M., eds., *A Petőfi Kör vitái hiteles jegyzőkönyvek alapján* [Debates of the Petőfi Circle on the basis of the Official Minutes] (1956-os Intézet, Budapest, 1989).
7. *A forradalom hangja. Magyarországi rádióadások 1956. október 23.–november 9.* [The Voice of the Revolution. Hungarian Radio Broadcasts, 23 October – 9 November, 1956], eds. László Varga and János Kenedi (joint publication by Századvég Kiadó and Nyilvánosság Klub, Budapest, 1989), pp. 23-26.
8. András B. Hegedüs, Peter Kende, György Litván and János Rainer M., eds., 1956 kézikönyve [Handbook of 1956] I, *Chronology* (1956-os Intézet, Budapest, 1996), pp. 77-78.
9. On the same topic, see the following: Miklós Horváth, “Fehér foltok a forradalom és szabadságharc térképén, Szovjet csapatok Magyarországon” [Blank

Spots on the Map of the Revolution and Freedom Struggle. Soviet Troops in Hungary], *Múltunk* 41 (1996) 3: 101-122; Miklós Horváth, "A Magyarország ellen végrehajtott szovjet agresszió: a 'Hullám' és 'Forgószél' fedőnevű hadműveletek" [The Soviet Aggression against Hungary: the Military Operations "Wave" and "Whirlwind"], in *A magyar forradalom eszméi. Eltérásük és győzelmük, (1956–1999)* [The Ideas of the Hungarian Revolution. Their Suppression and Victory, 1956–1999], eds. Béla Király and Lee W. Congdon (Atlantic Research and Publications, Budapest, 2001), pp. 65-88; Jenő Györkei and Miklós Horváth, *Adalékok a szovjet katonai megszállás történetéhez. Szovjet katonai intervenció 1956.* [Contributions to the History of Soviet Occupation. Soviet Military Intervention 1956] (H&T Kiadó, Budapest, 2001).

10. *Döntés a Kremlben, 1956. A szovjet pártelnökség vitái Magyarországról* [Decision in the Kremlin, 1956. The Soviet Party Presidium's Debates about Hungary], eds. Vyatcheslav Sereda and János Rainer M. (1956-os Intézet, Budapest, 1996), p. 26.
11. *Ibid.*
12. Mikoyan Anastas Ivanovich (1895–1978) Soviet politician. Member of the Presidium of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, and deputy president of the Council of Ministers. President of the Presidium of the Supreme Council from 1964.
13. *Döntés a Kremlben, 1956*, eds. Sereda and Rainer M., p. 26.
14. *Ibid.*
15. *Ibid.*, p. 27.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 26. Kaganovich expressed this view at the meeting.
17. *Ibid.*, pp. 26-27. In addition to Nikita Sergeyeovich Khrushchev, Nikolai Alexandrovich Bulganin, Vyacheslav Mikhailovich Molotov, Lazar Moiseyevich Kaganovich, Mikhail Georgievich Pervuhin, Georgi Konstantinovich Zhukov, Mikhail Andreyevich Suslov, Maksim Zaharevich Saburov, Dmitri Trofimovich Shepilov and Aleksey Illarionovich Kirichenko agreed with this proposal.
18. Mikhail Andreyevich Suslov (1902–1982) Member of the Presidium of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union.
19. *Döntés a Kremlben, 1956*, eds. Sereda and Rainer M., p. 27.

20. Mátyás Rákosi, *Visszaemlékezések, 1940–1956* [Recollections, 1940–1956] (Napvilág Kiadó, Budapest, 1997), pp. 1032–1033.
21. Y. I. Malashenko, “Osobij Korpus v. ognе Budapesta” [The Special Army Corps under Fire in Budapest. Recollections of an Eyewitness. Soviet Military Intervention 1956], *Vojenno Istoricheski Zhurnal* 10 (1993): 30.
22. Central Archive of the Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation 32. f. 701291. op. 16. d. 48. Cited by Aleksandr Kirov, “Szovjet katonai beavatkozás Magyarországon 1956.” [Soviet Military Interference in Hungary 1956.] In: *Szovjet katonai intervenció 1956* [Soviet Military Intervention in 1956] (Budapest, 2001), pp. 119-204.
23. Zoltán Ripp, “A pártvezetés végnapjai, 1956. október 23–31.” [The Last Days of the Party Leadership, 23-31 October, 1956], in *Ötvenhat októbere és a hatalom. A Magyar Dolgozók Pártja vezető testületeinek dokumentumai* (1956. október 24. – október 28.) [October 1956 and the Power Structure. Documents of the Decision-Making Institutions of the Hungarian Workers’ Party, 24-28 October, 1956], eds. Júlia Horváth and Zoltán Ripp (Napvilág Kiadó, Budapest, 1997), p. 186.
24. Ripp, “A pártvezetés végnapjai 1956”, pp. 193-196.
25. *Ibid.*
26. *Ötvenhat októbere és a hatalom*, eds. Horváth and Ripp, p. 29.
27. *Ibid.*, p. 135.
28. *Ibid.*
29. András Kő and Lambert J. Nagy, *Kossuth tér 1956* [Kossuth Square 1956] (Teleki László Alapítvány, Budapest, 2001), p. 279.
30. János Kádár (1912–1989) Hungarian Communist politician. In 1956 with Russian help he formed a proxy government against the legitimate Imre Nagy cabinet, and became premier of Hungary. First secretary of the Hungarian Socialist Workers’ Party (1956-88), and president of the Party (1988-89).
31. A “Jelcin-dosszié”. *Szovjet dokumentumok 1956-ról* [The Yeltsin File. Soviet Documents on 1956], eds. Éva Gál, András B. Hegedüs, György Litván and János Rainer M. (Századvég Kiadó – 1956-os Intézet, Budapest, 1993), pp. 50-51.

32. István Kovács, László Földes, Lajos Fehér and Imre Mező were originally members of the Military Committee. The two ministers in charge of armed organisations participated in its activities.
33. Ferenc Donáth (1913–1986) Hungarian economist and politician. He participated in the 1956 Revolution. Member of the Provisional Executive Committee. He was sentenced to twelve years' imprisonment in the Imre Nagy trial.
34. Géza Losonczy (1917–1957) Hungarian journalist and Communist politician. Minister without portfolio in Imre Nagy's cabinet in the 1956 Revolution. He was arrested in 1957 and died in prison under unclear circumstances.
35. *Ötvenhat októbere és a hatalom*, eds. Horváth and Ripp, pp. 50-88.
36. On 17-18 June 1953, there were workers' uprisings in East Berlin and several cities of the German Democratic Republic. The uprisings were put down by Soviet armed units.
37. See the table on Soviet military units in Part IV.
38. The section on "Our Demands" of this agreement, published in the daily newspaper *Népszava*, 28 October 1956, reads in part thus: "1. All power to the new democratic national government, in order that it can safeguard the independence of our country and the expansion of socialist democracy. The participants of the national democratic revolution should receive amnesty. The new government is called upon to establish a committee, with the participation of trade union and youth representatives, for the purpose of investigating the causes of the current movement. It is to identify those responsible, without regard to persons and positions. The committee should make the report public." October 1956, Annex 16, pp. 151-152. *Népszava*, 28 October 1956. The typewritten original is in the Archive of the Institute for Political History, 290 f. 1/20. ő. e. p. 121.
39. Magyar Nemzeti Levéltár [Hungarian National Archives] (henceforth: MNL), OL XX-5h. [Investigation box No. 23, vol. 7.]
40. János Kádár and Imre Nagy apparently negotiated with Mikoyan and Suslov during the night at the Soviet Embassy. According to research by János Rainer M. and Zoltán Ripp, no primary source for those negotiations is extant. See János Rainer M., *Nagy Imre. Politikai életrajz II. 1953–1958* [Imre Nagy. A Political Biography, II 1953–1958] (1956-os Intézet, Budapest, 1999), p. 273, and Ripp, "A pártvezetés végnapjai 1956," p. 269.

41. *Ibid.*
42. *A forradalom hangja*, eds. Varga and Kenedi, pp. 131-132.
43. *Ibid.*
44. The so called Kossuth coat of arms is a version of the Hungarian national coat of arms, lacking the holy crown and having a characteristically Hungarian form of escutcheon (shield) that is bent on the top and both sides. It became the official coat of arms after the deposition of the Habsburg dynasty and declaration of Hungary's independence on 14 April 1949 that is why it was named after Lajos Kossuth, Regent-President of Hungary from that date.
45. MNL OL, XX-5-h, box No. 23, vol. 31, pp. 340-341.
46. *A forradalom hangja*, eds. Varga and Kenedi, p. 132.
47. The author attempts to reconstruct events on the basis of summary minutes. The original minutes are available in the Sándor Kopácsi papers, MNL OL, "Nagy Imre és társai" [Imre Nagy and His Associates], XX-5-h, prepared by Erzsébet Kovács on the basis of recorded speeches, certified by Béla Király, Ernő Pongrácz and Sándor Kopácsi.
48. Vilmos Oláh met Béla Király in the hospital.
49. Béla Király, *Honvédségből néphadsereg* [From Honvéd Army to People's Army] (CO-NEXUS Print-teR Kiadó, Budapest, 1986), p. 243.
50. *Ibid.*, p. 251.
51. *Ibid.*
52. *A forradalom hangja*, eds. Varga and Kenedi, p. 245.
53. MNL OL, Nagy Imre és társai [Imre Nagy and His Associates], XX-5-h box No. 23, vol. 31.
54. *A forradalom hangja*, eds. Varga and Kenedi, pp. 342-343.
55. *Ibid.*
56. MNL OL, Nagy Imre és társai [Imre Nagy and His Associates], XX-5-h box No. 23, vol. 31.

57. MNL OL, Operatív iratok [Written Proceedings] box No. 2, vol. 6, pp. 30-38.
58. *Ibid.*
59. *Állambiztonsági Szolgálatok Történeti Levéltára* [Historical Archive of the State Security Services] (henceforth: ÁBTL) V-150005/21. pp. 74-77. Kovács István és társai [István Kovács and His Associates]
60. *Ibid.*
61. József Dudás (1912–1967) Hungarian engineer and revolutionary. Founding member of the Hungarian National Uprising Liberation Committee in 1944. He was jailed before the 1956 Revolution, and released in 1954. He founded the Hungarian National Committee in October 1956. He was executed by the Soviets.
62. ÁBTL V-150005/21. pp. 74-77. Kovács István és társai [István Kovács and His Associates].
63. *Ibid.*
64. *Ibid.*
65. *Ibid.*
66. *Ibid.*, pp. 78-83.
67. *A forradalom hangja*, eds. Varga and Kenedi, p. 458.
68. Király, *Honvédségből néphadsereg*, p. 272.

General characteristics of freedom-fighter groups

From 23 to 29 October, 1956, several thousand insurgents/freedom fighters fought against Hungarian and Soviet troops in Budapest. They were active in practically all parts of the city, with the exception of key installations held by government forces. They constantly attacked moving Soviet and Hungarian tanks, causing substantial losses. The majority were young workers, secondary school pupils, university students and teenagers. They attacked Soviet tanks with handguns and petrol bombs. The decisive factor in their success was the fact that they enjoyed the practical support of the population.

“From the outbreak of the revolution to the ceasefire negotiations, spontaneity played a key role. Insurgent groups with small memberships formed under the leadership of talented leaders. They obtained arms from a variety of sources. The majority of the population supported these groups. The composition of the groups changed almost on an hourly basis. The main focus of their activity was fighting Soviet forces, as well as the forces of the Hungarian police, political police (ÁVH) and army.”¹

Relationships within armed groups from October 23 to 28 were very loose. Insurgents joined groups individually, on the basis of free choice, and were free to decide when and under what circumstances they left.

Each group typically numbered five to ten members and had a separate leader. Groups elected leaders according to their combat effectiveness. It was not exceptional, however, that persons with outstanding speaking ability or a dominating personality were elected. Leaders changed frequently according to changes in battle conditions, or the success or failure of fighting efforts.

Insurgents who were separated from their group in the course of the fighting returned to their base and continued resistance with old and new members. Others joined adjacent groups or quit fighting altogether.

Before 28 October there was no organisational relationship among freedom-fighter groups including the Corvin Passage-based groups located close to each other. Their cooperation was very loose. In some cases there were conflicts. This occurred even at the time when they served as National Guard units.

Continuous combat conditions, frequent changes of leaders and changes in the number of fighters, together with the instability of freedom-fighter groups, made a unified organisation practically impossible until 28-29 October, when the revolution achieved victory.

Freedom-fighter groups formed primarily in the capital, but anti-government armed groups² controlled several small, non-contiguous areas in the countryside. Insurgents were most active in Bács-Kiskun, Győr, Sopron, Heves, Komárom, Nógrád, Somogy, Pest and Veszprém Counties.

A study of events in the countryside indicates that the most frequent actions involved damage to official state symbols, destruction of Soviet memorials,

damage to Soviet military gravesites, burning of Soviet books and propaganda materials, searches of the residence of state officials, damage to the dwellings of state officials, and the their arrest.

Freedom Fighters in Budapest

In the initial days of the revolution, insurgent groups fought independently of each other, without any unified leadership, in sectors of Buda and Pest. In Buda their bases were in Széna Square and Móricz Zsigmond Square. In Pest the main bases were the Corvin Passage and adjacent areas of the 8th and 9th districts, and peripheral areas such as Csepel, Soroksár, Pesterzsébet and Újpest.

In Buda, the Széna Square group controlled Széna Square, Moszkva Square and adjacent areas. They were also active between Margaret Bridge and Batthyány Square, along Szilágyi Erzsébet Boulevard and in the Szép Ilona area.

In Pest, freedom-fighter groups were active in the 8th and 9th districts near the Corvin Passage, in the cinema, along Ferenc and József Boulevards, the dwellings along Üllői Street and along major avenues used by Hungarian and Soviet troops.

“The most active participants were young students. Many soldiers leaving their units joined the Corvin groups.”³

The activity of insurgents in the 7th district was less extensive than that in the 8th district. Therefore most insurgents moved to the 8th district on 24 October. Medical students provided medical services to the insurgents until 28-29 October, and subsequently to National Guard units until 8-9 November.

There are only fragmentary data available on the National Guard in Budapest, due to the destruction of documentary evidence after 4 November. A comparison of preserved documents with a list of National Guard identity cards prepared by the Budapest Police Command on 3 November provides the following estimates.⁴ The Revolutionary Security Committee issued 18,362 identity cards.⁵ This number is not fully accurate, since more cards were requested on 3 November than were needed at the time.

Based on these calculations, the following tabulation provides an estimated membership of the National Guard in Budapest.

Composition of the National Guard in Budapest⁶

<i>Category</i>	<i>Category Description</i>	<i>Estimated Number of Guards</i>
A	National Guard units based on insurgents/freedom fighters	5,500
B	National Guard units based on university students and secondary school pupils	2,500
C	National Guard units based on places of employment	2,000
D	National Guard units based on police and army units	2,000
E	National Guard units recruited in Budapest for public safety services at district administrations	5,100
F	Others, unrelated to any of the above	1,400
TOTAL:		18,500

It can be concluded on the basis of these data that a majority of the National Guard membership, 65%, was under the command of the Revolutionary Security Committee. Of these units, the category B units, the student groups, were the most effective in terms of mobility and multi-purpose utility. Units of category A were less mobile, since they were active from the initial phase of the revolution and their activity was concentrated in specific city areas. But these units were the most active in resisting Soviet and Hungarian military forces and fighting for the achievements of the revolution. They were equally committed to fighting the Soviet invasion after 4 November. Units of category D can be classified in a similar manner. Their activity was largely determined by the specific installations that they occupied. The units of category C were the least capable of mobility. They were utilised primarily for the protection of property and persons related to workplaces. Category E units were established by district administrations to provide public safety services in specific districts of the capital.

National Guard combat activity in Budapest

When the Széna Square group received news of the Soviet attack at dawn on 4 November, it dispatched patrols to control the main arteries of the 12th district. At about noon a sub-unit of five tanks attacked Széna Square and then departed in the direction of Margaret Bridge. The insurgents of Széna Square then retreated to the Buda hills. They fought a battle with Soviet forces in the area of Solymár. Seventeen members of the group fell in the battle. Their leader, János Szabó, then dissolved the group.

At Móricz Zsigmond Square, battles took place on 4-5 November. An ex-army officer, Jenő Oláh, attempted to coordinate the actions of several independent freedom-fighter groups on 4 November. In the fighting during the night of 5-6 November, 140 Soviet soldiers died or were wounded, according to the Soviet military report. On 6 November, however, Soviet forces destroyed all resistance in the area.⁷

In Óbuda (a part of Buda) the 50th Hungarian Artillery Regiment of Jászberény was attacked by Soviet tanks. Several vehicles were set on fire and ammunition transported by them exploded. One group of National Guards occupied a firing position at the Buda end of Stalin (today Árpád) Bridge.⁸ National Guards, both civilians and soldiers, took up positions at the Schmidt Mansion on a hill (today Kiscelli Museum) Military officers and officer trainees prepared the insurgents for the defence of the position. Group members destroyed a radio interference station. The group engaged in a battle with Soviet forces, inflicting significant losses on them. On 7 November the commander dissolved the group.

Soviet forces encountered the strongest resistance, just as in the 24-29 October period, in the 8th and 9th districts. At dawn on 4 November Soviet forces attacked the National Guard sub-units of the 8th and 9th districts, specifically the regiment in the Corvin Passage, the National Guard battalion of Práter Street and the Kilián Barracks, with airborne troops, in fifteen open armoured vehicles and six tanks, from the direction of Nagyvárud Square and Boráros Square. Armed groups stationed in local buildings put up determined resistance. As a result, Soviet forces were unable to occupy the area and were forced to withdraw with significant losses. In the fighting up to 10 a.m. Soviet forces lost 20-30 soldiers.⁹ In the course of the first Soviet attack, National Guards in the Corvin Passage joined the fight under the command of Gergely Pongrátz. In the light of the overpowering superiority of Soviet forces, the fighting was basically defensive.

On 5 November, or according to some sources 7 or 9 November, at 1 p.m., units of the Obaturov Division of the Soviet forces renewed the attack against the Corvin Passage resistance, following an intensive artillery strike by 170 cannons and mortars. Tanks encircled the buildings of resistance and effectively dealt with all anti-tank attacks. Soviet forces also occupied the Kilián Barracks.

Insurgents in Tüzoltó Street and Ferenc Square in the 9th district fought Soviet forces in joint actions. In the evening of 4 November they barricaded the area enclosed by Üllői Street, Ferenc Boulevard, Mester Street and Thaly Kálmán Street, and also put up automobile barriers. The Tüzoltó Street group of 25-30 members fought Soviet troops from their base in a building on the corner of Nagyvárud Square, but by November 6 they were cut off completely from other groups. By noon on 8 November they had ceased resistance.¹⁰

In the 7th district, members of the Baross Square group fought Soviet forces in that area. Smaller groups fought in the adjacent Budapest Keleti railway station. Following the termination of resistance on 16 November, they prepared and distributed leaflets.

The Hungarian army put up resistance in one area only, at Juta Hill. The sub-units of the 51st Anti-Aircraft Artillery Group and an anti-aircraft battery were stationed there.

On 4 November, at 10 a.m., a Soviet column of two tanks, two armoured transport vehicles, three trucks and one Hudson-type automobile appeared at the gun positions of the Hungarian unit on Soroksári Road. The guns opened fire. They

disabled two tanks and the automobile. More than ten Soviet soldiers and Hungarian security officers on the trucks were wounded, and thirteen lost their lives. The others fled.

In the afternoon of 4 November some of the guns stationed at Jutá Hill and those at Határ Road fired at Soviet troops. They disabled a motorcycle with a sidecar. The fuel container of a Soviet tank was hit, but the burning tank was able to escape.

In the 20th district, Soroksár, the insurgents led by László Oltványi, the commander of the National Guard units of the district, obtained two anti-aircraft cannons and a mortar. On 5 November they fired at a Soviet military vehicle. In the ensuing battle two Soviet soldiers were killed, six were wounded and three were taken prisoner. On 6 November they fired at a Soviet tank. This insurgent group ceased operations and was dissolved on 10-11 November.¹¹

In Csepel, National Guard units increased their membership to 500-550 persons. They obtained A-type guns from the local anti-aircraft artillery regiment and attacked Soviet troops in transit through the Csepel district. In the afternoon of 4 November one of the guns fired at a tank on Kossuth Lajos Street and disabled it. The same gun damaged another tank soon after. Later the insurgents fired at an armoured vehicle approaching from Tököl. After damaging it, they disabled it with a petrol bomb. Soviet soldiers who fled from the scene were killed in battle. Another gun disabled a tank and set it on fire. On 7 November guns were used to shoot down an IL-28 aircraft. A group of 30-35 insurgents destroyed a vehicle transporting ammunition. In order to prevent or slow down the mobility of Soviet troops, insurgents blew up the road leading to the bridge at Gubacs and closed the road with railway carriages. They also fired at the Soviet air base at Tököl with mortars borrowed from the 20th district. As a result of the attack of Soviet troops between 7 and 9 November, the National Guard units ceased resistance on 10 November.¹²

In the 18th district, Pestszentlőrinc, attacks against Soviet soldiers took place in several locations.¹³ National Guardsmen and soldiers, under the direction of an anti-aircraft officer, placed two anti-aircraft guns into firing position. They fired at aircraft and ground targets. On 6 November they fired at airborne targets and on 7 November they fought Soviet tanks. They disabled a Soviet truck and took fleeing Soviet soldiers prisoner; their fate is unknown. They attacked Soviet tanks approaching from the direction of Budapest. In the ensuing battle two insurgents were killed.¹⁴ On 8 November the National Guard attacked other Soviet tanks. They disabled one of them and killed one Soviet soldier.¹⁵

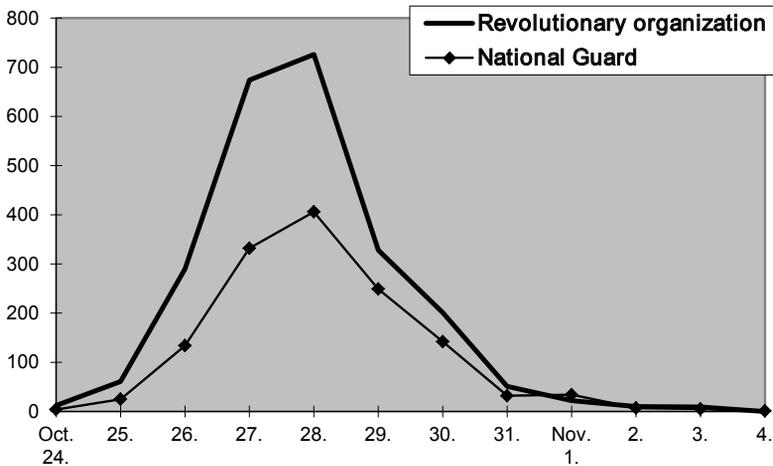
In the 19th district, the army officer in charge of the National Guard distributed arms to volunteers, who then opened fire on marching Soviet troops. The Soviet counter-attack forced the National Guards in the building to flee. On 6 November a group of 100-150 continued to fight Soviet troops. Four small groups engaged Soviet troops at several locations of the district. On 8-9 November National Guards ceased their resistance due to the overwhelming superiority of Soviet forces.

Anti-aircraft sub-units stationed in the 10th district, Kőbánya, opened fire on attacking Soviet forces jointly with National Guards. In battles continuing until 8 November anti-aircraft artillery units and National Guards disabled four or five tanks, three armoured transport vehicles and one communications vehicle. In the course of the fighting about 30 Soviet soldiers were killed. The group that had formed at the district police command building managed to take possession of an ammunition transport vehicle and disarm its Soviet occupants. This unit was destroyed by Soviet forces on 6 November. Another National Guard group disabled two additional armoured transport vehicles. Several Soviet soldiers were killed at this location. Those taken prisoner were released. Resistance ceased on 11 November.¹⁶

Freedom fighters in the countryside

In the countryside, an important development was the formation of civil self-defence organisations with diverse designations: plant guards, village guards, people's guards and, more generally, National Guard sub-units. These organisations appeared in close to 50% of local authority areas. The diagram on the formation of the National Guard demonstrates that a similar process was at work in the formation of revolutionary organisations.¹⁷

The following diagram also illustrates the comparable process of the formation of revolutionary organisations and National Guard sub-units.¹⁸



In the countryside, revolutionary organisations of local government bodies constituted the majority of National Guard sub-units or extended their authority over those that had existed prior to their own establishment.

According to estimates of the Communist Party, the participation ratio of groups subversive of the established (communist) system, designated at the time

as “hostile and class-enemy elements”, in the National Guard was less than 10%. In contrast, it was estimated that 74% of the National Guard consisted of the working classes, including workers, peasants, intellectuals and employees. Other categories were craftsmen, merchants, clergy and students, who made up an estimated 16% of the National Guard. The composition of individual National Guard units, however, indicates significant variations. This was true especially of industrial counties or those with large student populations, where the participation rates are significantly divergent from the national average.

In performing their service functions, 8.3% of National Guard sub-units cooperated with the army, police and Border Guard. In small communities the district representative of the National Guard usually performed public security services jointly with the policeman or replaced him in the event that he was relieved of his post. National Guard sub-units in border areas performed border guard duty in addition to public security services jointly with border guards or in the event of the latter’s dismissal independently in at least 15 locations.

More than one half (54%) of National Guard sub-units performed services unarmed. Armed National Guard sub-units collected weapons from Party members and hunters in the community to be used in performing their services and to prevent disruption of public order. In several localities the National Guard obtained weapons by disarming national or local police forces, less frequently Border Guard units. National Guard sub-units at the county, district and city levels generally obtained weapons in accordance with decisions of revolutionary committees of the area, justified by the obligation of the army and police to perform services jointly.

Revolutionary organisations and commanders of the National Guard increasingly enforced regulations on carrying arms. They stored weapons in guarded installations, and the majority of National Guards were armed only while on duty.

In the countryside, most importantly in villages, the principal function of National Guard sub-units was the assurance of property and personal safety. Examples are the prevention of unauthorised taking of properties when collective farms were dissolved, personal vengeance and arbitrary actions. These guards controlled automobile traffic, freight transport, identity checks, disarming and detaining armed persons not registered as National Guards, and curfew enforcement.

In preparation for the increasing threat of Soviet attack, alert and defence plans were prepared and exercises were held to practise planned activities in larger settlements and primarily in military bases. Technical preparations were made in support of defence plan implementation.

The Soviet attack disrupted these activities. In the countryside, the majority of National Guard units were dissolved on 4 November and subsequently. But in some cases new organisations came into being as a result of the Soviet attack. Several National Guard sub-units fought Soviet forces successfully in cooperation with military and police forces for shorter or longer periods.

Notes

1. László Eörsi distinguished three phases in the organisation of armed groups in his study “Civil felkelők a forradalomban” [Civil Insurgents in the Revolution], *Rubicon* 8-9 (1996): 8-10.
2. The term “anti-government forces” includes those armed persons and armed groups, in part armed crowds which openly opposed the political and military efforts of the established system and obstructed Party and government leaders and forces, including Hungarian and Soviet armed forces, in their attempt to retain power.
3. Állambiztonsági Szolgálatok Történeti Levéltára [Historical Archive of the State Security Services] (henceforth: ÁBTL) O-16803, OD-1901, p. 172. Testimony of László Béla György.
4. Magyar Nemzeti Levéltár [Hungarian National Archives] (MNL), OL Nagy Imre és társai [Imre Nagy and His Associates] XX-5-h. Box No. 22, vol. 32, pp. 50-53.
5. *bid.*
6. *Ibid.*
7. ÁBTL O-16/797/1 and V.150381/8, pp. 171-173.
8. ÁBTL V-150381/6, pp. 20-23.
9. ASZTL O-16803, OD-1901, p. 350.
10. László Eörsi, *Ferencváros 1956. A kerület fegyveres csoportjai* [Ferencváros 1956: The Armed Groups of the District] (1956-os Intézet, Budapest, 1997), p. 119.
11. Hadtörténelmi Levéltár [Archive of Military History] (henceforth: HL), BKB. B.III.071/1959. Kálmán Béla és társai [Béla Kálmán and His Associates]. The commander, Lieutenant Béla Kálmán, who directed the fighting, was executed after the defeat of the revolution.
12. First Lieutenant Sándor Körösi, who directed resistance in Csepel, was also executed.

13. MNL OL XX-5-h. Nagy Imre és társai [Imre Nagy and His Associates] 20. d. 29. vol., pp. 30-33.
14. HL BKB. B. IV. 056/1958. Szántó Béla fhdgy és társai [First Lieutenant Béla Szántó and His Associates]. First Lieutenant Béla Szántó and Commander József Tutsch were executed after the defeat of the revolution.
15. *1956 kézikönyve III. Megtorlás és emlékezés* [Handbook of 1956: Vol. III, Retrial and Remembrance], eds. András B. Hegedüs, Péter Kende, György Litván and János Rainer M. (1956-os Intézet, Budapest, 1996), p. 170.
16. ÁBTL V-150381/8, pp. 128-131, 153-156, 159-160, and O-16/797/2, pp. 136-140 and 168-169.
17. In this calculation I omitted those National Guard sub-units for which the date of organisation was unknown.
18. The vertical column of the diagram (0-800) indicates the number of settlements by date in which revolutionary organisations were established and also National Guard sub-units were formed. At the time there were 3410 settlements, called administrative units, in Hungary.

The first war between socialist states

Decision in the Kremlin: 30-31 October, 1956

The Presidium of the Central Committee of the Soviet Communist Party discussed the Hungarian question at its 28 October 1956 session, following a discussion of the issue on 26 October.¹ KGB chief Ivan Alexandrovich Serov informed the Soviet leadership² that, contrary to actually prevailing conditions, "...the insurgents in Budapest were uncertain about continued resistance. The most active favoured continuing to fight. They would agree to a cease-fire only on the condition that they could keep their arms, and would resume fighting at the most favourable opportunity."³

At the commencement of the 28 October session Khrushchev, First Secretary of the Soviet Communist Party expressed the following opinion, based on various sources of information: "The situation is becoming more serious."

Marshal Voroshilov suggested that Soviet troops not be withdrawn and that the uprising be suppressed forcefully. The Presidium was to prepare its own programme, and it should obtain the support of a significant Hungarian group for that.⁴ This was the first unequivocal statement calling for the support of a significant Hungarian group as a condition of suppressing the uprising. As subsequent comments indicate,⁵ an increasing number of Presidium members hoped for, expected, and even demanded from János Kádár, as the key actor, a solution acceptable to the Soviet leadership.

At this time, Khrushchev considered the least acceptable solution to be the formation of a new government, a "Committee." He proposed continued support of the Imre Nagy government, as well as the suppression of the armed insurgents.⁶

According to Suslov, recalled from Budapest for this meeting, a "relatively" firm government had to be established and elections put off, but Soviet troops should be prepared to withdraw from Budapest.⁷

Voroshilov stated that the deployment of Soviet troops was appropriate and they should not be withdrawn hastily.⁸ Several Soviet leaders emphasised the point that they agreed with the decisions already taken. There was no alternative but to support the current government.⁹ Voroshilov considered that the major problem to be anticipated was "the outbreak of war" if Soviet troops were withdrawn and there were no support groups.¹⁰ Khrushchev rejected the option of a new military intervention at that time.¹¹

The Presidium of the Central Committee of the Soviet Communist Party reached the conclusion at its session of 30 October, based primarily on the reports of delegates sent to Budapest,¹² that the political situation in Hungary and Budapest was failing to improve, and that on the contrary it was deteriorating. The insurgents would surrender their arms only when Soviet troops left Budapest, or, as others said, when Soviet troops left Hungary. A new threat was the possibility that Hungarian army troops would join the insurgents.

Comments made at this session of the Presidium indicate the disagreements and indecision of the Soviet leadership. But the majority agreed that relationships between the people's democracies and the Soviet Union had to be placed on a new basis and that negotiations should be initiated with leaders of those countries where Soviet troops were stationed. The issue of withdrawal of Soviet troops was to be put on the agenda of the Political Advisory Commission of the Warsaw Pact.¹³ Debate concerned the characteristics and levels of current changes and the issue of self-criticism. Contrary to the opinion of Dmitri Sepilov, who maintained that "national communism must be fought against forcefully";¹⁴ Minister of Defense Georgy Zhukov proposed that "troops must be withdrawn from Budapest, if necessary, also from Hungary".¹⁵

The primary explanation for the crisis was that it was impossible to exercise leadership in opposition to the will of the people, the appropriate decisions of the Twentieth Congress had not been implemented, and the Presidium of the Central Committee of the Soviet Communist Party had failed to "lead the initiatives of the masses".¹⁶

It was decided to issue a "declaration" to the Hungarian people, stating, in addition to the new principles of cooperation, the relationship of the Soviet leadership to the Hungarian government, which it supported, including the role of Imre Nagy and János Kádár.¹⁷

Following the debate on the declaration of the Soviet government, the Presidium heard the report of Pavel Fyodorovich Yudin Soviet, ambassador to Peking, who joined the session at this time, about negotiations with Chinese Party leaders. Yudin restated the questions raised by the Chinese delegates: "What is the situation? Will Hungary secede from our camp? Who is Nagy? Can we trust him?"¹⁸ These questions and the responses provided a new direction in the evaluation of the Hungarian question and the consideration of possible "solutions". As the minutes indicate, the Presidium invited Liu-Shao-Chi, President of the Peoples' Republic of China to join the session. He provided prepared responses to questions of the Presidium. Liu-Shao-Chi stated the revised position of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party: "The troops must remain in Hungary."¹⁹

Contrary to the determined position of the Chinese leadership, Khrushchev proposed two alternatives at this point: 1) military intervention; 2) withdrawal of troops and negotiation.²⁰

The debates of the Soviet leadership, the Chinese proposal, as well as the uncertainties and the new direction of Soviet policy were unknown in Hungary. The declaration of the Soviet government, indicating its intention to place its relations with other socialist countries on a new basis, nurtured hopes for a victorious revolution. But in less than 24 hours the decision to launch a new Soviet invasion was made.

The decision of the Soviet leadership to intervene was in no way influenced by the declaration of 30 October,²¹ in which it made a public commitment to observe "the principles of complete equality, territorial integrity, independence and

sovereignty, and non-interference in internal affairs in the mutual relations” of socialist states. The Soviet government declared that it was prepared to examine “the question of Soviet occupation forces in socialist countries participating in the Warsaw Pact”, on the basis of the principle that “the stationing of the forces of a state in the territory of another state is only permissible with the consent of that state in which these forces are present”. The Soviet government declaration also stated: “...since the continued presence of Soviet forces in Hungary may serve as a pretext for increased escalation of the crisis, the Soviet government has instructed its military command to withdraw Soviet forces from Budapest as soon as the Hungarian government considers it to be appropriate. At the same time, the Soviet government is prepared to negotiate with the government of the Hungarian People’s Republic and with the governments of the other states participating in the Warsaw Pact concerning the presence of Soviet troops in Hungary.”²²

A final decision involving a substantial change in Soviet policy was made at the 31 October session of the Presidium of the Central Committee of the Soviet Communist Party. Khrushchev declared, at that session, that the Soviet Union had no choice: Soviet troops would not be withdrawn from Budapest and Hungary, and “order” would be restored forcefully. Khrushchev justified the new policy by arguing that the withdrawal “would encourage American, British and French imperialists”, and that the membership of the Soviet Communist Party would disagree with it.²³

The Presidium then made decisions to establish a new Hungarian government, the Provisional Revolutionary Government, to prepare military plans for the new intervention and to draft political statements in support of the new policy. It appointed Marshal Ivan Konev as the commander of Soviet troops in Hungary.²⁴ The minutes confirmed that Mátyás Rákosi, András Hegedüs and Ernő Gerő, then residing in Moscow, supported Ferenc Münnich as prime minister of the new government. Others considered acceptable as members of the government were Antal Apró, János Kádár, Károly Kiss, János Boldoczki and Imre Horváth.²⁵ A decision was made to send Khrushchev and Georgy Malenkov to Yugoslavia and Romania, and to send Khrushchev, First Deputy Premier Vyatcheslav Molotov and Malenkov to Brest, to discuss the Hungarian question.²⁶

The Presidium of the Central Committee of the SCP held an expanded session on 2 November, with the participation of János Kádár, Ferenc Münnich and István Bata. The following developments explain this turn of events. János Kádár left the Hungarian Parliament building to meet Ferenc Münnich in the late evening of 1 November, while negotiations were taking place between the Administrative Committee of the Hungarian Socialist Workers’ Party (the new name of the revamped Party) and the Chinese ambassador to Hungary. Münnich, presumably directed by Yuriy Andropov, the Soviet ambassador to Hungary, convinced Kádár of the unacceptability of the Hungarian position following 28 October, which both Imre Nagy and Kádár supported. Kádár complied with the request of Münnich and Andropov, and accompanied Münnich to the Soviet Embassy, from

where they were taken by armoured vehicle to the Tököl air base. Both were then flown in separate airplanes to Moscow.

Kádár was en route to Moscow and had decided to leave Hungary, when Hungarian radio broadcast his appeal to the Hungarian people, published on 2 November in the Hungarian press. The appeal concluded with the following words.

“Our people have sealed with their blood their resolution to support the demand of the government for the full withdrawal of Soviet forces. We reject continued dependence! We do not want our country to become a battlefield! We appeal to all honest patriots! Let us unite for the victory of Hungarian independence, Hungarian freedom!”²⁷

At the session of the Presidium on 2 November the Hungarian question was discussed anew.²⁸ János Kádár stated that the leaders of the Hungarian movement were Imre Nagy and his followers, while the leaders of the armed insurgents were Party members and workers, who were fighting for the removal of the Rákosi faction and the withdrawal of Soviet forces, but supported the people’s democratic system. Demonstrations in the provinces were not seeking the overthrow of the people’s democracy, but its democratic transformation and the realisation of social policies.²⁹ All armed groups demanded the withdrawal of Soviet forces.³⁰

János Kádár also informed the Soviet leaders that strikers, demanding the withdrawal of Soviet forces, had intended to return to work as a result of the Soviet government declaration, but had changed their minds on receiving news of Soviet troop movements. The decision to declare neutrality was also made due to the impact of new Soviet troop arrivals.³¹

Kádár then considered the alternatives. He stated that Hungary could be retained by military force, but added:

“...in that case there will be armed conflict. That involves the shedding of blood. What will happen then? The moral standing of Communists will be zero. It will damage the socialist countries. Is there a guarantee that the same situation will not emerge in other countries?”

Ferenc Münnich complemented Kádár’s evaluation:

“The socialist system in Hungary exists and will survive only with the support of the Soviet Union.”³²

The next session of the Presidium meeting on the same day, in which the Hungarians did not participate, discussed and approved the military campaign plan Operation “Whirlwind” (in Russian, “Vikhr,” in Hungarian, “Forgószél”).

On 3 November the expanded session of the Presidium again discussed the composition of the Soviet-sponsored government. As a result of consultations

with the Yugoslav leadership, János Kádár was recommended as head of the government.

János Kádár then criticised the Soviet leadership on several points. He responded to his own question, “What is to be done?” as follows: “It is not permissible to allow the counter-revolution to take over a socialist country. We agree with you. The proper solution is to form a revolutionary government.”³³

The unanimous decision of the Presidium was as follows: “Kádár is to head the government.”³⁴ The Soviet-sponsored government was established as planned on 4 November. Its members were János Kádár, Ferenc Münnich, György Marosán, Imre Horváth, István Kossa, Antal Apró, Imre Dögei and Sándor Rónai.

The massive Soviet invasion of Hungary

In accordance with the declaration of 28 October, issued by the Hungarian government, the Soviet military command ordered a ceasefire. Soviet troops terminated military operations on 29 October. According to Lieutenant General Lashchenko, commander of the Soviet Special Corps, however, the withdrawal of Soviet troops was necessary, as was the agreement between the Hungarian government and Soviet leaders, “because of the inactivity and passivity of those troops”.

The Soviet leaders stipulated as a condition of withdrawal that Hungarian troops take over in their place. They also attempted to reach an agreement, providing an opportunity for insurgents to surrender their arms to Hungarian troops after withdrawal on 30 October at 9 a.m. However, negotiations on this matter, conducted by Major General Gyula Váradi, proved to be unsuccessful.

