

THE

1956

REVOLUTION FROM DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES

FOLLOWED BY
THE AFFECTED
COMPASSION OF
THE FREE WORLD



Edited by GÁBOR BÚR | ISTVÁN PÁL | ÁDÁM STEMLER

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The 1956 Revolution from Different Perspectives

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Edited by
Gábor Búr – István Pál – Ádám Stempler

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*This book is dedicated to our distinguished colleague Gábor Székely,
Professor Emeritus of the Department and Doctoral Program of
Modern and Contemporary World History at ELTE, on his 80th birthday.*

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Foreword

In the spheres of international diplomacy, politics and economics during the second half of the twentieth century, Hungary, in and of itself, came to be seen as a relatively insignificant state within the “Soviet Zone”. However, among the attempts at liberation made by nations within the zone of Soviet influence, the greatest impact and media response was achieved by the 1956 Hungarian Revolution, which marked an unmistakable peak in the West’s attention to Hungary. Yet even then, Hungary did not become important exclusively in her own right, but rather because of her position along the coordinates of power politics in a bipolar world. This international attention makes the study of the Hungarian Uprising an especially worthwhile subject for those of us engaged in research in world history. From time to time, especially on the occasion of a meaningful anniversary, we gather to present our latest findings arising from formerly unknown sources or resulting from novel modes of approach. This is how our collection of essays, *Followed by the Affected Compassion of the Free World. The 1956 Revolution from Different Perspectives*, came into being.

It was preceded by the symposium organized by István Pál, editor of the present volume, in November 2021 at ELTE, with the collaboration of colleagues from other institutions. This event generated considerable public interest in Budapest and aroused lively debate among specialists, creating the impetus to make the edited and revised versions of the presentations available in English, further refined along viewpoints that emerged in the course of the debates. The preparation of the English texts was made possible by the Mecenatúra (MEC_21) grant and also by the new editorial board of the periodical *Öt kontinens* [Five Continents], who agreed to include these essays in a special issue. Simultaneously, the contents became accessible via Open Access digital format in the Magyar Elektronikus Könyvtár (Hungarian Electronic Library) as well as in the Central and Eastern European Online Library.

The structure of this volume, and the order of the essays chosen from the presentations at the symposium, is based upon geographic and geopolitical distances. Miklós Mitrovits examines the 1956 uprising from up close, from within the political system as viewed from socialist Poland along the perspectives of Polish-Hungarian relations. The next essay, by Gábor Andreides, takes a look beyond the Iron Curtain and focuses on the vantage from Rome and the activities of Italian diplomats posted in Hungary. The authorial pair of Abdallah Al-Naggar and Zoltán Prantner deals

with the influences and reception of the Hungarian events of '56 in the Arab world, while Gábor Búr accomplishes the same task for Africa, and Ágnes Judit Szilágyi for Brazil. The final two essays in our volume refer to the period after the uprising in the chronology of events, and consider an especially important issue of that period, namely the situation of refugees. Gusztáv D. Kecskés examines the worldwide diaspora of Hungarian refugees, focusing on the various relief actions coordinated by the U.N. The final, and longest, essay, co-authored by István Pál and Gyula Hegedüs, considers themes arising during the late 1950s. The last three studies share a common interest in publishing primary historical sources. The Brazilian one is largely devoted to summarizing the various sources in the printed news media, while Gusztáv D. Kecskés pays express attention to U.N. documents. The special significance of the closing essay is due to its size and methodological character, since it is mainly based on a broad range of documents from the Historical Archives of the Hungarian State Security.

In general, it may be said that the present book calls attention to previously unpublished portions of archival materials, contemporary press reports, diaries and memoirs, thereby introducing fresh documentation to the active knowledge base on the 1956 Revolution. Our volume may be profitably read by specialists as well as interested members of the general reading public.

Ágnes Judit Szilágyi

Head of the Department and Doctoral Program
of Modern and Contemporary World History at ELTE

Polish–Hungarian Parallels and Interactions in 1956

MIKLÓS MITROVITS

In the postwar history of Poland and Hungary, 1956 constituted a major breaking point: between February and November of that year, both countries experienced significant changes that would determine not only their domestic policy, but also the relationship between leadership and society for the remainder of their respective regimes. Moreover, as the present study aims to show, the year 1956 was also extraordinary in terms of Polish–Hungarian relations, as their histories became completely entwined and events continued to unfold in parallel or by interaction, weaving a complex and intricate web.¹

The events of 1956 were fundamentally determined by the proceedings of the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) held during the period of February 14–25, 1956. The resolutions issued at this congress marked the beginning of a new era in terms of the relationship between the Soviet Union and its satellite states. By recognizing diverse forms of transitioning from capitalism to socialism, Soviet party leadership rejected the previous practice of Stalinism that had forced the countries of the Socialist Bloc to mechanically copy the Soviet model. Additionally, the “secret speech” delivered on the last day of the congress at a closed session by First Secretary Nikita Khrushchev had an even greater impact on subsequent events, as he denounced the earlier reprisals, reign of terror, brutal interrogations, and other crimes committed by Stalin. A written copy of the speech was also issued to the attending leaders of the Socialist Bloc.

1 On Hungarian–Polish relations in 1956, see also Tischler, J. (2007). Lengyelország. In Békés, Cs. (Ed.), *Evolúció és revolúció. Magyarország és a nemzetközi politika 1956-ban* (pp. 83–110). 1956-os Intézet – Gondolat Kiadó; Tischler, J. (2007). Rewolucja Węgierska w 1956 roku oraz jej odgłosy w Polsce. In Białecki, K. & Jankowiak, S. (Eds.), *Poznański Czerwiec 1956. Uwarunkowania – przebieg – konsekwencje. Materiały z międzynarodowej konferencji naukowej. Poznań, 22–23 czerwca 2006* (pp. 149–163). Instytut Historii UAM; Karwat, J. & Tischler, J. (2006). 1956. *Poznań–Budapeszt*. Media Rodzina; Granville, J. (2002). 1956 Reconsidered: Why Hungary and Not Poland? *The Slavonic and East European Review*, 80(4), 656–687; Granville, J. (2003). Reactions to the Events of 1956: New Findings from the Budapest and Warsaw Archives. *Journal of Contemporary History*, 38(2), 261–290. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022009403038002133>

The 20th Congress of the CPSU gave new impetus to de-Stalinization, and Khrushchev's secret speech – which would soon become widely circulated – shocked Soviet and Eastern European society outright. First Secretary Bolesław Bierut of the Central Committee of the Polish United Workers' Party was still in Moscow when the central party apparatus in Warsaw convened to discuss the results of the congress; their debate soon became a slew of criticism leveled at the Polish leadership, and, not long afterwards, they received news of Bierut's death in the Soviet capital. Simultaneously with Bierut's passing, the Central Committee of the Hungarian Working People's Party also convened in Budapest, and a few days later, they held the first public event of the Petöfi Circle (*Petőfi Kör*), an intellectual debating club established in 1955 by the Association of Youth Workers.

Events began to escalate when Khrushchev traveled to Warsaw to attend Bierut's funeral and the appointment of his successor, as the Polish leadership and the entirety of Polish society were caught in the throes of change. Having regained their freedom, the various press organs, including the party newspapers – *Szabad Nép* ['Free People'] in Hungary and *Trybuna Ludu* ['People's Tribune'] in Poland – began publishing a series of debate articles, while *Irodalmi Újság* ['Literary Journal'] and *Po Prostu* ['Frankly Speaking'] were on the front lines of urging change. Similarly to the Petöfi Circle in Hungary, Polish intellectuals regularly gathered at the Crooked Circle Club (*Klub Krzywego Koła*) in Warsaw to demand reform. In both countries, the most pressing issues were as follows: stopping the collectivization of agriculture, developing consumer product industries instead of heavy industries, decentralizing economic governance, rehabilitating the victims of political trials, granting general amnesty, holding the true culprits accountable for their failures and crimes, complete freedom of the press to ensure the success of reforms, and the rehabilitation and reinstatement of politicians Imre Nagy and Władysław Gomułka, respectively.

From the 20th Congress of the CPSU to the Press Debate of the Petöfi Circle and the Poznań Protests

From March to June 1956, political public opinion and public life in Hungary were primarily shaped by the general meetings of the Hungarian Writers' Association, the publications of various press organs – such as *Irodalmi Újság*, *Béke és Szabadság* ['Peace and Freedom'], *Magyar Nemzet* ['Hungarian Nation'], or *Művelt Nép* ['Educated People'] –, and the debates of the Petöfi Circle organized by the Association of Youth Workers. These debates were also defined by the political figure of Imre Nagy, despite the fact that he himself had never personally attended these events, as the

former Prime Minister and former party member was not only connected to all these different platforms through his friends and other mediators, but also influenced their political thinking. The “party opposition” articulating its views on these platforms had become the most significant informal pressure group in Hungary, which made Imre Nagy’s rehabilitation and reinstatement in the ruling party and the government an unavoidable issue.²

Another key Hungarian issue discussed in the spring of 1956 was the rehabilitation of the victims of political trials and holding the orchestrators accountable, especially Mátyás Rákosi and Minister of Defense Mihály Farkas. Since the former was the General Secretary of the ruling party, this issue became closely intertwined with debates on changes in Hungarian leadership, but rehabilitation and accountability also had important foreign policy connotations, especially with regard to the trial and execution of former Minister of Foreign Affairs László Rajk, whose trial had symbolically passed the same judgment on Josip Broz Tito and the Yugoslav model. Rajk’s rehabilitation implied the necessity of normalizing Hungarian–Yugoslav relations, which would not have been feasible under Rákosi, the principal figure behind the anti-Yugoslav campaign.

In Poland, Bierut’s sudden death had left the position of First Secretary vacant, and the Polish leadership had no choice but to appoint their next party leader without delay. The matter was so pressing that Khrushchev himself had traveled to Warsaw to attend the 6th Plenum of the Polish United Worker’s Party, where the members of the Central Committee called for a vote between candidates Edward Ochab and Roman Zambrowski.³ Ochab won the vote, but, as he soon turned out to be a subpar leader who favored neither reform nor hardline policy, Polish society threatened to erupt, which prompted the Polish party leadership to hold a meeting on April 6, 1956 in order to conclude the debates sparked by the 20th Congress of the CPSU. At this meeting, Ochab announced that Władysław Gomułka had been released from house arrest,⁴ though his rehabilitation and party membership were still pending.

Similarly to Hungary, Poland had also placed the rehabilitation of the victims of Stalinist political trials on its political agenda, but Poland’s case was exacerbated by the fact that the victims in question had been the soldiers and leaders of underground organizations formed during the war; they were not only unconnected to the communist movement, but the majority of them were explicitly anti-communist and had fought against the Soviet occupation just as they had resisted the German occupation.

2 For details, see Rainer M., J. (1999). *Nagy Imre. Politikai életrajz II. 1953–1958*. 1956-os Intézet, pp. 185–202.

3 Władyka, W. & Janowski, W. (Eds.) (2007). *Protokoły z VI i VII Plenum Komitetu Centralnego Polskiej Zjednoczonej Partii Robotniczej z 1956*. Oficyna Wydawnicza ASPRA-JR.

4 *Trybuna Ludu*, No. 97 (2610), April 8, 1956.

In other words, the issue of rehabilitation was inherently anti-Soviet at its core; nevertheless, the Polish leadership declared a general amnesty on April 27, 1956, leading to the release of approximately 10,000 political prisoners.

In June 1956, several political processes intertwined and amplified one another: on June 1, Vyacheslav Molotov was succeeded by Dmitri Shepilov as the new Soviet Minister of Foreign Affairs, and the next day, Tito arrived in Moscow for a three-week visit. Normalizing Soviet–Yugoslav relations was of great international significance to the Soviet leadership, and on June 24, the day after Tito had left the Soviet Union, the Presidium of the Central Committee of the CPSU welcomed the leaders of communist and labor parties in Moscow for a meeting, where the Hungarian delegation was headed by Rákosi, and the Polish delegation was headed by Ochab. At this meeting, the Soviet leadership reported on their negotiations with Yugoslav leaders and the resulting agreements, and then touched upon the problematic processes unfolding in the individual satellite states. Khrushchev and Anastas Mikoyan criticized Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and Poland as well for not taking a firm stance against manifestations of hostility, but, of the three, the Soviet leadership was most concerned about Poland. Khrushchev rebuked Ochab for the fact that his secret speech from the 20th Congress of the CPSU was being sold for 200 PLN in Polish markets, and pointed out that, instead of appointing persons of Jewish origin to positions of leadership, the party should employ more young Polish cadres; he also noted that hostile views in Poland tended to culminate in anti-Soviet statements. As for proposals to solve these issues, everyone agreed on the necessity of improving the general standard of living within the Socialist Bloc.⁵ The criticisms leveled at Poland were also heeded by Hungary: two days after the meeting, Prime Minister András Hegedüs had a discussion with Yuri Andropov, the Soviet Ambassador to Budapest, and acknowledged that Khrushchev’s criticism “was also significantly applicable to the situation in Hungary.”⁶ Due to the aforementioned meeting, the Polish and Hungarian party leadership received early intelligence of the Soviet leadership’s concerns, while the normalization of Soviet–Yugoslav relations became a catalyst for addressing the case of Minister of Defense Farkas, and indirectly the case of Rákosi.

Simultaneously with Tito’s visit to Moscow, on June 7, 1956, the Presidium of the Central Committee of the CPSU sent Mikhail Suslov to Budapest so he could personally inquire into the affairs of the Hungarian communist party and assess the Hungarian social climate. Coincidentally, Suslov arrived in Budapest on the same

5 National Archives of Hungary (*Magyar Nemzeti Levéltár Országos Levéltára*, hereafter: MNL OL), M-KS, 276. f., 53. cs., 293. ó. e.

6 Szereda, V. & Sztikalin, A. (Eds.) (1993). *Hiányzó lapok 1956 történetéből. Dokumentumok a volt SZKP KB levéltárából*. Móra Ferenc Ifjúsági Könyvkiadó, p. 33.

day that the representatives of the unofficial party opposition were gathering at the apartment of former Prime Minister Imre Nagy to celebrate the politician's sixtieth birthday. Suslov spent one week in Hungary, during which he held several meetings, visited factories and agricultural collectives, and concluded that there was no crisis in Hungary and therefore his presence was not required.⁷

Despite Suslov's positive assessment of Hungarian affairs, by the time Tito had left Moscow and the meeting on June 24, 1956 took place, the situation had escalated in Poland as well as Hungary. On June 18 at the debate by the Petőfi Circle, Júlia Rajk criticized the process of rehabilitation and demanded that her late husband's reputation be restored,⁸ and a week later, on June 27, the Petőfi Circle also held a press debate. This debate was the culmination of the thaw following the 20th Congress of the CPSU, the process of de-Stalinization, and the history of the Petőfi Circle since its establishment in 1955: it constituted the most radical and concentrated attack by the reform camp against the dogmatic communist camp thus far.

In some respects, the press debate of the Petőfi Circle transcended "the spirit of the 20th Congress":⁹ their demands included, among other things, the publication of Italian communist politician Palmiro Togliatti's complete statement on issues raised by the 20th Congress of the CPSU, in which Togliatti touched upon the possibility of the polycentric development of the communist movement, thereby questioning the leading role of the Soviet Union, and spoke of the euphemistic "cult of the individual" as a stranglehold on democracy.¹⁰ This was an especially sensitive issue because, as early as June 24, 1956, Khrushchev dismissed Togliatti's views as misguided, and an official response from the Presidium of the Central Committee of the CPSU was expected in the near future; however, such issues were preempted by the developments in Poznań.

On June 28, 1956, workers started a strike at Poznań's Cegielski Factories, also known as the Joseph Stalin Metal Industries, which quickly turned into a public demonstration. Protesters occupied the local headquarters of the communist party and then marched to the local prison and the office of the Ministry of Public Security to free political prisoners, but their attempt was met with violence that escalated into armed combat. The protests were originally motivated by economic factors, such as the failure of the Six-Year Plan of 1950–1955 and the consequently declining standard

7 Szereda & Sztikalin (1993), pp. 21–23.

8 Hegedűs B., A. & Rainer M., J. (Eds.) (1991). *A Petőfi Kör vitái hiteles jegyzőkönyvek alapján IV. Partizántalálkozó – Sajtóvita*. Múzsák, pp. 34–37.

9 Hegedűs B. & Rainer M. (1991); see also the introductory study in the present volume.

10 The interview was originally published in *l'Unita*, June 17, 1956; in July, it was also published in the journal of the Agitation and Propaganda Department of the Hungarian Working People's Party: *Anyag- és Adatszolgáltatás*, 1956(7), 29–41.

of living, but soon assumed a more political character as protesters connected the two causes in the slogan “*Bread and Freedom*”. The Political Committee of the Polish United Workers’ Party immediately decided to suppress the revolution, and, by deploying two units each of armored vehicles and light infantry, the city was neutralized after two days of armed struggle with over sixty casualties and approximately 500 persons injured.¹¹

“The Petőfi Circle debate is an ideological Poznań without the shooting”

Two days after the protests in Poznań, the Hungarian newspapers *Szabad Nép*, *Magyar Nemzet*, and *Népszava* [‘Word of the People’] quoted the Polish Press Agency and reported the following:

On Thursday, a severe disturbance occurred in the city of Poznań. Hostile agents managed to incite a public disturbance and besieged certain public buildings. These provocations incurred 38 casualties, and 270 persons were injured. Casualties include soldiers of the Polish People’s Army and functionaries of the public security bodies, who lost their lives while defending public buildings from the attacks of the divisive mobs (...) Workers expressed deep outrage and condemned these divisive acts. With the support of the class-conscious working class, the authorities managed to bring the situation under control and restored order in the city.

The Hungarian newspapers also included the warning published in *Trybuna Ludu*, which read as follows:

These provocations shall not succeed. We shall defend our most prized possession, the Poland we had rescued from the chasm of war and destruction with the tremendous effort of an entire nation in the face of the insane plans of domestic and foreign reactionaries. We shall paralyze the criminal hands that attempt to harm us. Against these perpetrators, the party, the working class, and the population must remain consciously anti-reactionary (...) The developments in Poznań point to the orchestration of criminal hands.

11 Makowski, E. (2006). *Poznański czerwiec 1956 – pierwszy bunt społeczeństwa PRL*. Wydawnictwo Poznańskie.

To reassure the Hungarian public, the Warsaw correspondent of *Szabad Nép* emphasized that “*Polish workers, employees, and intellectuals are holding spontaneous assemblies in factories and other places all over Poland to protest against the provocations in Poznań (...) The party, the government, and the country shall not stray from the well-trodden path.*”¹²

The Hungarian evening newspaper *Esti Hírlap* [‘Evening News’] supplemented the reports of other newspapers with “concrete” information that read as follows: “*The wave of provocation started at the Joseph Stalin Metal Works in Poznań, where planted saboteurs began to organize among the less class-conscious workers. This is where the disturbance started, which was based on a carefully devised plan.*” The newspaper also “reported” that, among those arrested, “*several persons are from West Germany. These persons arrived at the Poznań market under the guise of businessmen so they could participate in orchestrating the provocation.*” The same issue also published an anonymous article claiming that “*the divisive attempt in Poznań was leveled at the Polish people’s rule and the ongoing democratization [of Poland].*”¹³

The next day, almost every Hungarian newspaper published a transcript of Prime Minister Józef Cyrankiewicz’s radio speech from June 29, 1956, albeit only in fragments and heavily edited in certain places. *Szabad Nép* and other newspapers “quoted” the most heavily charged utterance as follows: “*Any provocateur or madman who dares to raise a hand against the people’s rule should have no doubt that the people’s rule shall stay his hand.*”¹⁴ In contrast, the Polish Prime Minister originally said that “his hand shall be cut off by the government.”

The reports discussed above were essentially the only source of information Hungarian society had on the events in Poznań. In the following days, more and more newspapers, including *Népsport* [‘People’s Sports’] began to report news such as “*the Hungarian athletic team traveled to Poznań on Wednesday to face off against the Poles.*”¹⁵ On July 8, 1956, the newspaper dedicated its entire front page to the Hungarian-Polish athletic competition, without a syllable said about the protests taking place a few days prior, and, on July 15, Poznań hosted a soccer tournament where 35,000 spectators watched the match between the reserve teams of Poland and Hungary (Poland won 3 to 6).¹⁶ In other words, to the Hungarian public, it seemed that order had been completely restored in Poland.

To the Hungarian Working People’s Party, the protests in Poznań were a worst case scenario come true, which explains their attempts to suppress information and

12 *Szabad Nép*, June 30, 1956, p. 3; *Magyar Nemzet*, June 30, 1956, p. 2.

13 *Esti Budapest*, June 30, 1956, p. 1.

14 *Szabad Nép*, July 1, 1956, p. 5.

15 *Népsport*, July 5, 1956, p. 3.

16 *Népsport*, July 16, 1956.

manipulate Hungarian society's perception of the events. In anticipation of future developments, the party leadership even decided to reschedule the Central Committee session planned for July 15 to June 30, so they could simultaneously condemn the "hostile group" forming around Imre Nagy, the press debate of the Petőfi Circle, and the recent events in Poznań. They sought to take an early stance for fear that they might have to face similar "provocations" in Hungary unless they showed the strength and unity of the communist party.¹⁷

At the June 30, 1956 session of the Central Committee of the Hungarian Working People's Party, the party leadership issued a resolution according to which the Petőfi Circle was the primary source of anti-party views, as certain individuals "*denied the leadership of the party and the working class and instead promulgated bourgeois, counterrevolutionary views.*" Hungarian party leadership labeled the Poznań protests as provocation, one that warned them to firmly oppose "any disruptive attempts".¹⁸ The resolution of the party was also reinforced by the fact that, on the very same day, the Central Committee of the CPSU issued a resolution "On Overcoming the Cult of the Individual and Its Consequences", in which they not only retracted certain statements made at the 20th Congress of the CPSU, but also explicitly criticized Togliatti's views.¹⁹

In light of the above, the Poznań protests took place at a time when Soviet party leadership decided to change its assessment of the period following the 20th Congress of the CPSU, and in Hungary, the idea of potential protests motivated Rákosi and his hardline communists to eliminate the opposition; however, the events ultimately took a different turn. Rákosi's government did not have enough power to defend its position *and* launch a general offensive against the opposition, while the issue of holding them accountable for their role in the orchestration of political trials was still on the agenda. In other words, the Soviet party leadership rightfully observed the situation in Hungary with great concern.

Despite the fact that the Central Committee had issued a unanimous resolution, in reality, Hungarian leadership was far from united, and within a week, Ernő Gerő contacted Ambassador Andropov to seek the Soviet leadership's help in restoring unity within the Hungarian Working People's Party. On July 9 and 12, 1956, the Presidium of the Central Committee of the CPSU convened to discuss Hungarian affairs and sent Anastas Mikoyan to Budapest. On July 13, the Soviet politician was immediately received by Rákosi, Gerő, and Hegedüs, who were warned that "*we cannot allow any unexpected or unpleasant events to take place in Hungary.*" Mikoyan's hosts did not

17 See the plenum debate of the Hungarian Working People's Party, in particular the contributions by István Kovács, Sándor Gáspár, Ferenc Dávid, and Máttyás Rákosi. MNL OL, M-KS, 276. f., 52. cs., 34. ó. e.

18 For the resolution, see *Szabad Nép*, July 1, 1956.

19 *Szabad Nép*, July 3, 1956.

deny the magnitude of the issue and admitted that “*while we have not lost our hold on power yet, it might be slipping through our fingers, and the developments might be leading towards a loss of power.*” At the end of their meeting, they agreed that Rákosi should resign his position as First Secretary and his membership in the Political Committee; the Central Committee should be supplemented with ethnic Hungarians, and “*an assault must be launched against the opposition without delay.*”²⁰

As early as the day of Mikoyan’s arrival in Budapest, the Political Committee of the Hungarian Working People’s Party had already withdrawn its confidence in Rákosi; the only question was who would succeed him as First Secretary. At the July 18, 1956 session of the Central Committee, as per their prior agreement and with due recognition of his merits, Rákosi was discharged “at his own request”, and after lengthy negotiations, Ernő Gerő was appointed as his successor.²¹ In his reply, Rákosi openly exercised self-criticism for his transgressions vis-a-vis “the cult of the individual and the violation of socialist legality”, and for not taking a firm stance against the slow process of rehabilitation, as well as certain dogmatic views.²²

At Gerő and Hegedüs’s request, Mikoyan attended the abovementioned session of the Central Committee and spoke on behalf of the Soviet leadership to inform the members that the CPSU and other sister parties were concerned about Hungary’s fate, and, in light of the events in Poznań, they wished to avoid “*something similar happening in Hungary.*” Mikoyan also criticized the debate circles held by the Petőfi Circle:

The Petőfi Circle debate is an ideological Poznań without the shooting. Remember that there were no straightforward counterrevolutionary diatribes in Poznań, so you cannot expect Hungarian communists to be reassured by the fact that the Petőfi Circle has no counterrevolutionary slogans.²³

It is remarkable that, during Mikoyan’s stay in Budapest, he met János Kádár, who was appointed as a member of the Political Committee at the abovementioned session of the Central Committee, and also met ex-party member Imre Nagy, whose readmission into the Hungarian Working People’s Party had been a subject of debate

20 Szereda & Sztikalin (1993), p. 40, 42, 45.

21 Gerő’s appointment as First Secretary was not self-evident, because Mikoyan recommended Hegedüs, Hegedüs recommended Gerő, and Rákosi recommended Kádár. Hegedüs thought Kádár was weak and Rákosi only saw Gerő as a temporary solution; moreover, Gerő himself hesitated to accept the position on account of his Jewish origins. Not long afterwards, Gerő also recommended Kádár to Mikoyan, but then proposed Hegedüs instead at the session of the Political Committee; however, the Political Committee rejected his motion and appointed Gerő. See Szereda & Sztikalin (1993), pp. 47–48, 57–58.

22 *Szabad Nép*, July 19, 1956.

23 Szereda & Sztikalin (1993), p. 62.

for months. Both politicians became more self-confident following their meeting with Mikoyan, and Nagy even allowed himself to express his doubts about Gerő's appointment as First Secretary.²⁴

Appointing Gerő as First Secretary of the Hungarian Working People's Party proved to be a bad decision, as the reform opposition considered Rákosi's dismissal a victory but saw the continuation of the same hardline policies in Gerő's appointment; at the same time, the situation had become ripe for Imre Nagy's readmission into the party. As for Gerő, he not only had to address domestic policy, but also had to start normalizing Hungarian–Yugoslav relations. During his three months in office, he only spent four weeks in Hungary: he first had to travel to the Soviet Union for six weeks, and then visited Yugoslavia. Meanwhile, Hungarian party leadership proved unable to implement the decisions issued in July 1956; not only did they fail to launch an offensive against the party opposition, but they were actually forced to make more concessions. On October 6, 1956, tens of thousands of people attended the reburial of László Rajk, and, on October 13, Imre Nagy was readmitted to the ruling party.

On July 18, 1956, the day the Central Committee of the Hungarian Working People's Party held a session to discuss the situation in Hungary, the Central Committee of the Polish United Workers' Party started its 7th Plenum. The plenum lasted ten days, during which the party leadership assessed the Poznań protests and the state of the economy as Gomułka's fate continued to hang in the balance and the struggle between the Stalinists (the Natolin faction) and the reformists (the Puławian faction) carried on.²⁵ At long last, they issued a resolution, but it did not satisfy the expectations and demands of Polish society, certain groups of which explicitly voiced their opinion through the organizations at their disposal, such as the Polish Youth Organization, the Polish Journalists' Association, the Polish Writers' Association, and, even before the 7th Plenum, through the Second All-Polish Congress of Economists.

On August 2, 1956, Gomułka was readmitted to the Polish United Workers' Party, and on October 12, he was invited to attend the session of the Political Committee; it is important to remember that Imre Nagy's readmission took place on the very next day. At the session of the Political Committee, the party leadership decided to remove high-ranking politicians Władysław Dworakowski, Franciszek Jóźwiak, Franciszek Mazur, Zenon Nowak, and Konstantin Rokossovski, and appoint Gomułka as First Secretary. The next plenum was scheduled for October 19, where they planned to issue a decision on these changes in leadership, which seemed so considerable to the CPSU that the Kremlin informed the Polish leadership through the Soviet Ambassador that the 8th Plenum would be attended by a Soviet delegation led by Khrushchev himself.

24 Rainer M. (1999), pp. 214–215; Szereda & Sztikalin (1993), pp. 49–56.

25 See Władyka & Janowski (2007).

“Poland has shown us the way, let’s do it the Hungarian way!”

As planned, the 8th Plenum of the Central Committee of the Polish United Workers’ Party started on October 19, 1956, but it was immediately suspended because Gomułka had to receive the Soviet delegation comprising Khrushchev, Mikoyan, Molotov, Lazar Kaganovich, and the Soviet Ambassador to Warsaw. Negotiations progressed with great difficulty: the Soviet delegation was not above insults and threats as they leveled harsh criticism at the Polish party leadership and its proposed change of members. In the end, the parties reached a compromise, where Gomułka promised that Poland would remain a member of the Warsaw Pact and continue on the path to socialism, and Soviet leadership approved the new members.²⁶ According to Gomułka’s notes from the Polish–Soviet talks, “*we belong to a common socialist camp – no one would forgive us if we broke apart.*”²⁷

On October 20, 1956, the day after the 8th Plenum, Gomułka delivered his inaugural address in which he criticized the Stalinist system and spoke of the beginning of a new era. He made a clear distinction between the old political system and the new system, heavily condemned the cult of the individual and the reign of terror, the economic and political failures of the government, the excessive centralization of industrial governance, and the forced collectivization of agriculture. This was Gomułka’s “20th Congress speech”, which managed to meet society’s expectations and pacified the Polish social climate, at least for the time being. The First Secretary also spoke of the protests in Poznań and the mistakes made by the former Polish leadership, and emphasized that the workers of Poznań had not protested against socialism, but against these mistakes; at the same time, he also criticized the official statement on the events, which attributed the protests to the work of imperialist agents and provocateurs: “*Agents and provocateurs can be found anywhere and at any time. However, they shall never determine the position of the working class anywhere (...) The reasons for the tragedy in Poznań and the deep dissatisfaction of the entire working class lie within us, in the leadership of the party and in the government.*”²⁸

In Hungary, the newspaper *Szabad Nép* published Gomułka’s inaugural address in full, and the effect was staggering: because Hungarian leadership had never

26 Notatka z rozmów delegacji Prezydium KC KPZR i członków Biura Politycznego KC PZPR w Warszawie, 19 października 1956 roku. In Dybicz, P. (Ed.) (2016). *Przełom Października ’56*. Oratio Recta.

27 Gomułka’s Notes from the 19–20 October Polish–Soviet Talks, October 19, 1956. History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, Gomułka Family private papers. Source: <http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/116002> (accessed on September 19, 2022).

28 *Nowe Drogi*, No. 88, October 1956. 8th Plenum of the Central Committee of the Polish United Workers’ Party, October 19–21, 1956.

delivered such a statement, the newspaper sold out immediately.²⁹ This means that, by October 23, 1956, Hungarian society had read Gomułka's anti-Stalinist speech, and while Hungarian young people were not privy to Polish internal affairs, the text made two things abundantly clear: the Polish people wanted more freedom and greater independence, and the Soviet Union wanted to prevent these changes. These realizations led the university students of Budapest onto a path of action: on the evening of October 22, the University of Technology issued "Sixteen Political, Economic, and Ideological Points", which included their demands for a new government formed by Imre Nagy, and, on October 23, the students gathered by the statue of Polish General Józef Bem to show solidarity with the Polish people and to express their desire for similar changes in Hungary.



College students demonstrating on Tanács Körút (today: Károly Körút) on 23rd October 1956 with placards representing solidarity with Poland

29 *Szabad Nép*, October 23, 1956.

The university students protesting in Hungary devised slogans to reflect their demands, and the crowd repeatedly chanted the phrase, “*Poland has shown us the way, let’s do it the Hungarian way!*” This meant that while Warsaw was leading by example, Hungary had to follow its own unique path and build socialism by taking into account its own national character and specificities, rather than imitate the Soviet model. (The Soviet government later issued a declaration on October 31, 1956, which echoed the same sentiment.) According to a memoir on the events of 1956, the slogan was “*Hungarians progress together, we’ll follow the Polish example!*”, which was less ideologically charged than the former slogan and instead called for similar changes in Hungary. It is possible that the crowd chanted both versions of the slogan while also waving a banner calling for “*Solidarity with the Polish People*” and a poster bearing the Polish coat of arms. A third slogan adopted by the marching protesters was “*Independence, freedom, Polish–Hungarian camaraderie!*” to express the goals of and traditionally close relations between the two nations. The university students setting out from the University of Technology marched under the Hungarian flag, to which they also added the Polish flag that would later appear by the statue of Józef Bem. According to the memoirs of György Gömöri, someone had brought a trumpet and played the patriotic song “God Save Poland”.

Solidarity Protests in Poland

On October 24, 1956, the day after the outbreak of the Hungarian Revolution in Budapest, Władysław Gomułka delivered a speech at the rally held on Parade Square (plac Defilad) in Warsaw. In light of the events in Budapest on the previous day, he declared that “*the state government will not tolerate any actions against Polish state interests or our political system for one moment (...) Enough of these rallies and protests! It is time to resume our daily work!*”³⁰ It was necessary for Gomułka to make a statement, considering that only a few days before and after a heated debate, he had promised Soviet party leader Nikita Khrushchev that Poland would continue to build socialism, that there would be peace and order, and the country would remain a political and military ally of the Soviet Union.

Despite Gomułka’s speech, however, Polish society fixed its attention on Hungary: across the country, working youngsters, university students, and intellectuals alike followed the developments in Budapest with great sympathy, and expressed their solidarity from the start. Hundreds of thousands of people had attended the rally

30 For the relevant parts of Gomułka’s speech, see Lengyel Filmkrónika. Source: <https://youtu.be/Xhl05lYwBJE> (accessed on September 19, 2022).



The crowd demonstrating at Bem József Square on 23rd October 1956
with Hungarian and Polish banners

in Warsaw and the Polish flag was joined by the Hungarian flag in the crowd,³¹ and, after the rally concluded, over 2,000 people marched over to the office of the Polish United Workers' Party to cheer for Gomułka and the party, and to place a banner reading "*The Hungarians cry out for help.*" Some ways away on Three Crosses Square (plac Trzech Krzyży), university students donned white and red armbands and stood in a guard of honor in front of the Hungarian Cultural Institute, waving a Hungarian flag that bore the words, "*Respect for the Hungarian Nation*".³²

As the crowd from Gomułka's rally dispersed, a group of protesters marched in front of the Hungarian Embassy in Warsaw to express their solidarity with the Hungarian nation, while another group headed to the Old Town to hold an assembly at Sigismund's Column with the slogan "*Warsaw – Budapest – Belgrade*"; however, the protesters were dispersed by the Polish Internal Security Corps, the police, and groups of volunteers. By 10.00 p.m., order was restored in the Polish capital and the police had arrested 70 persons; however, the next day, the Polish University of Technology held a rally attended by approximately 5,000 people, where the students composed a letter to Hungary expressing solidarity with their fellow Hungarian university students.³³

Other communities in Poland also mobilized to show solidarity with Hungary. At the Medical University of Gdańsk, students decided to send a delegation to Budapest to assist the protesters, and even gathered the funds necessary for travel; their plan was approved by the university, but, due to the situation in Budapest, their proposal was rendered impossible. Meanwhile in the factories of the city, the workers established the Polish–Hungarian Friendship Society and ordered three days of mourning, during which they instructed the population to hang out Polish and Hungarian flags on each building. The local newspapers *Głos Wybrzeża* ['Voice of the Coast'] and *Dziennik Bałtycki* ['Baltic Daily'] sent correspondents to Budapest, who published a series of reports on the events in Hungary. On October 25, 1956 in Toruń, university students sent a telegram to young workers and university students of Budapest, in which they thanked them for expressing solidarity with the changes in Poland, and, on October 27 in Wrocław, the Jelcz Automotive Works halted production to hold a rally where they chanted anti-Soviet and pro-Hungarian slogans. They also hung out the Hungarian and Polish flags and sang the Polish national anthem, and not long afterwards, the city hall in Wrocław flew the symbol of the Hungarian Revolution: the Hungarian flag with a hole in the middle.³⁴

31 Misur, Gy. (2010). *Szarvasról Rómába. Diplomáciai küldetésben*. Mundus Novus Kft., p. 53.

32 Bazylczuk, E. (2017). *Magyarország – 1956 – Emlékképek*. Mester Nyomda.

33 Tischler, J. (Ed.) (1996). *Az 1956-os magyar forradalom lengyel dokumentumai*. Windsor Kiadó.

34 Tischler, J. (2003). "*Hogy megcsendüljön minden gyáva fül*". *Lengyel–magyar közelmúlt*. Jelenkor Kiadó – 1956-os Intézet, pp. 64–66.

