

Intervention in Budapest

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THE WRITER OF THIS paper spent six years in the Stalinist prison camps. During the Hungarian uprising against Soviet tyranny in 1956, he participated in making peace between the Hungarian people and the Soviet Union based upon mutual respect and sovereignty. In the political prison camps between 1950 and 1956 he witnessed that not only the "capitalist enemies" and other victims of the proclaimed "class struggle" but Socialist labor union leaders, the Communist-collaborating Social Democrats, liberal intellectuals, as well as loyal Communists were also imprisoned and/or executed. Among the faithful Communists a well-known figure named László Rajk was hanged. Rajk fought in the same brigade with Orwell and other Communists against Franco during the Spanish Civil War. First Rajk was welcomed by the Stalinists as a great Communist. He set up the secret police system for the Hungarian Stalinist leaders. Then he was executed by the same people who had paid him great honor.

Among other former Communists who participated in the Communist Revolution in Hungary with Béla Kun in 1919, the writer of this paper met with a Comrade Neuhaus, who spent more than twenty-five years in a political prison during the regime of Admiral Horthy, the regent of Hungary. After the Soviet troops occupied Hungary in 1945, Comrade Neuhaus was

arrested by the Hungarian Stalinists and died in the Stalinist prison camp. Before Neuhaus's death in a prison hospital, the writer of this paper talked to him as a fellow prisoner. Neuhaus died in his arms. The last words he spoke were that the real communism, which should win out some day, was not the communism the Soviet Union represented.

The name of Neuhaus never hit the world news as did the name of Rajk. He died unnoticed among other early Hungarian Communist heroes. Ironically, he was saved by the "capitalists" and exterminated by his ideological bedfellows.

The Soviet party newspaper *Pravda* wrote, on November 23, 1956, "There is no doubt that the blame for the Hungarian events rests with the former State and Party leadership of Hungary headed by Rákosi and Gerö."¹ *Pravda*, however, failed to mention that both had been sent by the Soviet Union to govern Hungary according to the Soviet pattern.

The spokesman for the Soviet Union and Janos Kádár, then secretary of the Hungarian Communist party and prime minister of Hungary, after the crush of the Hungarian uprising, announced that legitimate grievances had prompted the Hungarian revolt. Kádár's spokesman also added that "honest Party and State workers suffered unjustly." As an example the execution of Rajk was mentioned.² However, the spokesman hid the fact that

in the execution of Rajk his best friend, János Kádár, was instrumental. After helping to incriminate Rajk, Kádár was also arrested by the Hungarian Stalinists and spent eight years in a Communist prison camp. After his release Kádár joined the Hungarian Revolution of 1956 and served in the cabinet of Imre Nagy. Then he joined his former captors and executed his friend Prime Minister Imre Nagy.

With the consent of the Hungarian government, university students of both scientific and technical universities demonstrated on October 23, 1956, in support of the Polish Communist party's victory over the Stalinist Communists.³ The students read the sixteen points which could lead Hungary out of a subservient status in her relationship with the Soviet Union to one of mutual respect for each other's sovereignty. Among other demands the most important were: (1) the withdrawal of the Soviet forces as guaranteed by the peace treaty; (2) free elections with the participation of both Communist and non-Communist parties; (3) giving to the workers the right to strike; (4) a declaration of neutrality; (5) freedom of speech and press; and (6) several political, economic, and structural changes in the government and in the Communist party.⁴

It was established as a fact by the UN Special Committee on the Problem of Hungary that "what took place in Hungary was a spontaneous national uprising, caused by long-standing grievances. One of these was the inferior status of Hungary with regard to the U.S.S.R. The uprising was led by students, workers, soldiers, and intellectuals, many of them Communists or former Communists . . . ; it is untrue that the uprising was fomented by reactionary circles in Hungary or that it drew its strength from imperialist circles in the West."⁵

The spontaneous and peaceful demonstration turned into a bloody revolution for the following reasons: (1) the arrogant statement of Ernő Gerő, then secretary of the Hungarian Communist party, who indeed ordered an open-fire on the

demonstrators in front of the Parliament and Radio buildings;⁶ and (2) the appearance of Soviet soldiers in Budapest as enemies in combat.⁷

On the question of who invited in the Soviet forces, a great controversy has raged. László Oltványi pointed out in his *Battles in South Budapest in 1956* that starting in July 1956 the Soviet Union had used Hungarian air space to supply the Sinai peninsula with military hardware. On October 1, 1956, the Soviets ordered a military alert in all signatory states of the Warsaw Pact.⁸ This report agrees with the findings of the UN Special Committee. It was stated in the report that "it would appear that the Soviet authorities had taken steps as early as the 20th of October to make armed intervention possible. . . . Soviet troops from outside Hungary were used even in the first intervention."⁹

The committee also found hardly believable the report of D.T. Shepilov, then foreign minister of the U.S.S.R., in which he stated on November 19, 1956, in the General Assembly of the United Nations, that on October 24, 1956, he received a telegram from the prime minister of Hungary requesting Soviet intervention in Hungary to put an end to the disturbances. The report also underlined the fact that Shepilov failed to state who had signed the message. The committee concluded that it was "indeed difficult for the Committee to understand how the Soviet tanks could arrive in Budapest at 2:00 A.M. on Wednesday morning 24 October, in response to a request received by the government of the U.S.S.R. on the same day."¹⁰ In fact, the Soviet leadership never gave the name of the person who signed the telegram and never settled this important question, although the credibility of the Soviet foreign minister and of the Soviet government was at stake. It was established, however, that, on October 25, Ernő Gerő, then secretary of the party, a day after the alleged telegram was sent, attempted to sign with Imre Nagy an antedated document inviting in the Soviet forces. Two witnesses have testified to the UN committee that Imre Nagy wrote on

the corner of the paper, "I will not accept this. I will not sign it."¹¹

It may be that the invitation to the Soviet forces was extended by the then Hungarian prime minister, András Hegedüs.¹² If this is true, why did Shepilov not mention who signed the telegram when he read it at the UN General Assembly? Curiously enough, adding to the confusion and lessening the credibility of the Soviet foreign minister, Ferenc Marosán, a Politburo member of the Hungarian Communist party, on October 23, 1956, after the fall of Prime Minister Imre Nagy, loudly "boasted" that he had called for Soviet military help.¹³

