
1956: Moscow - Budapest in the context of Cold and Hot Wars

TATIANA V. ZONOVA

More than fifty years have passed since the tragic events in Hungary took place. Abundant scholar researches have been made since then on that desperate attempt of the Hungarian people to change their status under the Soviet rule¹. Quite a new archive contribution is now accessible on the Soviet side. I mean the unclassified documents of the Presidium of the CPSU Central Committee. The mentioned documents are day after day evidence of the Soviet leaders' response to the events in one of the Warsaw Pact countries².

Analyzing these events one should take into account different factors. Major external factor for 1956 Hungarian revolution were the developments within the limits of the Soviet block as well as the events occurring on international chessboard. Among them are the 20th congress of the CPSU, de-stalinization processes and Polish disturbances. Outside the Soviet block one should mention the nuclear factor, formation of a bipolar system, and, last but not least, the war in the Middle East (the Suez crisis).

Let's see how the Soviet archives reflect the influence of all these elements on Soviet politics. First, a close perusal of the archive documents testifies that Khrushchev had no consolidated authority in those days. Stalin's successor was continuously constrained to maneuver between the supporters of de-Stalinization and its strong opponents. The unsealed Presidium papers also demonstrate his desperate attempts to enlist the support of each country of the so called 'socialist camp' and first of all to arrive at a mutual understanding with rather critically minded leaders of China and Yugoslavia. As always

¹ See for example: C. GATI, *Failed Illusions. Moscow, Washington, Budapest and the 1956 Hungarian Revolt*, Washington, W. Wilson Center Press, 2006; J. GRANVILLE, *The First Domino, International decision making during the Hungarian Crisis of 1956*, College Station, Texas U.P., 2004; A. GUERRA, *Gli anni del Cominform*, 1977; «L'indimenticabile 1956», Centro Studi sulla Storia dell'Europa Orientale, Materiali della conferenza, Milano, 19-20 ottobre 2006.

² *Sovjetsky Sojuz i venghersky krizis 1956 goda. Dokumenty*. Moskva: ROSSPEN, 1998, p. 863. The following footnotes mention the title of the document, the date of its issue and its number.

then, in 1956 ideologically motivated reasons of the Soviet policy complicated the situation and imposed narrow limits for maneuvering.

By the time a 'national communism' idea had gained ground in some communist parties. It caused big mistrust on the part of the Soviet leaders. It is useful to recall at this point that the Soviet Union was a multinational State and its unity had been usually preserved by suppressing any slightest display of nationalistic moods. The Soviet apprehensions were shared by some other communist leaders as well.

Naturally from the very beginning the 'Hungarian question' acquired features of ideological discussion. Hungarian reformist leaders, eager to follow the «Yugoslavian way to socialism, just to derive benefits both from the West and the East»³ caused greater concern among the Soviet leadership. Soviet leaders were also alarmed about anti-cooperative feelings mounting day by day among Hungarian farmers, who lived along the boundary with Austria and Yugoslavia⁴. In his letters Jury Andropov, the then Soviet ambassador in Budapest, stressed that «reactionary forces became more and more arrogant while Yugoslavs sent their secret agents, which were fomenting reactionary circles among Hungarian intellectuals»⁵.

There was also a revealing debate, caused by the Italian communist leader Togliatti. In his interview to «Nuovi Argomenti» magazine, subsequently reprinted by the Italian communist newspaper «l'Unità», Togliatti formulated his concept of 'polycentrism' within the communist movement. The idea appeared to be rather subversive for the Soviet communist leaders. Among records by Astafiev, Soviet diplomat in Hungary, there is a document saying that eight copies of «l'Unità» had been found in a Hungarian factory, and there were people who read and translated the interview to other workers⁶. On June 30th the Central Committee of the CPSU decided on criticizing Togliatti's ideas. The Hungarian party leadership took the decision to publish Togliatti's interview but in an abridged form.

In Andropov's opinion «there is lack of any firm line concerning the reactionary forces» in Hungary⁷. On July 12th Khrushchev addressed Togliatti with the request to expose «crazy nationalistic ideas» of some Hungarian opportunists (in other words to support Rakosi).

³ Voroshilov's short letter to the Presidium (26. 06. 1956), Dokument 19, p. 99.

⁴ Astafiev's records (10.08), Dokument 49, p. 225.

⁵ Andropov's telegram to the Ministry of foreign affairs (MID) (9.07), Dokument 27, p. 137.

