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The Soviet Union and the 1956 Crises in Hungary and Poland: Reassessments and New Findings

The overlapping crises in Hungary and Poland in the autumn of 1956 posed a severe challenge for leaders of the Soviet Communist Party (CPSU). After a tense stand-off with Poland, the CPSU Presidium (as the Politburo was then called) decided to refrain from military intervention and to seek a political compromise. The crisis in Hungary was far less easily defused. For a brief while it appeared that Hungary might be able to break away from the communist bloc, but the Soviet army put an end to all such hopes. Soviet troops crushed the Hungarian revolution, and a degree of order returned to the Soviet camp.

Newly-released documents from Russia and Eastern Europe shed valuable light on the events of 1956, permitting a much clearer and more nuanced understanding of Soviet reactions. This article will begin by discussing the way official versions of the 1956 invasion changed — and formerly secret documents became available — during the late Soviet period and after the Soviet Union disintegrated. It will then highlight some of the most important findings from new archival sources and memoirs. The article relies heavily on the so-called Malin notes and on new materials from East-Central Europe. Both the article and the documents will show that far-reaching modifications are needed in existing western accounts of the 1956 crises.

The advent of glasnost and 'new political thinking' in the Soviet Union under Mikhail Gorbachev led to sweeping reassessments of postwar Soviet ties with Eastern Europe. As early as 1987, an unofficial reappraisal began in Moscow of the Soviet-led invasion of Czechoslovakia in August 1968. Initially, these reassessments of the 1968 crisis did not have Gorbachev's overt endorsement, but the process gained an official stamp in late 1989 once communism had dissolved in Eastern Europe. Soon after the 'velvet revolution' engulfed Czechoslovakia in November 1989, the five states that took part in the 1968 invasion — the Soviet Union, Poland, Hungary, East Germany and Bulgaria — issued a collective statement denouncing the invasion and repudiating the Brezhnev Doctrine. In addition, the Soviet Union released its own declaration of regret over the 'erroneous' decision to intervene in 1968.[1]

1 'Zayavlenie rukovoditelei Bolgarii, Vengrii, GDR, Pol'shi, i Sovetskogo Soyuza' and 'Zayavlenie Sovetskogo Soyuza', both in *Pravda* (Moscow), 5 December 1989, 2.

Curiously, though, Gorbachev was much less willing to proceed with a re-evaluation of the Soviet invasion of Hungary in November 1956. Not until October 1991, two months after the aborted coup in Moscow had severely weakened the Soviet regime, did Gorbachev finally provide an official apology for the 1956 invasion.[2] Until that time, official judgments about Soviet actions in 1956 had been left primarily to Soviet military officers, who routinely glorified the invasion of Hungary as an example of 'the international defence of socialist gains' and of 'transforming socialist internationalism into action'.[3] A senior officer on the Soviet General Staff argued in 1987 that the 'suppression of counter-revolutionary rebellion', as in Hungary in 1956, should still be among the chief military missions of the Warsaw Pact.[4] The same theme was expressed the following year in a Soviet book about the 'Military Policy of the CPSU', which received admiring reviews in Soviet military journals and newspapers.[5]

When political reforms began to sweep through Hungary and Poland in late 1988 and 1989, signs of unease soon cropped up in Soviet military writings. In September 1989, a prominent article by one of the top Soviet commanders in Hungary in October–November 1956, General Pyotr Lashchenko, offered extravagant praise for the Soviet invasion.[6] Very few articles devoted solely to the Hungarian crisis had ever appeared in Soviet military journals (particularly after 'normalization' began in Hungary in the late 1950s), so there was no doubt that the publication of Lashchenko's analysis had been carefully timed. Several months before the article went to press, Imre Pozsgay and other top officials in the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party had publicly declared that the events of 1956 were a 'popular uprising against an oligarchical regime that was humiliating the nation'.[7] By contrast, Lashchenko still insisted that the events of 1956 were merely a 'counter-revolutionary rebellion that was actively supported by the most reactionary forces of international imperialism'. This harsh assessment was clearly intended to help prevent the political changes in Hungary from endangering the raison d'être of Soviet military deployments in Eastern Europe.

Unease within the Soviet military regarding the 1956 invasion continued even after the upheavals of late 1989. In contrast to the official Soviet statement

2 F. Luk'yanov, 'Vengriya privetsvuet zayavlenie Moskvy', *Izvestiya* (Moscow), 24 October 1991, 4.

3 See, for example, General A.D. Lizichev, 'Oktyabr' i Leninskoe uchenie o zashchite revolyutsii', *Kommunist* (Moscow), 3 (February 1987), 96; Admiral A.I. Sorokin (ed.), *Sovetskie vooruzhenye sily na strazhe mira i sotsializma* (Moscow 1988), 254; V.V. Semin (ed.), *Voenno-politicheskoe sotrudnichestvo sotsialisticheskikh stran* (Moscow 1988), esp. 127–41, 181–220; and the interview with General V.N. Lobov in 'I tol'ko pravda ko dvoru', *Izvestiya* (Moscow), 8 May 1989, 1, 3.

4 Colonel I.A. Klimov, 'KPSS ob ukreplenii edinstva i boevogo sotrudnichestva vooruzhenykh sil sotsialisticheskikh stran', *Voenno-istoricheskii zhurnal* (Moscow), 5 (May 1987), 80.

5 V.F. Khalipov, *Voennaya politika KPSS* (Moscow 1988), esp. 256–7.

6 General P.I. Lashchenko, 'Vengriya, 1956 god', *Voenno-istoricheskii zhurnal* (Moscow), 9 (September 1989), 42–50.

7 Budapest Domestic Service, 28 January 1989.

condemning the 1968 invasion of Czechoslovakia, no such statement was issued about the intervention in Hungary. Although numerous Soviet officials, such as deputy foreign minister Anatolii Kovalev, later denounced the invasion of Hungary, the Soviet High Command apparently blocked efforts to release a statement about 1956 comparable to the one about 1968. Moreover, in August 1990, the same journal that had published Lashchenko's 1989 article featured another essay, by a Hungarian lieutenant-colonel, that was even more scathing in its assessment of the 'counter-revolution' of 1956; the journal's editors highly recommended the article to their readers. Although senior officials on the CPSU Central Committee staff were secretly ordered in November 1990 to begin studying archival materials from 1956 and preparing an assessment for the CPSU leadership, this effort was intended mainly to find ways of deflecting pressure from the Hungarian government, and no public Soviet statements resulted.[8] Even when the last Soviet troops were pulled out of Hungary in June 1991, Gorbachev still declined to condemn the 1956 intervention.

The Soviet leader's belated apology in October 1991 was soon overtaken by the collapse of the Soviet regime. The new government in Russia under President Boris Yeltsin proved far more willing to re-evaluate and condemn controversial episodes in Soviet relations with Eastern Europe. As a result, a large quantity of Soviet documentation about the 1956 Hungarian crisis and Moscow's response has recently become available. In November 1992, Yeltsin handed over to the Hungarian government a preliminary collection of declassified materials, which are now stored at the Institute for the Study of the 1956 Hungarian Revolution in Budapest. These documents were all published in Hungarian translation in 1993 as a two-volume collection.[9] A few of the items had appeared earlier in the original Russian,[10] and in 1993 most of the others

8 'TsK KPSS: Ob izuchenii arkhivov TsK KPSS, kasayushchikhsya sobytii 1956 g. v Vengrii', Report No. 06/2-513 (Secret), from R. Fedorov and P. Laptev, deputy heads of the CPSU CC International Department and CPSU CC General Department, respectively, 23 November 1990, in Tsentr Khraneniya Sovremennoi Dokumentatsii (TsKhSD), Fond (F.) 89, Opis' (Op.) 11, Delo (D.) 23, List (L.) 1. The memorandum warned that the 'new Hungarian authorities' were 'clearly intending to use this question [i.e. the 1956 invasion] as a means of pressure against us'. For the article praising the invasion, see Lt.-Col. Jozsef Forigy, 'O kontrrevolyutsii v Vengrii 1956 goda', *Voenno-istoricheskii zhurnal* (Moscow), 8 (August 1990), 39–46. This article was explicitly intended to counter the 'traitorous revisionists' in Hungary who had claimed that the events of 1956 were a 'popular uprising' and who in 1989–90 were carrying out a second 'counter-revolution'. The article was unstinting in its denunciation of the 'traitors' led by Imre Nagy and of the 'new counter-revolutionaries in our midst today who regard themselves as the heirs of 1956'. The chief editor of the Soviet journal, Major-General Viktor Filatov, endorsed the Hungarian author's arguments and warmly recommended the article to his readers. Filatov added that 'upon reading the article, one cannot help but notice features of that [earlier] counter-revolutionary period that are similar to the changes occurring in the East European countries at the present time'.

9 *Jelcin-dosszie Szoviet dokumentumok 1956 rol.* (Budapest 1993); and *Hianyzo Lapok: 1956 tortenetebol: Dokumentumok a volt SZKP KP Leveltarabol* (Budapest 1993).

10 'O sobytiyakh 1956 goda v Vengrii', *Diplomaticheskii vestnik* (Moscow), 19–20 (15–31 October 1992), 52–6.

were published in Russian with detailed annotations in a three-part series.[11] Subsequently, a few additional Soviet documents were released, most of which are now available in Fond 89 (the declassified collection) of the Centre for Storage of Contemporary Documentation in Moscow, the former archive of the CPSU Central Committee. As valuable as these initial items were, they provided only a few tantalizing details about Soviet decision-making in 1956. Some aspects of Soviet decision-making had been revealed in memoirs by Nikita Khrushchev and other former officials, but in the absence of primary documentation it was difficult to know how accurate these memoirs were.[12]

Fortunately, that gap in the historical record has now been at least partly closed. In mid-1995, the Russian archival service finally released the 'Malin notes' from the October–November 1956 crisis. Verbatim transcripts of CPSU Presidium meetings were not kept in the 1950s, but Vladimir Malin, the head of the CPSU CC General Department during the entire Khrushchev period, took extensive notes of all Presidium meetings. His handwritten notes, stored in the former Politburo archive (which is now under Yeltsin's direct control), were all supposed to be declassified by the end of 1996, but regrettably only the ones pertaining to the Hungarian and Polish crises of 1956 have been released so far.[13] The initial batch of Malin notes was provided to a Russian historian, Vyacheslav Sereda, and to researchers at the 1956 Institute in Budapest, who had exclusive access to the materials until spring 1996, when the full set was published in Hungarian translation.[14] Since then, other scholars — both Russian and foreign — have been permitted to study the original documents. Malin's notes about the Hungarian crisis were published in

11 'Vengriya, aprel'-oktyabr' 1956 goda: Informatsiya Yu. V. Andropova, A.I. Mikoyana i M.A. Suslova iz Budapeshta'; 'Vengriya, oktyabr'-noyabr' 1956 goda: Iz arkhiva TsK KPSS'; and 'Vengriya, noyabr' 1956-avgust 1957 g.', all in *Istoricheskii arkhiv* (Moscow), 4, 5 and 6 (1993), 103–42, 132–60, and 131–44, respectively.

12 See, in particular, the segment of Khrushchev's memoirs published in 'Memuary Nikity Sergeevicha Khrushcheva', *Voprosy istorii* (Moscow), 4 (1995), 68–84. Another extremely useful account is available in the memoir by the former Yugoslav ambassador in Moscow, Veljko Micunovic, *Moscow Diary*, trans. by David Floyd (Garden City, NY 1980), 136. Because of his fluency in Russian and close ties with Tito, Micunovic regularly had direct contacts with Khrushchev and other senior figures. Less reliable, but potentially illuminating (if used with caution), are the relevant portions of the memoir by the police chief in Budapest during the revolution, Sandor Kopacsi, *Au nom de la classe ouvrière* (Paris 1979), which is also available in English translation under the same title. Kopacsi ended up siding with the insurgents and was arrested in November 1956. He was sentenced to life imprisonment in June 1958, but was granted amnesty in 1963. In 1974 he was permitted to emigrate to Canada.

13 A few well-connected Russians have had privileged access to Malin's notes from the Presidium meetings dealing with Khrushchev's secret speech at the 20th CPSU Congress, but these notes have not been made more widely available. See V.P. Naumov, 'K istorii sekretnogo doklada N.S. Khrushcheva na XX s'ezde KPSS', *Novaya i noveishaya istoriya* (Moscow), 4 (July–August 1996), 147–68; Vladimir Naumov, ' "Utverdit" dokladchikom tovarishcha', *Moskovskie Novosti*, 5 (4–11 February 1996), 34; and Aleksei Bogomolov, 'K 40-letiyu XX s'ezda: Taina zakrytogo doklada', *Sovershenno sekretno* (Moscow), 1 (1996), 3–4.

14 Vyacheslav Sereda and Janos M. Rainer (eds), *Dontes a Kremlben, 1956: A szovjet partelnokseg vitai Magyarorszagrol* (Budapest 1996).

Russian in summer and autumn 1996, and the notes about the October 1956 crisis in Poland were published in Moscow at the end of 1996.[15] (The portions about Poland had already appeared in the Hungarian translation.)

For an understanding of Soviet policy during the crises in Hungary and Poland, the Malin notes are by far the most valuable items that have surfaced. Although other important documents about the events of 1956 may eventually be released from the Russian Presidential Archive, the former KGB archives and the Russian military archives, the Malin notes are enough to shed extremely interesting light on Soviet decision-making during the crisis. Moreover, the Malin notes can be supplemented with a vast number of recently declassified materials from the East European archives as well as new first-hand accounts. Of the East European documents, an especially noteworthy item is a set of handwritten Czech notes from a Soviet Presidium meeting on 24 October 1956, as the crisis in Hungary was getting under way.[16] Of the new memoirs, perhaps the most valuable is an account published in serial form in late 1993 and early 1994 by a high-ranking Soviet military officer, Evgenii Malashenko, who helped command the operation in Hungary in 1956.[17] Together, all these materials permit a much better understanding of why and how the Soviet Union responded with military force in one case but not in the other.

One of the interesting things about the new evidence is that it tends to bear out much of Khrushchev's brief accounts of the Hungarian and Polish crises. Khrushchev's reminiscences were tendentious (as most memoirs are) and he was confused about a number of points, but overall his account, including many of the details, holds up remarkably well. At the same time, the new documentation provides an insight into many items that Khrushchev failed to discuss, and it also allows numerous mistakes in the record to be corrected. Although it is impossible in a brief article to provide a comprehensive review of the latest findings, it is worth highlighting several points that cast new light not only on the events of 1956, but on the whole nature of Soviet–East European relations.

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15 The notes about Hungary appeared in two parts under the title 'Kak reshalis' 'voprosy Vengrii': Rabochie zapisi zasedanii Prezidiuma TsK KPSS, iyul'-noyabr' 1956 g.', *Istoricheskii arkhiv* (Moscow), 2 and 3 (1996), 73–104 and 87–121, respectively. The notes about Poland appeared in Issue No. 5 of the same journal.

16 See the assessment of this meeting and the annotated translation of the Czech notes by Mark Kramer, 'Hungary and Poland, 1956: Khrushchev's CPSU CC Presidium Meeting on East European Crises, 24 October 1956', *Cold War International History Project Bulletin*, 5 (Spring 1995), 1, 50–6. The Czech document, 'Zprava o jednani na UV KSSS 24. rijna 1956 k situaci v Polsku a Mad'arsku', 25 October 1956, in Statni Ustredni Archiv (Praha), Archiv Ustredniho Vyboru Komunisticke Strany Ceskoslovenska (Arch. UV KSC), Fond (F.) 07/16 — A. Novotny, Svazek (Sv.) 3, was compiled by Jan Svoboda, a senior aide to the then leader of Czechoslovakia, Antonin Novotny, who attended the CPSU Presidium meeting.

17 Lt-Gen. E.I. Malashenko, 'Osobyi korpus v ogne Budapeshta', *Voenno-istoricheskii zhurnal* (Moscow), 10, 11 and 12 (October, November and December 1993) and 1 (January 1994), 22–30; 44–51, 33–7, and 30–6, respectively.

New evidence from the Russian and East-Central European archives helps explain why the Soviet Union decided to accept a peaceful solution in Poland but not in Hungary. Poland was the initial focus of Soviet concerns. A series of events starting in June 1956 had provoked unease in Moscow about growing instability and rebellion. The Poznan riots, on 28–9 June, came as a particular shock. The immediate cause of the riots was the Polish government's refusal to consider workers' demands for improved pay and benefits. On 28 June, employees of the ZISPO locomotive factory and other heavy industrial plants in Poznan went on strike. The strikers were joined by many other residents of the city in staging a large protest rally, which soon turned violent. The burgeoning crowd of demonstrators stormed the local headquarters of the security forces, freed political prisoners from the city jail, and voiced loud demands for 'an end to communist dictatorship in Poland', 'free elections for a new government', and the 'removal of Soviet occupation forces from Polish territory'. The top Polish leaders, Edward Ochab and Jozef Cyrankiewicz, ordered the Polish army and security forces to suppress the uprising. The combined Polish units managed to subdue the protests, but the two days of clashes left 53 dead and many hundreds wounded.

It is now known that some Polish military officers tried to resist the decision to open fire, but their opposition proved futile because the security forces were willing to carry out the orders and because Soviet commanders (and their Polish allies) still dominated the Polish military establishment.[18] Soviet troops in Poland could have intervened directly if the Polish forces had been unable to restore order, but as things worked out, the only task that Soviet military units had to perform during the crisis was to patrol the border with East Germany, preventing demonstrators from trying to flee westward. Back in Moscow, Soviet leaders were unnerved by the Poznan crisis, fearing that the unrest would flare up again and spread elsewhere unless strict ideological controls were reimposed. At a CPSU Presidium meeting shortly after the uprising, Khrushchev claimed that the violence had been provoked by the 'subversive activities of the imperialists' and was aimed at 'fomenting disunity' within the Soviet bloc and 'destroying [the socialist countries] one by one'.[19] These assertions echoed the public commentaries that Soviet leaders issued right after the riots.[20]

The measures adopted by Polish officials to alleviate public discontent and prevent further disorders had only a limited and transitory effect. By late summer and early autumn 1956 a new crisis was gathering pace, which soon

18 See the analysis and valuable collection of declassified documents in Edward Jan Nalepa, *Pacyfikacja zbuntowanego miasta: Wojsko Polskie w Czerwca 1956 r. w Poznaniu w swietle dokumentow wojskowych* (Warsaw 1992). For broader overviews of the crisis, see Jan Ptasinski, *Wydarzenia poznanskie czerwiec 1956* (Warsaw 1986); Jaroslaw Maciejewski and Zofia Trojanowicz (eds), *Poznanski Czerwiec 1956* (Poznan 1990); and Maciej Roman Bombicki, *Poznan '56* (Poznan 1992).

19 'Rabochaya zapis' zasedaniya Prezidiuma TsK KPSS, 9 i 12 iyulya 1956 g.', 12 July 1956 (Top Secret) in TsKhSD, F. 3, Op. 12, D. 1005, LI. 2–20b.

20 'Pol'skii narod kleimit organizatorov provokatsii', *Pravda* (Moscow), 1 July 1956, 6.

led to a tense stand-off with the Soviet Union.[21] In early October, one of the most prominent victims of the Stalinist purges in Poland in the late 1940s and early 1950s, Wladyslaw Gomulka, triumphantly regained his membership in the Polish United Workers' Party (PZPR) and was on the verge of reclaiming his position as party leader. The Soviet authorities feared that if Gomulka took control in Warsaw, he would remove the most orthodox (and pro-Soviet) members of the Polish leadership and steer Poland along an independent course in foreign policy. Soviet concerns were heightened by Gomulka's demand that Soviet military officers serving in the Polish army, including Marshal Konstantin Rokossowski, the Polish-born Soviet officer who had been installed as Polish defence minister and commander-in-chief in November 1949, be withdrawn. This demand came after the PZPR Politburo had already (in September 1956) requested the pull-out of all Soviet state security (KGB) 'advisers' from Poland.