The withdrawal of Soviet troops from Budapest commenced as planned on 30 October at 3 p.m., and was completed on 31 October around noon. On the same day the Soviet command ordered the Road and Railway Engineers’ Battalion to Szolnok, to defend and guard the railway station and bridge. But after considering the probable opposition of Hungarian rail personnel, the battalion was withdrawn until 2 November by order of Army General Malinin.³⁵

On 30 October, contrary to the declaration of the Soviet government,³⁶ parts of two airborne divisions landed at the Veszprém airfield.³⁷

After the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Budapest, the command of the Soviet Special Corps moved to the Tököl air base, where a Soviet air force unit was stationed. The Soviet troops occupied a concentric area at a distance of 15–20 kilometres from the Budapest city limits.

Army General Malinin then informed the command of the Soviet Special Corps that Marshal Konev, who had arrived in Szolnok, had been appointed as the commander of Soviet troops in Hungary, with the mission of preparing and leading a new offensive.³⁸ The Soviet command also learned that the staff of the

38th and 8th Armies were to arrive in Hungary from the Soviet Union and Romania.

The following Soviet military units arrived in Hungary by rail, motor vehicle and air, officially justified by the contention that the family members of Soviet officers were in danger.

During the night of 31 October – 1 November, the forces of the 31st Armoured Division of Vislenska, a unit of the Carpathian Military District, were ordered to Hungary.³⁹ On the same day, the 35th Mechanised Guard Division of Kharkov, a unit of the Odessa Military District, was ordered to Hungary.⁴⁰

On 1 November, the staff of the 8th Mechanised Army, under the command of Lieutenant General A. H. Babadzhanyan, and the forces of the 11th Mechanised Guard Division under that army's command crossed the Hungarian border with the immediate mission of occupying by the end of the day on 2 November a concentric area surrounding the cities of Debrecen, Szolnok, Kecskemét and Gyöngyös, and also other designated settlements in eastern Hungary.⁴¹ The 70th Rifle and 35th Mechanised Divisions were assigned to the command of the 8th Mechanised Army, when the forces of that army arrived at their designated areas.

Units preparing to execute their mission in Hungary included the Soviet Special Corps under Lieutenant General P. N. Lashchenko, the 8th Mechanised Army under A. H. Babadzhanyan, and the 38th Army under H. D. Mamsurov. The forces of the 31st Airborne Guard Division performed guard and other services at the Veszprém airfield.

The 177th Bomber Air Division commenced evacuation of Soviet military family members. They were evacuated by 4 November, using a combination of transportation carriers. Even patients in the Soviet military hospital were evacuated.

On 2 November, Marshal Konev called Lieutenant General Lashchenko to Szolnok. He was accompanied by Colonel Malashenko. Konev requested information concerning the activity of the Soviet Special Corps in Budapest. Lashchenko reported that the troops faced very complex circumstances, which made it difficult for them to understand their mission. Furthermore, their forces were inadequate for the fulfilment of their task. At the beginning, one division, with about 6,000 men, entered the capital. Additional divisions were deployed from Romania and Carpatho-Ukraine, but they were equally incapable of mastering the situation. According to the commander, another factor contributing to the failure of the mission was the fact that the Soviet units and sub-units acted without self-confidence or prudence. He added that several military instruments, such as the armoured vehicle BTR 152, open at the top, and self-propelled artillery, were unsuitable for urban warfare. In response to the question of Marshal Konev concerning the utilisation of aircraft, Lashchenko stated that aircrafts were unable to fire at targets in small areas accurately and effectively. The use of aircrafts would have caused greater destruction, leading to further dissatisfaction among Soviet troops and the civilian population.

The marshal agreed with the report and accepted it. Colonel Malashenko then

provided data on the military situation in the capital. He estimated that Hungarian military units in the capital numbered 50,000 men, while there were in addition 10,000 national guardsmen and 100 tanks.

Marshal Konev then asked whether the forces of the Corps were sufficient to suppress the armed uprising in the capital in three or four days and restore order. Lashchenko answered "No". He explained that it was essential to strengthen the Corps with infantry, self-propelled artillery and armour. He thought it desirable to commit another division to the forces of the Corps, and requested additional time to prepare the sub-units involved for the resumption of the attack.

After listening to reports and opinions, Marshal Konev stated:

"The highest political leadership of the Warsaw Pact countries made a decision on providing military 'assistance' to Hungary. Soviet forces were assigned the mission 'to destroy the counter-revolutionary forces.' The forces of the Soviet Special Corps must therefore prepare for participation in the military operation 'Whirlwind,' which has the mission of destroying armed resistance and restoring order in Budapest. The units of the Hungarian People's Army that attempt to resist must be disarmed."⁴²

The Soviet Special Corps in Budapest consisted, according to military orders, of the 2nd and 33rd Mechanised and 128th Infantry Guard Divisions. In addition, several armoured, artillery and airborne detachments strengthened the Corps.

The armies of Generals Babadzhanyan and Mamsurov received the mission of occupying the total area of Hungary, including the defence of the Austrian border and the "destruction" of insurgent groups outside the capital and in provincial cities.

Alert status for commencing military activities had to be attained by the evening of 3 November. The commencement of the military operation "Whirlwind" was to start following the sounding of the password "Thunder" (*Grom*).

The command of the Corps returned to Tököl to begin military planning. Leaders of the KGB residing in Hungary cooperated with the Soviet Special Corps. Under the direction of Serov, they had arrested 4148 persons by 19 November. About 1000 persons from among those arrested were taken by airplanes, railway wagons and motor vehicles to the hinterland, Carpatho-Ukraine. The KGB was also assigned the task of arresting members of the Imre Nagy government and leaders of the uprising.

1 November: declaration of neutrality and leaving the Warsaw Pact

While planning related to the departure of Soviet troops was still underway, the Hungarian government decided to assign responsibility for the maintenance of order in Budapest to the Hungarian People's Army. By order of Károly Janza, minister of defence, three security districts were established in the city. These were

the “Bem” district in Buda, commanded by Colonel János Mecséri, the “Mátyás” district in Pest, comprising areas to the north of Rákóczi and Kerepesi Roads, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Károly Csémi, and the “Kossuth” district in Pest, comprising the southern area, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Sándor Bakonyi.

Events took place in rapid succession on and after 31 October. In the afternoon of 31 October, the High Command of the Hungarian army learned that the Hungarian government had appointed Major General Béla Király as the commander of the Budapest Military and Security Forces. In this position his primary mission was to exercise full and unified authority over all military, National Guard and police units of Budapest. High military authorities criticised this appointment, arguing that exercising authority over all types of military and security forces would lead to a lack of concentration on any one of them. Their concern was that the commander would devote his principal attention to the organisation of the National Guard and neglect the military forces.⁴³

The staff of the 4th Army, located in the Ministry of Defence, was designated as the command for the Budapest Military and Security Forces. The staff assumed the command on 1 November. Major General Béla Király designated as the priority task of the command the immediate termination of all fighting and the establishment of order in Budapest.⁴⁴

On 2 November, Major General Király, in order to prepare for a potential Soviet attack, ordered the chief of staff of the 4th Army, Major General István Kovács, to issue 5000 anti-tank mines to National Guard units. Kovács, however, refused to execute the order. When he received the same order again, he authorised the issue of 1200 items, but on the condition that only Lieutenant Colonel Bakonyi, the division commander, could use them. Since the depot manager was instructed not to issue detonators, they were practically useless.⁴⁵

Military units outside Budapest, which reported Soviet troop movements, invariably received orders from the military operations section of the chief of staff to refrain from offering resistance to Soviet troops, to establish contact with Soviet commanders, and to prevent all confrontations or “provocations”.⁴⁶

Since powerful Soviet troop units were crossing the Soviet-Hungarian border continuously, Béla Király instructed Colonel László Zólogy⁴⁷ to prepare a “Defensive Plan,” specifying the task of National Guard units and military units in Budapest.⁴⁸

On 2 November, a high-level meeting of military leaders took place in the Ministry of Defence, chaired by Lieutenant General Janza, with the participation of Major Generals Béla Király and István Kovács, and Colonels Pál Maléter and Miklós Szücs. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss major issues facing the Hungarian army. At the end of the meeting, Minister of Defence Károly Janza stated that Colonel Maléter, Major General Kovács and Colonel Szücs were to participate in the Hungarian delegation to negotiate the withdrawal of Soviet troops. These officers were instructed to report to Imre Nagy in the Parliament

building at 5 p.m. The Prime Minister was to provide relevant instructions to them, as well as to the head of the delegation, Deputy Prime Minister Ferenc Erdei.

Imre Nagy had a special meeting with Colonel Maléter and informed him that he would be promoted to major general and recommended for the position of minister of defence.⁴⁹

On 30 October, the Hungarian government became aware of preparations for a new Soviet intervention. On 31 October, military preparations and negotiations relating to the Soviet intervention were initiated. Imre Nagy, informed of the arrival of new Soviet troops, requested an immediate meeting with Soviet Ambassador Andropov. "In the morning Imre Nagy requested an explanation from the Soviet Embassy concerning the entry of Soviet troops into Hungarian territory and their advance into the interior of the country."⁵⁰

In his report to the Presidium of the Central Committee of the Soviet Communist Party, Andropov stated the following:

"During the meeting with the Hungarian government, Imre Nagy requested an explanation. Zoltán Tildy stated that if Soviet troops continued their advance to Budapest, there would be a crisis and the government must resign. Tildy insisted that the Soviet troops, at least those that did not enter the country on the basis of the Warsaw Pact, immediately begin their withdrawal from the country."⁵¹

Andropov then gave an explanation, as directed from Moscow, but according to Imre Nagy that explanation did not answer the questions of the Hungarian government.

The same report also recorded the response given by Imre Nagy to Andropov:

"If the Soviet government still does not stop the advance of Soviet troops, and fails to give a satisfactory explanation of its actions taken so far, he will propose that Hungary withdraw from the Warsaw Pact, confirm the declaration of neutrality made this morning, and address an appeal to the United Nations, requesting the guarantee of the country's neutrality by the four Great Powers. If the Soviet government, however, orders an immediate stop to the advance of its troops and withdraws them (to be decided by the Hungarian People's Republic according to its military observations), then the Hungarian government will immediately withdraw its appeal to the United Nations, but Hungary shall remain neutral."⁵²

Andropov added the following: Ferenc Erdei and Géza Losonczy fully supported this statement of Imre Nagy, and Tildy approved it with reservations, while Kádár was not at all happy about it.

One hour after the departure of Andropov, the Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs transmitted a communiqué to the Soviet Embassy, stating that "since today Soviet troops with a large contingent crossed the border and entered Hungarian territory, in spite of the determined protest of the government of the Hungarian

People's Republic, the Hungarian People's Republic immediately withdraws from the Warsaw Pact."⁵³

Prime Minister and acting Minister for Foreign Affairs Imre Nagy informed the secretary-general of the United Nations by telegram of the new Soviet invasion, of the discussion with Andropov, of the withdrawal from the Warsaw Pact, and the declaration of neutrality. He requested the secretary-general to inform all member states of the United Nations of these events and to place the Hungarian question on the agenda of the 11th session of the General Assembly, which was to open shortly.⁵⁴

The decisions made by the Hungarian leadership, the request for assistance from the United Nations, the declaration of neutrality, the prospect of withdrawal from the Warsaw Pact and the proposal for new negotiations made no impact on the Soviet leadership, which was preoccupied with the establishment of the new Hungarian puppet government and the providing of information concerning its new policies to other socialist countries. On and after 31 October, preparations continued for the Soviet attack on 4 November by deploying new military forces to Hungary and expanding those already occupying the country.

Declaration of Imre Nagy on the state of war: 4 November, 5.20 a.m.

On 2 November Imre Nagy arranged the basic principles of negotiations with the Soviet government delegation. He proposed that since the government had withdrawn from the Warsaw Pact, the withdrawal of Soviet troops would take place in two stages: troops moved to Hungary recently should leave by 31 December, while troops occupying Hungary by authority of the Warsaw Pact should be withdrawn according to a separate, subsequent, negotiation, which would establish a timetable for full withdrawal.

Imre Nagy requested that Colonel Maléter provide accurate information to him on 3 November, prior to the planned negotiations, on the status of Soviet troops in Hungary. Accordingly, on 3 November, preceding the negotiations, Nagy listened attentively and silently as the map indicating the location of Soviet troops was displayed and evaluated by Major General Kovács. At that time, according to available information, there were three divisions in western Hungary and six to seven divisions in eastern Hungary. Maléter, according to his subsequent testimony, proposed that in case negotiations with the Soviet government delegation failed, this information should be transmitted to the United Nations. But Imre Nagy and Zoltán Tildy rejected the proposal as long as there was the possibility of continuing negotiations. They stated that public discussion should be considered only when negotiations failed completely.⁵⁵

Imre Nagy handed an Austrian document to Maléter, in which the Austrian Embassy confirmed, based on information received from the Austrian govern-

ment, that a demilitarised zone had been established along the Austrian-Hungarian border, which was found acceptable by the Soviet military attaché. This was meant to signal that Hungary could not be invaded from the west.

Colonel Maléter arrived at the conclusion, on the basis of the map showing Soviet troop concentrations, that the newly mobilised Soviet troops were not intended to occupy Hungary or to restore order, but to repulse any possible Western military intervention in Hungary.⁵⁶

Imre Nagy then stated that the government had nominated and the Presidential Council had appointed Colonel Pál Maléter as major general and minister of defence, to take effect on 2 November.

The Hungarian-Soviet negotiation started at noon in the Parliament building. Ferenc Erdei made introductory comments and then Army General Alexandr Malinin presented the position of the Soviet government. He stated that the Soviet government recognised the necessity of withdrawing its troops. The present committee was appointed to discuss the technical issues of troop withdrawal.

According to the Soviet proposal, troop withdrawal would start on 12 November 1956, and be completed on 31 January 1957. He mentioned those factors that in part obstructed, in part retarded, troop withdrawal: railway personnel had refused to handle military trains and the civilian population had refused to provide food to Soviet soldiers, even if paid for. He complained that the residences of the Soviet Embassy in Budapest were arbitrarily occupied, that communications between the embassy and other Soviet agencies were arbitrarily broken, and that the lives of Soviet citizens were endangered. He concluded his complaints by stating that armed insurgents had inflicted losses on those Soviet troops that had crossed the country's border at the request of the Hungarian government. Then he handed over the memorandum containing the conditions of withdrawal in specific terms. He requested verbally, as a point of emphasis, that the weapons confiscated by the insurgents be returned by 10 November. He requested a solemn farewell to the troops being withdrawn and considered indispensable the restoration of memorials to Soviet soldiers who had been killed in battle in Hungary in 1945.

He stated that the next session of negotiations would take place at the Soviet base in Tököl at 10 p.m. on the same day.

Then Pál Maléter spoke. Representing the official position of the Hungarian government, he declared that the Hungarian people insisted on their right to full independence and neutrality. With regard to the conditions proposed, he stated, as a preliminary response, that the Hungarian government would turn over confiscated arms and supplies to the Soviet government as the last train shipment to leave Hungary. He promised that the government would do everything in its power to prevent any harm to Soviet citizens. As a basis of further negotiations, he designated 31 December as the terminal date of completing withdrawal. In conclusion he stated that the Hungarian people were fully committed to a cooperative relationship with all neighbouring countries, including the Soviet Union, on the basis of full equality and independence.

An agreement was reached to issue a joint declaration, stating that additional Soviet troops would not cross the Hungarian border.⁵⁷

The Hungarian delegation accepted the Soviet proposal for the place and the time of the next session of negotiations.

Following the meeting, Maléter left to report to Imre Nagy on the course of negotiations, especially the favourable response to the Hungarian position. Following the report, they reviewed the major points to be discussed in the evening session. Military experts were called in to work out the details.⁵⁸

Members of the delegation, support personnel and military experts drove to the Soviet base. The automobiles and radio car transporting the delegation arrived at the Soviet base, where they were directed to the designated building for negotiations.

The delegation was escorted to a conference room. The Soviet delegation, headed by Malinin, entered the room and without a word of greeting took their seats on the other side of the table, facing the door. The members of the Hungarian delegation were seated with their backs to the entrance door. The atmosphere was very tense.

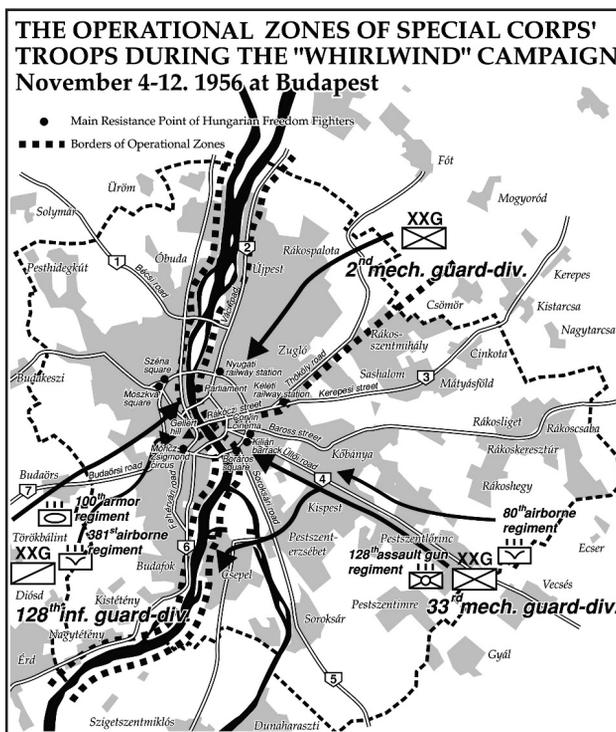
As Pál Maléter started to present the Hungarian position, Malinin interrupted him and apologised, stating that he had not been able to establish communications with his government.⁵⁹ While he spoke, the door was thrown open and Lieutenant General Serov,⁶⁰ head of the Soviet Security Service, rushed into the room with eight security personnel, armed with submachine guns. They pressed their submachine guns to the sides of the Hungarians. They disarmed the Hungarian officers and confiscated their pistols. Malinin and the Soviet delegation left the room.⁶¹

Major General Maléter protested in Russian, but Serov did not respond. He motioned to his men, who escorted the prisoners.⁶² Subsequently, Major General Kovács, at the request of the Soviet command, in the interest of preventing bloodshed, agreed to write to Major Generals Gyula Uszta and Gyula Váradi, requesting them to prevent any further hostilities between the two armies.⁶³ In this letter he stated that it was quite clear that in the case of a Soviet withdrawal the demoralised army would not be able to safeguard the power of the working class. This was code language to indicate that Soviet troop withdrawal would not take place and that Soviet troops would return to Budapest. He requested that all measures be employed to minimise resistance and to support the Soviet troops.⁶⁴

At the request of the Soviet command, Colonel Szücs provided information by map to Soviet authorities on the location of major points of armed resistance in Budapest.⁶⁵

On 4 November 1956, the massive military machine was launched. At 6 a.m. Moscow time, 4 a.m. Budapest time, the password "Thunder" was sounded and thus the military operation "Whirlwind" became operational. Main elements of military units ordered to occupy targeted objects and divisions of the Soviet Special Corps attacked Budapest from several directions at 5 a.m., after breaking the resistance of insurgent groups positioned on the outskirts of the city. Forces of

the 38th Army and 8th Mechanised Army began to occupy the country. In this military operation, parts of 17 Soviet divisions with 60,000 soldiers participated. These included eight mechanised, one armoured, two infantry, two anti-aircraft artillery, two air force, and two airborne divisions.⁶⁶



*Soviet troops participating in military operations in Hungary*⁶⁷

<i>Name of Military Unit</i>	<i>Permanent Station</i>	<i>Time of Alert*</i>	<i>Time of Border Crossing*</i>
Special Corps	Hungary	23 Oct., 8:00 p.m.	
2nd Mechanised Guard Division	Hungary	23 Oct., 8:00 p.m.	
17th Mechanised Guard Division	Hungary	23 Oct., 8:10 p.m.	
177th Bomber Air Guard Division	Hungary	23-24 Oct., night	
195th Fighter Air Guard Division	Hungary	23-24 Oct., night	
128th Infantry Guard Division	Carpathian Military District, Soviet Union	23 Oct., 7:45 p.m.	24 Oct., 12:15–7:00 a.m.
33rd Mechanised Guard Division	Romania	23 Oct., 10:35 p.m.	24 Oct., 11:00–12:00 a.m.
8th Mechanised Army	Carpathian Mil. Dist., SU	28 Oct., night	28 Oct.-4 Nov.
70th Infantry Guard Division	Carpathian Mil. Dist., SU	26 Oct.	28 Oct., 6:00 a.m.
32nd Mechanised Guard Division	Carpathian Mil. Dist., SU	27 Oct.	28-29 Oct.
60th Anti-Aircraft Artillery Division	Carpathian Mil. Dist., SU	27 Oct.	30 Oct.-1 Nov.
11th Mechanised Guard Division	Carpathian Mil. Dist., SU	28 Oct., night	1 Nov.
31st Armoured Division	Carpathian Mil. Dist., SU	1 Nov, night	3 Nov., 8:00 a.m.
35th Mechanised Guard Division	Odessa Mil. Dist., SU	31 Oct., 6:45 p.m.	4 Nov., dawn, via Romania
38th Army**	Carpathian Mil. Dist., SU	23 Oct., 7:45 p.m.	24-27 Oct., 8:00 a.m.
39th Mechanised Guard Division	Carpathian Mil. Dist., SU	23 Oct., 7:45 p.m.	24 Oct.
61st Anti-Aircraft Artillery Division	Carpathian Mil. Dist., SU	23 Oct., 7:45 p.m.	24 Oct.
27th Mechanised Guard Division	Carpathian Mil. Dist., SU	27 Oct.	27 Oct., 8:00 a.m.
7th Airborne Guard Division	Baltic Mil. Dist., SU	19 Oct.	30 Oct., 5:30 p.m., Tököl air base
31st Airborne Guard Division	Carpathian Mil. Dist., SU	28 Oct., 10:00 a.m.	30 Oct., Veszprém airport
1st Railway Guard Detachment	Carpathian Mil. Dist., SU	27 Oct.	29 Oct.

* Time designations are given according to the Hungarian time zone.

** The main forces of the 17th Mechanised Guard Division of the Special Corps were assigned after 28 October 1956 to the 38th Army.

Lieutenant General Károly Janza received a telegram from Tököl at about 3 a.m. on 4 November, which attempted to mislead the Hungarian military and political leadership by stating that the negotiations were proceeding in an orderly, “proper manner”. The general reported it immediately to Imre Nagy.⁶⁸

Subsequently, the commanders or acting administrative officers of airfields reported, one after the other, that Soviet troops were attacking them and demanding that all personnel surrender their weapons. Károly Janza and Major General Gyula Váradi instructed all callers to execute the demands of Soviet troops unconditionally, to surrender their weapons and send negotiators to the Soviet troops.⁶⁹

By this time it had become evident that Soviet troops were about to occupy the city. The staff of Colonel László Zólmoly attempted to prevent Hungarian troops from using arms against Soviet troops. An order to this effect was transmitted to commanders of all three military districts, who acknowledged its receipt.⁷⁰

At 5.20 a.m. Hungarian radio broadcast the following proclamation of Imre Nagy:

“This is Imre Nagy, the chairman of the Council of Ministers of the Hungarian People’s Republic. At dawn today Soviet troops launched an attack against our capital, with the evident intention of overthrowing the legal Hungarian democratic government. Our troops are in combat. The government remains in place. I wish to inform the people and world public opinion of these facts.”⁷¹

János Rainer M., a recognised historian and biographer of Imre Nagy, comments as follows about this proclamation. “The sentence ‘At dawn today, Soviet troops launched an attack against our capital, with the evident intention of overthrowing the legal Hungarian democratic government’ stated nothing less than the fact that the Soviet Union was an aggressive imperialist great power, which was treating Hungary just as Hitler’s Germany treated rump Czechoslovakia or Poland in 1939. As for the statement of Imre Nagy ‘Our troops are in combat’, those who were prepared for the worst (primarily the Budapest insurgents) rightly interpreted it as meaning that they too must fight.”⁷²

The Ministry of Defence interpreted the proclamation of Imre Nagy as a confirmation that Hungarian troops were actually engaged in battle. In order to counteract this interpretation, the top military staff – Lieutenant General Janza, and Major Generals Uszta, Váradi and Kovács – prohibited Hungarian troops in every possible manner from putting up resistance. All staff levels of the Ministry of Defence and the National Air Defence Command transmitted the order to cease fire to their subordinate units.

Not much later, when Soviet troops approached the building of the Ministry of Defence, Janza and Váradi ordered a withdrawal of the guard detachments and turned the tank guns towards the building. Lieutenant General Janza then personally approached the Soviet troops waving a white cloth. But this generous reception did not prevent the Soviet troops from ransacking the building of the ministry, disarming and arresting ministry personnel and transporting officers and generals to the Tököl Soviet base.⁷³ From there the majority of the government delegation was deported by air to the Soviet Union, and many officers removed from the ministry building were freed only on 11 November.

Nevertheless, Major General Béla Király decided to continue resistance in Budapest. As chairman of the Revolutionary Committee for Public Safety and commander of the National Guard, he reported several times during the night to Imre Nagy on the approach and attack of Soviet troops.

He later recalled one of his conversations with the Prime Minister.

“Shortly after midnight we received reports from the external defence perimeter of Budapest that Soviet troops were conducting reconnaissance missions against several defence positions. I then called Prime Minister Imre Nagy again, and the most dramatic conversation of my life took place between us.

‘Mr. Prime Minister! It is now unquestionable that the Soviet Union has launched war against us. The Soviet front lines are attacking the external defence perimeter of Budapest. We have no reliable communications with all defence positions and districts. Since we have instructed our troops up to this time not to fire, many commanders are probably uncertain. It is possible that their orders may come too late and Soviet troops may overrun them. We have one alternative: the Prime Minister or I should immediately issue a radio proclamation. Let us inform our troops that we are at war with the Soviet Union. Then our troops can conduct a defensive battle with a clear motivation.’

‘This is a political decision. As a General Staff officer, you must know that this matter is reserved to the government and is not the concern of the military. I prohibit you from making such a proclamation.’

‘I am absolutely clear about this. It is for this reason that I proposed that the Prime Minister issue this proclamation, or if you wish, I will issue it with your consent.’

‘No. We shall under no circumstances issue such a proclamation. This would entail a war. We do not want and we cannot conduct war with the Soviet Union. Please keep me informed of further events!’⁷⁴

The commander-in-chief of the National Guard called Imre Nagy again when he observed a Soviet tank column approach the Parliament building.

“Mr. Prime Minister! Soviet troops have broken through the defensive perimeter and have penetrated deeply into the capital,” Béla Király told Imre Nagy. “A tank column is just passing our building and its front is approaching the Parliament building. I am counting the tanks.”⁷⁵ After a short pause, in a determined voice Nagy said: “I do not need any more reports!”

Béla Király attempted to unravel the meaning of the statement that at a time of enemy aggression the Prime Minister did not wish to receive further reports from the commander of the Budapest armed forces. The major general did not know – could not know – that, prior to the radio proclamation, the Prime Minister had

left the Parliament building with several associates and had taken refuge in the Yugoslav Embassy of Budapest, accepting the offer of asylum.

Béla Király then called a meeting of the members of the Revolutionary Council for Public Safety and requested that they join him in strengthening the National Guard and resisting Soviet aggression.⁷⁶ Béla Király subsequently explained the objective of continued resistance.

“Even if this does not sound heroic, I must state frankly that my purpose in sustaining the command was not to lead a guerrilla war, nor to extend the suffering of the people by stubborn battles. My single objective was to preserve an organisation on which Imre Nagy could rely in case an acceptable compromise came about. This was the reason for fortifying the Szabadság Hill area. I was ready to fight to keep the command alive as an organisation until the appropriate time.”⁷⁷

Those members of the command of the National Guard who joined Béla Király organised the defence of a military post in the Buda hills. They established contact with National Guard forces in the area. 150 national guardsmen positioned in the nearby Communist Party School decided to accept the authority of the National Guard command.⁷⁸ They encountered an army first lieutenant, who reported to the major general that 200 armed men were ready to join his command. Major General Király learned that an anti-aircraft gun was prepared for action in Csillebérc. He called the commander and asked whether they could target the city. The captain answered that the city was indeed targeted, but his personnel had fled.

A group of selected national guardsmen soon arrived at the gun position. They reported that they were sent by Béla Király. Later Béla Király ordered the transfer of the gun to Nagykovácsi, the proposed centre of his command, but the commander refused to execute the order. He concealed the firing pins and hid in a cellar until the arrival of Soviet troops. Later Captain Vass turned over the firing pins to the Soviet commander.⁷⁹

Béla Király temporarily left his command at Nagykovácsi to contact members of the National Guard and other potential supporters. He visited the Border Guard post in Adyliget. His objective was the coordination of national guardsmen and border guards. But the post command immediately notified the Soviet command of his visit.⁸⁰ Border Guard Colonel János Szalva, the national commander of the Border Guard, reported: “Béla Király is here and the insurgents are streaming into the hills.” He requested assistance for fighting the National Guard units commanded by Béla Király. The Soviet command replied that they should attempt to fight the National Guard on their own. Colonel Szalva reported, however, that he could not fight tanks with infantry.⁸¹

Béla Király then attempted to establish contact with National Guard sub-units, in order to strengthen communications. He proceeded to Normafa in Buda, where he met a radio specialist, who offered to repair radio facilities on Kakukk Hill, but he was unable to do so. Then Béla Király visited national guardsmen in the Vörös

Csillag Hotel, where he encountered a group of insurgents from Széna Square (a prominent insurgent location in Buda). They reported that other insurgents were in a firing position on Martinovics Hill, since an attack was expected from János Hospital. Béla Király then drove there and ordered the insurgents to re-join the others. He learned that a third group was already in Nagykovácsi, where they would be instrumental in strengthening his command.

Before proceeding to Nagykovácsi, however, he arranged for the conversion of a radio interference post on Széchenyi Hill to a radio transmitter. He then broadcast a statement:

“The National Guard command is functional. The commander, Béla Király, requests the police and army units to assist the National Guard, as the single official security organisation.”⁸²

In his radio address, he severely criticised Soviet troops and called on revolutionary forces to make a final effort at resistance. Miklós Tancsin, who made the transmitter operational, recorded the message. Béla Király then assigned Tancsin responsibility for establishing a communications network for national guardsmen in the area and for providing them with radio transmitters. He received a personal instruction to deploy an R-40 radio transmitter, obtained from the Border Guard post, to the tourist shelter on Nagy-Szénás Hill.⁸³

The commander then established contact with National Guard units near Nagykovácsi. He issued the following instructions: to continue the organisation of National Guard units, but refrain from individual actions. “Uncle Szabó”, the commander of the Széna Square insurgents in Buda, usually visited him at noon and reported on the status of their forces and on continued fighting activity in the city.

According to Peter Gosztonyi’s report of a conversation with Soviet General Malashenko, Soviet military leaders were disappointed in that

“...they could not capture Béla Király on 4 November. They were concerned about his activities, since they regarded him as an efficient organiser and an excellent soldier. They instructed István Bata, the former Hungarian minister of defence, called back from Moscow, to call him by telephone and persuade him to surrender and cease resistance. It was senseless. His stubbornness would simply increase the suffering of the civilian population. Király rejected the offer. This led to the battle at Nagykovácsi on 10 November, where Malashenko committed several regiments with the order to destroy Király and his troops.”⁸⁴

In the fighting following this battle ten national guardsmen died and thirteen were wounded, according to Soviet sources. Soviet troops took possession of five motor vehicles and fifteen radio transmitters of the National Guard.⁸⁵ The command of the National Guard moved westward from Nagykovácsi to the Bakony

hills. In the second half of November Király dissolved the command near Pápa, but several hundred national guards fled with him to Austria, where they surrendered their arms to the Austrian authorities.⁸⁶

Notes

1. *Döntés a Kremlben, 1956. A szovjet pártelnökség vitái Magyarországról* [Decision in the Kremlin, 1956. The Soviet Party Presidium's Debates about Hungary], eds. Vyatcheslav Sereda and János Rainer M. (1956-os Intézet, Budapest, 1996), p. 35.
2. A "Jelcin-dosszié". *Szovjet dokumentumok 1956-ról* [The Yeltsin File. Soviet Documents on 1956], eds. Éva Gál, András B. Hegedüs, György Litván and János Rainer M. (Századvég Kiadó – 1956-os Intézet, Budapest, 1993), pp. 54-55.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 54.
4. *Döntés a Kremlben, 1956*, eds. Sereda and Rainer M., p. 36.
5. *Ibid.*, pp. 36-37. Kaganovich: "We must provide guidance to Kádár, so that he can neutralise..."; Bulganin: "Kádár hesitated. It is most important that we demand greater decisiveness from Kádár..."
6. *Ibid.*, pp. 38-39.
7. *Ibid.*, pp. 43-44.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 39.
9. *Ibid.*
10. *Ibid.*, p. 42.
11. *Ibid.* Khrushchev added the following arguments about avoiding military intervention: "The British and French are starting to stir up trouble in Egypt. Let us not become involved in the same situation. But let us not nourish illusions. We shall preserve our image..."
12. The reports of Serov, Mikoyan and Suslov. See *Hiányzó lapok 1956 történetéből. Dokumentumok a volt SZKP KB levéltárából* [Missing Pages from the History of 1956. Documents from the Archives of the CPSU CC], eds. Vyatcheslav Sereda and Alexander Stikalin (Móra Ferenc Ifjúsági Könyvkiadó, Budapest, 1993), pp. 83-90, pp. 122-126.
13. *Döntés a Kremlben, 1956*, eds. Sereda and Rainer M., pp. 51-53.

14. *Ibid.*, p. 53.
15. *Ibid.*
16. *Ibid.*, p. 55.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 56.
18. *Ibid.*
19. *Ibid.*, p. 57.
20. *Ibid.*
21. *Népszava*, 1 November 1956, cited in *1956 a sajtó tükrében* [1956 as Reflected in the Press], eds. Lajos Izsák and József Szabó (Kossuth Könyvkiadó, Budapest, 1989), p. 201.
22. *Ibid.*
23. *Döntés a Kremlben, 1956*, eds. Sereda and Rainer M., p. 62.
24. *Ibid.*, pp. 62-64.
25. Minister of Foreign Affairs Imre Horváth was scheduled to fly to New York, but his flight was forced to land in Moscow. Personal communication of Nikolai Dzuba.
26. *Döntés a Kremlben, 1956*, eds. Sereda and Rainer M., p. 64.
27. *A forradalom hangja. Magyarországi rádióadások 1956. október 23. – november 9.* [The Voice of the Revolution. Hungarian Radio Broadcasts 23 October – 9 November 1956], eds. László Varga and János Kenedi (Századvég Kiadó, Budapest, 1989), p. 371.
28. *Döntés a Kremlben, 1956*, eds. Sereda and Rainer M., p. 75.
29. *Ibid.*
30. *Ibid.*, p. 76.
31. *Ibid.*, p. 79.

32. *Ibid.*, p. 81.
33. *Ibid.*, p. 98.
34. *Ibid.*
35. Central Archives of the General Staff of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation (henceforth: CAGS), 32 f. 701291. op. 15. d. 392. Cited by Aleksandr Kirov, “*Szovjet katonai beavatkozás Magyarországon 1956.*” [Soviet Military Intervention in Hungary 1956.] In: *Szovjet katonai intervenció 1956* [Soviet Military Intervention in 1956] (H&T, Budapest, 2001), p. 139.
36. The declaration of the Soviet government published on 30 October 30 stated the following: “...The Soviet government, together with the Soviet people, deeply regrets that the events in Hungary have caused bloodshed. The Soviet government has approved, in response to the request of the Hungarian government, the deployment of Soviet military forces in Budapest, but since the continued presence of Soviet forces in Hungary may serve as a pretext for increased escalation of the crisis, the Soviet government has instructed its military command to withdraw Soviet forces from Budapest as soon as the Hungarian government considers it to be appropriate. At the same time, the Soviet government is prepared to negotiate with the government of the Hungarian People’s Republic [...] concerning the presence of Soviet troops in Hungary.” *1956 a sajtó tükrében*, eds. Izsák and Szabó, p. 167.
37. CAGS, 37 f. 697193, op. 13. d. 141. Cited in Kirov, *Szovjet katonai beavatkozás*, p. 142.
38. Soviet troops were not yet withdrawn completely from Budapest on 31 October, when the decision in favour of violent military intervention and the establishment of a new puppet government was made in Moscow.
39. CAGS, 32. f. 701291, op. 16. d. 60. Cited in Kirov, *Szovjet katonai beavatkozás*, p. 143.
40. CAGS, 32. f. 701291, op. 16. d. 153. Cited in Kirov, *Szovjet katonai beavatkozás*, p. 144.
41. CAGS, 32. f. 701291, op. 16. d. 16, Cited in Kirov, *Szovjet katonai beavatkozás*, p. 146.
42. Y. I. Malashenko, “A Különleges Hadtest Budapest tüzében – Egy szemtanú visszaemlékezései” [The Special Corps under Fire in Budapest. Recollections

of an Eyewitness], in *Szovjet katonai intervenció 1956* [Soviet Military Intervention 1956] (Budapest, 2001), pp. 249-250.

43. *Állambiztonsági Szolgálatok Történeti Levéltára* [Historical Archive of the State Security Services] (henceforth: ÁBTL), V-150005/4, pp. 233-234: “Zólomy László vallomása” [Statement of László Zólomy].
44. *Magyar Nemzeti Levéltár* [Hungarian National Archives] (henceforth: MNL), OL XX-5-h. vizsgálati iratok 26/89, pp. 95-100: “Zólomy László vallomása” [Statement of László Zólomy]
45. ÁBTL V-150005/14, p. 102: “Kovács Imre vallomása” [Statement of Imre Kovács].
46. ÁBTL V-150005/14, p. 130: “Oravecz István ht. katona vallomása” [Statement of Soldier István Oravecz].
47. Zólomy László (1916–1990), katonatiszt. 1956-ig a néphadsereg vezérkari tisztje. Október 23-án a Magyar Rádió épülete védelmének katonai parancsnoka, 25-től a vezérkarnál, majd Király Béla mellett szolgált. Nov. 7-én a szovjet katonai hatóságok letartóztatták. Tíz év börtönbüntetésre ítélték. Szabadulása után fordító.
48. ÁBTL V-150005/4, p. 164: “Zólomy László vallomása” [Statement of László Zólomy].
49. MNL OL, XX-5-h V.17. d. 22.k. p. 134: “Maléter Pál vallomása” [Statement of Pál Maléter].
50. *Hiányzó lapok*, eds. Sereda and Stikalin, pp. 127-128. Andropov was called to appear at the Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs regarding the repeated Soviet troop movements on 30 October at midnight for the first time. The Hungarian minister of foreign affairs requested an explanation. Andropov stated that he lacked information about this matter. Following his return to the Soviet Embassy, Andropov was informed by telephone that reports about Soviet troop movements were mistaken. A “Jelcin-dosszié”, eds. Gál, Hegedüs, Litván and Rainer M., pp. 67-68.
51. *Hiányzó lapok*, eds. Sereda and Stikalin, p. 127.
52. *Ibid.*, pp. 127-128.
53. *Ibid.*, p. 128.

54. *Népszabadság*, 2 November 1956, cited in 1956 a sajtó tükrében, eds. Izsák and Szabó, p. 245.
55. MNL OL, XX-5-h V. 17. d. 22. k. p. 144: “Maléter Pál vallomása” [Statement of Pál Maléter].
56. MNL OL, XX-5-h V. 17. d. 22. k. p. 145: “Maléter Pál vallomása” [Statement of Pál Maléter].
57. MNL OL, XX-5-h V. 17. d. 22. k. pp. 24-25: “Maléter Pál vallomása” [Statement of Pál Maléter].
58. Colonel Lajos Hersiczky, a Közlekedési Minisztérium Katonai Főosztályának vezetője, Colonel Sándor Garai, a Honvédelmi Minisztérium Üzemanyag Szolgáltatásának vezetője.
59. Personal communication of István Kovács.
60. Army General Ivan F. Serov, chief of the KGB, performed a key role in the preparation of the suppression of the Hungarian revolution and in the execution of retaliation.
61. Personal communication of István Kovács.
62. Miklós Szücs, *Ezredes voltam 1956-ban a vezérkarnál* [I was a General Staff Colonel in 1956] (Szabad Tér, Budapest, 1989), p. 125.
63. ÁBTL V. 150005/1, p. 178: “Kovács István és tsai. Kovács István vallomása” [István Kovács and His Associates. Statement of István Kovács].
64. *Ibid.*
65. Szücs, *Ezredes voltam*, p. 127.
66. CAGS, 32. f. 701291. op. 15-17. d. Cited in Kirov, *Szovjet katonai beavatkozás*, pp. 199-200. *Döntés a Kremlben*, 1956, eds. Sereda and Rainer M., p. 142.
67. CAGS, 32. f. 701291. op. 15-17. d. Cited in Kirov, *Szovjet katonai beavatkozás*, pp. 199-200.
68. ÁBTL V-150006, pp. 250-252: “Váradi Gyula feljegyzése” [Notes of Gyula Váradi].