⁶ Astafiev's record (23.06), TSHSD (Tsentr Hranenija Sovremennyh Dokumentov), F. 5. Op. 28. D. 394. L. 121.

⁷ Andropov's telegram to MID (9.07), Dokument 27, p. 142.

Only Mikoyan, influential member of the Presidium, said that Rakosi was «undesirable». His position obviously contradicted that of the other members of the Presidium. In particular he disagreed with Suslov's statement that Rakosi's removal would be a gift for the Americans⁸.

However, later on July 13th the CC Presidium addressed another letter to Togliatti, informing him on some changes in Hungarian politics and saying that «there was no more chance to maintain Rakosi at power»⁹.

As usual, relations with intellectuals remained the Achilles heel for leaders of the USSR and other socialist countries. With greater suspicion the party bosses observed discussions taking place within the oppositional Petőfi Club. To make matters worse on October 22nd, just on the eve of mass demonstrations in Budapest calling for democratic socialism, a novel written by Dudintsev and entitled "Not only by bread alone" appeared in the USSR: on that occasion Khrushchev alleged that «there was an international plot of the Writers Union hatched against the socialist system»¹⁰.

Andropov, too, hastened to inform from Budapest that, according to a secretary of the Hungarian Communist party, Hungary was not ruled by the Central Committee but the Union of Writers¹¹. Gromyko, deputy minister of Foreign Affairs, stepped forth with sharp criticism against the philosopher G. Lukács «spreading Togliatti's erroneous allegations and claiming that the Stalin cult was a consequence of the Soviet system»¹². In summer 1956 the CPSU leadership decided that it was high time to convene a party plenum on ideological issues¹³.

On October 12th Andropov informed Moscow that «enemies and opportunists urged Hungary to become a midway country, somewhere between capitalism and socialism». He expressed indignation that Hungarian workers, according to Gerő's words, «enthusiastically responded to every China's success but met news from the Soviet Union with icy silence because they believed that China and Yugoslavia, where there had been no personality cult, were far away forward and that we were to follow their example»¹⁴.

⁸ Mikoyan's telegram to the CPSU CC (14.07), Dokument 33, p. 156.

⁹ Presidium decision on a telegram to Togliatti (13.07), Dokument 32, p. 151.

¹⁰ Quoted by E. DOLMATOVSKY in: *I didn't sleep tonight*, «Rodina», 1992, n. 3.

¹¹ Andropov's telegram to the MID (23.10), Dokument 76, p. 339.

¹² Gromyko's letter to the CPSU CC (17.09), Dokument 58, p. 261.

¹³ The date of this Plenum more than once had been postponed and it never took place.

¹⁴ Andropov's telegram to the MID (12.10), Dokument 70, p. 302.

On October 20th the Soviet leadership was ever more alarmed at the situation in Hungary. Khrushchev went on with maneuvering. On the one hand, he insisted on sending Marshal Zhukov, minister of Defense, to Budapest, with the purpose to strengthen the fighting efficiency of Soviet troops stationed in Hungary and immediately exempt them from compulsory farm work. On the other hand, Khrushchev obtained the consent to recall all KGB advisers from Hungary. To tell the truth, the Hungarian leadership, unlike the Polish one, had never asked for this¹⁵.

In the last analysis the military reasons prevailed over any political solution of the crises. On October 23rd Khrushchev gave the militaries the green light. His position was met with approval by most Presidium members. Only Mikoyan believed that «this move could but ruin our own cause»¹⁶.

By the Ministry of Defense order the five divisions deployed in Hungary, Romania, and Carpathian military district were mobilized. The order was delivered at 23:00. 31550 men, 1130 tanks and self-propelled artillery, 159 fighters and 122 bombers were reported to have entered Hungary¹⁷.

At the same time Khrushchev suggested sending to Budapest a political mission headed by Mikoyan and Suslov, who were in favor of further negotiations. He even gave his consent to Nagy resuming an active part in politics. Khrushchev as the first secretary of the CPSU was now more than ever anxious to legitimize the Soviet military intervention and tried to obtain an official request for military assistance from the Hungarian leadership.