To compel Gomulka and his colleagues to back down, Soviet leaders applied both military and political pressure. On 19 October, as the 8th Plenum of the PZPR Central Committee was about to convene to elect Gomulka as party leader and remove Rokossowski from the PZPR Politburo, Khrushchev ordered Soviet army units in northern and western Poland to advance slowly toward Warsaw. Shortly thereafter, a delegation of top Soviet officials, including Khrushchev, Vyacheslav Molotov, Nikolai Bulganin, Lazar Kaganovich, and Anastas Mikoyan, accompanied by the commander-in-chief of the Warsaw Pact, Marshal Ivan Konev, and 11 other high-ranking Soviet military officers, paid a surprise visit to Warsaw. In a hastily-arranged meeting with Gomulka and other Polish leaders, the CPSU delegates expressed anxiety about upcoming personnel changes in the PZPR and urged the Poles to strengthen their political, economic and military ties with the Soviet Union.[22]

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21 The best overview of the events in Poland in 1956 is Pawel Machcewicz, *Polski rok 1956* (Warsaw 1993). Leszek Gluchowski has done valuable work on the Soviet–Polish crisis; see, for example, his 'Poland, 1956: Khrushchev, Gomulka, and the "Polish October" ', *Cold War International History Project Bulletin*, 5 (Spring 1995), 1, 38–49. See also Jerzy Poksinski, 'Wojsko Polskie w 1956 r. — problemy polityczne (1) i (2)', *Wojsko i Wychowanie* (Warsaw), 1–2 (1992), 40–78; and Robert Los, *Pazdziernik 1956 roku w perspektywie stosunkow polsko-radzieckich*, PhD diss., University of Lodz, 1993. For a sample of other perspectives on the 1956 Polish crisis, see Zbyslaw Rykowski and Wieslaw Wladyka, *Polska proba Pazdziernik '56* (Krakow 1989), 232–4; *Sprawozdanie z prac Komisii KC PZPR powolanej dla wyjasnienia przyczyn i przebiegu konfliktow spolecznych w dziejach Polski Ludowej*, special issue of *Nowe Drogi* (Warsaw), September 1983, esp. 21–32; Benon Dymek (ed.), *Pazdziernik 1956: Szkice historyczne* (Warsaw 1989); Bogdan Hillebrandt (ed.), *Ideowopolityczne kontrowersje i konflikty lat 1956–1970* (Warsaw 1986); Grzegorz Matuszak, *Kryzysy spoleczno-polityczne w procesie budowy socjalizmu w Polsce Ludowej* (Warsaw 1986); and Antoni Czubinski, 'Kryzys polityczny 1956 roku w Polsce' in Antoni Czubinski (ed.), *Kryzysy spoleczno-polityczne w Polsce Ludowej* (Warsaw 1983), 80–114.

22 'Zapis' besedy N.S. Khrushcheva v Varshave', 233 (Special Dossier — Strictly Secret), notes by A. Mikoyan, 19–20 October 1956, in Arkhiv Prezidenta Rossiiskoi Federatsii (APRF), F. 3, Op. 65, D. 2, LI. 1–14. Further details about this meeting are contained in 'Zprava o jednani na UV KSSS 24. rijna 1956', LI. 1–4.

Gomulka, for his part, sought clarification of the status of Soviet troops in Poland and demanded that the Soviet Union pledge not to interfere in Poland's internal affairs. Although he reaffirmed his intention of staying in the Warsaw Pact, he emphasized that Poland 'will not permit its independence to be taken away'.[23] Gomulka also renewed his call for the withdrawal of all or most of the Soviet Union's 50 'advisers' in Poland, and again insisted that Rokossowski and other top Soviet officers be removed from the Polish army. The Soviet delegation responded by accusing the Poles of seeking to get rid of 'old, trustworthy revolutionaries who are loyal to the cause of socialism' and of 'turning toward the West against the Soviet Union'.[24]

During these tense exchanges, Gomulka was suddenly informed by one of his aides that Soviet tank and infantry units were advancing toward Warsaw. This large-scale mobilization of Soviet troops, though intended as a form of coercive diplomacy rather than to provoke an immediate confrontation, gave the crisis a new edge. Rokossowski and dozens of other Soviet commanders (and their Polish allies) who were still entrenched in the Polish officer corps were able to keep the Polish army from preparing to defend Gomulka against incoming Soviet forces.[25] Rokossowski's influence, however, did not extend to many of the Polish troops from the Internal Security Corps (KBW) and other combat personnel under the aegis of the Polish Internal Affairs Ministry (MSW), who were fully willing to fight on behalf of the new Polish regime. These units took up strategic positions all around Warsaw and called in reinforcements as Soviet columns were reported to be moving in.[26] In this game of political-military brinkmanship, a clash seemed to be looming between the KBW troops and Soviet forces, and an even more explosive situation emerged *within* the Polish military establishment, pitting KBW units against troops from the National Defence Ministry under Rokossowski's command. Thus, for a brief while, Poland appeared to be on the verge of civil war as well as a conflict with the Soviet Union.

The latent danger of a clash between Soviet forces and the KBW — a danger that loomed large even though neither side wanted a direct confrontation — spurred Khrushchev and Gomulka to make a renewed effort to find a peaceful

23 Ibid.

24 Ibid. and 'Zapis' besedy N. S. Khrushcheva v Varshave', L. 4.

25 At the time, there were still 79 Soviet officers, including 28 generals, serving in the Polish army. See Edward Jan Nalepa, *Oficerowie Radziecky w Wojsku Polskim w latach 1943–1968: Studium historyczno-wojskowe* (Warsaw 1992), 43. For a valuable discussion of the military confrontation, see 'Wojskowe aspekty pazdziernika 1956r.' *Polska Zbrojna* (Warsaw), 18–20 October 1991, 3.

26 This account is based on documents recently declassified at the Internal Military Service Archive (*Archiwum Wojskowej Sluzby Wewnetrznej*, or AWSW) and the Central Military Archive (*Centralne Archiwum Wojskowe*, or CAW) in Warsaw, which were provided to the author by Leszek Gluchowski. See, in particular, the two reports compiled by Major Witold Osinski, deputy chief of the 2nd Section of the KBW's Military Counter-intelligence Directorate, in AWSW, sygn. 2859/20/K and CAW, sygn. 1812/92/8. See also the invaluable first-hand account by Wlodzimierz Mus, the KBW commander at the time, 'Spor generalow o Pazdziernik 1956: Czy grozila interwencja zbrojna?', *Polityka* (Warsaw), 42 (20 October 1990), 14.

solution. After being informed about the troop movements, the Polish leader requested that the Soviet units be pulled back; and Khrushchev, after some hesitation, complied with the request, ordering Konev to halt all troop movements.[27] Although Khrushchev assured Gomulka that the deployments had simply been in preparation for upcoming military exercises, the intended message was plain enough, especially in light of other recent developments. The existence of Soviet 'plans to protect the most important state facilities' in Poland, including military garrisons and lines of communication, had been deliberately leaked to Polish officials earlier in the day; and Soviet naval vessels had begun holding conspicuous manoeuvres in waters near Gdansk, keeping the Polish navy at bay.[28] Despite these various forms of pressure, the Polish authorities stood their ground, and the meeting ended without any firm agreement. The official communiqué merely indicated that talks had taken place and that Polish leaders would be visiting Moscow sometime 'in the near future'.[29] In most respects, then, the negotiations proved less than satisfactory from the Soviet standpoint.

Shortly after the Soviet delegates returned to Moscow on 20 October, they briefed the other members of the CPSU Presidium on the results of the trip.[30] By this point they knew that the PZPR Central Committee had reconvened early on 20 October and had elected Gomulka first secretary and dropped Rokossowski and several neo-Stalinist officials from the PZPR Politburo. Khrushchev made no attempt to conceal his disappointment, arguing that 'there's only one way out — by putting an end to what is in Poland'. He indicated that the situation would get much worse if Rokossowski were not permitted to stay as Poland's defence minister. Khrushchev laid a good deal of the blame for the crisis on the Soviet ambassador in Poland, Panteleimon Ponomarenko, who, according to Khrushchev, had been 'grossly mistaken in his assessment of [Edward] Ochab and Gomulka'. (Khrushchev declined to mention that he himself — and the rest of the Soviet leadership — had 'grossly' misjudged the situation in Poland over the previous few months.)[31]

The Presidium adopted Khrushchev's suggestion that a meeting be held soon in Moscow with leading representatives from Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Romania, East Germany and Bulgaria. Khrushchev also proposed that they consider sending a few senior officials to China 'for informational purposes'.

27 'Zapis' besedy N. S. Khrushcheva v Varshave', L. 4.

28 Comments by Stefan Staszewski, former PZPR CC Secretary, in Teresa Toranska (ed.), *Oni* (London 1985), 148.

29 'Komunikat o naradach Biura Politycznego KC PZPR i delegacji KC KPZR w Warszawie', *Trybuna Ludu* (Warsaw), 20 October 1956, 1.

30 'Rabochaya zapis' zasedaniya Prezidiuma TsK KPSS, 20 oktyabrya 1956 g.', 20 October 1956 (Top Secret), in TsKhSD, F. 3, Op. 12, D. 1005, LI. 49–50.

31 This was evident, for example, when Ochab stopped in Moscow in September 1956 on his way back from Beijing. See 'Priem Posla Pol'skoi Narodnoi Respubliki v SSSR tov. V. Levikovskogo, 10 sentyabrya 1956 g.', 11 September 1956 (Secret), memorandum from N. Patolichev, Soviet deputy foreign minister, in Arkhiv Vneshnei Politiki Rossiiskoi Federatsii (AVPRF), F. Referentura po Pol'she, Op. 38, Por. 9, Papka, 126, D. 031, L. 1.

In the meantime, the Presidium resolved to 'think carefully' about additional measures, including new military exercises and the formation of a 'provisional revolutionary committee' that would displace Gomulka. In addition, Khrushchev authorized a new campaign in the press, building on an editorial in the 20 October issue of *Pravda*, which accused the Polish media of waging a 'filthy anti-Soviet campaign' and of trying to 'undermine socialism in Poland'.[32] These charges, and subsequent accusations, prompted vigorous rebuttals from Polish commentators.

Strains between Poland and the Soviet Union remained high over the next few days as tens of thousands of Poles took part in pro-Gomulka rallies in Gdansk, Szczecin and other cities on 22 October. Even larger demonstrations, each involving up to 100,000 people, were organized the following day in Poznan, Lublin, Lodz, Bydgoszcz, Kielce and elsewhere. In the meantime, joint meetings of workers and students were being held all around Poland, culminating in a vast rally in Warsaw on 24 October attended by some 500,000 people. Although these events were intended mainly as a display of unified national support for the new Polish leadership in the face of external pressure, some of the speakers, particularly at a rally in Wroclaw on 23 October, expressed open hostility toward the Soviet Union.

As tensions mounted on 20 and 21 October, Soviet leaders re-examined a variety of economic sanctions and military options, but again they found that none of these options seemed the least bit attractive. At a meeting on 21 October, the CPSU Presidium unanimously decided to 'refrain from military intervention' and to 'display patience' for the time being.[33] The rationale for this decision remained just as compelling in the following days, as Khrushchev emphasized to his colleagues and to other East European leaders during an expanded Presidium meeting on the evening of 24 October: 'Finding a reason for an armed conflict [with Poland] now would be very easy, but finding a way to put an end to such a conflict later on would be very hard.'[34] The stand-off on 19 October had demonstrated to the Soviet leadership that most of the Polish troops who were not under Rokossowski's command, especially in the KBW, were ready to put up stiff resistance to outside intervention. Khrushchev and his colleagues also seem to have feared that Polish leaders would begin handing out firearms to 'workers' militia' units who could help defend the capital.[35] (Gomulka later claimed that arms were in fact distributed but the evidence generally does not bear out these assertions. The important thing, however, is that Soviet officials *assumed* that Gomulka would proceed with this step.)

Khrushchev's reluctance to pursue a military solution in such unfavourable circumstances induced him to seek a modus vivendi with Gomulka whereby

32 'Antisovetskaya kampaniya v pol 'skoi presse', *Pravda* (Moscow), 20 October 1956, 1.

33 'Rabochaya zapis' zasedaniya Prezidiuma TsK KPSS, 21 oktyabrya 1956 g.', 21 October 1956 (Top Secret), in TsKhSD, F. 3, Op. 12, D. 1006, L. 2.

34 'Zprava o jednani na UV KSSS 24. rijna 1956', L. 8.

35 Jacek Kuron, *Wiara i wina: Do i od komunizmu* (Warsaw 1990), 119.

Poland would have greater leeway to follow its own 'road to socialism'. Gomulka reciprocated by again assuring Khrushchev that Poland would remain a loyal ally and member of the Warsaw Pact. The Polish leader demonstrated the credibility of his promises by ordering Polish officers to cease considering the prospect of a complete withdrawal of the Soviet Northern Group of Forces from Poland.[36] (On 21 October, as the crisis with Moscow began to abate, a number of Polish commanders, led by General Waclaw Komar of the Internal Army and General Wlodzimierz Mus of the KBW, had thought it was the right moment to press for a total Soviet withdrawal, and started drafting plans to that effect. Gomulka put an immediate end to their activities.) Gomulka also adopted a far more conciliatory line in public, as reflected in his keynote speech at the rally in Warsaw on 24 October.[37] The Polish leader not only called for stronger political and military ties with the Soviet Union and condemned those who were trying to steer Poland away from the Warsaw Pact, but also urged his fellow Poles to return to their daily work and to refrain from holding any additional rallies or demonstrations.

Over the next few days, Soviet leaders became annoyed when Gomulka insisted that Rokossowski be removed from the national defence ministry (as well as from the PZPR Politburo), a demand that perplexed even Chinese officials, who overall were staunchly supportive of Gomulka.[38] Had the crisis in Hungary not intervened on 23 October, Soviet leaders might well have been inclined to take a firmer stand against Rokossowski's dismissal from the ministry. But by the time Gomulka began pressing this demand on 26 October, the deteriorating situation in Hungary gave Khrushchev a strong incentive to prevent renewed difficulties with Poland. Having been reassured that Gomulka would keep Poland in the Warsaw Pact and retain Soviet troops on Polish soil, Khrushchev reluctantly acquiesced in Rokossowski's ouster. In mid-November, Rokossowski was recalled to Moscow, where he was appointed a deputy defence minister.

Early in the crisis, some members of the Soviet Presidium, especially Vyacheslav Molotov and Kliment Voroshilov, had strongly opposed the leeway granted to the Poles, but by the time the Presidium met on 21 October, all members agreed that it was best to 'refrain from military intervention' and to 'display patience', at least for a while.[39] Nor were any major signs of dissent evident at the Presidium meeting on 23 October.[40] Participants in the meeting emphasized the 'fundamental difference' between the situation in Poland and

36 Mus, 'Czy grozila interwencja zbrojna?', op. cit., 14.

37 'Przemowienie towarzysza Wladyslawa Gomulki', *Trybuna Ludu* (Warsaw), 25 October 1956, 1, which appeared under the banner headline 'Ponad 300 tysiecy warszawiakow na spotkaniu z nowym kierownictwem partii'.

38 'Rabochaya zapis' zasedaniya Prezidiuma TsK KPSS, 26 oktyabrya 1956 g.', 26 October 1956 (Top Secret), in TsKhSD, F. 3, Op. 12, D. 1005, L. 53.

39 'Rabochaya zapis' zasedaniya Prezidiuma TsK KPSS, 21 oktyabrya 1956 g.', L. 2.

40 'Rabochaya zapis' zasedaniya Prezidiuma TsK KPSS, 23 oktyabrya 1956 g.', 3 October 1956 (Top Secret), in TsKhSD, F. 3, Op. 12, D. 1006, LI. 4–4ob.

the emerging crisis in Hungary. Gomulka's speech on 24 October and his follow-up discussions with Khrushchev further convinced the Soviet leader that Poland would remain a loyal member of the 'socialist commonwealth' and Warsaw Pact.[41]

This did not mean that all tensions with Poland were instantly dissipated. In addition to continued bickering over Rokossowski's status, Khrushchev remained concerned about the 'unacceptable' views espoused by certain PZPR officials, including some who allegedly wanted to assert territorial claims against the USSR.[42] Soviet leaders also were disturbed by reports that an influential PZPR secretary, Wladyslaw Matwin, had given a speech in Poznan on 10 November in which he condemned recent 'abnormalities in Polish–Soviet relations' that had 'raised doubts about the sovereignty of our country'.[43] Further problems arose in late November and December, when high-ranking CPSU officials reported to the CPSU Presidium that 'discussions in the Polish press' were causing 'nihilistic' and 'unsavoury' views among Soviet youth, and that Polish students in Moscow were 'behaving shamefully and disloyally toward [the Soviet Union]' by 'spreading pernicious information' about recent events in Hungary and Poland.[44] Nevertheless, these frictions did not detract from the basic assurances that Gomulka had provided to Khrushchev. By late October and early November 1956 the two sides had reached a broad accommodation that was able to withstand occasional disruptions.

Gomulka's determination to preserve a communist system in Poland and to remain within the Warsaw Pact had a strong bearing on Soviet policy during the Hungarian revolution. The outcome of the Polish crisis demonstrated that some Soviet flexibility would continue and that a return to fully-fledged Stalinism was not in the offing, but it also set a precedent for what would be tolerated. Had Gomulka not been willing to keep Poland firmly within the Soviet bloc, a military confrontation might well have ensued. The contrast with Hungary was telling. Early on, Soviet leaders may have hoped that they could rely on Imre Nagy to do in Hungary what Gomulka had done in Poland, but the Soviet Presidium soon concluded that there was 'no comparison with Poland' and that 'Nagy is in fact turning against us'.[45]

41 Compare Khrushchev's account in 'Memuary Nikity Sergeevicha Khrushcheva' with Molotov's less favourable reminiscences in Feliks Chuev (ed.), *Sto sorok besed s Molotovym* (Moscow 1991), 113.

42 Khrushchev's comments, as recorded in Micunovic, *Moscow Diary*, op. cit., 139.

43 'Telefonogramma po VCh', 15 November 1956 (Top Secret), from I. Maslennikov of the Soviet embassy in Warsaw, in AVPRF, F. Referentura po Pol'she, Op. 38, Por. 20, Pap. 127, D. 178, LI. 32–3.

44 'TsK KPSS', Memorandum No. ST–1272 (Top Secret), 18 December 1956, to the CPSU Secretariat from D. Polikarpov, head of the CPSU CC Culture Department, and A. Sazonov, sector head in the CPSU CC Culture Department, and 'Tsentral'nyi Komitet Kommunisticheskoi Partii Sovetskogo Soyuza: Tov. Suslovu Informatsiya', Memorandum No. 1255 (Top Secret), 15 December 1956, to the CPSU Presidium from I. Marchenko, first secretary of the Moscow city party committee, in TsKhSD, F. 4, Op. 16, D. 1098, LI. 50–2 and 53–5, respectively.

45 Quotations are from 'Rabochaya zapis' zasedaniya Prezidiuma TsK KPSS, 23 oktyabrya

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Social pressures had been building in Hungary since the spring of 1955, when the reformist Prime Minister Imre Nagy was dislodged by the old-line Stalinist leader Matyas Rakosi, who had been forced to cede that post to Nagy in mid-1953. The earlier transfer of power from Rakosi to Nagy, and the shift back to Rakosi, were both effected under Moscow's auspices. In June 1953 the Soviet authorities, led by Georgii Malenkov and Lavrentii Beria, had summoned Rakosi and other Hungarian officials to Moscow for a secret meeting. During three days of talks, Malenkov and his colleagues stressed that they were 'deeply appalled' by Rakosi's 'high-handed and domineering style' in office, which had led to countless 'mistakes and crimes' and had 'driven [Hungary] to the brink of a catastrophe'.[46] They ordered Rakosi to relinquish his prime ministerial duties to Nagy. Although Rakosi was allowed to remain First Secretary of the Hungarian Workers' Party (HWP), the office of prime minister at the time was seen as far more important than the top party position.