69. *Ibid.*
70. ÁBTL V-150005/4, pp. 267-268: “Zólmoy László vallomása” [Statement of László Zólmoy].
71. A forradalom hangja, eds. Varga and Kenedi, p. 487.
72. János Rainer M., Nagy Imre. *Politikai életrajz II. 1953–1958* [Imre Nagy. Political Biography, Vol. II., 1953–1958] (1956-os Intézet, Budapest, 1999), pp. 331-332.
73. ÁBTL V-150006/14, pp. 21-22: “Váradi Gyula beadványa” [Submission of Gyula Váradi].
74. Béla Király, *Honvédségből Néphadsereg* [From Honvéd Army to People’s Army] (CO-NEXUS Print-teR Kft. Budapest, 1989), pp. 279-280.
75. *Ibid.* p. 280.
76. MNL OL XX-5-h Nagy Imre és tsai [Imre Nagy and His Associates] V. 26. k, p. 175: “Lantos József vallomása” [Statement of József Lantos].
77. Király, *Honvédségből Néphadsereg*, p. 285.
78. MNL OL XX-5-h Nagy Imre és tsai [Imre Nagy and His Associates] V. 26. k, p. 212: “Marián István vallomása” [Statement of István Marián].
79. *Ibid.*, pp. 214-216: “Vass János vallomása” [Statement of János Vass].
80. Király, *Honvédségből Néphadsereg*, p. 291.
81. MNL OL XX-5-h Nagy Imre és tsai [Imre Nagy and His Associates] V. 27. k, p. 30: “Bocsák Antal vallomása” [Statement of Antal Bocsák].
82. *Ibid.*, V. 26. k, 76-78, p. 84: “Oláh Vilmos vallomása” [Statement of Vilmos Oláh].
83. *Ibid.*, V. 27. k, pp. 27-30: “Tancsin Miklós vallomása” [Statement of Miklós Tancsin].
84. Péter Gosztonyi, “Moszkvai találkozásom egy szovjet tábornokkal” [My Meeting in Moscow with a Soviet General], *Élet és Irodalom*, 15 May 1992, p. 6.

85. Y. I. Malashenko, "A Különleges Hadtest Budapest tűzében – Egy szemtanú visszaemlékezései" [The Special Corps under Fire in Budapest. Recollections of an Eyewitness], in *Szovjet katonai intervenció 1956* [Soviet Military Intervention 1956] (Budapest, 2001), p. 274.
86. Béla Király, *Amire nincs ige – visszaemlékezések, 1912–2004* [Words Are Inadequate – Recollections, 1912–2004] (HVG Könyvek, Budapest, 2004), p. 260.

Losses of life in the war and during the reprisals

Hungarian casualties during the Soviet intervention

The Soviet military interventions in Hungary resulted in the following losses in life and destruction. Eleven years after World War II the city of Budapest suffered major damage. Close to 20,000 people were injured, and more than 2500 people died.

In the course of battles in Budapest 1945 persons died between October 1956 and January 1957. In October the number of deaths was 757, in November 926, in December 36 and in January 6, while 220 died at undetermined dates. 34.5% of deaths occurred in the 8th and 9th districts (435 in the 8th and 234 in the 9th district). 39% died in October, 47.5% in November.

The number of civilian casualties in Budapest is estimated at 1569, 20.6% of whom were 19 years of age or younger. 18.4% of the dead were 20-24 years of age, and 11.2% were 25-29 years of age. In total, 50.2% were less than 30 years of age.¹

Total casualties included the following number of persons serving in Hungarian military or security organisations: the Hungarian army 279, the State Security Authority 90, the police 41, the Border Guard 12, and prison guards 1. The total was 423. 105 members of the Hungarian army fighting in support of the insurgents died in battle. 37.6% of army personnel died in the course of fighting Soviet forces or Hungarian units supporting them. Soviet troops arrested several Hungarian soldiers after 4 November and executed them. 66 soldiers were executed or died in battles between government forces, representing 23% of all Hungarian military casualties.

Between 23 October and 4 November, 48 members of the Hungarian Internal State Security Authority died and 119 were injured. Of these, 16 were executed by lynching, 6 committed suicide and 26 died as a result of shooting or by accident.² 12 or 15 members of the Border Guard died in October and November. 2-4 persons died in battle with insurgents and 14 were wounded in fighting at the Budapest Party Centre.

Casualties of Soviet troops

According to the casualty list of the Soviet Ministry of Defence, 7349 officers and 51,472 non-commissioned officers (hereafter referred to as NCOs) and soldiers participated in the military operation. That is, however, an understatement. The total casualties were 1982. Of this number 655 died, of whom 87 were officers, and 568 were NCOs and soldiers. 67, including 5 officers, were missing. 1260 were wounded.³

About 65% of the casualties of Soviet troops activated in the 8th and 9th districts occurred in these districts. These Soviet contingents consisted of the 2nd

and 33rd Mechanised Divisions. This indicates that 350 of the Soviet soldiers fighting in these south Pest districts died, 800-850 were wounded and 30 were missing. Compared to the total Soviet casualties in Budapest, Soviet troops incurred 80% of their casualties in fighting insurgents in the 8th and 9th districts.⁴

In the opinion of Lieutenant General Yevgeny Malashenko – as colonel in 1956 he was the acting chief of staff of the Special Army Corps – during the Budapest operations, “more than half of the casualties were incurred in October (October 24-29) by units of the Special Corps. The 33rd Mechanised Division under General Obaturov also suffered heavy casualties. They faced the most complex situation, since they were active in the central districts, where several armed groups were stationed, and initially they were not always successful in organising their operations. The 7th and 31st Airborne Guard Divisions incurred 85 dead, and 12 were missing; 265 were wounded. The 33rd Mechanised Division lost 14 tanks and automatic guns, 9 armoured transport vehicles, 13 guns, 4 BM-13 (ballistic missile throwers), 6 anti-aircraft guns, 45 machine guns, 31 vehicles and 5 motorcycles.”⁵

Reprisals during the Kádár regime

On 4 November the Revolutionary Worker-Peasant Government under János Kádár, created by the Soviet authorities as a puppet government, promised impunity to participants in the revolution, arguing that the insurgents had “initiated their uprising against the rule of the Rákosi-Gerő clique and not against the institutions of the People’s Republic.” Before this promise was made, however, Minister of Defence Major General Pál Maléter and his delegation and escorts were arrested, with the connivance of the Hungarian authorities. (The arrests took place with the collaboration of László Piros, defence minister up to 27 October, and state security officers who defected to the Soviets.)

The Soviet attack, launched without prior notice, claimed the lives of hundreds of unarmed people. Mass deportations took place in the first hours of the invasion, including disarmed soldiers.

Colonel Malashenko wrote the following in his recollections on the revolution and World War II.

“Soviet troops assisted in restoring public order and social order in Hungary. Officers and soldiers in the ranks executed their military duties. They did not consider whether their actions were justified; they did not question their orders. In those years many remembered that Hungary had fought as an ally of Fascist Germany against our country in the last war... they considered their actions as a continuation of their earlier fighting.”⁶

Soviet troops carried out their military operations against the Hungarian people and actions of reprisals in accordance with methods used in World War II and

the post-war period, regardless of ideological and circumstantial factors. Reprisals during the revolution and subsequently were a continued form of violence utilised prior to 23 October 1956, including the objectives, methods and implementation of reprisals.

Intimidation, repression and reprisal, as practiced prior to the revolution, motivated political decisions and their implementation between 23 October and 4 November. These acts of violence included the activation of Soviet military and Hungarian security forces, martial law procedures, the shooting of defenceless, unarmed civilians, the disarming of insurgents, arrests of civilians, immediate executions, and destructive attacks without rational justification.

The use of violence was a common method of resolving functional “disturbances” of the communist system in the final phase of World War II and even more in the post-1948 period, during the 1950s, at the time of the establishment of the communist dictatorship, when numerous methods of violence were used to intimidate and repress the uncommitted. The suppression, intimidation and repression of all persons, social groups, organisations and initiatives endangering the power position of the Party was a central element of the mentality and activity of the Party leadership.

According to research by Frigyes Kahler, 16,748 persons were convicted on charges of crimes against the state in the period from 1 January 1957 to 31 December 1960, corresponding to an interval somewhat more than one half of the reprisal period.⁷ Another source claims that a total of 26,621 persons were convicted in the entire period of reprisals. The distribution of 87.4% of the charges for political convictions is as follows.⁸

Convicts according to Types of Charge (1956–1963)

<i>Charges</i>	<i>Number convicted</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Illegal border crossing and assistance, failure to report, smuggling of persons	8,031	30.2%
Agitation, including agitation against agricultural cooperatives	6,949	26.1%
Conspiracy, rebellion	4,661	17.5%
Concealment of weapons	3,577	13.4%
Treason, assistance to the enemy, espionage	44	0.2%

Therefore it is fully justified to conclude that the reprisals following the revolution were part of a continuous process of persecution administered through legal procedures, but they were much more ruthless and relentless than those prior to 1956. Their implementation exceeded all expectations.⁹

The ideology of reprisal

While Soviet authorities conducted investigations of those arrested, several of whom, including soldiers, were executed on site, fundamental long-term decisions were made about the social-political future of Hungary under the close supervision of the Soviet leadership and the participation of the Communist elite. These decisions were based on the general evaluation of the revolution. The procedures and methods used in the course of the “administration of justice” provide substantial evidence concerning the organic relationship between reprisals prior to, during and following the revolution.

The Political Committee of the Hungarian Socialist Workers’ Party (to use the new name of the Party, adopted on 31 October 1956) continued the pre-revolutionary practice of “class-based administration of justice” and gave first priority to the identification and punishment of “class-enemy elements” who had attempted to restore their power during the revolution – aristocrats, landowners, capitalists, factory owners, bankers, Fascist and bourgeois party leaders, political and military leaders of the Horthy system, and military and police officers – and characterised them as “those social underclass elements who participated in counter-revolutionary armed activities”. At the same time it completely neglected to disclose the real issues and terminate the criminal political course of the recent past.¹⁰

Political and judicial organisations charged with the mission of implementing the prescribed approach to reprisals, in spite of their strenuous efforts to do so, did not meet the expectations of the Political Committee. A statement of the Political Committee on its resolution of 10 December 1957, relating to reprisal policies,¹¹ expressed the following criticism of judicial procedures: “Our authorities performed quantitative instead of qualitative activities.”

The resolution then stated:

“Our courts and prosecutors fail to employ the policies of our government consistently to punish with the full rigour of the law hostile, class-enemy and lumpen elements, as well as those of the working classes who have committed capital offenses. At the same time our judicial authorities fail to utilise the policy of our government to employ the instruments of education in the case of working-class persons who committed minor transgressions, and if punishment is used, then it should emphasise educational procedures.

In order to achieve these objectives it is mandatory to take the following actions.

The merciless severity of the law should be employed in the case of class-enemy and lumpen elements who have committed counter-revolutionary crimes. In judging the actions of these persons, their class identity will be considered as an aggravating circumstance.

The full severity of the law should be employed in the case of working-class persons who have committed capital or serious counter-revolutionary crimes during the counter-revolution or will do so in the future.

In the case of confused, misled workers who have committed minor crimes with limited impact, considering their class identity, their work record and behaviour, educational procedures should be employed and their sentence should be educationally motivated. In the case of such persons, courts should utilise suspended prison sentences, fines and, if appropriate, compulsory correctional-educational work assignment. In the case of misled workers committing minor crimes, short-term prison sentences should be employed if local conditions (public order and public stability) require it and such sentences are in accord with the law.¹²

Accordingly, in the case of former officers of the People's Army, their officer training in the pre-war military academy and service in the pre-1945 "Horthy army" were considered as aggravating circumstances. Major Antal Pálincás (Pallavicini) was sentenced to life imprisonment, but the appeals court changed it to the death sentence in part due to his aristocratic origins, his training in the pre-war military academy and his service in the pre-1945 Hungarian army.

In spite of the strenuous efforts of the courts and prosecutors to comply with the instructions of the political leadership, the dominant majority of those convicted were not "class enemies" but were of working-class origin. This is clearly evident from a review of the social characteristics of those who were executed. Of 229 persons executed, excluding 32 for whom reliable data were not available, only 16 can be classified as "class enemies," including 6 of wealthy peasant origin, indicating that 7% of the total were in that group. Those executed included 10 middle peasants, 19 poor peasants, 28 landless impoverished agrarian workers, 23 civil servants or intellectuals, 28 employed in small-scale industries, 8 service workers, 9 railway workers, 54 industrial workers and 9 unskilled or temporary workers.¹³

Legal institutions of reprisal

The political leadership transformed criminal law procedures in the interests of implementing the ideological objectives and efficient implementation of reprisals. This process consisted of five steps. The first one was Decree 22 of 1956 on simplified criminal procedures, effective 12 November 1956, according to which persons charged with murder, intentional manslaughter, arson, robbery, plunder or illegal use of firearms, if they were caught in the act or if evidence was immediately available, could be tried without formal indictment.¹⁴ This decree did not result in any convictions. According to Tibor Zinner, the explanation was that "the authorities at this time were unable to break popular resistance and the security authorities were incapable of performing these procedures. The dissolved ÁVH (State Security Authority) had not yet been replaced and judicial authorities had not yet been restructured."¹⁵

According to Decree 28 of 1956, published on 11 December 1956, military

court councils were authorised, from 15 December 1956 to 3 November 1957,¹⁶ to act as summary courts according to the rules of martial law in cases of murder, intentional manslaughter, arson, robbery (plunder), actions of intentional damage to plants of the public interest or plants providing for basic needs of the public, illegal possession of firearms, ammunition or explosives, and association or organisation to commit the designated acts. Persons who failed to report the possession of firearms and ammunition by others could also be tried by martial law. The sentence for crimes under the jurisdiction of summary courts was death.¹⁷

Decree 12 of 1957 on the extension of criminal procedures relating to the departure from the territory of the country made it a new crime to publicise illegal border crossing, to provide systematic or businesslike assistance in illegal border crossing or to fail to report illegal border crossing.¹⁸ An expert on this issue stated that the introduction of martial law procedures was “a typical case of the legislation and decrees of the Stalinist police state. The ‘failure to report’ decree provided investigators and prosecutors with unlimited authority to expand the circle of those found guilty. Relatives and family members also became punishable.”¹⁹

Decree 4 of 1957 on accelerated criminal procedure, effective 15 January 1957, ordered that in addition to crimes under the jurisdiction of summary courts, death sentences were to be imposed for crimes “to intentionally endanger public transportation, to organise against the state, to associate for that purpose, and to engage in revolt and disloyalty”. In place of death sentences, regular courts could impose sentences of life imprisonment, or five to ten years’ imprisonment, taking into account all the circumstances. Accelerated procedures were limited to special councils of county and Budapest judiciaries.

Accelerated procedure was intended to introduce a more effective practice than that of summary courts. Its introduction made it possible to initiate martial law proceedings against anyone more than once. This provision indicates the dissatisfaction of the political leadership with martial law proceedings. The decree stated that “if the summary court transfers a case to a regular court, the prosecutor may propose the utilisation of accelerated procedure”. Accelerated procedure was practiced in five counties and Budapest.²⁰

Decree 25 of 1957 on the establishment and procedures of the People’s Court Council of the Supreme Court, effective 6 April 1957, according to a note of the Legislative Division of the Court Division of the Ministry of Justice, was to ensure uniform judgments of cases relating to “counter-revolutionary crimes.” According to the decree, the People’s Court Council was authorised to proceed as a court of first instance in all cases referred to it by the president of the Supreme Court and in cases of indictment by the highest prosecutor. The highest prosecutor was entitled to appeal against the legally binding judgment of any court to the People’s Court Council. “With the establishment of the People’s Court Council of the Supreme Court a special court was created, which executed the instructions of the political leadership to the fullest extent.”²¹

Finally, Decree 34 of 1957 completed these instruments of reprisal. It estab-

lished people's court councils in Budapest and county courts, which "as special courts, instructed to implement the directives of the political leadership, were capable of rendering judgments in all political or politically designated cases. The composition of the court guaranteed that the sentence demanded in advance was actually imposed."²²

In addition to these judicial procedures, special police measures were introduced. Public security arrests of those persons were authorised "whose activity or behaviour endangered public order, public security and, especially, productive work activity and transportation. With the approval of public prosecutors, police authorities ordered these arrests for a period of six months, which could be extended by the Ministry of the Interior with the approval of the highest prosecutor."²³ Following the suppression of the revolution, 12,900 persons were placed in detention camps.²⁴

It is impossible to estimate the number of those persons dismissed from their positions as a reprisal for their revolutionary activity or that of those who suffered discrimination decades later as a form of reprisal against their parents.

Conclusions

I would like to call attention to two important points. In reviewing the military trials, I repeatedly observed efforts to apply extra-legal and legal forms of reprisal for losses suffered by Soviet troops. The principle of vengeance was applied most consistently in the case of the resistance at Juta Hill,²⁵ in the trial of János Mecséri and his associates. On 4 November 1956, eleven Soviet soldiers lost their lives at the battle of Juta Hill and therefore reprisal instructions ordered the execution of eleven Hungarian soldiers. Of eleven death sentences imposed by the court of second instance, the Presidential Council changed three sentences to life imprisonment. One person was sentenced to death *in absentia*. Seven soldiers were executed on 15 November 1958.²⁶

I also discerned a close relationship between the number of those executed for participation in the revolution and the number of those whom the Kádár regime declared to have died as martyrs. 229 persons were executed for participation in the Revolution.²⁷ Below is a listing by indictments.

The close approximation of the number of those executed and the number of those declared martyrs²⁸ – 229 and 224 – suggests the conclusion that one of the main objectives of the reprisal was vengeance for "those who died in defence of the regime", which meant that for each "martyr" at least one execution was to be carried out.

*Distribution of Persons
Convicted and Executed according to Indictments*

<i>Indictment</i>	<i>Number Convicted</i>	<i>% of</i>
Armed insurrection to 4 November	29	15
Armed insurrection after 4 November	28	15
Armed insurrection	60	32
Actions after 4 November	10	5
Organisational activities after 4 November	15	8
International contacts after 4 November	9	5
Leadership	22	12
Concealment of weapons	15	8
Total	188	100

Convictions and Executions for Other “Crimes”

Participation in lynching	22
Conventional crimes	9
Data communication	4
Innocent victims	6
Total	41

János Kádár made the following statement concerning the reprisal and the number of those executed in a conversation with Soviet First Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev on 25 September 1985 in Moscow:

“We took severe measures. According to prevailing laws, 280 death sentences were imposed. The Party did not intervene in the court procedures, but when the number of death sentences reached the number of those who had died as innocent victims in the counter-revolutionary events, I requested the comrades to stop.”²⁹

It should be noted that the statement that the Party did not intervene in the judicial process was clearly not true.

A review of those classified as martyrs indicates that at least 30% of soldiers and border guards and 10% of state security personnel were not killed in battles against the insurgents, but in fighting between Soviet and Hungarian government forces and between Hungarian army and security forces as a result of organisational confusion.³⁰

Enlargement of the number of “martyrs” was motivated, in addition to the intent to mislead the public, by efforts to increase the number of those executed and thereby justify the principle of vengeance.

Notes

1. *1956 kézikönyve III. Megtorlás és emlékezés* [Handbook of 1956. Vol. III. Reprisal and Memorial], eds. András B. Hegedüs, Péter Kende, György Litván and János Rainer M. (1956-os Intézet, Budapest, 1996), pp. 303-305.
2. “VI. Karhatalmi szekció, Belügyminisztérium és szervei újjászervezése a hatalom megszilárdításáért kifejtett tevékenysége. Száma: 13167/142/84” [Section 6 on Security Organisations. Reorganisation of the Ministry of the Interior and Its Organisations. Activities to Consolidate State Power], and Police Major General Ferenc Tóth, “A BM karhatalom újjászervezése az ellenforradalom leveréséért, a hatalom megszilárdításáért kifejtett tevékenysége” [Reorganisation of the Ministry of the Interior’s Security System. Its Activities to Suppress the Counter-revolution and to Consolidate State Power], in *Történeti hűséggel, politikai felelősséggel. Az MSZMP Belügyminisztériumi Bizottság elméleti tanácskozása 1982. június 16-án* [With Historic Loyalty and Political Responsibility. Conference of the Hungarian Socialist Workers’ Party Committee of the Ministry of the Interior, 16 June 1982] (BM Könyvkiadó, Budapest, 1985).
3. Aleksandr Kirov, “Szovjet katonai beavatkozás Magyarországon 1956.” [Soviet Military Interference Intervention in Hungary 1956.] In: *Szovjet katonai intervenció 1956* [Soviet Military Intervention in 1956] (H&T Kiadó, Budapest, 2001), pp. 201-202.
4. *Ibid.*, pp. 200-201.
5. Y. I. Malashenko, “A Különleges Hadtest Budapest tüzében – Egy szemtanú visszaemlékezései” [The Special Corps under Fire in Budapest. Recollections of an Eyewitness], in *Szovjet katonai intervenció 1956* [Soviet Military Intervention 1956] (Budapest, 2001), p. 276.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 283.
7. According to research by Frigyes Kahler, 16,195 of those convicted were sentenced to prison terms. Convictions were imposed on 4917 for agitation, on 4563 for illegal border crossing, on 4223 for organisational activity, on 2452 for concealing weapons, on 366 for agitation against agricultural cooperatives, and on 32 for espionage. Cf. Tibor Zinner, “A megtorlás vége a konszolidáció kezdete?” [End of Reprisal: the Beginning of Consolidation?], *História* 17 (1995) 9-10: 23.

8. Tibor Zinner, *A kádári megtorlás rendszere* [The System of the Kádár Reprisal] (Hamvas Intézet, Budapest, 2001), p. 423. Data are based on the author's research and the use of official statistics. Percentages were corrected by the author of this study.
9. Based on the evaluation of Tibor Zinner, in the author's possession. Thanks to Tibor Zinner for assistance.
10. *Iratok az igazságszolgáltatás történetéhez* [Documents on the History of the Administration of Justice], vol. 1 (Közgazdasági és Jogi Könyvkiadó, Budapest, 1992), p. 590.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 612.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 613.
13. Zita Cseh and Attila Szokolczai, *Az 1956-os forradalom büntetőjogi megtorlása* [The Reprisal of the Revolution of 1956 through Criminal Law]. Manuscript. 1956 kézikönyve, (1956-os Intézet, Budapest, 2006) p. 309.
14. *Iratok...*, p. 746. "Feljegyzés az 1956. október 23-án kitört ellenforradalom büntetőjogi felszámolásáról" [Note on the Suppression of the Counter-revolution Erupting on October 23, 1956, through Criminal Law]. This decree was repealed on 15 January 1957, by Decree 4 of 1957. Further information on the transformation of the legal system is available in the following: Frigyes Kahler, *Joghalál Magyarországon 1945–1989* [Death of Law in Hungary, 1945–1989] (Zrínyi Kiadó, Budapest, 1993); Attila Szokolczai, "A forradalmat követő megtorlás során kivégzettekről" [On Those Executed in the Course of Reprisals after the Revolution], in *Évkönyv III, 1994* [Yearbook 3, 1994] (1956-os Intézet, Budapest, 1994); György Markó, "A Katonai Bíróságok statáriális ítéletei, 1956. december – 1957. október között" [The Summary Sentences of the Military Courts, December 1956–October 1957], *Hadtörténeti Közlemények 109* (September 1996) 3: 115-130; Frigyes Kahler and Sándor M. Kiss, *Kinek a forradalma?* [Whose Revolution?] (Püski Kiadó Kft., Budapest, 1997); Imre Okváth, "Die Repressalien nach der Revolution in Ungarn von 1956 bis 1963", in *Das Internationale Krisenjahr 1956* (R. Oldenbourg Verlag, Munich, 1999), pp. 485-501.
15. Zinner, *A kádári megtorlás rendszere*, p. 106.
16. Kahler and Kiss, *Kinek a forradalma?*, p. 215.

17. Summary trials were terminated by Decree 62 of 1957, effective 3 November 1957.
18. This decree was effective from 8 February 1957 to 1 July 1962, but the new Criminal Code retained its essential elements.
19. Zinner, *A kádári megtorlás rendszere*, p. 107.
20. *Ibid.*, pp. 114, 116 and 188. Accelerated procedures were in effect from 15 January 1957, to 15 June 1957.
21. *Ibid.*, pp. 127-128. The People's Council of the Supreme Court was terminated by Decree 34 of 1957 on people's courts.
22. *Ibid.*, p. 145.
23. Decree 31 of 1956 on public security arrests, modified by Decrees 1 and 41 of 1957, was in effect from 13 December 1956 to 1 April 1960.
24. Zinner, *A kádári megtorlás rendszere*, p. 421.
25. The Hungarian army offered organised resistance after the Soviet invasion in Budapest in a single location, Jutai Hill. Two light and one medium gunnery units of the 51st Anti-Aircraft Artillery Group and one anti-aircraft artillery battery were in a firing position at this site. At 10 a.m. on 4 November a Soviet column consisting of two tanks, two armoured transport vehicles, three trucks and a "Hudson"-type automobile appeared in front of the firing line on Soroksári Street. The guns opened fire. Two tanks and the automobile were disabled. More than ten Soviet soldiers and Hungarian State Security officers on the trucks were wounded and several were killed.
26. In the trials concerning the "Jutai Hill" incident more than 67 persons were charged and tried. In the case of "János Mecséri and his associates" 52 persons were put on trial. In the first instance 11 were sentenced to death, one to life imprisonment and 40 others to 364 years' imprisonment. The Presidential Council changed the sentence of János Puchert, Elemér Paska and Lajos Dobrosi to life imprisonment. One person was sentenced to death in absentia. Seven of the accused, Colonel János Mecséri, Lieutenant Colonel Dezső Szendi, Major Pál Szabó, Lieutenant Pál Rémiás, First Lieutenant János Kicska, and soldiers Dezső Kálmán and János Magyar were executed.
27. Between 1991 and 1994 I participated in the analysis of the court documents relating to those executed, as a member of the research team of the 1956 In-

stitute, directed by Attila Szokolczai. Cf. Szokolczai, “A forradalmat követő megtorlás során kivégzettekről,” pp. 273-256.

28. Károly Hunyadi, *A munkás-paraszt hatalom védelmében* [In Defence of the Workers’ and Peasants’ State Power] (Zrínyi Kiadó, Budapest, 1981) provides information about the deaths of 224 persons of the regime, soldiers, state security personnel, Border Guard officers and non-commissioned officers, and civilians.
29. Magdolna Baráth and János Rainer M., eds., *Gorbacsov tárgyalásai magyar vezetőkkel. Dokumentumok az egykori SZKP és MSZMP archívumaiból (1985–1991)* [Negotiations of Gorbachev with Hungarian Leaders. Documents of the Archives of the Former Soviet Communist Party and the Former Hungarian Socialist Workers’ Party] (1956-os Intézet, Budapest, 2000), p. 50.
30. The work of Károly Hunyadi refers to Hungarian soldiers arrested and executed by the Soviet troops after 4 November 4 as “heroes sacrificing their lives in battles fought with counter-revolutionaries”.

3. HUNGARY IN THE SERVICE OF SOVIET POWER ASPIRATIONS

1968 – Czechoslovakia

The appearance of military force as an instrument of political pressure

Before presenting a few, perhaps randomly selected episodes¹ of Hungary's role in 1968, as a military historian I would like to clarify when the plan of applying brute military force as an important accessory of political pressure appeared in the tools of "handling" social changes in Czechoslovakia.

The end of March and beginning of April 1968 was the time of a definite move towards applying military force. At the beginning of April, in accordance with a presidential decision of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU), the Soviet defence minister, Marshal A.A. Grechko, gave the first order to prepare the military operation – according to current research, Hungarian participation in launching the process cannot be proved.

On 8 April Grechko signed directive GOU/1/87657, which determined the military operational tasks of the "South" Group of Forces organised from Soviet, Hungarian, Bulgarian and possibly Romanian troops, to be formed at the base of the Soviet Southern Group of Forces stationed in Hungary.

The Soviet plans to execute the "Danube" military operation were ready by the middle of April, but by the end of the month at the latest preparation of the Soviet military units stationed in Hungary, the GDR, Poland and the Soviet Union began in parallel.²

In my opinion, this proves that military intervention did not begin on 21 August. In my assessment, 4 May 1968 was the starting point when the General Secretary of the CPSU Central Committee (CC), L.I. Brezhnev, turned to the Czechoslovak leadership, and personally to Alexander Dubček, with the "request"³ for their consent to hold a military exercise with the participation of the troops and staff of the six member states of the Warsaw Pact – the Soviet Union, Poland, Hungary, the GDR, Bulgaria, Romania – and the "hosting" Czechoslovak People's Army in the territory of Czechoslovakia.

At the 14 May meeting of the Political Committee of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party (HSWP), János Kádár rendered an account of the events, saying that for the sake of emphasis "without making it seem a threat, Brezhnev made Comrade Dubček understand clearly that in the case of deteriorating events,

under certain circumstances the Soviet Union would not remain indifferent, and was ready to perform even the most far-reaching steps in the interest of preserving socialist Czechoslovakia.”⁴

János Kádár, who was ordered to Moscow “incognito” on 6 May, the first secretary of the Polish United Workers’ Party (PUWP) Władysław Gomułka, the first secretary of the German Socialist Unity Party (GSUP) Walter Ulbricht, and the first secretary of the Bulgarian Communist Party (BCP) Todor Zhivkov were informed about what was said at the meeting between the Soviet and Czechoslovak leaders on 4 May.

Brezhnev informed the first secretaries about the meeting,⁵ which had been initiated by the Soviets. According to his assessment, the situation in Czechoslovakia had further deteriorated since Dresden.⁶

“The Soviet leaders,” Kádár later reported about what Brezhnev said, “revealed the whole panorama of the counter-revolution. They pointed out that the Czechoslovak Party leadership was indecisive, twiddling their thumbs while the counter-revolution was on the offensive, occupying one position after another, so that in the end it would isolate and then overthrow the system without bloodshed...”

In order to consolidate the situation, Comrade Brezhnev and the other Soviet leaders urged holding the military exercise proposed by Marshal Ivan Yakubovskiy at the earliest, possibly around 10-12 May. According to the opinion of the Soviet Communist Party the appearance of the military units of the Warsaw Pact member states would encourage healthy forces, bring around the Czechoslovak People’s Army, and make the enemy come to heel.”⁷

According to Walter Ulbricht’s proposal, the most important task was “to search for the core within the Party which is ready to fight” and “the military exercise must be used for supporting this new core”⁸

János Kádár proposed, among other matters, that “they should not only consider the phenomena on the surface” when judging the Czechoslovak situation; “matters did not begin” in Czechoslovakia in January 1968.

“It involves older processes there, which undermined the prestige of the Party. A lot of wrong has had to be done for a long time for a situation as such to come about,” he said.

At present it is not a counter-revolution that is going on in Czechoslovakia, but a battle has begun to correct the mistakes committed in the past. Yet the leadership is weak and does not hold the Party, the state and society in hand. Therefore there is anarchy, the Party is divided; anti-socialist, counter-revolutionary elements are coming forward, the situation is dangerous. (...) The Political Committee and I think that the situation is dangerous but the counter-revolutionary forces have not gained the upper hand yet. (...) Consequently our duty is to do our best to facilitate

a communist way out of this difficult situation and not to do anything that would play into our enemies' hands.

The most important thing is that there must be people in the Czechoslovak leadership who we help, who need and approve of our assistance. At present most of our strength should be turned towards reinforcing Dubček and his comrades. They must be supported in order for them to gain strength, and our assistance should be useful. They are inexperienced in many ways, but these matters must be discussed with them. (...)

If they don't set their mind to a double-fronted fight they are lost. We must help Dubček and his comrades to take on an open fight against the counter-revolution. We cannot resolve the problem with armed force alone because these are complicated political issues. It is worth bearing in mind that in Hungary in 1956, although Soviet troops were present, their intervention was a good excuse for the counter-revolution to break out (...)

We agree with certain political conduct (...) We also agree that Yakubovsky⁹ and his comrades should contemplate the idea of the military exercise and work out proposals, but the most important task is to strengthen the healthy core of the Czechoslovak leadership. If Dubček cannot be reinforced, the situation will get worse and the conditions of the conflict will deteriorate. In the present situation, setting Dubček aside may result in the collapse of the Czechoslovak Party."¹⁰

Zhivkov's summary assessment asserted Brezhnev's viewpoint, saying "the present party leadership headed by Dubček clears the way for the counter-revolution". His proposal for a solution was: "It would be expedient to take the troops into the territory of Czechoslovakia as soon as possible and keep them there as long as possible."¹¹

Disagreeing with Kádár, Gomulka declared:

"There is a counter-revolution in Czechoslovakia (...) There haven't been conservative forces in Czechoslovakia for a long time, the fight has to be continued on one front – against revisionism and counter-revolution ... Concerning duties to perform, it would be right to hold the military exercise possibly by the middle of May (...) Having the military exercise in the autumn would already be late."

In his closing speech, Brezhnev summarised the contributions by saying that there was a difference of opinions among the party leaders only in assessing the situation, yet:

"There is agreement in that the mistakes have to be corrected within the framework of the system and at the same time the chief task is to fight with the revisionists and the counter-revolutionaries (...) We must seek the forces among the leaders who are in power today, who are ready to fight against the counter-revolution. If such are

not to be found among them, then those who are capable must be found elsewhere (...)

On its behalf the CPSU will urge holding the military exercise as soon as possible, possibly before the May meeting of the Czechoslovak Party's Central Committee (CzCP CC).¹²

It is undoubtedly important to state on the basis of the contributions quoted above that, according to Kádár, it was only Dubček who was capable of carrying out the changes demanded by the Soviet leaders, and military means, if necessary in the form of a military exercise to be held in the territory of Czechoslovakia, could be employed in order to reinforce the leading position of Dubček or any other communist leader.¹³ This is proved by the decision of the Hungarian political leadership about the Hungarian People's Army's participation in the exercise "Šumava".

The beginning of the military exercise

The preparations for exercise "Šumava" soon began. Field marshal M. I. Kazakov, chief of staff of the Unified Armed Forces of the Warsaw Pact (WP UAF), first deputy to the chief commander arrived in Czechoslovakia with a part of the troops – primarily with Soviet signal units – at the end of May and the beginning of June, without any coordination with the "hosts".

The signs were not encouraging. Marshal Yakubovsky did not appoint his headquarters in the territory of the hosting country as usual, but in Legnica, Poland. A front corps, two combined army corps and an air defence army corps of the Soviet Union, two combined arms corps and a home air defence corps of Czechoslovakia, a Hungarian, German and a Polish combined arms corps each, as well as a division of nine different nationalities and smaller protecting and servicing troops took part in the exercise. The number of Soviet soldiers arriving in Czechoslovakia exceeded 10,000. The number of Hungarian units, the corps of the 5th Army and the 11th Tank Division as well as the sub-units ensuring their activity amounted to approximately 800.¹⁴

Independently of what János Kádár said in Moscow, as can be seen the Hungarian political and military leaders who gave their blessing to participating in the "Šumava" exercise and took part in the execution of the exercise in the highest leading posts were absolutely clear about the political motives of their deed.

This statement is supported by the summary reports made of the exercise and submitted to the highest Party leadership. One of them¹⁵ says, for example, that the code-named "Šumava" exercise "was performed essentially for political reasons and goals on the basis of the analysis of the situation discussed at the meetings in Dresden and Moscow".¹⁶

In connection with my theme I would like to draw attention to two of the goals listed in the document.

A) "With respect to foreign policy we need to clearly demonstrate the strength and unity of the Warsaw Pact and to warn the imperialists that any speculation, any attempt at provocation in connection with the Czechoslovak or similar internal political events are foredoomed to failure."

B) "With respect to internal policy, we need to have an impact on the Czechoslovak events by demonstrating the impressive force and determination of the Warsaw Pact, and thus to restrain and deter the internal enemy, to have a warning impact on hesitating elements (primarily on the intelligentsia), and to support and give a boost to communists who are loyal to the revolution and socialism."¹⁷

Going forward in time and referring to the identity of aims and means, I would like to quote from the summary,¹⁸ often referred to later, which was made for the top political leadership about the consequences of another new military action launched on 21 August.

"The military action has not achieved its political goal. Moreover, a situation has come about which was to be avoided with this step we have decided to make. We did not manage to eliminate the right-wing elements by force, to get the presumed left-wing forces, 'the new set' into power, to prevent convening the extraordinary congress, to silence the means of mass communication with a right-wing and hostile attitude, and divide the anti-Soviet, nationalist national unity."¹⁹

The political aims of the military action, as the above indicates, could not be realised, even despite the size of the applied military force, but did not change until the partial withdrawal in October 1968 and in the first period of the lasting Soviet occupation.

The following elements from the assessment of the "Šumava" exercise verify my viewpoint concerning the beginning of the concrete military intervention.

"The Soviet comrades' viewpoint concerning the judgement of the internal political events in Czechoslovakia was prominent during the implementation of the goals of the exercise. They started off from the point that in Czechoslovakia there was a counter-revolutionary – or at least a direct pre-counter-revolutionary – situation. The Party and the government are not uniform, rather revisionist at present, or at least hesitant. They are not consistent and weak elements are the prominent ones who tolerate the propaganda of counter-revolutionary, anti-Soviet elements, their advance, moreover their organising to a certain extent. The state security organs stopped fighting against internal reaction. In the press and various social circles revisionist, anti-Soviet and counter-revolutionary manifestations come in quick

succession. (The counter-revolutionary article 'Two Thousand Words' was actually published during the exercise.) In their opinion these forces cannot be stifled by means of a political fight. A determined, hard action would be required of the leadership. However, that cannot be expected because the present political and state leadership has broken away from the people, is burdened with revisionist tendencies and has the danger in itself that, due to its weakness, it may become the host of the counter-revolution, despite intentions and possible goodwill.

The Soviet comrades are also convinced that the Czechoslovak Party and the working people have the strength to be able to surmount the events with the help of the socialist block. (...) Certain references seem to point at the fact that [the Soviets – M.H.] mean the known minority in the Central Committee. (Comrade Kazakov said that there were also other forces, for example 39 people voted against Comrade Dubček in the Central Committee.) They expected that these forces would conduct themselves more actively and courageously during the congress elections as a result of the exercise.”²⁰

In view of the above, it is clear that the Hungarian leadership was aware of what the exact goal of the special exercise planned in May was, just as much as they had to know that a complete occupation on a Soviet decision could begin at any time based on the significant military force which took part in the exercise.

In addition to the above, the aim of the exercise was also to intimidate the Czechoslovak army, intensify the anti-Soviet atmosphere, provoke the population by temporarily refusing the withdrawal of Soviet troops, then execute the complete occupation with reference to anti-Soviet actions thus induced.

The Czechoslovak political and military leaders had to endure a multitude of humiliating situations primarily induced by the Soviet military leaders, such as Marshal Yakubovsky and Army General Kazakov.

For more than two weeks after Kazakov's arrival, he

“...did not know or did not want to inform either the Czechoslovak Party, the government or the leaders of the army about the aim, the beginning, the end, concept, operational plan and timing of the phases of the exercise, or the quantity of troops and corps arriving in the territory of Czechoslovakia. (...) This irritated the Czechoslovak political and military leadership and they increasingly demanded to be given appropriate information. It did not happen. (...) This led to a gradual deepening of distrust, which had already existed at the beginning.

Thus, for example, there was an intense debate concerning the participants arriving in the territory of Czechoslovakia. The Czechoslovak comrades did not want the Polish and German corps and troops to go into the country; if they took part, they should exercise in their own territories. In the end they still let the Polish corps (without troops) in, but that was not the case for the Germans. A similar debate was conducted concerning the entry of certain Soviet organs.

The Chief Commander's arrival further increased the atmosphere of the exercise, which was becoming acrimonious. He did not provide answers to the questions raised by the leaders of the [Czechoslovak] Party and the government about the exercise. The Chief Commander acted without the advance information, consent of, or request to the Party and government leaders in the majority of the cases throughout the exercise (this was the source of much discord), as if he had wanted to demonstrate his mistrust in the leadership. (...)