However, no official request had been obtained. In his memoirs Rakosi claimed that after a phone conversation with Gerő Khrushchev complained that Gerő's words hadn't been loud and clear. Having got no request for intervention issued in written form, the Presidium gave only tacit but not official approval. On his side, Zhukov assured Khrushchev that Gerő had already addressed the Soviet military attaché with the request to start the intervention. A telephone call from the Soviet embassy confirmed the urgency of intervention, referring to a 'baffling complexity' of the moment¹⁸.

Khrushchev was also frenetically looking for an approval on behalf of 'brother communist parties'. While meeting with Germans,

¹⁵ Malin's hand minutes of Presidium session (20.10), Dokument 74, p. 316.

¹⁶ Malin's hand minutes of Presidium session (23.10), Dokument 82, p. 356.

¹⁷ Ministry of Defence report to the CPSU CC (24.10), Dokument 84, p. 367.

¹⁸ Vospominaniya M. Rákosi, APRF (Archiv Prezidenta Rossijskoj Federazii), F. 3, Op. 83, D. 117, L. 2567-2569 (translated in Russian from Hungarian).

Czechs, and Romanians he pointed out: «We do not live in the Komintern times when the authority pertained to the only one party. Today our recurrence to dictatorial method will only create unnecessary chaos. The dispute between parties will inevitably transform into one between nations»¹⁹.

The same confusion reigned in Hungary. On October 24th the Hungarian radio broadcast an anonymous message saying that because of the «counter-revolutionary gangs' armed revolt», Soviet troops deployed in Hungary had been called for help in accordance with the Warsaw Pact agreement. A couple of hours later on the same radio Nagy proclaimed «the Hungarian way to socialism»²⁰.

The same day Mikoyan and Suslov wrote a telegram saying that, according to Gerő, «the presence of Soviet troops negatively affected citizens, including the workers»²¹. Both leaders noted that «on closer examination the preliminary reports of the Soviet and Hungarian headquarters exaggerated negative trends. [...] Gerő especially, but also other comrades, had overestimated the adversaries' real strength and underestimated their own forces»²².

However on October 25th Soviet infantry units opened fire on the demonstration gathering in front of the Parliament. Some days later Suslov reported the news to the Presidium (October, 28th)²³.

In his telephone message Mikoyan underlined a certain «increase of the national peaceful movement calling for changes within the government». Mikoyan said: «There are two solutions: to reject such claims, keep on struggling under the protection of our troops (in this case the feedback will be lost and there will be casualties; this solution will deepen the abyss between people and government; hence following this way we are doomed to lose); second solution is to include a number of well-known democrats in the government, 5 to 6 persons, as Hungarians suggest»²⁴.

At the Presidium session on October 26th Molotov, Bulganin, Malenkov, Kaganovich, Zhukov and Shepilov subjected Mikoyan to a sharp criticism. Khrushchev suggested sending Molotov, Malenkov and Zhukov to Budapest with a special mission of 'reinforcement' (however the mission did not take place)²⁵.

¹⁹ A. Novotny's record (24.10) (translation in Russian from Czech), p. 365.

²⁰ I. Nagy's broadcast appeal, Dokument 86, p. 370.

²¹ Mikoyan and Suslov's telegram to the CPSU CC (24.10), Dokument 87, p. 373.

²² *Ibidem*.

²³ Malin's hand minute of the Presidium session (28.10), Dokument 105, p. 436.

²⁴ Mikoyan's phoned telegram to CPSU CC (26.10), Dokument 94, p. 388.

²⁵ Malin's hand minute of Presidium session (26.10), Dokument 100, p. 413.

Disagreement among Presidium members became even more serious when, on October 27th, Nagy demanded the recognition of «democratic character of the nation wide movement», truce with the insurgents and withdrawal of Soviet troops from Budapest.

On October 28th, at Presidium session the criticism towards Mikoyan and Suslov intensified. Both had been accused (Mikoyan in particular) to have insisted, during their meeting with members of Hungarian Labor Party Political Bureau, on peaceful negotiations with the insurgents²⁶. Voroshilov, Molotov and Kaganovich stigmatized the Budapest uprising as a 'counter-revolution' and insisted on its resolute suppression. Khrushchev's suggestion was «facing the facts and taking them into consideration instead of constraining ourselves to gun shootings». In Khrushchev's opinion it should be reasonable to prepare an appeal to the population and hence to support the Hungarian government. Otherwise, says Khrushchev, «Nagy will step forth against us»²⁷.