The biggest protest took place on October 30, 1956 in Olsztyn. On the next day, an “Urgent Report” issued by the local office of Polish public security gave a detailed account of the events as follows. At 2.00 p.m., at the initiative of the students of the Agricultural College and the Teacher Training College of Olsztyn, a protest was organized in solidarity with the Hungarian revolutionaries. The students marched to Red Army Square, where a group of approximately twenty persons had already assembled to wave Hungarian and Polish flags and to light candles. Four students stood in a guard of honor as the crowd brought wreaths, and later the masses marched over to General Swierczewski Square to hold a rally attended by approximately 10,000 people. A group soon formed and left the rally to destroy the name plaques on Red Army Square and rename it “Hungarian Revolutionaries’ Square”. These students carried banners with slogans such as “*We demand the withdrawal of the Soviet troops from Hungary!*”, “*We demand sovereignty for Poland and Hungary!*”, “*Free Poland – Free Hungary*”, “*Behold the Soviet Internationalism in Hungary*”, and a banner bearing a map of Hungary, two fists above it bearing the red star and dripping with blood, and the caption, “*Hands off Hungary*”.³⁵

“The Hungarians need blood!”

Polish society not only kept a close eye on the events in Hungary and expressed their solidarity with the Hungarian revolutionaries symbolically by protesting, but also backed up their sentiments with action. Within the first days of the Hungarian Revolution of 1956, Poland started a voluntary blood donation and general donation drive, and, on October 26, 1956, Polish Radio broadcasted a call for aid to “*our Hungarian brethren*”. After the broadcasts, Polish workers and university students showed up en masse at the blood donation centers that operated day and night across the country, with the citizens of Poznań, Bydgoszcz, Łódź, Warsaw, Białystok, Legnica, Wrocław, Katowice, and Tarnów taking the lead. In this manner, several thousands of Polish citizens came together to aid the Hungarian revolutionaries, including poet Wiktor Woroszyński and communist politician Mieczysław Rakowski (the latter was only 30 years old at the time), who would later play an important role in the cultural and political history of Poland, respectively.³⁶

As early as October 26, 1956, the first airplane from Poland arrived in Budapest, and by November 3, a total of fifteen airplanes had arrived to deliver donations. According to the statistics of the Polish Red Cross published on November 9, 1956,

35 Tischler (1996), pp. 205–207.

36 Woroszyński, W. (2019). *Dzienniki*. Vol. 3, 1988–1996. Karta, p. 628.

in the days of the Hungarian Revolution, Poland had donated a total of 795 liters of blood, 415 liters of blood plasma, 16.5 tons of blood substitutes, serum, medicine, and bandages, and they were also preparing another 24 tons of donations, primarily food, which was delivered soon after to aid the Hungarian population. At the time, the value of these donations was 2,000,000 USD, an incredible amount of aid considering that these events took place eleven years after the conclusion of World War II; in fact, the humanitarian aid rendered by Poland was twice the amount of aid Hungary had received from every other donating country in the world combined.

Not even the Soviet military intervention could stop Poland from providing humanitarian aid to Hungary. By the end of January 1957, Polish society had collected voluntary monetary donations amounting to 31,000,000 PLN and other donations equivalent to 11,000,000 PLN, which were transported to Hungary with the support of the Polish Red Cross using 42 trucks and 104 railway wagons. In addition, at the request of Kádár's government, the Polish government provided a non-reimbursable commercial aid grant equivalent to 100,000,000 PLN.³⁷ According to the memoirs of diplomat György Misur, in the days of the Hungarian Revolution of 1956, "*countless delegations had visited the [Hungarian Embassy in Warsaw] from every corner of the country (...) There were touching scenes of ordinary people and collectives offering money, food, blood, armed groups, and voluntary service, and these were always accompanied by the phrase, 'Pole and Hungarian brothers be, good for fight and good for party.'*"³⁸

Solidarity within the Polish Writers' Association

The revolution and freedom fight of the Hungarian nation even inspired Polish poets to contribute. On October 23, 1956, the crowd gathering by the statue of Józef Bem included poet Adam Ważyk, author of the seminal poem "A Poem for Adults", which marked the true beginning of the process of de-Stalinization in Poland known as the "Polish thaw". In 1955, the poem was translated by Béla Horváth and published in the journal *Látóhatár* ['Horizon'] in its entirety, meaning it was known to the Hungarian intelligentsia:³⁹ in fact, in June 1956, in his famous essay on pervasive lies, dogmas, idols, and superstitions titled *A tengervíz sós* ['Sea Water Is Salty'], writer Tibor Tardos quoted the lines of the Polish poet verbatim. On October 23, Ważyk did not address the crowd due to the spontaneous and disorganized nature of the protests, but he was inspired by these moments of the Hungarian Revolution and commemorated

37 Tischler (2003), p. 62, 81.

38 Misur (2010), p. 52.

39 Ważyk, A. (1955). Vers felnőtteknek. *Látóhatár*, 6(6), 324–330.

them in his poem “Qui tacent clamant”. Other poets who were inspired by the events in Hungary to publish their own poem included Zbigniew Herbert, Wiktor Woroszyński, Julian Przyboś, Andrzej Strumiłło, Stefan Żarewski, Tadeusz Śliwiak, Tadeusz Kubiak, and Jarosław Iwaszkiewicz.

Polish literary life also went beyond publishing poems inspired by the Hungarian Revolution: the Polish Writers’ Association planned to open its 7th Congress on November 6, 1956, but postponed it when they received news of the Soviet military intervention because they decided not to involve the invited Soviet writers in their discussions.

On November 10, 1956, writers Tibor Déry, Gyula Illyés, Zoltán Zelk, László Benjámin, and István Örkény contacted the Polish Embassy in Budapest to request political asylum. Despite the fact that he had been following the events in Budapest with remarkable objectivity and sympathy, Polish Ambassador Adam Willmann was obliged to explain that he could not grant political asylum, which caused the writers to withdraw their application. Upon his return, Wiktor Woroszyński attempted to request political asylum for Déry in Poland by seeking out a member of the Political Committee of the Polish United Workers’ Party in charge of cultural affairs, but his request was denied. (It is unclear whether the member in question was unable or unwilling to fulfill the request.) In the end, Déry was arrested in Hungary and sentenced to nine years in prison.

After being postponed on account of the Soviet military intervention in Hungary, the 7th Congress of the Polish Writers’ Association took place between November 29 and December 2, 1956, and the meeting began by the members rising for a minute’s silence to honor the martyrs of the Hungarian Revolution. In his opening remarks, Chair Julian Przyboś began as follows:

Colleagues! This terrible Hungarian drama is not over yet, and we look towards its second phase, now beginning, with compassion. A long road leads to the cleansing catharsis ahead, but we all share the same views on this tragedy; our hearts feel the same thing, and our will is one. The Hungarian nation has risen against the oppressive tyrants, executioners, and the government of those who had sentenced to death the best sons of the working class, the Hungarian patriots. These days have unleashed a horrible war, and the end is nowhere in sight.⁴⁰

Woroszyński, who had just returned from Budapest to attend the 7th Congress added the following:

40 Quoted in Tischler, J. (2011). Magyarok és lengyelek 1956-ban. In Kiss Gy., Cs. & Pápay, Gy. (Eds.), *Közép-Európa jegyében. Írószövetségek a demokráciáért és a nemzeti függetlenségért*. Magyar Írószövetség Arany János Alapítványa – Kortárs Könyvkiadó, p. 60.

The crimes committed in Hungary were not just aggression and genocide; they committed the horrible crime of treading down a popular freedom movement... (...) I do not know how anyone could ever pay for the socialism gunned down in Budapest, for the hopes invested in a true socialism free of inhumanity and lies – because that was all the Hungarian nation had wanted; it wanted freedom, independence, and true socialism, and for that it was cast into an abyss of indescribable suffering (...) I must loudly protest against the spilling of innocent blood, against the betrayal of thought, against the aggression of imperialist chauvinism, and against the unending series of murders committed under the banners of socialism and peace.⁴¹

Woroszyński concluded his speech by making two proposals as an act of sympathy with Hungary. The first proposal was to issue an invitation to Hungarian writers (and here he mentioned György Lukács and Tibor Déry by name) to come with their families to Poland, which was to be accepted at their own discretion. The other proposal was to abolish press censorship without delay to ensure true freedom of the press. The Polish Writers' Association also decided to issue a declaration to condemn the Soviet military invention in Hungary, which was signed by a total of 291 writers.

The Szczecin Revolt

Following the Soviet military invention in Hungary, several Polish cities held demonstrations in solidarity with the Hungarian people. On November 5, 1956 in Kraków, thousands participated in a silent protest organized by the revolutionary committee of the Jagiellonian University. On the same day in Toruń, university students rallied to discuss the events and suggested organizing a legion to aid the Hungarian people. On December 11 in Gliwice, approximately 5,000 people participated in a silent march to Main Square, waving Hungarian, Polish, and black flags, and carrying a banner that read, “*Enough of the bloodshed in Hungary!*”⁴²

The citizens of Szczecin, a seaside port town in northwestern Poland also participated in rendering social assistance to Hungary, and because Csepel was the twin town of Szczecin, their donations were all sent to Csepel. Another symbolic gesture in support of the workers of Csepel was a stamp captioned “*Szczecin–Csepel*”, which depicted the handshake of two working hands. On All Saints' Day on November 1, 1956, the students of the University of Technology in Szczecin stood in a guard of honor and hung out the Polish and Hungarian flags.

41 Tischler (2011), pp. 60–61.

42 Kovács, I. & Mitrovits, M. (2017). *Magyar emlékek Lengyelországban*. Antall József Tudásközpont.

Despite the acts of solidarity mentioned above, Szczecin became better known for the fact that, on December 10, 1956, several thousands of people stormed the buildings of the local police and the Soviet consulate, which they managed to occupy and set on fire. These protesters demonstrated against the suppression of the Hungarian Revolution, the Soviet military occupation of Hungary, and Imre Nagy's abduction, without success. Polish public security and the police managed to identify several participants, and the revolt was followed by political trials, prison sentences, careers ruined, and years spent under surveillance.

The Polish leadership did not dare disclose the fact that the Soviet consulate had been attacked by protesters; instead, Polish propaganda attempted to frame the events as drunken hooligans disturbing the peace in Szczecin by committing acts of vandalism. According to the official narrative, the perpetrators were young vandals under the influence of alcohol, who looted several stores and attacked "state buildings". Witnesses refuted these statements, but the party leadership hushed up their accounts; they not only kept silent about the targets of the attacks, but also the professed aims of the revolt and the slogans chanted by the crowd. Following the revolt, the leadership recruited "volunteers" from among the working class and the university student body, who were charged with the task of keeping order. According to our current information, the Szczecin revolt was the only revolt in the entire Socialist Bloc in response to the suppression of the Hungarian Revolution of 1956.⁴³

The Reception of the Hungarian Revolution of 1956 in Poland

Following the suppression of the Hungarian Revolution and the formation of Kádár's government, the first report by the Hungarian Embassy in Warsaw was issued on December 15, 1956 by chargé d'affaires ad interim Péter Baló, who attempted to summarize the period between October 23 and the end of November. He observed that Polish society showed immense solidarity with "*the forces of the struggle for socialist democratization and sovereignty*", "*the progressive masses of the armed revolutionaries*", and Imre Nagy's government, which was the reason that Polish society condemned both Soviet interventions and "*the way [the case of Imre Nagy] was handled*". (It is important to note that at the time of the report, Imre Nagy was still staying at the Yugoslav Embassy in Budapest.) Baló concluded that, in this period, there was a strong desire for "*Hungary to find the solution that Poland had managed to find without all this bloodshed.*" Baló was aware that his remarks would displease the new Hungarian leadership, and therefore emphasized that "*we established the*

43 Skubisz, P. (2009). *Nocna rewolta. Antysowieckie zamieszki w Szczecinie 10 grudnia 1956 r.* IPN.

*above facts based on examination, analysis, and comprehensive research of the most objective kind.*⁴⁴

Following his remarks on the period between October 23 and the end of November 1956, Baló continued his report by painting an even more grim picture of the Polish social climate at the beginning of December:

The opinion of Polish society only changed inasmuch as there is a rise of anti-Soviet sentiment (...) [and] a rise in antipathy towards the Kádár government (...) These opinions, which are shared by the vast majority of Polish society have created a delicate situation for the Polish leadership, who cannot be reasonably expected to make a statement either in favor of the masses or against their sentiments.⁴⁵

Baló's one reassuring statement concerned Polish party leadership, and suggested that, despite their lack of unity, they believed that *“now that it has come to this, [they] must support Comrade Kádár's government.”*⁴⁶

Due to the apprehensions of Polish leadership, censorship increased for articles discussing the events in Hungary, and from the end of December 1956, no such articles could be published. This meant that the series of articles written by Wiktor Woroszyński for *Nowa Kultura* [‘New Culture’], by Hanna Adamiecka for *Sztandar Młodych* [‘Standard for the Young’], and by Marian Bielicki for *Po Prostu*, all of which had such a profound impact on Polish society were no longer being published from the beginning of 1957. (A few months later, Adamiecka committed suicide.) At the same time, this crackdown did not mean a change of direction in the Polish press or a more positive representation of Kádár's government.

On April 2, 1957, Baló contacted Panteleimon Ponomarenko, the Soviet Ambassador to Warsaw to complain that the employees of the Hungarian Embassy were forced to carry out constant agitation among Polish journalists “to make them understand the events in Hungary”, with little success. Baló also informed Ponomarenko that he had met Marian Bielicki, who remained consistent in his conviction that there was no counterrevolution in Hungary, that the Soviet intervention had been a grave mistake, and he also condemned the Kádár government.⁴⁷

Over time, Baló issued several reports on different forms of Polish social assistance to the Hungarian people. On January 24, 1957, his report to the Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs expressed great sympathy towards the Polish artists who

44 MNL OL, XIX-J-1. Lengyelország 1945–1964, 1. d., 008066.

45 Ibidem.

46 Ibidem.

47 MNL OL, XIX-J-1. Lengyelország 1945–1964, 1. d., 002289.

had started charitable actions to aid their Hungarian colleagues. The actors of the Polish National Theater had organized two plays, the proceedings of which went to Hungarian theater actors performing in Hungary. With the help of UNESCO, the Polish artists appealed to the entire art world to support their Hungarian colleagues. Baló spoke of his immense gratitude to Polish pianist Władysław Kędra in particular, who had performed a total of sixteen concerts across Poland and donated the proceedings to aid Hungarian musicians. By January 24, 1957, Polish teachers had gathered approximately 1,000,000 PLN to aid Hungarian teachers, and proposed that Hungarian teachers and academics should come and take a vacation at the resorts of the Polish Teachers' Association. Baló suggested to the Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs that the Hungarian institutes involved should send their thanks to the Society of Polish Theater and Film Artists, the Association of Polish Artists and Designers, the Polish Teachers' Association, and to pianist Władysław Kędra.⁴⁸

Consequences

Polish and Hungarian internal affairs greatly determined the relations between the two countries, where each had received a new leader, but the circumstances of their rise to power were fundamentally different. Władysław Gomułka was the true victor of the “Polish October”, and he owed his popularity to the fact that, in accordance with the Soviet government declaration issued on October 30, 1956,⁴⁹ he managed to make the Soviet Union recognize Poland as an equal partner instead of a mere satellite state. In contrast, János Kádár had neither prestige nor legitimacy to support his rise to power, and following the armed resistance and suppression of the Hungarian Revolution of 1956, he was met with considerable social and political resistance from the workers' councils and the intelligentsia.

Beyond internal political constraints, Polish–Hungarian bilateral relations were also impacted by the development of global politics, and the fact that the socialist world system fundamentally dictated the foreign policies of the socialist states by acting as a barrier *and* a protection. Due to the extraordinary challenges posed by Hungarian internal affairs, Kádár's problems and international isolation served to curb his foreign policy ambitions: initially, his activities were limited to convincing the world of the necessity of the Soviet military intervention and securing the unconditional support of the Socialist Bloc. To this end, Kádár framed global politics

48 MNL OL, XIX-J-1-k. Lengyelország 1945–1964, 27. d., 00724.

49 See Gál, É. et al. (Eds.) (1993). *A “Jelcin-dosszié”. Szovjet dokumentumok 1956-ról*. Századvég Kiadó – 56-os Intézet, pp. 65–67.

as the struggle between two world systems: on one side stood the Soviet Union, its Socialist Bloc, and the third world countries that had broken their colonial shackles to join it, and on the other side stood the imperialists and their allies, who now eschewed open interference (as Kádár deemed the events of 1956) in favor of pursuing a policy of international thaw. In Kádár's view, socialist countries were protected from external threats by the Soviet Union and their own unity based on the principle of proletarian internationalism;⁵⁰ however, this foreign policy "doctrine" struggled to include Poland because Gomułka had very different foreign policy goals and domestic policy needs.

Due to the state of Polish internal affairs, Polish leadership was unable to simply accept the suppression of the Hungarian Revolution of 1956: on the one hand, they had to contend with the sympathy Polish society had for the Hungarian people, and on the other hand, at the end of October, the Polish leadership had taken an open stance in favor of the revolutionary Hungarian government.

At the same time, the Polish leadership did benefit from the Hungarian Revolution of 1956 inasmuch as it helped divide the Soviet Union's attention, which had previously been fixed on Poland alone. Gomułka essentially used the events in Hungary to blackmail Polish society: the image of Budapest lying in ruins reminded many Poles of the state of Warsaw following the Warsaw Uprising, and allowed Gomułka to convince Polish society to show restraint.

Translated by: Eva Misits

50 For the foreign policy of the Kádár era, see Földes, Gy. (2015). *Kádár János külpolitikája és nemzetközi tárgyalásai I-II*. Napvilág Kiadó.

Italian Diplomacy and the Hungarian Revolution of 1956

GÁBOR ANDREIDES

Introduction

It is a well-known historical fact that the Hungarian Revolution of 1956 sparked enormous unrest in Italy, where millions were mobilized by the news coming from Hungary. Zsuzsa Szőnyi, who, together with her artist husband Mátyás Triznya, had been the founder and for decades the proprietor and very soul of the Triznya Pub, a major cultural forum for Hungarian émigrés in Rome, recalled that “*not even in Garibaldi’s time in 1848 was their love and enthusiasm for us as incredible as it was in 1956. In 1956, Hungarians were worshipped in Italy; they adored us. When the refugees began to arrive, anyone who had the means wanted to help: the Italians as well, and us Hungarians all the more so.*”¹

The cause of the Hungarian freedom fight was supported by a host of leading Italian politicians, the political public, and ordinary citizens alike, and, except for the Italian communist leaders who embraced Moscow’s narrative in their evaluation of the events, the disappointment could be felt even within the ranks of the Italian Communist Party. Though it was temporary, many chose to turn away from the party, and even the party leadership faced serious problems when it came to their personal evaluation of the events. On the subject, Christian Democrat Giulio Andreotti said that “*fellow representative Giancarlo Pajetta, who had spent long years in prison during the period of fascism, told me in confidence that he was haunted by suicidal thoughts. To witness the fact that the Soviet Union had started a colonizer’s war against Hungary created some precarious situations for such individuals.*”²

In the following sections, we shall analyze the reactions and responses of Italian diplomacy to the Hungarian Revolution of 1956 and the subsequent waves of refugees, and the efforts Italy took to support the cause of the Hungarians.

1 Csete, Ö. (2017). *1956 személyesen. Forradalmi portrék*. Püski Kiadó, p. 156.

2 Ibidem.

The Mechanism Is Set in Motion

Following the outbreak of the Hungarian Revolution of 1956, an official response from Italian diplomacy was not long wanting: at the parliamentary session on October 26, 1956, on behalf of the Italian government, Minister of Foreign Affairs Gaetano Martino expressed his disapproval and condemnation of the Soviet aggression and of the Soviet troops entering Budapest.³ The Hungarian embassy in Rome also made a move, and, on October 31, the delegation of the Hungarian People's Republic in Rome issued a *note verbale* to the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in which they requested, among other things, that Italy continue to uphold its policy of immunity towards the Hungarian embassy and all Hungarian assets in Italy.⁴

On November 2, Envoy Imre Szabó and First Embassy Secretary László Perczel – who would later serve as the Hungarian Ambassador to Madrid⁵ – made a formal visit to the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. According to Italian foreign affairs sources, it was Perczel who told the press of the political opinion of the Hungarian Embassy in Rome regarding the Hungarian Revolution of 1956, which was to the effect that the diplomats serving in the Italian capital supported the policies of Prime Minister Imre Nagy's government, the initiation of diplomatic relations with the Holy See, and the strengthening of Hungarian–Italian relations.⁶ Their full declaration (which is often quoted only in fragments) reads as follows:

The personnel of the Embassy of Hungary in Rome welcomes the triumph of the glorious revolution of the Hungarian people with great enthusiasm. [The Embassy] fully identifies with the goals of a struggle that serves the freedom, democratic order, economic rise, and peace of our nation. We agree that work must immediately begin on devising the foreign policies of the independent Hungarian nation, and that these principles must be placed on new foundations. In this regard, the diplomatic mission recommends that the Hungarian government devote special attention to Hungarian–Italian diplomatic relations, which, in the course of history, have always been defined

- 3 Walcz, A. (2001). *La rivoluzione ungherese del 1956 e l'Italia*. l'Ambasciata della Repubblica di Ungheria e Accademia di Ungheria in Roma, p. 18.
- 4 Historico-Diplomatic Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (*Archivio Storico Diplomatico del Ministero degli Affari Esteri*, hereafter: ASDME), Direzione Generale per gli Affari Politici (hereafter: DGAP), Rappresentanza diplomatica d'Italia in Budapest 1944–1966, busta 4, Legazione della Repubblica Popolare Ungherese Nota verbale. Roma, 31 ottobre 1956.
- 5 Pál, I. (2020). A madridi rezidentúra. A magyar hírszerzés Spanyolországban a detente csúcspontjától a kishidegháború végéig, 1976–1984. *Nemzet és Biztonság*, 13(3), 113–128. <https://doi.org/10.32576/nb.2020.3.8>, Source: http://real.mtak.hu/124712/1/NeB_2020_3_08_Pal.pdf (accessed on June 14, 2022).
- 6 ASDME, DGAP, Rappresentanza diplomatica d'Italia in Budapest 1944–1966, busta 4, Ministero degli Affari Esteri D.G.A.P. Segreteria Appunto per il Segretario Generale. Roma, 2 novembre 1956.

by the traditional friendship of the two peoples, as well as to relations with the Holy See, which have deteriorated due to certain misguided policies. The members of the Embassy of Hungary are convinced that relations between a free Hungary and other nations must be based on sovereignty and the principle of national independence, while fully respecting the interests of other nations.⁷

At the Hungarian delegation's meeting with members of the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Envoy Szabó confirmed at the request of the Italian party that he fully consented to the publication of the above quoted declaration, thanked Italy for the support it rendered to Hungary, and also thanked the Italian delegation for speaking in favor of Hungary at the Special Session of the UN General Assembly.⁸ Judging by the meeting minutes issued by the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Szabó had no reliable information on how the Hungarian political leadership was evaluating the events of the Hungarian Revolution. He believed and explicitly told his negotiation partner that Hungary's exit from the Warsaw Pact and the declaration of neutrality made by Head of Government Imre Nagy "*attempted to reconcile the various tendencies of the revolutionaries in order to form a unified front against the Soviet invasion and to assume a position towards the UN that would satisfy the demands of the vast majority of Hungarians.*"⁹

Whether the declaration had been made by Envoy Szabó or First Embassy Secretary Perczel, it is certain that Szabó was the one who suffered the ill consequences of its publication. In his defense, Szabó told the Budapest leadership that he had consulted the Embassy of the Soviet Union in Rome prior to making the incriminating announcement, and received the reply that such a public statement would certainly be useful in "distracting" the Italian Hungarian emigration in Rome and other parts of the country "from the influence of fascist propaganda". The Budapest leadership not only dismissed these claims, but also dismissed Szabó's claim that the opinion of the Hungarian Embassy contained no anti-Soviet references, and ordered his return to Hungary.¹⁰

On November 4, 1956, the Soviet army launched another attack against Hungary and Budapest in particular, and two days later, on November 6, the Italian liberals demanded that their government make a suggestion to the NATO member

7 ASDME, DGAP, Rappresentanza diplomatica d'Italia in Budapest 1944–1966, busta 4, Legazione della Repubblica Popolare Ungherese Nota verbale. Roma, 31 ottobre 1956.

8 ASDME, DGAP, Rappresentanza diplomatica d'Italia in Budapest 1944–1966, busta 4, Ministero degli Affari Esteri D.G.A.P. Segreteria Appunto per il Segretario Generale. Roma, 2 novembre 1956.

9 Ibidem.

10 Pankovits, J. (2005). *Fejezetek a magyar-olasz politikai kapcsolatok történetéből*. Gondolat Kiadó, p. 42.

states to terminate diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union.¹¹ Meanwhile, the activities of Italian diplomacy also intensified due to the Suez Crisis and the severe problems arising in the Middle East, to the point where Rome urged the Italian UN delegation to take a more active stance in the matter. At the beginning of November, Minister of Foreign Affairs Martino addressed a plenary sitting of the Italian Parliament and drew parallels between the crises in Eastern Europe and the Middle East, and defended the European allies of Italy who, despite being aggressors in the case, did accept the decision of the international community to oppose the Soviet Union. Martino accused the latter of the utter violation of the law, urged free elections in Hungary, and expressed his hopes that the UN would treat the Soviet Union's actions as it did those of France and Great Britain. Martino's speech had such influence in the country that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs received a number of Italian volunteers to fight in Hungary, as Italian volunteers had done during the Hungarian Revolution of 1848.¹²

Following the suppression of the Hungarian Revolution of 1956, a wave of approximately 200,000 Hungarian refugees flooded Austria, and, in November 1956, the Italian government made a decision to join the ranks of European governments that sought to alleviate the refugee crisis and the ever-increasing burdens placed on the recently liberated from Allied occupation and now independent Austria. According to the decision of the government, Italy agreed to receive a total of 2,000 refugees on a temporary basis by June 1957, a quota that was later doubled to 4,000 persons in total.¹³ According to the summary reports of the Intergovernmental Committee for European Migration (ICEM), the most severe period of the refugee crisis that followed the suppression of the Hungarian Revolution fell between November 1956 and February 1957, when the ICEM coordinated the departure of approximately 2,000 persons per day from Austria, and these numbers peaked on November 30 with a total of 5,410 refugees.¹⁴

On December 7, 1956, when the first 152 Hungarian refugees arrived in Rome, they were greeted at the train station by several high ranking representatives of Italian political life and diplomacy. They were received by, among others, Christian Democrat and Head of Government Antonio Segni, Social Democrat and Deputy Prime

11 Walcz (2001), p. 19.

12 Somlai, K. (2006). Magyarország és Olaszország. In Békés, Cs. (Ed.), *Evolúció és revolúció. Magyarország és a nemzetközi politika 1956-ban*. 1956-os Intézet – Gondolat Kiadó, p. 256.

13 Walcz (2001), p. 26.

14 Intergovernmental Committee for European Migration, ICEM (1958). *Il Comitato Intergovernativo per le Migrazioni Europee (C.I.M.E.) La sua struttura e le sue attività*. Geneva, September 1958, p. 11. Source: <https://www.cser.it/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/CIME-struttura-e-attivita%CC%80-1958.pdf> (accessed on June 14, 2022).

Minister Giuseppe Saragat, Minister Raffaele De Caro, Secretary of State Carlo Russo and Secretary of State Lorenzo Natali of the Presidency, Secretary of State Vittorio Badini of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Director-General of the Italian Red Cross, and Apostolic Nuncio Giuseppe Cardinal Fietta.¹⁵ It therefore makes sense that, similarly to the rest of Italy, the capital also supported the Hungarian cause, aided the refugees, and condemned the policies of the Soviet Union, which also caused the Italian Communist Party to become completely politically and morally isolated, at least for the time being.

Beyond official diplomatic circles, Italian civil society also came together to aid the Hungarians, including well-known and lesser-known citizens (Umberto Agnelli, Filippo Anfuso, Gina Lollobrigida, Mirko Tremaglia), provinces (Sicily, Trentino-South Tyrol), local governments (Capestrano, Milano, Trento), national civic organizations (the Italian Red Cross, Actio Catolica), and large corporations (Fiat, Olivetti, Grundig Italiana), all of which sprang into action and organized the transport of humanitarian aid to Hungary, as well as the reception and accommodation of refugees arriving from Hungary.¹⁶ Giuseppe Alessi,¹⁷ who at the time was President of the Autonomous Region of Sicily, recalled the weeks and months when the residents of the largest island in the Mediterranean Sea came together as one to aid the Hungarians:

At the time I was President of the Province of Sicily; I was the first President of this region, actually, and all I did was send a ton of oranges, lemons, and so forth to Budapest. The Minister of Foreign Affairs was offended by this and said, “You are a provincial president, not the Minister of Foreign Affairs. How dare you directly contact the Hungarians instead of going through me?” But I was not a minister; I was the head of Sicily!¹⁸

It is also worth noting the enthusiasm with which the bastions of Italian higher education – including Bologna, Ferrara, Florence, Genova, Milano, Modena, Padua, Parma, and Rome – endorsed the cause of the Hungarian Revolution of 1956.¹⁹ Professors, students, and the entire Italian university population in general assisted and supported

15 ASDME, DGAP, Rappresentanza diplomatica d’Italia in Budapest 1944–1966, busta 4, Fonogramma Pol(izia). Stranieri, 12 luglio 1956.

16 Walcz (2001), pp. 53–57.

17 For reasons of scope, the politicians and diplomats included in this study are only listed by name without further details.

18 Csete (2017), p. 144.

19 Walcz (2001), p. 57.

the Hungarian refugees who had been forced to leave their homeland and start a new life in Italy. According to Giorgio Vanzo, who was a university student in 1956,

I served as an Italian tutor to the Hungarian refugee students so they could earn their diplomas from the Faculty of Arts. Since I myself had a bit of a speech impediment and speak almost in a whistle, every single Hungarian student – otherwise excellent students, by the way – learned to speak Italian with a whistle because of my pronunciation.²⁰

He also added that

(...) when Christmas came, there were many university students whose families agreed to receive one or two Hungarian students for the holidays. I, my family, and two Hungarians went to Lake Garda. The color of the water was beautiful and the sky was crystal clear, and I remember – and even today it still makes me emotional – one of them saying, with his meager Italian knowledge, while we watched the calm waters at the edge of the lake, “It’s nice, but Lake Balaton is nicer”.²¹

Let us now turn to how the Italian diplomatic mechanism was set in motion in the wake of the Hungarian Revolution of 1956, and how it reacted to the severe humanitarian catastrophe following the revolution.

The Italian embassies within the region – including those in Belgrade, Vienna, and of course, Budapest – played a prominent role in gathering news and information, and informing Rome of the developments. Even under difficult circumstances, the Austrian foreign representation headed by Angelino Corrias and the Italian Embassy in Budapest headed by Ambassador Fabrizio Franco maintained near-constant contact with Rome and with the Italian Embassy in Belgrade headed by Gastone Guidotti, and in the case of Franco, they also remained in touch with the accredited (Western) diplomatic corps in Budapest. Naturally, the task of assessment and analysis fell to the headquarters in Rome (to the Ministries of Internal and Foreign Affairs), and to the various intelligence bodies, and this task was especially important due to the fact that the West now received less and less reliable information from behind the “Iron Curtain”. Because of this state of affairs, the reception and accommodation of Hungarian refugees constituted a problem as well as an opportunity for Italy to receive vital information – and receive it first-hand – on the general situation in Eastern Europe and Hungary in particular.

20 Csete (2017), p. 22.

21 Idem, pp. 22–23.

Italian Diplomatic Presence in Hungary during the Revolution

Western journalists and reporters who, upon receiving news of the outbreak of the revolution, traveled to Hungary as soon as possible – and in some cases at breakneck speed – played a prominent role in informing European and Italian public opinion. Of the Italian journalists who had traveled to Hungary – including Bruno Tedeschi, Indro Montanelli, and Ilario Fiore²² –, the first journalist to conduct a serious interview with one of the main actors on behalf of *Giornale d'Italia* was Tedeschi, who, according to the diary of the Italian Ambassador to Budapest, had been staying in the capital since October 27,²³ and managed to speak to none other than János Kádár. The exact time of the interview is unknown, but, as it was published on November 2, 1956, the interview must have taken place a few days prior,²⁴ and shows Kádár using very different language about the Hungarian Revolution than he would afterwards. When the journalist asked him what sort of communism he wished to represent, Kádár replied, “*the new one, which arose from the revolution, and which wants to bear no resemblance to the communism of Rákosi, Hegedüs, and Gerő.*”²⁵ Moreover, when Tedeschi suggested that this sort of communism could perhaps assume a democratic form, Kádár said the following: “*You are right to ask. There will be an opposition and not a dictatorship: this opposition shall be heard, because it will express itself along the lines of Hungarian national interests, rather than the interests of the Communist International.*”²⁶

As for the accredited official Italian diplomacy in Hungary, from July 15, 1956, the Italian Embassy on Vorosilov út [today called Stefánia út – Author’s Note] was headed by Ambassador Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary Fabrizio Franco, whose diary, kept during the Hungarian Revolution, constitutes an important historical source today. Between October 23 and November 17, 1956, Ambassador Franco documented the events of the Hungarian Revolution in Budapest and the country. According to his entries, the diplomats of the Italian foreign representation were observing the events from different parts of the capital, and then immediately reported said events to headquarters. Franco wrote the following about October 23:

22 Walcz (2001), p. 58.

23 ASDME, DGAP, Rappresentanza diplomatica d’Italia in Budapest 1944–1966, busta 4, Diario dal 23 ottobre al 17 novembre 1956, p. 7.

24 Argentieri, F. (2012). I quattro volti di János Kádár. In Németh, G., Papo, A. & Rosselli, A. (Eds.): *Chi era János Kádár? L’ultima stagione del comunismo ungherese (1956–1989)*. Carocci Editore Pressonline, p. 37.

25 Idem, p. 37.

26 Idem, p. 38.

The members of the Embassy noticed groups of young people gathering in different parts of the city, along with all sorts of other persons, including soldiers, women, and a great many workers. Meanwhile, Hungarian Radio announced that, at 8 p.m., Ernő Gerő, having just returned from Belgrade, would address the people. Our cultural institute, which is located directly by the Kossuth Radio studios, notified the Embassy that, in order to prevent Gerő from giving a speech, certain university student groups suggested occupying the radio station. At 8 p.m., Telegraph 176 was issued and forwarded to the telegraph office. This is our way of keeping Rome up to date on the ongoing demonstrations, as well as on public proclamations listing the various demands of university students.²⁷

Beyond observing the events of the unfolding revolution, the Italian Ambassador to Budapest did his best to remain in contact with other Western embassies in the capital (the US, British, French, Swiss, and Argentinian embassies in particular), while also looking out for Italian citizens who were staying in Hungary and “keeping an eye on them” for their own safety:

At 11 a.m. (through Lendaro, head of the post office), Telegraph 177 was issued and dictated via telephone. At 11.30 a.m., the Ambassador, Antici [First Secretary of the Embassy Paolo Massimo – Author’s Note], and Sablich crossed the now openly revolting city to enter the Duna Hotel, where a group of [Italian] compatriots had gathered after contacting the Embassy (Rossi and his wife, Zecchi, Leva, Milani, another Rossi, Borla, and the journalist [Ilario – Author’s Note] Fiore).²⁸

The Italian foreign representation headed by Franco became multicentral during the days of the Hungarian Revolution. Due to their location in the center of the Hungarian capital, the aforementioned embassy building on Vorosilov út, the building of the Italian Cultural Institute on Bródy Sándor utca, and the residency of the Italian Ambassador at 36 Donáti utca played an especially important role, while the Italian journalists and citizens coming to Budapest predominantly stayed at the Duna Hotel and Astoria Hotel. Ambassador Franco’s entry for October 27 paints a poignant picture of the Italian Embassy’s daily operation and confirms that Tedeschi had arrived in Hungary around that same time:

Beyond the Embassy, we have Perselli [Director of the Italian Institute in Budapest Luciano – Author’s Note], Primavera, Ballerini, Battagliarini, and Colangeli. To our

27 ASDME, DGAP, Rappresentanza diplomatica d’Italia in Budapest 1944–1966, busta 4, Diario dal 23 ottobre al 17 novembre 1956, p. 1.