In all their addresses and toasts the Czechoslovak political and military leaders (Svoboda and Smrkovský, as well as the military leaders, comrades Džúr, Pepich and Rusov)²¹ were asking in an almost begging manner – in our view excessively – to be trusted.

The date of finishing the exercise caused a constant problem for the Czechoslovak comrades, as well as for us. In this respect the chief commander kept everyone in a state of uncertainty. The Czechoslovaks' urging and repeatedly asking for the end of the exercise and the withdrawal of the corps raised the question with some Soviet comrades whether these leaders were pro-Soviet and what they had against the presence of the Soviet troops. After all, they were there for them, too. There were hints at the fact that the presence of the Soviet troops had presented a problem only for Imre Nagy, but not to comrade Kádár at the time. (They generally often drew a parallel between the Czechoslovak events and the Hungarian counter-revolution."²²

According to Iván Pataky's research, the Hungarians also had their share of the Soviet generals' and officers' rudeness. "The Chief Commander did not inform the national deputies of the other WP member states, including Major General István Oláh, participating in the exercise. 'He did not involve his national deputies in any task, decision or judgement of the situation, and neither did he require their opinion when hearing his own staff or when working out the statements related to them in the evaluation. (...) The grotesqueness of the situation is shown by the fact that they were not in meaningful contact, apart from joint photographs and eating together in the same restaurant.' It must be remarked that Yakubovsky did not make a distinction in his superpower arrogance. He was equally condescending towards all his deputies, be they from the GDR, Poland or Hungary."²³

In vain did Defence Minister Lajos Czinege call on Yakubovsky at a time agreed in advance. He did not receive him. "Yakubovsky did not have a minute free to meet the Hungarian minister."²⁴

According to Hungarian experience, the Polish, Bulgarian and German military leaders followed the Soviet viewpoint, albeit with some restraint. The Romanians gave voice to their opinion, according to which the exercise "had the smell of an intervention". As can be read in the report: "We kept to the point of view assumed by the Central Committee."²⁵

The exercise was planned to be officially held from 19 June to the beginning of July. After frequent promises, the guest units except for the Soviet troops left the territory of Czechoslovakia following the closing evaluation on 3 July.

I agree with Iván Pataky's conclusion: "The exercise was essentially nothing else but an open and crude intervention in Czechoslovak internal affairs. With the exercise the High Command of the Warsaw Pact's Joint Armed Forces wanted exert pressure on an allied and independent state with unusually crude methods: on the one hand, by smuggling a significant military force into the country with the excuse of the exercise and with the method of the 'Trojan horse', then 'leaving it behind' and, on the other, by employing the means of direct political and military pressure. Both methods are unacceptable and diametrically opposite to international law and treaties."²⁶

"...The behaviour of the exercise command post, the chief of staff and especially that of the chief commander unfortunately had an undesirable impact on the situation, which by the time of the evaluation of the exercise had led to almost dramatic situations. (...) The regrettably tactless methods, which had been experienced before, presented themselves more emphatically in such a strained situation."²⁷ Iván Pataky quotes generals István Oláh and Ferenc Szűcs who took part in the exercise thus: "It seems that we will have to reckon with this method under normal circumstances in the future."²⁸

The dress rehearsal was not successful – the occupation of Czechoslovakia

The plan of the Soviet leadership was not successful. The Czechoslovak leadership demanded the Soviet troops leave the territory of the country, similarly to the other countries which took part in the exercise. The fact was that the Soviet units which remained in the territory of Czechoslovakia the longest left the country on 29 July following a last demonstration of force in the direction of Prague and only after the execution of a new offensive grouping. (The concurrence may not be accidental: in 1956 the last Soviet troops left Budapest on 31 October at the same time as the order for a new offensive was issued.)

The troops had to be arrayed before another offensive. In connection with that, there are data referring to the fact that Soviet troops, which got to know the Czechoslovak aspirations, i.e. those which got "under the influence of the enemy" according to the Soviet assessment, were withdrawn and replaced by trustworthy units.

By the beginning of July it had become obvious that the first military action was not successful. Therefore, in parallel with intensifying political pressure, the Soviet military leadership accelerated the preparations of executing the plans of a military operation, which had been made in April.

The coalition consisting of leaders of the Soviet Union, Hungary, Poland, the GDR and Bulgaria designated Warsaw as the location for exerting political pressure. The Czechoslovak leaders stayed away from the meeting, alluding to bilateral negotiations promising greater success.

Concerning Hungary, none of the members of the Political Committee, which had been convened to discuss the Czechoslovak situation on 12 July 1968, supported the plan of another military intervention. The “body authorised János Kádár and Jenő Fock ‘to represent the known viewpoint of the Central Committee and the Political Committee’ at the meeting and that ‘political solutions should be sought for resolving the Czechoslovak situation, and the present representatives of the fraternal parties must be advised against a military intervention.’”²⁹

At the meeting of the “five” held on 14-15 July, neglecting the authorisation of the Political Committee, János Kádár agreed with the “Soviet representation of facts, conclusions and proposals”, then announced that Hungary would also participate in “their execution”, i.e. in the complete military occupation of Czechoslovakia.³⁰

In the light of the end result, from the aspect of the theme examined by me, it is almost entirely a matter of indifference why Kádár turned away from the viewpoint of the Political Committee that he presented at the negotiations and then defended for a short time in the discussion. It did not turn out whether the reason was that he got angry with Dubček for not going to Warsaw³¹ or Walter Ulbricht’s emphatic statement: “The next strike will be inflicted on Hungary.”

After the Central Committee of the Czechoslovak Communist Party had refused the assessment and demands stipulated by the “five” on 19 July, the Soviet leadership, personally via the first secretary of the Ukrainian Communist Party, p. J. Shelest, officially informed János Kádár about the decision concerning preparation for military intervention.

For the occupation of Czechoslovakia the Soviet staff established two army groups. The task of the two Soviet armies in the formation of the “North” Army Group coming from the territories of the GDR and Poland together with the three Polish divisions was to occupy Prague, Bohemia, northern Moravia, Silesia and northern as well as eastern Slovakia.

The chief force of the “South” Army Group was provided by three Soviet divisions stationed in Hungary and one division entering the territory of Hungary at the time, the 36th Soviet Air Force and the 8th Mechanised Rifle Division of the Hungarian People’s Army, as well as an airborne division planned to be directly deployed from the territory of the Soviet Union. Bulgaria participated in the military action only with symbolic forces, two regiments.

The request concerning the participation of Hungarian troops was made to the Hungarian military leadership on 10 July and would have originally involved three divisions.

The Hungarian Party leadership decided about the participation of a reinforced division on 23 July. On this day the plans relating to the intervention were finalised in Moscow. In those the experience gained from the Warsaw Pact’s tactical-operational, command post exercise code-named “Šumava”, held in Czechoslovakia from 19 June to the beginning of July 1968, was taken into consideration.

Combat readiness for the Hungarian forces included in the occupation was

ordered at 10 p.m. on 26 July. During the following two days, the forces of the division were regrouped while hidden in the commencement sectors, 60-70 kilometres from the Czechoslovak border. The Hungarian 8th Mechanised Rifle Division, somewhat more than 10,000 soldiers, including 142 main battle tanks, 82 amphibious reconnaissance vehicles, 17 amphibious battle tanks, 158 cannon and mortars, was subordinated to the “South” Army Group from 11 p.m. on 28 July.

On a central order, the Hungarian troops crossed the border in three columns at Balassagyarmat, Parassapuszta and Letkés at midnight on 20 August and began occupying the designated zone. The Hungarian air force covered the activity of the Hungarian troops.

A total of approximately 25 divisional forces with nearly 250,000 people directly took part in the launched military intervention at that time, and a further four – two East German and two Hungarian – divisions, excluding the Soviet reserve forces, were on alert in the second phase of the coalition formation. According to Iván Pataky’s research, the total number of fighting troops with the reserve who did not cross into the territory of Czechoslovakia and the support troops probably exceeded half a million altogether.

Evaluation of the consequences of the military occupation

Hungary’s ambassador in Prague, Imre Kovács, critically summarised the consequences, including the reasons for the failure of the “five”, and touched upon the antecedents of the occupation.³²

“The military action did not achieve its political goal. What is more, such a situation has come about which we wanted to avoid and for which the decision was made. We did not succeed in eliminating the right-wing elements by force and getting the assumed left-wing forces, *‘the new set’*, into power, preventing the special congress from being convened, silencing the means of mass communication with a right-wing and hostile bias, or dividing the anti-Soviet, nationalist national unity.

As a consequence of the military intervention, an even more dangerous national unity was formed. (...) Our opponents isolated and essentially destroyed the left-wing groupings who were on our side. (...) Despite our intervention, the 14th Congress was held, which reinforced Dubček’s line in the leadership, eliminated the left in the leadership and the CzCP became subject to a right-wing, nationalist influence.”³³

With its declaration of 21 August, the Presidium of the CzCP became the chief organiser of national unity and resistance against the aggression. “The fight against the ‘occupiers’ has become a standard obligation of citizens, patriots and Party members in the past four days. As a consequence of our military step, division

and difference of opinions have disappeared in the Party. Today only the division between 'honest patriot' and 'collaborator-traitor' exists. (...)

"The situation that has emerged has proved the Hungarian Party leadership's earlier presumption that, apart from Dubček's set, there is no viable other group which is recognised by the masses and would lend itself to resolving the problems."³⁴

The detour is only apparent if we note that at the consultations in Moscow between 23 and 25 August János Kádár no longer regarded as realistic the idea which suggested that the situation in Czechoslovakia could be consolidated with the help of a "new left-wing centre, Party leadership and power factor".

"Therefore," Kádár stated his viewpoint expressed at an information meeting in Moscow on 27 August 1968, "we must strive for a satisfactory compromise based on fundamental principles with the Presidium of the CzCP, government and the president of the republic, and the form and manner concerning how to proceed fighting together in the future must be found."³⁵

At the end of the debate within the Soviet leadership Brezhnev made a proposal for accepting a solution of compromise, which was also supported by Alexei Kosygin, Chairman of the Council of Ministers, and that was the basis of the agreement which was concluded between the Czechoslovak delegation that had been set free from Soviet captivity and the Soviet delegation on 26 August.³⁶

In his already quoted report, Ambassador Imre Kovács writes the following about the situation following the occupation.

"Our military action was conducted with impressive speed. Despite this, it was already clear on the first day that the conduct of the military action did not correspond to the political situation and has not been modified accordingly since. The aim of the military action was visibly the demonstration of force against the right-wing, rather than its actual application. It is contradictory to be 'friends and occupiers at the same time.' During the military action, the means of communication in hostile hands failed to be silenced, gathering and organising failed to be prevented, important political and strategic points failed to be occupied, weapons to be collected, etc. It is apparent that the troops were not prepared to pursue political-propaganda tasks as well as military administrative tasks. The units which have entered the country are exposed to very hard physical strain and psychological and moral pressure from the population. They were surprised to have been received as aggressors and with hatred. (...)

As a consequence of our action, an entirely new situation has been formed between Czechoslovakia and the five socialist countries. They continue to direct the main fire against the Soviet Union and for the time being they do not differentiate among the other four countries. *The prestige of the Hungarian Party and Comrade*

Kádár, which had a positive effect in our relations, has been lost. [My emphasis – M.H.) We must take into consideration the fact that Comrade Kádár was the last from among the leaders of the socialist countries who met Dubček, and with reference to that they draw the conclusion that that meeting was decisive in launching the military action.”³⁷

According to Imre Kovács, the leaders of the “five” left out of consideration the following aspects before the decision concerning the occupation.

“Our military step almost entirely left out of consideration the characteristic features of Czechoslovakia. Primarily, that the population of Czechoslovakia is especially sensitive to military occupation. It compares our military action nearly automatically with the German fascist occupation of 30 years ago, the more so since no foreign troops were stationed in the territory of Czechoslovakia in the past twenty years.”³⁸

Later the ambassador lists the differences that according to him exist between the Czechoslovak situation and the Hungarian 1956 “counter-revolution”, as he put it. In his assessment, there are no armed insurgents in Czechoslovakia, “counter-revolutionaries” as he writes. The Party and the state power has not collapsed and one cannot talk about “the appearance of fascists and open western intervention. In the present state of affairs the communists and officials, certain layers of the population are not directly endangered in their existence by internal forces.”³⁹ However, such aspirations intensify in the street atmosphere, the demands and in the hunt for ‘collaborators’. On the other hand, a group of revolutionary leaders who come forward with a clear programme and appropriate courage is absent, and so is a mass of communists who support it and would be willing to rapidly support its actions, politically and legally.”⁴⁰

In addition to the above, the ambassador’s statements below also deserve attention.

“Thus the concept on which we based our military action has proved wrong. Some of the politicians we had trusted went over to the other side before the decisive step was made. Others got scared and stepped back during the military intervention. On the second day of the military intervention there was not a single leader who would have dared to accept that he had called in our troops, even in front of the 51 so-called conservative members of the Central Committee (CC). This part of the CC also condemned the military intervention. The retreat of the left-wing determined even the attitude of those who were hesitant. According to our information, even the units linked to the state security organs, who assisted us when the military action began, publicly and positively refused any co-operation three days later.”⁴¹ The situation of the left-wing forces is aggravated by the circumstance that we cannot protect them. (...)

Very different phases could be detected in the change of the atmosphere of the masses and in the streets. The first hours of our military action saw incredulity and surprise. Later an angry and desperate reaction was dominant. However, they recovered from the state of shock within a very short time and organising and passive resistance began, avoiding any clashes. This period can be characterised by the slogans 'Don't see, don't hear and don't know anything. Don't be good at anything, but yield to force.' However, besides this, today the signs of an optimistic expectation for victory can be detected, which are based on the failure of the military action, the failed attempt at setting up a new government, Svoboda's opposition and the negotiations in Moscow. The population carries out the instructions of the leadership rather rapidly and in a disciplined manner. It is clear that broad masses have rich experience in the methods of passive resistance against the occupiers. (...)

It has to be taken into account that in the present situation the resistance still has significant and unused reserves. It can be stated that our military action did not set the right-wing forces an actual trial, since the action did not reach them unprepared. They avoid an open clash very flexibly and in an organised manner – all the reserves and methods are not exhausted on the part of the civilian resistance organised on the basis of national unity. The possibility of a national general strike and the establishment of workers' councils threaten a significant conflict. The Czechoslovak army is in effect untouched. Presumably, it will not hand over its weapons and is willing to participate in the armed resistance, given an appropriate call from the Party and the president.”⁴²

The real reasons for the occupation

Much less than its significance would indicate is spoken about what strategic factors the Soviet leadership took into consideration for having the military occupation executed. These deeper motives can be concluded only from the negotiations or the 'slips of the tongue' that could be heard in the course of the military activity.

On the first day of the Soviet-Czechoslovak negotiations in Čierna, according to the report of the first secretary of the Prague Party Committee⁴³ who took part in the talks, Kosygin sharply declared:

“The chief achievement of World War II is that the borders were successfully pushed to the west as far as Šumava. Therefore, when the western borders of Czechoslovakia are involved they also represent the western borders of the Soviet Union. Thus the Soviet Union has not only the right but also the duty to secure these borders.”⁴⁴

Referring to the Charter of the Warsaw Pact, the president of the Soviet Union's Council of Ministers also stated:

“...the high command of the Warsaw Pact has the right to place and move troops in the territory of the Pact’s member states without asking the governments of the member states.”⁴⁵

Following the Czechoslovak leaders’ protest, Kosygin apologised, but the issue cannot be left there. The next incident also shows how strong the imperial view was among the Soviet leaders.

When at the “Šumava” exercise the Czechoslovak leaders took offence and criticised the fact that the Soviet leaders unilaterally regulated, or more precisely hid the numbers and the time of arrival of the troops, Field Marshal Kazakov, as the chief of staff of the Joint Armed Forces gave the following response in the presence of Hungarian officers.

“In a socialist country it is non-negotiable when, how many and for how long Soviet soldiers want to go in the territory of a country, since they increase the strength of socialism and reinforce the support for the communists in every situation and at all times.”⁴⁶

The Soviet military leadership indicated to the Soviet political leadership on several occasions that the deployment of Warsaw Pact troops, and a successful and rapid offensive launched against the German Federal Republic would be hindered by the fact that immediately ready, i.e. immediately deployable Soviet troops, were not stationed in Czechoslovakia. Until 1968 the Soviet military leadership thought that the problem could be resolved if, at the outbreak of war or in the period just before a war, a part of the Soviet troops stationed in the territory of Hungary – as happened in the real situation in 1968 – and the main forces of the Romanian 3rd army were moved to Czechoslovakia through Hungary. According to the calculation of the modelling exercises, the regrouping would take significant time (2-3 days), even during a period of peace. In a period of strikes involving traditional arms or nuclear weapons, this could have been executed only with significant delay and losses – according to plans with reference to war-time deployment, I must emphasise. The situation was complicated – and this justified placing Soviet troops in Czechoslovakia – by Romania’s incalculable behaviour concerning the deployment of its troops, and generally its military and political cooperation.

The movement of land forces would have also significantly limited the Hungarian troops in adopting the wartime grouping.

Although Czechoslovakia manifested on several occasions its commitment to undertake its allied obligations assumed in the Warsaw Pact, the Soviet leadership still considered that only by enforcing Soviet military presence could that be guaranteed.

Therefore, they persistently demanded that Soviet troops be stationed for an indefinite period of time in Czechoslovakia, in size of force and composition simi-

larly to troops stationed in the GDR. In order to spread responsibility, in September the Soviet military leadership urged each of the “five” to station troops set for a long duration in Czechoslovakia.

This issue was also raised during consultations between Hungarian and Soviet military leaders in Moscow on 4 September.⁴⁷ With reference to the withdrawal of the troops, Lajos Czinege remarked:

“The five states are present with unequal forces in Czechoslovakia and each country is also in a different situation politically. On the basis of historical relations between the peoples, the Czechoslovaks tolerate the presence of the Soviet troops more easily than that of German or Hungarian units. Therefore, when the withdrawal of the troops begins it would be expedient to ensure that the German, Hungarian, Bulgarian, etc. troops would be the first to be withdrawn. If the Soviet troops alone were to remain in Czechoslovakia, in itself this would create a qualitatively new situation.”⁴⁸

In his response Grechko did not react to Lajos Czinege’s concept concerning the schedule of the withdrawal. Instead, Czinege said, among other things:

“...the national composition of the troops remaining in Czechoslovakia is still an open issue, which must be decided by the governments. He [Grechko] considered several solutions possible. (...) Troops of mixed nationalities to stay; basically Soviet troops would remain and the other four countries would be represented by only symbolic forces; or only Soviet troops would remain and military representatives would be present only at the headquarters.”⁴⁹

Grechko emphasised: “Our presence should help to drive the counter-revolution back and assist healthy forces to gain power. The presence of our troops presents certain pressure for achieving that. Consolidation cannot be carried out without it, yet it cannot be achieved with the use of force, either.”⁵⁰ In his opinion 3-4 months in the provinces would be enough for full consolidation, but “more time is needed in terms of the whole state”.

Returning to the basic issue concerning the intention to change the European military-political situation, Grechko emphasised:

“The presence of our troops in the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic has largely changed the European strategic situation to our benefit. The most important positions in Central Europe are today in our hands. Twenty-four divisions in the CzSR and 21 in the GDR are ready to execute any task. NATO got confused in the first days and has not yet recovered. They are afraid of taking more serious counter-measures lest we would regard it as provocation and take preventive steps. They must reckon on us having a total of 52-54 divisions ready in Central Europe, excluding the Czechoslovak troops. Our military measures were well-prepared and

unexpected. NATO did not know either the time of the action or the grouping of our troops. (...)

From a military aspect, the difficulty is that we were received as enemy and not as friends. Despite that fact that we did not introduce a state of war and did not deploy the force we have. It would be possible for us to quickly stifle any resistance and create order, but that is not our aim. We want to convince the Czechoslovak people without the use of force. (...) If we withdrew now, the situation would not be better but worse than before our entry. Consequently, our troops have to remain there until we achieve the aim of the CzSR being a stable member of the socialist bloc.”⁵¹

A week later, on 12 September, Grechko asked Lajos Czinege to attend a meeting of the defence ministers of the “five” at the general headquarters of the occupying forces in Legnice, Poland. According to the marshal’s information, the aim of the meeting was to discuss the composition and size of allied troops remaining in Czechoslovakia. The Hungarian point of view adopted at an impromptu meeting of the leaders of the HSWP Secretariat and the Council of Ministers⁵² called for that very day was essentially the following:

“Working out a solution must be examined according to which the Czechoslovak government is to ask the Soviet government to have Soviet troops stationed in the territory of the country in a defined size and for indeterminate duration on the basis of an inter-state agreement, in order to secure Czechoslovakia’s sovereignty and defence of the western border. In the long term the presence of troops from other countries is not justified, since the Soviet Union also provides similar defence for the GDR, Hungary and Poland.”⁵³

“In order to advance the desired polarisation in the Czechoslovak Party and society,” the records read, “the Hungarian leadership can see an opportunity for the partial withdrawal of the troops of the five countries to begin within a short period, while a part of the troops would remain in Czechoslovakia for some time.”⁵⁴

At the meeting held in Legnice on 12 September, according to Lajos Czinege’s report,⁵⁵ unlike his assessment of the situation a week before, Grechko already characterised it as one where the solution was very slow in developing in Czechoslovakia and in all probability it could be a process lasting for one or two years, or possibly longer. He characterised the situation thus: “the counter-revolutionary forces have not given up the fight”; “a firm attitude continues to be absent on behalf of the Party and state leadership”; “the behaviour of the population and the Czechoslovak armed forces continues to be unfriendly”.

Following these statements and contradicting the assessment, Grechko announced that there was no longer a need to station such a military force,⁵⁶ since an armed uprising involving a move of the CzSR’s armed forces against the allied troops could not be expected, and a part of the troops could be withdrawn in the

case of appropriate political guarantees. According to the marshal, the further presence of the allied armed forces was justified only at the western border.

Since there was no contradictory opinion, Grechko summarised the result of the negotiations, which was concordant with the Hungarian viewpoint outlined by Lajos Czinege, whereby an agreement must be concluded with the Czechoslovak government about stationing “the Warsaw Pact’s troops of a determined size for an undefined period”. According to the Soviet point of view, it had to be ensured that somewhat less than half of the forces had to remain in Czechoslovakia and then, after conclusion of the agreement, the periodical withdrawal of the troops could begin. In order primarily to avoid difficulties caused by the approaching winter, Grechko also deemed it possible for a part of the Hungarian and Polish troops to return to their countries and remain there in high alert combat readiness.

With respect to withdrawal, the plans stipulated at the time involved the withdrawal of 2-3 units in the first phase in 1-2 weeks, and then in 1-1.5 months the withdrawal of all troops which had not received authorisation to remain further according to the conditions stipulated in the bilateral international agreement.⁵⁷

The events gathered speed simultaneously with the negotiations. The combat readiness of the Hungarian People’s Army units inside the territory of Hungary was gradually reduced and in parallel the re-transport of the dislodged units and sub-units to their original garrisons began on 11 September.

By 16 September smaller sub-units and detachments, which were indispensable from the aspect of further tasks, also returned home from Czechoslovakia, at the time still without the permission of the commander of the “South” Army Group.⁵⁸

According to the order of Marshal Grechko of 17 October, the units of the Soviet Southern Army Group were soon to return to their garrisons in Hungary. On the following day, 18 October, Grechko announced at a conference of defence ministers held in Moscow that the Soviet troops had settled for a lasting stay in Czechoslovakia on the basis of the strictly confidential – not to be published – “Protocol” agreed in Prague on 16 October.

According to the record made about the conference, Grechko evaluated the signed documents and their effects positively, and attached great political and military significance to what had happened.

“According to him,” the record says, “the military position of the Warsaw Pact armies has improved significantly by the fact that we have gained superiority in this direction. That is the reason why the leadership of NATO has been forced to meet for one and a half months to work out measures which counterbalance this superiority of strength. (...)”

A phase of the fight ended with signing the Agreement. His expressions to qualify this phase (addressing the defence ministers and Soviet military leaders present at the meeting) included: ‘I greet you on the end of the glorious military operation,’

and 'It was a serious step which showed the strength of our Alliance. True, we went in without resistance, but we were braced up to face the counter-revolutionary forces with arms if needed.'⁵⁹

Thus the main goal of the Soviet Union's political and military leadership was achieved: alluding to the Warsaw Pact – let me refer to the utterances of Kosygin in Čierna – the Soviet army permanently occupied Czechoslovakia nearly quarter of a century after the end of World War II. The Soviet Union extended its military supervision to Czechoslovakia, too, with János Kádár's active cooperation and the support of Hungarian military forces.

According to Grechko, the Soviet Union obtained an approximately 10-year advantage over NATO with the military occupation of Czechoslovakia and by having the Soviet troops remain there. The transformation process stopped as a result of brute military force and Soviet dictate. According to 1990 data, 73,500 soldiers, 30 missile launchers, 76 fighter planes, 146 combat helicopters, 1220 tanks, 1218 cannon and mortars, 2505 combat vehicles and 18,594 motor vehicles were stationed in Czechoslovakia until the departure of Soviet troops.⁶⁰

The "Zala" ("Šumava" was called "Zala" in Hungarian) exercise ended. The units of the Hungarian People's Army withdrawn in the first phase returned to their garrisons on 21 and 22 October. The 31st Tank Regiment was the last to leave for home, at 9 a.m. on 31 October.

"Comrade Kádár's prestige has been lost"⁶¹

Despite the slight differences and apparent contradictions, as well as the critical remarks put forward from time to time, János Kádár and the Hungarian political leadership essentially complied with the Soviet expectations. Their concrete steps, such as the deployment of military force, supported the realisation of Soviet aspirations.

I agree with the part of Tibor Huszár's perspective which highlights that "the role of János Kádár, the general secretary of the HSWP, in making the decisions concerning the Czechoslovak issue in 1968 and generally in forming the foreign policy of the HSWP and Hungary was significant (...) János Kádár cut free even from the Political Committee in taking the most important and critical decisions concerning the policy in connection with Czechoslovakia – note the meeting in Warsaw and the decisions made in connection with the military intervention."

"This fact," Tibor Huszár writes, "can be partly explained by the nature of the decisions concerning the intervention, Soviet pressure and the necessity of fast responses to unexpected changes at secret international conferences. "But only partly. It can be clearly stated on the basis of the minutes of the meetings of the Political Committee and the Secretariat of the HSWP that what he proposed in

his contributions and summaries and in connection with issues debated by these bodies are point by point identical with the resolutions passed by the two bodies. Changing what had to be changed, this also refers to the decisions of the Central Committee, which subsequently confirmed the decisions concerning the Czechoslovak issue.”⁶²

It should be stressed from Tibor Huszár’s study in connection with the theme that “the role of the state bodies – Council of Ministers and the Presidential Council – in managing the Czechoslovak issue is formal, while the participation of state organisations such as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Defence is limited to preparing the decisions, collecting information and execution.”

I will add the following to Tibor Huszár’s evaluation. János Kádár was the only one who also, due to his life experience, knew all the details of the script in addition to the Soviet leaders. If our starting point is what has been written so far about Brezhnev’s evaluation and conclusion, he stated at the end of March in Dresden:

“The Czechoslovak Party leadership was indecisive, they are twiddling their thumbs while the counter-revolution is on the offensive occupying one position after another, so that in the end it would isolate then overthrow the system without bloodshed (...) The appearance of the military units of the Warsaw Pact member states would encourage healthy forces, bring around the Czechoslovak people’s army and make the enemy come to heel.”

Then Brezhnev pointed out: “The chief task is to fight with the revisionists and the counter-revolution (...) We must seek the forces among the leaders in power today who are ready to fight against the counter-revolution. If such are not to be found among them, then independently of the names those who are capable must be found.”⁶³

To János Kádár it all sounded very familiar, despite the 12 years that had passed since 1956.

In my view what the end result would be was clear to János Kádár. It did not depend on János Kádár that Hungary’s 1956 – as it was recalled by many including him more than once – was repeated in Czechoslovakia. There was not a leader whose voice carried weight to be found in Czechoslovakia, who would have played the role “performed” by Kádár in the “drama” of 1956, which was directed by the Soviets.

Examining Kádár’s behaviour in 1956 and 1968, I do not regard János Kádár’s support for Dubček as authentic. In my view, the underlying aim of the two politicians’ mutual approach and good relations, which was often clearly inspired by the Soviets or sometimes tolerated in order to ensure continuous information flow, was to keep Dubček and his people under constant control, to manipulate

them if needed and assess the impact of Soviet decisions before performing the next steps. Hungary's embassy in Prague cooperated in that.

I may not be mistaken when I state that it was all perfectly clear to Dubček. As an experienced politician, he must have known about the circumstances in which Kádár was able to gain power, and he learnt about the circumstances of the execution of Imre Nagy and his companions not from the article in the literary paper *Literární listy*, which was published on the 10th anniversary of the execution. Keeping up the "good relations" between Dubček and Kádár could have been motivated by the fact that the messages from Moscow arrived precisely via Kádár.

In my opinion Kádár was primarily disappointed because, despite all his efforts, he was not able to make Dubček do what he himself did in 1956. Dubček did not leave, betray those who were on the same platform and go over to the Soviets.

Notes

1. To present all the important details of the theme is impossible in the framework of the present study. With reference to the topics of the international conference “1968, the Year of Dimensions” held in the House of Terror Museum on 22-23 May 2008, without being comprehensive I would like to draw attention to some problems and connections based on published works and my own research. For further details, see: Iván Pataky, *A vonakodó szövetséges* [The Reluctant Ally] (Zrínyi, Budapest, 1996); Tibor Huszár, 1968. *Prága, Budapest, Moszkva – Kádár János és a csehszlovákiai intervenció* [1968. Prague, Budapest, Moscow – János Kádár and the Intervention in Czechoslovakia] (Szabad Tér, Budapest, 1998); “A dolgozó népet szolgálom!” [I Serve the Working People], source publication from the documents in the Hungarian People’s Army’s Archive of Military History (1957–1972), series Publications of the Archive of Military History (HL), series ed. Dr. Jolán Szijj, edited and footnotes by Dr. Róbert Ehrenberger, documents selected and arranged for publication by Dr. Róbert Ehrenberger, Erika Laczovics and József Solymosi, introductory study written by Dr. Imre Okváth (hereafter “A dolgozó népet szolgálom!”)
2. Military History Archive, (henceforth: HL) MN VIII. 38. fond “Zala” (1968): 8. d. 16. ő. e. Summary report of General Provalov, commander of the Soviet Southern Group of Forces and Lieutenant General F. K. Marushchak for Soviet Marshal Zakharov about the activity of the troops of the Soviet Southern Group of Forces and the military operation “Danube”. Made on 22 September 1968. Quoted in “A dolgozó népet szolgálom!”, pp. 213-218. I do not have concrete information about the planned participation of the Romanian troops, but the Romanian symbolic participation in the “Šumava” exercise held at the end of June and beginning of July – more about the exercise later – makes it likely that in April they may have still reckoned with a limited deployment of Romanian troops.
3. Alexander Dubček was first secretary of the CzCP from January 1968 to April 1969, one of the initiators and leaders of the democratising process in Czechoslovakia.
4. National Archives of Hungary (hereinafter MNL) OL M-KS 288 f. 5/455. ő. e., pp. 24-35. Minutes of the meeting of the Political Committee (PC) of the Hungarian Socialist Workers’ Party, 14 May 1968. Report to the PC about the meeting of the first secretaries of the parties in the five socialist countries that took place in Moscow on 8 May 1968.

5. On the Czechoslovak side Dubček, PM Oldrich Černík, president of the Parliament Josef Smrkovszký and first secretary of the CC of the Slovak Communist Party Vasil Bilak, while on the Soviet side Brezhnev, president of the Soviet Supreme Council N. V. Podgorny and president of the Soviet Unions' Council of Ministers A. N. Kosygin took part.
6. In Czechoslovakia social problems which had been unresolved for years, specifically the tension between the Czech and Slovak nationalities, the dictatorial leadership methods of the Party and the increasingly grave economic difficulties, caused a crisis situation by the turn of 1967 and 1968. Movements demanding radical changes in society, specifically including changes to the Party, terminating Soviet influence and creating "a deeply democratic and socialist society" soon surpassed the degree that the Soviet Union could tolerate. Moscow and some socialist countries positively refused to question the leading role of the Communist Party and the rules of building socialism dictated and converted into reality by Moscow, and rejected opposition to Leninism and the theory of class struggle as a Russian phenomenon, while emphasising the prominent role of national features, the need for creating social self-government, the annulment of censorship and the gradual dismissal of leaders unconditionally serving Soviet power interests, i.e. the intention to create "socialism with a human face". The leaders of the invited socialist countries directed and supervised by Moscow made an attempt to "convince" the Czechoslovak leadership in Dresden on 23 March 1968. It is important to emphasise that János Kádár did not agree with Brezhnev's evaluation, according to which there was a situation with a counter-revolutionary character in Czechoslovakia, and he expressed the view that, despite the alarming signals, the tension could be reduced by pursuing a struggle on two fronts. A more detailed exposition of the antecedents can be found in the works and the studies of the aforementioned volume.
7. MNL OL M-KS 288 f. 5/455. ó. e., pp. 24-35. Minutes of the meeting of the Political Committee of the HSWP, 14 May 1968. Report to the PC about the meeting of the first secretaries of the parties in the five socialist countries that took part in Moscow on 8 May 1968.
8. *Ibid.*
9. Marshal I. I. Yakubovsky, first deputy of the Soviet Union's minister of defence, Marshal A. A. Grechko, chief commander of the Joint Armed Forces of the Warsaw Pact in 1968.
10. *Ibid.*

11. *Ibid.*
12. *Ibid.*
13. Drawing parallels with 1956 by János Kádár is distorted and does not reflect the real events. For this subject matter, see: Miklós Horváth, 1956 hadikrónikája [Military Chronicle of 1956] (Akadémiai Kiadó, Budapest, 2003).
14. Iván Pataky, *A vonakodó szövetséges*, pp. 32-33.
15. Strictly confidential report of the Staff of the Hungarian People's Army to the Political Committee about the command post exercise "Šumava", 5 July 1968. Signed by Major General, Deputy Minister of Defence István Oláh, Major General, deputy to the Staff of the Hungarian People's Army Ferenc Szűcs, endorsed by General Lajos Czinege, minister of defence. HL MN VIII. 38. fond, "Zala" (1968). 4. doboz 8. őrzési egység. Quoted in "A dolgozó népet szolgálom!", pp. 167-174.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 167.
17. "A dolgozó népet szolgálom!", p. 168.
18. A copy of the report of the Hungarian embassy in Prague on 24 August 1968. Subject matter: The Czechoslovak situation since the start of the military action. Strictly confidential. Made by Imre Kovács, Hungary's ambassador in Prague on 24 August 1968. To be received by János Kádár, Jenő Fock, Béla Biszku, Zoltán Komocsin, Lajos Fehér, Lajos Czinege, Árpád Pullai, György Aczél and András Benkei. Péter Vályi brought the report to Hungary in the early morning of 26 August and handed it over to the relevant authorities of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. HL MN VIII. 38. fond, "Zala" (1968): 68. d. 109. ő. e., pp. 196-200.
19. *Ibid.*
20. "A dolgozó népet szolgálom!", p. 168.
21. President of the Czechoslovak Republic Ludvík Svoboda, Josef Smrkovský, president of the Czechoslovak national assembly, minister of defence from April 1968 Martin Dzur, Egdal Pepich, lieutenant general, political director of army, chief of staff of the Czechoslovak People's Army Karel Rusov.
22. During the Hungarian revolution and freedom fight of 1956 Prime Minister Imre Nagy demanded the withdrawal of Soviet troops after 31 October. János

Kádár, Prime Minister appointed by the Soviets on 4 November agreed to the subsequent offensive of the Soviet troops. Strictly confidential report of the Staff of the Hungarian People's Army to the Political Committee about the command post exercise "Šumava", 5 July 1968. Signed by Major General István Oláh, deputy minister of defence, Major General Ferenc Szűcs, deputy to the Staff of the Hungarian People's Army, endorsed by General Lajos Czinege, minister of defence. "A dolgozó népet szolgálom!", pp. 169-170.

23. Iván Pataky, *A vonakodó szövetséges*, pp. 33-34.
24. *Ibid.* p. 34.
25. "A dolgozó népet szolgálom!", p. 171.
26. Iván Pataky, *A vonakodó szövetséges*, p. 36.
27. *Ibid.*
28. *Ibid.*
29. For further details see Tibor Huszár, *Kádár, a hatalom évei 1956–1989* [Kádár, the Years of Power 1956–1989] (Corvina Kiadó, Budapest, 2006), pp. 175-179.
30. *Ibid.*
31. On 13 July in Komárno, Kádár met Dubček, who stuck by his decision.
32. A copy of the report by the Hungarian embassy in Prague on 24 August 1968. HL MN VIII. 38. fond, "Zala" (1968): 68. d. 109. ő. e., pp. 196-200.
33. *Ibid.*
34. *Ibid.*
35. Information meeting. János Kádár's report about the consultation meeting(s) in Moscow. 27 August 1968. MNL OL-M-288. f. 4/95. ő. e. Quoted in Tibor Huszár, 1968, (Szabad Tér, Budapest, 1998) p. 273. Huszár summarised the viewpoints of the participants at the consultation on the basis of Kosygin's report to the CPSU CC on 25 August: Zhivkov represented the most militant approach, saying in essence that "war is inevitable, the counter-revolution must be put down by all means". Ulbricht and Gomulka in effect represented similar viewpoints, but in Kosygin's words they elucidated their thesis with more reasoning, involving processes: "the CzCP fell apart; there is no com-

munist vanguard in Czechoslovakia; establishing a workers' and peasants' government is inevitable". They sharply rejected the compromise solution outlined by Kádár. "If Dubček and Černík returned to the leadership", said Ulbricht in a raised voice, "why did we bring our troops here?" Tibor Huszár, 1968, pp. 273-274.

36. At the 'negotiations' in Moscow on 23-26 August the Czechoslovak leaders, most of whom had been held captive by the Soviets until the beginning of the negotiations, were compelled to accept the Soviet dictate, i.e. the Soviet troops were to stay in Czechoslovakia. The following extract from the thus concluded agreement demonstrates its unserious nature: "The troops of the allied countries which entered the territory of Czechoslovakia will not interfere in the internal affairs of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic. An agreement has been concluded about the conditions of the withdrawal of the troops, which will take place in accordance with the settling of the Czechoslovak situation..." Quoted in Iván Pataký, *A vonakodó szövetségés*, p. 141.
37. On Soviet request, János Kádár met Dubček in Komárno in the days before the attack but still before the last consultation in Moscow. Kádár's effort to try to "lead away Dubček from the right" failed again. MNL OL M-KS 288. f. 47/743. ő. e. Dubček in his memoir writes that Kádár did not warn him of the military aggression against Czechoslovakia, nor its possibility. Quoted in Tibor Huszár, 1968, p. 258.
38. A copy of the report by the Hungarian embassy in Prague on 24 August 1968. HL MN VIII. 38. fond, "Zala" (1968): 68. d. 109. ő. e., pp. 196-200.
39. In the framework of this study there is no opportunity to refute Imre Kovács's viewpoint relating to judgement of the Hungarian revolution and freedom struggle. See, for example, my publications addressing this theme.
40. A copy of the report by the Hungarian embassy in Prague on 24 August 1968. HL MN VIII. 38. fond, "Zala" (1968): 68. d. 109. ő. e., pp. 196-200.
41. According to the report of 26 August of the Embassy in Prague, Kotrch, the secretary in charge of the Prague Party Committee, appeared at the embassy with the permission of the CC and stated, among other matters, that "except for a couple of collaborators, the majority of the state security organs have remained faithful to the CzCP ... Shalgovich (deputy interior minister) was relieved by the government because of his preparation of the military action and the same happened to several other collaborating state security officers. Shalgovich is in his apartment protected by Soviet armed soldiers. They also have data that Kolar, head of the Party and Mass Organisations Department,

had known about the Soviet action two days before, so he was immediately relieved of his post.” HL MN VIII. 38. fond, “Zala” (1968): 68. d. 109. ő. e., p. 203.