Suslov came back from Budapest to inform the Presidium on the Hungarian government appeal for an immediate cease-fire and recognition of 'national-democratic' character of the revolt, as well as for withdrawal of Soviet troops. Suslov suggested supporting the Hungarian government and giving instructions to the Soviet military command to prepare the order about the withdrawal of troops from Budapest. All Presidium members (except Voroshilov) voted for Suslov's proposal²⁸.

On October 30th Khrushchev informed the Presidium about the «unanimous position of the Political bureau of the Communist Party of China». The Chinese communists demanded an immediate declaration on the Soviet troops' withdrawal from all countries of "people's democracy" and suggested putting these questions on the Warsaw Pact summit agenda. Chinese insisted on taking into account the opinion of the country in which territory Soviet troops were deployed. Molotov picked up the Chinese suggestion: «The appeal to Hungarian people should be ready tonight; we should immediately enter into negotiations on our troops' withdrawal». Molotov was echoed by Shepilov: «We stand for non-intervention. If the Hungarian government agrees, we will be ready for military disengagement». Zhukov emphasized: «Our main goal consists in our troops' withdrawal from Budapest and, if necessary, from Hungary»; Khrushchev suggested «supporting the Hungarian government and the party, Kadar and Nagy»²⁹.

²⁶ Malin's hand minute of Presidium session (28.10), Dokument 105, p. 432.

²⁷ *Idem*, p. 435.

²⁸ *Idem*, p. 439.

²⁹ Malin's hand minute of Presidium session (30.10), Dokument 115, pp. 457-461.

However the day after, on October 31st, Khrushchev drastically asked «to reconsider our conclusions, stop any troop's withdrawal from Hungary and Budapest and proceed with restoring order»³⁰. What really happened that day?

In my opinion, such U-turn might be explained with the strategy reasons having definitively prevailed over any political solution. Undoubtedly the Soviet military establishment as a winner of the World War II pretended to have a considerable weight in policy making and political decisions. The growth of its authority was favored by international situation when the nuclear arms had become a decisive factor in the world balance of power and the opposition between two military blocks – NATO and the Warsaw Pact – defined the international chessboard configuration.

Under a number of circumstances the presence of Soviet forces in Hungary had got a special importance for the Soviet command. In 1955 the Austrian State Treaty had been signed; all foreign troops including the Soviet ones had been withdrawn from Austria. Under Potsdam agreements after Austria the withdrawal of troops was to be continued from Hungary. In 1956 the Soviet leadership asserted that the Soviet army location in Hungary now was the result of Warsaw Pact agreements. However in 1956 – only a year after the Warsaw Pact came into being – no legal basis for that kind of deployment had been definitively fixed (the legal framework would be elaborated only in 1957). In this context Nagy's urgent request for Soviet troops' withdrawal and neutrality status (taking Austria or Yugoslavia for a model) might turn out to be quite legitimate for the world public opinion.

So, for the Soviet strategists the loss of Austria meant also the loss of Hungary. There was one more factor to cause a hard line conduct of the Soviet military command. The archives attest that in the early 1950s the Soviet experts discovered uranium mines in Hungary and put them under Soviet control. Hence a top secret enterprise called "Bauxite" had been set up. Any information on that business was classified. Even the chairman of the Hungarian commission on atomic energy had been never informed on that Soviet activity³¹. In August 1956 Andropov was alarmed at the rumors circulating among Hungarian authorities that Hungary shouldn't sell its uranium to the USSR but should sell it to other countries at world market value³². Later in autumn Hungarian insurgents claimed for an immediate full stop of selling Hungarian uranium to the USSR at a low price³³.

³⁰ Malin's hand minute of Presidium session (31.10), Dokument 125, p. 479.

³¹ *Sovetsky Sojuz i vengersky krizis*, cit., p. 306.

³² Andropov's report to the CPSU CC (29.08). Dokument 55, p. 240.

³³ Andropov's telegram to the MID (12.10), Dokument 70, p. 302.

It might be assumed that under such circumstances the Soviet military establishment could decide to act on its own, disregarding decisions of the Presidium³⁴. I would like to remind that in the same days the CC Presidium deliberated and Zhukov approved projects of the Soviet Army withdrawal from Hungary. At the same time on October 30th Andropov informed the Presidium on the Horvath's³⁵ alarming declaration about a considerable amount of Soviet troops, which had crossed the borders of Hungary.

