THE 1956 HUNGARIAN REVOLUTION AND THE SUPERPOWERS[1]

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The fate of East-Central Europe until the fall of the communist regimes was determined by the status quo that the allies set up in 1945. Despite the fact that it has never been formally recorded in any official document, both superpowers, which controlled the bipolar world order after World War II – namely the United States and the Soviet Union – attributed a pivotal role to this tacit agreement in the East-West relationship. Their mutual consent started to work as an automatic rule of thumb in the chilliest years of the Cold War era, and developed afterwards, when the sporadic East-West conflicts needed to be managed. On the basis of this conception, the passivity of the West at the time of the Hungarian Revolution of 1956 is not as surprising and incomprehensible as contemporary public opinion in Hungary regarded it. The Hungarian uprising was not merely inconvenient for the western powers but it totally contradicted their policy, which especially after 1955 aimed at a compromise with the Soviet Union through the mutual acquiescence of the existing status quo.

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I. The Hungarian Revolution of 1956 and the Superpowers: Improvisations and Decisions of Historical Importance

In this paper I intend to have a closer look at the international relevance of two significant elements of the Hungarian Revolution of 1956. My analysis focuses on two particular aspects: first, to what extent could the Soviet and American authorities make sensible decisions in such an inordinate situation; and second, whether their decisions were the right ones in defence of their political interests.[2]

News of the Hungarian Revolution in 1956, contrary to what many expected, caused considerable havoc in Washington. The American government had no firm concept and strategic plan in case such an unlikely event should happen. Suddenly the Eisenhower administration had to face the fact that despite their massive liberation propaganda in Eastern Europe, the United States, the world's larg-

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est military power, had a very limited potential of intervention in the Soviet sphere of interest in case of an anti-Soviet uprising. To maintain their political prestige, however, it was most important for the United States to conceal this inadequacy as best as they could from international public opinion. This delicate situation prompted those improvisational steps that the American administration made as a reaction to the Hungarian revolution. One of these spectacular steps was that, initiated by the Americans, the three Western Great Powers officially asked the UN Security Council to put the question of the Soviet intervention in Hungary on the agenda of its session on 28 October.[3]

From a historical perspective, however, it proved to be more important that the American government, which had already reassessed "for internal use" its policy toward the satellite states in July 1956, was now compelled to do the same for the general public as well. None the less, while the above mentioned No. 5608 decision of the National Security Council was preceded by a long and meticulous preparation, which included the participation of experts, there was no time for such accuracy in those stormy days at the end of October 1956, so the new directives were formed in the midst of *ad hoc* negotiations of the highest authorities and on the basis of hasty, improvisational decisions.

Following a suggestion on 26 October by Harold E. Stassen, the president's advisor on disarmament, it was decided that Secretary of State John Foster Dulles, in his canvassing speech for a Dallas audience the following day, would incorporate a message for the Soviet Union, suggesting that if the East-European states achieved freedom and independence, it would not jeopardise the security of the Soviet Union, because the United States would accept that these countries receive a neutral status, similar to Austria's, and would never become NATO members. In the very last moment, however, both the neutral status and the ban on NATO membership were excluded from the speech, so the famous declaration eventually conveyed no more than the following: "We do not look upon these nations as potential military allies."[4] It is small wonder, after all, that in the current situation this emphatically defensive and topical statement was interpreted in Moscow as the United States' confirmation that they would refrain from intervention in the interest of both Poland and Hungary.

The above cited declaration, however, was of historical importance even in this radically amended form – despite the fact that usually only its role in pacifying the Soviet Union is emphasized. All previous official statements of the Eisenhower administration regarding the satellite states were based on the assumption that should these states become independent one day, they would automatically be part of the western world, which in this context includes NATO membership at the same time.[5] Declaring that the United States did not consider these states as potential military allies, practically meant the repudiation of their former position, i.e., a significant *change of paradigm* in American foreign policy. In this