42. According to the report of 26 August of the Embassy in Prague, Kotrch, secretary in charge of the Prague Party Committee, appeared at the embassy with the permission of the CC and also stated that the members of the new Party leadership who were free pursued their activity almost underground, under the protection of the workers’ militia. “Comrade Kotrch evaluates the present situation as such that it has reached a point when the outbreak of an armed counter-revolution must be in effect reckoned with. [Subsequently, it seemed that Kotrch did not use that expression – M.H.] The new Party leadership holds back the workers’ militia from armed resistance with great difficulty. They have succeeded so far. The arsenals in the majority of factories have been locked and the Party organisations are securing them. However, on Saturday the Soviet units began liquidating the arsenals in the central institutions. It can be feared that if similar actions happen in the factories, armed clashes will take place.” HL MN VIII. 38. fond, “Zala” (1968): 68. d. 109. ő. e., p. 203.
43. HL MN VIII. 38. fond, “Zala” (1968): 68. d. 108. ő. e., pp. 137-142. The report of Hungary’s embassy in Prague on 8 August 1968. Seemingly a compromise was reached at the bilateral talks initiated by the Soviets which began on 29 July and lasted several days in Čierna. “The negotiation seemingly finished with Czechoslovak success. They did not have to let the Soviet army in the country, they did not have to withdraw the action programme and the lords of the Kremlin agreed with the CzCP about holding the 14th special congress. In return they merely had to make small concessions and agree with some personnel changes.” For further details, see: Iván Pataký, *A vonakodó szövetség*, pp. 88-89.
44. HL MN VIII. 38. fond, “Zala” (1968): 68. d. 109. ő. e., p. 203.
45. *Ibid.*
46. “A dolgozó népet szolgálom!”, p. 172.
47. Memo of the consultation between the Soviet Union’s minister of defence and the minister of defence of the Hungarian People’s Republic in Moscow on 4 September 1968. HL MN VIII. 38. fond, “Zala” (1968): 4. d. 8. ő. e. Published in “A dolgozó népet szolgálom!”, pp. 201-205. On the Soviet side, Marshal Grechko, Marshal Yakubovsky, General Povaly and General Tutarinov, on the Hungarian side General Lajos Czinege, Major General Imre Gábor, Colonel, Mihály Vorinkó, Lieutenant Colonel Gábor Farkas and Major Csaba Liskai as interpreter took part.

48. "A dolgozó népet szolgálom!", p. 204.
49. *Ibid.*
50. *Ibid.* p. 202.
51. *Ibid.*
52. MNL OL M-KS 288. f. 7/310 ő. e., pp. 1-6. Participants at the meeting were János Kádár, Jenő Foch, Lajos Fehér, Lajos Czinege, Zoltán Komocsin and Árpád Pullai.
53. MNL OL M-KS 288. f. 7/310 ő. e., p. 5.
54. HL MN VIII. 38. fond, "Zala" (1968): 4. d. 8. ő. e. Quoted in "A dolgozó népet szolgálom!"; pp. 208-213.
55. According to Grechko, during this period the allied troops had approx. 300,000 soldiers, and with regard to main technical facilities, 6000 tanks, 4000 cannons and 1000 airplanes. *Ibid.*, p. 212.
56. *Ibid.*
57. *Ibid.*, p. 213.
58. Iván Pataky, *A vonakodó szövetséges*, p. 152.
59. Report to the Political Committee of the HSWP about the conference of the defence ministers of the five allied countries held in Moscow on 18 October 1968. Quoted in Iván Pataky, *A vonakodó szövetséges*, pp. 154-155.
60. Svetozar Nadovic, *Czechoslovakia, I. The great withdrawal – Withdrawal of the Soviet – Russian Army from Central Europe 1990–1994* (Ministry of Defence of the Slovak Republic, Bratislava, 2005), pp. 74-75.
61. Quoted from the report of ambassador to Prague Imre Kovács on 24 August. See above.
62. Tibor Huszár, 1968, p. 275.
63. *Ibid.* I have no opportunity to introduce and analyse further details of Tibor Huszár's evaluation.

4. MARTIAL LAW IN POLAND AS REFLECTED IN HUNGARIAN MILITARY INTELLIGENCE DOCUMENTS (1980–1983)

In the past 30 years many people have analysed the history of martial law in Poland using a variety of approaches and to differing degrees. Of those, I would like to mention, without aiming to be complete, Katalin Szokolay, Miklós Mitrovits and János Tischler.¹

According to Lukas Kaminski, the introduction of martial law was something whose evaluation most divides Polish society. “Despite the facts, nearly half the Poles,” writes Kaminski, “believe General Jaruzelski and that the events of 13 December 1981 saved Poland from Soviet intervention.”²

The process leading to the declaration of martial law can be summarised on the basis of the Polish historian as follows. Society welcomed the agreement concluded between the striking workers and the government at the end of August and the beginning of September 1980 with enthusiasm and hope. The membership of the spontaneously organised independent trade union Solidarity increased by several million in a few weeks. Everyone felt that a new chapter was beginning in the country’s history and that there was hope that the catastrophic economic situation would improve. They hoped that Poland would regain its national sovereignty, society at last would be able to have a word in decision-making and human and citizens’ rights would be respected.

However, the leaders of the Communist Party were preparing to resolve the conflict violently, despite the aforementioned agreement. As early as August 1980 they considered this possibility and set up an operative staff named “Lato-80” (Summer ’80). Methodical preparation began in October 1980 when the Defence Committee coordinated the work of representatives of the Ministry of National Defence and Ministry of Interior. At the end of November 1980 the meeting of the Political Committee deliberated on the use of force, but in the end the decision was made that it was still early to deploy the armed forces. However, a working team consisting of representatives from the Party, the army, the Ministry of the Interior and the chief prosecutor’s office was set up to assess the forces which could be deployed in a probable confrontation. Planning was completed by March 1981.

I have aimed at systemising and summarising the assessments of Poland by primarily the USA, NATO and Western Europe in more than 150 reports of various lengths made in this respect by the 2nd Intelligence Directorate of the General Staff of the Hungarian People’s Army (MNVK) between the summers of 1980 and 1982.

The leading organisations of the USA and NATO continuously met and evaluated the information about the Polish crisis. Evaluating the data of civil and military intelligence, the leaders of the USA arrived at the conclusion that the most probable time for the use of military force – thus the deployment of Soviet troops – was the second half of December 1980.

The West German leadership indicated already in September 1980 that “they are definitely unwilling to display any behaviour which would appear and hold out hope as if they were willing to provide help. They do not want to get involved in a situation as they did during the Hungarian events in 1956 [as happened also in 1968 – M.H.] when western powers gave reason for hope, yet observed the intervention of the Soviet Union as outsiders. They avoid any conduct that may induce the Soviet Union to intervene and they expect a similar conduct of the Soviets, too.”³

As early as December 1980, the USA thought that a Soviet attack could soon begin. In the evening on 2 December, NATO General Secretary Luns held another special meeting with the participation of representatives of NATO’s Permanent Council where he announced the following on the basis of information from Chief Commander General Rogers.

“The Soviet Union has done all the preparation and so its 33 divisions can be deployed at any moment. (They have carried out the changes in the tactical-operational and signal systems, which are necessary for the intervention. They have called in the reservists and the commandeering operational corps have been pulled forward near the Polish border.) A possible Soviet intervention would generate an extremely difficult situation in Poland. According to intelligence data, the response of the Polish army can be expected against the Soviet intervention, which the Soviets themselves have also taken into account. The army would be able to hold Poland against the Soviets for about two weeks. (...)

According to General Rogers’ assumption, the Soviets are not likely to launch actual military operations against Poland before 15 December because: due to the weather the ground is not hard enough for them to manoeuvre their tanks at a necessary pace; prior to the ministerial level NATO Council Meeting the Soviets do not want to ‘present a gift’ to the Western powers, allowing them to react politically; Brezhnev returns from India on 15 December; the Polish national holiday is on 16 December. From this date onwards the intervention could occur at any time.”⁴

On 4 December NATO’s Permanent Council assembled. At the meeting the American representative stated:

“This week the Soviet Union introduced all the measures needed for the intervention; an East Berlin division has left its garrison and moved to the Polish border; the commander of the Soviet troops has been assigned to a different post. Such changes do not indicate a very pleasing forecast.”

The American representative proposed measures to be enacted in the case of Poland's occupation. He announced:

“The American government has been encouraged by the position taken by the allies, namely that they must uniformly and immediately respond if the Soviet Union occupied Poland. From this aspect we evaluate the special meeting as extremely useful. We must pursue our consultations in strict confidentiality, so that we would not give a reason for the Soviets to criticise NATO in any form.”⁵

During the preparatory work, the Americans took the following into account. The Soviets and presumably the Poles would try to keep the intervention secret until the last minute. The Polish security forces or the militia were expected to be deployed in the first phase, followed by the army later. In so far as the situation might deteriorate further, the Soviets were expected to start occupying Poland, whether on request or without. If the events were to begin with the deployment of Polish forces, they intended to inform the Polish bodies that their activity may result in consequences that affect the economic aid provided to Poland. Another version could have been that they would have the UN Security Council convened.

If the Soviets carried out the intervention, the American representative classified the measures to be adopted in two categories. According to plans, in order to prevent the occupation when the Soviet troops are very close to intervening “on behalf of the Western states the US President will explicitly admonish the Soviet Union, pointing out the immeasurable consequences of the intervention. Western heads of states will send Brezhnev the message calling for soberness. In parallel with the messages, the leaders of the Western delegations participating in the Conference on European Security and Cooperation will also make a declaration in Madrid. They will start negotiations with international organisations such as the International Labour Organisation and the Socialist International, as well as the countries of the Third World in order that they would make similar declarations. The UN Security Council has to be convened and in the case of a Soviet veto the UN General Assembly must assemble to adopt a resolution. NATO's Council of Ministers has to be summoned for a special general assembly.”⁶

The measures to be adopted following a Soviet intervention were the following.

“Western heads of state make a statement presenting the economic, political and diplomatic measures to be adopted.

Their ambassadors in Moscow will be called back to their centres for consultations.

In Madrid the Soviets will be strictly condemned and the Western countries will recall their delegations.

NATO's Council of Ministers will be summoned to condemn the Soviets and lay down measures to be adopted.

A resolution condemning the Soviet Union and demanding the immediate withdrawal of occupying forces has to be prepared for adoption by the UN General Assembly.

The international organisations and the countries of the Third World must be called on to adopt measures which make the Soviet Union pay a grave price for the occupation.

During the period preceding the intervention NATO will make mention of an official declaration concerning the matter only in the joint communication of the Council of Ministers, so that no excuse is given for criticism by the Soviets.

The number of staff in foreign representations of Western states in the Soviet Union has to be reduced and the same measure must be applied for Soviet representations, too.

It must be revised whether negotiations on disarmament and arms-reduction especially in respect to Europe can be continued.

The number of high-level visits must be reduced and East-West relations on all levels must be curtailed.”⁷

“According to a reliable source”, ambassador Ronald Spiers, head of the Intelligence Department of the US Foreign Office, told a NATO country’s ambassador to Washington already on 1 December:

“In the case of a Soviet intervention, it is rather possible that the Polish army will show resistance. The army regards national interests higher than communist interests. Apart from a small layer of the population, nobody would regard the invasive Soviet units as liberating.”⁸

According to Spiers’ assumption, even if Kania and Walesa were to take successful steps to reduce tension, closing up the matter was not probable.

“Poles no longer think that reforms which will make the economy work can be successfully realised under the communist system. Consequently, the tension will increase. The fault will be looked for in the leadership and they will not be able to prevent a people’s uprising. In addition, the period of January and February 1981 will be a very difficult time. As a result of Christmas and the New Year celebrations, the population’s consumption of food will increase. Thus the reserves will run out and a severe lack of foodstuffs will occur in the aforementioned two months.”⁹

A week later, on 8 December, Spiers informed the ambassadors of the NATO countries, Austria, Australia, New Zealand, Japan, Sweden and Switzerland the following.

“In the western region of the Soviet Union the troops of the Baltic, Belorussian and Carpathian military zones have been put on heightened alert. Signs referring to

mobilisation in these regions have also been experienced. Some troops have already been deployed for 60 days. Reserves have also been sent from Moscow to these areas.

The region in the GDR bordering Poland continues to be a forbidden military zone. The Soviet troops in the GDR and East German units are holding a military exercise. Three Czechoslovak and one Soviet division in Czechoslovakia, some 25 kms from the Polish border, and two Soviet divisions in Poland have been put on heightened alert and the signal units of these divisions have been deployed. Measures in connection with high alert have also been introduced in the Polish army. Actual activity cannot be experienced in the Baltic Sea. Soviet air reconnaissance has somewhat increased in the region in recent days.

All these developments indicate that the Soviet Union together with the GDR and Czechoslovakia can intervene in Poland within a very short time. It is likely that they would carry out the intervention in the form of a military exercise conducted together with some of the Polish troops.”¹⁰

I came across such opinions in the document, which in connection with expressing the Soviet danger as above, the American declarations about the potential intervention of Soviet troops in Poland “were intended for the opposition trade unions, so that they would not evoke such a Soviet step by going too far. The USA would not like the 1956 events to be repeated when some people expected help from the USA, which it could not provide. According to the source, the developments of recent days refer to the fact that the Poles understood the message.”¹¹

To demonstrate the division of the Western countries and the variety of evaluations, which will be detailed later, I will quote from the December 1980 evaluation by the head of a foreign representation of a NATO country in Moscow.

“A stable status quo has undoubtedly developed in Europe after World War II. It is essential for the Soviet Union to defend it, both from an ideological and a security point of view. Should the events in Poland overstep a significant line, the matter will become vital from the Soviet perspective. If the Soviets launch an action in Poland, this action will not change the status quo for the benefit of the Soviet Union, but will be an action to defend the status quo that it considers important. In other words, it will not be an offensive, but a defensive action to a certain degree; hence it will be different from the action executed against Afghanistan regarding its essence. (...)

Yet if Poland reaches a point when it can slip out from under the control of the Soviet Union, the Soviet Union cannot just stand by doing nothing either, because it does not want to lose Poland or because it will have to prevent a dissolution process which is unacceptable for it. (...)

If the intervention takes place it will be necessary to respond [sic! – M.H.] and the measures to be enacted must aim at being continuous and credible. On no account should they lead to consequences as in the case of Afghanistan, when it was

not the efficiency of the measures but the difference of opinions and discord between the allied countries that appeared.”¹²

In less than a year, on 18 October 1981, Wojciech Jaruzelski became the new first secretary of the Polish United Workers' Party. Preparations for martial law reached the final phase. General Jaruzelski explained the, so-to-say, inevitability of the state of emergency with the danger of an alleged Soviet intervention.

The historical experience of 1956 and 1968, as well as the data of American intelligence, show that the position based on exclusively Soviet opinions, i.e. that the Soviet Union did not plan an intervention, can be questioned. Neither is this contradicted by the fact that, in parallel with the preparation, Moscow continuously kept the Polish leadership under pressure to resolve the problem “with its own strength”.

As is known, the final decision about imposing martial law was made in the early afternoon on 12 December 1981. “Operation Azalia”, in order to get telecommunications as well as the radio and television under control, began before midnight. Operation code-named “Yodla” (Fir Tree), i.e. the internment of Solidarity activists and people in the opposition, started at midnight. More than 5000 people were interned in specially prepared camps within a few days.¹³

News of the introduction of martial law reached the American leadership unexpectedly. The position taken by NATO's Permanent Council on 14 December reflects the confusion of the West.

“Taking the given situation into account, a ‘moderate’ response is sufficient. (...) the Soviet troops are ready to intervene, therefore NATO's most important task is to prevent external intervention; thus they repeat the call according to which the Polish question can only be resolved by the Poles. (...)”

According to sources of the US State Department and the immediate circle of Haig, the American government was surprised at the introduction of the state of emergency in Poland, since on the basis of the military intelligence data they expected a Soviet military intervention. Haste and hesitation experienced in the American leadership can be due to that. Haig's colleagues think that, should the troops of the Polish People's Army use weapons, Washington's standpoint would fundamentally change. It is being debated whether in that case more severe measures should be rendered against only Poland or also the Soviet Union.”¹⁴

It was stated at NATO's Political Committee meeting on 16 December:

“The Poles executed the regulations in connection with the introduction of the state of emergency rapidly, effectively and in a well-organised manner, which strongly indicates that they had made a decision about it earlier. The Soviets had known about it all in advance. (...)”

The West must react to the Polish events with great self-restraint and abstain from such behaviour which could present a challenge to the opponent. It can only change this behaviour if large-scale and severe incidents and bloodshed were to happen in Poland. However, if the Polish system can show success in the long run, the West must insist on avoiding the political and social results achieved in Poland from being harmed.

[The NATO countries] have worked out a comprehensive, gradual plan in the case of the deployment of Soviet troops in Poland, which includes the suspension of transport of goods, and sports and cultural relations, breaking off East-West negotiations and diplomatic relations, the introduction of a state of military alert, as well as drafting reservists.”¹⁵

The Foreign Ministry of a NATO country received the following report from its foreign representation in Washington.

“The round-the-clock operative corps set up for crisis situations became active in the American State Department simultaneously with the first news about the events in Poland.

We learnt the following confidential information from politicians working in the above mentioned crisis corps:

‘the outlines of the turning point in Poland exclude the intervention of Soviet troops at the moment;

‘the Polish government’s intention to direct the events independently can be recognised;

‘having taken the measures of pressing necessity with respect to internal order, Jaruzelski’s firmness and good timing prove his intention to avoid foreign intervention;

‘the State Department concludes from the fact that Walesa has not been arrested, that despite everything the Polish leadership intends to maintain contacts with Solidarity after it has been cleared of extremists provoking a break off. This is verified by indications the government has made public in recent days.”¹⁶

In Europe, in the main, assessments diverging from the increasingly definite American viewpoint were expressed, which questioned the reason for the planned American sanctions.

For example, the official Austrian organs “received the introduction of the state of emergency in Poland with certain satisfaction.” Austria hoped that in that case fewer refugees would arrive in the country and “the execution of agreements on Polish coal exports would improve.”¹⁷

“[Austrian Chancellor] Kreisky sent a personal message to [French president] Mitterand, in which he asked him in the interest of the social-democratic movement not to join the anti-Soviet and anti-Polish US sanctions. According to him, all sup-

port must be given to the Poles because that is the precondition for the liberalisation process, the bond with the West and the reduction of dependence on the Soviet Union. He asked him not to leave West Germany and Austria on their own concerning the Polish question. Kreisky sent messages of a similar content to the other social-democratic leaders.

France has not so far supported the USA's anti-Soviet sanctions, since they conflict with her economic interests. (At present she obtains 14% of her gas requirement from the Soviet Union and intends to get 32% by 1990. French companies have recently concluded an agreement amounting to 3.2 billion francs with Soviet companies, which ensure many job opportunities for several years.) They do not want to introduce more severe measures against Poland because they would like to keep getting back the Polish debt amounting to 17 billion francs. (...) The French government will perhaps be obliged to support the American steps at least in principle, however without taking concrete measures."¹⁸

Holland also refused the demands of the USA. And at the meeting of NATO's Permanent Council on 16 December "the Norwegian representative declared that Poland was to remain communist and be a member of the Warsaw Pact in the future, too; therefore 'pursuing desires' must be abandoned and the main stress must be laid on the fact that the internal political and social achievements they had reached in the past one and a half years would not be damaged."¹⁹

"[In Helsinki] at the New Year reception, Major General Heiskanen, the chief of Finnish intelligence, told the Polish military attaché that he regarded the present military leadership's steps correct. He sympathised with them and wished that they would take control of the situation as soon as possible. He also sent his regards and best wishes to General Jaruzelski. In view of his position, it can be presumed that the chief of intelligence did not speak as an ordinary member of the public, but was forwarding the opinion and message of the Finnish military leadership."²⁰

At the NATO Permanent Council meeting on 6 January the following was mentioned:

"...how certain non-allied countries received the US proposal concerning a special European conference to be summoned with reference to Poland. These reactions showed that those asked did not expect any advantage from the special meeting. Moreover, they thought that it would only result in damage. On the basis of the above, NATO General Secretary Luns stated (...) it would not be useful to disclose this failure to the general public. (...)

Italy's position is close to the French viewpoint, since she granted a nearly 3.5 million dollar credit to Poland – [hence] she would find it difficult in her present position to cancel her broad economic relations with Poland and the Soviet Union. Under such circumstances, Italy is not able to provide effective support to President

Reagan in his measures against the Soviet Union. Italy attributes as much significance to the Siberian gas pipeline as France and the FRG, since it can cover 30% of her natural gas requirement.”²¹

“According to the assessment of the Swiss political leadership, the Polish situation has basically returned to normal. They noted the rapid pace of normalisation with surprise and satisfaction, although they have not changed in disagreeing with the methods of the Polish leadership.”²²

“[According to Greece] there is no sign of the Soviet Union being legally a participant in the Polish events. (...) It would be advantageous for the West to take a mild standpoint and show understanding towards Jaruzelski’s leadership. NATO is not a suitable forum for discussing the Polish issue. There are also countries among NATO members which are headed by military governments.”²³

The essence of the assessment by the President of Yugoslavia’s Federal Chamber, Tomašević, was as follows.

“The pressure affected by the USA on Western Europe (...) especially with respect to the FRG cannot be successful. [German chancellor] Schmidt is a smart adherent of realpolitik and he is not going to take steps which would torpedo the fundamentals of the FRG’s eastern politics or overshadow his hopes for uniting the two German states. The plan of a natural gas pipeline is also something that makes Schmidt refrain from sanctions against the Soviet Union. I think that the West Germans will at best sympathise with the USA. Western countries must support the Poles unconditionally, so that the problems which are worrying for all of us would be resolved.”²⁴

The Polish military leadership’s evaluation was as follows.

“The successful execution of the first phase of the programme by the Military Council of National Salvation (the isolation of Solidarity and the political opposition, and taking control over the state) presents a failure for the USA in carrying out the American plan aimed at the gradual ‘liberation’ of Poland. Therefore, it wants to achieve its political aims in the second phase (leading Poland out of the political and economic chaos). For the sake of that, it intends to take the following political-propaganda and economic measures.

Internationally: forming a united front of the Western countries to influence the Polish leadership; neutralising the attitude of Western circles sympathising with the decisions of the Polish government; isolating the American and West-European circles which think that the measures of the Polish authorities lead to the reconstruction of the Polish economy.

Within Poland: demanding the release of internees, with the intention of reviving the oppositional structures; the renewal of Solidarity’s activity and connecting it

to the power system (expectedly with a demand of forming a coalition government with Walesa, who would sign a declaration of loyalty).

In the field of propaganda: condemnation of the state of emergency and the Military Council of National Salvation; threatening a return to the conditions of the 1950s; instilling the idea that honest Poles refuse to cooperate with the present authorities, regarded as anti-people; spreading the rumour that the military take-over had been prepared a long time ago, supplies were hoarded and a list of those to be arrested was prepared in advance; trying to prove that the exclusion of Solidarity did not improve the country's economic condition, moreover it caused significant political damage; making the population aware of the idea that the internment of former Party and state leaders who were responsible for the mistakes was only a tactical step for the sake of protecting them, and there is no intention of taking them to court."²⁵

Let me quote a few sentences from the West German assessment as well.

"The present situation in Poland is not the worst possible outcome. Jaruzelski is primarily a 'patriot', secondly a 'soldier', and only after that a 'communist'. This is shown by the military administrative measures in Poland, which were the last to prevent direct Soviet intervention. (...)

From this aspect the West need not react strongly to the developments. It could be more effective and useful if the displayed firm American reaction and the somewhat milder West European reaction, which acknowledges the Polish developments with a positive direction, were to be harmonised. (...)

It would be useful if the West showed only a minimum reaction for two or three months. Provided the military leadership cannot protect certain minimum values in a few months and cannot stabilise the situation, or should a Soviet intervention take place, it would be justified for the FRG and Western Europe to adopt the hardest measures in a form that corresponds to the American demand. However, the Jaruzelski leadership is trying to find the middle way between the complete annihilation of the achievements of Polish renewal and provoking a direct Soviet intervention."

Reacting to the above behaviour of the FRG, the report says:

"Anti-FRG currents have formed in both the American and British public opinion. This shows that the 'concern about the German empire' has not ceased yet, despite the fact that West German politics has been impeccable since World War II and an entirely new German generation has grown up."²⁶

The foreign ministry of a NATO country also came to a similar conclusion.

“The American sanctions did not cause a severe problem for the Soviet Union. The West European countries essentially suffer loss. In Western Europe the trade with socialist countries provides jobs for 500,000 workers in the FRG, 200,000 workers in France and a total of one million in Western Europe as a whole. The Soviet Union performed 80% of its entire trade with the capitalist world with Western Europe. (...)

To compel the Soviets to return to the pre-12 December conditions would equal a demand of turning the Yalta Agreement inside out. However, it cannot be said that the conditions would have come about which would make it possible to invert the order that was achieved as the result of World War II, to which the Soviets attribute great importance in the interest of their security. (...)

Under the present conditions it does not seem possible to disengage a country whose history is a series of occupations from the Soviets without their agreement.”²⁷

The consequences are well-known.

Being aware of having control over the situation, the government suspended martial law on 31 December 1982, and brought it to an end as a kind of festive gift on 22 July 1983.²⁸ During the state of emergency a total of 10,000 people were interned and nearly a thousand were sentenced to prison. Tens of thousands lost their jobs and many had to choose exile.²⁹ However, having said that, the long-term consequences of the shock that Polish society suffered from the introduction of martial law have not been mentioned.

Notes

1. For example, Katalin Szokolay, *Lengyelország története* [History of Poland], 2nd edition, (Balassi, Budapest, 2006); Miklós Mitrovits, *A remény hónapjai...* A lengyel Szolidaritás és a szovjet politika 1980–1981 [The Months of Hope ... Polish Solidarity and Soviet Politics 1980–1981] (Napvilág Kiadó, Budapest, 2010) and János Tischler, *1981. december 13. Az ő dolguk.* (Magyarország és a lengyel válság 1980-81.) [13 December 1981. Their Business. (Hungary and the Polish Crisis 1980–1981)] in *Magyar Narancs*, 12 December 2002.
2. Lukasz Kaminski, *A lengyelországi szükségállapot* [The State of Emergency in Poland] in *Beszélő* online, 2007/2. (www.beszelo.c3.hu/cikkek)
3. Documents in the Central Record Office of the Archives of Military History MNVK (Hungarian People's Army's Staff) Directorate 2 (reconnaissance directorate) [henceforth HL KI MNVK 2]. West German assessment of the Polish situation, 4 September 1980, 560/05/137, p. 3.
4. Archives of Military History, (henceforth: HL) KI MNVK 2. Information in connection with Poland, 5 December 1980, 560/05/247, pp. 1-2.
5. HL KI MNVK 2. Information in connection with Poland, NATO measures, 6 December 1980, 560/05/251, pp. 1-5.
6. *Ibid.*
7. *Ibid.*
8. *Ibid.*
9. HL KI MNVK 2. USA information about the Polish situation, 9 December 1980, 560/05/253, pp. 1-2.
10. HL KI MNVK 2. USA information about the Polish situation, 10 December 1980, 560/05/253, p. 1.
11. HL KI MNVK 2. Information in connection with Poland, 1 December 1980, 560/05/238, pp. 1-2.
12. HL KI MNVK 2. Poland, 11 December 1980, 560/05/253, pp. 1-3.
13. Lukasz Kaminski, *A lengyelországi szükségállapot.*

14. HL KI MNVK 2. Events in Poland, 17 December 1981, 728/05/171, p. 1.
15. HL KI MNVK 2. Events in Poland, 18 December 1981, 728/05/173, pp. 1-2.
16. HL KI MNVK 2. Events in Poland, 15 December 1981, 728/05/168. p. 1.
17. HL KI MNVK 2. Events in Poland, 17 December 1981, 728/05/171, p. 1.
18. HL KI MNVK 2. Poland, 4 January 1982, 729/01/7, pp. 7-8.
19. HL KI MNVK 2. Events in Poland, 18 December 1981, 728/05/174, p. 1.
20. HL KI MNVK 2. Information in connection with Poland, 6 January 1982, 729/01/12, pp. 1-2.
21. HL KI MNVK 2. Poland, 7 January 1982, 729/01/16, p. 1.
22. HL KI MNVK 2. Poland, 8 January 1982, 729/01/18, p. 5.
23. HL KI MNVK 2. Poland, 11 January 1982, 729/01/20. pp. 1-2.
24. HL KI MNVK 2. Poland, 11 January 1982, 729/01/20, p. 4.
25. HL KI MNVK 2. Information about the Polish events, 27 December 1981, 728/05/185, pp. 3-4.
26. HL KI MNVK 2. Poland, 20 January 1982, 729/01/41, pp. 1-3.
27. HL KI MNVK 2. Poland, 18 January 1982, 729/01/38, pp. 2-3.
28. The Provisional Polish Government was formed in Chełm, eastern Poland on 22 July 1944. That day was a state holiday, similarly to 4 April celebrated in Hungary.
29. Lukasz Kaminski, *A lengyelországi szükségállapot.*

5. SOME MOSAICS FROM HUNGARY'S COLD WAR HISTORY

Hungary in the service of internationalism

After 1919 the Party of Communists in Hungary, dictated by the changed international circumstances, was renamed the Hungarian Communist Party. In 1945 the Party again had the opportunity to realise its objectives of changing society. Among the features that were significantly different in the historical situation of the inter-war period and that of the post-1945 era, I would highlight the Soviet military occupation and its permanent military presence as the most essential element of this chapter's theme.

Perhaps it is worth quoting Stalin's words to Milovan Djilas:

"This war is different from other wars; whoever occupies a territory will enforce its own social system there. Everyone will spread their system as far as their army gets to. It cannot be any other way."¹

Stalin knew what he wanted already at that time, before the end of the war! In February 1946 when evaluating Stalin's politics, Maxim Litvinov, former foreign minister and by then Soviet ambassador to the United States, asserted:

"Russia has returned to the old-fashioned concept of security based on territory – the more you get the greater security you have."²

Despite the above, although it may be incidental with respect to the end result, from the aspect of my theme I do not regard the discussion of certain questions as academic, namely deciding when and due to which direct and indirect causes did Stalin decide about the form in which the Soviet Union would annex and integrate the territories it occupied during World War II, and how it would make these countries serve its political – internationalist – objectives, pursued in the interest of consummating the world revolutionary process, as well as the military aims set to aid its political goals. As a military historian, I would like to focus on the latter.

Assessing the events according to Stalinist logic, it can be stated that, in the given historical situation, what happened did not and could not have happened in any other way.

When the Soviet leaders lost their self-control, they spoke the truth. The

essence of the “Brezhnev doctrine” announced on 29 September 1965, which was already experienced in Hungary in 1956, was that the Soviet Union regarded “the friendly socialist countries” as its territory. Leonid Brezhnev stated at the Central Committee meeting of the CPSU that the Soviet Union (as general secretary of the CC) regarded the “friendly socialist countries” as its own territory, thus they were ready to defend the states of their sphere of interest from foreign aggression, and if socialism was threatened in a “brotherly country” it was a common issue for all socialist countries.

Alexei Kosygin, the president of the Soviet Union’s Council of Ministers, brought the essence of the doctrine up-to-date at a “negotiation” conducted with the Czechoslovak leaders in Čierna:

“The chief result of World War II is that the borders were able to be pushed to the west as far as the Šumava. Therefore when we speak about the western borders of Czechoslovakia it also means the western borders of the Soviet Union. Thus it is not only the right but also the duty of the Soviet Union to secure these borders. (...) The High Command of the Warsaw Pact has the right to place and move troops in the territory of the Pact’s member states without asking the government of each country.”³

The following was often heard during the years of occupation: “Honouring its international commitment, the Soviet Union provides assistance to socialist countries!”

Field Marshal Mikhail Ilyich Kazakov, chief of the Joint Command of the Warsaw Pact Armed Forces in 1968, summarised the essence of the “internationalist” assistance provided for Czechoslovakia as follows.

“In a socialist country it cannot be a subject for discussion when and how many and for how long Soviet soldiers intend to enter the territory of the country, since they increase the power of socialism and reinforce the support of communists in every situation and at any time.”⁴

In the following let us examine briefly what the official interpretation of the era understood by internationalism.

The following definitions are included under “internationalism” in the Hungarian *Dictionary of Foreign Words*, published in the 1950s.

1. The international class union and solidarity of all countries’ proletarians and workers to overthrow the rule of the bourgeoisie and to eliminate imperialism in the struggle for building communism worldwide...

2. The protection of every people’s freedom and equality, of the cooperation and friendship of peoples and the voluntary union of nations; a struggle against chauvinism, nationalist isolation, narrow-mindedness and separation; help and

support for small peoples; the example of real internationalism and the ideal of peoples' friendship is the Soviet Union..."⁵

Not without tendentiousness let us quote the words from (the *Hungarian version* of) The International, which became the national anthem of the Soviet Union and can be connected to our theme.

"We've become creators of the common good – so let those who resist lose their lives! (...)"

Focussing strictly on the examined theme, the following data show all the more clearly what happened for the sake of creating the "common good" in Hungary:⁶

- ◆ approximately 600,000 soldiers and civilians in Soviet captivity and on "malenki robot" (forced labour);
- ◆ tens of thousands deprived of their property and thus of a significant part of their means of existence;
- ◆ the so-called kulak trials involving approximately 300,000 people;
- ◆ about 400 people were executed for political reasons up to 1956;
- ◆ several tens of thousands of people were compelled to leave their home;
- ◆ relocation of masses of people, 14-15,000 were removed from the capital alone;
- ◆ secret files on nearly one million people;
- ◆ more than a million criminal procedures between 1950 and 1953, of which 650,000 reached the courts, of those 390,000 resulted in conviction;
- ◆ approximately 40,000 were interned by the state security organs;
- ◆ forced labour and convict labour for drafted soldiers.

In 1956 the overwhelming majority of Hungary's population answered with a definite NO to this form of the Soviet interpretation of the "common good", to the dictatorship led and directed by the Communist Party, which at the time was called the Hungarian Workers' Party, and to the experiment to establish socialism.

The real reasons for the Soviet Union's war fought with the assistance of the Hungarian political leadership – the "internationalist assistance" formulated in the Kádár era – can be reconstructed on the basis of the following Soviet manifestations.

According to Veljko Mitsunovich's (ambassador of Yugoslavia to Moscow) notes taken at the talks held with Josip Broz Tito on the night of 2-3 November 1956, Nikita Khrushchev regarded the main reason for launching another attack on Hungary as the following:

"If the Soviet Union made allowances, the capitalists would think that it was weak or stupid, which amounts to the same thing. As long as Stalin ruled, everyone shut up

and there was no chaos, and now leaders gabble about condemning Stalin. Primarily the Soviet army would reproach them for this.”⁷

Colonel Y.I. Malashenko, Chief of Staff of the Soviet Special Corps directing the battles in Budapest, wrote in his memoirs: “The majority of Soviet soldiers regarded the fight against the Hungarians as a continuation of World War II.”⁸

“...It must not be forgotten that Horthy’s Hungary fought alongside Hitler’s Germany against our Motherland in the previous war...” Order No.1 of 4 November given by Marshal Koniev, Chief of Command of the Combined Armed Forces of the Warsaw Pact, first deputy minister of the Soviet Union’s Armed Forces in his primary post, encouraged the Soviet soldiers to greater fighting activity and a hard fight.

The fact that it was a unilateral Russian aggression is proved by the fact that the most frequently occurring concepts in connection with the activity of the Soviet troops in October and November among the Soviet leaders were: “entry”, “intervention”, “occupation”, “it won’t be a major war”, “we cannot give up Hungary”, etc.

The tragic consequences are known. Eleven years after the end of World War II, Budapest was again in ruins. Nearly 20,000 people were wounded, more than 2,500 died, of those 2000 in Budapest. Some 200,000 were compelled to leave their country. During the period of reprisals, approximately 16,748 people⁹ (others estimate the number at 26,000)¹¹ were convicted. A total of 229 people were sentenced to death and executed.

In my opinion, the experience of 1956 can be validly generalised for the whole period, despite the frequent change in the aims and content of the Soviet dictatorship. However, it is not only the Soviet decision makers and implementers who can be held responsible for the realisation of Soviet rule – the war waged by the Soviet Union against Hungary in 1956 – and thus for the consequences of the dictatorship.

In order to defend the thus acquired and “deserved” posts, the Hungarian leaders who were appointed to leading positions on the basis of decisions of the Soviet political leadership, and who carried out the Soviet leadership’s political decisions relating to Hungary, accepted the Soviet dictate without taking the consequences into account and, for example, in 1956 they turned to the Soviet Union for help in a knee-jerk manner.

On 23 October 1956 some in the Hungarian political leadership were aware of the fact that the deployment of Soviet forces for policing was possible in a certain case. Ernő Gerő, secretary of the Communist Party’s Central Committee, or Prime Minister András Hegedüs also had to know that the Soviet troops had a detailed plan for executing special police tasks, which plan was adjusted to the tasks of the Hungarian army and interior police force with a similar aim and content.

It is important to highlight the issue of whether the Hungarian political leadership asked for the deployment of Soviet troops on 23 October independently or simply acknowledged the fact. However, either way, a large part agreed with it.

They accepted the “advice” of Soviet leaders concerning the handling of the crisis and regarded this as obligatory for themselves. It can be proved that, regarding essential issues, between 23 and 31 October the Hungarian leadership did not go over the limits of the scope for action, which were indicated and several times modified – as a result of the events – by the Soviet leaders.

Of course, this does not mean that there would not have been any disputes over minor issues and even friction, misunderstanding or misinterpretations, but they did not result in the Soviet leadership withdrawing its support from the Hungarian leadership. The Soviet leadership regarded the Party leadership headed by János Kádár and the state leadership, which was headed by Imre Nagy but actually did not formally exist until 28 October, as suitable for handling the crisis as Soviet interests required.

It must also be stated in relation to the above that the Soviet and Hungarian political leadership was united in making decisions for handling the crisis, thus in my opinion its members share responsibility for all the consequences in Hungary that happened as an effect of those decisions.

There were always volunteers or “disciplined Party members” among the communists in the political elite who were unconditionally or on orders – at the time referred to as a Party resolution – ready to carry out the often changing Soviet decisions. When they could have had some freedom of choice, however slim that was, they still arrived at decisions about essential issues by taking the Soviet presumed or real interests into account and, importantly, in the interest of holding onto their own position and/or the power of the leading communist elite.

This is what happened in 1957 and 1958 when the Party leadership rejected the possibility of Soviet troops withdrawing from Hungary. At the meeting of the Central Committee of the Hungarian Socialist Workers’ Party (HSWP) on 22 June 1957, when evaluating the position of the Soviet troops János Kádár said the following.

“I always calculate for myself the position of power. What if the Soviet troops were withdrawn? Would we stand on our feet? I think we would, but with a terrible fight and bloodshed. That is the situation now...”¹²

The complete withdrawal of Soviet troops, which was the realisation of one of the most important objectives for the Hungarian people and the revolution, had to wait for several decades.

The Soviet troops remained in Hungary!

Going back in time, it can be stated that the agreement of the Allied powers provided the possibility for Soviet troops to remain in Hungary after 1945. Then the Peace Pact concluded between the Soviet Union and Hungary on 10 February

1947 made the position permanent. A clause of the treaty guaranteed that troops of a power and composition determined by the Soviet Union would stay in the country as long as occupying troops were in Austria and until Hungary's western neighbour regained its independence. Between 1947 and 1955 the "forces remaining" in Hungary ensured with four divisions the roads and railways which were suitable for the continuous supply.

Since the "Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance" concluded between the Soviet Union and Hungary on 18 February 1948 was still of legal force in October and November 1956, it must be emphasised that according to its intentions and written text the treaty – like the Warsaw Pact later – was concluded to collectively avert a possible external attack. In February 1948 the contracting parties also expressed their respect for each other's independence and state sovereignty, and asserted that in no way would they interfere in another's internal affairs – all the matters which did not concern the concept and content of mutually averting an armed attack by a third party. In addition, they also assumed the obligation of not engaging in actions or measures directed against the other party.

The occupying powers signed the Austrian Independence Treaty, which re-established the country as a sovereign and democratic state, on 15 May 1955. Following the signing of the treaty, the Soviet government should have withdrawn its troops on the basis of the peace treaty not only from Austria but also from Hungary by the end of October, or by the 31 December 1955 at the latest. It was not possible to station or increase the number of Soviet troops in Hungary subsequently.

After the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Austria, the situation in Hungary only changed compared to what was expected in the peace treaty, despite the lack of a legal basis, it was made possible for the Soviet troops to remain in Hungary with reference to the Warsaw Pact concluded on 14 May.