In fact, as it is documentary proved, on October 29th a division and a railway brigade deployed in the Carpathian military district did cross the boarder of Hungary³⁶. On October 30th an alarming telephone message came to Moscow: «Nagy asks to explain the arrival of new troops». The authors of the message, Mikoyan and Suslov, suggested the answer: «The troops are coming in accordance with our agreements; no more troops are expected to arrive provided you are able to act on your own». They also suggested «instructing the Ministry of Defense to stop sending troops while continuing their deployment on the Soviet territory»³⁷.

Surely, no one can exclude that Khrushchev was playing a double game, and behind the scenes he was bargaining with Zhukov on military escalation in Hungary. As is common knowledge, Khrushchev to a certain extent owed his take-over to militaries and Zhukov in particular; it is also well known that in his foreign policy Khrushchev pressed towards a strategic balance with the USA as a priority goal. So it's quite logical to assume that Andropov, too, deliberately induced Nagy into error while reassuring him on the Soviet troops' withdrawal³⁸. On the other hand, such an assumption leads to a conclusion that Mikoyan and Suslov were playing a double game as well. However this supposition doesn't seem to be verified by memoir literature³⁹. We also can't exclude that Khrushchev intended accepting democratization process in Hungary on condition to keep the Soviet military presence there.

³⁴ Unfortunately general Malinin's dispatches from Hungary have not been published yet.

³⁵ Horvath was the Hungarian Minister for Foreign Affairs.

³⁶ *Sovetsky Sojuz i venghersky krizis*, cit., p. 457.

³⁷ Mikoyan and Suslov's phoned telegram to CPSU CC (30.10), Dokument 117, p. 468.

³⁸ ENNIO DI NOLFO, *Istoriya mezhdunarodnyh otnoshenij 1918-1999*, Moskva, Logos, 2003, p. 275.

³⁹ See: FABIO BETTANIN, *Il fattore Khrushchev*, paper presented at the conference «L'indimenticabile 1956», cit..

As it has already been pointed out, the shift in politics occurred on October 31st. Khrushchev asked for reconsideration of previous analysis and suggested leaving the Soviet troops in Hungary and in Budapest in order to «put all things in order»⁴⁰. Undoubtedly, there were also a number of other factors making the Soviet military intervention inevitable. To make matters worse both the Hungarian reformers and the Western propaganda emphatically staked on struggle for national independence. It couldn't but foment nationalistic and even anti-Semitic chauvinism⁴¹. So groups of instigators executed brutal capital punishments (a kind of Lynch law) to a certain number of Communist party members.

A letter by Togliatti forwarded to Moscow on October 30th also might have toughened Khrushchev's position. With his letter Togliatti predicted succession of disastrous events in Hungary in a reactionary direction and warned Khrushchev about highly probable split within the new Soviet party leadership⁴².

Anyhow one should acknowledge that in those turbulent days the Soviet leadership was exceedingly attentive to the developments in the Middle East. Right up to October 31st Khrushchev's aim had been no more than a propagandistic opposition to aggressive behavior of Britain and France. The main thing, Khrushchev said, was «not to find ourselves in the same company [*with the aggressors – T. Z.*]»⁴³. Not by chance the Soviet government declaration «On developing and further strengthening of friendship and cooperation between the Soviet Union and other socialist countries»⁴⁴ seemed to oppose peaceful and friendly relations between socialist countries to aggressive acts in the Middle East.

On October 29th the Anglo-French ultimatum was issued to Egypt, and Israeli troops passed to the offensive on Sinai. On October 31st British and French aircraft supported Israeli troops with bombing Egyptian positions.

The Soviet leaders realized that a defeat of Egypt would put an end to any Soviet influence in the Middle East. Khrushchev's statements testified these fears. From this point on Khrushchev seemed to be sure using strength against Hungarian rebels: «If we depart from

⁴⁰ Malin's hand minute of Presidium session (31.10), Dokument 125, p. 479.

⁴¹ See: STEFANO BOTTONI, *Il fattore Nagy. La rivoluzione ungherese del 1956 nei diari di Snagov*, paper presented at the conference «L'indimenticabile 1956», cit..

⁴² See the text of the letter in *Sovetsky Sojuz I venghersky krizis*, cit., p. 476.

⁴³ Malin's minute of Presidium session (28.10), Dokument 105, p. 439.

⁴⁴ «Pravda», 30 October 1956. The declaration recognized such principals as sovereignty, territorial integrity and noninterference in internal affairs of socialist countries.