way the Hungarian Revolution of 1956 and its subsequent suppression – reluctantly acknowledged by the Americans – became a catalyst in a process that started in the summer of 1956 and lasted until the mid-sixties, and which resulted in a new, more pragmatic American foreign policy towards Eastern Europe. The new principle was gradually leaning towards the *de jure* acknowledgement of the European status quo, and instead of liberating the satellite states – although in a historical perspective this hope was never given up – it aimed at softening and liberalising the prevailing communist regimes, primarily through exerting economic pressure on them. The historical irony is that while the ideologically driven "liberation policy," relying on every nation's innate right to independence, failed to positively influence the state of the region, the subsequent "defeatist" US policy of self-restraint contributed effectively to the fall of communist systems in Eastern Europe after the collapse of the Soviet Union had begun.

Shortly, or perhaps long after suppressed revolutions and uprisings several questions arise: could it have happened otherwise; was the defeat unavoidable, or was there the slightest chance of victory? Had the result been due to an unfortunate turn of internal and external conditions? Hungarian society has not been able to come to terms with the failure of the 1956 revolution and has placed the event among the other historical traumas of the nation. Until recently, the public have assumed that the historic chance was missed because the western states eventually failed to deliver the expected assistance. Accordingly, when re-estimating the events, the focus of attention by Hungarians was always what the West and particularly the United States could and should have done in order to help the Hungarian cause. Although contemporary public opinion had every reason to expect genuine western support on the basis of American liberation propaganda, especially from a moral point of view, today we cannot disregard the above mentioned international conditions that fundamentally influenced the outcome of the Hungarian revolution. The facts reveal that the United States actually had no political means at their disposal to force the Soviet Union to give up on Hungary. Moreover, it is most likely that any form of military intervention could have resulted in a direct conflict between the superpowers, which could have precipitated the outbreak of the third world war.

This all means that the outcome of the Hungarian events in fact depended not so much on the western attitude as on how Soviet leaders would handle the political crisis that started on 23 October 1956. It is well-known that Tito in his speech delivered in Pula on 11 November 1956 considered the first Russian intervention a mistake, yet it is surprising how much neglected the fact is that the Soviets alone (and no one else) were in an *exclusive situation to decide* on 23 October 1956. That is, they could have decided differently *then and there*. There was nothing to prevent the Soviets from using the Polish scenario in Hungary. Furthermore, at the meeting of the CPSU Presidium in the evening of 23 October, a distinguished

member of the leadership, Mikoyan, who was most familiar with the Hungarian situation, clearly outlined the alternative solution: "Without Imre Nagy they can't get control of the movement, and it's also cheaper for us. (…) What are we losing? The Hungarians themselves will restore order on their own. We should try political measures, and only then send troops."[6] Mikoyan's suggestion was practically the only sensible alternative in the given situation, yet he was alone with his opinion at the Politburo meeting. The Soviet leaders, who showed a pragmatic approach towards the main issues of world politics after 1953, who had managed to give up on the idea of military intervention in the last moment when resolving the Polish crisis – an intervention which would have been prompted by the ideological and emotional motivation of Cold War reflexes – were unable to exercise the same policy of self-restraint when it came to the Hungarian uprising. In this way Khrushchev and his companions made the worst possible political decision *from their own point of view* as well, starting a process – against virtually the only anti-Soviet freedom fight in the history of the Cold War[7] – the uncomfortable consequences of which they sought to avoid by resorting to an imminent military campaign. Of course it cannot be guessed how the situation was to have developed in Hungary had the Hungarian government and its military forces been entrusted with the task of pacification. It is more than likely, though, that in such a case there would have been a slight chance of consolidating the situation and, similarly to Poland, of establishing a promptly introduced but firmly controlled and limited reform policy, which the Soviets would later accept as a passable solution that does not jeopardise their fundamental strategic interests. In such a case, however, we would be talking about the victory of the reform communist movement instead of the Hungarian Revolution of 1956. Having said that, it is just as conceivable that the government of Imre Nagy would have been unable to cope with the conflict and gradually slipped in an increasingly radical direction. Thus, the Soviet Union would still have had to subdue the uprising with military intervention in a few days or weeks. In the latter case, however, they could have said that they really did everything in their power to bring about a peaceful solution and it was not their fault that they failed.[8] It is therefore not too farfetched to say that in handling the crises of East-Central Europe between 1953 and 1981, 23 October 1956 was the only occasion when the Soviet leadership made an entirely mistaken decision from the point of view of their own imperial interests, which resulted in a situation directly opposed to their original intention. At the same time, it means that the invasion of 4 November, 1956 was a logical and unavoidable consequence of a flawed political decision. The *first* Soviet intervention propelled such a dynamic impetus in the Hungarian events, which – unlike Poland – after a certain point could not be handled by political means and within the framework of the system any more. Consequently, by the end of October the rapid collapse of the communist system became more and more apparent, and this in