By early 1955, however, the political calculus in both Moscow and Budapest had changed. The First Secretary of the CPSU, Khrushchev, had gradually eclipsed Prime Minister Malenkov, enabling the CPSU to regain its predominant status in Soviet politics. Khrushchev sought to reinforce his victory by prodding the East European countries to halt their New Courses (i.e. the reforms they had adopted when Malenkov was the top figure in Moscow) and to give renewed emphasis to the 'leading role' of their communist parties. This political reconfiguration coincided with the Soviet leaders' concern (or claimed concern) that Nagy's policies were giving impetus to 'rightist deviationists' and 'opportunists' in Hungary who were seeking to realign their country with Yugoslavia or the West. As a result, in March 1955 the CPSU Presidium again summoned top Hungarian officials, including Nagy and Rakosi, to Moscow for secret talks; and a high-level Soviet delegation then travelled to Hungary to oversee the reversal of Nagy's New Course and the elevation of Rakosi's protégé, Andras Hegedus, to the post of prime minister. This 'friendly interference in [Hungary's] internal affairs', according to a senior CPSU Presidium member, Kliment Voroshilov, provided 'a model for our relations with all the People's Democracies'.[47]

Nevertheless, these fluctuations were bound to spark social unrest in Hungary. The appointment of Nagy as prime minister in 1953 had helped stave off further disorders of the sort that occurred in Csepel, Ozd and Diosgyor in spring 1953; but the reascendance of Rakosi in 1955–6 brought all those

1956 g.', L. 4; and 'Rabochaya zapis' zasedaniya Prezidiuma TsK KPSS, 28 oktyabrya 1956 g.', 28 October 1956 (Top Secret), in TsKhSD, F. 3, Op. 12, D. 1005, L. 58.

46 For the full transcript of these sessions, see 'Jegyzokonyv a Szovjet es a Magyar part-es allami vezetok targyalasairol', 13–16 June 1953 (Top Secret), in Magyar Orszagos Leveltar, 276, F.102/65, oe.

47 'Plenum TsK KPSS — XIX Sozyv: Stenogramma chetyrnadtsatogo zasedaniya 12 iyulya 1955 g. (utrennego)', July 1955 (Top Secret), in TsKhSD, F. 2, Op. 1, D. 176, L. 143.

earlier grievances back to the surface. In the past, Rakosi had been able to rely on mass repression to stifle popular discontent, but by 1956 his options were far more limited because of the post-Stalin 'thaw' and de-Stalinization campaign that Khrushchev had launched at the 20th Soviet Party Congress. Those developments created greater leeway for the expression of pent-up grievances in Hungary; and they also helped transform the Petofi Circle, an entity set up by Rakosi in March 1956 as a debating forum for Party youth, into a prominent organ of the anti-Rakosi opposition. In late April 1956, the Soviet ambassador in Budapest, Yurii Andropov, informed the CPSU Presidium about the 'far-reaching impact' of the Soviet Party Congress on the public mood in Hungary and about the Hungarian regime's lacklustre response:

> Through demagoguery and provocations, the right-wing opportunists and hostile elements have managed to create an impression [among ordinary Hungarians] that the Hungarian Workers' Party leadership, in its current form, is not doing what is needed in Hungary to carry out the decisions of the XX CPSU Congress because some of the old members of the [Hungarian] Politburo are putting up resistance to these decisions and the younger comrades are too inexperienced to proceed with the required work. This impression is doing great damage to the authority of the [Hungarian] Politburo in the eyes of the party *aktiv* and a large segment of the workers.[48]

Andropov urged the Soviet Presidium to give greater support and assistance to Rakosi to prevent the anti-Rakosi forces from extracting further 'major concessions to rightist and demagogic elements'.[49]

This cable stirred apprehension in Moscow, and the CPSU Presidium decided in early May to send one of its members, Mikhail Suslov, to Budapest for discussions with Andropov and with leaders of the HWP.[50] It took several weeks, however, before Suslov actually left for Budapest. Despite the growing turbulence in Hungary, high-level attention in Moscow was distracted by other matters. When Suslov finally arrived in Budapest on 7 June, his week-long visit did little to help the situation. In contrast to Andropov's more alarming reports, Suslov assured the CPSU Presidium that there was no real disaffection in Hungary with the HWP leadership. The opposition to Rakosi, he argued, was confined to the HWP Central Committee (formally known as the Central Leadership), where a group supporting Imre Nagy had joined forces with 'politically immature and unprincipled officials'.[51] Suslov claimed that the problem could be eliminated if 'real Hungarian cadres' were 'promoted more vigorously' to diminish the 'hugely abnormal' representation of 'Jewish comrades' in the HWP Central Leadership. He took a number of steps to bolster Rakosi's position and to forestall any potential challenges to Rakosi

48 'Shifrtelegramma', Special Nos 316–319/No. 16595 (Strictly Secret), from Yu. V. Andropov to the CPSU Presidium and CPSU Secretariat, 30 April 1956, in TsKhSD, F. 89, Op. 45, D. 1, L. 2.
49 Ibid., L. 5.
50 'Vypiska iz protokola zasedaniya Prezidiuma TsK KPSS ot 3 maya 1956 g.', No. P13/XXIII (Strictly Secret), 3 May 1956, in APRF, F. 3, Op. 64, D. 483, L. 133.
51 'Telefonogramma iz Budapeshta v TsK KPSS', 13 June 1956 (Top Secret), from M. A. Suslov to the CSPU Presidium and Secretariat, in APRF, F. 3, Op. 64, D. 483, LI. 146–9.

at a crucial plenum of the HWP Central Leadership scheduled for mid-July. Suslov's strong backing for Rakosi at this point was in line with the views of the entire CPSU Presidium. Later on, Khrushchev privately acknowledged that it had been a 'great mistake' to 'rely on that idiot Rakosi', but in the first half of 1956 no one on the Soviet Presidium seriously questioned the policy.[52]

The assurance of strong, visible support from Moscow (and from Andropov) enabled Rakosi to counter his rivals within the HWP by depicting their criticism as 'directed also against the Soviet comrades'.[53] Ordinarily, this might have been enough to keep Rakosi in power for several years more, but two unforeseen events in late June 1956 changed the political balance of forces in Hungary. The first development, on 27 June, was a highly publicized meeting of the Petofi Circle, which featured sweeping criticisms of the regime's policies, condemnations of Rakosi for his role in the Stalinist repressions of the late 1940s and early 1950s, and renewed calls for 'full freedom of the press'. In response, Rakosi persuaded the HWP Central Leadership to adopt a resolution on 30 June that banned the Petofi Circle and explicitly denounced 'anti-party elements' and the 'anti-party views' of 'a certain group which has formed around Imre Nagy'.[54] The HWP Central Leadership also reprimanded HWP members who had shown 'insufficient vigilance' against 'hostile, demagogic attacks', rescinded the party membership of two prominent writers (Tibor Dery and Tibor Tardos) who had 'espoused bourgeois and counter-revolutionary views', criticized the HWP newspaper *Szabad Nep* for its 'misleading and unprincipled' coverage of the meeting, and prohibited any further gatherings of opposition forces.

This resolution was adopted only hours after another event that had far-reaching implications for Hungary: the outbreak of riots in Poznan, Poland on 28–29 June. Many Hungarians, particularly university students, intellectuals and a substantial number of HWP members, came to see the Petofi Circle meeting and the Poznan riots as indications that neo-Stalinist regimes throughout the Soviet bloc were suddenly vulnerable. Rakosi hoped to dispel any impression of weakness by returning to his earlier policy of 'stern measures' against 'hostile' and 'anti-socialist' forces. This marked a reversal of his approach over the previous few months, when he had grudgingly put up with a limited thaw in the wake of the 20th CPSU Congress. At a meeting of the Budapest party *aktiv* on 18 May, Rakosi had even reluctantly acknowledged

52 'Zapis' besedy N.S. Khrushcheva s kitaiskimi tovarishchami 2 oktyabrya 1959 g. v Pekine', 2 October 1959 (Top Secret/Special Dossier), in APRF, F. 3, Op. 65, D. 331, L. 12. For other disparaging remarks by Khrushchev about Rakosi, see Micunovic, *Moscow Diary*, op. cit., 135–6, 140.

53 See Janos Kadar's remarks to this effect in 'Rabochaya zapis' zasedaniya Prezidiuma TsK KPSS, 3 noyabrya 1956 g.', 3 November 1956 (Top Secret), in TsKhSD, F. 3, Op. 12, D. 1006, LI. 31–33ob.

54 The resolution was broadcast on Hungarian domestic radio on 30 June and published in *Szabad Nep* the following day. For an English translation, see Paul E. Zinner (ed.), *National Communism and Popular Revolt in Eastern Europe: A Selection of Documents on Events in Poland and Hungary, February–November 1956* (New York 1956), 328–31.

his part in the 'unjust repressions' of the Stalin era. These concessions, limited though they were, raised public expectations in Hungary; but the increased defiance of the Petofi Circle and the riots in Poznan spurred Rakosi to try to reassert an 'iron hand'. Within the HWP, however, this move was far from universally welcomed. A large number of officials, especially in the HWP Central Leadership, concluded that the real problem in Hungary was not the opposition forces or the Petofi Circle, but Rakosi himself.

The mounting disaffection with Rakosi was duly noted by Andropov in a cable to the CPSU Presidium on 9 July.[55] Andropov reported that 'hostile elements and the intra-HWP opposition have embarked on an open and intensive struggle' against Rakosi. He emphasized that some prominent opposition figures had begun calling for an 'independent national policy' and a 'national communist movement', which would 'permit the Hungarians to resolve their own affairs independently, "rather than on the basis of Soviet interference" '. Andropov also noted that Gero saw 'few ways, unfortunately, to overcome the situation that has emerged'. Although Gero believed that the HWP Central Leadership plenum on 18 July might 'restore solid unity' at the top levels of the party, he was concerned that 'severe complications could emerge unexpectedly' at the plenum. In this connection, Andropov reported that the former head of state security in Hungary, Gabor Peter, had written a letter from prison accusing Rakosi of direct personal complicity in the Rajk trial. Andropov warned that 'if this letter is read out at the plenum, Cde. Rakosi's plight will be enormously aggravated'. Andropov underscored Gero's hope of receiving 'concrete advice from the CPSU CC', and he added that 'Cde. Gero's alarm about the situation is fully understandable'. The ambassador expressed misgivings of his own about the 'indecisiveness, feeble actions, and inadequate vigilance of the Hungarian comrades in the struggle against hostile influences within the party and among workers', and recommended that the CPSU leadership issue a clear-cut endorsement of the HWP resolution of 30 June 'as well as of all the measures needed to strengthen the [Hungarian] party's unity and to intensify the struggle against hostile forces'.

Andropov's cable served as the basis for a CPSU Presidium meeting on 12 July 1956, which focused on the latest events in both Hungary and Poland. Malin's notes from the meeting show that Khrushchev and his colleagues still did not want to come to grips with the underlying sources of political unrest in Hungary.[56] To be sure, the events in Poznan had provoked 'alarm [in Moscow] about the fate of Hungary' as well as of Poland: 'After the lessons of Poznan we wouldn't want something similar to happen in Hungary.'[57] Soviet leaders went so far as to characterize the 'discussions of the Petofi Circle [on 27 June]

55 See, for example, 'Shifrtelegramma', from Yu. V. Andropov to the CPSU Presidium and Secretariat, 9 July 1956 (Special Dossier — Strictly Secret), in APRF, F. 3, Op. 64, D. 483, L1. 151–62. All quotations in this paragraph are from Andropov's cable.

56 'Rabochaya zapis' zasedaniya Prezidiuma TsK KPSS, 9 i 12 iyulya 1956 g.', L1. 2–2ob.

57 'TsK KPSS', 18 July 1956 (Strictly Secret — Urgent), Osobaya papka, in APRF, F. 3, Op. 64, D. 483, L. 231.

as an ideological Poznan, without the gunshots'.[58] Nevertheless, they displayed little understanding of the pressures that had given rise to such incidents. Khrushchev attributed the recent turmoil in Hungary (and Poland) exclusively to 'the subversive activities of the imperialists', who, he claimed, 'want to foment disunity' within the socialist camp and 'destroy the socialist countries one by one'.[59] The Presidium ordered that a lengthy editorial be published in *Pravda* reaffirming Moscow's 'internationalist solidarity with efforts to rebuff the enemy'.[60] The appearance of this article on 16 July was intended as a warning that the CPSU leadership would 'not permit the dissolution of the unity of the socialist camp under the pretext of respect for national particularities or the extension of democracy'.[61]

The Soviet Presidium also designated one of its members, Anastas Mikoyan, to visit Hungary for a first-hand assessment of the disarray within the Hungarian leadership and the growing ferment in Hungarian society. Upon his arrival in Budapest on 13 July, Mikoyan met with Rakosi and three other senior Hungarian officials (Erno Gero, Andras Hegedus and Bela Veg). These preliminary talks convinced Mikoyan that the situation would improve only if Rakosi stepped down. Having been authorized by the CPSU Presidium to do whatever was necessary to 'restore unity in the HWP leadership', Mikoyan bluntly informed Rakosi that it would be best if someone else took over as HWP First Secretary.[62] Rakosi had been hoping to gain Soviet backing for his proposal to 'smash the Nagy conspiracy' once and for all — a proposal that envisaged the arrest of Nagy and several hundred other 'conspirators' as well as a broader crackdown — and thus he was stunned by Mikoyan's recommendation. Nevertheless, Rakosi had little choice but to accept the Soviet 'advice'. Mikoyan then turned to the question of a successor. He proposed Erno Gero as a replacement for Rakosi, but Gero initially claimed that it would be better if a 'Hungarian official' (i.e. a non-Jew) took over. These demurrals were not entirely sincere, as Mikoyan soon realized, and the matter was settled over the next few days at two emergency sessions of the HWP Politburo. Mikoyan took part in the first session on 13 July and was kept closely informed about the second on 16 July.[63] As he had proposed, the HWP Politburo endorsed

58 Ibid., L. 232.

59 'Rabochaya zapis' zasedaniya Prezidiuma TsK KPSS, 9 i 12 iyulya 1956 g.', L. 2.

60 'Vypiska iz Protokola No. 28 zasedaniya Prezidiuma TsK KPSS ot 12 iyulya 1956 g.', 12 July 1956 (Strictly Secret), in TsKhSD, F. 3, Op. 14, D. 41, L1. 1–2.

61 'Rastut i krepnut mezhdunarodnye sily mira, demokratii i sotsializma', *Pravda* (Moscow), 16 July 1956, 2–3.

62 'Zapis' besedy A.I. Mikoyana s Matyashem Rakoshi, Andrashem Hegedushem, Erne Gere i Beloi Vegom, 13 iyulya 1956 g.', 17 July 1956 (Secret), compiled by Yu. V. Andropov, in APRF, F. 3, Op. 64, D. 483, L1. 186–90.

63 'Zapis' vystuplenii na zasedaniya Politbyuro TsR VPT, 13 iyulya 1956 g.', 17 July 1956 (Secret), compiled by Yu. V. Andropov, in APRF, F. 3, Op. 64, D. 483, L1. 191–205; and 'TsK KPSS', 16 July 1956 (Strictly Secret — Urgent), Osobaya Papka, APRF, F. 3, Op. 64, D. 483, L1. 183–5. See also 'Zapis' besedy A.I. Mikoyana s Yanoshem Kadarom, 14 iyulya 1956 g.', 17 July 1956 (Top Secret), compiled by Yu. V. Andropov, in APRF, F. 3, Op. 64, D. 483, L1. 206–15.

Gero as the new First Secretary. The transition to a post-Rakosi regime was formally approved by the HWP Central Leadership plenum on 18 July, in which Mikoyan played a crucial role.[64]

Mikoyan's efforts to promote greater political stability in Hungary came at the same time as a visit by a group of high-ranking Soviet officers to Hungary to inspect Soviet forces based there (the so-called Special Corps).[65] The officers, led by General Mikhail Malinin, a first deputy chief of the Soviet General Staff, discovered that the command staff of the Special Corps had not yet worked out a secret plan to handle large-scale internal disturbances in Hungary. (In the wake of the 1953 East German uprising, the commanders of all Soviet forces in Eastern Europe had been ordered by the CPSU leadership to devise appropriate plans for anti-riot and counter-insurgency operations.) When this omission was reported to Soviet Defence Minister Marshal Georgii Zhukov, he ordered that the requisite documents be compiled immediately. The visiting Soviet generals helped the commander of Soviet forces in Hungary, General Lashchenko, to put together a 'Plan of Operations for the Special Corps to Restore Public Order on the Territory of Hungary', which was signed on 20 July.[66] This plan, code-named 'Volna' (Wave), envisaged the use of tens of thousands of Soviet troops at very short notice (within three to six hours) to 'uphold and restore public order' in Hungary. The plan required a special signal (known as 'Kompas') to be given, but the formulation of 'Volna' at this stage indicates that Soviet leaders wanted a reliable fall-back option in case their attempts to bolster political stability in Hungary failed.

The growing reservations in Moscow about Hungary's political future turned out to be far more justified than Soviet leaders had hoped. Although the ouster of Rakosi eliminated the most exigent problem in Hungary, it was hardly sufficient to put more than a temporary check on the growth of social discontent. Gero was widely perceived to be of the same mould as Rakosi. Nor was the situation helped any by the 'comradely advice' that Gero received from his Soviet counterparts when he took office:

> The relaxation of international tensions and the slogan of coexistence [as proclaimed at the 20th CPSU Congress] do not presuppose but, on the contrary, exclude ideological concessions and any accommodation to hostile views. That is why you must eliminate all factors responsible for the collapse of party conduct in Hungary, restore discipline among CC members and the party's rank and file, and launch a fierce struggle on the ideological front.[67]

These suggestions were of little relevance to the turbulent political scene in Hungary. By early September, Gero privately acknowledged that he was still

64 'TsK KPSS', 18 July 1956 (Strictly Secret — Urgent), Osobaya papka, in APRF, F. 3, Op. 64, D. 483, L1. 225–36. On the eve of the plenum, Mikoyan also held talks with key members of the HWP Central Leadership to ensure that Gero's candidacy would be supported.

65 Malashenko, 'Osobyi korpus v ogne Budapeshta' (Part 1), 23–4.

66 'Plan deistvii Osobogo korpusa po vosstanovleniyu obshchestvennogo poryadka na territorii Vengrii', 20 July 1956 (Strictly Secret), as recorded in Tsentral'nyi arkhiv Ministerstva oborony (TsAMO), F. 32, Op. 701291, D. 15, L1. 130–1.

67 'TsK KPSS', op. cit., L. 231.

finding it 'enormously difficult to foster unity within the party's leadership' and to overcome 'sharp disagreements about certain fundamental issues'.[68] The lack of 'a unified position among the members of the Politburo', Gero believed, was exacerbating the 'dangerous and unstable situation in the country as a whole'.

Gero's awareness of these problems makes it especially difficult to understand why he was willing to be absent from Hungary over the next several weeks. During most of September and the first week of October, he was on vacation in the Soviet Union (mainly in the Crimea). According to Andropov, 'Gero openly acknowledged, when he was setting off on his trip, that he was not at all sure whether "things would be okay" while he was gone.'[69] When Gero finally returned to Budapest in October, he met again with Andropov and told him that 'unfortunately, now that I'm back in Hungary, I can see that the situation in the country has become much worse and more turbulent than I had imagined while I was in the USSR'.[70] Problems within the HWP, according to Gero, had 'gravely deteriorated', and 'acute discontent [had] spread throughout the country'.

Even Gero's efforts to allay public unrest were widely construed as little more than admissions of weakness. On 6 October, while Gero was still in Moscow, the remains of Laszlo Rajk and three other high-ranking victims of the Stalinist purges were reinterred in Budapest as a crowd of several hundred thousand looked on. Rajk had been sentenced to death on trumped-up charges in October 1949 and was then posthumously rehabilitated in March 1956, despite Rakosi's initial objections. When Rakosi announced the rehabilitation on 28 March, he made no mention of his own culpability and tried to gloss over the whole affair; but Gero was not as closely identified with the Rajk trial, and therefore was willing to permit the reburial. Gero viewed the measure as a convenient way to ingratiate himself with Tito (whom he had met in the Crimea at the beginning of October) as well as a means of defusing internal tensions, but he failed to anticipate what a profound effect the ceremony would have. As soon as Gero returned to Hungary, he realized the implications of what he had done. On 12 October, he confided to Andropov that 'the reburial of Rajk's remains has dealt a massive blow to the party leadership, whose authority was not all that high to begin with'.[71] Gero also conceded that the ceremony was likely to provoke 'even greater insolence' on the part of opposition forces, who will now 'openly demand the return of Imre Nagy to the Politburo'.