Hungary, it will give a great boost to the Americans, British, and French—the imperialists. ... To Egypt they will then add Hungary»⁴⁵. Khrushchev seemed to be obsessed by the thought: «Just in case the USSR doesn't not interfere, the Soviet army will be the first to reproach us for the loss of Hungary».

On November 1st the Presidium members were well aware of inevitable intervention with a view to escape the «danger of bourgeois restoration»⁴⁶. Now this danger became the main refrain of both Suslov and Zhukov's statements, which had appeared to be more reserved only a couple of days before. Mikoyan remained the sole member of the Presidium insisting on negotiations and demanding at least 10 to 15 days of delay for the final decision.

Even on November 3rd, after the Hungarian note on withdrawal from the Warsaw Pact and neutrality, Mikoyan kept insisting on negotiations. At the Presidium session (November 3rd) Kadar and Münnich, members of the new pro-Soviet Hungarian government, were present. They had just signed the “Appeal to Hungarian people” readymade in the Soviet cuisine. The “Appeal” provided for national independence and sovereignty, full equality, non-interference into internal affairs, mutual benefit, and negotiations with the USSR and other Warsaw Pact countries concerning the stay of the Soviet troops in Hungary. Mikoyan strongly supported Kadar's statement: «The more we amplify military stance, the weaker we become in politics»⁴⁷.

While the Soviet command started with broadcasting the “Appeal” and distributing leaflets from Carpathians district, the troops proceeded «to restore the people's democracy power in the country». The Ministry of Defense informed Kremlin on having blocked Hungarian Army garrisons, captured main airfields and put all roads along the Austro-Hungarian border under control⁴⁸.

Now Khrushchev had made his choice. He stopped maneuvering and launched an attack against his opponents. When Molotov asked to impede Kadar to follow «the Yugoslavian way», Khrushchev replied shortly: «The man [Molotov] harbors subversive thoughts». Molotov retorted: «We should check [Khrushchev] to make him stop giving orders»⁴⁹. However Molotov and his supporters' cause would be lost soon afterwards. In June 1957 the Central Committee Plenum would expel Molotov and his supporters from the Communist party as an “anti-party group”.

⁴⁵ Malin's minute of Presidium session (31.10), Dokument 125, p. 479.

⁴⁶ Malin's minute of Presidium session (01.11), Dokument 132, p. 495.

⁴⁷ Malin's minute of Presidium session (03.11), Dokument 155, p. 543.

⁴⁸ The MD information letter to CPSU CC (04.11), Dokument 159, p. 578.

⁴⁹ Malin's minute of Presidium session (04.11), Dokument 164, p. 584.

On November 5th Zhukov informed Kremlin: «All Hungarian aircrafts are in our hands, we are going on with suppressing resistance residuary strongholds»⁵⁰.

The West, absorbed in the Suez crisis, reacted very weakly to the Soviet interference in Hungary. On November 4th the United Nations took up the issue of the Soviet intervention. The emergency session of UN General Assembly passed a resolution condemning the USSR actions. But it had only a moral value.

Even barring the Suez crisis it would be hard to imagine any serious intervention of Western countries providing support to Hungarian insurgents. Although US Secretary of State J.F. Dulles had repeatedly called for «stimulating guerilla and revolt» in Eastern Europe and «going on with subversive activities in the territories under the Soviet control»⁵¹, still the US 'Real Politik' assumed prudent behavior as to the second nuclear power. In this regard one could presume the existence of an *ante litteram* Sonnenfeld doctrine⁵².

As a matter of fact, through all days of Hungarian crisis the West contented itself with radio broadcasting and with distributing leaflets and propagating false rumors on UN troops intervention. Such groundless expectations had only contributed to an increase of the number of victims. On October 27th Dulles declared the United States non-interference in the East-European region affairs. He attested that the USA does not see Hungary as its ally⁵³. On October 29th Bohlen, US ambassador to the USSR, notified the Soviet leaders of the absence of any American special interests in Hungary. During his electoral campaign (October 31st) US president Eisenhower confirmed his non-interference policy into the internal affairs of other countries⁵⁴.

It was for this reason that at the Presidium session on October 31st while discussing the military intervention in Hungary Khrushchev took the floor to reassure the assembly that «there wouldn't be any big war»⁵⁵.