turn posed a genuine threat to the integrity of the Soviet bloc. *By that time* there was no alternative decision that the Soviets could make: their only reaction was to be armed intervention.

While it is so rarely emphasised or even realised in old and recent analyses of the subject how decisive the *first* Soviet intervention was, the *general* reinterpretation of Soviet policy towards the Hungarian revolution has recently, following the disclosure of the so-called Malin notes,[9] gained a new impetus. These notes give a non-verbatim, often fragmentary yet immensely informative account of debates about the Hungarian crisis in the Soviet Politburo and provide an insight for the first time into the polemics at the highest echelons of Moscow, which eventually led to the decisions we know all too well. These documents confirm those earlier presumptions that there were serious, often heated debates in the Kremlin about the right policy to follow. Even in the light of the lately disclosed historical sources, however, researchers have widely different opinions on what was actually *at stake* in these debates.

Basically two different points of view can be identified. According to the first one, the Soviet authorities were more open toward handling the crisis than we had previously thought, and consequently the final suppression of the uprising was not the only alternative. Had the events taken a more favourable – and usually not specified – turn, there would have been a fair chance for the revolution to be victorious. Going one step further, some presume that the liberation of East-Central Europe could have happened 33 years before the actual event of 1989 and 1990. According to the second, directly opposed opinion, the message of the Malin notes does not contravene our previous assumption about Soviet policy in the issue. What is more, it generally confirms what we could only guess before. The debates within the presidential body were indeed serious and perhaps more heated than one could imagine. The real aim of the dispute between the "liberals" and the "conservatives,"[10] however, was not at all giving up on Hungary (i.e., realising the triumph of the revolution) as merely deciding what compromises and sanctions could be granted to the government of Imre Nagy in the given situation, so that they could consolidate the situation within the framework of the communist system. Although I hasten to add that I personally represent the latter theory,[11] it is worth conducting a brief survey to find out what kind of facts and information seem to confirm the idea that the Soviets would have been ready to give up Hungary if need be. It might sound surprising but in the minutes of Politburo meetings between 23 October and 4 November 1956 there is only one really important but vaguely decisive piece of information which could be used for such an interpretation. On 30 October the Presidum – under pressure from a Chinese delegation which had arrived in Moscow[12] – unanimously (!) declared that Soviet troops should be withdrawn from Hungary. Nevertheless, the key to the interpretation of the often fragmentary Malin notes is that new information had better be construed

in view of *all* known and recently disclosed information on the one hand, as well as in the global context of world politics and East-West relations on the other hand.[13] In this respect, it is more than obvious that the potential of such a favourable decision from the Soviet authorities depended by no means on their disposition to "give up" Hungary as such. Just opposite: it would have been the *maximum political concession* that Soviet leaders were willing to make – to avoid what even they thought would be the worst possible solution: military intervention – had the government of Imre Nagy been able to consolidate the situation without jeopardising the communist regime and the integrity of the Soviet bloc. There are several concrete examples in the Malin notes in this regard, proving that the withdrawal of Soviet troops would have been possible only if these two conditions had been met. Suffice it to mention two specific, poignantly expressed and documented examples. Foreign Minister Shepilov, who took part in the debates mostly as the representative of the "liberal alternative,"[14] said the following when supporting the above decision: "With the agreement of the government of Hungary, we are ready to withdraw troops. We'll have to keep up a struggle with national-Communism for a long time."[15] That is, the well-calculated consequence of their step was by no means the restoration of the capitalist system but the consolidation of a situation similar to that of Poland, i.e., the formation of a well-defined communist system, which could operate with more autonomy, yet remained loyal to Moscow and within the framework of the Soviet bloc.