28 Idem, p. 2.

surprise, journalist Bruno Tedeschi (*Giornale d'Italia*) shall be arriving soon, as he left Vienna with his [Fiat] 1100 this morning and almost had an easy trip. He observed that the border guard facilitated his entry into Hungary, and that the 180 kilometer long road from Nickelsdorf was lined with Hungarian and Soviet troops idling opposite one another.²⁹

The Ambassador's entries also tell us that, before November 4, the Italian diplomats and journalists expressed great concern over the movements of the Soviet troops: "On November 3 at 7 p.m., Representative [Gianmatteo – Author's Note] Matteotti, Cabalzar and his wife, and Montanelli returned to the Embassy, and confirmed that the Russians had stopped them, and that they had seen many Russian tanks in Győr (Cabalzar also informed the Embassy in Vienna of this via telephone)."³⁰

The Italian Ambassador to Budapest had one more important task: he received a phone call from a young Hungarian journalist, Dénes Gyapay, who addressed him in Italian to request that he assist in sheltering Judith Gyenes, the wife of Minister of Home Defense Pál Maléter.

Judith had to be relocated to a safe place. Only one remained, and that was the Italian Embassy, so we looked up the number of the Italian Embassy in a phone book. I was very lucky to have first called the residency, because at the time the Italian Ambassador still had a residency in Donáti utca. There I was told that the Ambassador was currently in the building of the Embassy, which was all the way out on Vorosilov út as it was called then; now it is called Stefánia út. Well, I called the Embassy and was immediately connected to the Ambassador. I introduced myself, told him I was a Hungarian journalist, but that was not really important, I was actually calling because Pál Maléter's wife needed to be relocated to a safe place for a few days. The Ambassador was most kind and cordial, but well, we were not acquainted in any sort of way, so perhaps the only thing that recommended me to him was that I spoke to him in Italian. He asked me to call him back in half an hour, because he had to discuss this with Rome. Today, with some diplomatic knowledge under my belt, I know that this was perfectly natural. It is much too great a responsibility for an ambassador to receive a prominent figure at the embassy or the residency, because the individual in question would be removed from local jurisdiction, so to speak. Half an hour later, I called him back, and the Ambassador very kindly told me that he had already informed his staff.³¹

29 Idem, p. 7.

30 Idem, p. 17.

31 Andreides, G. (2008). *A magyar-olasz kapcsolatok története 1956–1989*. Doctoral dissertation. Eötvös Loránd Tudományegyetem, p. 22. Source: <https://doktori.btk.elte.hu/hist/andreides/diss.pdf> (accessed on June 14, 2022).

Elsewhere, Italian journalist Indro Montanelli issued detailed reports of his experiences in revolutionary Hungary, including the almost legendary dialogue that took place between an unknown Soviet army major and Social Democratic Representative Matteotti, as the last great group of Italian journalists received permission to leave Hungary. The Soviet officer asked Giacomo Matteotti's son for his opinion on the events, to which Matteotti replied,

It was a serious experience for all of us, but I would not say that we were overjoyed by what happened, as I am sure you weren't either. The idea that this was a counterrevolution is not true. Those who had seen this through – as you are well aware – are not reactionaries, or fascists, or Horthyist officers, but communists who revolted against a certain type of communism.³²

Italian Diplomatic Efforts in Austria on Behalf of Hungary

As we have discussed above, the Italian Embassy in Vienna played an especially important role in the days of the Hungarian Revolution of 1956 due to its situation, as Vienna became the center from which humanitarian aid sent to Hungary from Italy was distributed, the headquarters of the Italian Red Cross, as well as a hub for journalists arriving from Italy and bound for Hungary, along with the civilian volunteers who were escorting the aid shipments. Additionally, those who wished to support the wave of refugees leaving Hungary after the suppression of the Hungarian Revolution gathered either in Vienna or at the refugee camps of nearby settlements.

The Italian diplomats serving in Austria often contacted the Hungarians during fieldwork and at the various refugee camps, which, on the one hand, increased the efficiency of recruitment, and on the other hand meant that these diplomats could personally refute any propaganda about Italian “reception conditions”, as the latter considerably hindered the success of the former. The Hungarians waiting in these refugee camps heard rumors that those arriving in Italy were detained in “concentration camps”, which were entirely false. The explanation for the emergence and circulation of these rumors was that Hungarian refugees were being purposefully targeted by rumors that Italy did not welcome them and they would not be able to exercise their rights due to the influence of the Italian Communist Party.³³ Italian reports also added that initial recruitment opportunities were also impacted, though to a lesser

32 Montanelli, I. (1989). *1956 Budapest – A Corriere della Sera kiküldött tudósítója jelenti*. Püski Kiadó, pp. 23–24.

33 ASDME, DGAP, 1950–1957, Ungheria b. 1341. p. 1. Soccorsi agli ungheresi: stato psicologico dei profughi. Vienna, 12 dicembre 1956.

extent, by the fact that the Italian government decided to receive refugees only as a temporary measure. The Italian diplomats tried to assuage these uncertainties by emphasizing the admiration and compassion with which Italy expected the refugees' arrival, and added that "*with the assistance of the Italian government, anyone shall be able to reach the European or overseas countries in which they would be able to find permanent residence.*"³⁴ In other words, Rome would not forsake even those who did not wish to resettle in Italy, who were the majority of refugees.

The fact that Italy could be considered only as a transit country was naturally known to the receiving parties, who undertook to support the arriving refugees regardless, even if their assistance was only temporary. Consider the following declaration made in support of a Hungarian refugee:

I the Undersigned, Edoardo Visconti di Modrone, a resident of Milano at via Cerva 44, on account of the fact that I am personally acquainted with Hungarian refugee Gyula Vita and can therefore vouch for his moral and political qualities, hereby undertake to accommodate him during his stay in Italy and request that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs provide him with a temporary stay visa as part of the quota of 4,000 refugees that the Italian government committed itself to receive. Rome, December 22, 1956.³⁵

The signee was none other than the younger brother of world famous film director Luchino Visconti di Modrone.

One of the Italian diplomats carrying out important work among the Hungarian refugees in Austria was Angelo Antonio Fumarola di Portoselvaggio, whose report was quoted earlier in this paper, and according to his information, between October 13 and November 28, 1956, Italian diplomacy was able to relocate 1,930 Hungarian refugees to Italy.³⁶ Despite the personal efforts of these diplomats, however, baseless misinformation continued to circulate among the Hungarian refugees. In mid-December 1956, the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs informed the Italian Embassy in Washington that the situation in the various refugee camps was incredibly tense and might blow up and cause serious incidents at any moment, because "*the refugees want to return to Austria for fear that they might never be able to go overseas from Italy.*"³⁷ Additionally, there were also Hungarians who had to return to Austria

34 Andreides, G. (2017). "Gli angeli ribelli che non vogliono più restare in paradiso." Le prime impressioni italiane in Austria relative ai profughi ungheresi del '56. In Fejérdy, A. (Ed.), *La rivoluzione ungherese del 1956 e l'Italia*. Rubbettino Editore, p. 25.

35 ASDMAE, DGAP, 1950–1957, Ungheria b. 1341. Dichiarazione di Edoardo Visconti di Mondrone. Roma, 22 dicembre 1956.

36 Andreides (2017), p. 25.

37 ASDME, DGAP, Rappresentanza diplomatica d'Italia in Budapest 1944–1966, busta 4, Ministero degli Affari Esteri, telegramma. Italdipl. Washington, 14 dicembre 1956.

on account of their disobedient and rebellious behavior – a total of 72 persons by mid-December 1956 –, and were simply handed back to the Austrian authorities by their Italian counterparts.³⁸

Let us examine a very informative report from December 1956, which was sent to Rome by the Italian Embassy in Vienna, and informed the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of an opinion poll taken among the Hungarian refugees staying at the refugee camps in Eisenstadt, Burgenland and Traiskirchen, Baden, in Lower Austria. According to the poll, 53% of the respondents believed that if the Soviet troops were to leave Hungary and a new political system established based on free elections, 44% would still choose to remain abroad. Regarding their reasons for leaving their home, 28% were afraid of potential deportation, 27% feared arrest on account of their active involvement in the revolution, and 16% were “simply” afraid. The most exciting question in the poll was undoubtedly the one asking about the refugees’ opinions about Hungarian politics and Hungarian politicians. Seventy-seven percent of respondents expressed especially strong sympathy towards Pál Maléter, created Minister of Defense during the Hungarian Revolution – who at the time of the opinion poll had already been detained by the Soviet troops –, and Prince Primate József Mindszenty, who managed to find refuge at the US Embassy in Budapest. Prime Minister Imre Nagy, who had also been detained by that time, received a slightly lower approval rating at 71%, while the title of least popular politician was more than well earned by János Kádár, who was rejected by 97% of the respondents.³⁹

In light of the above discussed opinion poll, it is not surprising that, at the end of December 1956, the Italian Embassy in Vienna informed the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Rome that the Austrian government had rejected the Kádár government’s request to be allowed to come to the refugee camps and organize the repatriation of refugees who had gone abroad out of sheer adventurism. Austria refused to receive any Hungarian committees at these camps for several reasons, including the fact that the authorities would not have been able to guarantee the personal safety of committee members.⁴⁰ On February 2, 1957, in reference to statistics published by the ICEM, the Italian Embassy in Vienna informed Rome that, according to available summary reports, by the beginning of 1957, a total of 169,692 Hungarian refugees had arrived

38 Ibidem.

39 ASDME, DGAP, Rappresentanza diplomatica d’Italia in Budapest 1944–1966, busta 4, Ambasciata d’Italia (Vienna), telespresso indirizzato al Ministero degli Affari Esteri. Roma – Vienna, 8 dicembre 1956, pp. 1–2.

40 ASDME, DGAP, Rappresentanza diplomatica d’Italia in Budapest 1944–1966, busta 4, Ambasciata d’Italia (Vienna), telespresso indirizzato al Ministero degli Affari Esteri. Roma – Vienna, 22 dicembre 1956.

in Austria, and over a hundred thousand persons (104,758 to be exact) traveled on to a third country, while 64,934 persons remained at the various Austrian refugee camps.⁴¹

Thanks to the reports submitted by its foreign representations, Italian diplomacy kept track not only of Hungarians seeking temporary refuge in Italy, but also of others. Among the reports issued by Italian consulates and embassies, we have found an especially interesting report from January 1957, in which the Italian Embassy in Athens included testimonies about post-revolutionary Hungary by young Greeks repatriating from the village of Beloianisz in Fejér County. For instance, the report states that “*the Hungarians bribe the Russian watchmen and the Hungarian police of the party,⁴² and that is how they make their escape. There is no Hungarian army, as only the party police⁴³ was reestablished by recruiting soldiers who were also members of the party (...). The Russians are on top of the situation and control everything.*”⁴⁴ The young Greeks also reported that many Greek youths studying in Hungary actively participated in the Hungarian Revolution of 1956, and, after the suppression of the Revolution, they found refuge with the Greek population of Beloianisz: “*The repatriates also claimed that some residents of Beloianisz pleaded with them to return to Greece, and said that the Greek communist leaders who had also fled were in morally bad shape, including the boss known as Menelaos (Stavros Ipadimatopoulos).*”⁴⁵

Summary

From the birth of the republic, Italy for a long time represented the foreign policies of Alcide De Gasperi, founded on commitment to NATO and European unity, and Italian diplomacy was especially consistent in following these principles because creating, reinforcing, and maintaining the image of being a reliable ally became crucial after the fall of the dictatorship. Independent of these considerations, however, Italy’s

41 ASDME, DGAP, Rappresentanza diplomatica d’Italia in Budapest 1944–1966, busta 4, Ambasciata d’Italia (Vienna), telespresso indirizzato al Ministero degli Affari Esteri. Roma – Vienna, 2 febbraio 1957, p. 2.

42 The report likely refers to members of the power of arms units established after November 4, 1956.

43 See the previous footnote.

44 ASDME, DGAP, Rappresentanza diplomatica d’Italia in Budapest 1944–1966, busta 4, Ambasciata d’Italia (Atene), telespresso indirizzato al Ministero degli Affari Esteri. Roma – Atene, 9 gennaio 1957, p. 2.

45 ASDME, DGAP, Rappresentanza diplomatica d’Italia in Budapest 1944–1966, busta 4, Ambasciata d’Italia (Atene), telespresso indirizzato al Ministero degli Affari Esteri. Roma – Atene, 9 gennaio 1957, p. 2. See also B. B. (1963). Menelaosz és Jozefa a beloianiszziak két jelöltje. *Fejér Megyei Hírlap*, 1963. január 20., p. 3. The communist leader’s name is Hungarianized in the source document, which does not provide the original Greek spelling of his name.

foreign policy initiatives in response to the Hungarian Revolution of 1956 were truly remarkable, and even continued to escalate two years later, when Imre Nagy and his associates were executed. When it came to Hungary's cause, Minister of Foreign Affairs Marino delivered his statements on Italy's foreign policy opinions and goals with determined independence and argued that "*Italy's position is different from that of the US.*"⁴⁶

Despite the outbreak of the Suez Crisis, Italy endeavored to keep the Hungarian cause on the agenda of international politics. For instance, the Minister of Foreign Affairs ordered UN Representative Leonardo Vitetti to encourage NATO member states to terminate diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union, but this suggestion was dismissed by the US as well as by the European Allies.⁴⁷ By 1958, Hungarian-Italian bilateral relations hit rock bottom and Italy withdrew the *agrément* or official diplomatic approval of appointed envoy Gyula Simó, the successor of Envoy Imre Szabó (whose revolutionary statement had become his downfall). Nevertheless, not even this rare and exceptionally serious diplomatic incident could prevent the gradual mending of relations between the NATO member state and the Eastern Bloc satellite state. After Simó finally received his *agrément*, he served as Hungarian Ambassador to Rome from 1958 to 1962, and, during his mandate, the once rigorous opposition between Italy and Hungary gave way to a slow thaw. During those four years, Simó's leadership prepared for a significantly different period of eight years to follow, and though it would perhaps be excessive to call those eight years the Száll Era after József Száll, the next Hungarian Ambassador to Rome, it is beyond a doubt that the Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs chose the perfect candidate to pursue the principles and values of classic diplomacy.

Translated by: Eva Misits

46 Somlai (2006), p. 255.

47 Idem, pp. 257-258.

The Arab Media's Retrospective Assessment of the Hungarian Revolution of 1956

ABDALLAH ABDEL-ATI AL-NAGGAR – ZOLTÁN PRANTNER

Introduction

Based on our research material, the Arab media not only provided extensive coverage of the events, news, and commentaries of the Hungarian Revolution of 1956, but also devoted considerable attention to a retrospective analysis of it. In 1958, the newspapers began publishing level-headed opinions and assessments of the events of the Revolution, and, after the execution of Prime Minister Imre Nagy, these calm reports were followed by a flood of analyses and harsh criticism. Between the 1960s and the 1990s, the Arab media published few analyses of the Hungarian Revolution for political reasons, such as the desire to maintain close international relations, and the vast number of important events and developments taking place in the Arab world. However, at the beginning of the 2000s, the Arab media showed renewed interest in commemorating the Hungarian Revolution of 1956, and, despite a host of catastrophic and critical developments between 2011 and 2020 (the “Arab Spring”, revolutions, wars, civil wars, social conflicts, seizures of power, and presidential and parliamentary elections), the Arab media continued to publish level-headed analyses of the Hungarian Revolution, both in its contemporary context and in the context of more recent but similar events.

For the purposes of the present study, we consulted the most well-known Arab media sources for articles about the Hungarian Revolution of 1956 that were published between June 23, 1958 and June 18, 2020. The result was a selection of articles from a wide range of media sources, including the Arabic language newspapers *Al-Ahram*, *Akhbar El Yom*, *Al Joumhouria*, *Youm7*, *Al-Watan*, *Al-Bayan*, and *Al-Quds Al-Arabi*; the weekly newspaper *Sabah Al-Kheir*; the weekly magazine *Rose Al-Yūsuf*; the quarterly Saudi magazine *Fikr*; and the official websites of two Saudi-owned

media channels, the television channel *Al-Arabiya* and the Qatari news channel *Al-Jazeera*. The abovementioned sources are well-established, primarily political in nature, and, in the period designated above, they published – in most cases – professional analyses of the Hungarian Revolution of 1956.

Arabic Language Media Sources

Al-Ahram [‘The Pyramids’] was originally founded in December 1875 by Beshara Takla¹ and his brother Saleem Takla,² and its first issue was published on August 5, 1876. It started out as a weekly newspaper, but, five years later, it became a daily newspaper, and in 1899, its registered office was moved to Cairo. Today *Al-Ahram* comprises a number of weekly newspapers and monthly magazines and can be considered the mouthpiece of the acting Egyptian government party. The first chief editor of the newspaper was Saleem Takla, who held the position for seventeen years before he was succeeded by his brother, and it is worth noting that the position of Chief Editor of *Al-Ahram* was usually awarded to one among the most renowned journalists in Egypt.³ In the course of its 130-year history, *Al-Ahram* published articles from a number of prominent literary authors and politicians, and from 1928, it was also published in the Middle East and Europe. In 1931, the newspaper was expanded to a total of sixteen pages, and from January 1, 1932, it also featured photographs on the cover page and the last page. From its foundation, it employed correspondents in Lebanon, Syria, and Iraq, and later sent reporters into Europe as well.⁴

First published as a weekly newspaper and later receiving a daily edition, *Akhbar El Yom* [‘News of the Day’] was founded on 6 November 1944 by twin brothers⁵ Ali

- 1 Beshara Takla (1852–1901) is one of the founders of the newspaper *Al-Ahram*. He studied in Beirut and later taught at the Ayn Tura College in Lebanon for two years. In 1875, he moved to Alexandria, where he and his brother Saleem founded *Al-Ahram*.
- 2 Saleem Takla (1849–1892) was a Lebanese journalist who worked as a teacher of Arabic Language and Literature in various Lebanese schools.
- 3 Khalil Mutran, Fikry Abaza, Ihsan Abdel Quddous, or Mohamed Hassanein Heikal. The newspaper always sought to employ the best journalists available, some of whom were also famous for their literary activities, including Ahmed Lutfi Al-Sayyid, Taha Hussein, Naguib Mahfouz (winner of the Nobel Prize for Literature), and Ahmed Shawqi, nicknamed the Prince of Poets. The Chief Editor of *Al-Ahram* and the Chair of the Executive Board were first appointed by the Magles El Shura (the Consultative Council or upper house of the Egyptian Parliament), and later by the Al-Haia Al-Watania Lel-Sehafa (the highest body of the National Press Authority).
- 4 Rizk, Y. L. (2003). *Al-Ahram Diwan Al-Hayat Al-Musawwara 1876–1882* [‘Al-Ahram: A Historical Photo Album, 1876–1882’]. *Al-Ahram*, p. 109; Kamil, N. (n.d.). *Mahmoud Azmi raid al-Sehafa al-Masriya* [‘Mahmoud Azmi, a Leading Figure of the Egyptian Press’]. Dar El Maaref, p. 9. The Hungarian version is Abdallah, A-A. A-S. M. (2015). *Az egyiptomi-magyar kapcsolatok a két világháború közötti időszakban* [‘Egyptian–Hungarian Relations in the Interwar Period’]. JATEPress, p. 9.
- 5 Mustafa and Ali Amin, the grandsons of famous Egyptian nationalist leader Saad Zaghloul Pasha, are considered the founding fathers of modern Arab journalism. The two brothers are also known

Amin⁶ and Mustafa Amin.⁷ Today it is the primary media product of the *Dar Akhbar El Yom* Foundation, and one of most well-known newspapers of the Middle East and the Arab world.

Al Joumhouria [‘The Republic’], established in Cairo and operating under state control, is considered one of the most famous and well-known daily newspapers in the Arab world. It was founded in 1954 by Muhammad Anwar el-Sadat,⁸ who was later elected President of Egypt, and from the beginning, it served as the mouthpiece of the new Egyptian political system. Accordingly, it was known as always operating under the influence of the acting government and openly supporting its policies. This newspaper is managed by the *Dar Al Tahrir* Foundation along with *La Bourse Egyptienne* [‘The Egyptian Stock Exchange’] and the *Egyptian Gazette*, which are among the oldest French and English-language publications in the Middle East, respectively.

Youm7 [‘Seventh Day’] is an Arabic language daily newspaper under private Egyptian ownership. It was first published in October 2008 as a weekly newspaper, but in May 2011, it became a daily newspaper. *Youm7* maintains a highly frequented and influential website, which also launched its own English language news portal on 6 October 2013, called *The Cairo Post*.

Al-Watan [‘The Homeland’] is an Arabic language political, economic, and social daily newspaper. It was founded on 10 December 2005 and is now considered the most widespread local newspaper in Bahrein.

Al-Bayan [‘The Dispatch’], founded on 10 May 1980 by the government of Dubai, is an Arabic language political newspaper that comes with three daily supplements: *Al-Bayan Al-Riyadi* (Sports), *Al-Bayan Al-Iqtisadi* (Economy), and *Al-Hawas Al-Khamsa* (Five Senses).

Founded in April 1989 in London, *Al-Quds Al-Arabi* [‘Arab Jerusalem’] is an Arabic language independent pan-Arab newspaper published both traditionally and

for introducing the Arab world to Mother’s Day in a volume published in 1947; thanks to their efforts, Egypt first celebrated the holiday in 1956, and it has since been adopted by the rest of the Arab world as well.

- 6 Ali Amin Yusuf (1914–1976) was a renowned Egyptian journalist. He studied at the American University in Cairo, and between 1931 and 1936, he studied engineering in England. In 1941, he served as Head of Office to the Minister of Agriculture, and in 1942, he became Head of Office to the Minister of Transport and the Minister of Finance. In 1962, he was appointed Chair of the Executive Board of the Dar al-Hilal Publishing House, and from April 18, 1964, he served as the Chief Editor of *Akhbar El Yom*.
- 7 Mustafa Amin Yusuf (1914–1976) was a well-known and popular Egyptian liberal journalist, writer, and novelist. He studied at the universities of Cairo and Georgetown and earned a degree in political science. In 1927, he started his career in journalism, and in 1938, he became the editor of a weekly newspaper. He worked for several Egyptian daily newspapers and magazines, including *Rose Al-Yūsuf*, *Akher Saa*, and *Al-Ethnain*.
- 8 Muhammad Anwar el-Sadat (1918–1981) served as the third President of Egypt between 1970 and 1981. He was a key member of the Free Officers Movement, which overthrew King Farouk in the Egyptian Revolution of 1952.

online. Today it is considered one of the most widespread Arab newspapers, and its online feed is followed by hundreds of thousands of readers worldwide.

Sabah Al-Kheir [‘Good Morning’] is an Egyptian weekly newspaper published by the *Rose Al-Yūsuf* Foundation. The first chief editor of the newspaper was Ahmed Bahaa Eddin,⁹ who was one of the youngest editors-in-chief in Egypt after Mustafa and Ali Amin. The first issue was published on 17 January 1956 with the now famous slogan, “*The magazine of young hearts and liberated minds.*”

Rose Al-Yūsuf is a popular Egyptian weekly magazine founded by Egyptian actress *Rose Al-Yūsuf*¹⁰ and managed by her son, writer Ihsan Abdel Quddous.¹¹ The first issue was published on October 26, 1925, and at the beginning, the journal was a cultural and literary publication; however, in 1928, it turned into a political magazine that is still being published today.¹²

Fikr is a diverse cultural and interactive quarterly magazine under Saudi ownership. Its staff is composed of famous Arab writers, researchers, and university professors, and the magazine primarily focuses on culture, literature, the arts, civilizations, and Arabic and foreign language literary criticism.

Al-Arabiya [‘The Arab One’] is a well-known pan-Arab television news channel under Saudi ownership. Its website, which is published in four languages – Arabic, English, Persian, and Urdu – and constantly updated with the latest news and analyses, is visited by hundreds of thousands of readers every day.

Founded in 1996, *Al-Jazeera* [‘The Island’] is a pan-Arab television channel owned by the government of Qatar and established in Doha. It is internationally available in several languages, and famous for having broadcasted live reports from active warzones (in Gaza, Iraq, Afghanistan, and Pakistan), and of dangerous revolutionary events (in Egypt, Tunisia, Syria, Libya, and Yemen), as a consequence of which several reporters have died in the course of their duties. In 1996, it only broadcasted for six hours a day, but by 1997, its transmission time increased to twelve hours, and since 1999, it has been broadcasting twenty-four hours a day. In 2001, *Al-Jazeera* also launched a highly integrated and saturated news website. Its programming often featured scandalous talk shows; for this reason, the channel was banned in several countries.

9 Ahmed Bahaa Eddin (1927–1996) was an Egyptian journalist who served as chief editor for the weekly newspaper *Sabah Al-Kheir*, the daily newspaper *Al-Ahram*, and the Kuwaiti journal *Al-Arabi*.

10 Rose Al-Yūsuf (1897–1958) was a famous actress and journalist. She was born in Lebanon to a Turkish family and given the birth name Fatma.

11 Ihsan Abdel Quddous (1919–1990) is an internationally renowned Arab journalist and novelist. The majority of his works have been translated into several languages. His father, Mohamed Abd El-Quddous, was an Egyptian actor and dramaturge.

12 For more information, see Goldschmidt, A. Jr. & Johnston, R. (2003). *Historical Dictionary of Egypt* (3rd ed.). Scarecrow Press, p. 342.

Who were the authors of the Arab media's analyses and opinions of the Hungarian Revolution of 1956?

To this day, the Arab world has yet to publish a monograph dedicated to the Hungarian Revolution of 1956, despite the fact that many Arab writers and journalists – and among them several prominent and renowned figures of the era – have studied the revolutionary events and their international impact and published a large number of newspaper articles and essays on the subject.

Mohamed Hassanein Heikal (1923–2016) was one of the most well-known Egyptian and Arab journalists, and a close friend of second Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser.¹³ Heikal earned his degree at The American University in Cairo. During World War II, he worked as a journalist for the British-owned *Egyptian Gazette*, and later served as Chief Editor of the Cairo daily newspaper *Al-Ahram* for seventeen years. The *Washington Post* hailed Heikal as “*The voice of Egypt (...) [the outside world's] window on that secretive regime*”¹⁴ because he frequently traveled to the countries of the Middle East to report on various political conflicts. His friendship with President Nasser began in 1951 and lasted until the latter's death, with Heikal supporting Nasser's pan-Arab aspirations and joining the Arab Socialist Union. Between 1957 and 1974, Heikal reported on the President's internal and external affairs policies in weekly articles titled “Bi-Saraha” [‘To Be Honest’], and under his management, the reformed *Al-Ahram* became one of the most important newspapers of the Arab world. In 1970, he even served as Minister of Culture, but only for a few months: as he condemned the diplomatic negotiations with Israel and published articles in *Al-Ahram* to voice his criticism of Nasser's successor, third President Muhammad Anwar el-Sadat, Heikal was dismissed from his post as chief editor in 1974 and sentenced to a month in prison. After his release, Heikal became a freelance journalist and published several monographs and articles on political and historical subjects. Between 2007 and 2008, he also presented a series of lectures on the Qatari

13 Gamal Abdel Nasser (1918–1970) was born in Bakos near Alexandria and became one of the most well-known and charismatic Arab politicians, and the second President of Egypt. In 1937, he enrolled in the Royal Military Academy and rose to the rank of officer upon his graduation. He served in Egypt, Sudan, and Palestine, and was a leading figure of the Free Officers Movement. Between 1953 and 1954, he served as Deputy Prime Minister, and between June 23, 1956 and September 28, 1970, he served as Prime Minister and President of the Republic. In the 1950s and 1960s, he was a prominent representative of Arab nationalism, and one of the main organizers of the Non-Aligned Movement.

14 Lippman, T. W. (1977, May 9). Heikal Under Siege. *The Washington Post*. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1977/05/09/heikal-under-siege/87956fae-bd05-4aab-b2ea-231207e7c94a/> (accessed on March 3, 2022).

pan-Arab television channel *Al-Jazeera*, where he talked of his experiences as a journalist, historical events, and politics.¹⁵



Mohamed Hassanein Heikal and Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser

Anis Mohamed Mansour (1924–2011) was an Egyptian and Middle Eastern writer, journalist, and philosopher, and a friend of President Muhammad Anwar el-Sadat. In 1947, he earned a degree in Philosophy at Cairo University and started his career as a journalist for the newspaper *Al-Asas* [‘The Foundation’]. He also contributed to *Rose Al-Yūsuf* and *Al-Ahram*, and even translated short stories and poems for the latter thanks to his knowledge of Arabic, English, French, Italian, Greek, and Hebrew. Between 1970 and 1976, he was Chief Editor of the Egyptian magazine *Akher Saa* [‘The Last Hour’], and in 1976 became Chief Editor of the newspaper *October*. He published more than 177 monographs on a variety of subjects (such as travel, philosophy, and politics), some of which were later translated into French, Dutch, and Russian, and authored fifteen comedy films and twelve television drama series. He also translated approximately two hundred German, French, and English short stories and twenty-four plays into Arabic. His most famous work is a monograph titled *Hawla Al-Alam fi 200 Youm* [‘Around the World in 200 Days’], in which he presented his journey around the globe at the beginning of the 1960s with detailed descriptions of the peculiar interests and traditions of the countries he had visited (including India, Japan, and the United States), and his meeting with the Dalai Lama.¹⁶

15 His biographical bibliography was compiled by Zsófia Juhász within the framework of the research program *Kutatási lehetőségek* [‘Research Opportunities’].

16 Venczkó, R. (2021). Anis Mansour. In Al-Naggar, A. A.-A., Prantner, Z., Fafka, B., Gloviczki, R. & Pornói, B. P. (Eds.) (2021), *Az arab világ történeti és kulturális kislexikona* [‘The Arab World: A Historical and Cultural Encyclopedia’]. ELTE BTK Új- és Jelenkori Egyetemes Történeti Tanszék, pp. 71–72.



Anis Mohamed Mansour and Egyptian President Muhammad Anwar el-Sadat

Atta Abdel-Wahab (1924–2019) was an Iraqi diplomat, the personal secretary of the last King of Iraq, and a writer and literary translator.¹⁷ In 1944, he earned his degree in law at the University of Baghdad, and between 1950 and 1955, he was a member of the Baghdad Mission to the United Nations. From 1955, he served as First Secretary of the Iraqi Embassy in Beirut, and from 1957, he was the personal secretary of Faisal II of Iraq.¹⁸ In 1958, he became a lawyer in Baghdad but had to leave London after the coup of 1968. His relationship with the new leaders was harrowing: his brother, Minister Zaki Abdel-Wahab, was arrested and executed, while Atta was kidnapped by Iraqi intelligence during a visit to Kuwait and brought to Iraq, where he was charged

17 Al-Naggar, A. A-A. (2021). Atta Abdel-Wahab. In Al-Naggar, A. A-A. et al., p. 76.

18 Faisal II of Iraq (1935–1958) was a member of the Hāshimite Dynasty and the King of Iraq between 1939 and 1958. He rose to power in 1953, but despite his general popularity, he had little to no political power, and was greatly influenced in his decisions by the Regent and by Iraqi politician *Nuri Pasha al-Said*, who played a major role in the establishment of the Arab Federation of Iraq and Jordan on February 14, 1958. In response, on July 14, 1958, the Iraqi army led by Colonel Abd al-Karim Qasim staged a coup, during which they executed Faisal II and almost every other member of the Hāshemite Dynasty. For details, see Al-Naggar, A. A-A. & Prantner, Z. (2021). (II) Faysal. In Al-Naggar, A. A-A. et al., p. 116.

with espionage and sentenced to death. He spent five years in prison waiting for his execution, after which his sentence was changed to life imprisonment. Thirteen years later, he was released from prison. In 2009, he started organizing a literary salon in his house in Amman and cultivated an active community of literature lovers. He translated several works by Virginia Woolf,¹⁹ including *The Waves*, *The Years*, *Flush: A Biography*, and *Mrs Dalloway*.

Hazem Saghieh (1951–) is a Lebanese journalist, critic, and political analyst. He was one of the editors of the London newspaper *Al-Hayat* [‘The Life’], and between 1974 and 1988, he worked for the Lebanese daily newspaper *As-Safir* [‘The Ambassador’]. He currently lives in Beirut and is regarded as one of the most famous and most controversial Arab writers.²⁰

Mohamed Uдах (1920–2006) was an Egyptian writer and journalist hailed as the Gandhi of Arab culture. He was the only Egyptian intellectual who had been sentenced to prison by King Farouk,²¹ President Gamal Abdel Nasser, and President Mohamed Anwar Al-Sadat because he stood by his principles and conviction under each regime. During his career of over sixty years, he witnessed several important historical events. He was also the Egyptian journalist who wrote the most impactful and sorrowful two-page Arabic language article on Prime Minister Imre Nagy, which was titled “You Had Unjustly Murdered Him!”²² and published in the July 13, 1958 issue of *Sabah Al-Kheir*.²³

Muhammad Jalal Kishk (1929–1993) was an Egyptian Muslim thinker, journalist, and writer. In 1951, when the Egyptian monarchy was still in power, he was among the first to demand the establishment of a republic, the nationalization of the Suez Canal, and the elimination of foreign monopolies. In 1962, he wrote a series of articles titled “Our Conflict with the Communists”, to which the Soviet party newspaper *Pravda* [‘Truth’] replied in a hostile tone that “*Jalal Kishk’s writings published in the Egyptian press are damaging to the Soviet Union.*” As a consequence, between 1964 and 1967, he was removed from the sphere of journalism and banned from publication. In the 1970s, he lived in Beirut with his family, where he worked as a journalist for the Lebanese newspaper *Al-Hawadis* [‘Incidents’]. During his career, he published thirteen monographs on Islam and five on communism.

19 Virginia Woolf (1882–1941) was a world-famous British novelist, critic, and feminist. She is one of the great figures of twentieth-century literature.

20 Al-Naggar, A. A-A. & Prantner, Z. (2021). Hazem Saghieh. In Al-Naggar, A. A-A. et al., p. 140.

21 Farouk (1920–1965) was the heir to the Egyptian throne and King of Egypt between 1936 and 1952.

22 The title refers to the tragic fate of Imre Nagy.

23 Al-Naggar, A. A-A. (2021). Mohamed Uдах. In Al-Naggar, A. A-A. et al., p. 242.

Opinions on the Hungarian Revolution of 1956 in the Arab Media

In the past century, the role of the printed press and television gradually increased, and for the majority of people became the primary sources of information and opinions on local and foreign events.²⁴ The Arab media paid considerable attention to the reception and assessment of the Hungarian Revolution of 1956, an event that was continuously commemorated in the decades that followed.