After the conclusion of the Austrian State Treaty, the Hungarian Party and state leadership agreed with the Soviet troops staying in Hungary, despite the lack of appropriate legal conditions. They agreed on hosting a part of the forces withdrawn from Austria and with the establishment of the Special Corps, and they assisted with the expansion of the Soviet military presence by making the related political and military decisions.

They did so although the conclusion of the Warsaw Pact did not settle this issue and did not legalise the situation, which both in its form and content significantly became modified following the withdrawal from Austria, and which existed at the time of signing the WP Charter.

In the subsequent international military-political situation, after winding up the Central Army Group, the Soviet political and military leadership thought it justified to change the number and composition of its troops stationed in Hungary according to the objectives and tasks outlined in the military doctrine of the Warsaw Pact.

The Special Corps set up in September 1955 was to close and protect the Aus-

trian border in cooperation with Hungarian troops and ensure transport links in the case of Soviet troop withdrawal. The Corps was subordinated to the minister of the Soviet armed forces via the General Staff.

A significant change occurred in the number and composition of the Soviet troops during the period of the revolution and freedom struggle. Up to the launch of the second Soviet attack on 4 November, an additional 13 Soviet divisions were ordered to Hungary in several stages.

After the 4 November, during the war a total of 17 Soviet divisions – eight mechanised, one tank, two rifle, two air defence artillery, two air combat and two airborne –, which were subordinated to the Soviet Special Corps, and the 8th and 38th armies were directed to Hungary and took part in the military operations with some 60,000 Soviet soldiers.

It is important to clarify whether the Soviet military force carried out the military operations in Hungary in autumn 1956 as part of the Combined Armed Forces of the Warsaw Pact or as a national force, independently from that organisation. The Soviet leadership did not treat the member states of the Warsaw Pact as equal partners during the Polish and the Hungarian “cases”. It did not show patience to an expected degree, but opted for threatening with force and the deployment of armed troops. Instead of peaceful means, it almost automatically laid emphasis on the deployment of the force of arms by interfering in the two countries’ internal affairs, rejecting the right of nations to self-determination.

At the beginning of 1957 Imre Nagy, who was by then in captivity in Romania, wrote:

“The Polish and Hungarian events have revealed that the Warsaw Pact is a means of Soviet super-power, chauvinistic aspirations. With its help they subordinate the participating socialist countries – more correctly, forced into it on Moscow’s orders – to this political line. The Warsaw Pact is nothing other than imposing the Soviet military dictatorship on these countries. ...So the real sense of the Warsaw Pact is to ensure such a political, economic and military situation in these countries with the help of the Soviet troops which best corresponds to the military aspirations of Soviet power. ...In the field of the inter-relations between the socialist countries, the Warsaw Pact is a military means of the Stalinist period’s dependence and subordination. What the Soviet government cannot achieve with the political advice and orders of the CPSU, the Warsaw Pact was to ensure with military means...”¹³

During the 1956 revolution Marshal Koniev, who took over command of the troops stationed in Hungary on 2 November as first deputy to Marshal Zhukov, executed the decisions of the Soviet political leadership. Since none of the member states were attacked by an external power from outside the bloc, in the framework of the Warsaw Pact there was no reason or possibility for state policing deployment of the home defence forces, including the Soviet troops ordered in the formation of the Combined Armed Forces. On 23 October and then on 31 Octo-

ber the Soviet Union unilaterally decided about the intervention by disregarding the norms stipulated in the Charter of the Warsaw Pact (WP). Thus it cannot be recognised as an action executed within the terms of the WP.

The stipulation in the Soviet government's statement published on 30 October 1956 that the Soviet troops were stationed in Hungary on the basis of the Warsaw Pact was false, since the bilateral agreement regulating the stationing of Soviet troops in Hungary was only signed on 27 May 1957.

The agreement, which came into force on 16 August 1957, on the temporary stationing of Soviet troops in Hungary states that "the temporary stationing of Soviet troops in Hungary in no way affects the sovereignty of the Hungarian state; the Soviet troops do not interfere in the internal affairs of the Hungarian People's Republic".¹⁴

The bilateral agreement concluded on 1 April 1958 about the number and location of Soviet troops temporarily stationed in the territory of the Hungarian People's Republic permitted the Soviet party to station 60,500 soldiers in 67 garrisons in Hungary. That agreement enabled the Soviet Union to arbitrarily change, if only temporarily, the number of troops and "the Soviet command not to harmonise the change in the temporary numbers with the Hungarian party".

After the suppression of the revolution and freedom struggle the Soviet Southern Group of Forces, whose command and subordinated formations with small changes were stationed in Hungary until summer 1991, was formed from the forces which were stationed in Hungary before 23 October 1956 and those that were ordered to the country by 4 November the same year.

For the Soviet troops stationed abroad, including Hungary, a task executed in combat several times was to preserve the Soviet sphere of interest and to prevent breaking off or separation, with force if needed. The other no less important task, "an internationalist mission", was to prepare for the struggle for "the annihilation of imperialism and building communism all over the world" relying on the occupied countries' required ability for war and use of military force – "enslaved masses stand up, stand up!" (as *The International* goes).

Ideas about the export of revolution, or Hungary's position and role in the Soviet war plans

The details of the Soviet and Hungarian concepts on the type of war that threatened at the time, i.e. nuclear war, which was undoubtedly to happen in accordance with Soviet expectations, can be fairly precisely reconstructed on the basis of documents researched in recent years. According to political and military evaluations the imaginary scenario of the war soon to be unleashed by the "Westerners" can be demonstrated with the help of recently analysed archival documents and maps. Today we already know the sequence, size and the probable consequences of strikes delivered on each other by "Westerners" and "Easterners" according to

Soviet assumptions. Alternative versions in connection with the projected outcome of the war can be also summarised.

In the narrow frameworks available here, the viewpoints about the imagined process of the war are introduced in a mosaic-like manner on the basis of archival sources in Hungarian and Russian, the majority of which were blocked until 2007, and which exist in Hungary in connection with activities in relation to the Warsaw Pact. Then it is followed by an outline of the consequences of a nuclear war to be launched with the participation of Hungary, causing major devastation and destruction of the country's population and infrastructure.

The objective is to destroy “the reserves of manpower in the imperialist bloc”

The country and its armed forces had to be prepared for an inevitable and long-lasting war, which would finally have resulted in the victory of the Soviet Union, according to Stalin's concept reflected by the military strategic principle of the period.

“In the last years of World War II the Soviet Union made the strategic attack, i.e. the principle that the enemy must be destroyed in ‘its own den’, the basis of its military strategic thinking. After the war, this concept took shape in a doctrine according to which the best means for its own security was to create the conditions of a maximum military threat towards the populations and territories of countries which the Soviet Union regarded as its opponents.”¹⁵

Starting out from the strategic and military operational principles, as well as the experience of World War II, Soviet strategists thought that land forces, and within those primarily tank and artillery troops, would again have a major role in the next war.¹⁶

When formulating the strategic principles of the period, the Soviet Union at the time did not yet reckon with the deployment of nuclear weapons. This was so despite the fact that the Soviet Union successfully detonated its first nuclear charge in 1949, and experiments relating to the production of a hydrogen bomb were underway.¹⁷

According to Imre Okvath's evaluation, Stalin “regarded the atomic bomb as a strategic weapon, which should be used primarily against targets in the enemy hinterland (cities and industrial centres) and did not think it was effective against the Soviet armed forces.”¹⁸ The Soviet military leadership maintained this viewpoint until the disintegration of the Soviet Union and enforced Stalin's concept during planning processes.

Stalin's aim was to be able to reach the territory of the USA as fast as possible,

to create the conditions for an air attack, including the development of “transatlantic missiles” and setting them up in a system.¹⁹

In his study, Sándor Simon asserts²⁰ that at the beginning of the 1950s those who developed the Soviet military doctrine presumed that a military collision with NATO, the main forces of the capitalist world, was inevitable, that war was to be waged basically with traditional weapons, and that Europe would comprise its main theatre. When later the Soviet military doctrine was reformulated, the appearance of Soviet nuclear weapons and their introduction into service with the troops played a significant role.

The Hungarian military leadership also evaluated the situation of NATO as unfavourable in several aspects. The launch of strategic missiles could be detected “in a few minutes”, which provided the opportunity for an almost simultaneous counter-strike.

As it is quoted in the study:

“On the basis of evaluating this opportunity it can be stated that in the case of an all-out nuclear war our expected enemies will find themselves in a very disadvantageous situation if they want to mobilise their military forces, especially if we consider the developed, existing balance of forces of the Warsaw Pact and NATO in Europe.

In the European theatre of war the NATO’s inadequacy, in particular, that of the number of its land forces deployed in the Central-European strategic direction and the supremacy of the socialist coalition, both in size and quality in this field, are well known, and this circumstance forces the leaders of NATO to counterbalance their disadvantage in relation to traditional forces with planned mobilisation and setting up a significant number of new divisions after the outset of military activities (...)

Concerning the effects and consequences of nuclear strikes en masse on the execution of the planned mobilisation, the extremely disadvantageous position of the imperialist bloc, especially the states situated in the European theatre, is indisputable. The fundamental manpower reserves in the imperialist bloc are concentrated in the densely populated Western European countries, which are extremely sensitive to strikes. A significant part of the population is concentrated in large cities and in relatively small areas in the vicinity of huge industrial objects which constitute the targets of nuclear strikes. Destroying these, as well as the bases prepared for setting up and equipping new units in the theatre, and the effect of high-level radiation in the wake of severe strikes, may dramatically influence the course of mobilisation or, depending on the yield of the strikes, may entirely paralyse their execution.”²¹

At the same time, the study states, the position of socialist countries is far more favourable. Large cities may come to be destroyed due to the nuclear strikes but “the reserves of military age are spread out in vast, geographically contiguous areas, which, despite the great losses, are able to guarantee the mobilisation of the military force required for achieving the long-term strategic goals of the war”.

It does not occur to the writers of the study that if their statements were correct, i.e. if the global nuclear war “primarily presented irreparable losses to the aggressor” and if “there is hardly any chance of carrying out mobilisation following the outbreak of the global nuclear war”, why they would wage it. The Hungarian military leaders were also mistaken about the fact that a total nuclear war would have catastrophic consequences primarily for NATO countries. (See later the data of the consequences of a nuclear war against Hungary with a total yield of 3.8 Mt.)

By the end of the 1960s the Soviet political and military leadership realised that an unlimited nuclear war would completely destroy mankind, therefore theoretical works and regulations appeared which were concerned with military activity using conventional weapons.

“In the 70s and 80s the Soviet General Staff and the Supreme Command of the Unified Armed Forces thought it possible that a war between the WP and NATO could take place with the use of conventional weapons, especially in the initial and final periods of the war.

According to these concepts, in the initial period of the war the Soviet (WP) land forces, which were significantly superior with respect to quantity, with the support of the air force of the fronts would have been able to break through NATO’s defence system and the army as well as the front with the deployment of military operational manoeuvre groups would have been able to develop the offensive military operation into a strategic success within a short time (10-15 days).

NATO’s nuclear means of attack, command points, air defence system, the main groupings of its armoured and mechanised troops etc. were planned to be destroyed or seized during the offensive operations of the fronts in the first phase. Thus they would have deprived the USA and NATO of presenting further armed resistance in the European theatres.

However, the concepts which emphasised the inevitability of deploying missiles with nuclear warheads continued to exist alongside ideas about a war fought with conventional weapons. As a reason for this, at the WP’s army- and front-level military exercises the idea was usually accepted that the political leadership of the USA (and NATO) could avert the rapid successes of the WP’s armed forces only by deploying nuclear weapons en masse. The theories of “counter-strike” and “encounter battle” emerged from this presumption, which required Soviet (WP) multiple nuclear strikes, either immediately following or simultaneous with enemy nuclear strikes.”²²

Hungarian participation in liberating the workers of Austria and Italy

An attack through Yugoslavia
– as if the Yugoslav People’s Army had disappeared into thin air²³

At the beginning of the 1960s the military doctrine of the Warsaw Pact defined Kaposvár – Zagreb – Ljubljana – Gorizia – Beluno as an important military operational direction of the South-Western Theatre, including Hungary.

As the section of the map of NATO exercise “WINTEX/CIMEX – 1979”, prepared by Hungarian intelligence services, shows NATO reckoned with the possibility of an attack launched through Yugoslavia.²⁴

In 1962 Colonel-General Lajos Czinege, Hungary’s minister of defence, stated that this direction ensured favourable conditions for Hungary “to occupy important ports (Trieste, Rijeka, Pula) on the Adriatic Sea then [to exclude] Italy from the war by getting to the Italian plain with a military operation via the Adriatic and also across land.”²⁵

By evaluating the vegetation, hydrographic conditions and possibilities of rail and road transport, it was stated that Székesfehérvár – Zagreb – Trieste – Verona – Genoa was the most favourable direction and that the lines Veszprém – Szombathely – Graz – Klagenfurt and Szekszárd – Pécs – Sisak – Rijeka could be primarily taken into consideration as the secondary direction of the offensive.²⁶

Czinege said that during the exercise “we have started off from the real situation. We made the Italian armed forces, their strength and positioning appear as in reality on the basis of data at our disposal at present. We realistically planned the activity that can be expected in the presumed situation.

“Starting off from this situation, we tried to take advantage of possibilities presented by the military geographical situation to destroy the enemy...”²⁷ in the interest of which the missile units of the WP would deliver nuclear strikes en masse on the objects of strategic importance for the “Westerners” and on their land forces executing forward manoeuvres and embarkation.

According to these plans, the Hungarian army’s next task was to destroy the 3rd Italian Army’s initial forces of the first echelon in an encounter battle in the region west of Zagreb and by developing the strike with the main forces to the wing and rear of the “Westerners”, the Hungarian forces would seize the regions of Ljubljana, Sodražica and Skrad by the end of the second day (D2) of the military operation.

Later, by deploying fresh forces, the army would develop the offensive in the directions of Gorizia – Udine – Padua and Ljubljana – Trieste. Bit by bit it would destroy the forces which have been drawn forward from the operational reserve of the “Westerners”. Then by the end of day six of the operation it would execute its further task with its main forces and seize the zones of Tolmezo and Belluno,

as well as Montebelluna and Treviso. Thus the Hungarian army would create the conditions for a rapid transition into the second military operation.

Thirty-two tactical and theatre ballistic missiles with nuclear warheads, as well as 13 missiles with chemical and 34 with conventional warheads, were ensured for executing the offensive operation by the 1st Army. Consequently the yield of nuclear devices would reach a total of 635 kt – according to other data it would be 695 kt in the case of 33 missiles. (This yield was thirty times greater than that of the atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki.)

Comparing the above data with the concept of the process of the military operations, it can be stated that the majority of the army's planned nuclear strikes would have happened in the territory of Yugoslavia.

During my research I found the material relating to only two military exercises in which WP forces – among them primarily Hungarian People's Army units – fight against NATO troops in the territory of Yugoslavia according to the conceptualised situation. A peculiarity of these plans is that they do not mention at all what the Yugoslav People's Army would be doing at the time of the activity of the WP troops. The war involving the use of nuclear devices would be taking place in the territory of Yugoslavia, as if the Yugoslav People's Army had disappeared into thin air.

“Self-defence” from the Hungarian-Austrian border to Trapani in Sicily

According to Soviet and consequently Warsaw Pact military ideas, with tactical and theatre nuclear strikes en masse and the successful offensive of troops, Austria and Italy could be “disconnected” from the war in a relatively short time of 6-14 days. Hence the military operational plans were worked out in more details primarily to the line of Como – Milan – Mantua – Venice.

Yet the material of a Front and Staff Command exercise, held in 1980, verifies that the WP also had plans for a complete military occupation of Italy. Important details of military operations up to Trapani in Sicily can be demonstrated with the help of a recently discovered sketch map and document fragments²⁸.

According to the “concept” worked out on the basis of the general strategic principles of the WP, NATO began the war preparations. The starting point stipulated in the material of the exercise claims that the “Westerners” at the beginning of 1980 “began preparations to start a war against the WPS [the member states of the Warsaw Pact – M.H.]. Neo-fascist activity intensified in the FRG and Italy, and right-wing circles in the FRG launched a campaign for annexing the GDR aggressively.

“The reactionary circles of Austria accomplished a coup, seized power and declared their willingness to execute military activities jointly with NATO troops against

WPS. (...) in several capitalist countries mobilisation took place under the disguise of preparing for an exercise and they began the transport of personnel, air force, weaponry, 'Pershing II' missiles, cruise missiles and neutron weapons from the USA to the Central-European theatre and Italy."²⁹



The “Easterners” uncovered NATO’s war preparations and “made efforts to resolve the situation by diplomacy. Simultaneously (...) they raised the combat readiness of their armed forces and began the transition to a war time structure.

“The Southern Group of (Soviet) Forces and the troops of the Hungarian People’s Army ... began the execution of tasks of full combat readiness. The higher echelons occupied their sectors of combat readiness and reached a state of full readiness.

The ‘BALATON’ Front was formed from the troops of the Southern Group of Forces and the Hungarian People’s Army.”³⁰

According to the assumption of the WP planners, the “Westerners” would start the attack after numerous surprise air strikes at 6 a.m. on 12 June. NATO forces would deliver a major blow in the direction of Berlin and Prague. The aim of the main attack would be to destroy the major grouping of the WP in the territories of the GDR and Czechoslovakia, then as a result of the successful offensive military operation, to get to the western border of the Soviet Union by the 12th-15th day of the military operation.

“In the South-Western Theatre the forces of the Southern Group of (Soviet) Forces [according to WP assumptions – M.H.] are planning to achieve their set objective by the surprise use of nuclear weapons, provided the combat activities were unfavourable.”³¹

After the “Easterners” had uncovered the war preparations of the “Westerners”, the Command of the South-Western Theatre would be planning an offensive in the direction of North Italy, the aim of which would be to deploy units of the Southern Group of Forces in the territory of Austria and Italy, thus disconnecting Austria and Italy from the war.

The supply of nuclear ammunition for the land forces of the Front was planned up to the first ten days of the military operation. In accordance with this plan, at the start of the operation the yield of the nuclear warheads delivered to the troops for use was somewhat more than 14.5 Mt. With subsequent resupply, further warheads with a yield of 3.1 Mt would reach the units.

The use of a total of 329 ballistic missiles was reckoned with to get the nuclear and conventional warheads onto the targets. At the beginning of the military operations the troops received 238 missiles from the above amount.

The conclusion can be drawn from the data that the Hungarian forces which made up more than 50% of the Front’s personnel had 23% of the nuclear warheads of the missiles, 27% of the means of delivery and only 20% of the total yield of the nuclear devices ensured for the execution of the military operations.

In addition, the Theatre Command ensured 141 pieces of nuclear ammunition with a total yield of 7,947 kt for the air units of the Front for the first ten days of the military operation.³²

Thus the total yield of nuclear devices ensured for the Front up to the tenth day of the military operation was 25,623 kt. I did not find data in the 1980 source about the nuclear devices planned to be deployed by the Theatre Command and the Supreme Command.

As it was planned as early as 1964, the Supreme Command (at that time there was no Theatre Command as an intermediary command level) would have executed the destruction of Italy's important political-administrative and industrial objects, nuclear weapon storage sites, missile launchers and airports with the use of nuclear devices. The 1964 plan reckoned with 20 nuclear strikes of strategic missiles with a total yield of 14.8 Mt, as detailed in the following table.

"TEMP" – Register of targets of planned nuclear strikes in Italy³³

<i>Serial No.</i>	<i>Nuclear strike target</i>	<i>Yield of nuclear device (kt or Mt)</i>
1.	Turin	1 Mt
2.	Vercelli	500 kt
3.	Navara	500 kt
4.	Milan	1 Mt
5.	Brescia (nuclear weapon storage site)	1 Mt
6.	Vallegio-Sul-Munto (nuclear weapon storage site)	500 kt
7.	Gretciana (presumably Grecciano) (nuclear weapon storage site)	500 kt
8.	Genoa	500 kt
9.	Bologna	1 Mt
10.	Livorno	300 kt
11-12.	Ancona	2 × 500 kt
13.	Rome	1 Mt
14-18.	JUPITER launch sites	5 × 1 Mt
19.	Rimini (nuclear weapon storage site)	500 kt
20.	Naples	1 Mt
Total		14,800 kt

In my opinion, in 1980 the Supreme Command and the Theatre Command reckoned with a multiple yield planned in 1964 to be used. The correctness of my statement is indirectly verified by the fact that the forces – the “South-western Front” in 1965 and the “Balaton Front” in 1980 – deployed in the south-western direction were to be issued nuclear devices with a total yield of 1.8 Mt³⁴ in 1964 compared to 25.6 Mt in 1980 for executing military operations of approximately the same objective and volume.

This assumption is reinforced by the fact that when planning the military operations urban combat, which required significant forces and time, as well as basically affecting the accomplishment of the set military operational aims, was not taken into consideration – *the cities were planned to be destroyed with the use of nuclear weapons.*

As a result of the offensive in the northern Italian operational direction, the forces of the Front were to destroy the Austrian armed forces primarily with nuclear strikes and thus would have “disconnected Austria from the war”.

The Front was to accomplish the second military operation, whose depth was planned to be 950-1,000 kilometres, in 17-19 days.

In order to disconnect Italy from the war and to completely occupy her territory, the Hungarian 12th (actually 5th) Army and part of the forces on the right wing of the Front was to reach the coast of Genoa Bay, where they were to conduct a defensive military operation between the French border and Viareggio.

Having occupied the territories of the Venice – Padua – Ferrara – Ravenna – coastline region, the Hungarian 10th (actually 3rd) Army Corps was to secure the offensive military operations of the Soviet 4th Army and the Soviet 6th Army Corps with a defensive operation on the coast on their the left flank.

The main strike of the second military operation was to be executed by the Soviet 4th Army and the Soviet 6th Army Corps, as a result of which the further task of the second attack of the Front in occupying Sicily would have been accomplished.

The existence of the plan worked out for the complete military occupation of Italy (a version is shown above) verifies that the military doctrine of the WP was to fight for a final victory and in order to achieve that all means, including a total nuclear war, could be used – a denial of the principle stipulated in the WP Charter about collective self-defence.

The aggressive character of the WP is further illustrated by the fact that it first discussed the problems of preparing and accomplishing defensive military operations at a Command and Staff Exercise at a Unified Armed Forces level only as late as 1987 – 32 years after the founding of the WP. An important event preceding it was that the Political Consultative Committee of the WP decided to reinforce the defensive nature of the WP’s military doctrine at its meeting held in Berlin in May 1987.

The essence of the Berlin decision – important from the aspect of the examined theme – was summarised by State Secretary Lieutenant General Lajos Mórocz in agreement with Marshal V. G. Kulikov, the Supreme Commander of the Unified Armed Forces, in the following at the Front Command and Staff Exercise held in Hungary between 12 and 18 June 1987.³⁵

“Given our geo-strategic position ... [that] our neighbours are socialist countries, while our western neighbour, Austria, is neutral, we have no direct borders with NATO countries. Therefore the enemy’s attack can hit us primarily through the airspace. In order that they could launch an attack against us on land, NATO troops would have to enter Austria, which requires time and in this respect provides the opportunity for adequate preparation and counter-measures [for example, for a “preventive” attack through Austria that was practised in previous decades – M.H.]

An essential element of our geo-strategic position is that the Hungarian People's Republic is a country of small size, which would turn into a theatre of war in the case of a war in Europe. If it comes to aggression, it will have to be averted; *therefore the first military operation will in all probability be a defensive military operation* [my emphasis – M.H.] ... The solid defence of the country's territory has to be already started at our borders, we cannot give up significant territories without gravely endangering the existence of our state...

The technical aspect of the military doctrine includes that if we are attacked we not only defend ourselves – hiding our necks in trenches infinitely (Sic!) – but in cooperation with our allies *we must be ready for definite, powerful counter-strikes, for destroying the aggressor with attack, for transferring the combat to the territory of the enemy, and for eliminating it from the armed conflict. Therefore we must keep our armed forces at high combat readiness and in an adequate grouping. In this respect we must take into account the probable theatre, primarily the Italian strategic direction and the command and organisational structure and equipment of our land forces must be shaped in such a way that they would optimally correspond to the geographical and military conditions of their probable use.*"

Lajos Mórocz summarised the essence in the following: "Thus we will execute the development, technical modernisation, and preparation of the Hungarian People's Army in such a way that it would meet the requirements of both defence and attack."³⁶

Perhaps it is not rushing to conclusions to state that the "self-defence", as it was practised in 1980, could be invariably pursued up to the complete occupation of Italy – in a favourable case from the Hungarian-Austrian border to Trapani in Sicily – without giving up territories.

The presumed effects of a nuclear war on Hungary – on the hinterland and the population

The prognosticated war for Hungary constituted an important component of the plans worked out by the WP for a nuclear war, which were made in different versions adapted to the "set" strategic and operational situations. They also included concepts related to preserving, securing and defending the political and state institutions which were "vital from the aspect of the country's direction and functionality", the factories and their workers "obliged to produce during war time", those in the population who were able to do military service and employed in military production, and (last but not least, although with a different emphasis) the part of the population who were not in the above plans and were unable to serve in the above.

The government adopted a territorial system of classification as the basis of

preparing for civil defence. It stipulated which areas and towns were primarily endangered by the enemy's probable nuclear strikes.

According to the government's assessment, on the basis of strategic, national economic and administrative importance, cities and towns at the highest level of danger and thus categorised in the top classification were the following: Budapest, Miskolc, Debrecen, Szeged, Pécs, Győr, Székesfehérvár, Szolnok and Dunaújváros. In those settlements and their immediate vicinity "the highest organs of the Party leadership and state administration are concentrated and these areas are also the centres of the country's most significant political, state administrative, economic and cultural bases". Some 25% of the population lived in those towns and their vicinity.³⁷

According to the analysis of civil defence experts, the nuclear strikes of a combined yield of 3.8 Mt that would be nearly simultaneously delivered at these towns would have the following consequences: the country's leadership could not be alerted, therefore the destruction and annihilation of the leadership must be reckoned with and thus the independent initiative of local organisations, and the activity of the leading bodies of those counties, districts and settlements which were outside the strike territory, would be needed.

Life protection facilities did not meet modern requirements, and shelters functioned as storerooms. Therefore in the immediate destruction zone of the strike losses would reach 1,150,000 people – 400,000 would immediately die and the 750,000 injured would require medical care. This figure amounted to 12% of the country's population. Scientific capacity and, generally, the majority of white-collar workers, as well as a great part of skilled workers needed for reconstruction were concentrated in the above towns, primarily in the capital.

As a consequence of radioactive fall-out, a further 800,000 persons suffering from radiation exposure or with radioactive contamination would have to be reckoned with in the ABC zones of the fall-out. Thus the total number of casualties would rise to nearly two million people, which would amount to some 20% of the population and the number of injured would keep rising. Under such conditions the search and rescue of the survivors would be impossible and there would not be enough facilities for emergency medical care either.

One of the causes of the situation described above would be that some 55% of the civil defence forces established to carry out the above tasks – some 260,000 people of the 500,000 organised nationally – would be wiped out or become unable to perform the rescue tasks. There would be no opportunity to concentrate the forces which had remained in the unaffected areas, because of transport difficulties and the size of the territories contaminated as a consequence of the strikes.

The situation would be further complicated by the fact that there would not be enough time to mobilise the civil defence military units or to reinforce the existing units by mobilisation. In addition, the majority of the personnel intended for this purpose would be called up from the endangered territories.

Material losses would also be significant. The deployment of the army would

be largely limited by the fact that 51%, a significant part of the Hungarian People's Army's objects classified for air defence, would be situated in the endangered territory. These objects would have "a great significance in the supply of the army, since the majority ensure the supply of medical care, food, fuel and explosives [for the armed forces]."³⁸

Of the facilities required for maintaining medical services, 77% of the country's stock of medication, 60% of the nationally stored 110,000 litres of blood and approximately 58%, i.e. 45,000 hospital beds of the 76,000 ones in the country, could be found in the endangered territory.

The situation was impossible to handle, which is shown by the fact that the "demand for medical dressings, medicine, and instruments necessary for the hospital care of at least 50% of the injured [would be] so high that even the present peace time stocks would be unable to satisfy it."³⁹

The losses due to radioactive fall-out would further impair the anyway grave situation. Thus nationally 80.7% of pharmaceutical and 67% of blood stocks would nationally be destroyed, while the probable loss of hospital beds might reach 63%.

Since the medicine, blood, blood plasma, and blood plasma substitutes in the country "hardly cover the necessary quantity for the medical support of the tasks of the army's first military operation", the losses would be even higher.

Taking into account the territories of the radioactive fall-out, 31% of the country's 2.4 million square metres of food storage area and 69% of the approximately 15,000 wagonloads of wheat silo capacity would be concentrated in the territory of the nine towns identified as the most endangered; the probable loss would reach 36% of the food storages and 76% of the wheat silo capacity. A part of the losses could be later reused following adequate decontamination procedures.

The difficulties in food supply would presumably be increased by the fact that 25%, some 70,000 square kilometres of cultivated agricultural lands would be situated in the territory affected by the strike and approximately 15% of the country's 1,700,000 livestock, some 260,000 animals, might also be destroyed.

Sixty-seven per cent of the country's industrial capacity was concentrated in the territory declared as endangered, thus some 53% of the industry manufacturing the final products of the military industry, 100% of the pharmaceutical industry and precision engineering, 60-70% of meat processing and canning industry, as well as 75% of dairy, milling and baking companies would be destroyed or become unable to operate for a long time.

The expert report asserts: "On the basis of evaluating the given industrial concentration it can be presumed that the interruption of production can already occur in the case of a strike that is delivered only on the capital and its vicinity."⁴⁰

As a consequence of the probable strikes, besides the incapacitated electric power supply and crude oil transport, the key transport junctions, crossings over the Danube and the Tisza rivers would be destroyed or become unusable. The transport in Transdanubia could be paralysed by the destruction of road and rail junctions in the town of Székesfehérvár.

The conclusions and proposals submitted by the Civil Defence Staff following the evaluation of the probable consequences of nuclear strikes are also noteworthy.

“Updating the warning system for the population seems to be expedient... *In the examined situation the large-scale losses of the population can be accepted as a fact* [my emphasis – M.H.]. This can only be resolved by a long-term development plan which would aim at consistently reducing the overcrowdedness of towns in the country and simultaneously at decentralising the population.

On the basis of the government decree, no comprehensive construction of shelters for the population has been conducted since 1960. Organised resettlement cannot be carried out under the conditions of a surprise attack; thus the population can rely only on using the existing defence facilities, shelters, emergency shelters, underground spaces, etc., provided the people can reach them in time. (...)

In the given situation we must reckon with the instinctive fleeing of the population who have survived from the territory of the strike, as well as the people’s spontaneous abandonment of the towns unaffected by the nuclear strike (...)

Under the examined circumstances, the medical care and food supply for the surviving population can only be provided in the towns, districts and settlements in territories outside the impact zone of the strike, whose stocks at present are inadequate for the number of the population living there. Consequently the demand of the surviving population for food and health care is extremely high. At present it seems almost impossible to resolve this problem with respect to the fact that there is no possibility to accumulate supplies given the existing stocks and the present load-bearing capacity of the national economy...”⁴¹

In connection with the above, a Ministry of Interior study⁴² ten years later, in 1976, notes the following about the presumed situation forming on the first 8-10 days of a nuclear war.

“As a consequence of the multiple nuclear strikes, harmful psychological effects are present in a high percentage of the population. Since there was no proper psychological preparation earlier, most people considered primarily the radioactive radiation as something unperceivable and a mysterious factor of the effects of modern weapons of destruction. In addition, the opinion that defence against nuclear weapons is hopeless and their deployment means ‘the end of the world’ was widespread...

As a result of the strikes a part of the population in the territories that suffered from the attack panicked. After the strike many of them left the shelters before the all-clear sounded and tried to blindly flee generally across the territories with radioactive contamination...

Complete chaos ruled after the nuclear strikes in Budapest, where the evacuation of the population was still going on. Evacuation was halted after the air raid warning. Despite that, a part of the crowd in a terrified state tried to leave the city,

thus blocking the movement and impeding the work of ambulance rescue forces. Forces maintaining public order were unable to stop this panicky flight.

With the exception of Budapest, the emergence of mass panic could only be prevented by isolating and arresting scaremongers, by a firm attitude and sometimes by employing force.

In addition to the above, the sight of destruction and the effect of huge losses make a large number of people depressed. Depression, indifference, the feeling of hopelessness and a complete lack of activity can be experienced. Consequently there are areas where the population cannot be involved in rescue operations and rubble removal...

Among the population many hysterical people – ‘hypochondriac contaminated patients’ – appear who present the symptoms of radioactive contamination (dizziness, vomiting, etc.), partly because of the fear of radiation and partly because of the sight of genuine radioactive contamination. These hypochondriacs increase overcrowdedness in hospitals and health care institutions (...) and make the treatment of patients more difficult.

Various crimes multiply as an effect of demoralisation following a high level of psychological shock. The number of crimes against life, looting and robberies increases. The trade in arms and profiteering thrives. All these cases increase the tasks of the Interior Ministry’s agencies.”⁴³

As seen from the above, the Party and state leadership and the leaders of repressive organisations, as well as people involved in working out plans, evaluations and special studies, were aware of the possible consequences of a nuclear war “waged” by the WP and the military leadership of the Hungarian People’s Army several times a year – fortunately only on the planning table. In my opinion, in the light of the above facts it is possible to evaluate the “proposals” submitted and decisions made in relation to this theme by the Hungarian political and military leadership.

“The population must be guaranteed minimum protection...”

The proposition that “what must be decided is only whether it is time for the government and the responsible organs to seriously deal with the issue of air defence”, put forward by János Kádár at the meeting of the Politburo of the HSWP in September 1958 also reveals that the opinion of Béla Biszku, who submitted the agenda, is grounded in the view that “the activity of the organs of executive power, state administration and social organisations with respect to air defence is one of the most neglected issues”.

Later, following the mention of foreign examples, Kádár emphasised that

“...the focus must be on the protection of vital things and, as happens elsewhere, the *population must be guaranteed minimum protection* ... [my emphasis – M.H.].

A rational attitude is needed because it is impossible to require this [i.e. the construction of shelters – M.H.] everywhere and in every institution...

Similarly to Budapest, Miskolc also has to be examined. I would perhaps say Miskolc, Győr, Sztálinváros [Dunaújváros] and Budapest. They are focal towns. As long as they exist, Hungarian industry will exist and function (...) Air defence is primarily the task of state organs and not of Party organisations. The Party organisations should be concerned with this issue only to a minimum degree,” said Kádár.⁴⁴

The picture emerging about the Party leadership can be made more precise by another evaluation – besides the issue of air defence – submitted to the Party leadership in 1960.⁴⁵

As Zoltán Komócsin, member of the Politburo, articulated it at the time: “The matter of the evacuation of Budapest’s population must be resolved, but I do not see the evacuation of large towns possible to resolve.” He added that copying the Soviet example in this respect would be incorrect, since evacuation there can be accomplished thanks to the vast territories – as the Soviets did that during World War II.

In agreement with Zoltán Komócsin, substitute member of the Political Committee, György Marosán, full member of the PC, stated that evacuation under the Hungarian conditions did not help the situation much, but since it was difficult to judge whether the war could break out in 2-3 years it had to be done.

“It is not only about the safety of certain people. What would happen if half a million people remained in Budapest and only one third of those have survived? What would happen to them from the aspect of medical treatment and health, and from the aspect of chemical decontamination? (...) Looking at it a bit pessimistically, it seems the fate of those remaining in cities is sealed,” Marosán concluded.

Ferenc Münnich’s opinion was that “it is not sure that Budapest will survive in the Pilis Mountains”. Later he said: “The other matter is that we are in the first-line sector of the future war. We serve as an advance ground for the Soviet army; therefore we draw the enemy’s attention to ourselves. Something must be done, but I don’t think that we can resolve it only with the construction of expensive buildings. (...) for example, *we have heard that people who lay down in ditches survived in Hiroshima.*” [My emphasis – M.H.]

According to János Kádár, building shelters must be stopped not because “people do not have to be protected, but because such protection has no sense. It does not provide protection and is a huge burden on the national economy”. Territories suitable for receiving and accommodating evacuated people must be surveyed in the country and “it will turn out that there are only a few regions suitable for that and the evacuation list must be revised (...)”

“Evacuation,” stated Kádár, “does not actually require information (...) In the West lectures providing information are given and as a result they have lived on the edge of madness for 12 years. We need a serious plan. If we say that we want to save half the population, it is not serious. The British are debating whether six or nine bombs of the yield known today are necessary to annihilate Britain. Is the question then whether in our case two or three are required? (...) A plan is needed and instructions must be given on what to do.”⁴⁶

János Kádár “would not have been concerned” so much about the size of the areas that were suitable for evacuation if he had known the Soviet concepts and plans. The Soviet leaders participating at a consultation held on 11 November 1960 claimed that “*the endangered Hungarian population ‘can also be evacuated to the territory of the Soviet Union,’ accounting for which the Soviet Air Defence planned to ‘leave a part of Ukraine,’ the territories close to Hungary, vacant.*”⁴⁷ [My emphasis – M.H.]

Without discussing the details further, it can be concluded that later an essential development occurred concerning the protection of only the Party and state leadership. The exorbitantly expensive main nuclear-proof shelters of the National Defence Council, which was to direct the country during a war, had been built by 1972, and objects with a similar aim for the County Defence Committees were to be constructed in accordance with the plan by 1975.

In 1972 the Politburo came to the conclusion concerning civil defence that building shelters for the population “continues not to be justified in peace time.”⁴⁸

The Party leadership did not intend to allocate financial resources for protection against radioactive fall-out in the unlisted parts of the country; therefore it stipulated that the population would construct their “simple shelters” with the use of their own means in the period of imminent danger of war or in the first phase of the war.⁴⁹

Finally, going much ahead in time, it can be noted that the meeting of the Politburo on 17 November 1987, evaluating Hungarian and foreign lessons learned, came to the conclusion that “the massive evacuation of the urban population is not feasible”. Depending on the risk level to an area, 60-100% of its adult population is equipped with protective means and the new plans involved reaching the conditions of full supply by 2000.⁵⁰

Notes

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2. Interview with Litvinov by CBS presenter Richard C. Hottel in Moscow. Foreign Relations of the United States, 1946/VI, pp. 763-765. Quoted in John Lewis Gaddis, *Most már tudjuk – a hidegháború történetének újraértékelése* (Európa Könyvkiadó, Budapest, 2001), p. 54. [*We Now Know: Rethinking Cold War History* (Oxford University Press, New York, 1997)]
3. Archive of Military History (henceforth HL) MN VIII. 387. fond, “Zala” (1968): 68. d. 109. ő. e., p. 203.
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5. *Idegen szavak szótára* [Dictionary of Foreign Words] ed. István Terényi (Szikra, Budapest, 1951).
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7. *TOP SECRET – Magyar-jugoszláv kapcsolatok – 1956* [Hungarian-Yugoslav Relations – 1956] eds. József Kiss, Zoltán Ripp, István Vida (MTA Jelenkor-kutató Bizottság [Hungarian Academy of Sciences Research Committee of the Modern Age] Budapest), pp. 151-152.
8. Y. I. Malashenko, *A Különleges Hadtest Budapest tüzében* [The Special Corps under Fire in Budapest] in *Szovjet katonai intervenció 1956* [Soviet Military

Intervention in Hungary], eds. Jenő Győrkei and Miklós Horváth (H&T, Budapest, 2001).