Gero's misgivings proved well-founded. A rapid sequence of events in the second and third weeks of October gave rise to a fully-fledged crisis. The HWP

68 'Zapis' besedy s Erno Gere, 2 sentyabrya 1956 g.', 27 September 1956 (Top Secret), in TsKhSD, F. 5, Op. 28, D. 394, L1. 254–6.
69 Ibid., L. 256.
70 'Shifrtelegramma', 12 October 1956 (Strictly Secret — Urgent — Special Dossier), from Yu. V. Andropov to the CPSU Presidium, in APRF, F. 3, Op. 64, D. 484, L1. 64–75.
71 Ibid., L. 71.

Politburo had tried to curb popular ferment by readmitting Imre Nagy into the party on 13 October, but that step, if anything, merely emboldened the regime's opponents. To make matters worse, Gero decided once again to travel abroad at a critical moment. From 15 to 22 October he was in Yugoslavia. Although the main purpose of his trip was to hold negotiations with Tito and other senior officials, he extended his stay to take a vacation on the Yugoslav coast. While he was away, the situation in Hungary grew ever more turbulent, spurred on in part by the concurrent events in Poland.

The surge of discontent in Hungary reached breaking-point on 23 October (just hours after Gero had returned from Yugoslavia), when a huge demonstration was organized in downtown Budapest by students from a local polytechnical university who wanted to express approval of the recent developments in Poland and to demand similar changes in their own country.[72] The HWP authorities initially tried to prevent the demonstration, but their efforts proved futile, as several hundred thousand people gathered in the capital. After a preliminary march to the statue of Josef Bem (a hero from the Polish revolution of 1830 and the Hungarian revolution of 1848), the demonstrators split into several large groups and moved to key points in the city, where they voiced demands for 'national independence and democracy'. A huge statue of Stalin in the centre of Budapest was torn down. Similar rallies were held in other Hungarian cities, where thousands of protesters called on the government to resign. Faced with this growing wave of unrest, Gero desperately tried to regain control of the situation, but the protests continued to mount.

Gero's plight was made immeasurably worse later in the evening when Hungarian state security (AVH) forces, acting without authorization, opened fire on unarmed demonstrators outside the main radio station in Budapest who were seeking to enter the building to broadcast their demands. The shootings precipitated a chaotic rebellion, which was much too large for the Hungarian state security organs to handle on their own. Soviet 'advisers' and military commanders in Hungary had been trying since early October to convince Hungarian officials that far-reaching security precautions were needed to cope with growing unrest; but, as one of the top Soviet officers later reported, 'the leaders of the [Hungarian] party and members of the [Hungarian] government did not adopt the measures called for by the urgency of the situation.

72 Countless books and articles about the Hungarian revolution have been published since 1956. For a vivid and well-researched account of the events of 23–24 October, see Bill Lomax, *Hungary 1956* (London 1976), esp. 106–23. For other useful perspectives, see Ferenc A. Vali, *Rift and Revolt in Hungary: Nationalism versus Communism* (Cambridge, MA 1961); Paul Kecskemeti, *The Unexpected Revolution: Social Forces in the Hungarian Uprising* (Stanford, CA 1961); Charles Gati, *Hungary and the Soviet Bloc* (Durham, NC 1986); and Paul E. Zinner, *Revolution in Hungary* (New York 1962). Until recently, reliable Hungarian-language accounts were relatively few in number, but that has changed dramatically since communism ended. The large number of publications put out in Budapest by the Institute for the Study of the 1956 Hungarian Revolution are a particularly rich source, as are some of the monographs sponsored by the Institute of History at the Hungarian Academy of Sciences.

Many of them were simply incapable of evaluating the state of things realistically.'[73] As a result, the violent upheavals on the evening of 23 October quickly overwhelmed the Hungarian police and security forces and caused widespread panic and near-paralysis among senior Hungarian officials.

Until very recently, nothing was known about decision-making in Moscow on the evening of 23 October 1956, when the first reports came in about the Hungarian revolution. Some gaps in the story persist, but a reasonable account can be pieced together on the basis of new sources, including the Malin notes.[74] It is now known that despite the growing turmoil in Budapest, Gero did not even mention what was going on when he spoke by phone to Khrushchev on the evening of 23 October. Gero's evasiveness during that conversation is hard to explain. Since by that point he had already transmitted an appeal for urgent military assistance to the military attaché at the Soviet embassy, it is unclear why he would not want to raise the matter directly with Khrushchev. Gero's behaviour in the two months prior to the revolution, when he chose to be out of the country at critical moments, was odd in itself; but his reaction on 23 October seems even more peculiar.

Despite this strange twist, information about the rebellion quickly made its way to Moscow. When the Soviet attaché received Gero's request, he immediately passed it on to Andropov, who telephoned the commander of Soviet troops in Hungary, General Lashchenko. Lashchenko responded that he could not comply with the request without explicit authorization from political leaders. Andropov then cabled Gero's appeal directly to Moscow, which prompted Khrushchev to contact Gero by phone for the second time that evening. Khrushchev urged Gero to send a written request for help to the CPSU Presidium, but the Soviet leader soon realized, after the brief conversation ended, that events in Budapest were moving too fast for him to wait until he received a formal Hungarian request (which, incidentally, did not arrive until five days later).[75] A Soviet Presidium meeting had already been scheduled for 23 October to discuss other matters, and Khrushchev abruptly changed the agenda to focus on the situation in Hungary.

The newly declassified notes from the 23 October meeting show that the CPSU Presidium could not reach a unanimous decision on whether to send in

73 Malashenko, 'Osobyi korpus v ogne Budapeshta' (Part 1), 24–5.

74 Other key sources are 'Zprava o jednani na UV KSSS 24. rijna 1956', L1. 8–14; Malashenko, 'Osobyi korpus v ogne Budapeshta' (Part 1), 22–30; and 'TsK KPSS', Memorandum from Marshal Georgii Zhukov, Soviet Minister of Defence, and Marshal Vasilii Sokolovskii, Chief of the Soviet General Staff, 24 October 1956 (Strictly Secret — Special Dossier) to the CPSU Presidium, in APRF, F. 3, Op. 64, D. 484, L1. 85–7.

75 The written request, dated 24 October 1956 and signed by the then Prime Minister, Andras Hegedus, was transmitted by Andropov in a ciphered telegram on 28 October. See 'Shifrtelegramma' (Strictly Secret — Urgent), 28 October 1956, from Yu. V. Andropov, in AVPRF, F. 059a, Op. 4, P. 6, D. 5, L. 12.

troops.[76] Khrushchev and all but one of the other participants strongly supported the introduction of Soviet forces, but a key Presidium member, Anastas Mikoyan, opposed the decision, arguing that 'the Hungarians themselves will restore order on their own. We should try political measures, and only then send in troops.' Despite the pro-intervention consensus among all the other participants, Mikoyan held firm in his opposition. The Presidium therefore had to adopt its decision without unanimity, an unprecedented step in such an important matter. The Presidium also decided to send Mikoyan and Suslov to Budapest along with the KGB chief, Ivan Serov, to provide on-the-scene reports, following up on the tasks they had accomplished in Hungary earlier in the year (as already mentioned). In the meantime, Khrushchev authorized Soviet Defence Minister Zhukov to 'redeploy Soviet units into Budapest to assist Hungarian troops and state security forces in the restoration of public order'.[77] Khrushchev's directive was promptly transmitted to Lashchenko by the chief of the Soviet General Staff, Marshal Vasilii Sokolovskii, who specified that the bulk of the Soviet troops in Hungary were to be used in 'establishing control over the most important sites in the capital and in restoring order', while others were to 'seal off Hungary's border with Austria'.[78]

Having finally received due authorization, Lashchenko was able to set to work almost immediately. The troops under his command had been preparing since late July to undertake large-scale operations aimed at 'upholding and restoring public order' in Hungary (as already mentioned). In accordance with the 'Volna' plan, Soviet forces in Hungary had been placed on increased alert in mid-October, and were brought to full combat alert on 19–21 October at the behest of the Soviet General Staff.[79] Hence, when the mobilization orders arrived from Moscow on the night of 23 October, the response on the ground was swift, despite dense fog that hampered troop movements. By the early morning hours of 24 October, thousands of soldiers from the USSR's two mechanized divisions in Hungary (the Special Corps) had entered Budapest, where they established a command centre at the main building of the Hungarian National Defence Ministry. They were soon joined by thousands more Soviet troops from a mechanized division based in Romania and two divisions (one mechanized, one rifle) from the Transcarpathian Military District in Ukraine.[80] The combined interventionary forces were placed under the command of General Malinin, who maintained constant liaison with an 'emergency operational group' of some 80 high-ranking officers from the

76 'Rabochaya zapis' zasedaniya Prezidiuma TsK KPSS, 23 oktyabrya 1956 g.', L1. 4–4ob.
77 'Zprava o jednani na UV KSSS 24. rijna 1956', L. 9.
78 Malashenko, 'Osobyi korpus v ogne Budapeshta' (Part 1), 27.
79 The preliminary directives are recorded in TsAMO, F. 32, Op. 701291, D. 15, L1. 130–1.
80 'TsK KPSS', Memorandum from Marshal Georgii Zhukov, Soviet Minister of Defence, and Marshal Vasilii Sokolovskii, Chief of the Soviet General Staff, 24 October 1956 (Strictly Secret — Special Dossier) to the CPSU Presidium, in APRF, F. 3, Op. 64, D. 484, L1. 85–7. This memorandum lays out in detail the complexion and assignments of the Soviet ground and air forces.

Soviet General Staff and the main staffs of the Soviet ground and air forces. All told, some 31,500 Soviet troops, 1130 tanks and self-propelled artillery, 380 armoured personnel carriers, 185 air defence guns, and numerous other weapons were redeployed at short notice to Budapest and other major cities as well as along the Austrian–Hungarian border. Two Soviet fighter divisions, totalling 159 planes, were ordered to perform close air-support missions for the ground forces; and two Soviet bomber divisions, with a total of 122 aircraft, were placed on full alert at airfields in Hungary and the Transcarpathian Military District.

For the task at hand, however, this massive array of firepower was largely irrelevant. The intervention of the Soviet army proved almost wholly ineffectual and even counterproductive. Gero himself acknowledged, in a phone conversation with Soviet leaders on 24 October, that 'the arrival of Soviet troops in the city has had a negative effect on the mood of the residents'.[81] Soviet armoured vehicles and artillery were sent into the clogged streets of Budapest without adequate infantry protection, and thus became easy targets for youths wielding grenades and Molotov cocktails. Although Hungarian soldiers were supposed to operate alongside Soviet units, troops from the Hungarian state security forces, police and army proved incapable of offering necessary support, and some defected to the side of the rebels.[82] As a result, the fighting merely escalated. By mid-afternoon on 24 October, at least 25 protesters had been killed and more than 200 wounded. The mounting violence, as Mikoyan and Suslov reported back to Moscow, 'caused further panic among senior Hungarian officials, many of whom fled into underground bunkers that were unsuitable for any work'.[83]

The Malin notes confirm that the post-Stalin succession struggle in Moscow, which was not decisively resolved until June 1957, had a strong effect on Soviet policy toward Hungary. As the Hungarian crisis escalated, splits within the Soviet leadership came to the surface. Mikoyan and Suslov, who were both close to Khrushchev, had been sending a flurry of emergency cables and reports back to Moscow from the time they arrived in Budapest on 24 October.[84] These messages were discussed at length by the other members of the CPSU Presidium. At a session on the evening of 26 October, numerous members of the Presidium voiced complaints about Mikoyan, arguing that he

81 'Shifrtelegramma iz Budapeshta', Cable from A. Mikoyan and M. Suslov to the CPSU Presidium, 24 October 1956 (Strictly Secret), in AVPRF, F. 059a, Op. 4, Pap. 6, D. 5, L. 2.

82 The Soviet defence ministry's complete list of Hungarian army units that defected to the insurgents was recently declassified at the main Russian military archive, TsAMO, F. 32, Op. 701291, D. 17, L1. 33–48.

83 'Shifrtelegramma iz Budapeshta', Cable from A. Mikoyan and M. Suslov to the CPSU Presidium, 25 October 1956 (Strictly Secret), in AVPRF, F. 059a, Op. 4, Pap. 6, D. 5, L. 8.

84 Important samples of these messages, declassified in 1992, are available in 'Vengriya, oktyabr'–noyabr' 1956 goda: Iz arkhiva TsK KPSS', *Istoricheskii arkhiv* (Moscow), 5 (1993), 132–41.

'is acting improperly and is pushing us toward capitulation'.[85] The hardline opponents of Khrushchev — notably Vyacheslav Molotov, Kliment Voroshilov and Lazar Kaganovich — clearly were hoping to use these criticisms against Khrushchev himself. Khrushchev responded on 23 October by defending his colleague: 'Mikoyan is acting just as he said he would. Cde. Mikoyan supported a position of non-intervention.' Although Khrushchev strongly disagreed with Mikoyan's non-interventionist stance, he was not going to let the verbal attacks go unanswered.

At the next session of the Presidium on 28 October, Molotov and Voroshilov stepped up their campaign.[86] Voroshilov charged that Mikoyan and Suslov were 'poorly informed' and were 'unable to carry out [their] work properly'. Molotov alleged that Mikoyan and Suslov were providing 'calm reassurances' while 'the situation deteriorates and is gradually moving toward capitulation'. Other officials, including Zhukov and Georgii Malenkov, defended Mikoyan and Suslov, arguing that 'we shouldn't lay blame for the situation on our comrades' and that it was 'unfair to condemn [Mikoyan] right now'. These arguments, however, failed to deter Voroshilov from voicing even harsher complaints: 'The American secret services are more active in Hungary than Cdes. Suslov and Mikoyan are. We sent [Suslov and Mikoyan] there for nothing.' Khrushchev and numerous other officials, including Nikolai Bulganin (who initially was critical of Mikoyan), reproached Voroshilov for his remarks, and they urged that the Presidium focus on what to do next, rather than simply engaging in recriminations. An uneasy lull thus ensued. Later that evening, when Suslov returned temporarily from Budapest to give a detailed briefing to the Presidium, Voroshilov and Molotov refrained from making any explicit criticisms.

The emergence of pronounced rifts within the Soviet leadership, at a time when the Presidium needed to reach a unified position, clearly hindered Moscow's response to the crisis. One of the reasons that Soviet officials wavered so much during the crucial days of 30–1 October was that they were aware of the domestic political repercussions of their actions.

The Malin notes reveal that as the situation in Hungary deteriorated in late October, the CPSU Presidium had great difficulty in deciding how to respond. On 28 October, senior Hungarian officials began insisting that all Soviet troops be withdrawn from Hungary, a demand that caused alarm in Moscow. At a lengthy meeting of the Presidium on 28 October, all the participants agreed that 'we must not withdraw troops' and must instead 'act decisively against the centres of resistance'.[87] They voiced dismay that 'Nagy is speaking

85 'Rabochaya zapis' zasedaniya Prezidiuma TsK KPSS, 26 oktyabrya 1956 g.', L1. 62–62ob.

86 Citations here are from 'Rabochaya zapis' zasedaniya Prezidiuma TsK KPSS, 28 oktyabrya 1956 g.', L1. 54–63.

87 'Rabochaya zapis' zasedaniya Prezidiuma TsK KPSS, 28 oktyabrya 1956', 28 October 1956 (Top Secret), in TsKhSD, F. 3, Op. 12, D. 1005, L1. 54–63.

against us', and expected that Nagy's call for the withdrawal of Soviet troops would soon be followed by 'a demand for [Soviet] capitulation'. The Hungarian government's announcement on 28 October that the recent events had been a 'national-democratic uprising' rather than a 'counter-revolution' sparked particular consternation among Soviet Presidium members, who insisted that 'we cannot and will not retreat'.

At the same time, Khrushchev and his colleagues recognized that Soviet options were limited by the sheer pace of events, which had already resulted in the deaths of hundreds of Soviet soldiers and Hungarian civilians. The current Hungarian leaders, Nagy and Janos Kadar, were being challenged by more radical elements in Hungary, who wanted to overthrow the existing regime. Although Soviet leaders were determined to adhere to a 'firm line' and put an end to Nagy's and Kadar's 'flip-flops', they reluctantly agreed that they had little choice but to support the current government and to be prepared to withdraw troops from Budapest (though not from Hungary as a whole).

By 30 October, however, the mood within the Soviet Presidium had taken a surprising turn. All the members, including Molotov and Voroshilov, had reached a consensus — ephemeral though it may have been — that the Soviet Union should forgo large-scale military intervention in Hungary.[88] Marshal Zhukov conceded that the Soviet Union had to be ready, if necessary, to withdraw all Soviet troops from Hungary, viewing this as 'a lesson for us in the military-political sphere'. Others reluctantly concurred. Khrushchev and his colleagues were well aware that the situation in Hungary had continued to deteriorate, and had taken on distinctly anti-Soviet overtones. Even so, they unanimously agreed to adopt what Khrushchev described as 'the peaceful path — the path of troop withdrawals and negotiations', rather than 'the military path, the path of occupation'.[89]

This decision seems to have been predicated on an unrealistic expectation of what could be achieved by the Soviet government's 'Declaration on the Principles of Development and Further Strengthening of Friendship and Co-operation between the USSR and Other Socialist Countries', issued on 30 October.[90] A draft of the statement, prepared by high-ranking CPSU Central Committee officials, was reviewed at length and edited by the CPSU Presidium just before it was released. The declaration acknowledged that Soviet–East European relations had been plagued by 'egregious mistakes' in the past, and that Moscow had committed rampant 'violations of the principle of equality in relations between socialist countries'. It pledged that in the future the Soviet Union would scrupulously 'observe the full sovereignty of each socialist state'

88 'Rabochaya zapis' zasedaniya Prezidiuma TsK KPSS, 30 oktyabrya 1956 g.', 30 October 1956 (Top Secret), in TsKhSD, F. 3, Op. 12, D. 1006, L1. 6–14.

89 Ibid., L. 14.

90 'Deklaratsiya o printsipakh razvitiya i dal'neishem ukreplenii druzhby i sotrudnichestva mezhdu SSSR i drugimi sotsialisticheskimi stranami', *Pravda* (Moscow), 31 October 1956, 1. For the CPSU Presidium decision to issue the declaration, see 'Vypiska iz Protokola No. 49 zasedaniya Prezidiuma TsK KPSS ot 30 oktyabrya 1956 g.: O polozhenii v Vengrii', No. P49/1 (Strictly Secret), 30 October 1956, in APRF, F. 3, Op. 64, D. 484, L1. 25–30.

and re-examine the basis for its continued troop presence in the Warsaw Pact countries (other than East Germany), leaving open the possibility of a partial or total withdrawal. Most of the Presidium members seemed to view the declaration as a viable way of 'extracting us from an onerous position' and of 'putting an end to the bloodshed'.[91] Any hopes they may have had, however, were quickly dashed. Had the declaration been issued several months earlier, it might have prevented all the subsequent turmoil, but by the time the statement was broadcast over Hungarian radio on 30 October, events in Hungary had already eluded Soviet control. Moscow's verbal promises were no longer sufficient to contain either the wave of popular unrest or the actions of Nagy's government. Although the declaration caused a stir in most of the East-bloc countries, its effect in Hungary was limited. Many of the insurgents were determined to achieve their goals immediately, rather than settle for ill-defined negotiations that, once under way, would be subject to delay or derailment.

Nevertheless, even if Soviet hopes about the declaration were misplaced, the decision to forgo intervention was still remarkable at this late stage. It suggests that for a brief while — a very brief while — the Soviet Presidium actually may have been willing to accept the collapse of communism in Hungary.