The Hungarian Revolution of 1956 unfolded simultaneously with the Suez Crisis, to the latter of which the Arab media paid greater attention; nevertheless, the newspapers still managed to publish frequent reports of the Hungarian events,²⁵ which gave a brief account of the developments and, in some rare instances, expressed an opinion. Even once the Revolution had been suppressed, the Arab media only informed the masses of the sustained Soviet armed intervention, Prime Minister Imre Nagy's address to the people of the world, Hungary's attempt to withdraw from the Warsaw Pact, and the establishment of a "counterrevolutionary" government by First Secretary János Kádár.²⁶ The first retrospective assessments of the events echoed the widespread view of certain correlations between the events in Hungary and the developments in the Middle East. For example, an article titled "The Drama of Hungary" and published on November 7 by the Tunisian newspaper *Es-Sabah* ["The Morning"] stated the conviction that "*the British and French aggression towards Egypt encouraged the Russians to suppress the Hungarian Revolution.*"²⁷ This idea, and the fact that the Hungarian revolutionaries had been fighting for their national independence just as Egypt had done, made the policy-makers in Cairo proceed with exceptional caution, as shown by the private conversation in which Khaled Mohieddin, Chief Editor of the evening newspaper *Al Messa* ["The Evening"] stated that the Hungarian events had "*rendered [Egyptian leadership] even more reserved towards the Soviet Union, but to a certain degree were pained by the Hungarian events, because the Western charges brought against the Soviet Union made it more difficult for us to cooperate with the Soviet Union.*"²⁸

24 Abdallah, A-A. A-S. (2015). *Az egyiptomi-magyar kapcsolatok a két világháború közötti időszakban* [Egyptian–Hungarian Relations in the Interwar Period]. JATEPress, p. 107.

25 For details on the reception of the Hungarian events in Egypt, see Al-Naggar, A. A-A. & Prantner, Z. (2021). Echoes of the 1956 Hungarian Revolution in the Egyptian State Press. *Central European Political Science Review*, 22(86), pp. 121–141.

26 J. Nagy, L. (2017). Birodalmak válsága: Szuez – Budapest 1956. In Ujváry, G. (Ed.) (2017), *A szuezi válság és Magyarország 1956* [The Suez Crisis and Hungary, 1956]. Veritas Történetkutató Intézet – Magyar Napló, pp. 56–57.

27 J. Nagy (2017), p. 57.

28 Ibidem.

On November 5, 1956, Soviet Minister Nikolai Bulganin issued a letter to the Prime Ministers of Israel, England, and France, which had an immediate effect not only on the developments of the Suez conflict, but also on the assessment of the Hungarian Revolution. In the eyes of the Egyptian public, signing the ceasefire was at once proof of the unquestionable authority of Moscow and Russia as a superpower, as well as a demonstrative stance in support of Egypt and Arab nationalism. Thanks to all this, his popularity soared among the Egyptian population while the renown of the West hit rock bottom, the consequence of which was that people turned to the socialist countries for “authentic” news and interpretations of the events and ignored the reports of the Western media. Egypt’s preference for the Arabic-language broadcasts of the radio stations of Moscow and Peking was evidenced by the fact that the abduction of Prime Minister Imre Nagy and his associates from the Yugoslav Embassy excited only a brief and temporary episode among the Egyptian public, and at the same time had no actual influence on the country’s Hungarian and Soviet relations. Nevertheless, the incident did spark a heated debate among the media forums of the various Arab countries, which often interpreted the events from their own unique perspectives and as stemming from completely different reasons. For instance, the Egyptian newspaper *Al Joumhouria* interpreted Imre Nagy’s statement of neutrality to mean that Hungary was going to abandon Egypt in the middle of the Suez Crisis.

And for other different motives, the newspapers of the Maghreb countries were highly critical of the events in Hungary. In addition to publishing the relevant statement of Indian President Jawaharlal Nehru, the newspaper *La Vigie Marocaine* [‘The Moroccan Observer’] went so far as to condemn the abduction of the Hungarian politicians as a “disgraceful act”. Moreover, the Tunisian newspaper *Al-Watan* construed the events as a new political maneuver introduced by the French and their abduction attempt on October 22, 1956, when aircraft from the French air force pressured a flight from Rabat to Tunis operated by the Moroccan airline Air Atlas into making an unexpected landing. Following the landing, they took into custody five leaders of the Algerian National Liberation Front, who had been traveling on board to Tunisia in the hopes of negotiating a compromise that would end the armed conflict in Algeria.²⁹ “*Abduction is abduction. There is no difference between abduction in France and abduction in Russia.*”³⁰ The Maghreb papers continuously reflected their interest in the different Hungarian events, which did not cease even after the bloodbath of the freedom fight. While the other Arab newspapers remained silent or at least kept a distance from the politics of the Kádár regime, the Moroccan and Tunisian newspapers strongly condemned the abduction of Imre Nagy.

29 J. Nagy, L. (2014). *A Maghreb-országok története a 20. században* [‘The Twentieth-Century History of the Maghreb Countries’]. JATEPress, p. 176.

30 J. Nagy (2017), pp. 58–59.

As the months passed, the various Arab media products showed open and increasing regard for the Soviet Union, which proceeded not only from its solidarity with Egypt, but also from the ill-timed Eisenhower Doctrine, the demonstrative support for Syria, and the West's indifference to the conflicts raging in Algeria. Naturally, these factors greatly influenced the Arab media's perception of Hungarian events, especially after the United Nations Security Council added "the Hungarian issue" to its agenda. By that time, the contents and tone of the Syrian press all but echoed the press organs of the Eastern Bloc, and the newspaper *Al Joumhouria* even went so far in its article titled "The Hungarian Drama and Us" as to justify the Red Army's bloodbath in Hungary by placing it in the context of the Cold War and bringing up the Arab victims of the Algerian war and the Palestine conflict:

However barbaric the Soviet Union's actions may be, they are no different from what the West is doing in its colonies and in countries under Western military occupation. If the Soviet Union killed ten thousand³¹ innocent people for demanding the right to freedom in Hungary, then France has killed hundreds of thousands in Algeria and still continues its slaughter, and those killed in Hungary by the Soviet Union ought never be compared to the countless Palestinians who had died for their homeland, which the Zionists had claimed with America's consent.³²

The newspaper *Sabah Al-Kheir* expressed a similar sentiment in its article titled "Why Hungary and Not Algeria?" which reads, "I do not understand why the UN published such an extensive report on Hungary and nothing on the issues of Algeria. The UN should send a committee to Algeria as well."³³ Here, they did call attention to the atrocities in Algeria, and complain about the West and the UN not acting with the same pace and rigor. They use the Hungarian case to point at other – maybe similar – contemporary issues that affected even larger masses.

Naturally, the statements quoted above did not escape the notice of the Hungarian press, which seemed to take pleasure in adding to its criticism of the West's measures that "for example, the Egyptian 'Al-Ahram' explained that the Hungarian counterrevolutionary coup and the Suez aggression were prepared by the same forces, and now those same forces were using the so-called 'Hungarian issue' to divert the world's attention from the imperialist atrocities in Algeria as well as from the raging conflicts between the Western powers."³⁴

31 The paper called the Soviet intervention "barbaric" and point at 10,000 deadly victims, all "innocent people" (incorrectly extrapolating the numbers, as there were no more than 3,000).

32 J. Nagy (2017), p. 61.

33 Ibidem.

34 Gimes, Gy. (1957, August 18). Söpörjenek a saját portájuk előtt! ['Let Them Sweep Their Own House Fronts!'] *Kisalföld*, 193, p. 2.

On June 23, 1958, the weekly magazine *Rose Al-Yūsuf* published an article on the Hungarian “rebellion” that clearly supported the stance of the Soviet Union.

Almost two years ago, a revolution broke out in Hungary. The Hungarian government³⁵ requested the assistance of the Soviet government in suppressing the rebellion, because certain foreign bodies provided weapons and aid to the rebels, and America protested against any Russian intervention. The United States weaponized all manner of propaganda and turned to the United Nations to condemn the intervention. In this spirit, [the United States] also issued a great number of publications. Every American and Western European radio station called on the revolutionaries to encourage them and incite them to rebellion (...) America believed that the stance taken by Archbishop József Mindszenty³⁶ was decisive evidence of the fact that the entire Hungarian population hated the Hungarian government.³⁷ What happened to the Archbishop became the stuff of legends that prevail to this day.³⁸

Less than two months after its publication, the article quoted above received a strongly worded response penned by Mohamed Udah, one of the most well-known journalists in the country. Udah, who had often openly expressed sympathy with the Hungarian Revolution and its leader Imre Nagy, published an analysis in the July 14, 1958 issue of *Sabah Al-Kheir*, a newspaper under the management of the *Rose Al-Yūsuf* Foundation, in which he held not only the Western states responsible, but also the misguided policies of the Hungarian leftist political elite:

35 The Egyptian author of the article refers to the first government formed by János Kádár in Szolnok on November 4, 1956, the members of which were selected and appointed by Soviet leadership. It initially functioned alongside the third government of Prime Minister Imre Nagy as a sort of counter-government without any mandate, and only assumed power after the invasion of Hungary by the Soviet Army. It was sworn in on November 7, after the suppression of the Revolution.

36 The article refers to Prince Primate Cardinal József Mindszenty, the Archbishop of Esztergom (who was born József Pehm and changed his name in 1942).

37 The Egyptian author might be referring to the iconic speech delivered by Cardinal Mindszenty on 3 November 1956 at 8.00 p.m. on Radio Szabad Kossuth [‘Free Kossuth’]. In his controversial radio speech, the Cardinal addressed the Hungarian public and emphasized, among other issues, that “*let it be known to everyone in this country that the struggles that had taken place were not of a revolution, but a freedom fight. In 1945, after a lost and, on our part, pointless war, the Hungarian political system was established through violence, and its inheritors now brand all of its parts with the mark of denial, contempt, disgust, and condemnation. The system was swept away by the Hungarian people as a whole. (...) This was an unparalleled freedom fight, with the young generation leading our people.*” The speech and its contents were reported the next day by several newspapers, and with minor inconsistencies, the text was published in New York and Munich. Gianone, A. (2021). Kultúr-nacionalista szellemű vagy elemű? Mindszenty József bíboros 1956-os rádióbeszédének változatai [‘Cultural Nationalist Spirit or Construction? Different Versions of the 1956 Radio Speech of Cardinal József Mindszenty’]. *ArchívNet*, 21(2). <https://archivnet.hu/kulturnacionalista-szellemu-vagy-elemu-mindszenty-jozsef-biboros-1956-os-radiobeszedenek-valtozatai> (accessed on March 8, 2022).

38 *Rose Al-Yūsuf*: Levels of Intervention. June 23, 1958, no. 1576: 5.

We all expressed our sympathy with the Hungarian Revolution, and are fully convinced that, in the bloodshed, the responsibility of the imperialists is greater than that of the Hungarian Communist Party,³⁹ whose leadership had become estranged from the Hungarian people. The leadership of the Hungarian Communist Party led by Mátyás Rákosi and Ernő Gerő ignored the feelings of the working class, the peasantry, and the intelligentsia, and was in severe violation of the sanctity of law.⁴⁰

On February 23, 1959, *Rose Al-Yūsuf* published an interview with the Hungarian Ambassador to Cairo titled “The Defensive Statement of the Hungarian Ambassador”. The interview was a clear attempt to find a scapegoat and avoid responsibility, and its antisemitic undertone is especially apparent in the way it focused on the Hungarian Revolution and the alleged role of the Jewish population in the events: “Those who had migrated to Israel after the events of 1956 were traitors who had orchestrated a conspiracy and instigated a civil war in Hungary.⁴¹ These Jews, some 25,000 in number,⁴² managed to flee from Hungary via the Austrian border.”⁴³

In contrast to the press products discussed above, one of the most prominent Arab newspapers, *Al-Ahram*, showed exemplary professionalism by publishing frequent and accurate accounts of the days of the Hungarian Revolution of 1956. The

- 39 By this time, the Hungarian Communist Party (*Magyar Kommunista Párt*, MKP) had been succeeded by the Hungarian Working People's Party (*Magyar Dolgozók Pártja*, MDP). This far left-wing party was established on 12 June 1948 to unite the Social Democratic Party and the Hungarian Communist Party, with the latter dominating the coalition. The new party soon rose to power in Hungarian political life and operated as the only political party in the country until the Hungarian Revolution of 1956. It was officially abolished on October 31, 1956, but the very next day, it was reformed under the name Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party (*Magyar Szocialista Munkáspárt*, MSZMP), which functioned as the state party until the Hungarian political system change in 1989.
- 40 *Sabah Al-Kheir*: You Had Unjustly Murdered Him! July 3, 1958, no. 130: 12, 38.
- 41 Hungarian historians such as László Eörsi and András Lénárt agree that the Hungarian events of 1956 had no Jewish narrative, because during the revolution, Hungarian Jewish citizens took a stance based on their individual convictions rather than their denomination. The latter factor is especially relevant because the above quoted article expresses the implicit bias that Jewish people were only to be found among the revolutionaries, and magnanimously “ignores” the dedicated supporters of the communist system who served in party leadership or in the ranks of the state security organs.
- 42 Of the 200,000 persons who had left Hungary following the events of 1956, approximately 20,000 persons were Jewish – in other words, they constituted ten percent of the Hungarian emigration of that period. One of the main reasons for such a high rate of Jewish emigrants was an agreement between Israel and Hungary in 1957, according to which Israel agreed to recognize the internationally isolated Kádár system and establish the highest level of diplomatic relations if Hungary allowed the Hungarian Jewish population to leave the country. Although this agreement was only in effect for a few months, the Hungarian party sought to “hush it up”, especially in the press of an Arab country with which they sought to establish dynamic international relations, and which still carried in its collective consciousness the recent memory of its devastating military losses at the hands of Israel.
- 43 *Rose Al-Yūsuf*: The Defensive Statement of the Hungarian Ambassador: We Allowed Emigration to Refute the Accusations of an Iron Curtain. The First Group of Emigrants Were All Traitors! February 23, 1959, no. 1602: 8–9.

analyses published by this newspaper in the years following the events were also compassionate and notable. For example, in the 3 January 1959 issue of *Al-Ahram*, Mohamed Hassanein Heikal gave a succinct summary of the Hungarian events in a few simple but clever and expressive phrases:

If the Cold War continues to persist, every single step in the battle between the superpowers, whether it is a victory or a loss, will only be measurable in the number of casualties in the “small states”. Who paid the price of Cold War casualties in Hungary? America, which had supported and aided the revolution with all its might, paid no price whatsoever. Russia, which had suppressed the revolution, paid no price either. Only the Hungarian people had paid the price, and only the Hungarian territories had suffered unimaginable atrocities and difficulties for having become a battleground between two powerful monsters. The small countries reduced to battlegrounds are like a ball being kicked around by the players on the soccer field.⁴⁴

Heikal’s excellent article was followed, whether for political reasons or on account of the countless important events taking place in the Arab world, by fewer writings published in the Arab media on the Hungarian Revolution of 1956; however, at the beginning of the 2000s, the interest of the Arab media was rekindled.

In its analysis issued on November 4, 2004, the Arab television channel *Al-Jazeera* broadcasted the following assessment:

The Soviet government used as much military violence as possible to suppress this revolution, which broke out during the escalation of the Cold War between the Soviet Union and the United States. As a consequence of the Soviet intervention, several thousands of Hungarian people had lost their lives, and over two hundred thousand had become homeless and fled to Poland.⁴⁵ (...) On November 4, 1956, the Soviets intervened once again, and by January 1957,⁴⁶ the Soviet Union managed to establish a new Hungarian government, thereby halting all reform attempts that aimed to liberate Hungary from Soviet control. This revolution was not the only revolution to take place in the Eastern European countries against Soviet control: in the 1960s, a similar

44 *Al-Ahram*: This Is Our Role... We Are Heading Towards a Cold War. January 3, 1959, no. 9, editorial. See also Al-Naggar, A. A-A. A-S. M. (2017). A szuezi válság és Magyarország egyiptomi szemmel [‘The Suez Crisis and Hungary from Egypt’s Perspective’]. In Ujváry (2017), pp. 95–106.

45 These refugees actually fled Hungary en masse through Austria and Yugoslavia until the middle of November 1956, when the borders were closed once again.

46 The new Hungarian government rose to power in 1957, so it is probable that the article refers to the government led by Ferenc Münnich (1886–1967) between January 28, 1958 and September 13, 1961. It is worth noting that the first Kádár government was in power between November 4, 1956 and January 28, 1958.

revolution took place in Czechoslovakia called the “Prague Spring”, which the Soviet forces then suppressed in the same manner.⁴⁷

On October 23, 2006, on the fiftieth anniversary of the Hungarian Revolution of 1956, the US-funded radio station *Radio Sawa* [‘Radio Together’] issued a broadcast that brought to the majority of the Arab public an Arabic translation of US President George Bush’s rallying and bellicose statement on the Hungarian Revolution of 1956.

The history of Hungarian democracy is a fine example of the triumph of freedom over tyranny. In the fall of 1956, the Hungarian people demanded change, and tens of thousands of students, workers, and other citizens bravely marched down the streets, demanding freedom. Although the Soviet tanks had brutally suppressed the Hungarian revolution, the desire for freedom lived on, and in 1989, Hungary became the first communist country in Europe to make the transition into a democracy.⁴⁸

On December 25, 2006, the daily newspaper *Al-Bayan* inspired sympathy in the Arab public by a detailed account of the casualties of the Hungarian Revolution of 1956. The article emphasized that over 20,000 were injured during the events, and many were executed⁴⁹ after the struggles had ceased on November 10, 1956, including Prime Minister Imre Nagy. The article erroneously stated that the last death sentence was carried out in 1958,⁵⁰ but correctly observed that approximately 200,000 people left Hungary after the suppression of the Hungarian Revolution.⁵¹

During the Arab Spring, certain authors drew explicit parallels between the developments unfolding in the Arab world and the events of the Hungarian Revolution

47 Source: <http://www.al-jazirah.com/2004/20041104/xh9.htm> (accessed on March 8, 2022).

48 Source: <https://www.radiosawa.com/archive/2006/06/23/%D8%A8%D9%88%D8%B4-%D8%AB%D9%88%D8%B1%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D8%AC%D8%B1-%D8%B9%D8%A7%D9%85-1956-%D8%AF%D8%B1%D8%B3-%D8%A7%D8%B3%D8%AA%D9%81%D8%A7%D8%AF-%D9%85%D9%86%D9%87-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B9%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85> (accessed on March 8, 2022).

49 Based on current research, during the reprisals following the revolutionary events of 1956, a total of 277 persons were executed by hanging between 1956 and 1961, 115 of whom had been sentenced to death by a military court, and 162 of whom had been sentenced to death by a civil court. Kisémet, J. (2015). *A halálbüntetés története Magyarországon* [The History of the Death Sentence in Hungary]. *Magyar Rendészet*, 6, p. 113.

50 The last death sentence was carried out on August 26, 1961 with the execution of László Nickelsburg (1924–1961), a mechanic and the leader of a revolutionary group on Baross tér. Earlier on the same day, two other members of the same revolutionary group, cinematographer István Hámori (1917–1961) and miner Lajos Kovács (1927–1961) were executed by hanging. See László, D. M. (2011). *Nickelsburg László és a Baross téri csoport* [‘László Nickelsburg and the Revolutionary Group of Baross Square’]. PhD dissertation. Pázmány Péter Katolikus Egyetem.

51 Source: <https://www.albayan.ae/paths/books/2006-12-25-1.968748> (accessed on March 8, 2022).

of 1956. For example, in *The National*, Faisal Al Yafai made a reference to the intellectual legacy of Eric Hobsbawm when he pointed out correlations between the lessons learned from the Hungarian Revolution 1956 and the Egyptian protests of 2012. About the reception of the 100-day reign of Mohamed Morsi's Islamic government and the expected developments in Egyptian political life, he emphasized that the Hungarian Revolution and the events of 2011 in Egypt both unfolded from spontaneous demonstrations by the masses. In his account of the Hungarian events, he mentions the thaw of internal political tension in the fall of 1956, the protests, the start of the armed struggle, the futile expectations of substantial aid or support from the West, and the brutal suppression of the revolution by the Soviet forces. At the same time, in his summary of the lessons of 1956, he notes that the uprising of the Hungarian people was just as justified as the uprisings in those Arab republics where "the promises of the governments were built on oppression and lies."⁵²

On May 10, 2015, the Saudi magazine *Fikr* published a long and neutral article titled "Budapest: The Diamond of the Danube". This eloquent and well-composed article clearly shows that although the socialist period had long ended, Hungary still carried its legacy in marked traces. According to the magazine, Budapest attempted to forget its communist past by, among other measures, changing the names of several streets, removing the statues reminiscent of the era, and modernizing the Hungarian capital; nevertheless, the remnants of the recent past remain. For instance, the office of the former political police had been converted into a museum called the House of Terror, which showcases the most brutal torture methods and instruments of the Stalinist period, and a selection of old and modern statues and memorials of the socialist period were installed in Memento Park on the outskirts of Buda, including the legs of the statue of Stalin.⁵³ At the same time, the article notes that the Soviet memorial commemorating the 1945 victory of the Red Army remains in place on Szabadság ['Freedom'] Square, and a statue of Imre Nagy stands opposite the building of Parliament.⁵⁴ The section on Hungarian catering and restaurants also mentions the café Bambi Eszpresszó: according to the author, since its opening fifty years ago,⁵⁵ it still retains its interior and exterior design, including the characteristic

52 Faisal, A. Y. (2012, October 9). Legacy of Hungary's Uprising Has Lessons for Arab Spring. *The National*. <https://www.thenationalnews.com/legacy-of-hungary-s-uprising-has-lessons-for-arab-spring-1.380821> (accessed on March 8, 2022).

53 During the Hungarian Revolution of 1956, the Stalin statue standing on Felvonulási ['Parade'] Square was toppled over and destroyed by the masses, leaving only parts of the legs and feet. In Memento Park, not the originals are on display.

54 In May 2019, Viktor Orbán's government transferred the statue from Vértanúk ['Martyrs'] Square to Jászai Mari Square (named after Hungarian actress Mari Jászai).

55 The article refers to a café on Frankel Leó utca in Budapest, which opened on May 1, 1961 and was named after Felix Salten's *Bambi*, rather than the popular drink brand Bambi.

red furniture. The author emphasizes that, during their visit, the café seemed very popular, which in their opinion was because it reminded Hungarians of the positive aspects of the communist period, including the security of jobs and pensions, free education, and all those consumer goods that used to make Hungary “the happiest barracks” of the Eastern Bloc.⁵⁶

In 2015, famous Iraqi diplomat and writer Atta Abdel-Wahab claimed that his way of thinking, his political self-definition, and indeed his whole life was changed by the Hungarian Revolution:

In 1956, there was a revolution in Hungary, and the Soviet army violently suppressed it. When that happened, I was shaken in my previously Marxist way of thinking. My suspicions and reservations with regard to putting Marxism into practice were confirmed, and, in my eyes, the political system idealized by the romanticizing fancies of youth had utterly collapsed, and no longer belonged to the category of good world systems.⁵⁷

In its 23 October 2016 issue, the newspaper *Al-Quds Al-Arabi* published a long and important opinion piece on the Hungarian Revolution of 1956. The newspaper argued that

(...) the Hungarian Revolution was distinguished from other events by the serious conflict between the communists and by the Soviet intervention. Former Prime Minister⁵⁸ and Chairman of the Hungarian Communist Party⁵⁹ Mátyás Rákosi had become so infamous for his replication of the totalitarian Stalinist system that he was called ‘the best disciple of Stalin’. However, following the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, the first one since the death of Stalin, Hungary voiced an increasing demand for Rákosi’s resignation. It so happened that, at that Congress, Soviet Leader⁶⁰ Nikita Khrushchev delivered a speech in which he condemned cults of personality and their consequences, as well as the crimes committed by Stalin and his dictatorship. When every state authority, including the state security bodies, joined

56 Source: https://www.fikrmag.com/article_details.php?article_id=49 (accessed on March 8, 2022).

57 Atta, A-W. (2015). *Sulalatt Al-Tein: Serat Masaat* [‘Black Days: A Tragedy’]. Arab Institute for Research & Publishing, p. 263.

58 On August 14, 1952, Rákosi was appointed by the National Assembly as President of the Council of Ministers of the Hungarian People’s Republic. In June 1953, he resigned under Soviet pressure.

59 Mátyás Rákosi was officially the General Secretary of the Hungarian Communist Party between 1945 and 1948, the General Secretary of the Hungarian Working People’s Party from 1948 to 1953, and First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Hungarian Working People’s Party between 1953 and 1956.

60 Officially he was the First Secretary of the CPSU.

forces to demand Rákosi's resignation in Hungary, the authorities in Moscow had no choice but to put pressure on Rákosi to resign and travel to the Soviet Union, where he remained until his death in 1971. Nevertheless, these measures did not lead to substantial changes in the policies and composition of the Hungarian government.⁶¹

The Arabic article exaggerates when it claims that all Hungarian authorities had opposed Rákosi's reign. This statement was likely based on an official Hungarian press release that also circulated in the West, which omitted the real causes of Rákosi's resignation and simply claimed that it was "the will of the people". On July 17, 1956, a member of the Presidium of the Central Committee of the CPSU, Anastas Ivanovich Mikoyan, suddenly arrived in Hungary, where he mentioned Rákosi's removal as fact. According to the directives of Moscow leadership, on the next day at the session of the Central Committee of the Hungarian Working People's Party, the disgraced party leader resigned from his position as First Secretary "for health reasons", and on the following day, he left Hungary on a flight to Moscow, never to return.

On November 5, 2016, Lebanese writer Hazem Saghie wrote an article for the Saudi-owned television channel *Al-Arabiya*, in which he claimed that the great significance of the Hungarian Revolution of 1956 and its suppression partly stemmed from the fact that it had exposed the true colors of the Soviet Union. Instead of the Moscow leadership opening the gates of freedom and human emancipation, "*the political systems of the countries of the Eastern Bloc were closer to becoming modern slaves⁶² that hold people in contempt and refuse to acknowledge the dignity due to human beings.*" Regarding the claims that the countries of East and Central Europe had national sovereignty, the author added that these claims had no basis, and their self-determination was yet another illusion produced by a mixture of ideology and propaganda. The suppression of the Hungarian and Czechoslovak revolutions was, in fact, a sign of the slowly approaching death of the Soviet Union and the Eastern Bloc: they had exposed the cowardice of these political systems and their inability to answer any demands for reform, no matter how modest, especially if meeting these demands were to be met with threats due to Moscow leadership's strategic and geopolitical influence. At the end of his article, Hazem concluded that "*the role of the Hungarian people in*

61 Source: <https://www.alaraby.co.uk/60-%D8%B9%D8%A7%D9%85%D8%A7%D9%8B-%D8%B9%D9%84%D9%89-%D8%A7%D9%86%D8%AA%D9%81%D8%A7%D8%B6%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D8%AC%D8%B1-%D8%A8%D9%86-%D9%83%D9%87%D8%A9-%D8%AA%D8%AC%D8%AF%D9%91%D9%8F%D8%AF-%22%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AD%D8%B1%D8%A8-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A8%D8%A7%D8%B1%D8%AF%D8%A9%22> (accessed on March 8, 2022).

62 The political systems of the Eastern Bloc were considered the slaves of Soviet leadership.

*this epic, as well as the roles of the Germans, the Czechoslovaks, and the Poles, remains unforgettable and forever memorable.*⁶³

On October 25, 2018, an article was published on the Iraqi website *Al-Hewar al-Mutamaddin* ['Civilized Dialogue'], according to which

(...) the revolution broke out against the dictatorial policies of Mátyás Rákosi and the tyrannical control of his pro-Soviet Stalinist Hungarian Socialist Party [sic]. This revolution exposed the then counterrevolutionary nature of the Soviet Union. (...) The takeover by Kádár only brought in even more Russian tanks to aid the suppression, but the Russians as well as the Hungarian puppets under their control and surveillance experienced resistance in every quarter.

The political website added that, in October and November 1956, Hungary was like Russia during the revolutions of 1905 and 1917. In this manner, Budapest had immortalized a new name on the list of the fighting cities of the world: its name was now commemorated alongside Paris, Saint Petersburg, Canton, Madrid, and Warsaw.⁶⁴

In its 14 January 2019 issue, the Bahrein daily newspaper *Al-Watan* drew a parallel between the Hungarian Revolution of 1956 and the "Arab Spring" and compared the two great events for similarities. The article described how the superpowers toyed with smaller countries by using certain political concepts and argued that

(...) the superpowers sought to invent political terms that they would be able to market in the Arab world by way of global media and political mechanisms, and which ultimately aimed to serve the interests of the superpowers themselves, such as the "new Middle East", the "Arab Spring", or "creative chaos". We saw how the concept of the "new Middle East" was followed during the presidential term of George W. Bush by structural imbalances in the structures of the regional system, which led to two great American wars, one in Afghanistan in 2001, and the other in Iraq in 2003, the latter of which caused the collapse of the Iraqi state and the rise of the regional powers. This "play of words" and its political marketing is nothing new: as early as the 1950s and 1960s, the West had been using the concept of "spring" against its loathsome opponent, the Soviet Union. In 1968, they labeled the uprising in Czechoslovakia the "Prague Spring", and the Hungarian Revolution of 1956 was labeled the "Budapest Spring". Both revolutions

63 Source: <https://www.alarabiya.net/ar/politics/2016/11/05/-%D8%AB%D9%88%D8%B1%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D8%AC%D8%B1-%D9%81%D9%8A-%D8%B0%D9%83%D8%B1%D8%A7%D9%87%D8%A7-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B3%D8%AA%D9%8A%D9%86?fbclid=IwAR0ADqbKOCs0M6YxuA4iw2-3zbUnkrv5Sr3o63-AbcoVyC42ScECt1rn8Tg> (accessed on March 8, 2022).

64 Source: <https://www.ahewar.org/debat/show.art.asp?aid=615973> (accessed on March 8, 2022).

were a “spring” to America and to the West, while to their enemy the Soviet Union it was a politically devastating, windy, and dirty “fall”. The aim was to weaken and preoccupy the Soviet Union with the political conflicts unfolding in the Eastern Bloc in the hopes of its collapse, which eventually occurred in 1990 during the term of Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev. Since then, instead of the bipolarity that had dominated during the Cold War, America has been leading the world by itself, through unipolar policies.⁶⁵

Finally, in the 18 June 2020 issue of *Al-Quds Al-Arabi*, well-known Egyptian writer Attif Abdel-Meguid⁶⁶ published a long article on the Arabic translation of the monograph *Magyar Forradalom 1956. Napló* [‘Hungarian Revolution of 1956: A Diary’]⁶⁷ compiled by Gyula Csics.⁶⁸ According to Abdel-Meguid, it was the political changes after the period of Soviet Stalinism, the nationalist movements of the Eastern European socialist parties, and the various social protests that had created the necessary circumstances and conditions for the eventual outbreak of the Hungarian Revolution of 1956. The anti-Soviet revolution in Poland encouraged the uprising in Hungary; to put it differently, the close ties and shared history of Poland and Hungary made it natural, even expected, that a Hungarian revolution would follow. The article also argued that “*the Hungarian revolution, similarly to every other revolution, was born from the crises of the political system, especially because the Hungarian system and the Soviet system were both a form of bureaucratic state socialism in which employees have*

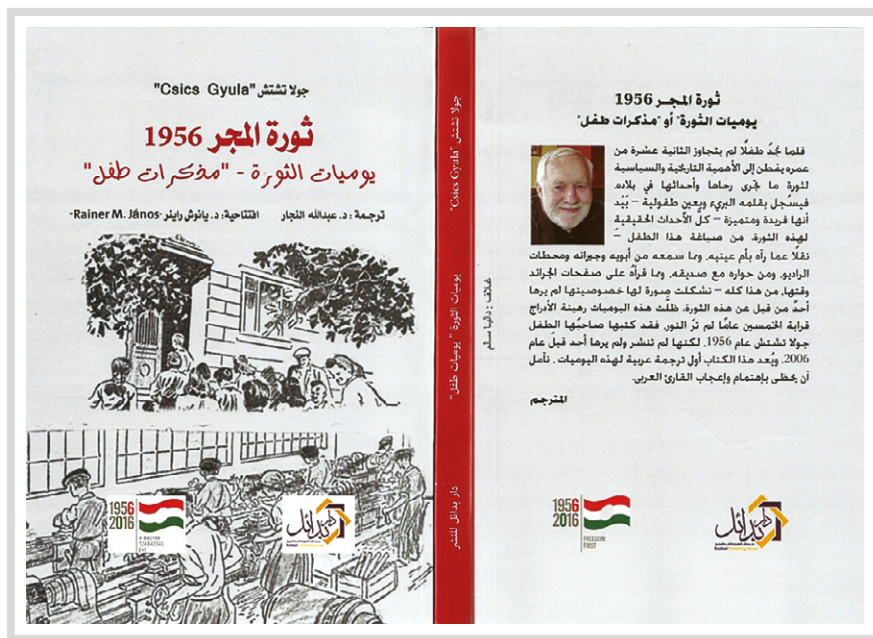
65 Source: <https://alwatannews.net/article/812105/Opinion/%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%82%D9%88%D9%89-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%83%D8%A8%D8%B1%D9%89-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AD%D9%82%D9%8A%D9%82%D8%A9-%D9%88%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%82%D9%86%D8%A7%D8%B9-2-3> (accessed on March 8, 2022).

66 Attif Abdel-Meguid (1973–) is an Egyptian poet, writer, journalist, and literary translator, and a member of the Egyptian Writers’ Union and the Arab Writers’ Union. He has published articles, analyses, translations, and poems in some of the most prestigious Arab newspapers and journals, and to date he has published over twenty monographs and volumes, including several volumes of poetry.

67 The original Hungarian title is *Magyar Forradalom 1956. Napló* [‘Hungarian Revolution of 1956: A Diary’], while the Arabic translation is titled ثورة المجر 1956 – يوميات الثورة. Written by Gyula Csics. Translated by Dr. Abdallah Abdel-Ati Al-Naggar. Revised by Dr. Barakat Al-Sharafawy and Safaa Mohamed Mahmoud. Number of published copies: 1,000. Length: 224 pages. Dimensions: 14 × 21 cm. Publication date: October 2016. First edition. ISBN: 978-977-6507-15-9. Publisher: Badael Publishing House. By translating, publishing, and successfully presenting the Diary, we have made a serious contribution to Arab and Egyptian social remembrance, as well as the strengthening community identity based on shared values, culture, and the past. The Arabic translation of the Diary ensured that the Egyptian and Arab public would be able to learn about the Hungarian Revolution of 1956 in detail. The author, the translator and historian, and Professor László J. Nagy of the University of Szeged discussed the monograph at the book launch and in television and radio interviews, which were broadcasted in Egypt and reached at least 150,000 citizens. The monograph sold 1,000 copies.

68 Gyula Csics (1944–) is a teacher of History and Russian Language and Literature, and the director of the library in Tatabánya. He received awards for flood protection (1970), excellence in mining (1999), and for his contributions to the culture of Tatabánya (2007). His childhood diary written during the days of the Hungarian Revolution of 1956 was published in 2006.

no democratic control over society and against domination by the ruling ranks, which use employees to hoard wealth.”⁶⁹



Cover of the Arabic language version of *Hungarian Revolution of 1956: A Diary*

In Lieu of Conclusion: Correlations Drawn between the Suez Crisis and the Hungarian Revolution of 1956 in the Arab Media

On account of the fact that the Hungarian Revolution and the Suez Crisis occurred in the same year and unfolded almost simultaneously, researchers studying the history of these events have often examined them from a Western perspective;⁷⁰ however, until recently, research on Arab sources had been scarce. In this last section, we shall attempt to bridge this gap by a brief overview of relevant archival and press materials.

Based on our current research, we have concluded that the Arab world and in particular Egypt interpreted the correlations between the Suez Crisis and the Hungarian

69 *Al-Quds Al-Arabi*: Revolutions Are Born from Political Crises. June 18, 2021, no. 9938: 13.

70 These two international events have been studied by many, including Gusztáv D. Kecskés (Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Institute of History), László J. Nagy (University of Szeged, Faculty of Humanities), Tamás Kovács (National Archives of Hungary), János Sáringer (Veritas Research Institute for History), and François David (Université Jean Moulin, Lyon, France).