Mikoyan expressed most clearly the necessity of keeping up the status quo by hook or by crook, even though he always represented the most liberal opinion in terms of Hungary. "We simply cannot allow Hungary to be removed from our camp," he said at the Politburo meeting on 1 November, one day after the decision was made about the need for intervention, while he tried to convince the others that there were still political means to find a solution, and they should wait another 10-15 days before launching an intervention.[16] The irony of fate is that while on 23 October Mikoyan was the only one who assessed the situation sensibly, pushing the strategy of wait and see *then*, on 1 November the same position meant that now he was the only one in the leadership who could not understand (or accept) that the Hungarian events were indeed beyond the scope that the Soviet Union could tolerate. Today, it is generally accepted that by the end of October Hungary had experienced an irreversible democratic transition, which would have resulted in the complete elimination of the communist dictatorship, had it not been for outside intervention. The events between 1 and 3 November only reinforce this opinion; it was not incidental that at the Politburo meeting on 3 November Mikoyan himself suggested János Kádár as the head of the new government.[17]

All in all, we can conclude that the Malin notes do not contain any facts or information that would imply that anyone in the Soviet leadership was willing to

accept the changes in Hungary, as well as the obvious consequences that would include the emergence of a democratic system. Come to think of it, this is not that surprising. Allow me to refer once again to a well-known fact: it has been common knowledge for long that Tito himself agreed to the plan of Soviet invasion on the night of 2 and 3 November on the island of Brioni, in order to save the communist system in Hungary. More than that, he later officially declared that the second invasion was unavoidable. Having said that, it is beyond any doubt there was no one more interested in the victory of national communism than Tito, in this case in the success of the Imre Nagy. Consequently, if at the beginning of November even Tito thought – despite his fundamentally positive disposition, and rightly – that the communist dictatorship in Hungary was in grave jeopardy, it would have been most peculiar if the Soviet leaders, who had conceded even more moderate changes within the political framework of communism only under the pressure of a serious crisis, had shown more compliance than the Yugoslav authorities.[18]

After the intervention of 4 November it seemed that the proposal made by the CPSU Presidium at their meeting on 30 October, which did not concern fundamental issues but was of historical importance nevertheless, lost its relevance once and for all. Paradoxically, though, out of all the East-Central European states it was Hungary and the Kádár leadership, which came to power in those days and consolidated its supremacy rapidly with a dual strategy of stick and carrot, that would stretch the boundaries of Moscow's tolerance at all times and achieve a relatively independent *internal* development during the decades after 1956. Also paradoxically, a relatively independent *foreign policy*, just barely tolerated by the Soviet Union, was achieved by Romania, a state whose internal system was in many respects more retrograde than the post-Stalinist Soviet system.

In my opinion, the lost historical opportunity of 1956 – if there was any – can be defined as follows: had the Imre Nagy government been able to miraculously stop the democratic process, which spread with an extraordinary rapidity, the Soviet leadership would have been willing to withdraw their troops from the country; thus making a compromise more significant than in the resolution of the Polish crisis, where this possibility was not even mentioned seriously. It means that Moscow was ready to grant the *privilege of relative internal and external independence* at the same time to *one particular* satellite country, that is to Hungary. Khrushchev and his colleagues were leaning towards such a *complex concession* in the critical situation, which the Soviet authorities would never again accept in the following decades. A relatively independent internal and foreign policy in any allied country was considered too dangerous from the point of view of imperial interests.

II. The International Aftermath of the Revolution

In the following paragraphs I intend to give a sketchy outline of the significance of the Hungarian revolution in the further development of the East-West relationship, in the *détente* process, and how the events of 1956 later influenced Hungary's position and diplomatic elbowroom in international politics.[19]

The *détente* process that started after 1953 was temporarily disturbed and arrested but definitely not terminated by the Hungarian revolution and its suppression; moreover, the revolution did not influence the future of the process either. The tension caused by Western objection to Soviet intervention was in fact expressed in the field of propaganda, predominantly on the forums of the UN, while both the Americans (together with the British and French) and the Soviet authorities were willing to negotiate as before. The spring of 1957 brought about the rekindling of international dialogue, and a new East-West summit was under preparation by the end of the year.