The unanimity of the Presidium's decision to eschew military force belied the inherent fragility of that position, especially after Khrushchev and his colleagues realized that the 30 October declaration would not have the desired effect. Ominous reports from Hungary, including cables and secure phone messages from Mikoyan and Suslov that were much more pessimistic than their previous dispatches, continued to flow in. Earlier in the crisis, Mikoyan and Suslov had hoped that they could induce Nagy to restore order and achieve a satisfactory political solution, but by the end of October they had markedly changed their tone. In a phone message to Moscow on 30 October, they warned that the uprising could be ended only through the use of force and that the Hungarian army probably was not up to the task:

> The political situation in the country, rather than improving, is getting worse . . . .The peaceful liquidation of the remaining centres [of resistance] can effectively be excluded. We will try to liquidate them using the armed forces of the Hungarians. But there is a great danger in this: the Hungarian army has adopted a 'wait-and-see' position. Our military advisers say that the attitude of Hungarian officers and generals toward Soviet officers has deteriorated in recent days, and that there is no longer the trust which existed earlier. It may well be that if Hungarian units are used against the uprising, they will go over to the side of the insurgents, and it will then be necessary for the Soviet armed forces to resume military operations.[92]

Subsequent messages from Mikoyan and Suslov were gloomier still, in part because they sensed that their worst fears were coming true. Within hours after their initial message on 30 October, they learned that an angry mob had launched a bloody attack on the Budapest party committee's headquarters in

91 'Rabochaya zapis' zasedaniya Prezidiuma TsK KPSS, 30 oktyabrya 1956 g.', L1. 9, 10.

92 'TsK KPSS', High-Frequency Transmission, 30 October 1956 (Strictly Secret), in TsKhSD, F. 89, Op. 45, D. 12, L. 2.

Republic Square. The grisly reprisals that some of the attackers carried out against disarmed AVH troops came as a shock not only to Mikoyan and Suslov, but also to most Hungarians (including many rebel leaders, who strongly criticized the actions). The attack caused even greater alarm in Moscow, where scenes of the violence were being featured on newsreels when the CPSU Presidium met on 31 October. Equally disconcerting was the very fact that the mob had been able to seize the building. Three Hungarian army tanks, which had been sent to help the defenders of the site, ended up defecting to the insurgents, just as Mikoyan and Suslov had feared. The siege in Republic Square proved to be an isolated case (and actually helped to calm the situation a good deal by spurring both the government and the rebels to press once again for a peaceful settlement), but amid the general turmoil in Budapest at the time, it initially seemed — at least from Moscow's perspective — to portend the 'deterioration' that Mikoyan and Suslov had been predicting.

Concerns about the internal situation in Hungary were reinforced by the latest news about international developments, particularly the start of French and British military operations in the Middle East and the increasing signs that unrest in Hungary was spilling over into other Warsaw Pact countries. Each of these factors warrants the separate discussion which follows. Not only were the Suez Crisis and the fears of a spillover extremely important in their own right; they also magnified the importance of Hungary's status in the Warsaw Pact. The prospect of an 'imperialist' victory in the Middle East and of growing ferment within the bloc made it all the more important to keep Hungary within the Soviet camp; but on this score, too, there seemed increasing grounds for pessimism. By late October it was clear that momentum for Hungary's withdrawal from the Warsaw Pact was rapidly building. One of the members of Nagy's new 'inner cabinet', Bela Kovacs, explicitly called for a 'neutral Hungary' and the end of Hungary's 'ties to military blocs' in a speech he delivered on 30 October.[93] That same day, Nagy himself endorsed the goal of leaving the Warsaw Pact, and opened talks about the matter (and about the withdrawal of all Soviet troops from Hungary) with Mikoyan and Suslov, who promptly informed their colleagues in Moscow about the discussions.[94] It seems likely that Nagy's expressed desire to renounce Hungarian membership in the Warsaw Pact was one of the factors that induced the CPSU Presidium on 31 October to reverse its decision of the previous day. To be sure, Nagy had spoken many times in earlier years (especially after he was abruptly removed from power in 1955) about the desirability of Hungarian neutrality, but his

93 Kovacs's remarks, at a meeting of the Independent Smallholders Party in Pecs, were reported in the first issue of the revived party newspaper *Kis Ujsag* (Budapest), 1 November 1956, 2.

94 See the first-hand comments by Gyorgy G. Heltai, the Hungarian Deputy Foreign Minister under Nagy's government, 'International Aspects', in Bela K. Kiraly and Paul Jonas, *The Hungarian Revolution of 1956 in Retrospect*, East European Monograph No. XL (Boulder, CO 1978), esp. 52–3. The negotiations are also briefly recounted in Tibor Meray, *Thirteen Days That Shook the Kremlin: Imre Nagy and the Hungarian Revolution*, trans. by Howard L. Katzander (London 1959), 163–5; and 'Szemtol-szembe Mikojannal es Szuszloval', *Igazsag* (Budapest), 1 November 1956, 1.

decision to raise the issue with Mikoyan and Suslov at this delicate stage must have come as a jolt in Moscow.[95] Once Soviet leaders were confronted by the stark prospect of Hungary's departure from the Warsaw Pact, they realized how much their influence in Hungary had waned.

The confluence of all these circumstances was bound to spur a reassessment of Moscow's non-interventionist stance. Khrushchev later recalled that he regretted the 30 October decision almost as soon as the Presidium adopted it.[96] At short notice on 31 October, he convened another emergency meeting of the Presidium to reconsider the whole matter.[97] The notes from the meeting reveal that Khrushchev was not the only one who had misgivings about the previous day's decision. With one exception, all the participants strongly endorsed Khrushchev's view that 'we must revise our assessment and must not withdraw our troops from Hungary and Budapest. We must take the initiative in restoring order in Hungary.' The only dissenting voice was Maksim Saburov, who argued that 'after yesterday's session this discussion is all pointless. [Full-scale intervention] will merely vindicate NATO.' His assertions were disputed by Molotov and numerous others, who insisted (not entirely convincingly) that the previous day's decision had been 'only a compromise'. After further persuasion, Saburov came round to supporting the interventionist position.

With that, the Presidium unanimously approved the full-scale use of military force 'to help the working class in Hungary rebuff the counter-revolution'.[98] This action brought an end to the long period of indecision and wavering in Soviet policy.

Even so, the reversal on 31 October should not detract from the importance of the consensus on the previous day. The Malin notes suggest that there was a chance, if only a very slender one, that the events of 1989 could actually have occurred 33 years earlier.

On 26 July 1956, the new Egyptian leader, Gamel Abdel Nasser, announced that he was nationalizing the Suez Canal Company. Over the next few months the British, French and US governments tried to persuade (and then compel) Nasser to reverse his decision, but these diplomatic efforts were of no avail. In late October, Israel began mobilizing its army, and on 29 October Israeli troops moved into Egyptian territory, an action that was broadly co-ordinated with France and Great Britain. On 30 October, the French and British governments sent an ultimatum to Nasser, which the Egyptian leader promptly

95 The theme of Hungarian neutrality was emphasized in several of Nagy's essays in *On Communism: In Defence of the New Course* (London 1957). The Soviet Union's backing for Rakosi against Nagy in March–April 1955 was clearly one of the factors that prompted Nagy to consider the prospect of neutrality.

96 Khrushchev, 'Memuary Nikity Sergeevicha Khrushcheva', op. cit., 73–4.

97 'Rabochaya zapis' zasedaniya Prezidiuma TsK KPSS, 31 oktyabrya 1956 g.', L1. 15–18ob.

98 'Vypiska iz protokola No. 49 zasedaniya Prezidiuma TsK KPSS ot 31 oktyabrya 1956 g.: O polozhenii v Vengrii', No. P49/VI (Strictly Secret), 31 October 1956, in APRF, F. 3, Op. 64, D. 484, L. 41.

rejected, and early the next day they joined the Israeli incursions by launching air raids against Egyptian cities and imposing a naval blockade.[99] Western analysts have long speculated about the role of the Suez Crisis in Soviet decision-making vis-à-vis Hungary, but until recently there was no real way of knowing. The new evidence, particularly the Malin notes, does not resolve all the ambiguities, but it does shed a good deal of light on the matter.

On the whole, the Malin notes and other new materials indicate that the Suez Crisis gave Soviet leaders a powerful incentive to resolve the situation in Hungary as soon and as decisively as possible. For one thing, the prolonged diplomatic wrangling over Suez induced the Soviet Presidium to be wary of becoming embroiled in lengthy political disputes the way the French and the British had. Khrushchev raised this point at the Presidium's meeting on 28 October, the day before military action began in Suez: 'The English and French are in a real mess [*zavarivayut kashu*] in Egypt. We shouldn't get caught in the same company.'[100] By this, he evidently meant that if the Presidium allowed the Hungarian crisis to drag on indefinitely, things would only get worse and the Soviet Union would be left facing the same intractable dilemma that the French and British were encountering in Egypt.

The start of fighting in the Middle East on 29–31 October, which left Moscow's political ally, Egypt, in a precarious state, caused even greater complications for Soviet leaders. They worried that a failure to act decisively in Hungary would compound the damage to Soviet foreign policy. This fear was particularly acute after the French and British launched their military operations in the early hours of 31 October. When the Soviet Presidium met later that day to reach a final decision about Hungary, reports were already flooding into Moscow about the spectacular 'successes' that the French, British and Israeli forces were supposedly achieving. It soon turned out that their joint military efforts got bogged down (for want of US support) and a stalemate ensued, but Khrushchev and his colleagues could not have foreseen this when they met on 31 October, because they automatically assumed — in a classic case of misperception — that the USA would back the allied incursions. Khrushchev himself expressed the dominant sentiment at the Presidium meeting:

> If we depart from Hungary, it will give a great boost to the Americans, English and French — the imperialists. They will perceive it as weakness on our part and will go on to the offensive. We would then be exposing the weakness of our positions. Our party will not accept it if we do this. To Egypt [the imperialists] will then add Hungary.[101]

99 For a detailed survey of the crisis as recorded in declassified US documents, see US Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1955–1957*, vol. XVI: *Suez Crisis, July 26–December 31, 1956* (Washington, DC 1990).

100 'Rabochaya zapis' zasedaniya Prezidiuma TsK KPSS, 28 oktyabrya 1956 g.', L. 61.

101 'Rabochaya zapis' zasedaniya Prezidiuma TsK KPSS, 31 oktyabrya 1956 g.', 31 October 1956 (Top Secret), in TsKhSD, F. 3, Op. 12, D. 1006, L1. 15–18ob. If Khrushchev had been privy to secret US deliberations, he would have realized that the USA had no intention of directly supporting the French–British–Israeli operation, either militarily or diplomatically. See, for example, 'Memorandum of a Conference with the President, White House, Washington, October 30, 1956, 10.06 –10.55 am', in FRUS/1955–1957/Vol. XVI, 851–5.

Khrushchev's subsequent comments about Suez, especially at a Presidium meeting on 4 November, show that he believed that the decision to intervene in Hungary would help, rather than hurt, Moscow's policy vis-à-vis Suez. The distraction posed by Hungary, he implied, had prevented an effective response in the Middle East. Now that a firm decision to suppress the uprising had been adopted, the Soviet Union would be able to 'take a more active part in the assistance to Egypt'.[102]

In another respect as well, Soviet policy in Hungary was linked — if only inadvertently — to the Suez Crisis. The sudden conflict diverted international attention from Poland and Hungary to the Middle East. Because the USA refused to support the Israeli and French–British military operations, the crisis generated a deep split among the western powers at the very moment when they needed to show unity in response to the events in Hungary. The intra-NATO rift engendered by the Suez Crisis was not a critical factor in Moscow's response to the Hungarian uprising — after all, the rift was not yet fully evident when the Soviet Presidium met for its fateful session on 31 October — but it did, as Khrushchev pointed out at the time, provide a 'favourable moment' for the Soviet Union to undertake a large-scale military operation in Hungary.[103] The French and British governments, he noted on 2 November, 'are bogged down in Suez, and we are stuck in Hungary'.[104]

The invasion of Hungary undoubtedly would have been approved even if there had been no Suez Crisis, but Soviet fears of 'imperialist' successes in the Middle East and the sudden emergence of a divisive row within NATO clearly expedited Moscow's decision.

New evidence confirms that Soviet leaders feared that the Hungarian revolution might spread rapidly into other East European countries and even into the USSR itself, causing the whole communist bloc to unravel. Warnings to that effect had been pouring in throughout the crisis from the Soviet embassy in Budapest, from KGB representatives in Hungary, and from three former Hungarian leaders (Rakosi, Andras Hegedus and Istvan Bata) who had fled to Moscow after being ousted. Concerns that the Hungarian revolution would spill into other Warsaw Pact countries were heightened by a series of intelligence reports from neighbouring Romania and Czechoslovakia. Khrushchev later recalled that he had learned from KGB sources

102 'Rabochaya zapis' zasedaniya Prezidiuma TsK KPSS, 4 noyabrya 1956 g.', L. 34. On this same point, Sandor Kopacsi recounts a very intriguing comment that Ivan Serov, the head of the Soviet KGB, allegedly made when he was arresting Kopacsi just after the invasion: 'Suez caught us [in Moscow] by surprise. We were compelled to resort to military measures in the Danube Basin because of that area's strategic importance to any operations we might conduct in the Near East.' See Kopacsi, *Au nom de la classe ouvrière*, op. cit., 201. If Kopacsi recorded Serov's statement accurately, and if — assuming the statement is accurate — Serov was being sincere, this passage sheds valuable light on Khrushchev's remarks.

103 Micunovic, *Moscow Diary*, op. cit., 136.

104 Ibid.

that the 'residents of the border areas in Hungary have begun seeking contacts with [residents in] the border areas of Czechoslovakia and Romania to gain direct backing from them'.[105] Archival materials fully bear this out.

From Romania, Soviet leaders received word that students in Bucharest and in a large number of Transylvanian cities (Cluj, Tirgu Mures, Timisoara, Baia Mare and Oradea, among others) were holding demonstrations in support of the Hungarian revolution, and that disturbances were spreading around the country. As early as 24 October, the Politburo of the Romanian Workers' Party (RWP) felt the need to impose emergency security measures and visa regulations along the border with Hungary, effectively sealing it off to all traffic.[106] The Romanian authorities also established rigorous, comprehensive screening of mail and publications arriving from and going to Hungary. As a further precaution, the RWP Politburo ordered the state security forces (*Securitate*) to reinforce their defences around key buildings, including transport stations, communications and broadcasting facilities, university complexes, and Communist Party and government offices. Leave for soldiers and state security troops was cancelled.[107] Over the next few days, Romanian leaders also took steps to alleviate economic grievances and boost living standards, but overall, Romania's efforts to prevent a spill-over from Hungary were geared toward increased vigilance and preparations for a large-scale crackdown.[108]

Despite these precautions, the Romanian authorities were soon confronted by renewed 'agitation and demonstrations by student groups and hostile elements' in many parts of the country, especially Transylvania and Bucharest.[109] Officials who were dispatched to Cluj reported scenes of 'mass confusion and unrest'.[110] An unofficial student movement, formed at Bolyai University on 25 October, attracted hundreds of members and gained support from much of the faculty, including many who belonged to the RWP. Romanian officials in the area emphasized that 'party members of Hungarian origin' were especially likely to succumb to 'hostile' elements, and that ethnic Hungarian students throughout Transylvania were 'singing Horthyite and chauvinistic songs'.[111] Most worrying of all were reports that young people in

105 Khrushchev, 'Memuary Nikity Sergeevicha Khrushcheva', 73.

106 'Protocol No. 54 al sedintei Biroului Politic al CC al PMR din 24 oct. 1956', 24 October 1956 (Top Secret), in Arhiva Comitetului Central al Partidului Comunist Roman (Arh. CCPCR), Bucharest, F. Biroul Politic, Dosar (Do.) 354/56, ff. 1–5. This document is included in the valuable new collection edited by Corneliu Mihai Lungu and Mihai Retegan, *1956 Explozia: Perceptii romane, iugoslave si sovietice asupra evenimentelor din Polonia si Ungaria* (Bucharest 1996).

107 Ibid.

108 'Protocol No. 55 al sedintei Biroului Politic al CC al PMR din 26 oct. 1956', 26 October 1956 (Top Secret), in Arh, CCPCR, F. Biroul Politic, Do. 355/56, ff. 1–5.

109 'Protocol Nr. 58 al sedintei Biroului Politic al CC al PMR din 30 oct. 1956', 30 October 1956 (Top Secret), in Arh. CCPCR, F. Biroul Politic, Do. 358/56, ff. 3–5.

110 'Stenograma conferintei organizatiei regionale al CC al PMR', 23 November 1956 (Top Secret), in Arh. CCPCR, F. 85, Do. 84/56, ff. 1–8. This report is not included in the Lungu/Retegan volume. I am grateful to Mihai Retegan for providing me with a copy of the document.

111 Ibid.

Baia Mare and Carei were 'intent on joining the Hungarian army', and that Romanian army troops and security forces in the border region were being swayed by the demonstrators' 'tendentious' and 'inimical' propaganda.[112] To combat the growing unrest, the RWP Politburo on 30 October set up a 'general command staff', consisting of four senior Politburo members (Emil Bodnaras, Nicolae Ceausescu, Alexandru Draghici and Leontin Salajan), who were given extraordinary powers, including the right to issue shoot-to-kill orders and to declare a state of emergency.[113] The command staff was successful in its task, but the very fact that this sort of measure was needed was a disconcerting reminder to Soviet leaders that the events in Hungary, if left unchecked, could prove contagious.

Equally disturbing reports flowed into Moscow from Czechoslovakia about student demonstrations in Bratislava and other cities amid growing 'hostility and mistrust toward the Soviet Union'.[114] The Czechoslovak authorities denied most of these reports, but they acknowledged that the events in Hungary were having 'deleterious psychological effects' and creating a 'hostile, anti-socialist mood' among some of the Czechoslovak troops who had been sent to reinforce the 560-km border with Hungary.[115] Senior Czechoslovak military officials warned that the confusion might even 'tempt the counter-revolutionary forces [in Hungary] to penetrate into our country and stir up a rebellion in Slovak territory', especially in the southern areas inhabited mainly by ethnic Hungarians.[116] They also warned that the danger would increase 'if Soviet and Hungarian units are withdrawn' from northern Hungary, since 'it is unlikely that [Czechoslovakia's] existing combat forces will be enough to prevent incursions by counter-revolutionary groups'.[117] The risk of a spill-over into Czechoslovakia was explicitly cited by Soviet leaders when they approved a full-scale invasion: 'If we don't embark on a decisive path, things in Czechoslovakia will collapse.'[118] It is unclear whether the actual danger was as great as they feared, but the important thing at the time was the perception in both Moscow and Prague that a failure to act would have ominous consequences.

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112 Ibid. See also Constantin Botoran, 'National Interest in Romanian Politics During the Cold War' (Bucharest, March 1994), 7–8.

113 'Protocol Nr. 58 al sedintei Biroului Politic al CC al PMR din 30 oct. 1956', ff. 3–5.

114 'Stenograficky zapis ze zasedani UV KSC', 5–6 December 1956 (Top Secret), in SUA, Arch. UV KSC, F. 07, Sv. 14, Archivna jednotka (A.j.) 14.

115 'Zabezpeceni klidu na uzemi CSR a statnich hranic s Mad'arskem', Report from Col.-General Vaclav Kratochvil, Chief of the Czechoslovak General Staff, and Lt.-General Jaroslav Dockal, Chief of Operations, 29 October 1956 (Top Secret), in Vojensky historicky archiv (VHA) Praha, Fond Ministra narodni obrany (MNO) CSR, 1956, Operacni sprava Generalniho stabu cs. armady (GS/OS), 2/8–39b.

116 Ibid., 5.

117 'Souhrn hlaseni operacniho dustojnika Generalniho stabu cs. armady', Notes from Col.-General Vaclav Kratochvil, Chief of the Czechoslovak General Staff, to the KSC Central Committee (Top Secret), 27 October 1956, in VHA Praha, F. MNO, 1956, GS/OS, 2/8–49b.

118 'Rabochaya zapis' zasedaniya Prezidiuma TsK KPSS, 1 noyabrya 1956 g.', 1 November 1956 (Top Secret), in TsKhSD, F. 3, Op. 12, D. 1006, L. 22.