The events in the Middle East ousted the Hungarian crisis from newspapers' front pages and news broadcasting. Moreover, those events gave a chance to the USSR for a certain rapprochement with the USA. On November 5th the Soviet Prime Minister Bulganin wrote

⁵⁰ The MD information letter to CPSU CC (05.11), Dokument 166, p. 588.

⁵¹ See: FR. P. SEMPÁ, *Ronald Reagan and the Collaps of the Soviet Empire*, «American diplomacy», July 21, 2004, www.americandiplomacy.org.

⁵² So-called Sonnenfeld's doctrine, which was proclaimed in late 60-s, presumed a certain freedom of action for the USSR within its sphere of influence.

⁵³ *Sovetsky Sojuz i venghersky krizis*, cit., p. 334.

⁵⁴ *Ibidem*.

⁵⁵ Malin's minute of Presidium session (31.10), Dokument 125, p. 480.

to Eisenhower a letter suggesting uniting their forces in order to put an end to any military activity in the Middle East⁵⁶.

For the sake of strengthening his positions within the party Khrushchev tried to restore the unity of the socialist camp once severely compromised by different conflicts. To his mind joint decisions on Hungary crisis would permit characterizing the Soviet intervention not as a diktat but the result of concerted action. That is why the Presidium had a permanent agenda concerning the coordination line with the socialist camp leaders.

In his urgent telegram (October 23rd) Andropov suggested «involving Chinese, German and Czechoslovak comrades in the solution of Hungarian crisis». He pointed out that these leaders were very much anxious about a feasible crisis impact on their home politics⁵⁷. While discussing the “Appeal to the people of Hungary” (October 28th), Khrushchev considered opportune to stimulate a similar address on behalf of Chinese, Bulgarian, Polish, Czech and Yugoslavian comrades⁵⁸. As a matter of fact on October 24th representatives of Bulgaria, Hungary, the German Democratic Republic, Czechoslovakia and China gathered for discussing Budapest events. In addition the Soviet leaders met Chinese comrades apart⁵⁹.

On October 30th the Presidium were to discuss the Chinese proposal to approve the Declaration on Soviet troops’ withdrawal from People’s democracy countries. Chinese insisted also that future relations between socialist countries should be based on the five principals of peaceful coexistence known as “Pancha Shila”. At the same time Liu Shaotsi (those days he was in Moscow) unexpectedly suggested keeping the deployment of Soviet troops not only in Hungary but also in Budapest⁶⁰. As we already know on October 31st the Presidium took a final decision. According to this decision the troops will be withdrawn neither from Hungary, nor from Budapest. The postscript proposed considering «discussing with Tito, and informing Chinese, Czech, Romanian and Bulgarian comrades»⁶¹. On November 1st while approving the military presence in Hungary Kaganovich first of all made reference to the positive opinion of Chinese comrades on the matter⁶².

According to the memoirs of V. Mićunović⁶³ on November 2nd/3rd Khrushchev and Malenkov came by plane to Yugoslavia for discussions

⁵⁶ See online: <http://militera.lib.ru>.

⁵⁷ Andropov’s telegram to the MID (23.10), Dokument 76, p. 342.

⁵⁸ Malin’s minute of Presidium session (28.10), Dokument 105, p. 435.

⁵⁹ *Sovetsky Sojuz i venghersky krizis*, cit., pp. 315-316.

⁶⁰ Malin’s minute of Presidium session (30.10), Dokument 115, p. 462.

⁶¹ Malin’s minute of Presidium session (31.10), Dokument 125, p. 479.

⁶² Malin’s minute of Presidium session (01.11), Dokument 495, p. 495.

⁶³ V. MIĆUNOVIĆ, *Moskovske godine. 1956/1958*, Zagreb, 1977.

with Tito; some hours before they had met W. Gomulka in Brest and Gh. Gheorghiu-Dej and A. Novotný⁶⁴ in Bucharest. Right after that they had a short stay in Bulgaria. During negotiations Khrushchev pointed out that he had consulted with all comrades and with Chinese in the first place⁶⁵. On November 26 Suslov and Mikoyan informed Kremlin from Budapest that Kádár «took a resolute stand» (that is, he fought against counter-revolution and went ahead with arrests): «Just not to be ashamed while meeting the Chinese comrades»⁶⁶.