The most direct effect of the revolution was that the great Western powers, through their attitude, expressed undoubtedly that the West acknowledged the European status quo of 1945 and did not want to question its relevance, despite all of the propaganda stunts. Naturally it satisfied the Soviet leadership more than anyone else, because instead of a *tacit agreement* now they got a firm *de facto guarantee* that in resolving future conflicts within the boundaries of their empire they would not have to consider the point of view of the Western states, not even when they resort to the most drastic means. In this respect the Hungarian Revolution of 1956 certainly provided the Soviet Union with a much more favourable position because the uncertainty threatening – in actual fact only at the level of propaganda – the security of the East-Central European region by the United States through its psychological warfare was ended after 1956.

This guarantee of security policy, gained in 1956 and lasting until the collapse of the Soviet Union – together with scientific results in missile technology and space research in the late 1950s – contributed to the strengthening of the international position of the Soviet Union and gave a boost to the self-confidence of Soviet leaders. Later, it would indirectly influence the strengthening of several tendencies: the elaboration of Khrushchev's adventurist foreign policy, which led to the second Berlin crisis and the Cuban missile crisis. In the long run the increasing self-confidence strengthened the emancipation tendency, which made the Soviet Union a superpower on *a par* with the United States from a military and strategic point of view by the end of the 1960s. However, it indirectly helped the deepening of the classic *détente* policy that began at the end of the sixties. This in turn contributed to the signing of the Helsinki Agreement (1975) on the basis of *de jure* acceptance of the European status quo and helped to realise the practice of "compelled coexistence."[20]

The revolution influenced in a peculiar way Hungary's later role in the East-West relationship and her position in international politics. Learning from the experiences in 1956, the Kádár regime, to say the least, did not strive for a more or less independent foreign policy; moreover, it openly proclaimed both in Hungary and abroad that it rigorously followed the directives of Moscow at all times. In less spectacular and more disguised spheres of foreign policy, such as economic relations with the West and in secret missions for mediating during the Vietnam war as well as in the Czechoslovak crisis in 1968, the significant role played in the preparation of the European security conference, Hungary maintained a cautious but firm tendency all along, which aimed at utilising the available political leeway most effectively but without drawing much attention.[21] This practice was directly the opposite of the Romanian strategy, which proclaimed both for their domestic public and abroad that, beginning with the mid-sixties, Romania dissented from the Soviet line and was eager to demonstrate the existence of a truly independent Romanian foreign policy. At the same time the country, as far as the basic interests and aims were concerned, similarly to Hungary, remained a solid member of the Soviet system of alliance.

On the basis of official and spontaneous social reaction in the West to the suppression of the revolution, and the commitment of the UN General Assembly to the issue of Hungary, many might have thought that the Kádár regime would not be able to consolidate their relationship with the West for a long time. None the less, the defeat of the Hungarian uprising instead prompted western politicians to carry on with the policy of reinterpretation, which meant that after 1956 they completely did away with the theory of liberating enslaved nations. From then on, the new goal was "softening" and liberalising the communist regimes of East-Central Europe. In this respect the Kádár administration, aiming at the systematic *rehabilitation* of the communist regime after November 1956, i.e., trying to organise a system that works effectively, proved to be a most promising partner.[22] Having said that, it is not surprising that Britain decided to stabilise relations with Hungary as early as the spring of 1957, although given the circumstances this intention remained reserved for "internal use" only for the time being. Discretion was necessary, as the Kádár regime wanted to accomplish a specifically Hungarian variation of the post-Stalinist system *parallel with* the inconceivably brutal and widespread retaliation campaign after the revolution, to which western politicians responded with morally righteous indignation. Thinking sensibly and considering the security interests of the Soviet Union they admitted the necessity of pacification and restoring law and order, none the less, partly under pressure from public opinion on home ground, they expected the Hungarian government to forgive the "delinquents" and "deviants" just as magnanimously and as pragmatically as they intended to win over the majority of the population for their policy. Perhaps we can risk the presumption that if the West, and primarily