9. According to the research by Frigyes Kahler, of those convicted 16,195 were sentenced to imprisonment. Quoted in Tibor Zinner, “A megtorlás vége, a konszolidáció kezdete?” [The End of Retribution, the Beginning of Consolidation?], *História*, Vol. XVII, 9-10, p. 23.
10. Tibor Zinner, *A megtorlás rendszere* [The System of Retribution] (Hamvas Institute, Budapest, 2001), p. 423.
11. The Hungarian Socialist Workers’ Party’s minutes of meetings, Vol. IV, p. 200. INTERA RT. 1993, Institute of Political History.
12. Notes by Imre Nagy written in Sangov, Romania, 1957. Hungarian National Archives (henceforth MNL OL), Documents of the trial of Imre Nagy and fellow defendants, XX-5-h. Investigation documents, Vol. 8, pp. 19-22.
13. MNL OL XIX-J-1-j-26/261-005145-1961, 26/261-001871/1962. 322. d. Extract from bilateral international agreements between Hungary and the Soviet Union from 1945 to 31 December 1960.
14. Sándor Piriti, “NATO – Varsói Szerződés – párhuzamos történet. 1949–1991.” [NATO – Warsaw Pact – A Parallel Story. 1949–1991.] in *Tények könyve – NATO* [Book of Facts – NATO], ed. András Kereszty (GREGER–DELACROIX, Budapest, 1997).
15. Tibor Kőszegvári, *Katonai stratégiák és doktrínák a hidegháború korszakában* [Military Strategies and Doctrines in the Period of the Cold War], university textbook, ed. György Szternák (Zrínyi Miklós National Defence University [henceforth ZMNE] Doctoral School, Budapest, 2000), pp. 20-21. This doctrine significantly neglected the role of the navy.
16. The Soviet Union successfully detonated its first hydrogen bomb in August 1953.
17. Imre Okvách, *Bástya. A béke frontján – Magyar haderő és katonapolitika 1945–1956* (Bastion. On the Front of Peace – Hungarian Army and Military Policy 1945–1956) (Aquila, Budapest, 1998), pp. 98-99. The Soviet air force became an independent military service in July 1948.
18. *Ibid.*, p. 100.

19. Sándor Simon, *Katonai doktrínák a hidegháború éveiben (A doktrínák kialakulása és fejlődésük története) 1945–1989* [Military Doctrines in the Years of the Cold War (The Formation and Development of Doctrines) 1945–1989], university textbook (ZMNE Doctoral School, Budapest, 2000).
20. Study 22-23 February 1966, Archives of Military History (HL) 1969/T. 186. p. 9.
21. *Ibid.*
22. Tibor Kőszegvári, *Katonai stratégiák és doktrínák a hidegháború korszakában*, p. 26.
23. Prepared on the basis of the 8-13 January 1962 further training material of the Further Training Group of the Minister of Defence and his Chief of Staff, HL 1964/T. 7.
24. Historical Archive of the State Security Services, AX-1./79.
25. HL 164/T. 7. ő. e., no. 7 appendix: “A hadműveleti irány jellemző katona-földrajzi adatai” [The characteristic military-geographical data of the military operation], p.1.
26. *Ibid.*
27. Lecture by Minister of Defence Lajos Czinege, evaluation of the experience of further training. HL 1964/T. 7. ő. e., pp. 5-6.
28. HL KI 5/13-224-021. Front command post exercise, 9-14 June 1980. The object of the exercise: organising and executing offensive military operations in divergent directions by breaking through fortified sectors without the deployment of nuclear weapons. Planning the next military operation during the offensive military operation with the deployment of nuclear weapons. The exercise was led by Field Marshal, commander of the Soviet Southern Group of Forces stationed in Hungary, V.I. Sivenok. Marshal V. G. Kulikov, chief commander of the Unified Armed Forces of the Warsaw Pact also held a brief lecture.
29. *Ibid.*, pp. 189-190.
30. *Ibid.*, p. 190.
31. *Ibid.*, pp. 190-191.

32. *Ibid.*, p. 81.
33. HL 1964/T. 9. ő. e. Documents of MNVK Military operational Group Command, fol. 24. main data about the idea of the exercise code named “TEMP” [Speed].
34. *Ibid.*
35. HL KI 449/12/2. Evaluation of the activity of the Hungarian corps who participated in the Front command post exercise between 12-18 June 1987. 1 July 1987, pp. 1-48.
36. *Ibid.*, pp. 9-10.
37. A supplementary paper, “A háború váratlan kitörésének következményei a Polgári Védelem Országos parancsnoksága tevékenységének tükrében” [The consequences of an unexpected outbreak of war in the context of the activity of the National Command of Civil Defence], was prepared for the further training held on 22-23 February 1966. HL. 1969/T. 186. ő. e. (Henceforth Civil Defence Supplementary Paper, 22-23. 2. 1966), pp. 4-6.
38. Civil Defence Supplementary Paper, 22-23. 2. 1966. HL 1969/T. 186. ő. e., pp. 7-8.
39. *Ibid.*, p. 9.
40. *Ibid.*, pp. 10-12.
41. *Ibid.*, pp. 13-19.
42. MOL XIX-B-1-γ-10-46/25/1976. Evaluation entitled “A háború első 8-10 napján kialakult általános helyzet ismertetése” [Presentation of the general situation formed in the first 8-10 days of the war]. I thank Krisztián Ungváry for putting the document at my disposal.
43. *Ibid.*
44. MOL Hungarian Socialist Workers’ Party (MSZMP) Politburo (PB) [henceforth MSZMP PB] 288. fond, 5/99. ő. e., pp. 22-24.
45. MOL MSZMP PB 288. fond, 5/206. ő. e., p. 90. “Jelentés az ország légoltalmi felkészítéséről és a légoltalom fejlesztésének további feladatai” [Report about

preparing the country for air defence and further tasks for developing the air defence], 17 December 1960. Signed by Interior Minister Béla Biszku.

46. MOL MSZMP PB 288. fond, 5/206. ó. e., pp. 35-38. Minutes of the Politburo meeting, 25 October 1960.
47. HL 1963/T 42. ó. e., p. 357. "Jelentés a szovjet delegációval folytatott konzultálás eredményeiről" [Report on the results of the consultation with the Soviet delegation]. Prepared by Military Operational Department of the Air Defence National Staff Command of the Ministry of Interior, 11 November 1960.
48. MOL M-KS 288. fond 5/598. ó. e. 99, pp. 110-111. "Jelentés a polgári védelem helyzetéről, javaslat a fejlesztés elveire" [Report about the state of civil defence, proposal for the principles of development]. Presenters: János Borbándi and Lajos Czinege, 21 November 1972.
49. *Ibid.*, p. 98.
50. MOL MSZMP PB M-KS 288. fond 5/1012. ó. e., p. 41. "Jelentés a Politikai Bizottságnak a polgári védelem és a hátszágvédelem helyzetéről, javaslat a fejlesztésekkel kapcsolatos feladatokra" [Report to the Politburo about the state of civil defence and defence of the hinterland, and proposal for the tasks in connection with development]. Prepared by the HSWP Central Leadership Public Administration Department and the Ministry of Defence, 17 November 1987.

6. THE RESTORATION OF HUNGARY'S SOVEREIGNTY

The withdrawal of soviet troops and the contribution of Hungary to the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact

Short historical background

After 1945, the Soviet Union maintained an occupying military presence in line with the agreement between the Allied Powers. The provisions contained in article 22 of the peace treaty signed on 10 February 1947¹ provided an opportunity to the Soviet Union for stationing troops of unilaterally decided strength and composition in Hungary, as long as there were occupation forces in Austria.

On 30 December 1947, the Ambassador of the Soviet Union, G.M. Pushkin, told Mátyás Rákosi:

“...as a result of the withdrawal of certain parts of the Soviet army, only such military units shall remain on the territory of Hungary as of 14 December the current year which are essential for supporting the transportation lines to the Austrian zone of occupation.”²

During this period, about 60-70,000 troops serving in an anti-aircraft and three infantry divisions were tasked with enforcing the occupier status in Austria. Between 1947 and 1955, in line with the provisions of the peace treaty, the main task of the so-called “remaining troops”, consisting of about four divisions, was securing transit routes on land and by rail.

In the opinion of István Pataki: “...a few units with a few thousand men would have sufficed for this task. In reality, however, a much larger contingent was stationed in Hungary, served by different institutions, headquarters, shooting and training grounds, and airports, far from the main traffic routes leading to Austria. (...) After this date, agreements and amendments³ did not satisfy all requirements of the peace treaty; rather, the focus of attention was on the contents of point 3 of article 22. This fact and the provisions related to the placement of troops infringed upon the sovereignty of the country.”⁴

Formally, the Soviet government did not provide any information regarding the manpower and placement of Soviet troops. In 1948, after the conclusion of the agreements, “more and more Soviet units and subunits arrived in Hungarian territory. The number of troops was further increased in 1949, 1953 and

1955. In August 1949, a mobile infantry division was deployed to the territory of Hungary by the Commander of the Baden Central Army Group, consisting of 11,010 troops. Most of them were diverted from Romanian territory and the material and technical organisations of the Ministry of Defence were placed in charge of providing them with supplies and accommodation. In the same year, further air and air defence forces arrived in Debrecen, without any notification. By the years 1949–1950, more than 80 cities, towns and other places hosted units and subunits of four Soviet troop divisions. Some 20–22 of these locations were protected with guards.”⁵

On 15 May 1955, the occupying forces signed the treaty regarding the re-establishment of an independent and democratic Austria. After the withdrawal of occupying troops from Austria, the legal status of the Soviet troops in Hungary was left undetermined by both the Soviet and the Hungarian government authorities until 23 October 1956. However, the corresponding bilateral agreement was signed as late as on 27 May 1957. After the liquidation of the Central Army Group, the Soviet political and military leadership failed to fulfil its obligations laid down in the peace treaty and decided to unlawfully modify the number and composition of the troops stationed in Hungary.

As First Secretary, Ernő Gerő put it in connection with the stationing of Soviet troops in Hungary:

“The West make a big fuss about how the Russians are still here, despite signing the treaty on peace in Austria. However, we should not let ourselves be overly influenced by this.”⁶

Thus it happened that most Soviet troops withdrawn from Austria were stationed on the territory of Hungary. The Soviet Special Corps created in Hungary in September 1955 consisted of the 2nd and 17th Guards Mechanised Divisions, the 195th Fighter Division, the 177th Bomber Division, the 20th Pontooner Company and diverse air defence, arms and other specialist forces. The Special Corps was designated for cooperating with Hungarian troops in closing and securing the Austrian border and for securing transportation routes in the eventuality that the Soviet forces were ordered to leave. The Corps were commanded by the Minister of Soviet Armed Forces through the General Staff. No information is available to suggest that the divisions of the Corps, and more specifically, the 2nd and 17th Guards Mechanised Divisions, were subordinated to the purposes of the Warsaw Pact.

The Warsaw Pact (WP) and the Unified Armed Forces were established on 14 May 1955, as a response to alleged unfavourable changes in the international situation. Nothing in the founding documents suggests that the settlement of domestic issues and the execution of potential tasks and objectives within individual member countries, such as the containment, intimidation or, if necessary, elimination by force of arms of domestic opponents and enemies of the so-called “People’s Democratic system,” were among the reasons for the establishment of the

WP. Contrary to the original principles, national military forces raised on Soviet orders were not united into an army that was supposed to be structurally independent from domestic forces of individual nations. At all times, the supreme commander of the Unified Armed Forces (UAF) was the First Deputy Minister of the Armed Forces in the USSR, effectively making the national units assigned to join the UAF a part of the standing Soviet army.

If we apply the basic principles laid down in the Charter of the United Nations, quoted in the Charter of the WP, to the action taken by the Soviet Union in 1956, it is beyond any doubt that most of these principles were neglected or violated.

The Soviet leadership chose to handle the situations developing in Poland and Hungary unilaterally. They did not treat the member states of the Warsaw Pact as equal partners, failed to exercise reasonable tolerance and went against the provisions in the UN Charter by immediately threatening with violence and launching armed intervention as a response. Meddling with the internal affairs of the two countries and infringing upon the right of self-determination of the nations, the USSR went on to use armed force almost instantly at the sign of trouble.

Marshal Koniev, the commander-in-chief of the UAF, failed to act in the spirit of the Charter or according to the orders of the Political Consultative Committee. Instead, he acted as first deputy of Marshal Zhukov, minister of defense in charge of the Soviet Armed Forces and enforced the decisions of the Soviet political leadership.

Held captive in Romania, Imre Nagy wrote in the first part of 1957:

“Events in Poland and Hungary have shown that the Warsaw Pact was conceived to enforce chauvinistic Soviet ambitions of maintaining their position as a great power and that other Socialist member countries were coerced into joining only to be subordinated to these political ambitions. The Warsaw Pact is nothing more than a tool to extend Soviet military domination to member countries. (...) Whatever cannot be achieved through advice and orders issued by the Soviet government or the CPSU, the Warsaw Pact will achieve through military force.”⁷

Around the period of the 1956 revolution and struggle for freedom, significant changes occurred in the numbers and composition of Soviet troops. Until the initiation of the second wave of Soviet aggression on 4 November, parts of a further 13 Soviet army divisions were diverted to Hungary. As a result of these troop movements, more than 60,000 Soviet soldiers belonging to 17 Soviet divisions took part in military operations after 4 November.

At that time, the Soviet troops had not yet been mandated by the provisions of the Warsaw Pact to enter Hungary, as the bilateral treaty governing the presence of Soviet troops in the country was signed only later, on 27 May 1957. Another agreement on the number and location of Soviet troops signed on 1 April 1958 entitled the Soviets to station 60,500 troops in 67 garrisons. This agreement

allowed for unilateral, if temporary, modification of the number of troops by the USSR.

Similarly to the Charter, the agreement signed on 27 May 1957 regarding the temporary stationing of Soviet troops in Hungary reinforced the principle that “the temporary stationing of Soviet troops on the territory of the Hungarian People’s Republic does not in any way infringe upon the sovereignty of the state and the Soviet troops shall not interfere with the internal affairs of the Hungarian People’s Republic”⁸ Similarly to all previous agreements, this agreement did not authorise the stationing of Soviet troops on the territory of Hungary in the numbers and composition mandated by the Warsaw Pact or the Political Consultative Committee.

As for the real reasons behind stationing Soviet troops in Hungary, János Kádár said the following at the meeting of the Central Committee (CC) of the Hungarian Socialist Workers’ Party (HSWP) on 22 June 1957:

“I always think about the state of our authority like this: what if the Soviet troops were withdrawn? Would we still stand as we are? I believe so, yes, but a terrible fight and bloodshed would follow. This is our situation now.”⁹

Thus the keenest desire of the Hungarian people and one of the most important goals of the revolution, the final withdrawal of Soviet forces, was only reached decades later. Instead, the Southern Army Group (SAG) was formed from units of the Soviet Special Corps and other forces diverted to Hungary after 23 October 1956 to quell the revolution and struggle for freedom. The leadership and subordinated units of the SAG, with insignificant modifications, was stationed in Hungary until the summer of 1991.

Following the creation of the WP and the Russian invasion and war in 1956, the already restricted sovereignty of Hungary was further reduced by the signing of declarations regarding peacetime and wartime activities in 1969 and 1980, respectively.

Decision about the withdrawal of Soviet forces

The Political Committee (PC) of the HSWP issued a statement on 9 August 1988 saying that, in the context of reduction of conventional armed forces in Europe, the best interests of Hungary require that the SAG leave the country already in the first period.

Cutting the numbers of Soviet troops and then their final withdrawal would hardly have been possible without the unilateral decision of Mikhail Gorbachev. On the 7 December 1988 session of the UN General Assembly, the secretary general announced that the USSR was going to reduce the number of its troops stationed in Central and Eastern Europe by approximately half a million soldiers.

On 8 December, as a reaction to the announcement made by Gorbachev, Minister of Defence Ferenc Kárpáti declared that the unilateral reduction of troops might apply to one quarter of Soviet troops stationed in Hungary. A month later, on 10 January 1989, Károly Grósz, the secretary general of the HSWP issued an announcement regarding the imminent commencement of a partial withdrawal of Soviet troops from Hungary.

Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze repeated the official position regarding the troop withdrawals at the next meeting in Helsinki on 19 January 1989, saying that the USSR "is ready to commence the liquidation of military bases abroad if all other concerned parties are ready as well".¹⁰

"Whenever it was possible," wrote Ferenc Kárpáti, "the issue of withdrawal of Soviet troops was brought back into the focus of attention at the meetings, such as the 23-24 March 1989 negotiations between Károly Grósz and Gorbachev, or later the 7-8 July 1989 meeting between president of HSWP Rezső Nyers, Károly Grósz and Gorbachev."¹¹

The first steps were taken as early as the spring of 1989. The Soviet military leadership decided to withdraw approximately one fifth of the Soviet troops stationed in Hungary in the period between 25 April and 30 June, amounting to a full division (11,300 troops, 470 tanks, 200 artillery cannons and mortar launchers and 2900 different types of vehicles). Ferenc Kárpáti noted that, as a result of the reduction in the numbers of troops, only air defence troops were left in the vicinity of the border between Austria and Hungary. In this period, the Soviets abandoned 10 army bases, such as the Grassalkovich Mansion in Gödöllő and the historic building located next to the Basilica in Esztergom, used as a hospital capable of receiving 100 patients, giving back their rights of use to the original owners.¹²

In his book, Lajos Für (minister of defence between 23 May 1990 and 14 July 1994) asks the question: "How was it possible that such a gigantic military machine as the Warsaw Pact collapsed almost overnight, historically speaking, when it seemed impregnable even as late as the spring of 1990?"¹³

As shown in the foregoing, the end of the invasion did not begin in the spring of 1990. Its earliest indication occurred during the Hungarian revolution of 1956 when the withdrawal of occupying Soviet forces and the establishment of a free and independent Hungary were at the core of demands. In order to achieve these goals and to prevent another Soviet intervention on 4 November, the Hungarian government announced it was leaving the Warsaw Pact and declared the neutrality of Hungary on 1 November 1956.¹⁴

On 16 June 1989, on the occasion of the reburial ceremony of Imre Nagy and his fellow martyrs, Viktor Orbán, that time a reformist politician declared: "Ever since the Russians invaded the country and introduced the Communist dictatorship, the Hungarian nation had a single opportunity to muster enough strength and courage and try to reach its historical objectives, set as early as 1848, which are national independence and political freedom. (...) Our goals are still the same

today. We are still loyal to the spirit of '48 just as we are loyal to the spirit of '56. (...) If we stick to the ideas voiced in '56, we will elect a government which will start negotiations without delay about the commencement of withdrawal of Russian forces."¹⁵

There was full consensus across the democratic opposition, enjoying increasingly powerful political support from the people, and later the emerging democratic parties on the issue that leaving the Warsaw Pact and the withdrawal of Soviet troops was essential for replacing the Socialist regime.

At that time, Gorbachev was only willing to agree to further reduction of troops with the condition that NATO member states withdraw a similar number and quality of troops stationed abroad.

According to Ferenc Kárpáti, Gorbachev "recognised only shortly before the summit in Malta, in the last months of 1989, that withdrawing the troops from Hungary, Czechoslovakia and Poland was actually preferable for the USSR as well. (...) Gorbachev was aware of the fact that if the weapons race was extended to outer space, international tension would be further increased, putting tremendous pressure on the already ailing economy of the country."¹⁶

As a favourable circumstance to the democratic transformation in progress in several Socialist countries, such as Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia and the GDR, Gorbachev "accepted the principle of non-interference with the freedom of elections and domestic affairs"¹⁷ at his meeting with President George W. Bush on 2 December 1989.

Knowing that the withdrawal of Soviet forces from Hungary was likely to be a central issue of the upcoming elections, and that several MPs had demanded the acceleration of the withdrawal and its completion by the end of 1990 at the meeting of the Foreign Affairs and Defence Committee on 5 January 1990, Prime Minister Miklós Németh wrote a letter to Nikolai Ryzhkov, chairman of the USSR Council of Ministers, proposing to "start substantive negotiations about specific issues related to the withdrawal of Soviet troops temporarily stationed on the territory of the Republic of Hungary as soon as possible."¹⁸ Four days later, during their personal meeting at the headquarters of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (CMEA) in Sofia, Miklós Németh and Nikolai Ryzhkov agreed upon the schedule of troop withdrawal.¹⁹

At that point, the Soviet leadership was not yet ready to acknowledge the changing historical circumstances. In the light of this, on 12 February 1990, the UAF General Command sent out its "suggestions" regarding the modernisation of the cooperation in the framework of the Warsaw Pact and then not much later the Hungarian military leadership received the strategic road map for the joint development of military technology until the year 2000. On 21 March 1990, another road map was received regarding the modernisation of the Unified Armed Forces of the WP.

Though not without arguments and difficulties, the government of Miklós Németh finally achieved its objective on 10 March 1990 when the agreement on

the withdrawal of Soviet troops was signed,²⁰ with a road map scheduling troop movement between 12 March 1990 and 30 June 1991.

USSR Minister of Defence, Field Marshal Dmitri Yazov, wrote to Minister of Defence Ferenc Kárpáti in his letter of 10 January 1990 about signing the agreement:

“[Most recently,] leaders of different social bodies in the Republic of Hungary, such as members of the Parliament, have been pressing the issue of Soviet troops stationed on the territory of Hungary. The Ministry of Defence of the Soviet Union expresses its concern that the strong wording of the demand that Soviet troops be withdrawn by the end of 1990 is similar to an ultimatum.”

Yazov went on to ask Ferenc Kárpáti, while “highly appreciating the activities of the minister in the National Assembly on this issue” to

“...please keep on trying to find alternatives for making it clear that in the current circumstances, the Soviet troops shall not interfere with domestic affairs of the Republic of Hungary and shall hold its sovereignty entirely in respect.”²¹

In the general introduction of the Agreement, concluded for the “development of friendly and good-neighbourly” relations between the parties, it is stated that the “withdrawal of Soviet troops temporarily stationed on the territory of Hungary is regarded as part of joint efforts to reinforce the international trust between European countries”. According to the Agreement, the Hungarian government will provide the necessary means to conclude the withdrawal of Soviet troops between 12 March 1990 and 30 June 1991,²² during which time “all Soviet military personnel shall be withdrawn, including civilians who are Soviet citizens, as well as all weapons, war technology and financial assets” (articles 1 and 2).

It is an important part of the Agreement that the Soviet troops “shall reduce their activities related to armed training, including flights” (art. 4) as well as that “the provisions of the Agreement do not apply to the bilateral and multilateral commitments, including those that may arise from the Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance signed in Warsaw on 14 May 1955” (art. 9).

Furthermore, the Agreement provided that “the transportation of Soviet troops, as well as the abandonment and destruction of different materials and waste materials, shall be carried out taking into account the interests of the civilian population and in compliance with environmental legislation” (art. 3).

The parties selected commissioners who were tasked with controlling the withdrawal and controlling the “registration, appraisal, transfer and sale of objects, equipment and other material resources in a mutually agreed manner” (art. 5).

In addition, it was decided that all issues related to the legal status of Soviet troops and other issues of property law, finance and other such areas related to the temporary stationing of Soviet troops on the territory of Hungary until final

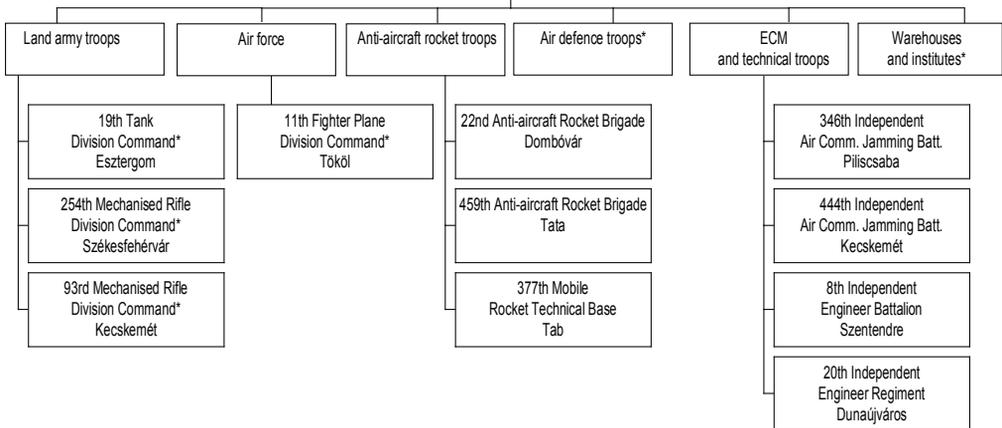
withdrawal shall be governed by agreements which had been concluded on 27 May 1957 and later, and were still in force at that point. Furthermore, issues falling in the aforementioned categories which were not governed by the agreements in force would be governed by special agreements until complete withdrawal.

Disputes arising from the execution of the Agreement were to be settled within 30 days, primarily by the Hungarian-Soviet Joint Commission²³ created on the basis of article 17 of the Agreement concluded on 27 May 1957. If the Joint Committee could not decide on the matters, the dispute would be settled through diplomatic means (art. 6-8).

Withdrawal of Soviet troops from Hungary

“Soviet troops in Hungary were stationed in 94 garrisons comprising 328 real estate properties. Before signing the Agreement, the Soviet party reduced the number of troops in the Southern Army Group by approximately 10,000 soldiers within the framework of the partial troop withdrawal of 1989–1990. As part of these actions, 4 garrisons were completely and 6 garrisons were partially vacated.”²⁴

*The Soviet Southern Group of Forces
(1990-1991)*



Based on the Agreement signed on 10 March 1990, troops were withdrawn from a further 90 Soviet garrisons, of which 65 were army posts.

In the period between 12 March 1990 and 19 June 1991, marking the end of pull-out, 1547 trains containing a total of 34,541 railway wagons left the country. Among these, there were 637 troop carrier trains, 560 material transports, 217 container transporters and 133 passenger trains. The number of withdrawing road columns was 48.²⁵

To secure the pull-out, operative groups were created with the participation of generals and officials of the Hungarian army and the Soviet Southern Army

Group, as well as representatives of the Hungarian State Railways. These groups were responsible for developing the timetables used for transporting troops, materials and equipment. An IT Centre was created for the same purpose as well, ensuring the required computer technology, up to date documentation and information of the agencies concerned.²⁷

*Personnel and military equipment
withdrawn from Hungary between 1990–1991*

<i>Soviet citizens</i>		100,380 ²⁶
of which military personnel		44,668
primary armament and technical equipment in total:		24,660 items
of which:	planes	194
	helicopters	138
	wheeled vehicles	19,684
	crawlers	1,143
	tanks	860
	armoured personnel carriers	1,143
	artillery equipment	622
	anti-aircraft equipment	350
	missile launchers	196
	other technical equipment	9,747
	material equipment	309,364 tonnes

As stipulated in the road map annexed to the Agreement, the missile and radio electronics units were first to leave the country, by the end of June 1990. The 19th Tank Division left the country by September, while the 254th Mechanised Infantry Division left by the end of the year and the 93rd Mechanised Infantry Division left by March 1991. Air force troops, together with servicing and supporting units and institutions, were to be last to leave the country, in a pace evenly distributed throughout the entire period. The transportation of supplies was due to be completed, according to schedule, by the end of June 1991.

A note to the road map stipulates that the Hungarian party agrees to facilitate the marketing of approximately 260 trains of equipment by purchasing the fuel and the ammunition. The Soviet party guarantees to receive 3-4 military trains daily and guarantees the 80 railway cars required to do this, as well as the reception of the 417 trains full of equipment.

The size and structure of Soviet troops can be reconstructed on the basis of reports created during the withdrawal as follows:²⁸

*Schedule for the withdrawal of Soviet forces from the territory of Hungary
(Annex to the Agreement)*

<i>Higher units and institutions</i>	<i>Garrisons</i>	<i>Further loading stations</i>	<i>Number of trains</i>
Tank Divisions	Esztergom, Komárom, Győr, Tata, Veszprém, Szentendre	Esztergom, Komárom, Győr, Tata, Óbuda, Hajmáskér	115
Mechanised Infantry Division	Székesfehérvár, Pápa, Polgárdi, Lepsény, Sárbogárd, Hajmáskér, Kiskunmajsa	Székesfehérvár, Pápa, Polgárdi, Lepsény, Sárbogárd, Hajmáskér, Kiskunmajsa	119
Mechanised Infantry Division	Kecskemét, Szeged, Cegléd, Táborfalva, Kiskunhalas, Nagykőrös, Debrecen	Kecskemét, Szeged, Cegléd, Táborfalva, Kiskunhalas, Nagykőrös, Debrecen	116
Missile Units	Tata, Dombóvár	Tata, Dombóvár	40
Air Defence Units	Dunaföldvár, Mór, Szolnok, Budapest	Dunaföldvár, Mór, Szolnok, Budapest	75
Technical Units	Szentendre, Dunaújváros, Etyek	Szentendre, Dunaújváros, Bicske	20
Radio Electronic Units	Kecskemét, Piliscsaba	Kecskemét, Piliscsaba	8
Air Force	Debrecen, Sármellék, Tököl, Kiskunlacháza, Kalocsa, Kunmadaras	Debrecen, Sármellék, Tököl, Kiskunlacháza, Kalocsa, Kunmadaras	249
servicing and supporting units (institutions)			218
material supplies			392
Total troop and supply carrier trains			1352 ²⁹

After the withdrawals were initiated, on 20 April 1990, Colonel General Burlakov allowed observers to monitor the process of loading and shipping of equipment in Esztergom, Győr, Komárom and Kecskemét. Esztergom was chosen as a priority site where representatives of the international media were invited to broadcast the moment when the last unit of the armoured corps left the country.³⁰

By the end of June 1990, the rocket and radio electronic units had left Hungary as scheduled. The withdrawal of the 19th Tank Division was completed in September.

In spite of the sporadic ultimatums announced at the meetings from time to time, the withdrawal was going according to plan, as proven by data indicating the state of affairs on 30 September 1990.

*The state of withdrawal of Soviet troops³¹
30 September 1990*

<i>Indication of the Soviet troops</i>	<i>Withdrawn by 30 September 1990 (as a percentage of the total corps)</i>	<i>Scheduled for withdrawal by the end of 1990 (as a percentage of the total corps)</i>
rocket troops	100	
combined arms army	60	80-85
air force	20	40-45
<i>of which basic forces</i>	50	70-75
material supplies for operations	43	60-65

As planned, the 254th Mechanised Infantry Division left the country by the end of the year and the 93rd Mechanised Infantry Division left by March 1991. In his report prepared on 28 May 1991, the government commissioner noted that “recently”, the pace of withdrawal had accelerated and that it was likely that the process would be completed by 30 June.³² Air force troops, together with servicing and supporting units and institutions, were last to leave the country, in a pace evenly distributed throughout the entire period.³³ The transportation of material supplies was carried out according to the schedule as well.

“During the planning phase and the troop withdrawal, there was close cooperation between the Hungarian Army and the leadership of the SAG, making it easy to clarify and solve all issues in an operative manner. Thanks to this well organised cooperation, the withdrawal of Soviet troops was completed before deadline, on 19 June 1991.”³⁴

Hungarian decision about leaving the Warsaw Pact

With regard to regaining the sovereignty of Hungary, exiting the Warsaw Pact and repealing all commitments related to the Treaty was just as significant as the withdrawal of Soviet forces. The road to both was paved with a series of heavy debates. Most leaders agreed that Hungary must leave the WP by the end of 1991, but, according to historian Lajos Für, minister of defence in the Antall government,³⁵ this decision brought up other serious issues that needed to be solved right away.

Before and after the Hungarian decision to leave, serious doubts, arguments and counterarguments were raised.

- ◆ Should Hungary leave by itself or should other countries be allowed to leave with it?
- ◆ Should the alliance be upheld in any other form?

- ◆ Should the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact be only partial or total?
- ◆ What happens if Hungary's plea is repealed?
- ◆ If Hungary becomes isolated as a consequence of its declaration of withdrawal, will we find partners for gradual deconstruction of the WP?
- ◆ Would a hasty dissolution of the WP slow down the withdrawal of Soviet troops?

While looking for answers to the above and other questions, there was a threat that the Soviets might harden their stance and disrupt the energy supply of Hungary, or make it difficult to find military spare parts on the market. One of the more serious counterarguments was that the Western powers did not support the radical Hungarian idea. If Hungary brings imprudent decisions, said the West, that may bring the developing changes in the USSR to a halt, may slow down perestroika³⁶ or may even strengthen the threat of reversing the democratic processes.

Time was short. A decision had to be reached quickly. The first step towards the separation was taken by Prime Minister József Antall at the meeting of the Political Consultative Committee (PCC) of the Warsaw Pact on 6-7 June 1990. Accepting his proposal, the PCC changed the 2nd item on the agenda: from "Exchange of views on democratisation, as well as modernisation and restructuring of cooperation within the framework of the Warsaw Pact", to "Exchange of views on revision of the character, function and activities of the Warsaw Pact and its potential radical transformation."

The proposal and speech of the Hungarian Prime Minister made it clear that the Warsaw Pact had become one of the last remnants of opposition between European countries and, as such, needed to be revised. In these circumstances, said the Hungarian resolution, the military organisation of the Treaty had lost its significance and could be dispensed with. Ultimately, it should be completely terminated as a result of mutually attended negotiations by the end of 1991. According to József Antall, efforts ought to be concentrated on the establishment of a new European security and cooperation structure, instead of trying to revive the Warsaw Pact. As such, all elements that infringed upon the sovereignty of the member states should be declared void.

Furthermore, József Antall suggested that the PCC decide upon "the establishment of an extraordinary government committee composed of ambassadorial special envoys who will be tasked with the revision of the character, function and activity of the Warsaw Pact [and then] will propose the revision of the entire Warsaw Pact, including the gradual termination of the military cooperation and all related bodies, in view of the requirements of the development process of the European security and cooperation structure. (...) Hungary is prepared to host the extraordinary session of the Political Consultative Committee in Budapest." Thus said the Prime Minister, adding the further suggestion that the execution of PCC decisions should be initiated on 1 January, at the latest.³⁷

The suggestions of József Antall were accepted by the plenary session and

a decision was made about the location and date of the meetings of the Government Commissioners' Provisional Committee. Its first meeting was to be held in Prague on 15 July 1990; its later meetings were to be held monthly in different locations and the accepted suggestions were to be submitted to the PCC. In addition, it was agreed that the Board would be convened in Budapest by the end of November.

Mikhail Gorbachev, the first man of the Soviet Communist Party (CPSU), pointed out at the meeting with the Hungarian delegation on 7 June that he "agrees with the revision of the Warsaw Pact, but not with its premature termination".³⁸

According to the subsequent assessment of Lajos Für, the Soviet leaders, Gorbachev, Prime Minister Nikolai Ryzhkov and Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze, were far from welcoming the proposals of the Hungarian Prime Minister, but they did not categorically reject his ideas either. Members of the Hungarian delegation felt that there was a break-through in the matters.³⁹

During the parliamentary debate, state secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Tamás Katona, summed up the events at the Political Consultative Committee (PCC) meeting and the standpoint of the government as follows:

"It is obvious that the desirable aim for us is for the military organisation to cease to exist, possibly by means of a joint decision. If the member states insist on maintaining the military organisation, Hungary has to first of all leave the military organisation by leaving the Warsaw Pact by means of lengthy negotiations. According to our plans, it should do so by the end of 1991 at the latest. Leaving the military organisation obviously has to take place in several phases and steps, since it affects the all-European, very beneficial processes to a strong degree. We must do it in such a way that we should not possibly endanger the negotiations in Vienna and should possibly not endanger the Soviet withdrawal of troops from Hungary, which has taken place on schedule so far, and take into account the difficulties presented by the reunification of Germany within Europe's overall unity. It is also clear that leaving the Warsaw Pact in this way may easily involve Hungary in an isolated situation and that should be avoided. After all, we know very well that large states are also threatened by the fact of becoming isolated. (...) we would regard it dangerous if we now used the present political situation to push the Iron Curtain farther to the east and try to exclude the Soviet Union from Europe. The isolated position of the Soviet Union can also be extremely dangerous for Europe. And naturally the government is trying to do its best to avoid Hungary getting into an isolated position after it leaves the Warsaw Pact."⁴⁰

To successfully achieve the above goals, according to Tamás Katona, the Hungarian government began the revision of agreements on friendly and mutual assistance in order to exclude the possibility of military intervention, and so that

Hungary would not take part and hold military exercises in the framework of the Warsaw Pact (WP).

“Besides bilateral negotiations,” Katona said, “we would like to use the opportunity that is involved in regional cooperation, thus both the feasible tri-lateral conventions and the possibility presented by the Alps and Adriatic cooperation, i.e. five-sided relations, so that being somehow left outside Europe would not threaten the country. We would like to achieve some cooperative status in Europe. (...) I specially recommend that the motion of Parliament, that of the foreign affairs commission and the defence commission be adopted, because it does present the government with some kind of special authorisation such that it can rely not only on the natural solidarity of the three governing parties; and that will always be our intention in Hungarian foreign policy and Hungarian security policy; we intend to pursue a policy which meets the agreement of Parliament as a whole, all the six parties.”⁴¹

At the session on 26 June 1990 Miklós Vásárhelyi, MP for the Alliance of Free Democrats (SZDSZ), declared that “perfidy and foreign intervention on 4 November 1956” prevented the declaration proclaiming independence and cancelling membership of the Warsaw Pact from coming into force. Hence Vásárhelyi made a proposal on behalf of the parliamentary panel of SZDSZ: “Parliament should ascertain that the elimination of the declaration of 1 November 1956 occurred under external coercion and illegally”; and as the second point of the motion he proposed to Parliament to call upon “the government of the Hungarian Republic to commence negotiations with the governments of the Warsaw Pact member states about reinstating the *de jure* situation” and “until the agreement is concluded” Parliament to call upon “the government of the Hungarian Republic to suspend Hungary’s participation in the military organisation of the Warsaw Pact”; and “begin negotiations with the member states of the Warsaw Pact about the revision of the so-called Agreements of Friendly and Mutual Assistance.”⁴²

According to the vice-chairman of the Foreign Affairs Commission, István Hegedűs, the negotiations had now changed reference, namely to Para. 62 of the Vienna Convention.⁴³ “However, all this does not mean that the Commission would in any way think differently about the original Imre Nagy government declaration of 1956. It only means that we have found a better and more fortunate reference point from the aspect of international law.” István Hegedűs went on to emphasise that the proposed six-party mutual statement “does not at all include a unilateral intention of withdrawal. The draft proposal clearly wants the government to pursue our withdrawal from the Warsaw Pact via negotiations.” As was stipulated in the draft proposal, “it is desirable for the government to enter into negotiations with all the member states of the Warsaw Pact about Hungary’s withdrawal from the Treaty (...) it is stipulated that as the first step during the negotiations the government would set the suspension of Hungary’s participation in the military organisation of the Warsaw Pact as its objective.”⁴⁴

As he said, in the government's programme and at the negotiations in Moscow the government had partly identified with those elements which were included in the Parliamentary motion. The government met the request of the six parties when it negotiated about the withdrawal from the Warsaw Pact. The government had to see to the enforcement of Hungarian interests.⁴⁵

As a matter of interest, the opinion of József Mózs of the SZDSZ must be mentioned. "It would be totally absurd in the future," he said "if, while we are restructuring in line with the democratic institutions of the developed western countries, and we are asking for and expecting their help, we simulate an attack against these countries in military exercises as a member of the Warsaw Pact..."⁴⁶

Gyula Horn (Hungarian Socialist Party, HSP) also agreed with what took place at the Moscow summit.

"The government took the initiative in such a way that it did not cause unbearable tension." And later he said: "At the same time, it is also a fact that the Hungarian government was still left on its own with its standpoint in Moscow. If we take into account the opinion and standpoint the other member states expressed in Moscow, it is clear that they agree with the need for modernising and transforming the Warsaw Pact, yet no one supports a precipitate decision – for example, a step which would aim at the premature or immediate dissolution of the Warsaw Pact. (...) Thus we must carry out a withdrawal – and that is actually supported by the Foreign Affairs Commission – which does not harm the interests of the nation and the process of détente, and does not result in some kind of threat for the country, especially if we take into account the tensions and anti-Hungarian outbursts among some of our neighbours."

Gyula Horn also attached utmost importance to the government commencing negotiations about guaranteeing Hungary's security without much delay, because "it is, among others, a condition for Hungary to be able to join west European organisations of integration".⁴⁷

Soon democratic elections followed and the Hungarian National Assembly was formed on 2 May 1990. The National Assembly decreed on 26 June 1990 that the country would leave the Warsaw Pact.⁴⁸ Beyond expressing the intent to leave the WP, the National Assembly voted for an agenda containing the following points:

- ◆ the government of the Republic of Hungary shall initiate negotiations about leaving the Warsaw Pact, in agreement with all member states, on the basis of article 62 of the Vienna Convention, with reference to fundamental changes to the historic circumstances;
- ◆ as a first step of leaving the treaty, Hungary shall cease to be part of the military organisation, i.e. the Hungarian armed forces shall not take part in joint

exercises and members of the Warsaw Pact shall not hold military exercises on the territory of the country;

- ◆ as a second step, negotiations shall be initiated with member states of the Warsaw Pact about the revision of the treaties of bilateral friendship and mutual assistance, with the goal of annulling all provisions of these treaties that may authorise military intervention or infringe upon the sovereignty of Hungary in any other way.