The growing concerns about a spill-over were shared in East European countries further away from Hungary, notably East Germany. Initially, the East German leader, Walter Ulbricht, mainly feared that the return of Nagy might presage a similar turn of events in the GDR.[119] Once the Hungarian revolution broke out, apprehension in East Berlin rapidly increased. A top East German official, Otto Grotewohl, warned that 'the events in Hungary and Poland show that the enemy looks for weak spots in the socialist camp, seeking to break it apart'.[120] He and other East German leaders were acutely aware that the GDR itself was one of these 'weak spots'. Soviet officials, too, were worried that developments in Hungary could undermine their position in East Germany, which by this point was closely tied to Ulbricht. Soviet Foreign Minister Dmitrii Shepilov warned that certain elements in East Germany might exploit the crisis to launch a campaign against the 'Ulbricht clique'.[121]

Quite apart from the threat of a spill-over into Eastern Europe, Soviet leaders were aware of serious problems in the USSR itself. Newly declassified materials reveal that unrest among students in the Soviet Union had emerged as early as the spring and summer of 1954, when protests were held at Moscow State University (MGU) to demand greater leeway for political discussion and dissent.[122] In late 1955 a group of students at MGU began publishing *The Literary Bulletin*, a newspaper that featured lively discussions of controversial political issues as well as literary topics.[123] University administrators tried to suppress the newspaper, but the students managed to circumvent their efforts. Social ferment in the USSR increased markedly in 1956 with the inception of de-Stalinization, which spawned numerous instances of public disorder and demonstrations. Mass disturbances erupted in Tbilisi and other Georgian cities in early March 1956, as students, workers and intellectuals joined together to protest against the growing criticism of 'our great leader Stalin'.[124] These rallies and strikes marked the first time that 'anti-Soviet

119 Wilfried Otto (ed.), 'Ernst Wollweber: Aus Erinnerungen — Ein Porträt Walter Ulbrichts', *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Arbeiterbewegung* (Berlin), 3 (1990), 365–7.

120 Speech by Grotewohl to the SED CC plenum, 13 November 1956, in Stiftung Archiv der Parteien und Massenorganisationen im Bundesarchiv, Zentrales Parteiarchiv (Berlin), DY 30/IV 2/1/166, 247.

121 'Rabochaya zapis' zasedaniya Prezidiuma TsK KPSS, 4 noyabrya 1956 g.', L. 35ob.

122 'Informatsiya: TsK KPSS', Memorandum No. 53–s (Top Secret), 23 September 1954, to the CPSU Presidium from A. Lutchenko, Deputy Sector Head in the CPSU CC Department for Science and Culture, and 'TsK KPSS', 11 October 1954 (Top Secret), from A. Rumyantsev, Head of the CPSU CC Department, to the CPSU Presidium, in TsKhSD, F. 4, Op. 9, D. 1097, L1. 187–90 and 191–5, respectively.

123 'TsK KPSS', Memorandum No. St–1271 (Top Secret), 28 November 1956, from A. Lutchenko, Supervisor of the CPSU CC Department for Science, Educational Institutes, and Schools, in TsKhSD, F. 4, Op. 16, D. 1098, Ll. 44–7.

124 For a detailed, top-secret account of the disorders, see 'Zakrytoe pis'mo', 12 March 1956 (Top Secret), from S. Statnikov, Tbilisi correspondent for *Trud*, to the CPSU Central Committee, in TsKhSD, F. 5, Op. 30, D. 140, Ll. 53–67.

activities' had occurred in Georgia since communist rule was established, and Soviet leaders responded by imposing martial law.[125]

Very different challenges arose elsewhere in the Soviet Union, where students, intellectuals and other groups took advantage of the opportunity to voice long-suppressed grievances. Criticism of Stalin, of the repressions of the 1930s–50s and of the 'cult of personality' opened the way for broader complaints about the nature of the Soviet regime itself. In mid-1956, Soviet leaders tried to regain control of the de-Stalinization campaign by issuing a decree that specified what was permissible and what was not, but this document failed to put an end to the dissidents' activities.[126] Thus, when the revolution began in Hungary in late October 1956, Khrushchev and his colleagues were concerned that students and intellectuals in the Soviet Union might try to provoke similar disturbances at home. The Soviet authorities saw disturbing parallels between the burgeoning dissidents' movement in the Soviet Union and the activities earlier in the year by the Petofi Circle in Hungary. They feared that the use of repressive measures might not be enough to deter protests and restore tight discipline, just as Rakosi's and Gero's efforts to curb unrest had failed in Hungary.[127]

These concerns seemed to gain credence when a rash of protests cropped up both before and after 4 November at higher educational institutions in the USSR, including MGU, the Moscow Aviation-Technological Institute, the Potemkin State Pedagogical Institute, the Ural Polytechnical Institute, Gorky University, Sverdlovsk University, the Herzen Pedagogical Institute, Leningrad State University, Kuibyshev University, the Bashkirian Pedagogical Institute, the Smolensk Pedagogical Institute and numerous other schools.[128] Even students who were members of the Communist Youth League (Komsomol) took part in the demonstrations. The scale and frequency of unrest outside the capital came as a particular jolt to the Soviet authorities, who ordered a sweeping crackdown by the State Security Committee (KGB). Special anti-riot troops forcibly disbanded protests in Yaroslavl and many other outlying cities where students organized rallies and carried banners demanding the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Hungary.[129]

Protests within Moscow proved equally vexing for the CPSU leadership.

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125 'Prikaz No. 14 Nachal'nika Tbilisskogo garnizona', from Major-General Gladkov, commander of the Tbilisi garrison, 9 March 1956, in TsKhSD, F. 5, Op. 30, D. 140, L. 68.

126 'O kul'te lichnosti i preodolenii ego posledstvii', in *KPSS v rezolyutsiyakh i resheniyakh s"ezdov, konferentsii i plenumov TsK*, 8th edn (Moscow 1978), vol. 7, 212.

127 For a cogent analysis of this matter based on newly declassified materials, see M.R. Zezina, 'Shokovaya terapiya: Ot 1953-go k 1956 godu', *Otechestvennaya istoriya* (Moscow), 2 (1995), esp. 129–33.

128 In addition to other sources cited here, see 'Informatsiya v TsK KPSS iz Ministerstva prosveshcheniya RSFSR', Memorandum No. 41388 (Top Secret), from E. Afanasenko, RSFSR Minister of Education, to the CPSU Presidium, 28 November 1956, in TsKhSD, F. 5, Op. 30, D. 181, Ll. 82–9.

129 'TsK KPSS: Informatsiya', 7 November 1956 (Top Secret), from regional KGB stations to the CPSU Presidium, in TsKhSD, F. 5, Op. 30, D. 141, L. 67.

KGB forces were dispatched to MGU to arrest students and staff who had staged rallies 'denouncing the Soviet military intervention' and who had put up 'anti-Soviet slogans and posters'.[130] Reprisals were also meted out to the editors of *The Literary Bulletin* after they published several articles condemning the invasion. Administrators at MGU seized the opportunity to shut down the newspaper once and for all. Similar measures were adopted at the prestigious Moscow Institute of Railroad Engineering, where more than 100 students gathered in early December to hear speakers who strongly criticized the Soviet invasion and argued that 'Janos Kadar and his Workers' and Peasants' Revolutionary Government are maintained in power only through the bayonets of Soviet troops'.[131] The First Secretary of the Moscow party branch, Ivan Marchenko, reported that one of the speakers at the gathering had denounced Soviet policy in Poland as well as in Hungary:

> [The speaker] said that the press in the Soviet Union is purveying disinformation to the Soviet people, is incorrectly depicting the real situation in Hungary, and is 'lying about a white terror in Hungary'. . . . He also expressed opposition to the deployment of Soviet troops in Poland, arguing that they are not needed there and that Poland can get along without them.[132]

Further problems arose at the All-Union State Institute of Cinematography (VGIK) in Moscow, where dozens of students were accused of 'disseminating prejudicial information' about Hungary and Poland, and where more than 50 per cent of the students reportedly tuned in to Voice of America to learn about the invasion.[133] On 12 December, the KGB arrested students at VGIK who had led 'politically harmful discussions' that branded the Soviet invasion as 'unwarranted interference in Hungary's affairs'.[134] The arrests sparked fresh protests at VGIK by more than 350 students, including a surprising number of Komsomol members, who claimed that 'the actions by the KGB organs are vulgar and incorrect, and are reminiscent of the NKVD's actions in the past'.[135] The students demanded to know what legal basis there was for the arrests and whether there would be an open trial. The leaders of the rally threatened to convene a much larger demonstration, but they eventually gave in after

130 See the first-hand account by the former KGB Deputy Director, Filipp Bobkov, *KGB i vlast'* (Moscow 1995), 144–5.

131 'Tsentral'nyi Komitet Kommunisticheskoi Partii Sovetskogo Soyuza: Tov. Suslovu Informatsiya', Memorandum No. ST-1255 (Top Secret), from I. Marchenko, First Secretary of the Moscow party committee, to the CPSU Secretariat, 15 December 1956, in TsKhSD, F. 4, Op. 16, D. 1098, Ll. 53–5.

132 Ibid., L. 55

133 'TsK KPSS', Memorandum No. ST-1272 (Top Secret), 18 December 1956, from D. Polikarpov and A. Sazonov of the CPSU CC Culture Department to the CPSU Secretariat, in TsKhSD, F. 4, Op. 16, D. 1098, Ll. 50–2.

134 'TsK KPSS', Memorandum No. ST-1256 (Top Secret/Special Dossier 56), 15 December 1956, from N. Mikhailov, Soviet Minister of Culture, to the CPSU Presidium, in TsKhSD, F. 4, Op. 16, D. 1098, L. 50.

135 'Tsentral'nyi Komitet Kommunisticheskoi Partii Sovetskogo Soyuza: Tov. Suslovu Informatsiya', L. 53.

officials from the Moscow party committee met with them and urged a return to calm. Subsequently, most of the protest organizers were rounded up and expelled from the institute.

These various incidents spurred the CPSU Presidium to move faster in implementing its decision of 4 November to 'purge all higher educational institutions of unsavoury elements'.[136] By late 1956, major changes in the staff of key universities and colleges were largely completed. The Presidium also ordered relevant departments of the CPSU Central Committee to send party officials and instructors to scores of cities throughout the USSR to 'improve ideological training in higher educational institutions' and to bolster the Komsomol's influence on student activities.[137] Soviet leaders followed up in late 1956 and early 1957 by authorizing the arrest of many presumed dissidents and students who had continued to defy university authorities. Such measures were deemed insufficient by a coterie of senior party officials led by Pyotr Pospelov, a CPSU CC secretary responsible for the Russian Republic. Pospelov and his colleagues wanted to undertake much more drastic action, launching a crackdown reminiscent of the Stalin era.[138] Their proposals were never formally adopted, but the disturbances in 1956 were enough for Soviet leaders to feel that the invasion of Hungary had narrowly averted a much worse spill-over into the USSR.

A number of western analysts, such as Charles Gati, had long suspected that concerns about a spill-over from Hungary were one of the major factors in Soviet decision-making during the 1956 crisis.[139] The new evidence has amply corroborated that view.

The pro-intervention consensus on 31 October was formed without the participation of Mikoyan and Suslov, who were still in Budapest. When the two officials returned to Moscow on the evening of 31 October to present their conclusions, they discovered that the matter had already been settled without them. Suslov evidently agreed with the decision, but Mikoyan was dismayed by it, opposing it just as strongly as he had resisted the original decision on 23 October. Mikoyan pleaded with Khrushchev to call another meeting of the CPSU Presidium to reconsider the matter, but Khrushchev refused. According to Khrushchev's memoirs — which seem eminently plausible on this point — Mikoyan even threatened to commit suicide if Khrushchev did not

136 'Rabochaya zapis' zasedaniya Prezidiuma TsK KPSS, 4 noyabrya 1956 g.', 4 November 1956 (Top Secret), in TsKhSD, F. 3, Op. 12, D. 1006, L. 36ob.

137 'Byuro TsK KPSS po RSFSR: O merakh uluchsheniya ideino-vospitatel'noi raboty v vysshikh uchebnykh zavedeniyakh', 12 November 1956 (Top Secret), from N. Kaz'min, Head of the CPSU CC Department of Science, Schools and Culture, and A. Makhov, Sector Head in the CPSU CC Department of Science, Schools and Culture, in TsKhSD, F. 5, Op. 37, D. 2, Ll. 95–8. See also Pyotr Pospelov's instructions in the 'Spravka' attached to the document (ibid., L. 99).

138 Bobkov, *KGB i vlast'*, op. cit., 145. On the new arrests, see Zezina, 'Shokovaya terapiya', op. cit., 130.

139 Gati, *Hungary and the Soviet Bloc*, op. cit., 153.

reconvene the Presidium.[140] Khrushchev responded that it would be the 'height of stupidity' to behave so 'irrationally', and he set off to take care of the final political and military preparations for the invasion. Had it not taken the CPSU Presidium so long and been so politically costly to reach a final decision about Hungary, Khrushchev might have been willing to comply with Mikoyan's request; but Khrushchev explained to Mikoyan that he was loath to 'resume fruitless discussions' and 'destroy our whole plan' now that 'everything has been decided and a timetable has finally been laid out'.[141]

Despite these explanations, Mikoyan remained deeply upset by the decision, as he indicated at the Presidium meeting on 1 November (when Khrushchev had already headed off to Brest to inform the Polish leadership of the decision).[142] Mikoyan insisted that 'the use of force now will not help anything', and that 'we should enter into negotiations instead'. Although he agreed that 'we cannot let Hungary escape from our camp', he argued that it was still possible to wait 10–15 days to see how the situation would unfold: 'If things stabilize by then, we can decide whether to pull out our troops.' The other participants disagreed with Mikoyan, but he held his ground, arguing that an invasion was 'inappropriate in the current circumstances'. In public, however, Mikoyan did not display any qualms. The first time that Mikoyan's objections were revealed was in Khrushchev's memoirs, and the Malin notes amply bear out Khrushchev's account.

Interestingly enough, in later years Mikoyan tried to gloss over his anti-interventionist stance in October 1956, arguing that the decision to send in troops was unanimous.[143] Technically, this assertion was correct because the participants in the 31 October meeting did indeed approve the decision unanimously. What Mikoyan failed to point out was that if he had been present, the decision would not have been unanimous, just as he dissented from the original decision to send in troops on the night of 23–24 October. In spite of this subsequent backtracking, Mikoyan's position in October–November 1956 was in fact both courageous and consistent.

It had previously been known that Janos Kadar and Ferenc Munnich were spirited to Moscow aboard a Soviet military aircraft on the evening of 1 November, and were brought back with Soviet troops after 4 November to be installed as the prime minister and deputy prime minister of a 'Provisional Revolutionary Workers' and Peasants' Government'. Nothing was known, however, about what Kadar was doing in Moscow on 2 and 3 November.

140 Khrushchev, 'Memuary Nikity Sergeevicha Khrushcheva', op. cit., 76.

141 Ibid.

142 'Rabochaya zapis' zasedaniya Prezidiuma TsK KPSS, 1 noyabrya 1956 g.', 1 November 1956 (Top Secret), in TsKhSD, F. 3, Op. 12, D. 1006, Ll. 19–22.

143 See, for example, Mikoyan's comments during the secret proceedings of the June 1957 CPSU CC plenum (which removed the Anti-Party Group) in 'Plenum TsK KPSS, iyun' 1957 goda: Stenograficheskii otchet', No. P2500 (Strictly Secret), 22–29 June 1957, in TsKhSD, F. 2, Op. 1, D. 259, Ll. 27ob–28ob.

Almost all western accounts of the Hungarian crisis have assumed that Kadar was duplicitous and supportive of Soviet military intervention from the outset. The Malin notes provide a more complex picture, offering the first solid evidence of Kadar's and Munnich's roles in the establishment of a post-invasion regime.

Both Kadar and Munnich took part in sessions of the CPSU Presidium on 2 and 3 November, though Kadar did most of the talking.[144] (On 2 November they were joined by another Hungarian official, Istvan Bata, one of four senior figures who had been transported to Moscow several days earlier, on the evening of 28 October. On 3 November they were joined by Imre Horvath, who took detailed notes of the session.) On 2 November, Khrushchev and Malenkov were still away conferring with the leaders of other Warsaw Pact countries and with Tito, but the other Presidium members met at length with Kadar and Munnich. On 3 November, Khrushchev and Malenkov joined them.

The notes from the two sessions indicate that even though Kadar had been willing to travel surreptitiously to Moscow at a critical moment, he did not favour large-scale Soviet military intervention in Hungary. Nor did he arrive in Moscow intent on becoming the head of a new, post-invasion government. At the session on 2 November, Kadar warned that 'the use of military force will be destructive and lead to bloodshed'. Such an outcome, he added, would 'erode the authority of the socialist countries' and cause 'the morale of the communists [in Hungary] to be reduced to zero'.[145] The next day, Kadar's tone had changed somewhat, though not drastically. He highlighted the existing government's failure to prevent the 'killing of communists', and said that he 'agreed with [Soviet officials]' that 'you cannot surrender a socialist country to counter-revolution'. Kadar also asserted that 'the correct course of action [in Hungary] is to form a revolutionary government'. But even then, he implied that a Soviet invasion would only make things worse — 'The withdrawal of Soviet troops from Hungary will be of great significance' — and warned that 'the [revolutionary] government must not be puppet-like; there must be a [popular] base for its activities and support among workers'.[146] In this respect, his views differed sharply from those of Bata, who insisted that 'order must be restored through a military dictatorship' imposed by the Soviet army.[147]

It is also interesting that even on 3 November Kadar did not portray the recent events in Hungary in a uniformly negative light. Although he claimed that 'Nagy's policy has counter-revolutionary aspects' and that 'hour by hour the situation [in Hungary] is moving rightward', he urged the Soviet leadership to recognize that the uprising had stemmed from genuine popular discontent

144 'Rabochaya zapis' zasedaniya Prezidiuma TsK KPSS, 2 noyabrya 1956 g.', 2 November 1956 (Top Secret), in TsKhSD, F. 3, Op. 12, D. 1006, Ll. 23–9; and 'Rabochaya zapis' zasedaniya Prezidiuma TsK KPSS, 3 noyabrya 1956 g.', 3 November 1956 (Top Secret), in TsKhSD, F. 3, Op. 12, D. 1006, Ll. 31–3ob.

145 'Rabochaya zapis' zasedaniya Prezidiuma TsK KPSS, 2 noyabrya 1956 g.', L. 24ob.

146 'Rabochaya zapis' zasedaniya Prezidiuma TsK KPSS, 3 noyabrya 1956 g.', L. 32.

147 'Rabochaya zapis' zasedaniya Prezidiuma TsK KPSS, 2 noyabrya 1956 g.', L. 29.

and that 'the HWP has been compromised in the eyes of the overwhelming masses'. He argued that 'the entire nation took part in the movement' to 'get rid of the Rakosi clique'.[148] Kadar's perspective at this time was far more nuanced and insightful than the rigid formulas adopted by his government in December 1956, which characterized the whole uprising as no more than a 'counter-revolution'.

One other surprising aspect of Kadar's remarks is that he made little effort to gloss over his own actions or to downplay the negative influence of Soviet policy. He gave a detailed account of the meetings of the Hungarian 'inner cabinet' on 1 November, noting that he 'was a supporter of the view that no sort of steps should be taken without having spoken with Andropov'. This position, however, did not really distinguish Kadar from Nagy, who himself had summoned Andropov to the evening session for urgent consultations about Soviet troop movements.[149] Moreover, Kadar acknowledged that when the consultations were over, he joined the other members of Nagy's cabinet in voting for the declaration of neutrality, the appeal to the United Nations, and the resolution demanding an immediate withdrawal of Soviet troops from Hungary. On both 2 and 3 November, Kadar spoke harshly about past Soviet 'mistakes' in Hungary, and was far more critical about Rakosi than about Nagy. His comments on this topic were echoed by Munnich, who argued that the fundamental 'source of anti-Soviet sentiments' in Hungary was the population's 'certainty that the [communist] regime exists and is preserved only through the support of the USSR'.

None of this is to imply that Kadar's stance in early November was greatly beneficial to Hungary. Kadar was hardly naïve, and the fact that he was willing to come to Moscow suggests that he advocated more forceful Soviet action. Nevertheless, the Malin notes do not bear out the notion that Kadar was a quisling from the very start. He took on that function after 4 November, but it was not the role he wanted or envisaged when he arrived in Moscow.