Revolution in four different ways. According to the first interpretation, England and France, together with Israel, took advantage of the fact that the Soviet Union's attention was fixed on Hungary, meaning that the Hungarian Revolution "enabled" these states to launch an invasion against Egypt. This interpretation was first published in 1958⁷¹ by Egyptian writer Mohamed Hassanein Heikal, who argued that "*in the war on Suez, the Hungarian events had a decisive impact on the swift victory of the British over Egypt, since England sought to take advantage of the fact that the Soviet Union was engrossed by Hungary. (...) However, it had never occurred to the three aggressors that the Soviets would so quickly suppress the Hungary revolution as to have the matter all settled by November 4.*"⁷²

Another interpretation of the two events points to the attacks instigated by England, France, and Israel regarding the issue of the Suez Canal as the real reason for the suppression of the Hungarian Revolution of 1956. Israel launched its attack on Egypt on October 29, and Great Britain and France followed suit on October 31, at which time the stance of the Soviet Union radically changed, leading the proponents of this theory to the conclusion that the fate of the Hungarian Revolution was ultimately decided by the development of international events, and primarily by the Suez Crisis. Anis Mohamed Mansour supported this theory in an article published in the 1 November 2006 issue of *Al-Ahram*, according to which "*the 1956 revolution in Budapest can still be considered the first death blow to Russia in Europe. (...) The communists might try to play down the importance of the Hungarian Revolution, but the fact of the matter is that this revolution forced Nikita Khrushchev to withdraw his troops from Hungary, and they only returned with brutal force after the triple invasion [of Egypt] had begun, which then completely engrossed the attention of the world.*"⁷³ This opinion is the most widespread and most realistic interpretation of the events, and its correctness was later confirmed by the disclosure of confidential and strictly confidential Egyptian, Israeli, Hungarian, and British foreign affairs and military reports.

The third interpretation draws yet other correlations between the Hungarian Revolution and the Suez Crisis, as explained by Egyptian journalist Mohamed Fahmi:⁷⁴

71 Heikal, M. H. (1958). *Al-Okad Al-Nafsiya ellati Tahcoun Al-Shawq Al-Awsat* ['The Psychological Complications that Govern the Middle East']. Al-Shariqa Al-Arabiya Lel-Tebaa Wal-Nashr, pp. 151–163.

72 At dawn on November 4, 1956, Operation Whirlwind commenced, which constituted a general attack by the Soviet Army to suppress the Hungarian Revolution. Contrary to their earlier calculations, the invasion forces only managed to completely subdue the organized armed resistance of the Hungarian people on November 12.

73 *Al-Ahram*: Positions. November 1, 2006, last page.

74 In the mid-1970s, Fahmi became the Germany correspondent of *Akhbar El Yom*, and spent twenty years working in Berlin. He died in 2017 and is regarded today as one of the most prominent figures of the state-owned Egyptian daily newspaper.

On the international stage, the consequences of the Hungarian Revolution had an impact on the course taken by the attacks of Britain, France, and Israel. Western activities in support of the Hungarian Revolution greatly influenced Soviet leadership to take a stance in favor of Egypt, and to play a decisive role in resolving the Suez Crisis. (...) Minister of Foreign Affairs Shepilov⁷⁵ issued a letter to the Chairman of the Security Council, while Prime Minister Bulganin⁷⁶ sent telegrams to Eden,⁷⁷ Mollet,⁷⁸ and Ben-Gurion,⁷⁹ in which he threatened all three countries with the deployment of missile weapons. This had a serious and positive effect on Arab public opinion.⁸⁰

Finally, the fourth and last position regarding the correlations between the Suez Crisis and the Hungarian Revolution of 1956 was represented by writer Muhammad Jalal Kishk, who argued that “*despite the fact that there is no available evidence at our disposal, it seems that the Americans and the Russians had reached a mutual agreement: the Americans gave the Russians free rein to suppress the Hungarian Revolution. That might have been what happened.*”⁸¹

75 Dmitri Trofimovich Shepilov (1905–1995) was a Russian communist politician and Minister of Foreign Affairs. He was born in Askhabad, which is the current capital of Turkmenistan. In 1926, he graduated from Lomonosov University (now the Moscow State University), after which he served in academic positions. In 1941, he enlisted in the Red Army. In 1952, he became Chief Editor of the Soviet newspaper *Pravda*, and a member of the Central Committee of the CPSU. In June 1956, he was appointed as the Minister of Foreign Affairs. In February 1957, he was removed from his position and dismissed from the Central Committee for participating in the coup attempt against Khrushchev. In 1962, his party membership was also revoked, but in 1976, he was readmitted into the ranks of the CPSU. He retired in 1982.

76 Nikolai Alexandrovich Bulganin (1895–1975) was a Russian communist politician. He was born in Nizhny Novgorod and joined the Bolshevik Party in 1917. From 1931, he served as Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Moscow City Soviet, and between 1937 and 1938, he served as Chairman of the Council of People’s Commissars (effectively becoming Prime Minister). In 1939, he became a member of the Central Committee of the CPSU. He served as Minister of Defense between 1947 and 1949, as well as between 1953 and 1955, and from February 8, 1955, he served as Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the Soviet Union. He was one of the most important supporters of Khrushchev in the power struggle following Stalin’s death; however, in 1957, he joined the opposition group within the Presidium that sought to remove Khrushchev from power. When the dissenters failed to remove Khrushchev, Bulganin was forced to resign in 1958, and the Central Committee also stripped him of his rank of Marshall and his party membership. He retired in 1960.

77 Anthony Eden (1897–1977) was a British diplomat. He served as Minister of Foreign Affairs, and between 1955 and 1957, he was Prime Minister of the United Kingdom.

78 Guy Mollet (1905–1975) was a French politician and Prime Minister of France between February 1, 1956 and June 13, 1957.

79 David Ben-Gurion (1886–1973) was an Israeli politician and Prime Minister of Israel.

80 *Akhbar El Yom* (2015, June 6). Hungarian Remembrance. See also Al-Naggar, A. A-A. A-S. M. (2017). A szuezi válság és Magyarország egyiptomi szemmel [‘The Suez Crisis and Hungary from Egypt’s Perspective’]. In Ujváry, G. (Ed.), *Veritas kötetek 6*. Veritas Történetkutató Intézet, pp. 95–106.

81 Kishk, M. J. (2012). *Thawrat Yoliu Al-Amerikiya – Ilakat Abden-Nasser Bil-Mukhabarak Al-Amerikiya* [‘The July American Revolution – The Relationship between Nasser and American Intelligence’]. Al-Zahraa lil-Ilam wal-Nashr, p. 544.

Last but not least, the most interesting historical source and collection of articles would be a series of comprehensive independent foreign affairs analyses published by the Egyptian press.

In conclusion, we hope to have shown that except for some rare instances, the calm analyses published in the Arab media were generally supportive of the Hungarian Revolution of 1956.

Translated by: Eva Misits

The Hungarian Revolution of 1956 and Africa

GÁBOR BÚR

“I would not want to live in Russia (...) I found existence there unbearably poor and sad. Once, for half an hour, I sat in a car on a busy street, and, in all this time, I did not see a single happy face.”¹

At the time of the Hungarian Revolution of 1956 and the refugee crisis following the Soviet intervention, Africa was still predominantly a continent of colonies. Compared to the period between the two world wars, which meant relative peace for the colonists, Africa became a turbulent continent during and after the Second World War. Only four independent African states were among the original membership of 51 countries of the United Nations: Egypt, Ethiopia, Liberia and the Union of South Africa. (Today, a quarter of the member states of the UN are African.) The rest of the continent was represented in world affairs through the six European “mother countries”. Historically they were more European colonial powers participating in the “scramble for Africa” but the Scandinavians, the Dutch and, after their defeat in World War I, the Germans were pushed out. Italy lost all its colonies during World War II, but was allowed to return to Somalia in 1950 for ten years to administer it as a trusteeship territory.² By 1956, France had the largest portion of Africa; the “lion’s share” of the British was smaller. Besides them, Portugal held three mainland and two island colonies, Spain two mainland colonies and several enclaves in Morocco and Belgium had the Congo and Ruanda-Urundi.³ In the 1950s, only six new independent states were born in Africa: Libya in 1952, Sudan in 1955, Tunisia and Morocco in 1956, Ghana in 1957, and Guinea in 1958. The breakthrough only happened in 1960, in the “year of Africa,” when 17 former colonies became independent.

1 Millin, S. G. (1941). *The night is long*. Faber & Faber limited, p. 355.

2 Trusteeship Agreement for the Territory of Somaliland under Italian administration. Official Records of the UN General Assembly, Fifth Session, Supplement No. 10. <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/RESOLUTION/GEN/NR0/060/40/PDF/NR006040.pdf?OpenElement> (accessed on August 23, 2022).

3 Griffiths, I. LL. (1985). *An Atlas of African Affairs*. Methuen, p. 48.

Hungary never had a colonial empire and, despite being part of European “collective colonization,” it was never a “colonizing factor”.⁴ The country focused instead on Asia in politics, trade, and even scientific research. This “Asia first” approach was valid until recent years. Interest in Africa was never really high in Hungary; people got to the continent only incidentally and research by Hungarian Africanists was never received with the same degree of attention and understanding as in countries with colonial experiences. Little was done to promote contact with Africa and knowledge of the continent remained marginal until the 1960s. It was so despite conditions having totally changed due to Hungary’s forced adoption of the Soviet-style communist model, which treated solidarity with colonial peoples and active support for the “anti-colonialist struggle” as a top priority; development efforts in Asia and Africa became important elements of the official ideology.

In 1949, the World Festival of Youth and Students was held in Budapest under the motto “*Youth, Unite! Forward for Lasting Peace, Democracy, National Independence and a better future for the people!*”. And although the official propaganda proudly announced that guests from 84 countries came to the event, Africa was represented by students who had studied at European universities. The press of the time therefore used specific terms, such as “*a black-skinned guest came from a faraway land.*” Only French West Africa was directly represented, as the French committee of the World Federation of Democratic Youth (WFDY) donated 350,000 francs to the youth organizations of the French colonies to take part in the event.⁵ This event did not boost the tepid interest in Africa, just like the fact that the only Africanist figure in Hungary of the time, Endre Sík, returned from his post as ambassador to Washington in 1949 and became the head of the political department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, a position he held until 1954. In this period, he was also the director of the Academy for Foreign Policy.⁶ In 1954 he became deputy foreign minister and, in the following year, first deputy of the foreign minister.⁷ The breakthrough in diplomatic relations with Africa can be linked to his name but that happened only after the 1956 revolution, when he became foreign minister of the Hungarian People’s Republic in 1958 and circumstances and needs in foreign policy changed radically.

- 4 Biernaczky, Sz. (1984). Folklore in Africa Today. *Current Anthropology*, 25(2), 214–216. <https://doi.org/10.1086/203110>
- 5 Klenjanzsky, S. (2016). „Világ fiataljai egyesüljete!” Az 1949-es budapesti Világifjúsági Találkozó és a francia fiatalok részvétele a fesztiválon történeti kontextusban. *Múltunk*, 61(1), 207–232.
- 6 Endre Sík’s most important contribution to African Studies was his 4 volume History of Black Africa (1961–1973) published first in French (*Histoire de l’Afrique Noire*) then in Hungarian (*Fekete-Afrika története*), and in English. He wrote the major part of this work in Moscow in the 1930’s.
- 7 Búr, G. (2007). Hangarii no Afrika kenkyu [African scholarship in Hungary]. *ARENA*, 2007(4), 83–96; Búr, G. (2007). Endre Sík and the Traditions of African Studies in Hungary. *Boekihu, Chubu International Review* (Japan), 2, 155–169.

Until the “tragic events” of 1956, Hungary had very little diplomatic representation in Africa. During the Second World War, Hungary’s diplomatic relations were severed. Before the peace treaty was signed on February 10 1947, the country’s international activities were limited by the Allied Control Commission, and its permission was required to establish diplomatic relations. Nevertheless, at the time of signing the peace treaty, Hungarian foreign missions were already operating in twenty states, including one in Africa, namely Egypt.⁸ Diplomatic relations were established with Sudan immediately after it gained independence in 1955, and an embassy was opened in Khartoum on March 7 1956. The mission was led by the Hungarian ambassador in Cairo. The embassy in Tunisia was opened on August 30 1956, and in Morocco only in 1959.⁹ There was no Hungarian foreign representation in the key countries of the continent; in 1964 Budapest could only accredit the Hungarian ambassador in Cairo to Ethiopia.

The economic giant of the continent, the Union of South Africa, was forbidden fruit for Hungarian diplomacy for decades. After the electoral victory of the National Party and the introduction of Apartheid, South Africa stood high on the long list of public enemies of the communist world. Endre Sík described both Jan Smuts (a key figure in the creation of the United Nations Charter’s Preamble) and the National Party’s leader Daniel F. Malan (who instituted the policy of enforced segregation of non-whites from whites), as simply “fascist”.¹⁰ Blindly following the Soviet line it was neither conducive to the establishment of relations nor to the acquisition of the most basic knowledge regarding Africa. Only after the 1956 revolution were active steps taken to replace the almost total ignorance of the African continent by acquaintance with its ethnography, languages, history, and present political and economic developments. Due to the circumstances, not even a rough image of Hungary was formed on the African continent; even for educated people, it was only a speck somewhere beyond the Iron Curtain.

From the 1950s there was a structural change in international relations with the emergence of the third world as a new force in world politics, as the post-war liberation movements in the former colonial areas of Asia, and Africa weakened and finally destroyed the Western colonial system and brought forth new nations and a new constellation of power onto the world scene.¹¹ Moscow sought to break or diminish

8 Sáringer, J. (2014). *Iratok a magyar Külügyminisztérium történetéhez, 1945–1950*. Balassi Kiadó, pp. 44–45.

9 Baráth, M. & Gecsényi, L. (Eds.) (2015). *Diplomaták a változó világban. Főkonzulok, követek és nagykövetek 1945–1990*. Bölcsészettudományi Kutatóközpont, pp. 117–119.

10 Búr, G. (1990). The Image of Africa in Hungary with Particular Emphasis on South Africa. *South Africa International*, 21(2), 98–103.

11 Durojaiye, J. O. (1988). Soviet Strategic Interests in Africa. *Strategic Studies*, 12(2), 54–71.

Western influence in Africa. As the above-mentioned South African Prime Minister Malan articulated just before he took office in 1948, “*Russia has long planned to export communism here and incite revolution, and its next fertile field of activity is the non-white population.*”¹²

Malan was not right because, until 1956, the Soviet Union did not show much interest in the colonial world.¹³ Two factors changed this attitude in that year, the Suez crisis and the Hungarian revolution. On July 26 1956, Gamal Abdel Nasser nationalized the British- and French-owned Suez Canal Company to demonstrate his independence from the European colonial powers. This gave the Soviet Union an opportunity to undermine traditional Anglo-French hegemony in the Middle East and Africa.¹⁴ Moscow abandoned Stalin’s restrictive interpretation of the “two camps theory,” which pronounced that alliances with non-Marxist nationalist elites were impossible, and instead jumped at the chance to make new friends in Asia, Africa and Latin America at a time when more and more countries in these regions were becoming independent.

Whereas Stalin believed that post-independence leaders were “lackeys” of the imperialists, Nikita Khrushchev, the new First Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU), was convinced that the newly independent countries represented a great opportunity for the Soviet Union. Khrushchev hoped “*to use post-colonialist momentum, break into the soft underbelly of imperialism and win the sympathies of the millions of people who woke up to the new life.*”¹⁵ The Soviet leader made a somewhat surprising statement in October 1955: “*Let us compete without war.*” He argued that, with the advent of nuclear technology, military confrontation was inconceivable and the USSR should thus adapt to peaceful forms of competition with the West, which were possible in the third World.¹⁶ Although Africa was considered to be of marginal importance for many more years, the Soviet Union maintained an interest in the region, if only because, in its opinion, it was one of the weak links in the global capitalist system.¹⁷ The situation promised that the Soviet Union could

- 12 Давидсон, А. Б. & Филатова, И. И. (2010). *Россия и Южная Африка: три века связей*. Издательский дом Государственного университета – Высшей школы экономики, p. 268.
- 13 Singh, K. R. (1969). The Soviet-UAR Relations. *India Quarterly*, 25(2), 139–152. <https://doi.org/10.1177/097492846902500203> <https://www.jstor.org/stable/45069363> (accessed on August 23, 2022).
- 14 Hahn, P. (1956). *The Suez Crisis*. https://origins.osu.edu/milestones/suez-crisis-1956?language_content_entity=en (accessed on June 12, 2022).
- 15 Iandolo, A. (2014). Imbalance of Power. The Soviet Union and the Congo Crisis, 1960–1961. *Journal of Cold War Studies*, 16(2), 32–55. https://doi.org/10.1162/JCWS_a_00449
- 16 Telepneva, N. (2021). *Cold War Liberation. The Soviet Union and the Collapse of the Portuguese Empire in Africa, 1961–1975*. University of North Carolina Press, p. 15.
- 17 Obuah, E. (1997). Reviewed Work: Africa in the New International Order: Rethinking State Sovereignty and Regional Security by Edmond J. Keller and Donald Rothschild. *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, 35(4), 767–770. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022278X97302614>

fight the Cold War in Africa “on the cheap”, using clandestine means to achieve the required aims.

U.S. officials during the Eisenhower (and Kennedy) administrations were unable to counter Soviet charges with a wholesale defense of Western colonialism at the UN: although Eisenhower and Dulles were generally not opposed to decolonization, they regarded it as a long process, Eisenhower favored 25 years of preparation for nationhood while Dulles believed it could take 50 or more. In late 1955, Dulles sounded out British Chancellor of the Exchequer Harold Macmillan on a “Bandung in reverse”, whereby the colonial powers would announce a broad plan for granting self-determination to their colonies and thus seize the initiative from the Soviet Union.¹⁸ The US leaders did see value in highlighting the transitory nature of decolonization, in contrast to the seeming permanence of Soviet control of Eastern Europe, the Baltic States, and Central Asia, employing in the process the language and tone of the larger U.S. campaign against Red Colonialism,¹⁹ which was presented in contrast to the evolutionary progress toward self-determination that had been made under western auspices since World War II.

It was under these conditions that the news of the revolution in Budapest reached Africa. Hardly any attention was paid. At the time when US and other Western reactions to the Hungarian uprising was nothing other than improvisation,²⁰ it is no wonder that, from the African perspective, it seemed like the confused happenings of a faraway, unknown country. From such a distance, the combination of the Yugoslav and Finnish models of neutrality and all the other aims of the revolution were hardly interpretable. If the African newspapers reported on Hungary at all, it was in short articles of a few lines on one of the back pages. In British East Africa, even missionary papers kept quiet about the events in Hungary, while photographs of the British Royal Family frequently appeared.²¹ Similarly, the English-language West African press kept silent about the events in Budapest but at the same time was publishing a number of articles on the civil rights movement in the United States.²²

18 Sangmuah, E. N. (1990). Eisenhower and Containment in North Africa, 1956–1960. *Middle East Journal*, 44(1), 76–91. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/4328057> (accessed on May 30, 2022).

19 Heiss, M. A. (2015). Exposing “Red Colonialism”. U.S. Propaganda at the United Nations, 1953–1963. *Journal of Cold War Studies*, 17(3), 82–115. https://doi.org/10.1162/JCWS_a_00562

20 Békés, Cs. (2015). The 1956 Hungarian Revolution and international politics. *STORIA E POLITICA. Annali della Fondazione Ugo La Malfa*, 30, p. 31.

21 Scotton, J. F. (1978). Tanganyika’s African Press, 1937–1960: A Nearly Forgotten Pre-Independence Forum. *African Studies Review*, 21(1), 1–18. <https://doi.org/10.2307/523760> <https://www.jstor.org/stable/523760?seq=1> (accessed on May 11, 2022).

22 Kumolalo, F. O. (2012). The Anglo-West African Press and the African American Struggle For Equality During the Eisenhower Administration: A Case Study of The Ghanaian And Nigerian Press. *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria*, 21, 154–170.

A few days after the outbreak of the revolution in Budapest came the news of the tripartite invasion of Egypt in the Suez Canal zone. The Egyptian leader, Gamal Abdel Nasser nationalized the canal in July 1956. Until then, French and British capital was the determining factor in the Suez Canal Company (Compagnie universelle du canal maritime de Suez); Egypt received only 7% of the Company's annual income. The move was of enormous importance for Africa: it was an easy-to-understand message for everyone. However, in October 1956 during a secret meeting, Great Britain, France and Israel agreed on a military attack against Egypt.²³ The invasion began on 29 October 1956 and made the front page news of every African newspaper.

On 4 November, Soviet troops began to crush the Hungarian revolution. The response of the African press to the brutal military occupation showed some confusion. In the few independent countries of Africa, as well as in the colonial possessions of the European powers, the Hungarian David, who was fighting against Soviet Goliath, was met by general sympathy among intellectuals, and it was easy to find a parallel with the fight against the colonizers. Egypt was an exception, since by this time it had already firmly attached itself to the Soviet Union. Nevertheless, Africa's first and most important priority was decolonization and, in itself, the time slippage of two important events resulted in Moscow scoring a major public relations victory on the continent. Of course, this did not mean that the Hungarian question would not be on the agenda of international forums, above all the UN.

The Eleventh Session of the UN General Assembly opened on 12th November 1956 and was adjourned on 8th March 1957. The French and British objective was to bring the Hungarian events to the world's attention, while trying to downplay the significance of their own military intervention in Egypt. This effort was not successful but it caused displeasure among many Africans that the attention of the General Assembly was concentrated to such an extent on the urgent and immediate problems of Hungary and Suez that other questions, especially the complicated and difficult ones, were swept under the diplomatic rug, in particular, long-standing questions involving South Africa, South West Africa, and the Ethiopian-Somali border disputes. (According to a humorous comment, they were asked to solve themselves without disturbing the delegates.) Other topics, such as like the Algerian question, the affairs of African trust territories (except South West Africa) and Somalia, received considerable attention from the General Assembly, and some progress toward self-government was backed from the French and British Togolands in the west to Tanganyika in the east of the continent. In contrast, the non-self-governing territories, (the so-called

23 Sáringer, J. & Abdalláh, A-A. A-Sz. M. (Eds.) (2016). *A szuezi válság és Magyarország 1956. Diplomáciai iratok az 1956-os magyar forradalom és szabadságharc, illetve a szuezi válság történetéhez*. Veritas Research Institute – Magyar Napló, pp. 39–41.

step-children of the UN Charter) were given little encouragement by the General Assembly. Admission of new African members was adopted; Morocco, Sudan, and Tunisia were admitted as new members of the UN at the beginning of the Session of the General Assembly, and Ghana (formerly the Gold Coast, with which British Togoland was united) was admitted at the conclusion of the Session. Admission of these states was among the few universally approved actions by the Assembly.²⁴

Events in Hungary in October–November 1956 showed the limits of de-Stalinization. The Soviet attack on the country featured prominently in the international press, and even more so the wave of refugees caused by the bloody retaliation. In a few months nearly 200,000 people left Hungary. It was only a tiny part of the estimated more than 12 million refugees who had escaped during the Cold War from the Communist countries (including the Soviet Union, mainland China, Tibet, Albania, Romania, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, North Korea, North Vietnam, and from East Germany) but, at the level of propaganda, it could be used as proof of the “savagery” of the Soviet empire.²⁵

Most of the world moved to help the refugees, and the few already independent African states were no exceptions. Ethiopia, Liberia and Morocco offered financial contributions to help solve the refugee crisis. Tunisia agreed to accept 100 people temporarily, but in the end no one got there. The Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland offered to take in 30 orphans under the age of five, and finally took in 60 Hungarians by 1958, both adults and children.²⁶ The defining part of the help from the African continent came from the Union of South Africa. From the first moment, the South African government sharply condemned the Soviet intervention in Hungary, on November 4 1956, and criticized the restrained involvement of the United Nations, which was in favor of the Russian intervention in the eyes of the South Africans. Nevertheless, in the last weeks of 1956, the Union of South Africa donated £ 26,000 to the UN crisis program and paid £ 25,000 into the fund to help Hungarian refugees. In mid-November, it undertook to take in 150 Hungarian refugees, but increased the contingent to 1,500 in December due to the escalation of the refugee crisis.²⁷

24 Africa-UN bulletin, No. 6. JSTOR Primary Sources, 04-09-1957. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/al.sff.document.acoa000086> (accessed on May 4, 2022).

25 Heiss, M. A. (2015). Exposing “Red Colonialism”. U.S. Propaganda at the United Nations, 1953–1963. *Journal of Cold War Studies*, 17(3), 82–115.

26 NATO Archives (Brussels): Report on Hungarian refugees, note by the Chairman of the Committee of Political Advisers, signed A. Casardi, C-M (57)65 (April 7. 1957) https://www.nato.int/nato_static/assets/pdf/pdf_archives_hungarian_revolution/20130904_C-M_57_65-ENG.PDF (accessed on May 4, 2022).

27 Mohan, J. (1961). South Africa and the Suez Crisis. *International Journal*, 16(4), 327–357. <https://doi.org/10.1177/002070206101600402> <https://doi.org/10.2307/40198749>



Hungarian refugees in the ‘railwaymen’s camp’ on the seashore of Natal, South Africa, in 1957

Central Europe had no significance for the apartheid system; the South African government reacted chiefly to the Suez Crisis. However, the press reported the news from the world press about the Hungarian revolution and the Soviet intervention. The following could be read on the first page of the paper with the largest circulation, *The Star of Johannesburg*, on November 5: “*Hungary has been butchered. Thousands flee Soviet terror.*”²⁸ On November 17, (white) students demonstrated on behalf of the Hungarians. Demonstrations, meetings, and collections were organized in the following days. Sympathy for the Hungarians was universal; only the radical Black groups that had been forced into illegality and the Communists approved of the Russian intervention. The reason for this was their blind adherence to the Muscovite line and a peculiar view of the world: Hungary was a white country, and only peoples of color could carry out a just struggle against their white oppressors. While news of the Suez Crisis was on the title pages of the radical press during its decisive days, reports on the Hungarian events appeared on the back pages and only because of the international outrage over the Soviet intervention.

Overall, it can be said that the echo of the Hungarian revolution of 1956 was perhaps the smallest on the African continent. Kwame Nkrumah, “the Greatest African” according to a recent poll, in the book intended to be the main work of his life (*Neo-Colonialism: The Highest Stage of Imperialism*), when he listed the crises of the Eastern bloc a few years after the events, wrote about the revolution imprecisely

28 Csap, L. (2006). *Magyarok Dél-Afrikában*. I. Private publication of the author, p. 16.

and dryly, without any kind of sympathy: “*East Germany in the riots of 1953, in Hungary’s abortive crisis of 1959, Poland’s of September 1956.*”²⁹ On the continent, where the source of all problems was colonialism, there was simply no political place for the rebellion against Soviet oppression. It was not just that the “Wall Street Octopus” was considered as the main peril and not Soviet imperialism, but Africa was also on the way to monopolize the victim’s role and was not ready share it. Decades later, we see that more clearly in connection with the war between Russia and the Ukraine.

29 Nkrumah, K. (1965). *Neo-Colonialism: The Highest Stage of Imperialism*. Nelson, p. 241.

Brazil – Hungary, 1956: Commentaries on the Hungarian Revolution in the Brazilian Daily *O Estado de São Paulo*

ÁGNES JUDIT SZILÁGYI

In the fall of 1956, the attention of Brazilian public opinion was seized by a number of interesting internal affairs brought on by the ambitious plans of the Second Brazilian Republic. Earlier in the summer, the government launched an education development program with US support, known as the Brazilian-American Assistance Program for Elementary Education (*Programa de Assistência Brasileiro-Americana ao Ensino Elementar*, PABAAE). In the first days of October, Israel Pinheiro¹ presented to the National Congress a set of plans for the new federal capital, and on October 18, the newspapers reported on the start of construction work. Meanwhile, preparations for the Santos-Dumont² anniversary were proceeding rapidly; a new media law was wreaking havoc among the journalists; student movements sprung up at the University of São Paulo, and in Rio de Janeiro, October 26 saw the death of General Gois Monteiro, a prominent politician of the Vargas Era. Furthermore, the communist movement and the Brazilian Communist Party itself were at the time facing a severe crisis. One would think that this last development might have been somewhat influenced by news of the Hungarian Revolution of 1956, but Jorge Luiz Ferreira's monograph³ on the subject contains no mention of its resonance: already overwhelmed by the horrors of Stalinism, the Brazilian communists had no attention to spare for the cause of the Hungarian Revolution. However, another segment of public opinion

- 1 Israel Pinheiro da Silva (1896–1973) was an iron and steel industry tycoon and politician. At the period discussed in this paper, he was the president of Companhia Urbanizadora da Nova Capital, the company established to build the City of Brasília.
- 2 Alberto Santos-Dumont (1873–1932) was a Brazilian–French pioneer of aeronautics. In 1906, he built his famous aircraft model *14 Bis*, which was the first aircraft in the history of aeronautics to lift into the air and land on the ground unaided, using only the power of its engine.
- 3 Ferreira, J. L. (2002). *Prisioneiros do mito – Cultura e imaginário dos comunistas no Brasil (1930–1956)* [“Prisoners of Myth – The Culture and Imaginary of Communists in Brazil (1930–1956)”]. EDUFF.

received daily and detailed reports of the Hungarian events from *O Estado de São Paulo* (OESP), one of the biggest daily newspapers in São Paulo, which was founded in the spirit and tradition of economic liberalism and political conservatism, and during the Cold War maintained a determined anti-communist stance.

For the purposes of this paper, I examined the news and commentaries of the Brazilian newspaper *O Estado de São Paulo* from the early October issues to those of late November, as I agree with the recently published theory⁴ that, in a sense, the Hungarian Revolution began with the reburial of communist politician László Rajk on October 6, 1956. Another reason for starting at an earlier date was that news of Hungary and the region was already being discussed in the newspaper (which always followed foreign affairs with great interest), and in this manner the escalation of Hungarian events became more tangible in the Brazilian press, as did the temporary decline of interest following the arrival of the Soviet forces and the inauguration of János Kádár's government on November 7, 1956.

About the newspaper

By the fiftieth anniversary of the Hungarian Revolution of 1956, many interesting studies had been published of its international media coverage,⁵ and around that time.

When I started my research on the Brazilian reception of the events, I was obliged to narrow the incredibly wide range of Brazilian press organs. In Brazil, the two most well-known and widely read newspapers are published in São Paulo: the first one is *Folha de São Paulo*, which was established in 1921, and the second one is *O Estado de São Paulo*. In October and November 1956, both newspapers provided their readers with daily and detailed reports on the Hungarian events; however, I chose to concentrate on the OESP because it was and still is considered one of the most professionally edited national newspapers in Brazil. In the period examined in this

4 “Fifty years ago on the anniversary of the Martyrs of Arad, László Rajk was reburied; technically, this was the day the Revolution had started.” See Rév, I.: “The Enchanted Summoner.” *Népszabadság*, October 9, 2006: 7.

5 Cf. Tischler, J. (Ed.) (2006). *Budapestről jelentjük... Az 1956-os forradalom az egykorú nemzetközi sajtóban* [‘Reporting from Budapest... The Hungarian Revolution of 1956 in the Contemporary International Press’]. 1956-os Intézet; Pallai, P. & Sárközi, M. (2006). *A szabadság hullámhosszán. Az 1956-os magyar forradalom története a BBC elmondásában* [‘On the Wavelength of Freedom: The History of the Hungarian Revolution of 1956 as Told by the BBC’]. Helikon; Simándi, I. (2006). *Nemzetközi sajtószemle a Szabad Európa Rádióban. 1956 október 22 – november 10, 1956’*. [‘International Press Review in Radio Free Europe, October 22 – November 10, 1956’]. Gondolat; Szabo, L., Segrillo, A., de Aquino, M. A. & Aubert, P. G. (2006). *Hungria 1956: E o muro começa a cair* [‘Hungary 1956: And the Wall Starts to Fall’]. Contexto; Anderle, Á. (Ed.) (2007). *A magyar forradalom és a hispán világ, 1956* [‘The Hungarian Revolution and the Hispanic World, 1956’]. SZTE.

paper, the newspaper was owned – and its intellectual profile was determined – by Júlio de Mesquita Filho (1892–1969),⁶ a press mogul and aspiring politician who was greatly interested in the issues of international politics and well acquainted with the Western parts of Europe. The precursor of the OESP was founded in 1875 during the period of the Empire by republican and abolitionist circles and called *A Província de São Paulo*, and in 1927, it was taken over by Júlio de Mesquita Filho from his father, Júlio de Mesquita (1862–1927), with its intellectual profile fully preserved. In 1930, as a prominent member of the Democratic Party (*Partido Democrático*)⁷ established in 1926, Mesquita pledged his support to Getúlio Vargas,⁸ and also supported the military coup in 1964. However, in both instances, he opposed these systems as soon as their dictatorial nature had become apparent, and was thus forced into political emigration several times, while the newspaper was nationalized in 1940⁹ and then faced constant censorship trials from 1968 onwards.¹⁰ During the Second Brazilian Republic, Mesquita and the OESP sided with the opposition, and criticized the policies of Kubitschek and João Goulart¹¹ with true *udenist*¹² conviction. As per the traditions of the newspaper, the stance of the editorial team was summarized on the third page, in the oldest and perhaps most well-known column called *Notas e Informações* [‘Notes and Information’]; in a certain sense, this column is considered to this day as the standard of Brazilian conservatism and right wing politics. Its worldview consists of rejecting all forms of dictatorship, which manifested on the foreign affairs front as virulent anti-communism and anti-Sovietism, especially during the Cold War, and thus fostered increasing interest in events within the Soviet Bloc. The foreign affairs

6 For details, see Beloch, I. & de Abreu, A. A. (Eds.) (1984). *Dicionário Histórico-Biográfico Brasileiro 1930–1983* [‘Brazilian Historical-Biographical Dictionary 1930–1983’]. Forense Universitária, FGV/CPDOC-FINEP, Volume 3, pp. 2220–2221.

7 This became the party of the new generation of São Paulo conservatives, which urged the replacement of the elites at the member state level as well as the level of federal policy, thus opposing the old oligarchs and the dominance of their party, the Paulista Republican Party (*Partido Republicano Paulista*, PRP).

8 Getúlio Vargas first served as President of Brazil between 1930 and 1945. From 1937, he established a firm authoritarian system called *Estado Novo* [‘New State’]. In 1950, he won the democratic elections and once again served as President until his suicide in 1954.

9 Nationalization here means the nationalization process executed by the central government of the Federation. See Szilágyi, Á. J. (2004). *Távolodás Európától* [‘Withdrawing from Europe’]. ÁGER Bt., p. 7.

10 For details, see de Aquino, M. A. (1999). *Censura, Imprensa, Estado Autoritário (1968–1978)* [‘Censorship, Press, Authoritarian State (1968–1978)’]. EDUSC.

11 Juscelino Kubitschek was the 21st President of Brazil (1956–1961), and João Goulart was the 23rd President of Brazil (1961–1964).

12 The term *udenist*, derived from the name of the National Democratic Union (*União Democrática Nacional*, UND) referred to the opponents of Kubitschek and the Social Democratic Party (*Partido Social Democrático*, PSD), and of Goulart and the Brazilian Labor Party (*Partido Trabalhista Brasileiro*, PTB).

column of the newspaper, overseen by Giannino Carta and the owner's son, Ruy Mesquita, happened to reach outstanding professional heights in the 1950s and thus became celebrated throughout Brazil. From that period until the 1970s, the front page was almost exclusively devoted to international news.

The emphasis on international themes in *O Estado São Paulo* was not only due to the interests of the editorial team, but also to the demand of its readers: in the State as well as the City of São Paulo, the majority of the inhabitants were European immigrants and their descendants, including a large number of Hungarians, who followed the events in Europe with eager curiosity. Moreover, in May 1956, the editorial team of the OESP was joined, in a manner unprecedented in the history of the Brazilian press, by an influential Hungarian member: foreign policy commentator Miklós Boér, whose journalism helped maintain public interest in Hungarian affairs. For these reasons, historians could expect to find detailed reports of the Hungarian events of 1956 in the OESP.