Prime Minister Imre Nagy declared on October 27 before a workers' delegation that it was not he who called in the Soviets, only that they wanted subsequently to obtain his signature to this effect.¹⁴ On October 29 Nagy pointed out before witnesses that it would in fact have been impossible for him to have called in the Soviet troops, since they had arrived in Budapest around and even before the time that he was appointed prime minister. Nagy also stated that the first addresses that he made over the radio after he became prime minister were made with a gun at his back.¹⁵ On October 31, 1956, Radio Budapest reported the speech of Prime Minister Nagy, repeating it several times during the day. In this speech Nagy again declared that he had not called in the Soviet troops. On the contrary, he fought for their withdrawal.¹⁶ On the same evening Radio Vienna broadcast an interview with Nagy. He again categorically declared that it was not he who had invited the Soviet troops to move into Budapest, nor had he subsequently approved of the invitation.¹⁷ In fact, at the time when Politburo member Marosán claimed that he was the one who had invited in the Soviet forces, Imre Nagy was not even a member of the Politburo. For this reason Nagy's statement cannot be challenged.

Since October 23 Party Secretary Gerö had been in constant telephone contact with Moscow. It is possible that, in agree-

ment with the chief Soviet military adviser, Ambassador Andropov decided to ask for the intervention of the Soviet troops. The movement of Soviet forces in Hungary did not require the consent of the Hungarian government. In order to save face among other Soviet satellite countries and in the West, Gerö tried, after the fact, to obtain this declaration from Prime Minister Nagy. When Nagy refused to sign such a declaration, it is possible that Gerö sent the telegram to the Soviet government in the name of the Council of Ministers of the Hungarian People's Republic. If this is true, then why was there a need for Marosán's declaration that he, as a member of the Politburo, invited the Soviet troops?

On October 29, 1956, after the cease-fire had been announced, new Soviet troops crossed the Hungarian border from Romania and Czechoslovakia. The day before Imre Nagy had announced on the radio that Soviet troops had started to move out of Hungary.¹⁸ Indeed the Soviets started to withdraw from Hungary on October 30 via Záhony¹⁹ (the northernmost city of Hungary on the Soviet border). But this was only a fake move. On November 3 the Soviets invited the Hungarian delegation to discuss the details of the total withdrawal of the Soviet forces. First the delegation attended a banquet given in their honor. Then about midnight General Serov, chief of the Soviet Security Police, arrived and ordered the N.K.V.D. officers to arrest the members of the Hungarian delegation,²⁰ who had diplomatic immunity. In spite of this fact, all of them were later executed.

After this barbarous act, Soviet troops launched their second invasion on November 4, 1956, with fresh troops of Tartar and Mongolian origin. The soldiers had been told that they were not to fight Hungarian workers in a people's republic, but that they were being sent to Egypt to throw back Anglo-French imperialism.²¹

As to the second intervention, and as to who called in the Soviet forces, nobody so far has given an explanation. Not even a mystified one such as the Soviet minister

of foreign affairs tried to give regarding the question of the first intervention before the UN General Assembly on November 19, 1956. In fact, Imre Nagy never resigned as prime minister. He was hanged as the legal prime minister of the sovereign coalition government of Hungary.

Since this government had declared the neutrality of Hungary and the holding of

free elections, obviously the Soviet Union felt it unimportant to find someone willing to state that he was responsible for the re-invitation of Soviet troops. The question became an interparty one, where the principle was that the "Soviet Party rules the satellite Party."²² Perhaps this principle prevailed during the first intervention as well.

¹*Report of the Committee on the Problem of Hungary*. General Assembly Official Record: 11th sess., suppl. no. 18 (A/3592) (New York, 1957), p. 37. Hereafter cited as *UN.Com.* ²*Ibid.* ³Francis S. Wagner, *The Hungarian Revolution in Perspective* (Washington, D.C., 1967), p. 146. ⁴*A Magyar Forradalom és Szabadságharc a hazai Rádióadások Tükrében*. 1956 October 23-November 9 (New York), p. 4. ⁵*UN.Com.*, p. 27. ⁶Wagner, p. 147. ⁷*UN.Com.*, p. 27. ⁸László

Oltványi, *Harcok Délbudapesten, 1956* (Munich, 1981), pp. 10-12. ⁹*UN.Com.*, p. 27. ¹⁰*UN.Com.*, p. 97. ¹¹*Ibid.* ¹²Wagner, p. 147. ¹³Ferenc A. Váli, *Rift and Revolt in Hungary: Nationalism Versus Communism* (Cambridge, Mass., 1961), p. 276. ¹⁴*Ibid.* ¹⁵*UN.Com.*, p. 90. ¹⁶Rádió, p. 220. ¹⁷*UN.Com.*, p. 92. ¹⁸Rádió, p. 91. ¹⁹*Ibid.*, p. 166. ²⁰*UN.Com.*, p. 24. ²¹*Ibid.*, p. 36. ²²Váli, p. 276.