The CPSU Presidium's abrupt shift in favour of all-out intervention on 31 October, after more than a week of vacillation, left many political and military tasks to be carried out. Shortly before the Presidium meeting, Khrushchev had spoken by phone with Gomulka, and the two men had arranged to meet the next day (1 November) in Brest, along the Soviet–Polish border. The Presidium designated Malenkov and Molotov to accompany Khrushchev to Brest. The Presidium also authorized Khrushchev and Malenkov to hold negotiations with Tito so that they could try to gain at least tacit support from the Yugoslav leader. In addition, the Presidium approved Khrushchev's suggestion that they

148 'Rabochaya zapis' zasedaniya Prezidiuma TsK KPSS, 3 noyabrya 1956 g.', Ll. 31–3.

149 In addition to Kadar's account in 'Rabochaya zapis' zasedaniya Prezidiuma TsK KPSS, 2 noyabrya 1956 g.', see the cable sent to Moscow by Andropov on 1 November — 'Shifr-telegramma', 1 November 1956 (Strictly Secret), in AVPRF, F. 059a, Op. 4, P. 6, D. 5, Ll. 17–19 — which provides valuable corroboration of Kadar's remarks.

'inform the Chinese comrades, the Czechs, the Romanians, and the Bulgarians' about the upcoming invasion.[150]

When the Presidium meeting adjourned, Khrushchev first contacted Liu Xiaoqui and other senior Chinese officials who had been in Moscow for consultations since 23 October. The members of the Chinese delegation, who had kept in close touch with Mao Zedong during their visit, were getting set to return to Beijing on 31 October. Khrushchev wanted to inform them immediately about the new decision, rather than have them find out about it second-hand back in China. The entire CPSU Presidium travelled to Vnukovo airport on 31 October to meet with the departing Chinese officials and smooth any ruffled feathers.[151] Khrushchev was concerned that Liu Xiaoqui might be upset when he learned about the sudden change in Soviet policy. During consultations with the Soviet leadership the previous week, Liu Xiaoqui had consistently expressed Mao's view that the 'working class of Hungary' must be permitted to 'regain control of the situation and put down the uprising on its own', without further Soviet interference. As late as 30 October, the Chinese delegates had called for Soviet relations with all other socialist states, including Hungary, to be based on the five principles of Pancha Shila: mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity; non-aggression; non-interference in internal affairs; equality and mutual benefit; and peaceful coexistence.[152] The Soviet decision on 30 October seemed to be in full conformity with these principles, but the volte-face on 31 October raised doubts about Chinese reactions.

It turned out, however, that the talks with Liu Xiaoqui were much less onerous than expected. After Khrushchev had explained why the Soviet leadership had reversed its position, the Chinese delegates condoned the change and promised to go over the matter carefully with Mao.[153] Even before the delegation returned to China, Mao's own view of the situation was gradually changing as a result of intelligence reports and diplomatic cables flowing into Beijing. It is unclear precisely when Mao shifted unambiguously in favour of the invasion, but the last-minute consultations at Vnukovo airport may well have been decisive in allowing the Soviet Union to gain strong Chinese backing.

With that task accomplished, Khrushchev and Malenkov were able to set off a few hours later for their rapid series of top-secret meetings with leaders of

150 'Rabochaya zapis' zasedaniya Prezidiuma TsK KPSS, 31 oktyabrya 1956 g.', Ll. 15–18ob.

151 Khrushchev, 'Memuary Nikity Sergeevicha Khrushcheva', op. cit., 74–5.

152 'Rabochaya zapis' zasedaniya Prezidiuma TsK KPSS, 30 oktyabrya 1956 g.', in TsKhSD, F. 3, Op. 12, D. 1006, Ll. 6–14. The principles of Pancha Shila were endorsed in a joint statement by Chinese Prime Minister Zhou Enlai and Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru in New Delhi on 28 June 1954. The five principles were intended to 'guide relations between the two countries' as well as 'relations with other countries in Asia and in other parts of the world'. For the full text of the statement, see G.V. Ambekar and V.D. Divekar (eds), *Documents on China's Relations with South and South-East Asia (1949–1962)* (New York 1964), 7–8.

153 In addition to Khrushchev's account, see the contemporary observations recorded by Micunovic in *Moscow Diary*, op. cit., 132 and 138, which amply bear out Khrushchev's version.

the other Warsaw Pact countries.[154] At the first such meeting, in Brest, Khrushchev and Malenkov were joined by Molotov for talks with a Polish delegation consisting of Gomulka, Jozef Cyrankiewicz and Edward Ochab. This meeting was regarded as particularly sensitive and unpredictable because the political situation in Poland was still so turbulent. The three Soviet negotiators hoped to defuse most of Gomulka's objections, but their efforts in this regard were largely unsuccessful. Although the Polish leader agreed that the 'counter-revolution' in Hungary had to be suppressed, he strongly objected to the use of Soviet military force. Khrushchev soon realized that he would not be able to convince Gomulka that direct intervention was necessary, and the Soviet leader was not even sure by the end of the meeting whether Gomulka would refrain from publicly criticizing the action.[155]

Khrushchev's concerns were not entirely unfounded. Shortly after Gomulka and his colleagues returned to Warsaw, they convened an emergency session of the PZPR Politburo, which 'expressed opposition to the USSR's armed intervention in Hungary'.[156] The Polish Politburo also endorsed the publication of a statement affirming that the crisis should be resolved 'by the Hungarian people alone and not by foreign intervention'. This statement appeared (in slightly modified form) in the PZPR newspaper *Trybuna Ludu* the following day.[157] Moreover, on 2 November, Gomulka publicly offered Warsaw as a forum for Soviet–Hungarian negotiations, which he (and Imre Nagy) hoped would 'lead to the settlement of problems in bilateral relations'.[158] When Gomulka's last-ditch efforts proved futile and the invasion began as scheduled on 4 November, the Polish leader briefly considered voicing his objections openly. After further thought, however, Gomulka decided that he should maintain a discreet public stance to avoid undue antagonism with Moscow.[159] At his behest, the PZPR Politburo instructed the Polish envoy at the United Nations to vote against a US-sponsored resolution condemning the Soviet invasion.[160]

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154 First-hand accounts of the meetings are available in Khrushchev, 'Memuary Nikity Sergeevicha Khrushcheva', op. cit., 75–7, which have been well corroborated by other sources, including Khrushchev's observations at the time, as recorded in Micunovic, *Moscow Diary*, op. cit., 135, 138–9. Newly declassified documents pertaining to the meetings are cited below.

155 See 'Zapis' telefonogrammy', c. 1 November 1956, in TsKhSD, F. 3, Op. 12, D. 1005, L. 66.

156 'Protokol Nr. 135 posiedzenia Biura Politycznego w dn. 1.XI.1956r.', 1 November 1956 (Top Secret), in Archiwum Akt Nowych (AAN), Warsaw, Archiwum Komitetu Centralnego Polskiej Zjednoczonej Partii Rabotniczej (Arch. KC PZPR), Paczka (Pa.) 15, Tom (T.) 58, Dokument (Dok.) 134. This protocol is included in the valuable collection of declassified Polish documents edited by Janos Tischler, *Rewolucja wegierska 1956 w polskich dokumentach*, Dokumenty do dziejow PRL No. 8 (Warsaw 1995).

157 'Odezwa Komitetu Centralnego Polskiej Zjednoczonej Partii Rabotniczej do klasy robotniczej, do narodu polskiego', *Trybuna Ludu* (Warsaw), 2 November 1956, 1.

158 'Rozmowy radziecko-wegierskie', *Trybuna Ludu* (Warsaw), 3 November 1956, 1.

159 Gomulka's conflicting thoughts about the matter can be seen in 'Stenogram Krajowej Narady Aktywu Partyjnego odbutego w dn. 4 listopada 1956 r.: Wystapenia W. Gomulki', 4 November 1956 (Top Secret), in AAN, Arch. KC PZPR, 237/V-241.

160 'Protokol Nr. 136 posiedzenia Biura Politycznego w dniu 4 listopada 1956 r.', 4 November 1956 (Top Secret), in AAN, Arch. KC PZPR, Pa. 15, T. 58, Dok. 135.

Gomulka remained distinctly uneasy about the whole matter, but he kept his reservations out of public view. To that extent, the Soviet consultations with Polish officials in Brest on 1 November were a qualified success. Had Gomulka not been informed about the invasion beforehand, he might well have been inclined to adopt a much less accommodating position when Soviet troops moved in.

The Soviet consultations after the Brest meeting went far more smoothly. Molotov returned to Moscow on 1 November so that he could inform the other members of the CPSU Presidium about Gomulka's reaction. In the meantime, Khrushchev and Malenkov travelled to Bucharest, where they spoke with top Romanian, Czechoslovak and Bulgarian officials. Not surprisingly, the delegations from all three East European countries vehemently endorsed the Soviet decision. The Czechoslovak leader, Antonin Novotny, and the Romanian leader, Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej, re-emphasized the concerns they had been expressing over the past several days about the growing spill-over from the revolution. They were joined by the Bulgarian leader, Todor Zhivkov, in arguing that 'it is essential to adopt every appropriate measure, including military intervention, as soon as possible' to combat 'imperialist intrigues' and 'preserve the system of people's democracy in Hungary'.[161]

On 2 November, Khrushchev and Malenkov flew to Yugoslavia, where they met with Tito at his villa on Brioni from 7.00 pm until 5.00 am the following day.[162] When the two Soviet leaders were *en route* to Brioni, they were apprehensive — particularly after the recent session in Brest with Gomulka — that Tito, too, would strongly oppose the Soviet decision; but their concerns proved to be unwarranted. During the ten hours of talks, Khrushchev declined to provide Tito with a precise timetable for the invasion, but he made clear that Soviet troops would soon be intervening in Hungary to 'defend socialism' and 'halt the killing of honest communists'. The Yugoslav leader, for his part, left no doubt that he agreed with the Soviet decision, if only because it was the sole remaining way to 'crush the counter-revolution' and 'prevent the restora-

161 'Usneseni 151 schuze Politickeho byra UV KSC k bodu 1: Udalosti v Mad'arsku', 2 November 1956 (Top Secret), in SUA Praha, Arch. UV KSC, F. 02/2 — Politicke byro UV KSC 1954–1962, Sv. 120, A.j. 151.

162 Khrushchev's account of this meeting tallies well with the much more detailed first-hand account in Micunovic, *Moscow Diary*, op. cit., 131–41. Micunovic's account is based on notes he compiled right after the negotiations, but unfortunately those notes have not yet turned up in the Yugoslav archives. (Another document in the former Yugoslav Central Committee archive refers to the notes, so it is possible that they still exist somewhere; but the location has not yet been pinpointed.) Newly declassified correspondence between Tito and Khrushchev in early 1957, now stored in the former CPSU Central Committee archive, bears out Khrushchev's and Micunovic's memoirs very well, but it also shows that the memoirs omit a few key details, which are mentioned below. See 'Pis'mo Tsentral'nogo Komiteta Kommunisticheskoi Partii Sovetskogo Soyuza ot 10 yanvarya 1957 goda Tsentral'nomu Komitetu Soyuza Kommunistov Yugoslavii/Pis'mo Tsentral'nogo Komiteta Soyuza Kommunistov Yugoslavii ot 7 fevralya 1957 goda Tsentral'nomu Komitetu Kommunisticheskoi Partii Sovetskogo Soyuza', No. P295 (Top Secret), February 1957, in TsKhSD, F. 89, Op. 45, D. 83, L1. 1–12 and D. 84, L1. 1–18.

tion of capitalism in Hungary'. Tito's earlier support for Nagy had essentially disappeared by this point.[163]

When the question came up of who should be brought in to replace Nagy, Khrushchev mentioned that Janos Kadar and Ferenc Munnich were the leading candidates, with a decided preference for the latter. Tito and other Yugoslav officials at the talks (Edvard Kardelj, Aleksander Rankovic and the Yugoslav ambassador to Moscow, Veljko Micunovic) argued that it would be better to go with Kadar because of his credentials as a prisoner during the Stalin-era purges, and the Soviet leaders readily agreed. Tito also urged Khrushchev and Malenkov to be sure that the new 'Provisional Workers' and Peasants' Government' would condemn the Rakosi era and adopt reforms needed to win popular support. Khrushchev assented to these proposals (except for Tito's suggestion that the newly-formed workers' councils in Hungary be preserved), and in return Tito pledged to use his special contacts with Geza Losonczy (a close aide to Nagy) to try to persuade Nagy to step down immediately, before Soviet troops entered. That way, the existing Hungarian government would collapse, and the Soviet intervention would not appear to be directed against a specific leader.[164] It turned out that Tito was unable or unwilling to fulfil his promise — a failure that caused great irritation in Moscow later on — but Khrushchev did not foresee that when he left Brioni.[165] Even if he had foreseen it, the very fact that Tito was so firmly supportive of the upcoming invasion was enough for Khrushchev to regard the talks as a 'pleasant surprise'.[166]

On the morning of 3 November, Khrushchev and Malenkov returned to Moscow, having largely accomplished their task of overcoming any reservations that allied communist states (with the exception of Poland) might have had about the impending military action. Khrushchev had ample reason to be pleased when he briefly presented the results of the talks at a CPSU Presidium meeting later that day.[167]

The military side of the invasion proceeded just as rapidly as the political

163 For a very useful collection of newly declassified materials tracing Yugoslav–Hungarian relations in late October and early November 1956, see Jozsef Kiss, Zoltan Ripp and Istvan Vida (eds), *Magyar–Jugoszlav Kapcsolatok 1956: Dokumentumok* (Budapest 1995), esp. 125 ff.

164 Until recently, this arrangement had not been disclosed, apart from a few vague references in Micunovic's memoirs (*Moscow Diary*, op. cit., 137–8). The first direct revelation of the deal came in the early 1990s when the top-secret correspondence between Tito and Khrushchev from early 1957 was declassified. See 'Pis'mo Tsentral'nogo Komiteta Kommunisticheskoi Partii Sovetskogo Soyuza ot 10 yanvarya 1957 goda Tsentral'nomu Komitetu Soyuza Kommunistov Yugoslavii', op. cit., L. 4.

165 For Tito's explanation of why the promise could not be fulfilled, see 'Pis'mo Tsentral'nogo Komiteta Soyuza Kommunistov Yugoslavii ot 7 fevralya 1957 goda Tsentral'nomu Komitetu Kommunisticheskoi Partii Sovetskogo Soyuza', op. cit., L1. 17–18.

166 Khrushchev, 'Memuary Nikity Sergeevicha Khrushcheva', op. cit., 75.

167 See Imre Horvath's handwritten summary (in Hungarian) of Khrushchev's remarks, in Magyar Orszagos Leveltar, XIX J-1-K Horvath Imre kulugyminiszter iratai, 55, doboz. For some reason, Malin did not record Khrushchev's speech in the notes from the full session ('Rabochaya zapis' zasedaniya Prezidiuma TsK KPSS, 3 noyabrya 1956 g.', LI. 31–3ob).

consultations. On 1 November, Marshal Konev was appointed the supreme commander of Soviet forces in Hungary. That same day, tens of thousands of Soviet troops, who had supposedly been withdrawing from Hungary, instead received orders to move back into Budapest to quell the uprising. They were reinforced by many tens of thousands of additional Soviet troops who had been congregating in Romania and the Transcarpathian Military District, along Hungary's southern and eastern borders.[168] Some consideration was given to having Romanian and Bulgarian soldiers take part alongside the Soviet forces and to having Czechoslovak troops move in simultaneously from the north.[169] Romanian and Bulgarian leaders had told Khrushchev that 'they wanted to have their own military units participate in . . . the struggle against the Hungarian counter-revolution', and the Czechoslovak Politburo likewise expressed its 'readiness not only to support intervention, but also to take an active part in it'.[170] In the end, however, Khrushchev and his colleagues decided that the invasion should be carried out exclusively by Soviet troops. Although one might have thought that Marshal Konev, as commander-in-chief of the Warsaw Pact, would have preferred a joint operation with the East European armies, he in fact was among those who recommended that the task be left to the Soviet Union alone.

To ensure that mistakes made during the initial Soviet intervention in late October would not be repeated, Konev met with General Lashchenko and other Soviet officers who had been in Hungary from the outset.[171] For a variety of reasons, as one of Lashchenko's aides later explained, the Soviet Union's chances of success were much greater during the second intervention:

> In November our combat operations took place under more auspicious circumstances than at the end of October. Budapest was already under martial law; armed groups were less successful in carrying out sudden attacks; and our troops controlled the situation on the city streets. We also had a lot more forces and equipment at our disposal than in October. In addition, our troops were no longer hampered by contradictory directives issued by the Hungarian government (whether and when to open fire, etc.), which had seriously impeded our troops' actions and resulted in needless casualties . . . . The considerable experience acquired by our units in October also contributed to the greater success of our subsequent operations.[172]

168 A detailed first-hand account of the military operations can be found in Malashenko, 'Osobyi korpus v ogne Budapeshta', op. cit. (Part 3), 33–7 and (Part 4), 30–6.

169 See, for example, 'Zprava o opatrenich k zesileni bojove pohotovosti vojsk'. Report from Col.-General Vaclav Kratochvil, Chief of the Czechoslovak General Staff, and Lt.-General Evzen Chlad, Chief of the Main Logistical Directorate, to the MNO Collegium (Top Secret), 31 October 1956, in VHA Praha, F. MNO, 1956, GS/OS 2/8–49b. See also 'Rozkaz k provedeni vojenskych opatreni na hranicich s Mad'arskem', from Col.-General Vaclav Kratochvil, Chief of the Czechoslovak General Staff, to the 2nd Military District in Trencin (Strictly Secret), 28 October 1956, in VHA Praha, F. MNO, 1956, GS/OS, 2/8–2b.

170 'Usneseni 151 schuze Politickeho byra UV KSC k bodu 1', op. cit., pt. 1.

171 Malashenko, 'Osobyi korpus v ogne Budapeshta' (Part 3), op. cit., 33.

172 Malashenko, 'Osobyi korpus v ogne Budapeshta' (Part 4), op. cit., 32–3.

In addition to helping out with the final military plans, Lashchenko retained a key command role in Budapest. Responsibility for operations elsewhere in Hungary was assigned to General Mikhail Kazakov and General Mikhail Malinin, both of whom had played a key part in the earlier intervention.

One of Kazakov's first tasks was to ensure that enough Soviet troops were deployed along the border with Austria to forestall any prospect of western intervention. Soviet leaders decided to err on the side of caution in this regard, not least because Nagy and his colleagues had made a last-ditch attempt on 1 November to obtain military support from either the United Nations or NATO by combining Hungary's formal withdrawal from the Warsaw Pact and its declaration of neutrality with an appeal to the UN General Assembly.[173] Any hopes of receiving outside support, however, were quickly dashed. The USA expressly prohibited NATO forces from taking any actions that might be deemed at all provocative.[174] Once it was clear that the 'imperialist' armies would not be intervening, Konev and his subordinates were able to concentrate their planning and resources on Budapest and other cities where the revolution was at its height.

The West's failure to intervene left Nagy's government in a hopeless situation. Although Hungarian army units had been fighting mainly on the side of the rebels since 28 October (when a ceasefire was declared and a National Guard was formed), the military overall could no longer function as a cohesive whole.[175] In early November, Hungarian Defence Minister Pal Maleter began preparing as best he could to defend against a Soviet attack, but in the absence of western military support Nagy was reluctant to order large-scale armed resistance, for fear of precipitating mass bloodshed without any possibility of victory.[176] Among other things, Nagy was well aware that the

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173 Nagy's cable to UN Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjold can be found in UN Doc. A/3251. The appeal and declaration of neutrality were broadcast on Budapest radio on the evening of 1 November. According to Kadar's detailed explanation at a CPSU Presidium meeting on 2 November, Zoltan Tildy was the one who came up with the idea of a declaration of neutrality. All the members of the Hungarian cabinet ultimately voted in favour of it. See 'Rabochaya zapis' zasedaniya Prezidiuma TsK KPSS, 2 noyabrya 1956 g.', LI. 23–9.