About the reports and articles

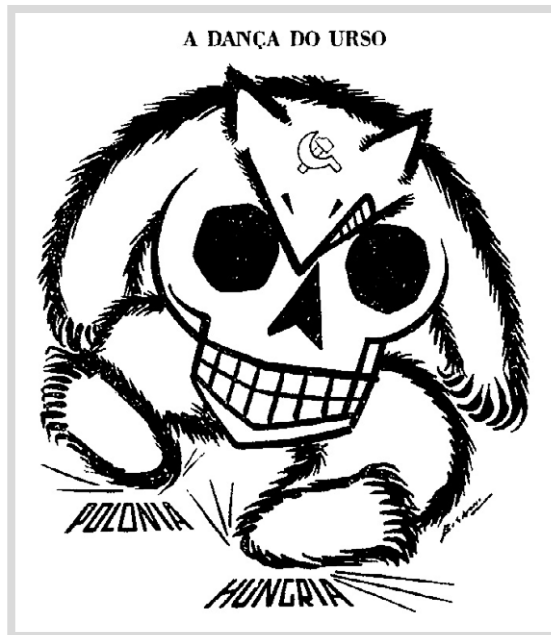
In the days of the Hungarian Revolution, *O Estado São Paulo* received its news from materials sent by major news agencies such as the United Press (UP) and the *Agence France-Presse* (AFP), usually with a lead time of one day. The newspaper devoted considerable space to news from Hungary which, together with the crisis in the Middle East, first made the front page on October 11: “Hungarian Writers Demand Greater Freedom” – “Former Head of Political Police Imprisoned” – “Victory of the Petőfi Circle” – “Evangelical Bishop Released in Hungary”. Such headlines suggest that the OESP provided detailed and thorough reports of the situation in Hungary, and continued to do so during the period examined in this paper. From October 14, the events in Poland came to the foreground and landed on the front page as well (without crowding out the Hungarian events, which still featured daily in the newspaper), but on October 24, they inevitably gave way to a flood of news, lengthy articles, and photographs. The revolution in Budapest became a huge sensation overnight, and for more than a week it kept the editorial team – and presumably the readers – in great suspense. On November 1, updates from the Middle East took over the front page, but, on November 4, news of the arrival of the Soviet forces reclaimed the front page, followed by a decline in interest. The Hungarian resistance still merited a flow of information, but, from November 6, it was confined to the inner pages of the newspaper. The articles that were published in the OESP based on the materials of news agencies recorded the events as well as their international resonance, and in this manner did not much differ from the now well-known publications of the foreign press.

It is especially interesting to examine reports about Brazil's reaction to the Hungarian Revolution of 1956, of which a great number were published in the October 30 issue of *O Estado São Paulo*. The front page featured a call for aid from the Hungarian colony to the population of São Paulo; Page 2 contained a statement by the Brazilian Minister of Foreign Affairs, who urged the UN Security Council to convene and discuss the Hungarian issue; on Page 4, a speaker of the Legislative Assembly of Rio de Janeiro was quoted in expressing support for the Hungarian cause; on Page 5 we find a declaration against violence published by the student organization of the Faculty of Law of the Pontifical Catholic University of São Paulo; and on Page 6, the newspaper published a manifesto signed by the executive committee of Hungarian Associations in Brazil (*Associações Húngaras No Brasil*) and the South-American Hungarian Federation (*Conselho Nacional Húngaro e a Federação Húngara*). According to the November 1 issue of the OESP, the Legislative Assembly honored the triumph of freedom in Hungary (Page 5); on November 2, Péter Murányi, the General Honorary Consul of the Dominican Republic called for assistance for the patriotic Hungarians (Page 9), and the same page also contained a news article and a photograph of the thanksgiving mass organized by the Hungarians of São Paulo to celebrate the departure of the Soviet troops. On November 4, the OESP published a telegram sent by the José Pilsudski Society (established by Polish immigrants) to the Brazilian-Hungarian Cultural Association (Page 16). On November 10, the newspaper reported on the student march in Rio de Janeiro, which had been organized in solidarity with the Hungarian events, and published a telegram sent by an anti-communist student organization (*Cruzada Nacional Estudantil Anticomunista*) and a labor organization (*Confederação Nacional dos Trabalhadores na Indústria*) to the UN on the Hungarian issue (Page 40).

During the days of the Hungarian Revolution of 1956, the Hungarian events were also featured in the various columns and commentaries of *O Estado São Paulo*, such as the columns *De um dia para outro* ['From Day to Day'], *De uma semana para outra* ['From Week to Week'], and the aforementioned *Notas e Informações*. These news releases reflected the opinion of the editorial team, and clearly showed that, from Brazil's perspective, the Hungarian situation was not interesting in and of itself, but was always framed within the bipolar world order and connected with the fate of Tito's position, the Polish cause, or even the Soviet Bloc itself. This worldview is also reflected by the emblematic caricature.

For our purposes, the most interesting sources are the lengthy standalone foreign policy analyses published by known authors, and within the examined period, I found five such articles, all of them commentaries inspired by the Hungarian situation and written by two authors, of which I have translated one from each of them, to be published in full as a supplement to this paper. Of the five articles, the first one

was published on October 28, 1956, written by Miklós Boér and titled “Hungria in-conquistavel” [‘Unconquerable Hungary’];¹³ the second was published on October 31 and written by Franz Borkenau, the Vienna correspondent of the OESP, titled “Nagy comprometeu sua posição ao aceitar a ajuda dos soviéticos” [‘Imre Nagy Compromises Position By Accepting Soviet Aid’];¹⁴ on November 1, Borkenau wrote another article titled “A União Soviética começa a desintegrar-se dos satélites” [‘Soviet Union Begins Dismantling Satellite Bloc’], followed on November 4 by an analysis from Boér titled “Na Hungria e no Oriente Medio decide-se o destino da ONU” [‘Fate Of The UN To Be Decided In Hungary and The Middle East’] (see *Appendix 1*); finally, on November 6, a third Borkenau article, titled “A ultima esperança dos húngaros era o Ocidente” [‘The West Was Hungary’s Last Hope’] was published (see *Appendix 2*).



Caricature “The Bear’s Dance – Poland, Hungary”

Due to spatial constraints, I chose to focus on a single article each from Boér and Borkenau. Of the two articles penned by Boér, the first one spans a vast period and can be considered an abridged history of Hungary, though, due to its genre, the tone

13 This paper preserves the original contemporary orthography used by the OESP for all Portuguese titles and terms.

14 Borkenau’s choice of title suggests and his article discusses in detail the idea that Imre Nagy might have played a role in the assault of the Soviet tanks against the protestors. This assumption was not confirmed by any subsequent events.

is rather subjective; and the other is an apocalyptic vision of the decades after World War II, which was based on an analysis of the situation in 1956, and therefore more befitting the purpose of this paper. As for the three articles written by Borkenau, I chose to translate the last one, which is based on personal and local experiences. Moreover, the two articles thus chosen for this paper perfectly “frame” the day of the Soviet occupation, as one was published immediately before it, and the other immediately after. Both articles are rather characteristic, and, like an ocean in a drop, they are great examples of the particularities of the authors’ views and style.

About the authors

In the fall of 1956, *O Estado São Paulo* commissioned two notable anti-communists to publish commentaries on the Hungarian Revolution of 1956, and, given that the newspaper sold half a million copies per day, these commentators had a significant role in forming Brazilian public opinion despite not being Brazilian by birth.

Miklós Boér, known as Nicolas Boér¹⁵ (1914–1987) hailed from Szeged; he was a journalist and seminary teacher, and the personal biographer of Cardinal József Mindszenty.¹⁶ Boér moved to Brazil in 1950, and, from May 1956, he produced international political analyses in *O Estado São Paulo* on an almost daily basis, featured by columns such as *Notas e Informações*. In the course of his career, he gave up on being ordained, but he was well-respected in Brazil and abroad as a journalist and a professor of sociology teaching at several universities. He also published several monographs on international relations and religious psychology. A boulevard was named after him in São Paulo.

In 1956, Boér followed the events of the Hungarian Revolution from São Paulo and was clearly deeply affected, as shown by the fact that, on November 1, he joined the priests holding the celebratory mass for Hungary. The translated article published below is a good example of his writing, which is passionate and characterized by pathos and patriotism, largely prosaic language with long, complex sentences, and a strong style despite Portuguese not being his native language. Boér was always a committed patriot, and he was ecstatic in his exultation of the revolution and his emphasis on the heroism of the Hungarian people, which was probably why his article published on November 4 suggests that, at the time of writing it, he did not see

15 For a short biography of the author, see Szilágyi, Á. J. (1993). “Passeando na Avenida Prof. Nicolas Boér” [‘Strolling along the Avenue of Prof. Nicolas Boér’]. *Observador Húngaro*, 3, 6–7.

16 Boér, N. (1949). *Cardinal Mindszenty and the Implacable War of Communism Against Religion and Spirit*. B.U.E.

the tragedy approaching, and instead envisioned the complete disintegration of the Soviet sphere of influence: "(...) and with the events in Hungary, the process of disintegration has reached its peak in the satellite states of Russian colonialist imperialism." (see Appendix 1).

The other analyst and journalist who published lengthy articles of the Hungarian Revolution of 1956 in *O Estado São Paulo* was German journalist and sociologist Franz Borkenau (1900–1957). As a young man, he was drawn to the ideology of communism, and in the 1920s, he was a member of the German Communist Party and worked at the Communist International. During his university studies, he dedicated himself to Marxism and psychoanalysis. As an employee of the Frankfurt Institute for Social Research, he soon came into contact with prominent members of the Frankfurt School. Following Hitler's rise to power, he left Germany. In 1936 and 1937, he traveled to Spain while the civil war was still raging, and published his observations in 1937 in a sensationalist monograph¹⁷ in which he was highly critical of the role of the Soviet Union. In the years of the postwar Hungarian emigration, he spent a long time in Panama City and Latin America, and only returned to Europe in 1947, where he became a university professor in Marburg, and later a freelancer journalist in Rome, Paris, and Zurich. In 1950, he was one of the founders of the Congress for Cultural Freedom,¹⁸ and by that time had become a well-known expert on communism and the Soviet Union, and one of the pioneers of Sovietology. His other research interests included the decline of civilizations, and the critical analysis of the lifework of Arnold Toynbee and Oswald Spengler.

Borkenau followed the events of the Hungarian Revolution up close from Vienna and Sopron,¹⁹ but kept his distance otherwise, as the Hungarian cause interested him as an expert on communism rather than as a patriot (in the former capacity, however, he did study the Hungarian Soviet Republic as well). To him, Hungary's fate was only as important as her international weight, or more precisely because her role in

17 Borkenau, F. (1937). *The Spanish Cockpit: An Eyewitness Account of the Political and Social Conflicts of the Spanish Civil War*. Faber and Faber.

18 This organization was established by anti-communist intellectuals in West Berlin. One of the most vital members of their society was Arthur Koestler, but there were also prominent Hungarian members such as Mihály Polányi and Tibor Méray. The founders sought to represent the freedom of thought, culture, and science against the forces of totalitarianism. For details, see Coleman, P. (1989). *The Liberal Conspiracy. The Congress for Cultural Freedom and the Struggle for the Mind of Postwar Europe*. The Free Press, A Division of MacMillan Inc. – Collier Macmillan Publishers.

19 His article suggests that he had been staying in Sopron, but we did not find his name on the list of important and identified foreigners staying in Hungary during the Revolution. For the list, see Molnár, J. (2006). Külföldi tudósítók az 1956-os forradalomban [‘Foreign reporters in the Hungarian Revolution of 1956’]. In Topits, J. & Tischler, J. (Eds.), *Az 1956-os forradalom a világsajtóban* [‘The Hungarian Revolution of 1956 in the International Press’]. Source: http://server2001.rev.hu/msite/display_item.asp?id=2&act=tu (accessed on April 11, 2022).

the disintegration or the preservation of the Soviet Bloc would make her important. Moreover, knowing the developments, he treated the fall of the revolution as a fact, and searched for the causes. Like the still hopeful Boér, he too raised the question of the responsibility of the West: *“The interest in the decision of the UN was greater than the West could have imagined. Everywhere I saw bitterness over the apathy of the West. Moreover, hatred for the invading Russians and the desire for national independence rooted in historical tradition made the Hungarian people feel that its cause was also the cause of the West, and now they accused the West of having betrayed them as well as itself.”* (see *Appendix 2*). Borkenau also undertook to analyze the roles of certain public figures, often based on conjecture. He shows profound distrust towards the communists and a dislike of both the national and the reform branches: he was “suspicious” of János Kádár as well as Imre Nagy. His style is drier than Boér’s, and was presumably written in Hungarian and translated into Portuguese.

Regarding the international press materials presented in this paper, readers are warned to keep in mind that, due to factors such as the proximity of the events, the lack of local and Hungarian knowledge, superficial information, or the lead time between news agencies and the newspaper, the articles may contain inaccuracies or mistakes. The two translated articles published here also contain expressions that are contradicted by our current knowledge, but this does not diminish the value of these sources concerning the reception of the Hungarian Revolution of 1956 in Brazil.

Appendix 1

Nicolas Boér: *Fate of The UN to be Decided in Hungary and the Middle East*
(Article published in the November 4, 1956 issue of *O Estado de São Paulo*, page 90.)

All over the world the seismographs are detecting tremendous earthquakes, a terrible historical cataclysm that promises the coming of apocalyptic times in the second half of our stormy twentieth century. Colossal revolutionary changes are upon us, which transform, continuously and from moment to moment, every historical circumstance – there shall be unexpected and uncontrollable events at work, tendencies that shall be beyond the analytical reach of historians, despite the fact that they shall open glorious and abysmal chasms between parts of the world which, although they had previously been cast into a firm unity, neither their past nor their historical structures justify the present manner of their belonging or the establishment of any such formation – and man shall merely gape in confusion, and feel lost as to the aims or meaning of history, shall desperately seek security for himself and his nation, and feel an avid desire for establishing social peace and a calm international atmosphere. A great struggle shall begin between the historical forces of good and evil, between construction and destruction, with the laws of nature, the laws of man, and humanism in one corner (the eternal, humiliated, and ravaged dreams of mankind), and in the other corner, the forces seeking to drive people and nations into utter slavery, and crush social and international law under foot. Naturally, even in the present historical times, as it is wont to happen during great battles, the warring parties shall be torn asunder and fall to pieces, and it will be difficult to determine who came out on top and who had fallen, who stands on the side of good and on the side of evil, while good and evil intertwine in a deadly embrace.

In the past decade, our world was fatally torn apart into two factions; however, both sides wish that the countries of planet Earth united into a single supranational political organization, and this communing has already begun around the United Nations and around Soviet Russia, since every historical and social force represented by these two conflicting ideological systems dearly wishes for integration. The United Nations seeks to solve this problem in a democratic and organic manner: its aim is to facilitate the free and spontaneous development of national sovereignty, and at the same time – in accordance with the interests of the international community – imposes restrictions on egotistical and imperialist nationalism with the help of an international political, legislative, economic, cultural, social, and moral structure, which is fundamentally based on justice and fairness, and establishes or guarantees to every nation the conditions to secure to itself – in accordance with its own ethos and traditions, but in an ethical and first and foremost peaceful manner – its

wellbeing, while taking into account the national interests of other members of the community likewise. Meanwhile, the Soviet Union is the advocate and follower of violent and revolutionary methods. According to its plans, the other countries must dismantle their previous economic and social systems, and uniformly adapt the proletarian dictatorship lead by the communist parties controlled from Moscow, and join the world union of socialist republics, which eliminates independent states; in the language of politics, this means the end of the idea of national sovereignty. The uniforming aspirations of the Soviet Union are evident from the fact that in Eastern Europe, it established a system of satellite states with the goal of creating a homogeneous world completely enslaved by modern Eastern barbarism, based on an ideology that conflates a messianic atheism, the Hegelianism of Karl Marx, and pagan Russian messianism.

Historical landslides

In these historical moments, the delicate and sensitive international seismographs are picking up the first signs of tremors from the region of the once seemingly indivisible Communist Bloc, tremors that started an avalanche of the waves of freedom, a heroic movement inspired by the invincible moral strength of attachment to historical traditions, and the nationalism so deeply rooted in human nature. In the satellite states, the power of the Soviet Empire had been shaken even before the current cataclysm. This had different phases: despite the fundamental differences in the question of Leninist orthodoxy, peace – though a tactical, rather than earnest peace – was achieved between the new masters of the Kremlin and Tito's Yugoslavia; the systems of the satellite states underwent careful "de-Stalinization" and gradual "liberalization"; the Polish national movement had succeeded, which in that country led to the national emancipation of communism and to relative freedom; and with the events in Hungary, the process of disintegration has reached its peak in the satellite states of Russian colonialist imperialism. After eleven years of heroic and passive resistance – in its centuries-long struggles, this had always been the Hungarians' weapon of choice against absolutist systems – the arguments of the millennial states are irrefutable: blood generously spilled, the capital destroyed, the rural areas soaked in blood, all of this has declared once more how steadfastly Hungary longs for national independence, the proper exercise of constitutional rights and freedoms, and to confess her millennial faith shining through her social structures. In light of the recent events, we are no longer at a loss to interpret the phenomena of "de-Stalinization" and "liberalization" in the preceding era, which were permitted by the new Muscovite leadership in order to consciously reduce the internal pressure by a "calculated risk", and thus prevent more violent eruptions, and especially large landslides. However, the spontaneous

vehemence of the triumphant Hungarian national uprising constituted an emotional impulse and psychic shock that paralyzed the forces of the Red Army, and even caused the central leadership of the Moscow “think tank” to hesitate. In this manner, the rumble of the earthquake shaking the entire Soviet sphere of influence was heard throughout the world. But was this really the culmination of these events? Or is it the start of new and even more profound revolutionary changes? What is certain is that this was the vocal triumph of the ideals represented by the UN and the community it unites, and the organization has assumed political and moral guardianship over the trusting, hopeful county of Hungary, which – with the declaration issued by her government bowing before the triumphant and united will of the people –, has reclaimed its sovereignty and neutrality, and has preserved its inner peace.

Nevertheless, it is a tragic circumstance that Hungary’s desperate message addressed to the UN should be delivered at a time when the United Nations was going through a serious moral crisis, and its edifice – which had been raised by the determination and enthusiasm of people who wished to instill, in a world still reeling from the horrors of war, the hope that ethics, law, and peace could exist in international relations – was shaken by a new, unexpected, and inexplicable shock. This new earthquake is no coincidence, not even if at the moment, it is incomprehensible why the two main founders of the United Nations, whom we have come to recognize through history as “Balance of Power” and “Collective Security”, those patient and excellent champions of compromising realpolitik and endless international negotiations, and whom we believed would be bound by their past and their dignity, should resort through their representatives to a “political maneuver” in which they openly invaded a territory exclusively under UN jurisdiction, just because they had suffered a serious conflict of interest. When it was they who – and very correctly – ceremoniously agreed and made others agree that “armed force shall not be used, save in the common interest”, and instead of national armies, “international machinery” should be employed “to establish conditions under which justice and respect for the obligations arising from treaties and other sources of international law can be maintained.”²⁰ Will not their incomprehensible behavior, which could perhaps only be explained by some greater and as of yet unknown correlation, become fatal encouragement to future aggressors, who hardly need a precedent as it is, to conduct themselves in a similar manner? This of course also raises other distressing questions: what could explain the very alarming and suspicious circumstance of the continuous and threatening presence of reinforced Soviet troops in Hungary? And if the UN is unable to

20 *United Nations Charter*. Source: <https://www.un.org/en/about-us/un-charter/full-text> (accessed on April 11, 2022).

enforce its own ceasefire agreements in the Middle East, would it be able to achieve the removal of the Soviet troops from Hungary?

History shall be the judge

In these troubled times, world history has arrived at a turning point. Seemingly, we have just managed to back out of an international “dead end”, but if the Western world does not reinforce its moral foundations and does not show enough courage, creativity, and adherence to its principles in the decisions and actions through its leadership in the UN, then it will miss a most exceptional opportunity to realize the disintegration of the Soviet Empire within the heart of Europe, and to establish the boundaries of personal freedom and national autonomy deep within the world of complete servitude. At the promising beginning of the collapse of the Russian satellite system, the facts show that an artificial, mixed, and forcibly created structure can no longer be maintained by brute force; at the same time, those attending the current sessions of the UN General Assembly rightfully emphasize that the wellbeing of the international community can only be realized based on their principles, and if these very principles fail, if their humanitarian credibility is lost, it will be useless to even talk of a moral crisis. Today Russia and the UN are both standing before the court of history.

“Mene, mene, tekel, parsin”²¹

In the eyes of the Soviet-style “people’s democracies”, the ultimate goal was to arrive at sixteen “Soviet Socialist Republics”, which had “voluntarily” forfeited their national sovereignty in favor of the Soviet Union, as well as their desire to experience their national existence within the framework of independent states, and as the basis of their union, they accepted the uniform socialist economic system centrally controlled and implemented by the proletariat governed by the communist party. Originally, the Soviet state and the people’s democracies were considered two different types of socialist systems: while the former treaded the path of transitioning from socialism to communism, the latter was transitioning from capitalism to socialism, and the difference between the two socialisms could only be distinguished by differences in quality, which were first and foremost made apparent by accelerated economic and social processes, which were necessary in order for the “mature” people’s democracies to request their accession, or rather their merger, into the Soviet Union.

21 Daniel 5:25, New International Version.

According to A. Alymov and S. Studenkin (*Soviet Federalism and Democratic Centralism*),²² the Soviet republics “had realized the most important program of transforming political and social structures. They established state power with the support of the organizations of the working masses, and thus became members of the friendly union of people’s democracies headed by the Soviet Union, the ultimate goal of which is to unite nations adopting similar systems into a single, strong state.” This is the path of the people’s democracies as well.

The process of transformation had indeed begun in these countries in top-down fashion, spearheaded by their governments and the communist parties representing an insignificant fraction of the population. József Révai, the number one Stalinist ideologue of the Hungarian Communist Party, actually divulged the secret of their speedy success in a public lecture: “We are a minority in the Parliament and in the government. In spite of this, we represent leading power in the country, and firmly control the police. Our power lies in the Party and in the power of the working class, which is multiplied by the fact that we had always been supported by the powerful assistance of the Soviet Union and the Red Army.” And yet the Cominform, this instrument of political coordination still dissolved under the pressure of Titoism, which successfully enforced the principle that “every country has its own way of achieving socialism”; the instrument of economic standardization, the Comecon, with the inhumane slavery of collective labor, the political utopia of forced industrialization, and the forced collectivization of agriculture had brought on the complete failure of the production of consumer goods; and the comprehensive military organization of the Warsaw Pact had fallen apart with the triumph of the Hungarian national uprising.

No matter how the fate of these countries shall develop, history had delivered its judgment of the Iron Curtain and stamped it with the sweat, tears, and blood of their peoples: “Mene, mene, tekel, parsin. Here is what these words mean: Mene: God has numbered the days of your reign and brought it to an end. Tekel: You have been weighed on the scales and found wanting. Peres: Your kingdom is divided and given to the Medes and Persians.” (Daniel 5:25-28 NIV)

Now it is the UN’s turn... The oppressed nations had exposed the plans of communist conspiracy, which, paradoxically, under the pretense of guaranteeing the freedom of the nations, endeavored to merge and dissolve the socialist countries of the world into a single international organization and dissolve them, just as they proposed to guarantee personal rights and freedoms under this collectivist ideology; in other words, by the integration of impersonal individuals into a totalitarian social

22 Boér referred to his source by its Portuguese title, *Federalismo Soviético e Centralismo Democrático*. Based on the translated title, the book (or study) and authors could not be identified with any certainty, and the spelling of the authors’ names might be incorrect.

structure. In this elevating historical moment, the Hungarian nation, followed by the affected compassion of the free world, has reached the Gates of Freedom, which it opened with its unconquerable will to live. If it could only step through it, other oppressed nations would follow. Now it is the UN's turn... Will it be able to act according to the spirit of its former declarations: "We the peoples of the United Nations determined (...) to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small." Will it be able to determine the future by granting through international guarantees the sovereignty, internal peace, and the right to free government elections to peoples who wish to be free, and who wish to live by the principles dictated by their centuries-old traditions? If the UN fails them now, entire nations might drown in the bloodbaths of reprisals, the world shall be consumed by chaos and pandemonium that only recognizes the law of violence, and the Iron Curtain shall descend once more as a terrible, dark shadow over the hopes of the people. History shall then deliver a judgment speaking the tragic colors and chords of death. At any rate, the Hungarian people had made a decision: freedom or death, with steadfast faith, unbreakable hope, and faithful to its first holy king, who had taught us, "If God be for us, who can be against us?"

Appendix 2

Franz Borkenau (special correspondent of *O Estado de São Paulo*):

The West Was Hungary's Last Hope

(Article published in the November 6, 1956 issue of *O Estado de São Paulo*, page 90.)

Vienna, November 5 (Via Western) – Presumably, the correspondent of *O Estado* had been the last foreigner to leave the last free Hungarian city, Sopron, an hour before the Soviet troops arrived. The journey from Vienna to Sopron had a profound effect on me. Sopron is a border city separated only by a narrow strip of land from Austria, and hitherto had seen no struggle. On the very first day of the uprising, the army, together with the police, had joined the revolutionaries, thus precluding an armed clash, and also made it possible to distribute a large amount of weapons to the restless masses, which mainly consisted of young people between the ages of 18 and 22. We could watch them waiting by the iron gates of the ammunition depots, which always opened on the arrival of a truck carrying yet another group of civilians. The young people coming on these trucks snatched the weapons from the hands of the soldiers and immediately lined up outside the gate.

The scene unfolded in remarkable silence. The harsh movements of the people showed that they knew the struggle would turn out unfavorably for them, but were determined that they would rather die than surrender. This seemed all the more strange because at the same time, rumors were going about that the line of defense lying some twenty kilometers from the town had been deserted, and the Russians were now on the outskirts. Although the distant rumble left no doubt as to this fact, there were not the smallest signs of panic to be seen; on the contrary, these people were ready to die for their homeland. Perhaps their quiet resolution was dictated by some sort of Eastern fatalism. It was also very moving that everyone had accepted the orders to evacuate the women, the children, and any elderly persons who wished to participate in the struggle, but were no longer fit for the purpose. The Revolutionary Council, whose weak link was precisely its lack of organization, had no means of enforcing this tragic order, yet the population obeyed it voluntarily, and in this manner, eight or ten times more women had retreated than men.

Needless to say, the conduct of the members of the Council – and of the military officers, etc. – was a suicidal step, since they made the decision not to defend the city, even in spite of its favorable geographic nature. Perhaps this was the right decision to make, considering that most of the weapons wielded by the revolutionaries of Sopron were ones left over when – before the uprising – the barracks had been moved. In Sopron, there were a number of anti-tank rifles, but no tanks, and regular weapons were also few and far between.

The only emotion expressed there was related to the conduct of the West. Everyone was anxiously asking whether the UN troops would intervene or not. The interest in the decision of the UN was greater than the West could have imagined. Everywhere I saw bitterness over the apathy of the West. Moreover, hatred for the invading Russians and the desire for national independence rooted in historical tradition made the Hungarian people feel that its cause was also the cause of the West, and now they accused the West of having betrayed them as well as itself.

A confused situation

Having analyzed the general situation based on my own personal experiences, the role played by the putschist forces that had insidiously betrayed the Hungarian Revolution is not quite clear. Nor am I certain whether the Russians – in the very moment they left Budapest last Wednesday [on October 31] – had determined they would concentrate their troops near the major cities to catch them off-guard and run them down with tanks. A number of signs point to discord among the leadership of the Kremlin as to the proper stance to take in those uncertain days. Namely, Mikoyan's visit to Budapest last Sunday – Mikoyan is known for being an advocate of making peace with the opponents of the Hungarian Stalinists – might have been advantageous to the Stalinists, since it contributed to the deception and pacification of the Hungarian revolutionaries. However, Mikoyan's real goal might have still been to facilitate negotiations. According to rumors, Zhukov had also been to Budapest, though this is not certain, but what is undeniable is that he had a decisive role in preparing the plans for the military coup. Zhukov cannot be called an angel of peace by a long shot; in fact, he is an enemy to the revolutionary policies of the world, but above all he is a Russian imperialist and openly hostile towards the satellite states. We may safely state that Molotov and Zhukov enthusiastically supported violence, Malenkov and Mikoyan opposed it, while Khrushchev was undecided. The events were likely hurried on by Bulganin under pressure from the far right marshals – Konev's group –, since his personal position depended on them.

The perspective of the Politburo

There were probably two objective reasons as to why the majority of the Politburo voted in favor of using violence: to acknowledge the military victory of the revolution would have been a death blow to Russia's authority in the region of Eastern Europe; and the establishment of a new four-party government would have meant the abolishment of the one-party system, and thus the end of the communist regime. These two factors held much greater weight compared to the events in Poland, where there

had been no armed uprising, and where one-party governance continued to persist. Hungary's tragedy was precisely that while the uprising progressed further than it had done in Poland, the power of its political coalitions and anti-communist organizations was much smaller in comparison to Poland.

The role of national communist leadership is not yet clear. Imre Nagy, the Prime Minister currently in detention was not firm enough, and held the uprising of national forces in suspicion when he ought to have supported them. However, the majority of Hungarians still believe in his sincerity. At any rate, by transforming the government and abandoning the one-party system, he had given a signal for Russian intervention. Therefore, we cannot rule out the possibility that Nagy had played a double game. In the case of János Kádár, the new General Secretary appointed by the Soviets, this very same conduct is clear evidence of the betrayal of those national communist goals which he too had previously championed. Of course, we cannot be certain whether he had accepted the position of Prime Minister under pressure or – if not – when his cooperation with the Russians had actually begun. It is possible that he had also been involved in the trap set for the military leaders, Maléter and István Kovács, whom the Russians captured in the very chamber where they had held negotiations, and it is also possible that Kádár was responsible for the fact that in Budapest, the buildings of the ministries had remained defenseless and unprepared in a crucial moment of the Russian offensive. We must not forget that although Kádár is a confidant of Tito, the Yugoslavs are becoming increasingly hostile towards all national communist endeavors, as Tito fears his own system might be jeopardized by the movement spreading in the neighboring countries. It is a fact that one of the principle reasons for the collapse was that Yugoslavia refused assistance when, according to prior assumptions, they ought to have aided these movements.

The end of Titoism

Although Belgrade denies it, the events suggest the end of Titoism as a significant and independent political power, as well as the total failure of Tito's own policies. The consequences of all this could be very severe on Khrushchev. Nevertheless, no matter who shall govern in Hungary – Kádár, or Gerő's Stalinists, or even Rákosi himself –, there had never been a smaller chance that these "Quisling" communists would be supported by any social group of the population. Russia's jurisdiction will be evident. This can already be felt on Budapest Radio, which today broadcasted only Russian music and in the Russian language! Under these circumstances, the progress of the political thaw had concluded for good, and it seems the Cold War Era shall return, even if today the Russians talk differently than they did in 1952.

Still, there is no cause for alarm. Russia's intentions remain hostile towards all attempts at national autonomy and independence; we might as well be clear on that. The fear of the Russians shall not abate, but rather shall increase in the face of North America and Western Europe's military might, which means that the danger of war will certainly not be greater. The nations of the satellite states will once again suffer terribly, but the West, though it will be receiving more and more threats from the Russians, shall have no actual danger to remove.

However, what is currently of particular concern is what the consequences of the failure of the Hungarian Revolution will be – for its failure is certain, even if the struggle might last a few more days – when it comes to the situation in Poland. Unlike the Hungarians, the Poles do have an army, the legitimacy of their government is indisputable, and they are just as prepared to hold out to the last as the Hungarians were. If the Russians attempted to remove Gomulka, that would lead to war between the two countries, which would then have severe international consequences. Therefore, the Russians will put off entering into open confrontation with Poland, at least until the consequences of the crisis are felt by the rest of the satellite states as well, even if less spectacularly.

Translated by: Eva Misits

The Public Information Activities of the United Nations Family of Organizations Concerning the Hungarian Refugee Crisis of 1956¹

GUSZTÁV D. KECSKÉS

Introduction

The wave of refugees leaving Hungary after the suppression of the Hungarian Revolution of 1956 and the internationally organized humanitarian action to receive them constitute significant chapters of both Hungarian and global migration history. Providing for, transferring, and resettling approximately 200,000 Hungarian refugees was an extraordinary feat of international refugee aid, in which the institutions of the United Nations family of organizations and other intergovernmental, governmental, and non-governmental humanitarian organizations had played a prominent role: the intensive public information activities of the UN institutions, which consisted of meticulous reporting activities and a global media campaign, significantly contributed to raising the enormous funds needed to resolve the refugee crisis.

The United Nations established its international legal basis for action through a series of UN General Assembly resolutions calling for aid for the Hungarian refugees. Within the first few days of the Hungarian refugee crisis, the main consultative and decision-making body of the UN called for “*humanitarian assistance to the people of Hungary*”, meaning both the Hungarian population as well as Hungarian

1 The present study was supported by the National Research, Development and Innovation Office under the tender “Az 1956 utáni menekültválság és a magyar emigráns közösségek a hidegháború idején” [“The Post-1956 Refugee Crisis and Hungarian Emigrant Communities During the Cold War”] (NKFI-1 FK-135586, Reference no. 72063).

refugees. The resolutions issued on November 9 and 21, 1956 charged the UN Secretary-General and his subordinate, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) with the task of organizing and coordinating the relief efforts, activities which involved establishing and administrating monetary funds, and devising a press campaign to increase the public's willingness to donate. The tasks set forth in the General Assembly resolutions were undertaken by one of the main bodies of the UN, the UN Secretariat in New York, and within that body by the Hungarian relief section and the Department of Public Information (DPI). Within the DPI, the Radio and Visual Service Division also played an important role in the cause, and around the world, the UN information centers worked hard to comply with the relevant provisions of the DPI in New York. Another important institutional partner in the relief efforts was the Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees, where Special Assistant to the High Commissioner Stanley J. C. Wright was in charge of press matters. The UNHCR also had its own international network in the form of local offices in major cities such as Geneva, Paris, Brussels, and London. The governments of UN Member States exercised financial control and supervision over the activities of the organization through the Executive Committee of the United Nations Refugee Fund (UNREF).