the United States, had exerted pressure on the Hungarian government in order to make it more moderate, and to alleviate the zeal of political retribution directly, by means of secret negotiations, as later in 1960–1962,[23] they might have forced more serious compromises from the Hungarian government much earlier. Instead, the West appealed to the widest public and used such diplomatic forums as the UN. Eventually the Hungarian case was taken off the agenda of the UN General Assembly in December 1962, in return for which Hungary granted amnesty to the majority of those convicted for their participation in the revolution. Nevertheless, the retribution campaign itself could have been influenced, mitigating its austerity, and thus directly saving dozens of human lives.[24] What makes it all plausible is that the main objective of the Kádár regime in foreign policy right after 1956 was to break out of its almost complete diplomatic isolation and to demonstrate that even from a western point of view the new system, although its conception was far from immaculate, was no worse, perhaps even better than the other communist regimes. Apparently the West registered this attempt quite soon, but the recurring issue of Hungary in the UN was so instrumental, especially for the United States, in the struggle of superpowers for the influence over the third world, that direct negotiations with the Hungarian authorities only became possible once the UN debate had been obviously exhausted.[25]

In this way in Western policy Hungary only gained the status of *bloc normal* – i.e., the same recognition as the other communist states – after the amnesty of 1963. Having said that, Hungary became a favourite straight away, together with Poland. The peculiarly Hungarian variation of the post-Stalinist system – worked out by the mid-sixties and relying mostly on the lessons of the revolution – created a more flexible and tolerant communist model of its own kind, which happened to align with the goal of American foreign policy after 1956: a policy that abandoned the rhetoric of liberation for good. Paradoxically the Hungarian revolution of 1956, striving for the principle of universal human freedom, was totally out of tune with the actual objectives of western politics – even though many thought that the uprising rendered the conditions of "liberation." The Kádár regime, however, with their pragmatic approach, managed to align with western expectations of the time more than any other country of the Soviet bloc for decades after 1956.

Notes

1. An earlier version of this paper was published as: "Hidegháború, enyhülés és az 1956-os magyar forradalom" [Cold War, Détente and the 1956 Hungarian Revolution], in *Évkönyv V. 1996–1997* (Budapest: 1956 Institute, 1997), 201–213.
2. Generally on the policy of the superpowers see Bence Kovrig: "Liberators: the Superpowers

and Hungary in 1956." In *Hungary and the Superpowers in the 20th Century,* ed. Ignác Romsics (Budapest: László Teleki Foundation, 1995); Csaba Békés: *The 1956 Hungarian Revolution and World Politics.* Cold War International History Project, Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, Working Paper 16 (Washington D.C. 1996). About the reaction of the individual great powers, including the decisions of the Soviet Union, see the articles of János M. Rainer, Viatcheslav Sereda, Vladislav Zubok, Mark Kramer, Leonid Ghibiansky, Chen Chien, Raymond L. Garthoff, Ronald Pruessen, Vitaly Afiany, and Daniel Calhoun in *Évkönyv V. 1996–1997* (Budapest: 1956 Institute, 1997). For the most up to date account and documentation on the revolution see: *The 1956 Hungarian Revolution: A History in Documents. A National Security Archive Documents Reader,* eds. Csaba Békés, Malcolm Byrne, and János M. Rainer (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2002).