174 Micunovic, *Moscow Diary*, op. cit., 156.

175 'Stav Mad'arske lidove armady a priciny jejiho rozkladu', Report compiled by KSC CC Department No. 14 for the KSC CC Politburo, 9 April 1957, in SUA, Arch. UV KSC, F. 100/3 — Mezinarodni oddeleni UV KSC 1954–1962, Sv. 110, Ar. Jed. 371. Quoted passage is from 'Shifrtelegramma iz Budapeshta', Cable from A. Mikoyan and M. Suslov to the CPSU Presidium, 24 October 1956 (Strictly Secret), in AVPRF, F. 059a, Op. 4, Pap. 6, D. 5, L. 2. For a thorough survey of the role of the Hungarian army in 1956, see Imre Okvath, 'Magyar tisztikar a hideghaboru idoszakaban, 1945–1956', *Uj Honvedsegi szemle* (Budapest), 1 (1994), 14–27, which is based on documents from the 1956 collection (*1956-os Gyujtemeny*) of the Military History Archives of the Hungarian National Defence Ministry (*Hadtortenelmi Leveltar, Honvedelmi Miniszterium*). A recent volume by Miklos Horvath, *1956 katonai kronologiaja* (Budapest 1993), also draws on these documents. For a useful first-hand account, see Bela Kiraly, 'Hungary's Army: Its Part in the Revolt', *East Europe*, 7, 6 (June 1958), 3–16. Kiraly, as commander of Hungarian troops in Budapest at the time, led the armed resistance against the invasion.

176 On the preparations by Maleter, see Miklos Horvath, *Pal Maleter* (Budapest 1995), esp. 223–8.

Soviet Union had systematically penetrated the Hungarian military establishment from the late 1940s on. He feared that dozens of Soviet agents who were still entrenched in the Hungarian officer corps and national defence ministry, as well as a 'field staff for Soviet troops in Budapest that operated in direct contact with the Hungarians' from the outset of the crisis, would prevent most of the Hungarian army from being used to support the government.[177] As a result, the majority of Hungarian troops remained confined to their barracks on 4 November and were systematically disarmed by Soviet forces who re-entered Budapest.[178] Although some middle- and lower-ranking Hungarian officers, conscripts and reservists, under the leadership of General Bela Kiraly, took up arms in a last-ditch defence of the uprising, their efforts could not make up for the inaction of most Hungarian soldiers.

Early in the morning of 4 November, a final signal was given for Operation 'Whirlwind' (*Vikhr* — the code-name of the invasion) to begin. The fighting in Budapest and many other cities on 4, 5 and 6 November was intense, and even in a small town like Dunapetele the defenders managed to hold out for four days despite being hopelessly outnumbered.[179] Eventually, though, Soviet forces crushed the resistance and installed a pro-Soviet regime under Kadar and Munnich. Officials in Moscow were able to maintain direct contact with the new Hungarian regime via Leonid Brezhnev and Anastas Mikoyan, who had been sent to Budapest on 3 November for precisely that reason.[180] Some limited fighting continued in Hungary until 11 November, especially in areas well outside Budapest (notably in Pecs, where some 200 fighters held out until 14 November), but the revolution was effectively over by 8 November. Marshal Konev had promised Khrushchev on 31 October that it would take Soviet troops three to four days to 'destroy the counter-revolutionary forces and restore order in Hungary', and his forecast was largely borne out.[181]

Even after the final decision to intervene on a massive scale was adopted on 31 October, the leadership struggle continued to buffet Soviet deliberations about

177 'Stav Mad'arske lidove armady a priciny jejiho rozkladu', LI. 4–5. The quoted phrase is from 'Shifrtelegramma iz Budapeshta', Cable from A. Mikoyan and M. Suslov to the CPSU Presidium, 24 October 1956 (Strictly Secret), in AVPRF, F. 059a, Op. 4, Pap. 6, D. 5, L. 2.

178 On the disarming operations, see 'Informatsiya o polozhenii v Vengrii po sostoyaniyu na 21.00 4 noyabrya 1956 goda', Report No. 31613 (Top Secret), from Soviet Defence Minister G. Zhukov to the CPSU Presidium, and 'Informatsiya o polozhenii v Vengrii po sostoyaniyu na 9.00 5 noyabrya 1956 goda', Report No. 31614 (Top Secret), from Soviet Defence Minister G. Zhukov to the CPSU Presidium, both in APRF, F. 3, Op. 64, D. 485, LI. 102 and 103–4, respectively. See also Malashenko, 'Osobyi korpus v ogne Budapeshta' (Part 3), op. cit., 34, 37.

179 'Informatsiya o polozhenii v Vengrii po sostoyaniyu na 21.00 6 noyabrya 1956 goda', Report No. 31618 (Top Secret), from Soviet Defence Minister G.K. Zhukov to the CPSU Presidium, in AVPRF, F. 0536, Op. 1, P. 5, D. 65, L. 63. Among the other cities in which Soviet troops encountered fierce resistance were Budaorsi, Csepel, Jaszberenyi, Kaposvar, Kecskemet, Kobanya, Komlo, Mezokovesd, Miskolc, Obuda, Pecs, Soroksar, Szolnok, Szombathely, Thokoly, Ulloi and Veszprem.

180 'Rabochaya zapis' zasedaniya Prezidiuma TsK KPSS, 2 noyabrya 1956 g.', L. 30.

181 Khrushchev, 'Memuary Nikity Sergeevicha Khrushcheva', op. cit., 77–8.

Hungary. This was evident not only at the Presidium meeting on 1 November, when Mikoyan (having just returned to Moscow) tried to reverse the decision to invade, but also at the meetings held during the first few days of the invasion, on 4–6 November.[182] Molotov and Kaganovich disagreed with the others about the best way to handle the post-invasion regime in Hungary. Initially, Molotov had wanted the former Prime Minister, Andras Hegedus, who had escaped to Moscow on 28 October, to be made the head of a new 'Provisional Workers' and Peasants' Government'. Such a step, Molotov claimed, would simply amount to the reinstatement of Hegedus's government as the legitimate authority in Hungary. (Hegedus had been Prime Minister in the government that immediately preceded Nagy's return to power in October 1956.) Molotov averred that Janos Kadar was still a furtive supporter of Nagy and should not be given any top post. Although Molotov eventually backed down on this issue, he continued to insist that it was improper for Kadar's new government to condemn the 'Rakosi–Gero clique' and to give a new name to the revived Hungarian Communist Party. A number of acerbic exchanges with Khrushchev and other Presidium members ensued. On 4 November, Khrushchev declared that he 'simply cannot understand Cde. Molotov; he always comes up with the most pernicious [*vredneishie*] ideas'. Molotov responded by telling Khrushchev that he 'should keep quiet and stop being so overbearing'.[183]

The exchanges became even more acrimonious at the session on 6 November, when Molotov brought a flood of criticism upon himself by declaring his 'vehement objection' to Khrushchev's ideas about the regime that Janos Kadar was establishing in Hungary. Maksim Saburov accused Molotov and Kaganovich of being 'rigid and dogmatic', and Mikoyan insisted that 'Cde. Molotov is completely ignoring the concrete situation and is dragging us backward'. Averki Aristov noted that 'Cdes. Molotov and Kaganovich were always transfixed by Stalin's cult, and they are still transfixed by it'. Severest of all were the criticisms that Khrushchev himself expressed, accusing Molotov and Kaganovich of wanting to indulge in 'screeching and face-slapping'. He expressed particular disdain for Kaganovich, asking him, 'when are you finally going to mend your ways and stop all this toadying [to Molotov]?'.

In June 1957, when the leadership struggle reached its peak, the Hungarian crisis resurfaced. One of the accusations levelled by Molotov and other members of the 'Anti-Party Group' against Khrushchev was what they described as his mismanagement of intra-bloc affairs. Molotov argued that

182 Quotations here and in the following paragraph are from 'Rabochaya zapis' zasedaniya Prezidiuma TsK KPSS, 4 noyabrya 1956 g.', LI. 34–36ob; and 'Rabochaya zapis' zasedaniya Prezidiuma TsK KPSS, 6 noyabrya 1956 g.', 6 November 1956 (Top Secret), in TsKhSD, F. 3, Op. 12, D. 1006, LI. 41–5ob. This bickering was first described by Khrushchev in his memoirs ('Memuary Nikity Sergeevicha Khrushcheva', op. cit., 77–8), and a few additional details (not mentioned in Malin's notes) came to light in the recently declassified transcript of the June 1957 CPSU Central Committee plenum ('Plenum TsK KPSS, iyun' 1957 goda', LI. 27ob–28ob). The Malin notes confirm and add a great deal to these earlier sources.

183 The Russian phrase that Molotov used (*odernut' nado, chtoby ne komandoval*) is awkward in the original, but it can be roughly translated as it is here.

Khrushchev had committed 'dangerous zigzags' vis-à-vis Eastern Europe and had 'ignored the impact of [the Soviet Union's] actions on other socialist countries' — charges that were not entirely without merit.[184] Khrushchev managed to deflect those allegations and to oust his opponents, but the events in both Hungary and Poland in 1956 had highlighted the risks of allowing de-Stalinization in Eastern Europe to move too fast. Although Khrushchev cemented his status as the top leader in 1957, he pursued a much more cautious policy in Eastern Europe from then on.

By re-establishing military control over Hungary and by exposing — more dramatically than in 1953 — the emptiness of the 'roll-back' and 'liberation' rhetoric in the west, the Soviet invasion in November 1956 stemmed any further loss of Soviet power in Eastern Europe. Shortly after the invasion, Khrushchev acknowledged that US–Soviet relations were likely to deteriorate for a considerable time, but he indicated that he was ready to pay that price because the Soviet Union 'had proved to the West that [it is] strong and resolute' while 'the West is weak and divided'.[185] US officials, for their part, were even more aware than they had been in 1953 of how limited their options were in Eastern Europe. Senior members of the Eisenhower administration conceded that the most they could do in future was 'to encourage peaceful evolutionary changes' in the region, and they warned that the USA must avoid conveying any impression 'either directly or by implication . . . that American military help will be forthcoming' to anti-communist forces.[186] Any lingering US hopes of directly challenging Moscow's sphere of influence in Eastern Europe thus effectively ended.

Despite these obvious benefits for Soviet policy, the revolts in both Poland and Hungary in 1956 had demonstrated serious weaknesses in the region that would continue to endanger Soviet control. The bloodiness of the three-day conflict in Hungary, in which roughly 22,000 Hungarians and nearly 2300 Soviet soldiers died or were wounded, underscored the extent of popular opposition both to the communist regime and to the Soviet role in Eastern Europe.[187] Two years of intensive 'normalization', including wholesale purges,

184 See 'Plenum TsK KPSS, iyun' 1957 goda', LI. 2, 25. The charge of 'dangerous zigzags' was levelled by Molotov at a CPSU Presidium meeting a few days before the Central Committee plenum.

185 Micunovic, *Moscow Diary*, op. cit., 156.

186 'Memorandum from the Director of Central Intelligence to the President', 20 November 1956 (Secret), in US Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1955–1957*, vol. XXV: *Eastern Europe* (Washington, DC 1988), 473, 475.

187 Data on Hungarian and Soviet casualties come, respectively, from Peter Gosztonyi, 'Az 1956-os forradalom szamokban', *Nepszabadsag* (Budapest), 3 November 1990, 3; and 'Sobytiya v Vengrii 1956 g.', in Col.-General G.A. Krivosheev (ed.), *Grif sekretnosti snyat: Poteri vooruzhenykh sil SSSR v voinakh, boevykh deistviyakh i voennykh konfliktakh: Statisticheskoe issledovanie* (Moscow 1993), 397. The number of Soviet deaths was 720, and the number of Soviet wounded was 1540. The number of Hungarian deaths was 2502, and the number of Hungarian wounded was 19,226.

arrests, deportations and executions, culminating in the executions (by hanging) of Nagy and Pal Maleter in June 1958, were required to eliminate the most active opposition to Kadar's regime. By the time the process was completed, more than 100,000 people had been arrested, 35,000 had been tried for 'counter-revolutionary acts', nearly 26,000 had been sentenced to prison, and as many as 600 had been executed.[188] Similarly, in Poland the Poznan riots and the mass protest rallies that preceded and accompanied Gomulka's return to power were indicative of widespread disaffection with the extant political system. That discontent merely festered in subsequent years, as Gomulka gradually abandoned the reformist mantle and reverted to an orthodox communist approach. Ironically, it was Kadar, not Gomulka, who ended up pursuing a more relaxed political and economic line once he had consolidated his hold on power; and as a result, Hungary experienced no further instances of violent upheaval and mass disorder. By contrast, Gomulka's eschewal of genuine reform left Poland as politically unstable as ever by the time he was forced out in December 1970.

The events of 1956 also made Soviet leaders aware of the urgent need for improved economic conditions in Eastern Europe, insofar as the unrest in both Poland and Hungary — and in East Germany three years earlier — had stemmed, at least initially, from economic discontent. The danger of allowing 'basic economic and social problems to go unresolved' was one of the main lessons that Khrushchev emphasized to his colleagues from the very start: 'Ideological work alone will be of no avail if we do not ensure that living standards rise. It is no accident that Hungary and Poland are the countries in which unrest has occurred.'[189] Khrushchev also concluded that the rectification of 'certain inequalities in our economic relations with the fraternal countries' would be 'crucial to the process of normalization' in both Poland and Hungary.[190] Although Kadar was eventually able to redress some of the most acute economic grievances in Hungary through the adoption of a New Economic Mechanism in 1968 and other reforms in subsequent years, his retention of state ownership and centralized economic management thwarted any hope of genuine prosperity. This was even more the case in Poland, where, despite some leeway granted for private activity (especially in agriculture, retail trade and light industry), the economic policies under Gomulka and his successors spawned periodic outbreaks of widespread public unrest. No matter how often the Polish authorities claimed that they would pursue drastic economic improvements, they always proved unwilling to accept the political price that such improvements would have necessitated.

188 Attila Szakolczai, 'A forradalmat koveto megtorlas soran kivegzettekrol', in *Evkonyv*, vol. 3 (Budapest 1994), 237–56. Szakolczai provides a considerably lower figure (229) for the number of executions. The figure of 600 comes from Maria Ormos, 'A konszolidacio problemai 1956 es 1958 kozott', *Tarsadalmi Szemle*, vol. 44, nos. 8–9 (1989), 48–65. See also Janos Balassa et al. (eds), *Halottaink*, 2 vols (Budapest 1989).

189 'Zprava o jednani na UV KSSS 24. rijna 1956', op. cit., L. 12.

190 Khrushchev, 'Memuary Nikity Sergeevicha Khrushcheva', op. cit., 81.

From a purely military standpoint, the invasion in November 1956 achieved its immediate goals, but in the longer term it exacted significant costs. When the revolution was crushed by Soviet troops, the morale and fighting élan of the Hungarian armed forces were bound to dissolve as well. The remains of the Hungarian army were regarded by Soviet commanders (and by Kadar) as politically and militarily unreliable. More than 8000 officers, including a large number who had attended Soviet military colleges and academies, were forced out of the Hungarian armed forces in late 1956 and 1957.[191] The country's army thus essentially disintegrated and had to be rebuilt almost from scratch, leaving a gap in Warsaw Pact military planning and combat preparations for many years thereafter.

From a diplomatic standpoint as well, the invasion entailed significant costs, at least in the short term. The large-scale use of force in Hungary alienated numerous Third World countries that had been sedulously courted by the Soviet Union. A top-secret memorandum prepared in December 1956 by Igor Tugarinov, a senior official at the Soviet Foreign Ministry, acknowledged that there had been a 'significant increase in hostile statements about the Soviet Union' in key South Asian countries, including India, Pakistan, Burma, Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) and Indonesia.[192] Tugarinov noted that the governments in these countries, and even many leftist commentators there, were publicly 'drawing an analogy between the English–French–Israeli aggression in Egypt and the participation of Soviet troops in the suppression of the counter-revolutionary uprising in Hungary'. The report cited an official protest from the Indian government in mid-December which declared that 'the events in Hungary have shattered the beliefs of millions who had begun to look upon the USSR as the defender of peace and of the rights of the weakest people'. What was even more disturbing, according to Tugarinov, was the 'increased prestige that the United States had derived from recent events in Hungary and the Near East'. While Asian officials were condemning Soviet 'aggression' in Hungary as 'a direct violation of the spirit and letter of the Bandung Conference declaration', they were making 'extremely favourable' references to the 'US position in both Hungary and Suez'. Tugarinov reported that some Indian officials had even begun insisting that 'it makes sense for India to reorient its foreign policy more closely toward the United States'. This raised the 'distinct possibility', in Tugarinov's view, that 'there will be a major improvement in Indo-American relations, with a detrimental impact on India's relations with the USSR'. Although the adverse effects of the 1956 invasion on

191 Testimony of former National Defence Minister, Lajos Czinege, in Magyar Orszaggyules, *A Honvedelmi Bizottsag 1989 oktoberi ulesszakan letrhozott vizsgalobizottsag 1989 december 11–i, 1990 januar 3–i, 1990 januar 15–i, 1990 februar 6–i ulese jegyzokonyvenek nyilt reszlete*, 5 vols (1994), vol. 1, 261.

192 'Tov. Orlovu A.L.', Memorandum No. 1869/2 (Top Secret), 28 December 1956, transmitting a report prepared by I. Tugarinov, Deputy Head of the Foreign Ministry's Information Committee, in AVPRF, F. Referentura po Vengrii, Op. 36, Por. 9, Pap. 47a, D. 110, LI. 11–18. An English translation of this document, as well as an insightful commentary by James Hershberg, can be found in the *Cold War International History Bulletin*, 4 (Fall 1994), 61–4.

Soviet–Third World relations proved, for the most part, to be relatively ephemeral, the suppression of the uprising did cause at least a temporary disruption in Khrushchev's strategy vis-à-vis the Non-Aligned Movement.

Finally, the fact that an invasion had been necessary at all underscored the dangers of Moscow's incoherent and drifting policy in Eastern Europe following Stalin's death. Khrushchev was well aware of the potential for recriminations, as he indicated during his conversation with Tito in early November:

> [If we had failed to take action], there are people in the Soviet Union who would say that as long as Stalin was in command, everyone obeyed and there were no great shocks, but now that [these new bastards] have come to power, Russia has suffered the defeat and loss of Hungary.[193]

This point was further highlighted by the already-mentioned acrimonious exchanges during the CPSU Presidium meetings in early November and by the accusations which the Anti-Party Group lodged against Khrushchev in June 1957. Ultimately, Khrushchev was able to overcome the political fall-out from the two crises, but the events of 1956 clearly took their toll on the process of de-Stalinization in Eastern Europe. Even though Khrushchev suspected that the Warsaw Pact countries would remain vulnerable to recurrent crises unless the indigenous regimes became more 'viable' and the Soviet Union forged a more equitable relationship, he was determined to proceed far more cautiously in the future.[194] Repressive leaders in Eastern Europe, such as Walter Ulbricht in East Germany, Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej in Romania, Todor Zhivkov in Bulgaria and Antonin Novotny in Czechoslovakia, were able to win even stronger backing from Khrushchev because they convinced him that their presence was the only safeguard against 'unexpected developments' of the sort that occurred in Hungary and Poland. When faced with a trade-off between the 'viability' of the East European regimes and the 'cohesion' of the Eastern bloc after 1956, Khrushchev consistently chose to emphasize cohesion, thus forestalling any real movement toward a more durable political order.[195]

This brief review of some of the latest findings about the 1956 crises leaves numerous topics unaddressed, but it should be enough to indicate that the new archival evidence does not just confirm what everyone knew all along. More often than not, the new evidence undercuts long-established views and reveals unknown events. Disagreements about how to interpret the past will persist even if all the archives are open some day, but the new documentation is enabling scholars to achieve a far more accurate and complete understanding

193 Micunovic, *Moscow Diary*, op. cit., 134.

194 Khrushchev, 'Memuary Nikity Sergeevicha Khrushcheva', op. cit., 80–2.

195 The notion of a trade-off between 'cohesion' and 'viability' is well presented in James F. Brown, *Relations between the Soviet Union and its East European Allies: A Survey*, R–1742-PR (Santa Monica, CA 1975).

not only of specific episodes (e.g. the Soviet Union's responses to the Polish and Hungarian crises) but of the entire course of the Cold War.

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