Some of the first arrivals at Traiskirchen Camp, near Vienna. Within three months, 200,000 Hungarians had escaped to Austria and Yugoslavia

Data Collection and Reporting Activity

As early as 13 November 1956, at the first session of the Co-ordination Committee held in Geneva and presided over by the UNHCR on the issue of Hungarian refugees, Richard R. Brown, who represented the United States and the United States Escape Program (USEP)² pointed out the importance of data collection and reporting:

Accurate reporting was also extremely important. The reports that had been published through press and radio had given rise to a tremendous up-rush of humanitarian feeling amongst people everywhere. If later reports showed that the numbers and needs had been grossly exaggerated there might be a most undesirable reaction. It must be one of the tasks of the High Commissioner's Office to check and co-ordinate the reports that were being put out.³

The UNHCR had indeed made significant efforts to gather, organize, clarify, and publish statistics on the number and movement of refugees continuously,⁴ and for this purpose had developed close working relationships with the Austrian Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Intergovernmental Committee for European Migration (ICEM).⁵ In October 1957, the UNHCR, the ICEM, and the Austrian authorities entered into an agreement to use uniform statistics to track Hungarian refugees.⁶ The materials forming

- 2 The USEP was a program founded in 1952 by the United States government to aid and resettle refugees escaping from the Soviet satellite states of Eastern Europe, as well as those who had ended up in displaced persons camps after World War II. As a humanitarian organization, it co-operated with social and church institutions, as well as the Intergovernmental Committee for European Migration. However, the program also had the undisclosed aim of using refugees for reconnaissance and propaganda purposes.
- 3 *Archives of the United Nations Office in Geneva*, Geneva (hereafter: UNOG Archives): Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Summary record of the co-ordination meeting on the question of refugees from Hungary, between governmental and intergovernmental organizations and voluntary agencies working for refugees, held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, 13 November 1956, restricted, G. I. 30/2 (Situation in Hungary, Relief Measures, Refugees), Jacket no. 1 (29 October – 14 December 1956). (21 November 1956).
- 4 The UNHCR Archives (Geneva) has organized the statistics and the relevant correspondence into dossiers for each receiving country. See *UNHCR Archives: 20-HUN-AUS Statistics – Hungarian refugees in Austria (1957–1961)*, *20-HUN-FRA Statistics – Hungarian refugees in France (February 1957 – February 1958)*, *20-HUN-YUG Statistics – Hungarian refugees in Yugoslavia (March 1957 – January 1958)*.
- 5 *United Nations – Archives and Records Management Section*, New York (hereafter: UNARMS): Report submitted by the High Commissioner. The problem of Hungarian refugees in Austria. An assessment of the needs and recommendations for future action, UNREF Executive Committee, Fourth Session, A/AC.79/49, UN-S-445-0199-11. (17 January 1957).
- 6 *UNARMS: Refugees from Hungary in Austria. Special Statistical Bulletin, restricted*, UN-S-445-0198-4. (30 October 1957).

the basis of the UN Secretariat's reports on this issue were also supplied by the UNHCR,⁷ and as such, the annual reports of the UNHCR to the UN General Assembly could be considered as summary reports of these documentation activities.⁸ The League of Red Cross Societies, which was one of the major partners of the UNHCR in providing aid to Hungarian refugees in Austria, also carried out thorough reporting and media activities. They established a media and reporting office subordinate to the director responsible for the Austrian activities of the League, and the directors and teams of the refugee camps were responsible for issuing weekly reports based on pre-designed templates.⁹

Beyond the organizations mentioned above, the UN Secretariat was also involved in the documentation of Hungarian refugees, and regularly informed the UN General Assembly, and by extension the UN Member States of the progress of humanitarian work. Information on the issue of Hungarian refugees and humanitarian relief to Hungary was usually compiled into a single report, the first of which was issued on 12 December 1956;¹⁰ meanwhile, the UN Secretary-General informed the Hungarian government of any measures regarding humanitarian aid.¹¹ Several members of the Hungarian Relief Section established at the Secretariat and directed by Myer Cohen were also involved in information work. Vernon Duckworth-Barker handled all information and press-related tasks, and compiled weekly summary reports on the developments of Hungarian humanitarian aid and the refugee crisis;¹² Mary Jeffreys compiled documents for the UN General Assembly, and a Hungarian member, László Hámori, was in charge of submitting daily information reports to Cohen on Hungarian events.¹³

7 UNARMS: Interoffice memorandum from K. W. Taylor, UN, New York to Philippe de Seynes, Under-Secretary for Economic and Social Affairs, Under-Secretary for Relief to the Hungarian People, UN, New York, Hungarian Relief, UN-S-445-0200-1. (10 April 1957).

8 For examples, such as the period between May 1956 and May 1957, see Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, General Assembly, Official Records: Twelfth Session, Supplement No. 11, A/3585/Rev.1, New York, 1957.

9 UNOG Archives: Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Co-ordinating Sub-Committee for Assistance to Refugees from Hungary, Summary record of the fourth meeting held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, at 3 p.m., 18 December 1956, restricted (19 December 1956). Annex 1: Instructions for Camp Directors and Teams (12 December 1956). G. I. 30/2 (Situation in Hungary, Relief Measures, Refugees), Jacket no. 1 (29 October – 14 December 1956).

10 UNARMS: Question considered by the Second Emergency Special Session of the General Assembly from 4 to 10 November 1956. Humanitarian activities to assist the Hungarian people. Interim report of the Secretary-General, A/3443, UN-S-445-0200-1. (12 December 1956).

11 UNARMS: Press Release, Secretary-General moves to implement resolutions on relief for Hungary. Nominates Philippe de Seynes. UN-S-445-0195-8.

12 UNOG Archives: Weekly Bulletin on relief to the Hungarian people by Vernon Duckworth-Barker, Senior Information Officer for Technical Assistance, Hungarian Relief Section, UN, New York, G. VI. 1/43 (General and Miscellaneous, Hungarian Relief, General). (12 December 1956).

13 UNARMS: Letter from Myer Cohen, Executive Director for Relief to the Hungarian People, UN, New York to Pierre Obez, Liaison Officer for Relief to the Hungarian People, UN, Geneva, Office for Hungarian Relief, Confidential, UN-S-445-0197-3. (26 December 1956).

Global Media Campaign

The UN Secretariat co-operated closely with the UNHCR, and assisted it not only in the management of funds raised for the Hungarian refugees and in documentation, but also by organizing and implementing its global media campaign. Due to its financial weight and central position in the UN system of institutions, the DPI in New York played a prominent role: within weeks of the beginning of the Hungarian refugee crisis, it had developed a detailed media plan to facilitate the fundraising campaign announced by the UN Secretary-General and the UNHCR. The first draft of the proposals was issued on 27 November by Senior Information Officer Vernon Duckworth-Barker of the Hungarian Relief Section, directed by Myer Cohen,¹⁴ and the next day a high-level meeting was held at the UN Secretariat to discuss the proposals and issue a record of the results.¹⁵ By 30 November, the DPI had issued instructions to the directors of UN Information Centers (IC) all over the world, detailing a grand scale operation¹⁶ that would largely be realized in the following months. In the next section, we shall discuss these plans in particular.

Comprehensive Plans

From the perspective of the press department of the UN Secretariat, the decisions of the UN General Assembly placed such responsibility onto the UN Secretary-General regarding the fundraising efforts as to create new challenges for the DPI. In order to facilitate fundraising efforts actively, the Department received more freedom to act than ever before;¹⁷ in fact, the staff believed that the media campaign of the DPI served specifically “*to maximize the contributions*”.¹⁸ To this end, they sought to keep

14 UNARMS: Interoffice memorandum from Vernon Duckworth-Barker, Senior Information Officer for Technical Assistance, UN, New York to Val J. G. Stavridi, Director, External and Specialized Agencies Service, Department of Public Information, UN, New York, Attached documentation on Hungarian relief, UN-S-445-0195-7. (27 November 1956).

15 UNARMS: Note on a meeting held on 28 November 1956 to discuss DPI co-operation in plans for relief to the Hungarian people, UN-S-445-0195-7. (28 November 1956).

16 UNARMS: Circular memorandum no. ES/44 from Val J. G. Stavridi, Director, External and Specialized Agencies Service, Department of Public Information, UN, New York to directors of United Nations Information Centers and information officers, Relief to the Hungarian people, copies sent to Athens, Belgrade, Bogota, Buenos Aires, Cairo, Copenhagen, Geneva, Karachi, London, Mexico City, Moscow, Monrovia, New Delhi, Paris, Prague, Rio de Janeiro, Sydney, Teheran, Washington, Bangkok, Djakarta, Manila, Santiago, UN-S-445-0195-7. (30 November 1956).

17 UNARMS: Note on a meeting held on 28 November 1956 to discuss DPI co-operation in plans for relief to the Hungarian people, UN-S-445-0195-7. (28 November 1956).

18 UNARMS: Letter from Myer Cohen, Executive Director for Relief to the Hungarian People, UN, New York to Philippe de Seynes, Under-Secretary for Economic and Social Affairs, Under-Secretary for Relief to the Hungarian People, UN, New York, UN-S-445-0195-7. (7 December 1956).

the issue of Hungarian humanitarian relief in the forefront of public attention, and foster a favorable atmosphere for governments to answer the UN's calls with generous contributions.¹⁹ The DPI's first priority²⁰ was to reach as many potential contributors as possible²¹ by way of a very ambitious media plan, in which the traditional verbal and visual resources of the printed press were combined with the audiovisual tools of the latest technologies.

In order to inform its staff of incoming contributions, current aid demands, and other important measures continuously, the DPI decided to issue weekly or biweekly internal bulletins. Their most immediate task was to publish the calls of the UN Secretary-General and the UNHCR for aid in newspapers, but they also planned to publish press releases and summary brochures on incoming contributions, and dispatch photographers, whose photographs would be combined with images taken from video footage and published in "influential magazines". UN Radio planned to send three reporters to Austria for a period of three or four weeks to visit Hungarian refugee camps, and expected them to deliver reports and interviews in English, French, and Spanish to UN Radio and to national networks. Other plans included sending a film crew consisting of a director, a cameraman, and an assistant, as the DPI hoped that, within ten days, the crew would be able to send two-minute film reports of the refugees to be broadcasted by television channels and the news services "*so as to secure maximum dramatic and cumulative effect*". By these means, the DPI expected to gather enough material within a month to produce a thirty-minute television program that presented the most dramatic events of the refugee crisis and could also be used as a documentary.²²

In the media campaign organized to support the fundraising program for Hungarian refugees, the DPI in New York assigned a prominent role to the global network of UN ICs. The very first media campaign drafts contained proposals for these ICs to

19 UNARMS: Circular memorandum no. ES/44 from Val J. G. Stavridi, Director, External and Specialized Agencies Service, Department of Public Information, UN, New York to directors of United Nations Information Centers and information officers, Relief to the Hungarian people, copies sent to Athens, Belgrade, Bogota, Buenos Aires, Cairo, Copenhagen, Geneva, Karachi, London, Mexico City, Moscow, Monrovia, New Delhi, Paris, Prague, Rio de Janeiro, Sydney, Teheran, Washington, Bangkok, Djakarta, Manila, Santiago, UN-S-445-0195-7. (30 November 1956).

20 UNARMS: Circular memorandum no. ES/44 from Val J. G. Stavridi, Director, External and Specialized Agencies Service, Department of Public Information, UN, New York to directors of United Nations Information Centers and information officers, Relief to the Hungarian people, copies sent to Athens, Belgrade, Bogota, Buenos Aires, Cairo, Copenhagen, Geneva, Karachi, London, Mexico City, Moscow, Monrovia, New Delhi, Paris, Prague, Rio de Janeiro, Sydney, Teheran, Washington, Bangkok, Djakarta, Manila, Santiago, UN-S-445-0195-7. (30 November 1956).

21 UNARMS: Interoffice memorandum from Vernon Duckworth-Barker, Senior Information Officer for Technical Assistance, UN, New York to Val J. G. Stavridi, Director, External and Specialized Agencies Service, Department of Public Information, UN, New York, Attached documentation on Hungarian relief, UN-S-445-0195-7. (27 November 1956).

22 UNARMS: Note on a meeting held on 28 November 1956 to discuss DPI co-operation in plans for relief to the Hungarian people, UN-S-445-0195-7. (28 November 1956).

establish preliminary contact with various mass communication media and to find ways to motivate prominent public figures to publish articles or deliver speeches on the subject, and another proposal suggested contacting NGOs, churches, and other groups that were permitted to collect donations or assist in fundraisers (such as women's associations, labor unions, and Rotary Clubs).²³ The DPI in New York expected these ICs to co-operate with any and all local fundraising initiatives within their sphere of influence that was in compliance with the decisions of the UN General Assembly. The directors of the UN ICs were informed that, although it was generally prohibited, in this specific case they were allowed to participate in fundraising efforts; they were, in fact, instructed to take measures in order to facilitate the efforts to aid Hungarian refugees, though they themselves were not allowed to accept donations.²⁴ The directors were also to receive regular information and documentation on assistance in Hungary and the developments of the refugee crisis.²⁵

Before we discuss the implementation of the plans outlined above, it is important to touch upon two major problems hindering the organizational work of the DPI in New York. On the one hand, despite the objections of the UNHCR, the UN Secretariat issued only one call for aid, which united the issues of humanitarian relief in Hungary and the refugee crisis. Nevertheless, the radio and film footage available to the DPI only concerned the refugee crisis in Austria, since Western film crews and reporters were barred from entering Hungary. In order to bridge this gap, the DPI proposed to explain to the viewers and listeners that they were only being shown a glimpse of an enormous tragedy, which could not be captured in its entirety. This information was to be shared at the end of the relevant television or radio programs by public figures or celebrities (at the request of the UN ICs), who would then make a call for donations.²⁶ On the other hand, the UN Secretariat faced considerable difficulties in organizing the implementation of fundraising efforts. The DPI's proposals urged governments to support the calls for aid sent to the NGOs, and if possible,

23 *UNARMS*: Interoffice memorandum from Vernon Duckworth-Barker, Senior Information Officer for Technical Assistance, UN, New York to Val J. G. Stavridi, Director, External and Specialized Agencies Service, Department of Public Information, UN, New York, Attached documentation on Hungarian relief, UN-S-445-0195-7. (27 November 1956).

24 *UNARMS*: Circular memorandum no. ES/44 from Val J. G. Stavridi, Director, External and Specialized Agencies Service, Department of Public Information, UN, New York to directors of United Nations Information Centers and information officers, Relief to the Hungarian people, copies sent to Athens, Belgrade, Bogota, Buenos Aires, Cairo, Copenhagen, Geneva, Karachi, London, Mexico City, Moscow, Monrovia, New Delhi, Paris, Prague, Rio de Janeiro, Sydney, Teheran, Washington, Bangkok, Djakarta, Manila, Santiago, UN-S-445-0195-7. (30 November 1956).

25 *UNARMS*: Note on a meeting held on 28 November 1956 to discuss DPI co-operation in plans for relief to the Hungarian people, UN-S-445-0195-7. (28 November 1956).

26 *UNARMS*: Letter from Vernon Duckworth-Barker, Senior Information Officer for Technical Assistance, UN, New York to Pierre Obez, Liaison Officer for Relief to the Hungarian People, UN, Geneva, UN-S-445-0196-2. (19 December 1956).

to help co-ordinate the fundraising efforts on a national level. In order to avoid chaos or losses, they considered it especially important to have an officially recognized national channel for receiving donations in every country, and suggested that the radio and film campaigns would have greater effect if there were only one collection address for donations in each country.²⁷ The DPI hoped that the UN would soon issue a request that, wherever possible, the governments should devise their own national donation systems.²⁸

The challenges posed by the Hungarian refugee crisis forced the United Nations to seek new approaches, which is evident from the 12 December 1956 report submitted by the UN Secretary-General to the UN General Assembly, which stated that

(...) with regard to contributions by voluntary organizations and the general public for assistance to the Hungarian people, also envisaged by the resolutions of the General Assembly, the Secretary General would welcome any suggestions which Governments may care to make for the co-ordination of national fund-raising efforts from private sources. Response to appeals for funds from such sources may be more effective when a co-ordination body, such as a national committee of leading citizens, organizes the appeal and ensures the widest publicity for it.²⁹

Nevertheless, the representatives of the UN Secretariat doubted that such national institutions would indeed be established in every single country; therefore, in the absence of national donation systems, they proposed that the “public figures” calling for donations at the end of radio and television programs should tell the public to donate directly to the Red Cross or to any organizations actively involved in alleviating the refugee crisis.³⁰ For example, in the United States, the public figure speaking at the end of the American Broadcasting Company (ABC) Network’s television program about the Hungarian refugee relief efforts was Lewis Williams Douglas, Chairman

27 UNARMS: Note on a meeting held on 28 November 1956 to discuss DPI co-operation in plans for relief to the Hungarian people, UN-S-445-0195-7. (28 November 1956).

28 UNARMS: Circular memorandum no. ES/44 from Val J. G. Stavridi, Director, External and Specialized Agencies Service, Department of Public Information, UN, New York to directors of United Nations Information Centers and information officers, Relief to the Hungarian people, copies sent to Athens, Belgrade, Bogota, Buenos Aires, Cairo, Copenhagen, Geneva, Karachi, London, Mexico City, Moscow, Monrovia, New Delhi, Paris, Prague, Rio de Janeiro, Sydney, Teheran, Washington, Bangkok, Djakarta, Manila, Santiago, UN-S-445-0195-7. (30 November 1956).

29 UNARMS: Question considered by the Second Emergency Special Session of the General Assembly from 4 to 10 November 1956. Humanitarian activities to assist the Hungarian people. Interim report of the Secretary-General, A/3443, UN-S-445-0200-1. (12 December 1956).

30 UNARMS: Letter from Vernon Duckworth-Barker, Senior Information Officer for Technical Assistance, UN, New York to Pierre Obez, Liaison Officer for Relief to the Hungarian People, UN, Geneva, UN-S-445-0196-2. (19 December 1956).

of President Eisenhower's Advisory Committee on Aid to Hungarians, whose DPI-issued script directed potential donors to the American Red Cross.³¹

Grand Scale Execution: The Printed Press, Photographs, Radio, and Film

As its draft proposals suggested, the UN DPI media campaign unfolding in November and December 1956 involved the use of printed as well as audiovisual media, with special emphasis on the latter. Regarding the printed press, the representatives of the DPI and the UNHCR published several press releases with regard to the Hungarian refugee crisis to inform the public of calls for donations, the current state of fundraising efforts, and particularly generous donations. For example, in its 22 November 1956 release, the representative of the UNHCR in the UK announced that the British government had decided to send an immediate contribution of 20,000 British pounds to the Austrian government's Refugee Fund, as well as donate 15,000 British pounds each to the funds established by the UN Secretary-General for assistance in Hungary and of Hungarian refugees.³² Meanwhile, as part of the ideological warfare in the Cold War, US representative Henry Cabot Lodge orchestrated an actual "media event" to present donations from the United States to the UN Secretary-General: in November 1956, he handed over a check of one million US dollars and said, "*it is for the benefit of people now destitute, because they have tried to achieve the human rights and fundamental freedoms which are proclaimed so eloquently in the Charter of the United Nations.*"³³ This donation was followed on 17 December of the same year by another check, this time for four million US dollars.³⁴ Significant contributions such as these were, of course, recorded by the UN press releases to promote donations as well as the donating country. On 12 December, journalists, photographers, and

31 UNARMS: Letter from Vernon Duckworth-Barker, Senior Information Officer for Technical Assistance, UN, New York to Lewis Williams Douglas, Chairman of President Eisenhower's Advisory Committee on Aid to Hungarians, the draft of the appeal, UN-S-445-0196-2. (20 December 1956).

32 UNARMS: Press Release REF/99. High Commissioner's London Office Announces Contributions for relief of Hungarian refugees, UN-S-445-0195-8. (22 November 1956).

33 UNARMS: Press Release, United States donates million dollar check for Hungarian refugees, UN-S-445-0195-8.

34 *National Library of Sweden*, Stockholm: Dag Hammarskjölds samling, Hungary, 1956–1957 (chronological), 1 Nov. 1956 – 31 Jan. 1957. United Nations, Department of Public Information, Press and Publication Division, UN, New York (for use of information media – not an official record), Press Release REF/101. United States gives further \$4,000,000 to Secretary General for Hungarian Refugees. (17 December 1956).

radio staff gathered at Palace of Nations, the European Headquarters of the UN, to celebrate the agreement entered by and between the UNHCR and the League of Red Cross Societies regarding Hungarian refugees in Austria.³⁵ On 11 April 1957, the DPI issued a press release containing a brief summary of the current situation of Hungarian refugees submitted by the UNHCR.³⁶ The press staff of the UN institutions also sought to inform journalists personally of these developments in order to motivate them to publish articles on the subject: for example, during his visit to London in February 1957, Stanley J. C. Wright, the Special Assistant to the High Commissioner, took measures to ensure that the *Economist*, the *Times*, and the *Daily Telegraph* would publish articles on current issues in the refugee crisis.³⁷

The worldwide publication of dramatic photographs featuring fleeing Hungarian refugees and their reception in Austria played a major role in mobilizing global public opinion. In the first few weeks of November, the UNHCR sent photographs to the UN DPI, and Wright, the Special Assistant to the High Commissioner, traveled to Austria in the first week of November, from whence he sent photographs taken at the refugee reception centers to David Ritchie, Director of the Visual Information Division in New York, for immediate distribution. These photographs were especially significant on account of the fact that, initially, nobody was permitted take photographs at the refugee camps.³⁸ On 14 November, Wright dispatched an additional 23 photographs of the Austrian reception of Hungarian refugees to Jerzy Szapiro at the UN Secretariat, requesting that they make the photographs available to the press.³⁹

Regarding the above discussed media plan, the DPI in New York took over the initiatives of the UN Secretariat at the end of November, and developed a detailed budget plan for presenting the humanitarian relief of Hungarian refugees through photographs. Their plans included sending the material from Vienna to Geneva,

35 *UNOG Archives*: Memorandum from John Defrates, UNHCR to Warren A. Pinegar, UNHCR, copy to Acting Director of the UN Information Center, Geneva, Publicity concerning the Agreement between HCR and the League of Red Cross Societies, G. VI. 1/43 (General and Miscellaneous, Hungarian Relief, General). (11 December 1956).

36 *UNARMS*: UN Press Release REF/122. High Commissioner's Office reviews Hungarian refugee situation, UN-S-445-0195-8. (11 April 1957).

37 *UNOG Archives*: Memorandum from Stanley J. C. Wright, Special Assistant to the High Commissioner to August Lindt, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (through the Deputy High Commissioner), Report on Information Mission to Paris, London, Amsterdam and Brussels, G. VI. 1/44 (General and Miscellaneous, Hungarian Relief, Film). (19 February 1957).

38 *UNARMS*: Letter from Stanley J. C. Wright, Special Assistant to the High Commissioner to David Ritchie, Director, Visual Information Division, Department of Public Information, UN, New York, UN-S-445-0196-3. (10 November 1956).

39 *UNOG Archives*: Interoffice memorandum from Stanley J. C. Wright, Special Assistant to the High Commissioner to Jerzy Szapiro, UN, New York, Photographs, personal, G. VI. 1/43 (General and Miscellaneous, Hungarian Relief, General). (19 November 1956).

developing the approximately thirty negatives, making 150 copies of said negatives, editing them, adding captions in French and English, distributing the copies, and sending the negatives to New York. It was likewise proposed that the UN should set aside 6,000 to 9,000 US dollars per week for development costs, for a period of four to six weeks.⁴⁰ The DPI in New York also delegated all matters related to photographs of Hungarian refugees to the UN IC in Geneva.⁴¹ On 28 November 1956, the DPI in New York sent a telegram to Geneva, authorizing the IC to send photojournalist Eric Schwab to Austria to take photographs of Hungarian refugees and the organization of humanitarian relief. To support his work, Schwab received six rolls of Kodacolor film, and he was instructed to send the photographs to Geneva, where the best photographs would be selected for distribution, possibly by involving the photo department of a local newspaper. The DPI in New York also expected the UN IC in Geneva to forward the negatives to New York as soon as possible so that they could distribute the copies across the American continent.

The global distribution list for photographs clearly shows that the DPI in New York intended to use the international network of UN ICs for the global dissemination of information on the Hungarian refugee crisis. According to the list, the DPI sent photographs to Geneva on a daily basis, to be distributed to Austria, Bulgaria, the Federal Republic of Germany, Hungary, Italy, Poland, Romania, and Switzerland; and they also sent daily material to The Hague and Washington. The DPI also sent copies of the photographs three times a week to Bangkok (Cambodia, Laos, Thailand), Paris (Belgium, France and French colonies, Luxembourg), and Santiago (Chile). Twice a week, photographs were sent to Belgrade (Albania, Yugoslavia), Cairo (Egypt, Ethiopia, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Saudi-Arabia, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, Yemen), Copenhagen (Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden), London (Ireland, United Kingdom and British colonies excepting British West Africa), Mexico City (Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama), and New Delhi (Burma, Ceylon, India, Nepal). Last but not least, once a week the DPI sent photographs to Athens (Greece, Israel, Turkey), Bogota (Columbia, Ecuador, Peru, Venezuela), Buenos Aires (Argentina, Bolivia, Paraguay, Uruguay), Jakarta (Indonesia), Karachi (Pakistan), Manila (Philippines), Monrovia (British West Africa), Moscow (Belarus, the Ukraine, the Soviet Union), Prague (Czechoslovakia), Rio de Janeiro (Brazil), Shanghai (China),

40 *UNOG Archives*: Memorandum from DPI Director [Geneva] to Jerzy Szapiro, UN, New York, Photo coverage of Hungarian refugees, personal, G. VI. 1/43 (General and Miscellaneous, Hungarian Relief, General). (29 November 1956).

41 *UNOG Archives*: Letter from David Ritchie, Chief, Photographic and Exhibition Services, UN, New York to Paul Jonás [Jónás Pál], Vienna, G. VI. 1/43 (General and Miscellaneous, Hungarian Relief, General). (2 January 1957).

Sydney (Australia, New-Zealand), and Teheran (Afghanistan, Iran). The DPI also distributed material separately to Canada, the delegation of the People's Republic of China, Haiti, Japan, Portugal, Spain, and the Union of South Africa.⁴² Beyond its geographical scope, the global scale of distribution is evident from the fact that, by the middle of January 1957, the UN ICs had sent out approximately 20,000 copies of the photographs.⁴³

Radio became a crucial cog in the information distribution mechanism of the contemporary Western press, as one of its great advantages was the ability to deliver news several times a day.⁴⁴ Compared to other components of the contemporary media, this medium held fundamental significance, as television was practically non-existent on a global level, and, due to long printing times, any information received at the news agencies could only be published by the daily newspapers on the following day. The newsreels screened at the cinemas were also continuously late, as were the reports of weekly newspapers.⁴⁵ It is no coincidence therefore that the DPI in New York gave a prominent role in its media campaign to mass communications via radio.

As early as 30 November 1956, a radio crew of three journalists was sent to Austria to report on the spot and record news material in English, French, and Spanish. In the course of two and a half weeks, the radio crew observed, described, and recorded on a magnetophone every significant aspect of the history of the Hungarian refugees, including their crossing over the Austrian–Hungarian border, their registration in Austria, their application for traveling onward, their life at the refugee camps, and their departure. All three radio reporters sent frequent updates in the form of audio material to the UN for use in its daily and weekly radio programs, and they also submitted their reports and other materials to Geneva, from whence they were broadcasted to national radio stations for further distribution.⁴⁶ The IC of the

42 UNOG Archives: Memorandum from David Ritchie, Chief, Photographs and Exhibition Services, UN, New York to Paul Jankowski, Acting Director, Information Center, Geneva, Photo coverage in Austria, G. VI. 1/43 (General and Miscellaneous, Hungarian Relief, General). (29 November 1956).

43 UNOG Archives: Letter from David Ritchie, Chief, Photographs and Exhibition Services, UN, New York to Stanley J. C. Wright, Special Assistant to the High Commissioner, G. VI. 1/43 (General and Miscellaneous, Hungarian Relief, General). (16 January 1957).

44 Bellanger, C. et al. (Eds.) (1975). *Histoire générale de la presse française* [‘General History of the French Press’]. Vol. IV: 1940–1958. Presses Universitaires de France, p. 34, 298.

45 Sorlin, P. (2000 [1996]). “Les intellectuels et l’opinion publique en France face à la révolution hongroise de 1956” [‘Intellectuals and Public Opinion in France on the Hungarian Revolution of 1956’]. Presentation delivered at the conference organized by the French Institute in Hungary, 17–19 October 1996. Manuscript transcribed by Csaba Csapodi and archived at the *Médiathèque* of the French Cultural Institute in Budapest.

46 UNARMS: Interoffice memorandum from Gohl Obhrai, Chief, Radio Services, UN, New York to Peter Ayles, Director, Radio and Visual Service Division, UN, New York, Hungarian Refugees: Radio Operations, UN-S-445-0196-2. (7 January 1957).

UN Headquarters in Geneva also ensured that *Radio-Genève* (Geneva Radio) would receive brief commentaries from Vienna twice a week on the situation of Hungarian refugees in Austria.⁴⁷

The materials recorded in Austria in different languages served as the base material of countless documentaries around the world. For the English language area, three separate thirty-minute documentaries were produced on various aspects of the Hungarian refugee problem, with enough time left for a call for donations; these documentaries were broadcasted in the United States on 21 December 1956, 28 December 1956, and 4 January 1957. At the end of these documentaries, the public figures calling for donations were Lewis Williams Douglas, Chairman of President Eisenhower's Advisory Committee on Aid to Hungarians, John Wilson, Vice President for Disaster Operations and Logistics at the American Red Cross, and High Commissioner for Refugees August Rudolph Lindt, respectively. These programs were also broadcasted in Australia, New-Zealand, South Africa, Ireland, and Israel. Other versions, shortened to fifteen minutes, were broadcasted in India, Pakistan, the Philippines, Ceylon, and Canada. The Spanish materials served as the basis of four thirty-minute documentaries that were distributed in Latin America. As for the French materials, four thirty-minute radio broadcasts aired in France, Belgium, Canada, Switzerland, Monte Carlo, and Haiti, and an additional six documentaries, each fifteen minutes long, were broadcasted weekly in Canada. The materials gathered by the reporters of the UN were also used by Flemish, Norwegian, Danish, Swedish, Greek, Italian, and Portuguese radio stations, and according to our sources, these were adapted into Tagalog, Burmese, Indonesian, Turkish, Serbo-Croatian, and Hebrew as well.⁴⁸

The DPI in New York had clearly recognized the significant promotional value inherent in moving pictures, and in order to promote its calls for relief to the Hungarian refugees, it managed to produce a film within a mere 35 days. Just as it had sent radio reporters to Austria, on 30 November, two days after the decision of the UN General Assembly, the DPI dispatched a film crew to Vienna, and, on 3 and 4 December, filming began by recording Hungarian refugees as they crossed the Austrian-Hungarian border. On 14 December, editing began in New York, and on 4 January 1957, the resulting film was ready for broadcasting. On 7 January, a preliminary screening was held at the UN Office, and on 13 January, it was broadcasted by ABC Network

47 *UNOG Archives*: Letter from René Dovaz, Director of Radio-Genève to Paul Jankowski, Deputy Director of the Information Center of the European Office of the United Nations, Geneva, G. VI. 1/43 (General and Miscellaneous, Hungarian Relief, General). (5 December 1956).

48 *UNARMS*: Interoffice memorandum from Gohl Obhrai, Chief, Radio Services, UN, New York to Peter Aylen, Director, Radio and Visual Service Division, UN, New York, Hungarian Refugees: Radio Operations, UN-S-445-0196-2. (7 January 1957).

as part of the “Omnibus” program produced by the TV-Radio Workshop of the Ford Foundation.⁴⁹

Despite recording and using a lot of live footage, the film produced by the UN film crew was not a documentary, but an “appeal film” intended to present the situation from the perspective of Hungarian refugees.⁵⁰ As the organization often argued in response to criticism, the aim of the film was to inspire interest and compassion among the audience towards the issue, rather than objectively represent the international humanitarian action for the relief of Hungarian refugees.⁵¹ The film followed the story of Mária Varga, a young widow and mother of two boys, to present the precarious situations of individual refugees while also showing the helping hands reaching out to them (such as those of the Red Cross).⁵² According to the synopsis,

Maria has no plan for her future... A young man in that office [camp migration office] tells Maria that though many countries have been generous, most of the quotas are, for the moment, full or nearly full (...) Then there is nothing to do but wait, and the corrosion of idleness in a camp sets in (...) The man with the armband tells Maria he has waited in a refugee camp for five years. “It is so hard,” he says, “for people in the outside world to keep their sympathy alive.” Maria is overcome. Five years in a bedroom with eighty-nine people? Could that be a home for her children? She asks: “Can’t I have a *real* home?”⁵³

As discussed above, the DPI in New York had assigned an important role to the UN ICs in the international distribution of photographs featuring Hungarian refugees, and now called on the ICs to assist with the distribution of the “appeal film” produced by the film crew, meaning that the directors of the ICs were charged with the

49 *UNOG Archives*: Document on the film *OUT*: presentation, synopsis, production diary, G. VI. 1/44 (General and Miscellaneous, Hungarian Relief, Film). The document reads, “United Nations Film Board presents *OUT*, 25 Minutes (...) Edited by Alexander Hammid, in Charge of Production Thorold Dickinson (...) Produced by the United Nations Department of Public Information: November 30th, 1956 – January 4th, 1957.”

50 *UNARMS*: Interoffice memorandum from Thorold Dickinson, Chief, Film Services, Radio and Visual Services Division, UN, New York to Peter Aylen, Director, Radio and Visual Service Division, UN, New York, UN-S-445-0196-3. (3 January 1957).

51 *UNARMS*: Interoffice memorandum from Peter Aylen, Director, Radio and Visual Service Division, UN, New York to Myer Cohen, Executive Director for Relief to the Hungarian People, UN, New York, Film Appeal Hungarian Relief, UN-S-445-0196-2. (9 January 1957).

52 *UNOG Archives*: Interoffice memorandum from Thomas Baird, Deputy Chief, Central Operations and Facilities Service, RVS [Radio and Visual Service], DPI, UN, New York to W. Gibson Parker, Director, United Nations Information Center, Geneva (8 January 1957). Attachment: *OUT*, based on the film produced by the United Nations Department of Public Information, F-45-E. G. VI. 1/44 (General and Miscellaneous, Hungarian Relief, Film).

53 *UNOG Archives*: Document on the film *OUT*: presentation, synopsis, production diary. G. VI. 1/44 (General and Miscellaneous, Hungarian Relief, Film).

linguistic adaption and distribution of the film in cinemas and outside of cinemas, as well as its broadcasting on television. Following the successful presentation of the film in the US, certain countries such as Denmark and Switzerland, began to show greater interest in the film. According to the director of the UN IC in Copenhagen, Danish television was willing to pay 4.25 US dollars per minute, without subtracting adaptation costs;⁵⁴ and Adrian Pelt, Director of the European Headquarters of the UN, asked Léopold Boissier, the Chairman of the International Committee of the Red Cross, to call for donations at the end of the film's broadcast by *la Télévision-Suisse* (Swiss Television).⁵⁵ In comparison, it was more difficult to broadcast the film in Great Britain and France. In London, the first screening was supposed to take place on 14 January 1957, when they would have originally screened the UNHCR film "Island Exile". For the screening, they invited the press, the BBC, the commercial television channels, and film distributors as well. They had great hopes of a BBC broadcast by way of applying to Alexander Codogan, Great Britain's first UN Ambassador, who in 1956 and 1957 was the Chairman of the Board of Governors of the BBC; and they also planned to use the UN Association of the UK as the fundraising organization.⁵⁶ In France, *Radio-Télévision Française* (RTF) only agreed to broadcast the film after considerable hesitation and under certain conditions, such as reducing the footage to fifteen minutes, to be followed by ten to fifteen minutes of live round table discussion, which was to emphasize positive prospects for the future by mentioning the relief efforts of international organizations. They also requested that the UN IC in Paris bear the costs of adding a French commentary to the film.⁵⁷

Last but not least, the employees of the DPI in New York also produced a slideshow based on the appeal film in English, French, and Spanish, titled *Out*. The various elements of the slideshow were connected by the story of a small family, whose members arrive at a refugee camp in Austria in search of a new home. In order to ensure the widest possible distribution of the slideshow, the DPI sought to produce as many copies as might be required by the various organizations in charge of collecting

54 UNARMS: Letter from Michael Hayward, Chief, Operations, Radio and Visual Service Division, Department of Public Information, UN, New York to W. Gibson Parker, Director, United Nations Information Center, Geneva, UN-S-445-0196-3. (9 January 1957).

55 UNOG Archives: Letter from Adrian Pelt, Director of the European Headquarters of the United Nations and representing the Secretary-General, Geneva to Léopold Boissier, President of the International Committee of the Red Cross, Geneva, G. VI. 1/44 (General and Miscellaneous, Hungarian Relief, Film). (4 February 1957).

56 UNOG Archives: Memorandum from Stanley J. C. Wright, Special Assistant to the High Commissioner to Pagès, G. VI. 1/44 (General and Miscellaneous, Hungarian Relief, Film) (11 January 1957).

57 UNOG Archives: Letter from Jean Dupuy, Deputy Director of the United Nations Information Center, Paris to Stanley J. C. Wright, Special Assistant to the High Commissioner for Refugees, G. VI. 1/44 (General and Miscellaneous, Hungarian Relief, Film). (22 February 1957).

contributions in cash and in kind.⁵⁸ To realize these goals, they even ensured free distribution in third world countries.⁵⁹

Relations between the DPI of the UN Secretariat and the Information Department of the UNHCR

As discussed in the previous section, there had been co-operation as well as tension between the UN Secretariat and the UNHCR regarding the raising and use of funds for the purpose of humanitarian relief to the Hungarian people. There were likewise disagreements when it came to the media activities of the DPI in New York and the UNHCR, but there their co-operation remained solid.⁶⁰

The UNHCR took several initiatives towards the media organs of the UN. At the beginning of December 1956, the Special Assistant to the High Commissioner contacted the UN IC in Geneva and offered to write a short 800-1,000 word article on the Hungarian humanitarian action, and even offered to prepare other materials if required.⁶¹ The DPI's lower interest is evident from the slowness with which they attended to Wright's proposal: for over a month, it was said to "floating around the building" before it "landed" on the desk of Michael de Capite, Chief of the Central Editorial Services of the UN Secretariat.⁶² On 8 January 1957, the Special Assistant of the UNHCR assisted the UN DPI through correspondence regarding the information and captions of the photographs of Hungarian refugees, and also inquired about the use of the photographs in the DPI's possession.⁶³

58 *UNOG Archives*: Memorandum from David Ritchie, Chief, Photographic and Exhibition Services, DPI, UN, New York to W. Gibson Parker, Director, United Nations Information Center, Geneva, Filmstrips, G. VI. 1/44 (General and Miscellaneous, Hungarian Relief, Film). (31 January 1957).