3. For the UN debate on the Hungarian issue, see Csaba Békés, "A brit kormány és az 1956-os magyar forradalom" [The British Government and the 1956 Hungarian Revolution] in *Évkönyv I* (Budapest: 1956 Institute, 1992). And by the same author: "A magyar kérdés az ENSZ-ben és a nyugati nagyhatalmak titkos tárgyalásai 1956. október 28. – november 4. (Brit külügyi dokumentumok)" [The Hungarian issue in the UN and the secret negotiations of the Western Great Powers 28 October – 4 November 1956. (Documents of British foreign affairs)] in *Évkönyv II* (Budapest: 1956 Institute, 1993). László Borhi, "Rollback, Liberation, Containment or Inaction? U.S. Policy and Eastern Europe in the 1950s", *Journal of Cold War Studies,* I/3 (Fall 1999).
4. An abridged version of the speech is printed in *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1955–1957.* Vol. XXV. *Eastern Europe* (Washington: United States Government Printing Office), 318.
5. This thesis is indirectly proved by the reluctance showed by the US in accepting the idea of Austria's neutrality prior to the conclusion of the Austrian state treaty in 1955. The above mentioned fact, i.e., that in the last minute the reference to the ban on NATO membership and to neutrality were omitted from the speech of Dulles on October 27, 1956 seems strongly to support the idea that up till that moment the potential incorporation of the East-Central European countries into NATO had been a serious intention of the US leadership.
6. The "Malin Notes" on the Crises in Hungary and Poland, 1956. Mark Kramer ed. *CWIHP Bulletin,* Issues 8–9, 389.
7. In this context I disregard the partisan warfare in Afghanistan against Soviet occupation, because of the peculiar circumstances of the invasion.
8. Typically enough, although the Soviet leadership was well aware of the rapid escalation of Hungarian events, at the Politburo meetings after 23 October no one cared to attribute it to the wrong decision. Moreover, with the exception of Mikoyan, they all assessed it as a wise step afterwards.
9. These notes have been published in several studies since their disclosure in 1995: *Döntés a Kremlben, 1956* [Decision in the Kremlin, 1956], eds. János M. Rainer and Viatcheslav Sereda (Budapest: 1956 Institute, 1996); *Istoritchesky Archiv* (Viatcheslav Sereda, ed.) 1996, Nos 2, 3; *The Hungarian Quarterly,* 1996, No. 142, 143 (János M. Rainer, ed.); *The Hidden History of Hungary 1956: A Compendium of Declassified Documents*, eds. Csaba Békés, Christian F. Ostermann, Malcolm Byrne (Budapest – Washington D.C.: The Institute for the History of the 1956 Hungarian Revolution – The National Security Archive, 1996); *CWIHP Bulletin*, Issues 8–9, Winter 1996–1997 (Mark Kramer ed.)., *The 1956 Hungarian Revolution: A History in Documents.*
10. Categories used by János M. Rainer. Cf. *Döntés a Kremlben, 1956, op. cit.*
11. For the first publication of this view see: Csaba Békés – Melinda Kalmár: Optimizmusra

szükség van – de illúziók nélkül. Volt-e esély 1956-ban? [Optimism is a must have – but without illusions. Was there a chance in 1956?]. *Népszabadság*, 22 October 1996.