On October 12th Andropov informed Kremlin about his conversation with Gerő. Gerő said that the Hungarian delegation in Beijing had had a three-hour exchange with Chou Enlai. During this meeting the Chinese leader told the Hungarians that the Chinese leadership didn't agree with the denunciation of Stalin's cult by the 20th Congress of the CPSU.

According to Chinese communists, said Gerő, they were in disagreement with Stalin also on some topical questions even when the Soviet leader was still alive. For example, they ascribed leftist deviations of Wan-Minh to Stalin's influence. The Chinese didn't agree with Stalin when Stalin tried to dissuade them from taking up arms saying that China, according to the agreements, was a sphere of the US interests⁶⁷.

Even in the course of 'consolidation' that began after the suppression of the Hungarian people uprising the Soviet leadership kept on coordinating their line with the leaders of other socialist countries. In particular, arrangements were made with Yugoslavs providing refuge to Nagy and his close supporters. Subsequently Yugoslavs got rid of Nagy allowing his deportation to Romania. Later Nagy had been brought back in Hungary and executed together with his associates.

Hard line politics pursued by the Soviet leadership brought only illusionary benefits, but in the long run led to numerous tragic consequences. In the course of military intervention 250 Hungarians were killed and 13,000 wounded⁶⁸; among Soviet casualties there were 720 soldiers killed, or those who died of wounds, or missing and 1,540

⁶⁴ Polish, Romanian and Czechoslovak leaders.

⁶⁵ At that time Liu Shao-Tsi was in Moscow. Chinese archives of 1956, which are to be open, may give us more details on Sino-Soviet relations. About the Chinese archives see: Xinhua agency 20.07.2006.

⁶⁶ Malenkov, Suslov, Aristov's phoned telegram to CPSU CC (26.11), Dokument 211, p. 687.

⁶⁷ Andropov's telegram to the MID (12.10), Dokument 70, p. 303.

⁶⁸ G. KRIVOSHEEV (ed.), *Grif secretnosti snjat. Statisticheskoe issledovanie*, Moskva, Voenizdat, 1993. See also: www.soldat.ru.

wounded⁶⁹. In the following years numerous Hungarian oppositionists were subjected to repression, about 200,000 left Hungary and sought political asylum in the West⁷⁰. Despite all his maneuvering Khrushchev did not manage to unify the socialist camp. Quite soon the Soviet relations with China, Yugoslavia, Albania and Romania considerably worsened.

The Hungarian crisis aggravated domestic tension within the USSR. At the Presidium session on November 3rd there were alarming calls for «strengthening political and educational work and heightening vigilance considering Hungarian events, which is a major proof of escalating attacks against socialism on the part of hostile imperialistic forces»⁷¹. The Soviet rulers were frightened even by the people gathering to celebrate the October revolution anniversary. Therefore they decided «to reduce the time of mass demonstrations and not to allow so many people get together»⁷².

On November 4th the Presidium put on the agenda a very peculiar point on “Cleansing higher schools of unhealthy elements”⁷³. As a matter of fact in a number of Soviet higher schools there had been students’ unrest and protest meetings against the Soviet military intervention in Hungary⁷⁴. The KGB had been conferred plenary powers to restore order in educational institutions⁷⁵. An *ad hoc* commission headed by Brezhnev addressed a classified directive of the CPSU Central Committee to the party organizations. Its title was “On strengthening mass political work and suppressing all activities of anti-Soviet hostile elements” (approved by the Presidium on 19th December 1956)⁷⁶.

Now we can assert that the crash of Soviet system has been caused among other factors also by the dissident movement initiated just in the years following the Hungarian revolution.

⁶⁹ J. GYÓKEI and M. HORVÁTH (eds.), *Soviet Military Intervention in Hungary. 1956*, Budapest, Central European University Press, 1999.

⁷⁰ F. CSERESNYÉS, *The '56 exodus to Austria*. «The Hungarian Quarterly», XL (154).

⁷¹ Decision of the Presidium (03.11), Dokument 156, p. 548.

⁷² *Ibidem*.

⁷³ Malin’s minute of the Presidium session (04.11), Dokument 164, p. 585.

⁷⁴ See: R. PIHOJA, *Sovetsky Sojuz: istoria vlasti 1945-1991*, Moskva, RAGS, 1998, p. 165.

⁷⁵ F. D. BOBKOV, *KGB i vlast*, Moskva, Veteran MP, 1995, pp. 144-45.

⁷⁶ *Sovetsky Sojuz i venghersky krizis*, cit., p. 586.