The National Assembly stated in the directive that the Hungarian Republic wishes to live in peace and friendship with all its neighbours and no force shall be given permission to launch an attack against a third country from the territory of Hungary.⁴⁹ The directive was published on 3 July 1990.⁵⁰

Activity of the Government-Authorised Temporary Commission

Under the leadership of ambassador Béla V. Kupper, the activities of the Government Commissioners' Committee were aimed at executing the mandate authorised by the Prime Minister to hold negotiations about the dissolution of the military organisation of the WP in joint decision, or, failing this, ensure Hungary's separation from the WP by 31 December 1990 in a manner which does not interfere with negotiations in Vienna and does not endanger the process of Soviet troop withdrawal and German reunification.⁵¹

"We must try not to be left alone during the course of negotiations!" can be read among the instructions for the Hungarian delegate.⁵²

The process of gradual dissolution of the WP and its military organisation was divided into three phases, in accordance with the Hungarian road map completed in July and August 1990.

In the first phase, the Hungarian presence in military organisations would be reduced, with the goal of preparing the separation. Thus Hungary's delegations would be present at the negotiations only in an advisory capacity, to accelerate the dissolution of the military organisation of the WP and to investigate issues of military-grade technological supplies. Hungary would not take part in any future joint military exercises of the WP. After the PCC meeting held in Budapest in November, the central command post of the Ministry of Defence would be excluded from the alarm network of the organisation. Hungary was to initiate the reduction of representatives and all reporting and accounting obligations were to be repealed.

In the second phase (between 1 January 1991 and 30 June 1991), the process of the separation of the Hungarian Army was to be initiated, as part of which the UAF would cease to have jurisdiction over Hungarian troops, Hungary would stop taking part in joint military planning and repeal all commitments regarding the preparation of war theatres and joint strategic resources. Hungary would

initiate the dismissal of the group of representatives to the UAF Chief of Staff and, simultaneously, reduce the number of officers delegated to the UAF command to the minimum. In the unified air defence system of the WP, Hungary would limit the scope of its activities to the mutual exchange of information using radio technology. Hungary was to accept and organise military meetings and negotiations related to disarmament and arms proliferation only, but would actively take part in the work related to the dissolution of the WP. Hungary would initiate the conclusion of bilateral military agreements with member states of the WP and other neutral and uncommitted countries and strive to develop bilateral confidence-building relationships with NATO member countries.

In the third and last phase of the process (between 30 June and 31 December 1991), Hungary was going to recall the Hungarian group of contact people and delegate observers to the WP and NATO, as well as to the Military Consultative Group of the WP, once formed. Prior to the official announcement of the exit, Hungary was to repeal all decisions governing its participation in the WP. During preparation of the plans, it was held desirable that Hungary concludes bilateral agreements with the armies of all neighbouring countries, in order to ensure security.

The Hungarian delegation carried out effective work at the meetings of the Government Commissioners' Committees⁵³ and the consultations held on their own suggestions with the goal of ensuring the complete dissolution of the Warsaw Pact.⁵⁴

The first conference in Prague

"the Hungarian delegate was not isolated"⁵⁵

The first meeting of the Government-authorized Temporary Commissions of the member states was held in Prague between 15 and 17 July 1990. Following the meeting, the Hungarian delegation evaluated the experience of the first round. Despite significant differences of opinion, it was a step forward that the political organs would continue to function as a consultative forum, which was supported by the majority. It was also a significant result that the Disarmament Special Committee, whose function was extended with the execution of disarmament agreements, was reinforced as a consultative body.

Yet the Hungarian delegation's proposal with reference to terminate the WP military bodies and military cooperation by mutual decision by the 31 December 1991 was declined. This endeavour was averted by the submission of the Soviet delegation's counter-draft. According to the Hungarian standpoint, the possibility for a step forward could be reinforced by the fact that the proposal for terminating the Joint Command of the Unified Armed Forces and the military organisation got included in the Soviet delegation's draft concerning the transformation of the military structure. However, the Hungarian delegation did not regard it as

fortunate that the Czechoslovaks made a diversion from the existing structure with their proposal for forming new organs, which strengthened the Soviet and Bulgarian positions.

In the summary of the negotiations the Hungarian delegation added to the above that, according to the contributions at the plenary meetings, as well as the “informal” talks with the participants, the majority of the member states were concerned “that a consultative mechanism whose essential part would include the military committee was to remain in the cooperation, even after a radical transformation and reduction of the military structure of the WP..” Several member states were interested in maintaining certain elements of the air defence system and cooperation in military technology, primarily for ensuring the supply of spare parts.

Some delegations disapproved that, despite its intent to leave the WP, Hungary “participates in the efforts of revision and transformation”. At the relevant meetings the Hungarian delegation emphasised that the date of end-1991 for the Hungarian withdrawal from the military bodies provided sufficient time to eliminate the whole military structure gradually and in a planned manner, and this deadline could be realistic for the others, too.

It is a great achievement that the Hungarian delegation did not become isolated, despite its consistent standpoint, and cooperation was formed concerning certain issues with the Polish and Czech delegates which was considered to be desirable and was to be continued in the future. Therefore, the head of the Hungarian delegation, Ambassador Béla V. Kupper, suggested to the heads of the Polish and Czech delegations that they should have consultations in Budapest to draw their standpoints closer before the negotiations in Berlin in September.⁵⁶

The first consultation in Budapest

“changing the maximalist Soviet position supported by the Bulgarians promises to be difficult”⁵⁷

The consultation proposed at the Prague meeting was held in Budapest on 16 August 1990. Hungary wanted to have a clear idea about the standpoint of Poland and Czechoslovakia concerning the WP. In addition, as is shown by Béla V. Kupper’s memo, an immediate objective shared with the Polish party was to make the Czechoslovaks withdraw their proposals with reference to salvaging the military structures. A clear goal also involved bringing the concepts of Hungary’s partners closer to the Hungarian viewpoint and possibly reaching a situation whereby the three delegations would form a mutual platform at the next consultative round.

As a result of talks and exchanges of opinion, the viewpoints of the delegations indeed became closer, thus the following preliminary agreements were concluded at the level of delegation heads:

- ◆ the commission's work should be limited exclusively to the revision of the WP;
- ◆ the deadline for the dissolution of the WP's military organisation must be defined – possible dates: 31 December 1991, 1 January 1992 or, as a compromise, March 1992, the starting day of Helsinki Conference II;
- ◆ on the level of intent it was stipulated that a consultative military forum should be set up and function until the complete dismantling of the existing military structures and their replacement;
- ◆ rejecting the exclusiveness of relations between the WP and NATO as blocs and the authorisation of the PCC with decision-making functions;
- ◆ the Committee of Foreign Ministers should be replaced by the PCC. The member states are to be represented at its meetings by their heads of state (prime ministers) every other year and by their ministers of foreign affairs annually;
- ◆ the extension of the WP general secretary's authorisation proposed by the Soviets is not regarded as justified.

According to the standpoint outlined at the meeting of the delegations, it was desirable to include the observation of the military aspects of European security in the exclusive consultative activity of the PCC and the Special Commission on Disarmament, besides their review of the possibilities concerning European disarmament. What had to be avoided was the attempt to make decisions concerning the subsequent questions in the military sphere, evading the political leadership.

After a long exchange of opinions, a preliminary standpoint was formed concerning the following possible tasks of the Military Consultative Group (MCG) as the only military body which could perhaps remain as an auxiliary to the PCC of the WP:

- ◆ consultation about the issues of cooperation in military technology;
- ◆ exchange of experience about the problems of preparing and training troops;
- ◆ consultation about the military-technical aspects of European disarmament;
- ◆ a review of the technical and financial issues concerning the gradual elimination of the present joint military bodies and structures, including their stipulation in terms of jurisdiction;
- ◆ exchange of experience about the military relations maintained with the other CESC (Conference on European Security and Cooperation) countries.

They mutually agreed that the MCG, to which the member states could delegate a maximum of 12 members, both military and civilian, should generally meet bimonthly on the basis of an agenda compiled by the organising member state and chaired in a rotating manner. The group was to immediately begin its work following the meeting of the PCC in November and was to report about it to the PCC and the Special Commission on Disarmament (SCD).

The ambassadors of the three countries regarded it desirable that the corps of the Unified Armed Forces assigned by the PCC should compile the schedule of the dissolution of the military organisations and the financial accounts up to the dissolution.

The Polish and Czechoslovak delegates mostly agreed with the schedule compiled by the Hungarians and consented to submit a proposal supporting that to their respective leaderships.

Finally, proposed by the Poles, the ambassadors agreed to have another meeting to finalise the joint standpoint in the building of the Hungarian embassy before the Berlin meeting on 3 September.

As Béla V. Kupper, head of the Hungarian delegation summarised the situation:

“...although both the Polish and the Czechoslovak standpoints include insecure elements and are pliable, their concept has become and can be made closer to our viewpoint. (...) However, it has also been confirmed that both the Czechoslovak and Polish parties want a temporary and consultative body of loose military cooperation primarily for military-technical and disarmament-technical considerations. (...) We have all agreed that changing the maximalist Soviet position supported by the Bulgarians promises to be difficult. However, close Hungarian, Polish and Czechoslovak cooperation will be significant regarding the destiny and future of the WP.”⁵⁸

Sofia – second meeting of the Government-authorized Commissions

“the Soviets were ‘cast in the shade’”⁵⁹

The second meeting of the Government-authorized Temporary Commission, which was assigned to review the WP due to the departure of the GDR, was held in Sofia between 17 and 20 September 1990.⁶⁰ On the eve of the negotiations the proposal made by the Hungarians was finalised with the Polish and Czechoslovak delegations. The negotiating parties failed to come to an agreement concerning the date for dissolving the military organisation. The Czechoslovaks insisted on March 1992 instead of 1 December 1991, though the Poles indicated that any date would suit them. They managed to come to share the standpoint about the dissolution of the permanent leading bodies of the Unified Armed Forces as from July 1991 and the repeal of the provisions concerning the operation of the Unified Armed Forces.

At the plenary session on 17 September Hungary’s delegation submitted the joint proposal of the three countries, “the three” stating that the Hungarian Republic firmly intended to leave the military organisation of the WP by 31 December 1991 at the latest. “Our proposals unexpectedly surprised the other delegations, es-

pecially the Soviet, which was to develop the Prague position further,” reads Kupper’s report.⁶¹

As compared to Prague, it was new that “the three” insisted on a concrete, close date for the dissolution of the military organisation of the WP and limited the authorisation of the PCC and the SCD solely to consultations. They also initiated that all bodies should cease to operate and “they thought it possible to set up a periodically functioning military consultative forum operating on only a loose rotational principle with a strictly consultative character”. This proposal made the Czechoslovak delegation’s standpoint expressed in Prague – “the main military structures continue to exist” – lose its validity.⁶²

Ambassador Béla V. Kupper concluded at the end of the meeting held in Sofia that the Hungarian delegation fulfilled its mandate by “enforcing our point of view about leaving the military organisation of the WP within the framework of negotiations about the revision of the Warsaw Pact and its potential radical transformation, while reaching the agreement between member states necessary for the dissolution of the military organisation on 1 July 1991, half a year earlier than the planned Hungarian exit. This date coincides with the deadline set for the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Hungary.”⁶³

The breakthrough was successful. All the delegations accepted that by 1 December 1991 the Commission of Foreign Ministers, the Commission of Defence Ministers, the Military Scientific and Technical Council and the Multilateral Mutual Continuous Information Group, as well as specialist groups set up earlier were terminated. The parts of the Statute for peacetime relating to the Unified Armed Forces (UAF) and the Joint Command of the WP which refer to the troops (forces) and their direction appointed to the UAF, the Statute for wartime relating to the Unified Armed Forces and its leading bodies, as well as the resolutions and normative documents referring to the above bodies, became invalid. The preparation and execution of the gradual dissolution of the leading bodies of the Unified Armed Forces simultaneously commenced.

“Intermezzo” in the Ministry of Defence

“Old ties are always difficult to undo...”⁶⁴

“How do you intend to withdraw from the Warsaw Pact? In what sequence?” Chief Commander of the UAF, field marshal P.A. Lushev asked Minister of Defence Lajos Für on 12 October 1990. At the “discussion” – or rather “questioning”, as is indicated by the minutes⁶⁵ made at the negotiations – initiated by the Soviets, the chief commander gave voice to his disapproval “that the Hungarians do not participate in the joint exercises and do not let the representative of the UAF’s chief commander near the Hungarian troops, despite the fact that the Warsaw Pact does exist, it does have a Joint Command while we [the Soviets] do not differenti-

ate at all vis-à-vis your [the Hungarian] representatives". The chief of staff of the UAF, Field Marshal V.N. Lobov, added the demand that, despite its intent to leave, Hungary had to comply with the regulations of the Warsaw Pact. The UAF had not been terminated, thus the plans in force must be carried out.

Recalling the meeting in 2003, Lajos Für wrote the following in his book: "I am almost sure that the special attention was aimed only at us once more and for the last time. It is understandable that the 'military assault' of a last great effort would have wanted to break only us. (...) They were late. The experiment was unsuccessful."⁶⁶

At the meeting, responding to the questions, remarks and demands of the UAF leaders, Lajos Für emphasised:

"The Warsaw Pact was really established by governments including the Hungarian government (...) [But] The present Hungarian government has never adopted the Warsaw Pact because that is how the democratically elected Parliament decided. Despite that, we have not left unilaterally but announced our intent to withdraw and that we wanted to enter negotiations about it. That is the reason why we do not take part in the joint exercises and we also have financial reasons. (...) since entry was voluntary, consequently withdrawal is also voluntary and it must be accepted in this case. I markedly stated this intention at both the Moscow and the Berlin meeting of the Commission of Defence Ministers."⁶⁷

At this meeting Lushev "pretended", Lajos Für evaluated later "as if no one had ever told him and his comrades, as if he had never read any report about the Hungarian (then the other member states') intention [with reference to withdrawal] and concepts related to exact dates. As if he had never heard or read what not only four member states had adopted a month earlier, but the Soviet party itself also announced in Sofia."⁶⁸

At the end of the meeting Lajos Für considered it important to emphasise: "Old ties are always difficult to undo. That sometimes causes tension. We do not want to break away but form a new relation, since the old one was not unclouded."

On leaving, Lushev answered that they both mutually saw the good and bad sides in the relations of the two countries, but he hoped that they would mutually resolve the differences of opinion.

That was how the last official meeting between the Joint Chief Command of the Warsaw Pact and the Hungarian defence leadership ended.

The third round in Warsaw

“we are endeavouring to form bilateral relations”⁶⁹

Requested by the Hungarians differently from the one planned, the third meeting of the Government-authorised Commissions was held in Warsaw on 22 and 23 October 1990. The Hungarian viewpoint for the meeting in Warsaw was to resolve the still open questions in documents that went to the PCC and to decide about the tasks, sequence and methods involved in the dissolution of the WP's military bodies.

The Hungarian delegation arrived in Warsaw with new concepts and proposals for texts. The Czechoslovak and Polish delegations supported the Hungarian endeavours at the preliminary consultations.⁷⁰

The two-day intensive negotiations were successful, except for defining the authority of the Military Consultation Group. Thus, with the exception of one open question the finalised document was ready to go to the PCC for approval.

As compared to the standpoint in Sofia, more significant changes were made in relation to the following issues.

- ◆ In accordance with the Soviet requirements to postpone the PCC meeting, the beginning of dismantling the military structure was modified from 1 December 1990 to 1 January 1991, but the deadline of 1 July for dissolution remained unchanged.
- ◆ From 1 January 1991 the Statute for peacetime concerning to the combined air defence system of the WP was to be repealed, thus the related technical issues had to be arranged by 1 July 1991.
- ◆ The positive political elements that referred to the character and qualification of the WP and were unacceptable for the Hungarians were left out from the draft document.
- ◆ Two political consultative organisations remained. The PCC was to discuss the joint aspects of security interests. At its two annual meetings, one at the highest level and one on foreign ministerial level, the SCD was primarily to discuss issues concerning disarmament and the establishment of new European security structures. The consultative nature of the organisations excluded decision making without the nations. Only complete consensus could result in working out a joint standpoint.
- ◆ They managed to exclude the general political and foreign political issues from the PCC's sphere of authority. Thus the foreign political consultative and harmonising obligation ceased to exist in practice.
- ◆ Despite the Hungarian and Polish agreement with reference to the military consultative body, the Czechoslovak delegation – “in the interest of asserting Czechoslovakia's financial claims”⁷¹ – stood for the need of a multilateral committee in addition to bilateral negotiations.

- ◆ According to the Hungarian proposal, the MCG would stop operating after the dissolution of the military structures; thus “the three” objected to setting up a Military Commission as a permanent body which would be aimed at salvaging the earlier multi-lateral military cooperation.

This happened despite the fact that the Soviet negotiating delegation tried to salvage the existing multilateral military cooperation. They wanted to reinforce the role of the two political bodies and wanted to maintain the WP as a political and security policy organisation for an undefined period of time.

Romania did not participate in this debate. A personal communication of the head of delegation informed the organisation that they did not want to continue the multilateral military cooperation. Thus, apart from the Soviet Union it was only Bulgaria which was interested in continuing the multilateral military consultations.

The summary report made about the meeting says:

“During bilateral informal contacts with the Soviet delegation we implied that, in parallel with the dissolution of the multilateral military cooperation in the WP, we strive to form stable, cooperative military and security political relations as partners with the Soviet Union and the WP states on a bilateral basis. It appeared from the response of the Soviet delegates that they would be pleased if we made a step to initiate the renewal of our bilateral relations, including security policy relations.”⁷²

The Hungarian delegation performed its task successfully at the meetings of government-authorised commissions⁷³ and consultations⁷⁴ held to accomplish the complete dissolution of the organisation, which were initiated by Hungary.

The Hungarian head of government invited the representatives of the member states to the meeting of the Political Consultative Conference on 4 November 1990. A letter in which the Soviet party asked for the postponement of the meeting came from Moscow on 20 October. With reference to the information of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Lajos Für came to the conclusion that “although late, the Soviet leadership realised that the proposed date (4 November) coincided with the date of the 1956 entry of Soviet troops.”⁷⁵ [Actually, the launch of the second Soviet intervention, the military operation ‘Whirlwind’ – M.H.]

“According to the Hungarian Foreign Affairs Ministry,” writes Lajos Für, “more important domestic political considerations may be behind the request for postponement. ‘It would have been far more difficult’ for Gorbachev ‘to have the decision about the dissolution of the WP military organisation be adopted’ at home ‘before rather than after the Paris summit’⁷⁶. (...) In this case Moscow can already refer to the Charter concerning the dissolution of the military organisation. The Foreign Ministry thought that it may have been an important matter of prestige for Gorbachev that after the Paris summit he himself personally would announce the dis-

solution, giving the impression that the Soviet Union made this decision of great importance independently, on its own accord."⁷⁷

The decision about the termination of the Warsaw Pact was brought to the extraordinary meeting of the Political Consultative Committee held in Budapest on 25 February 1991. At this meeting, representatives of the member states decided to completely terminate the military coalition. According to the corresponding protocols, all documents referring to the military coalition, as well as all other documents and official papers, were to be declared void as of 31 March 1991 and, from that date on, all joint military activities, bodies and structures established in the framework of the Treaty were terminated. Furthermore, payments directed to the UAF headquarters would cease and the representative bodies mutually delegated by the commander-in-chief and the national defence ministries would cease their activities.

On the initiative of the Hungarian government, implementing the decision of the National Assembly, Hungary regained its independence in 1991. As a result of the coordinated activity of high-level individuals and organisations taking part in the preparation and execution of the decisions, such as politicians, diplomats, military leaders, military diplomats and experts, the PCC of the Warsaw Pact declared the dissolution of the organisation. The Soviet troops were pulled out of the country after 47 years of occupation.

Notes

1. Article 22 of part IV of the Peace Treaty (“The Withdrawal of Allied Forces”) provides for the following: 1. “Upon enactment of the present Treaty, all Allied forces shall be withdrawn from the territory of Hungary within 90 days; however, the Soviet Union retains its right to maintain such military presence on Hungarian territory that may be required to support the direct access of the Soviet army to the Soviet zone of occupation in Austria. (...) 3. Hungary shall be liable to provide the Soviet Union all particular means and facilities that may be required in order to maintain the routes to the zone of occupation in Austria, for which the Hungarian government shall be entitled to appropriate remuneration.” Dénes Halmosy, *Nemzetközi Szerződések 1945–1982* [International Treaties, 1945–1982]; *A második világháború utáni korszak legfontosabb külpolitikai szerződésai* [The Most Important Foreign Policy Treaties of the Post-World War II Era] (Közgazdasági és Jogi Könyvkiadó, Budapest, 1985), p. 84.
2. National Archives of Hungary (hereinafter MNL) OL XIX-J-1-j-IV.430. p. 12; in István Pataki, *Egyezmények a szovjet csapatok magyarországi tartózkodásáról* [Treaties on Stationing Soviet Troops in Hungary], *Múltunk*, 1995/3, p. 124.
3. In the period between 10 February 1947 and 15 May 1955, the following treaties were enacted between Hungary and the Soviet Union that touch upon our subject: Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance (Moscow, 18 February 1948); Agreement on Exemption from Custom Duties for the Soviet Troops Stationed in Hungary; Agreement on Transportation of Soviet Troops Stationed in the Zones of Occupation in Hungary and Austria on Hungarian Railroads; Agreement on Communications Services Provided to Soviet Troops Stationed in Hungary; Lease Agreement for Barracks and Service Premises, Warehouses, Airports and Training Grounds (Budapest, 6 December 1948); Agreement on Reimbursement of Costs Associated with the Training of Hungarian Military Staff in Military Educational Institutions of the Soviet Union (Moscow, 29 June 1949); Treaty on the Settlement of the Border between Hungary and the Soviet Union; Agreement on the Settlement of Border Conflicts and Incidents (Moscow, 24 February 1950). MNL OL XIX-J-1-j-26/261-005145-1961, 26/261-001871/1962. 322. d. Extract from the bilateral international agreements concluded between Hungary and the Soviet Union from 1945 to 31 December 1960.
4. István Pataki, *Egyezmények a szovjet csapatok magyarországi tartózkodásáról*, pp. 125-127.

5. Hungarian Military Archives (hereinafter HL) MN. 1954. Placement and special affairs. See also: István Pataki, *Egyezmények a szovjet csapatok magyarországi tartózkodásáról*, p. 130.
6. MNL OL 276. f. 53. cs. 229. ő. e., quoted in István Pataki, *Egyezmények a szovjet csapatok magyarországi tartózkodásáról*, pp. 130-131.
7. The notes of Imre Nagy written in Snagov, Romania. MNL OL, trial documents of Imre Nagy and his fellows, XX-5-h, Vizsgálati Iratok [Investigative Files], vol. 8, pp. 19-22.
8. MNL OL XIX-J-1-j-26/261-005145-1961, 26/261-001871/1962. 322. d. Extract from the bilateral international agreements concluded between Hungary and the Soviet Union from 1945 to 31 December 1960.
9. Volume IV of the protocols of the temporary governing body of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party, in *Politikatörténeti füzetek* [Political History Notebooks], eds. Sándor Balogh, Magdolna Baráth, Zoltán Ripp (INTERART., Budapest, 1994), p. 200.
10. Ferenc Kárpáti, *Puskalövés nélkül...* [Without a Single Shot...] (DUNA International, Budapest, 2011), p. 97.
11. *Ibid.*, pp. 94-95.
12. Central Registry of the Hungarian Military Archives (hereinafter CR HL) 00808/1989 – 79/0919. Report on partial withdrawal of Soviet troops by Ferenc Kárpáti. Quoted in Ferenc Kárpáti, *Puskalövés nélkül...*, p. 97.
13. Lajos Für, *A Varsói Szerződés végnapjai – magyar szemmel* [The Last Days of the Warsaw Pact as Seen from Hungary] (Kairosz Könyvkiadó, Budapest, 2003), p. 9.
14. *A forradalom hangja* [Voice of the Revolution] – Századvég füzetek 3. *Magyarországi rádióadások 1956. október 23–november 9.* [Radio broadcasts in Hungary between 23 October and 9 November 1956], eds. Tamás László Fellegi, András Gyekiczki, László Kövér, Szilárd Kövér, János Máté, Viktor Orbán, István Stumpf, Tamás Varga and Attila Wéber (Századvég Kiadó and Nyilvánosság Klub, Budapest, 1989), p. 357.
15. http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=4YybjROUMu0 (Accessed 25 June 2013)

16. Ferenc Kárpáti, *Puskalövés nélkül...*, p. 97.
17. Ignác Romsics, *Magyarország története a XX. században* [History of Hungary in the 20th Century] (Osiris, Budapest, 2005), p. 550.
18. In his letter, Miklós Németh announced that he authorised Ferenc Somogyi, secretary of state for foreign affairs, and Lt. General László Borsits, chief of staff of the Hungarian People's Army, to take part in expert meetings. Ferenc Kárpáti, *Puskalövés nélkül...*, p. 99.
19. *Ibid.*
20. CR HL 261/013/5. Annex no. 1 to the submission by government commissioner Colonel General Antal Annus on the subject of troop withdrawal on 30 May 1990: Agreement concluded between the governments of the Republic of Hungary and the USSR regarding the withdrawal of Soviet troops temporarily stationed on the territory of the Republic of Hungary. The Agreement was signed on 10 March 1990 by secretaries of state Gyula Horn and Eduard Shevardnadze.
21. CR HL 261/010/20. Letter of minister of defence Dmitri Yazov to Ferenc Kárpáti, 10 January 1990.
22. The Soviets accepted the deadline of 30 June 1991 only because Hungary had agreed to "facilitate" the sale of 260 trainloads of goods, including war technology, civilian equipment, installations, materials, fuels, propellants, lubricants, etc. Government commissioner Antal Annus later suggested that the Ministry of Defence should buy and use the war technology, comprising goods in the approximate value of 400 million HUF, out of the total 1.1 billion HUF of value left behind by the Soviets, according to their own calculation. To support his idea, Annus emphasised that the deterioration of the economic situation had, *inter alia*, led to significant deductions in the security sector, making the use of Soviet weapons and technical equipment absolutely necessary for initiating the convergence. The remaining amount of wartime equipment, some 700 million HUF in value, would open the possibility of economical re-exportation, Annus argued. The Agreement provided that the Soviets would ensure the transportation of articles and tools not sold by 31 March 1991. According to Annus, the purchase of fuels, propellants and lubricants by the Ministry of Defence was justified. Moreover, further supply of such materials would be required, although a negative reply was to be expected on the part of the Soviets. Annus condemned efforts of the Soviet government commissioner to "sell the fuel and the underground storage tanks to foreign-owned companies", a plan that ultimately failed due to Hungarian resistance. Submis-

sion to the Council of Ministers. Subject: Complete withdrawal of the Soviet Southern Army Group from Hungary. Prepared by Antal Annus government commissioner on 30 May 1990. CR HL 261/013/5.

23. According to the statistical figures provided by Imre Karácsony, the Hungarian-Soviet Joint Commission created on the basis of the 1957 Agreement acted in approximately 20,000 cases of damage disputes and litigations over 33 years, arising from the actions or failures to act of Soviet military units or related personnel, involving approximately 60,000 Hungarian citizens, 800 foreign nationals and 1,000 Hungarian organisations (cooperatives and companies). As part of this work, the committee established the liability of the Soviet party in the value of approximately 240 million HUF, while the aggregate value of contractual cases which had to be decided on was over 10 billion HUF. Major General Imre Karácsony, *Hungary*, in *The Great Withdrawal (Withdrawal of the Soviet-Russian Army from Central Europe 1990–1994)* (Ministry of Defence of the Slovak Republic, Bratislava, 2005), p. 211. Hungarian version of the study in the author's possession.
24. *Ibid.*
25. Source of reconstruction: Detailed statement on the status of troop withdrawal operations between 12 March and 30 September 1990. Prepared on 10 October 1990; signed by Colonel Bálint Sáfár, chief of transportation services of the Hungarian Army. HL CR 261/010/29.
26. According to Colonel General Matvei Burlakov, on 10 May 1990, 294 Hungarian citizens were employed at the different organisations of the Southern Army Group, of which 43 in Kecskemét, 68 in Debrecen and 30 in Kunmadaras. CR HL 261/013/34.
27. Imre Karácsony, *Hungary*, pp. 213-214.
28. Source of reconstruction: Detailed statement on the status of troop withdrawal operations between 12 March and 30 September 1990. Prepared on 10 October 1990; signed by Colonel Bálint Sáfár, chief of transportation services of the Hungarian Army. HL CR 261/010/29.
29. In hand writing: “+ 417=1763”
30. The letter of Colonel General Burlakov to Defence Minister Ferenc Kárpáti on 12 April 1990. CR HL 261/010/21.

31. HL KI 261/010/28. Report on the first six months of the withdrawal of Soviet troops. Prepared by Colonel Bálint Sáfár on 10 October 1990.
32. Submission of the government commissioner to the government. Subject: Tasks related to the withdrawal of Soviet forces and to economic and financial issues. Prepared by Antal Annus, 28 May 1991. CR HL 261/010/52.
33. CR HL 261/010/28. Report on the first six months of the withdrawal of Soviet troops. Prepared by Colonel Bálint Sáfár on 10 October 1990.
34. Imre Karácsony, *Hungary*, pp. 213-214.
35. Lajos Für, *A Varsói Szerződés végnapjai...*, p. 182.
36. The economic and social reforms initiated in the Soviet Union by Mikhail Gorbachev in 1985. The Soviet economy showed such a deep stagnancy that they found its complete reorganisation necessary. The reforms were called 'uskoreniye' (acceleration) but the true catchwords were 'perestroika' – reconstruction of the economic and social system – and 'glasnost' – political opening and openness.
37. Quoted from the speech of József Antall. Quoted in Lajos Für, *A Varsói Szerződés végnapjai...*, pp. 137-138.
38. *Ibid.*, p. 141.
39. *Ibid.*, p. 142.
40. <http://www.parlament.hu/naplo34/017/0170012.html> (Accessed 16 June 2011)
41. <http://www.parlament.hu/naplo34/017/0170012.html> (Accessed 16 June 2011)
42. <http://www.parlament.hu/naplo34/017/0170004.html> (Accessed 16 June 2011)
43. Article 62 of the Vienna Convention provides that: 1. A fundamental change of circumstances, unlike those that existed at the time of conclusion of the contract which the parties did not intend to, cannot be used as a basis to terminate the contract or withdraw from it, except in cases where: a) the existence of those circumstances constituted an essential basis of consent of the parties bound by the treaty; b) the change of circumstances is radically to transform the extent of obligations still to be performed under the contract. [...] 3. Where, in accordance with the preceding paragraphs, a party may invoke a fundamental change of circumstances as a basis for terminating

or withdrawing from it, then it may also invoke the change as a ground for suspension of the contract. Source: http://curia.europa.eu/arrets/TRA-DOC-HU-ARRET-C-0162-1996-200406786-05_00.html (Accessed 16 June 2011)

44. <http://www.parlament.hu/naplo34/017/0170006.html> (Accessed 16 June 2011)
45. *Ibid.*
46. <http://www.parlament.hu/naplo34/017/0170010.html> (Accessed 16 June 2011)
47. <http://www.parlament.hu/naplo34/017/0170020.html> (Accessed 16 June 2011)
48. Directive no. 141/1990 of the National Assembly. The text of the directive is quoted in Lajos Für, *A Varsói Szerződés végnapjai...*, pp. 182-183.
49. <http://www.complex.hu/kzldat/o90h0054.htm/o90h0054.htm> (Accessed 16 June 2011)
50. <http://grotius.hu/publ/displ.asp?id=ATLDOR> (Accessed 16 June 2011)
51. HL KI 1/20/330/01/8. – HM. SZT. 00110/2/1991, p. 3.
52. *Ibid.*
53. Prague (15-17 July 1990), Sofia (17-20 September 1990), Warsaw (22-23 October 1990).
54. Budapest (16 August 1990), Sofia (16 September 1990).
55. HL KI 1/20/330/01/8. – 002303/9. KÜM, 00110/3/1991 HM. Report about the first meeting of Government-authorized Provisional WP Committees (Prague, 15-17 June 1990). Prepared by ambassador Béla V. Kupper on 19 July 1990, pp. 65-72.
56. *Ibid.*
57. HL KI 1/20/330/01/8. – 002333/9. KÜM, 0026/4/1990 HM. Memo about the Hungarian-Polish-Czechoslovak government-authorized consultation (Budapest, 16 August 1990). Prepared by ambassador Béla V. Kupper on 22 August 1990, pp. 56-64.
58. *Ibid.*

59. HL KI 1/20/330/01/8. 002686/1/ 1990 KÜM, 00222/1990. HM. Report about the second meeting of the Government-authorized Temporary Commission assigned to review the WP. Sofia, 17-20 September 1990. Prepared on 27 September 1990. The members of the Hungarian negotiating delegation at the meeting were: ambassador Béla V. Kupper, Major General Lajos Kondor, Colonel Zsigmond Tömösváry, chief official of Foreign Ministry László Szücs, others; pp. 30-37.
60. The consecutive meeting of the Military Council of the Unified Armed Forces was held before the meeting. Defence Minister Lajos Für in agreement with the PM defined the mandate of the Hungarian delegation in the following: 1. The representatives of the Hungarian Army take part in the 42nd meeting of the Military Council of the UAF in a consultative manner. 2. They are to express in their contributions: "...the transformation in the interest of independent national defence has begun in the Hungarian Army; we consistently execute the resolution of Parliament, i.e. to leave the military organisation of the Treaty by the end of 1991; at the same time we think that the formation of a European security and cooperation system would be highly enhanced if the Warsaw Pact dissolved its military organisations (possibly by 1992); in parallel with our leaving the alliance we will initiate bilateral military cooperation with all member states on the basis of complete equality and mutual trust; until our leaving the alliance, we will continue to participate in the work of the Joint Armed Forces; however we will decide on the character of our participation later, depending on the resolutions of the PCC meeting in Budapest. 3. we would sign the mutual plan of functions for 1991 noting that "the Hungarian delegation has received the Protocol as a recommendation (date) and it will send its viewpoint in writing to the UAF Chief Command and the member states after having reported to the government of the Hungarian Republic". Functions only in connection with strengthening European trust, disarmament or establishing a system of cooperation and security or the dissolution of the WP military organisation can be planned in a Hungarian location. 4. We must be non-committal in terms of a declaration or signature concerning the modernisation or development (transformation) of the UAF. In the framework of the united air-defence system we maintain the mutual radio-technical information until the end of the Soviet withdrawal of troops, 30 June 1991. "With reference to subsequent matters we must show willingness to conclude bilateral agreements which make the cooperation of air defence units possible." 5. We will contribute to the 1991 budget depending on the November meeting of the PCC in the ratio of our participation. 6. Let us show the highest willingness in the issues of disarmament, the establishment of a European system of security and cooperation and that of broad bilateral military relations. Let us not take a standpoint in connection with the relations between WP and NATO (here as well, let us lay the emphasis

on the bilateral relations of states.) HL KI 1/20/330/01/8. 0045/3/1990. Letter of Defence Minister Lajos Für to Kálmán Lőrincz, in which in addition to the above he is asking that a delegation headed by the Military Operational Chief of Staff, which delegation would consist of experts with reference to the agenda, should represent the Hungarian Army at the subsequent 42nd meeting of the UAF CC. Prepared on 10 September 1990, pp. 10-11.

61. HL KI 1/20/330/01/8. 002686/1/ 1990 KÜM, 00222/1990. Ministry of Defence report on the 2nd meeting of the Government-Authorized Temporary Committee tasked with the revision of the WP. Sofia, 17-20 September 1990. Prepared on 27 September. Members of the Hungarian delegation at the meeting: Ambassador Béla V. Kupper, Major General Lajos Kondor, Colonel Zsigmond Tömösváry, MFA rapporteur László Szücs, others; pp. 36-37.

62. *Ibid.*

63. *Ibid* p. 34

64. HL KI 1/20/330/01/8. 00268 MK HM. Memo about the meeting between the minister of defence and the chief commander of the WP UAF, from 12 September to 15 October 1990. Participants at the meeting were: Minister of Defence Lajos Für, MD public administration state secretary, Lieutenant General Antal Annus, commander of the army, Lieutenant General Kálmán Lőrincz, chief of staff, Lieutenant General László Borsits, Major General, secretary of the MD cabinet Lajos Kondor, Hungarian deputy of the chief commander of UAF Róbert Széles, interpreter Colonel Zsigmond Tömösváry. On behalf of the Soviets: Field Marshal, chief commander of UAF P.A. Lushev, Field Marshal, chief of staff V.N. Lobov, Lieutenant General, UAF chief of military operational group and deputy chief of staff S.M. Ivanov, pp. 22-28.

65. *Ibid.*

66. Lajos Für, *A Varsói Szerződés végnapjai...*, p. 204.

67. HL KI 1/20/330/01/8. 00268 MK HM. Memo about the meeting between the minister of defence and the chief commander of the WP UAE, from 12 September to 15 October 1990, pp. 22-28.

68. Lajos Für, *A Varsói Szerződés végnapjai...*, p. 205.

69. HL KI 1/20/330/01/8. 002686/6/1990. Report about the 3rd meeting of the Government-authorised Temporary Commissions assigned to review the WP, Warsaw, 22-23 October 1990. Prepared by Dr. István Körmendy. On the Hun-

garian side József Hajogató, László Szűcs and Zoltán Bács (Ministry of Foreign Affairs), Major General Lajos Kondor and Colonel Zsigmond Tömösváry (Ministry of Defence) participated in the meeting; pp. 46-55.

70. *Ibid.*

71. *Ibid.* p. 48.

72. *Ibid.* p. 50.

73. Prague (15-17 July 1990), Sofia (17-20 September 1990), Warsaw (22-23 October 1990).

74. Budapest (16 August 1990), Sofia (16 September 1990)

75. Lajos Für, *A Varsói Szerződés végnapjai...*, p. 245.

76. The Charter of Paris for a New Europe was adopted on 21 November 1990 whereby 34 heads of states and governments participating at the summit of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe, including József Antall, declared the termination of European division and the “era of confrontation” that had lasted from the end of World War II. The Charter defined, *inter alia*, the new principles of cooperation among the states participating in the process and laid down the new institutions to be established.

77. Lajos Für, *A Varsói Szerződés végnapjai...*, p. 245.

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Military historian Miklós Horváth has been engaged in military history research since the early 1980s. His degrees are as follows: University Doctor of Political Sciences (dr. univ.) in 1989, Candidate in Military Science in 1996, Doctor of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences (DSc.) in 2003. He habilitated in military history (dr. hab.) in 2004.

Since 1990 he has been a researcher at the Military History Institute and Museum of the Ministry of Defence, since July 2003 director of Military History Institute; retired colonel. As of September 2005 he became an appointed professor at Pázmány Péter Catholic University.

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He was awarded 7 state and several other honours in recognition of his work. Among others he received the Zrínyi Miklós Prize.

Results of his research carried out parallel with his teaching activities:

1956 Rozstrzelana rewolucja : walka zbrojna wegrów z interwencja sowieska by Miklós Horváth. Kraków: Arkadiusz Wingert, 2006. (Polish version of his book entitled *1956 hadikrónikája*.)

In memoriam 1956 by Miklós Horváth and Éva Tulipán. Budapest: Zrínyi, 2006.

Keresztutak: Magyar Néphadsereg, 1956 by Miklós Horváth and Éva Tulipán. Budapest: H&T, 2006.

Koronatanúk jeltelen sírgödrökben – Dokumentumok Nagy Imre és társai per-történeteihöz by Miklós Horváth and Tibor Zinner. Budapest: Magyar Közlöny és Lapkiadó, 2008.

Hadsereg és fegyverek 1956 by Miklós Horváth and Vilmos Kovács, Budapest: HM Zrínyi Média Közhasznú Nonprofit Kft., 2011. *Kényszerkirándulás a Szovjetunióba: Magyar deportáltak a KGB fogságában – 1956* by Miklós Horváth and Olekszandr Pahirya, Budapest: Argumentum Kiadó, 2012.

Budapest 1956: Időutazás - A Journey to the Past by Miklós Horváth and Péter Szikits, Budapest: Hadtörténeti Intézet és Múzeum, 2014.

Magyarország az atomháború árnyékában – Fejezetek a hidegháború korszakának had- és haditechnika-történetéből by Miklós Horváth and Vilmos Kovács, Budapest: Zrínyi Kiadó, 2016.

The results of his scholarly activities include 90 scholarly publications in Hungarian and partly in foreign languages, 12 of which are monographs, furthermore 45 chapters published in monographs and textbooks.