12. For the ambiguous role of the Chinese leadership see Chen Jian: *Mao's China and the Cold War* (Chapel Hill – London: The University of North Carolina Press, 2001), Chapter 6.
13. Just as important, yet often overlooked by scholars, is the significance of so-called negative information; i.e. the analysis of what party leaders did not talk about. On the basis of this, it is apparent that Soviet leaders were not afraid of western intervention in Hungary because there are no important observations on this issue recorded in the notes. If they had reckoned with such an exigency, they would not only have had to put it on the agenda for discussion but immediate security measures would have been taken (e.g., total mobilisation of the armed forces, etc.)
14. A category used by János M. Rainer. Cf. *Döntés a Kremlben, 1956, op. cit.*
15. The "Malin Notes" on the Crises in Hungary and Poland, 1956. Mark Kramer ed. *CWIHP Bulletin*, Issues 8–9, 392.
16. *Ibid*., 394.
17. *Ibid*., 397.
18. About the Yugoslav opinion on Soviet intervention new information has been disclosed in recently published Soviet sources: according to these, in the course of negotiations with Soviet leaders in November and December 1956, Yugoslav leaders, Tito among them, expressed that Yugoslav troops would have intervened to subdue the Hungarian uprising, had the Soviet army not marched in on 4 November. *Hiányzó lapok 1956 történetéből. Dokumentumok a volt SZKP KB levéltárából* [Missing Pages from the History of 1956. Documents from the Archive of the Central Committee of the Former Soviet Communist Party] Compilation, notes and foreword by Viatcheslav Sereda and Alexandr Stikalin (Budapest: Móra, 1993), 249; "Top Secret. Magyar–jugoszláv kapcsolatok, 1956–1959" [Top Secret. Hungarian–Yugoslav Relations, 1956–1959], eds. József Kiss, Zoltán Ripp, István Vida (Budapest: Committee on the Contemporary History of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, 1997), 99. This surprising fact, which has not yet been confirmed by Yugoslav sources, was first published by Swiss historian Pierre Maurer: *Az 1956-os magyar forradalom helye a szovjet kommunista rendszer összeomlásában* [The contribution of the 1956 Hungarian revolution to the collapse of the Soviet communist system] Minutes of the international conference, 13–15 June, 1991, Budapest, National Széchényi Library. Manuscript, ed. Csaba Békés (Budapest, 1956 Institute, 1993), 53. On the role of Yugoslavia see Leonid Gibianskii: "Soviet–Hungarian Relations and the Hungarian Revolution of 1956", *CWIHP Bulletin,* Issue 10, March, 1998, 139–148.
19. For more detailed recent analyses on the aftermath and effect of the revolution see Péter Kende: "Mégegyszer a magyar forradalom világpolitikai jelentőségéről" [Once again on the significance of the Hungarian revolution and world politics.] In *Évkönyv IV* (Budapest, 1956 Institute, 1995), 7–23; Csaba Békés: *The 1956 Hungarian Revolution and World Politics,* Chapter 3.
20. For the explanation of this term, recently introduced by the author see: "Cold War, Détente and the 1956 Hungarian Revolution". Working paper No. 7, Project on the Cold War as Global Conflict, International Center for Advanced Studies, New York: New York University, 2002.
21. About Hungarian foreign policy after 1956, see Charles Gati: *Hungary and the Soviet Bloc* (Durham: Duke University Press), Chapter 7; András Felkay: "The Relationship of Hungary and the Soviet Union in the Years of the Kádár Regime, 1956–1988," in *Hungary and the Great Powers in the 20th Century*, ed. Ignác Romsics (Budapest: László Teleki Foundation, 1995), 215–227; Jungwon Park: "Conformity and Relative Autonomy in the Soviet Bloc: Hungary's Westward Policy Since the 1956 Revolution," Ph.D. thesis, manuscript (Budapest, 1994); Mihály Fülöp and Péter Sipos: *Magyarország külpolitikája a XX. században* [Hunga-

ry's Foreign Policy in the Twentieth Century] (Budapest: Aula, 1998), 429–456; Csaba Békés: "A Kádári külpolitika 1956–1968" [Kádár's foreign policy 1956–1968.] *Rubicon* (1998), 1.

22. Instead of the terms "restoration" and "consolidation" commonly used – with opposite political bias – for describing the reconstruction period following 1956, in recent scholarship Melinda Kalmár introduced a term much more appropriate for an academic analysis: rehabilitation [szanálás]. Cf. Melinda Kalmár: *Ennivaló és hozomány. A kora kádárizmus ideológiája* [The ideology of the early Kádár era] (Budapest: Magvető Kiadó, 1998).
23. On Hungarian-American secret negotiations see János Radványi: *Hungary and the Superpowers. The 1956 Revolution and Realpolitik* (Stanford, California: Hoover Institution Press, 1972) and Borhi László: *Iratok a magyar–amerikai kapcsolatok történetéhez, 1957–1967. Dokumentumgyűjtemény* [Documents on the History of Hungarian-American Relations, 1957–1967. Collection of Documents] (Budapest: Ister, 2002), 247–354.
24. The number of those sentenced to death because of their participation in the revolution was incredibly high and altogether 230 people were executed.
25. Cf. Csaba Békés: "A magyar kérdés az ENSZ-ben" [The Hungarian question at the UN]. *Rubicon*, (1996) 8–9.