59 *UNOG Archives*: Memorandum from R. D. Mathewson, Chief, Sales and Circulation Section, DPI, UN, New York to Directors, United Nations Information Centers and Information Officers at Bangkok, Djakarta, Manila, Santiago and The Hague, New Filmstrip – "OUT", PU 122(2) UNIC's, G. VI. 1/44 (General and Miscellaneous, Hungarian Relief, Film). (28 February 1957).

60 The report of the UNHCR for the year 1957 also expressed the intention to co-operate. See Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, General Assembly, Official Records: Twelfth Session, Supplement No. 11 (A/3585/Rev.1), New York, 1957. 22.

61 *UNOG Archives*: Memorandum from Paul Jankowski, Deputy Director, UN Information Center, Geneva to Gibson Parker, Director, United Nations Information Center, Geneva, Articles on refugees, G. VI. 1/43 (General and Miscellaneous, Hungarian Relief, General). (10 December 1956).

62 *UNOG Archives*: Letter from Michael de Capite, Chief, Central Editorial Services, United Nations Secretariat, New York to Gibson Parker, Director, United Nations Information Center, Geneva, G. VI. 1/43 (General and Miscellaneous, Hungarian Relief, General). (22 January 1957).

63 *UNOG Archives*: Letter from David Ritchie, Chief, Photographs and Exhibition Services to Stanley J. C. Wright, Special Assistant to the High Commissioner, G. VI. 1/43 (General and Miscellaneous, Hungarian Relief, General). (16 January 1957).

The UNHCR mainly focused its attention on the film produced by the UN Secretariat on Hungarian refugees, as well as its promotional use: in this regard, High Commissioner Lindt made particular demands towards the DPI in New York. In his message sent by telex to Myer Cohen, Executive Director for Relief to the Hungarian People, Lindt first requested information on the measures they would take in individual countries regarding the film's distribution by television stations or at cinemas, with special attention to the details of the beneficiaries named by national calls for donations. Lindt's second request was that the UNHCR be mentioned in calls for donations, and proposed that there should also be a reference to the co-operation between the UNHCR and the League of Red Cross Societies in Austria. Cohen issued an interoffice memorandum to relay these requests to Peter Ayles, Director of the Radio and Visual Service Division,⁶⁴ who replied that he thought it neither "practicable", nor "desirable" to mention the UNHCR in the film, given that it was not a documentary on the work of various humanitarian organizations, but an "appeal film," intended to inspire interest and compassion in its audience.⁶⁵ Nevertheless, the representatives of the UN Secretariat did their best to consider the High Commissioner's proposals, and in their scripts drafted for the public figures delivering the calls for donations, they made explicit mention of the requested elements. They also promised that any reports arriving from the UN ICs would be forwarded to the UNHCR through the New York representative of the UNHCR without delay.⁶⁶ As per the DPI's resolution, the film script contained no references to the co-operation of the organizations;⁶⁷ nevertheless, Lindt continued to uphold his demands,⁶⁸ and proposed that, as soon as they learned more about the national fundraising institutions, the local representative of the UNHCR should immediately contact these as well as the local representatives of the UN ICs.⁶⁹ Measures were taken accordingly, and Gibson Parker, the director

64 *UNARMS*: Interoffice memorandum from Myer Cohen, Executive Director for Relief to the Hungarian People to Peter Ayles, Director, Radio and Visual Service Division, High Commissioner's Requests regarding Refugee Film, UN-S-445-0196-3. (9 January 1957).

65 *UNARMS*: Interoffice memorandum from Peter Ayles, Director, Radio and Visual Service Division to Myer Cohen, Executive Director for Relief to the Hungarian People, Film Appeal Hungarian Relief, UN-S-445-0196-3. (9 January 1957).

66 *UNARMS*: Letter from Myer Cohen, Executive Director for Relief to the Hungarian People, New York to August Lindt, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Geneva and "Suggested points for final appeal of the film 'OUT'", UN-S-445-0196-2. (10 January 1957).

67 *Ibidem*.

68 *UNARMS*: Letter from August Lindt, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Geneva to Myer Cohen, Executive Director for Relief to the Hungarian People, New York, UN-S-445-0196-2. (18 January 1957).

69 *UNOG Archives*: Copy of teleprinter conference between August Lindt, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Geneva and Myer Cohen, Executive Director for Relief to the Hungarian People, New York, G. VI. 1/44 (General and Miscellaneous, Hungarian Relief, Film). (9 January 1957, 18:00).

of the UN IC in Geneva entered into co-operation with the offices of every European capital where the UNHCR had a local representative.⁷⁰ During his visit to London, Lindt's Special Assistant also contacted the local organization responsible for fundraising, and they determined that, following the distribution of the film and with the co-operation of the British UN Association, the contributions thus collected would be sent to the Hungarian refugees through the Austrian representative of the UNHCR.⁷¹

The High Commissioner considered it very important to continue co-operation with the DPI,⁷² and, during his stay in New York, he proposed to consult with several representatives of the DPI. In preparation for these consultations, Wright issued detailed negotiation plans for Lindt, who had planned far more than mere ceremonial visits and intended to consult not only Ahmed Shah Bokhari, the Under-Secretary of the UN, Head of Information and his Deputy Under-Secretary Alfred G. Katzin, but also to visit Net Gordon, Director of the Press and Publications Division, Peter Ayles, Director of the Radio and Visual Service Division, and even the heads of the media departments under Ayles (Film and Television, and Photography and Visual Information). Bokhari and Katzin were particularly to be informed of the significance of fundraising and fostering interest among the international public towards the refugee crisis, and of the UNHCR's plans in this regard. They proposed that the DPI should produce a new documentary about the Hungarian refugees for broadcasting on television as a reminder to the public, which had long forgotten the earlier refugees who thus remained at the refugee camps. They wished to make it clear that the budget of the UNHCR made it impossible to produce a documentary, but they were willing to assist the film crew by providing equipment and facilitating local travel, and would also assist in adapting the film in several languages.⁷³ The UNHCR was clearly devoted to its media activities and desired to co-operate with the DPI in New York, as evidenced by the fact that they planned to appoint a press official in Vienna through whom they would be able to send more audio, textual, and visual material to the UN DPI for global distribution.⁷⁴ In order to facilitate the distribution

70 *UNARMS*: Letter from August Lindt, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Geneva to Myer Cohen, Executive Director for Relief to the Hungarian People, New York, UN-S-445-0196-2. (18 January 1957).

71 *UNOG Archives*: Memorandum from Stanley J. C. Wright, Special Assistant to the High Commissioner to Pagès, G. VI. 1/44 (General and Miscellaneous, Hungarian Relief, Film). (11 January 1957).

72 *UNOG Archives*: Memorandum from Stanley J. C. Wright, Special Assistant to the High Commissioner, Geneva to Thorold Dickinson, Chief, Film Services, Department of Public Information, United Nations, New York, personal, G. VI. 1/44 (General and Miscellaneous, Hungarian Relief, Film). (8 February 1957).

73 *UNOG Archives*: Memorandum from Stanley J. C. Wright, Special Assistant to the High Commissioner to August Lindt, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (through the Deputy High Commissioner), High Commissioner's mission to New York, G. VI. 1/43 (General and Miscellaneous, Hungarian Relief, General). (8 February 1957).

74 *Ibidem*.

of the “appeal film” about Hungarian refugees, Wright went on a tour to four different countries, where he consulted the local representatives of each UN IC. In Paris, he successfully convinced French Television to broadcast the film, and at the “preliminary screening” in London, he held a press conference with Dame May Curwen, the UK Representative of the Executive Committee of the UNREF.⁷⁵ In Amsterdam, Wright discussed the international distribution of a photo album about the refugees with the director of the De Bezige Bij Publishing Company, as well as its use in the distribution of the film in the Netherlands. Last but not least, Wright visited Belgium, where preparations for the television broadcast of the film were well under way in the Flemish Section as well, and Wright was asked to represent the UNHCR and attend this special one-hour program.⁷⁶

Although the DPI was evidently less interested in maintaining relations than the UNHCR, it did express willingness to co-operate with the High Commissioner, and so it frequently requested information from its local centers on the distribution of the appeal film and the local organization of fundraising efforts and relayed these to the UNHCR,⁷⁷ while the UN IC in Paris directly informed the UNHCR of the developments of the television broadcast of the film in France.⁷⁸

Measures Taken by the UNHCR to Ensure Lasting Media Impact

In order to resolve the still ongoing refugee crisis, the UNHCR, headed by August Lindt, consciously sought to deepen and sustain the profound and positive impact made on the Western public by the Hungarian refugee crisis as well as its successful

75 The UNREF was a four-year funding program established in 1954 by the UN General Assembly and implemented by the UNHCR in order to provide permanent solutions to refugees. Within the framework of this program, the Executive Committee of the UNREF exercised control and direction over the activities of the UNHCR regarding the use of monetary funds. The target amount for the period between 1955 and 1958 was 16,000,000 US dollars.

76 *UNOG Archives*: Memorandum from Stanley J. C. Wright, Special Assistant to the High Commissioner to August Lindt, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (through the Deputy High Commissioner), Report on Information Mission to Paris, London, Amsterdam and Brussels, G. VI. 1/44 (General and Miscellaneous, Hungarian Relief, Film). (19 February 1957).

77 *UNOG Archives*: Letter from Michael Hayward, Operations, Radio and Visual Services Division, Department of Public Information, New York to W. Gibson Parker, Director, United Nations Information Center, Geneva, G. VI. 1/44 (General and Miscellaneous, Hungarian Relief, Film). (9 January 1957).

78 *UNOG Archives*: Letter from Jean Dupuy, Deputy Director of the United Nations Information Center, Paris to Stanley J. C. Wright, Special Assistant to the High Commissioner for Refugees, G. VI. 1/44 (General and Miscellaneous, Hungarian Relief, Film). (22 February 1957).

management. Lindt had expressed these intentions as early as the height of the refugee crisis at the 10 January 1957 session of the Co-ordination Committee in Geneva, stating that “*he wished to express the hope that the great upsurge of public sympathy and interest in the refugees which had been caused by the Hungarian crisis, could be kept alive and extended to those unfortunate ‘old’ refugees, many of whom had been living for ten years in refugee camps waiting for the chance of a new life.*”⁷⁹ To this end, the UNHCR took definite steps in co-operation with other actors of the refugee relief system.

At the 12 March 1957 session of the Co-ordination Committee in Geneva, Wright informed those present that the UNHCR proposed to publish a monthly information journal, the first issue of which would detail the resolution of the Hungarian refugee crisis. According to their plans, each issue would have an editorial on the issues currently handled by the UNHCR, which would contain facts and information on the developments of resolving the Hungarian refugee problem, the progress of the UNREF program, the activities of volunteer organizations assisting with the integration and settlement of refugees, and the international protection of refugees. To maintain the journal successfully, the organizers also hoped for the co-operation of volunteer organizations.⁸⁰ They planned to publish the first issue at the beginning of May 1957, with the Hungarian refugee crisis as their chosen theme.⁸¹

On 27 and 28 May 1957, the volunteer organizations involved with the refugee crisis held a conference in Geneva, where preparations were vigorously assisted by the Intergovernmental Committee for European Migration (ICEM) as well as the UNHCR.⁸² In order to keep the public invested in the refugee crisis, the UNHCR

79 *UNOG Archives*: Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Co-ordination Committee for Assistance to Refugees from Hungary, Summary record of the third meeting held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, 10 January 1957, restricted, GI/30/2 (Situation in Hungary, Relief Measures, Refugees), Jacket no. 2 (11 January – 11 November 1957). (15 January 1957).

80 *UNOG Archives*: Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Co-ordination Committee for Assistance to Refugees from Hungary, Summary record of the sixth meeting held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, 12 March 1957, Restricted, HCR/SVA/SR.6, GI, 30/2, Jacket no. 2 (Situation in Hungary, Relief Measures, Refugees) (18 March 1957). The “Information Notes” (1952–1958) found at the Archives contain no reference to the Hungarian refugee crisis; however, the UNHCR Archives have a brochure that served to maintain public interest in the refugee issue. *UNHCR Archives*: Fonds 16 – Records of Public Information – Irms: 148315. “To Have a Key” – A Storybook of Human Drama, published by the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees.

81 *UNOG Archives*: Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Co-ordination Committee for Assistance to Refugees from Hungary, Summary record of the eighth meeting held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, 16 April 1957, Restricted, HCR/SVA/SR.8, GI, 30/2, Jacket no. 2 (Situation in Hungary, Relief measures, Refugees). (16 April 1957).

82 *UNOG Archives*: Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Co-ordination Committee for Assistance to Refugees from Hungary, Summary record of the eleventh meeting held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, 19 June 1957, restricted, HCR/SVA/SR.11, GI, 30/2, Jacket no. 2 (Situation in Hungary, Relief measures, Refugees). (19 June 1957).

proposed the invitation of internationally renowned journalists representing as many significant national newspapers as possible to attend this congress, and afterwards to visit the refugee camps to become personally acquainted with the humanitarian relief efforts.⁸³ Our sources confirm that this program was successfully carried out: on the very first day of the conference, the journalists received background information on the issue, and were able to visit three Hungarian refugee camps in Yugoslavia, where they were allowed to communicate directly with the refugees. They were especially interested in minor-age refugees, and also visited an Austrian camp housing non-Hungarian refugees. The journalists concluded that “*an international effort comparable to the one that had been made in favor of the Hungarian refugees ought to be made to resettle all these refugees and liquidate the camps.*”⁸⁴ This was the very conclusion Lindt hoped they would reach, and Wright likewise concluded that the journalists, who had previously known little about the issue, were profoundly affected by the seriousness and complexity of the refugee situation, as well as by the high-level co-operation exhibited by the organizations involved in these affairs.⁸⁵

At the first session of the Working Group for the Continuation of International Assistance to Refugees (appointed by the Executive Committee of the UNREF) in August 1958, as part of the information campaign aimed at finding permanent solutions to the European refugee crisis, the British representative of the Working Group submitted a proposal to proclaim the year 1959–1960 as World Refugee Year.⁸⁶ This proposal outlined two major goals: first, to raise funds from national governments, volunteer organizations, and the general public to aid the refugees; and second, to give new opportunities to refugees so they could find permanent solutions to their problems.⁸⁷ According to a comment disclosed by the High Commissioner in May 1961, “*the greatest achievement of the World Year was undoubtedly that it called the*

83 *UNOG Archives*: Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Co-ordination Committee for Assistance to Refugees from Hungary, Summary record of the ninth meeting held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, 6 May 1957, Restricted, HCR/SVA/SR.9, GI, 30/2, Jacket no. 2 (Situation in Hungary, Relief Measures, Refugees). (10 May 1957).

84 *UNOG Archives*: Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Co-ordination Committee for Assistance to Refugees from Hungary, Summary record of the eleventh meeting held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, 19 June 1957, restricted, HCR/SVA/SR.11, GI, 30/2, Jacket no. 2 (Situation in Hungary, Relief measures, Refugees). (19 June 1957).

85 *Ibidem*.

86 Gatrell, P. (2011). *Free World? The Campaign to Save the World's Refugees, 1956–1963*. Cambridge University Press.

87 *Archives of the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs* (La Courneuve, hereafter: AFMFA): Series: United Nations and International Organizations, cote: 372QO, Carton 300, Dossier 4. UNREF Executive Committee, Report on the first session of the Working Group for the Continuation of International Assistance to Refugees, 21–27 August 1958, A/AC/79/WP.1/R.10, Restricted. (1 September 1958).

attention of many governments and the general public to the refugee problems existing in various parts of the globe.” Moreover, they managed to raise more than 92,000,000 US dollars in contributions.⁸⁸

August Lindt even used the ceremonial opportunities and public appearances afforded by his position as High Commissioner to promote the refugee relief efforts. The Nansen Refugee Award, established in 1954 – and named after Norwegian polar explorer and politician Fridtjof Nansen, the first High Commissioner for Refugees of the League of Nations –, was annually awarded by the UNHCR in recognition of outstanding service to the cause of refugees. This award was repeatedly awarded in direct connection with the resolution of the Hungarian refugee crisis: in 1957, it was awarded to the League of Red Cross Societies for its prominent role in the relief of Hungarian refugees in Austria; and in 1958, it was awarded to David Hoggett, a British volunteer who was seriously injured in 1956 while working on a house for Hungarian refugee families, and became paralyzed from the chest down. In his ceremonial speech, Lindt noted that, in giving the award to David Hoggett, the UNHCR also wished to recognize the sacrifices and hard work of countless benevolent people around the world.⁸⁹ Finally, in 1959, the award was bestowed on former Austrian Minister of Internal Affairs Oskar Helmer for his outstanding achievements in the reception of Hungarian refugees, and in his ceremonial speech the High Commissioner commended him as well as the entire country of Austria.⁹⁰

Conclusion

The UN Family of Organizations, and in particular the UN Secretariat in New York and the UNHCR played a significant role in the successful Western reception of the vast majority of the approximately 200,000 Hungarian refugees who had left Hungary following the suppression of the Hungarian Revolution of 1956. These institutions actively participated in raising sufficient funds, handling all contributions, and using

88 AFMFA: Series: United Nations and International Organizations, cote: 372QO, Carton 300, Dossier 5, World Refugee Year, 1958–1961. Executive Committee of the High Commissioner’s Program, Fifth Session, Note presented by the High Commissioner, World Refugee Year, A/AC.96/121, Restricted. (15 May 1961).

89 *UNHCR Archives*: Presentation Speech by Mr. A. R. Lindt, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees on the occasion of the award of the Nansen Medal for 1958 to Mr. David Hoggett, Nansen Medal Award Committee, Fds 13.sf 7-A. Lindt Speeches and Statements (vol. 4) 1957–1960, Nansen Medal.

90 *UNHCR Archives*: Address by Mr. A. R. Lindt, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees on the presentation of the Nansen Medal to Mr. Oskar Helmer, former Minister of the Austrian Republic, Nansen Medal Presentation Ceremony, Fds 13.sf 7-A. Lindt Speeches and Statements (vol. 4) 1957–1960, Nansen Medal. (13 October 1959).

these to deal with the refugee crisis, and were also largely responsible for documenting these international aid efforts. Moreover, their complex media campaign to support the calls for donations issued by the UN General Assembly ensured that news of the needs of the refugees in Austria and Yugoslavia would reach every part of the world.

The information activities of the UN organizations involved in refugee relief, and in particular those of the UNHCR clearly achieved international recognition, and they meticulously executed every task set forth in the decisions of the UN General Assembly. For instance, the surveys and calculations of the UNHCR regarding the needs of refugees served as the basis for the measures of the competent international institutions, the UN Refugee Fund, and the UN Secretariat as well.⁹¹

The active and strong participation of the DPI of the UN Secretariat in supporting the fundraising efforts of the world organization was a new phenomenon brought on by the urgency of the refugee crisis. As Senior Information Officer Duckworth-Barker said during the planning stage of the media campaign, “*as we are specifically instructed by the General Assembly resolutions to make immediate and subsequent appeals to both governments and NGOs for aid to refugees, this involves a departure from our usual anti-fundraising policy.*”⁹² Likewise, using the local ICs of the UN to facilitate fundraising efforts was a novel solution to the refugee problem.

Even before the Hungarian refugee crisis began, the UNHCR had recognized the importance of media campaigns to promote fundraising efforts. At the third session of the Executive Committee of the UNREF on 23 May 1956, the Committee gave permission to the UNHCR to spend 13,300 US dollars on information activities to raise the public’s interest in the problems of refugees, as well as to fund its own programs. The money was indeed used to produce publications, photographs, films, and radio programs in co-operation with the DPI of the UN Secretariat and various radio and television companies.⁹³ The DPI in New York and the UNHCR had also organized a joint media campaign even before the Hungarian refugees arrived in the West: in October 1956, they intended to produce a photograph and report series about refugees from Italy going to Belgium to document every step of their resettlement.⁹⁴

91 Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, General Assembly, Official Records: Twelfth Session, Supplement No. 11, A/3585/Rev.1, New York, 1957. 2.

92 UNARMS: Interoffice memorandum from Vernon Duckworth-Barker, Senior Information Officer for Technical Assistance, UN, New York to Val J. G. Stavridi, Director, External and Specialized Agencies Service, Department of Public Information, UN, New York, Attached documentation on Hungarian relief, UN-S-445-0195-7. (27 November 1956).

93 Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, General Assembly, Official Records: Twelfth Session, Supplement No. 11, A/3585/Rev.1, New York, 1957. 22.

94 UNOG Archives: Letter from Stanley J. C. Wright, Special Assistant to the High Commissioner to Paul Ladame, Acting Head of the Information Service of the Intergovernmental Committee for European Migration, G. VI. 1/43 (General and Miscellaneous, Hungarian Relief, General). (24 October 1956).

The experiences gained in the course of the Hungarian refugee crisis had likely helped the UNHCR to form clear plans:

The international relief operations implemented by the UNHCR depend on contributions from national governments or private sources. Therefore, we must endeavor to inform official circles as well as the general public, and provide information on the developments of the refugee problems the UNHCR was intended to solve. Beyond these information tasks, which the UNHCR carries out in extensive co-operation with the UN ICs, the UNHCR is especially invested in fundraising activities.⁹⁵

By the co-ordination of fundraising efforts to aid the Hungarian refugees of 1956 – empowered by international law, in other words by the decisions of the UN General Assembly –, the professional and accurate documentation of humanitarian needs and activities, and the professionally organized and implemented media campaign to support calls for donations, the UN Family of Organizations significantly contributed to the forming and successful realization of Western governmental will.

Translated by: Eva Misits

95 AFMFA: Series: United Nations and International Organizations, cote: 372QO, Carton 300, Dossier 4. Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Program, First Special Session, Program Evaluation, 1959–1964, A/AC.96/25/Rev.1, General. (6 July 1959).

Spy Game in London: A Battle between László Kiss aka Agent “Műszerész” and Hungarian Intelligence

ISTVÁN PÁL – GYULA HEGEDÜS

Introduction

Following the suppression of the Hungarian Revolution of 1956, Hungary was placed under almost complete diplomatic isolation, as the NATO Member States and their distant allies introduced a series of retaliatory and punitive measures against Hungarian diplomacy. After the French Embassy in Budapest was placed under strict official control from February 25 to March 2, 1957, the Prefecture of Police in Paris also opted for similar measures:¹ the Central Directorate of Public Security² ordered uniformed police officers to guard and observe the Hungarian Legations in Paris, and the Central Directorate of General Intelligence (the French political police) started harassing clients and visitors.³ Later, in June 1957, the United States expelled Captain Pál Rácz (1928–1986), who had worked for the Hungarian intelligence station or residency in New York and was later appointed as the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs in Hungary.⁴

The British government did not immediately follow the American example of taking measures against Hungary, but had other means of demonstrating that the slow mending of bilateral relations that started in 1953 had come to another halt.⁵

- 1 Kecskés, G. (2007). *Franciaország és a magyar forradalom, 1956*. História – MTA Történettudományi Intézete, pp. 222–224.
- 2 Arrighi, J-P. & Asso, B. (1979). *La Police Nationale. Missions et Structures*. Editions de la Revue, pp. 179–181.
- 3 Berliere, J-M. & Lévy, R. (2011). *Histoire des Polices en France, de l’Ancien Regime á nos Jours*. Le Grand Livre Du Mois, pp. 275–276. <https://doi.org/10.14375/NP.9782847365733>
- 4 Tabajdi, G. & Ungváry, K. (2008). *Elhallgatott múlt. A pártállam és a belügy. A politikai rendőrség működése Magyarországon 1956–1989*. 1956-os Intézet – Corvina Kiadó, p. 110.
- 5 Arday, L. (2005). *Az Egyesült Királyság és Magyarország. Nagy-Britannia és a magyar-angol kapcsolatok a 20. században*. Mundus Magyar Egyetemi Kiadó, pp. 154–156.

In March 1957, the Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs ordered the return of Hungarian Ambassador to London János Katona;⁶ however, the Foreign Office (FO) utterly refused to approve the *agrément* of his proposed successor, former Minister of Transport Lajos Bebrits. According to British diplomacy, Bebrits was objectionable because the FBI had expelled him from the United States in 1932, due to illegal entry.⁷ British diplomacy was aware that, from the perspective of the US government, Bebrits had been involved in politically undesirable activities as a member of the Communist Party of the USA, and therefore rejected his candidacy in consideration of Washington policy.⁸ In the end, on October 8, 1957, the FO approved the appointment of Pál Földes, the former director of the Textile Industry Research Institute in Budapest, which, according to the representatives of the FO, equaled the *de jure* recognition of János Kádár's government.⁹

Shortly after the Hungarian Revolution of 1956, approximately 20,000 Hungarian refugees had arrived in Great Britain, the majority of whom settled in England.¹⁰ According to Home Office statistics, between November 1956 and May 1959, a total of 16,648 Hungarian citizens entered Great Britain, of whom 6,104 people traveled on to a third country (the majority to Canada) and 1,767 returned to Hungary, with 13,837 remaining on British soil.¹¹ (It is important to note that, in contemporary Hungarian language use, England and Great Britain were technically interchangeable; for stylistic reasons, the authors of this study decided to use the adjective 'British' to encompass the entirety of the United Kingdom.)

From the very moment of its reorganization at the beginning of 1957, Department II/3 of the Hungarian Ministry of the Interior (the Hungarian intelligence) dedicated considerable effort to the repatriation of "dissidents" as well as mapping and infiltrating the new Hungarian émigré community in Great Britain;¹² therefore, its London

6 The National Archives (hereafter: TNA), Foreign Office (hereafter: FO), 128743/HN1903/9/NH1903/9. Departure of the Hungarian Minister, April 11, 1957, pp. 52–60.

7 TNA FO, 128743/HN1903/3. Request for *agrément* for Mr. Lajos Bebrits Encloses Biography. – From Foreign Office to Budapest. Addressed to Budapest, Telegram No. 377 of March 5. – London, March 5, 1957, pp. 1–3.

8 TNA FO, 128743/NH1903/7. *Agrément* for Lajos Bebrits as Hungarian Minister in London. – London, March 13, 1957.

9 TNA FO, 128743/NH1903/15. *Agrément* for a new Hungarian Minister. – London, October 8, 1957.

10 Ungváry, K. (2013). "Anglia a második legnagyobb ellensége Magyarországnak." A londoni magyar hírszerző rezidentúra működése a saját jelentései tükrében 1951 és 1965 között. *Századok*, 147(6), pp. 1532–1534.

11 TNA, Home Office (hereafter: HO), 352/142. Statistical Return for Information of Home Office. May 31, 1959.

12 Tóth, E. (2013). A politikai és gazdasági hírszerzés szervezettörténete. In Cseh, G. B. & Okváth, I. (Eds.), *A megtorlás szervezete. A politikai rendőrség újjászervezése és működése, 1957–1962*. ÁBTLL – L'Harmattan Kiadó, pp. 401–412.

residency sought to recruit as many collaborators as possible from the ranks of the Hungarian refugee waves of 1956. However, it is important to note that while there were always volunteers who willingly cooperated, such as the subject of this study, we would argue that the wavering loyalty of network persons posed serious challenges to Hungarian intelligence, as MI5 (Military Intelligence Section 5 or the Security Service)¹³ more precisely its “D” (counterespionage) Branch¹⁴ was quick to expose these makeshift agents in order to mislead and double-cross the London residency.

The Candidate

On March 30, 1957, a telephone technician named László Kiss (born in Turda, Romania on July 2, 1925)¹⁵ contacted the Hungarian consulate in London to request a grace period of up to two years before his permanent return to Hungary in order to further his own professional development in the field of telephone exchange maintenance.¹⁶ Many refugees cherished similar illusions of self-improvement abroad before their repatriation, but, considering the general situation in contemporary Hungary, such attempts were most likely a phase in the process of letting go of one’s old life and adjusting to new circumstances.¹⁷ However, when Kiss first applied at the Hungarian consulate, one of the covert members, Intelligence Officer (hereafter: IO) “Havasi” (Major Imre Turopoli)¹⁸ proposed to his unit that, from the perspective of the Hungarian People’s Republic, the candidate possessed knowledge that would be useful even in the transitional period of consolidation. Two months later, on May 25, 1957, Kiss returned to the Hungarian consulate and claimed that his previous conversation with the employees made him realize that it was his patriotic duty to further the development of Hungarian telecommunications. The only personal information he divulged was that he used to live with his wife and two children in Kazincbarcika (Újváros, F épület 3, II/12), and that, in 1954, he became a foreman at the Borsod Chemical Combine and was involved in the installation of telephone exchanges for

13 Andrew, C. (2009). *The Defence of the Realm. The Authorized History of MI5*. Allen Lane, pp. 241–262.

14 West, N. (1982). *A Matter of Trust. MI5 1945–72*. Weidenfield and Nicolson, p. 17.

15 TNA HO, 334/1215/101382. Certificate of Naturalization for László Kiss – Certificate No. BNA101382 – Home Office No. K 155737 – November 5, 1968, pp. 1–2.

16 Historical Archives of the Hungarian State Security (Állambiztonsági Szolgálatok Történeti Levéltára, hereafter: ÁBTL), 3.2.1. Bt-702, Z-110/1958. “Műszerész” – Tárgy: Kiss László ügye – Jelentés. London, May 27, 1957, p. 15.

17 Czigány, M. (2007). *Kényszerű tanulmányúton. 1956-os magyar egyetemi hallgatók Nagy-Britanniában*. József Műhely Kiadó, pp. 138–143.

18 Ungváry (2013), p. 1523.

the State Protection Authority (the Hungarian political police). In England, Kiss lived at 3 Andrew House, Rockhampton Lane, London SW15, and originally worked for Standard Telephones and Cables, from whence he was transferred to one of the company's subsidiaries in charge of modernizing telephone exchanges in London.



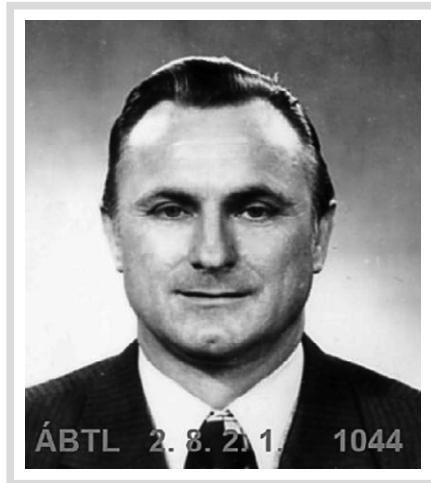
László Kiss, aka “Műszerész”

Kiss, who was referred to in intelligence reports under the code name “Műszerész” (‘Technician’ in Hungarian) claimed that he knew the floor plans of his work place almost by heart and his superiors often asked him for advice, but quickly added that his level of English competence was insufficient to read foreign literature or consult with British experts; he also promised that he would procure anything requested by the Beloiannisz Telecommunications Factory in Hungary.

After listening to Kiss’s proposal, IO “Szepesi” (Police Lieutenant Tibor Bazsó),¹⁹ the science attaché of the Hungarian legation, considered recruiting him in earnest: as an intelligence agent; he believed that Kiss’s diligence would sooner or later earn him a position in management, which might grant him access to valuable documents and materials, and he could also be used against Hungarian émigrés. Bazsó proposed that the Ministry of the Interior (the Centre in its internal parlance) should perform

19 ÁBTL, 3.2.1. Bt-702, Z-110/1958. “Műszerész” – Kérdőív. London, October 11, 1957, pp. 11–14.

a background check on the candidate's family and investigate his conduct during the so-called counter-revolutionary events of 1956, and requested that it inquire into the data and information necessary to develop and improve Hungarian telephone and cable production. The most important question, however, was whether Department II/3 approved of their plan to recruit Kiss as an agent.



Tibor Bazsó, the Hungarian case officer

At the Hungarian consular office in London, station chief “Bakos” (Major Péter Szolnok)²⁰ approved of Police Lieutenant Bazsó’s proposal to recruit Kiss,²¹ and on June 15, 1957, without the prior approval of Hungarian intelligence, IO “Szepesi” set out to meet the candidate. At 12:00 p.m., Bazsó and Kiss met at Charing Cross underground station, from whence they went to the bank of the Thames and visited a garden café by Victoria Park. Kiss told IO “Szepesi” that he had since been transferred to the installation of another telephone exchange and developed a good working relationship with his immediate superior and some of his colleagues but, due to his low level of English competence, he did not manage to make new acquaintances, and he had yet to meet the Hungarian engineer who recently arrived at Standard Telephones and Cables. “Műszerész” proposed that, after finishing his current business, he would return to the company to develop military telephone exchanges, radio transceivers, and railway signal stations.

20 Pál, I. (2021). Jótétemény vagy inkább teherfétel. Két brit szakszervezeti vezető felhasználásnak kísérlete az ellenzéki Munkáspárt meggyőzésére az 1956-os forradalom utáni években. *Polymatheia*, 18(1–2), p. 67. <https://doi.org/10.51455/Polymatheia.2022.1-2.04>

21 ÁBTL, 3.2.1. Bt-702, Z-110/1958. “Műszerész” – Tárgy: Kiss László ügye – Jelentés. London, May 27, 1957, pp. 15–17.

Police Lieutenant Bazsó informed Kiss that the Hungarian consular office (aka the intelligence residency) in London was open to the idea of supporting him and his family, but they first wanted to ascertain how he might be useful to Hungarian intelligence. For their next meeting, “Műszerész” was to write a report on his current job, complete with blueprints and calculations, a reasonable request given that Kiss had constant access to the circuit documentation of certain telephone exchanges, but the candidate claimed in full confidence that his sketches alone would be useful for the development of Hungarian telecommunications.

Beyond technical tasks, the intelligence residency also wanted to use “Műszerész” against the Hungarian émigrés because László Csűrös, a prominent member of the émigré circles in England, had assisted Kiss in finding employment, and also invited him to a club where he met a group of approximately thirty Hungarian émigrés. Bazsó charged Kiss with the task of visiting the club as often as possible without rousing suspicion, improving his relationship with Csűrös, gathering as much information on other members of the club as possible, and observing his new Hungarian colleague at Standard Telephones and Cables.

At the time of his meetings with the employees of the Hungarian consular office in London, Kiss struggled with a host of personal problems that made the matter of his recruitment more pressing. Shortly before his meeting with Police Lieutenant Bazsó, he received a letter from his wife that his mother had unexpectedly passed away at the age of eighty. At his meeting with IO “Szepesi”, Kiss related his woes and requested financial support for the expenses incurred by his new activities and tasks, especially because his dental treatment was becoming increasingly expensive. At the time, Bazsó gave him £2 and requested a receipt by June 29, 1957. In his report, Bazsó noted that Kiss did not seem to align himself with the majority of the Hungarian immigrants and soon started calling Bazsó “comrade”, but his political views remained unclear; nevertheless, Bazsó believed that the candidate was worth recruiting and financially assisting his family in Hungary would help to advance that cause.²²

On June 29, 1957, Major Turopoli met Kiss at Kew Gardens and, as he approved of the candidate’s political views and his opinion of the events of 1956, he decided to test “Műszerész” by sending him to an important telecommunications facility (such as a radar factory) or, if the former was not an option, to a recently formed émigré organization called the Hungarian Freedom Fighter Association (*Magyar Szabadságharcos Szövetség*, hereafter Freedom Association).²³

22 ÁBTL, 3.2.3. Mt-545/1, Z-110/1. “Műszerész” – Találkozó “Műszerész”-szel. Jelentés. London, June 17, 1957, pp. 21–23.

23 ÁBTL, 3.2.3. Mt-545/1, Z-110/1. “Műszerész” – Tárgy: Kiss ügye. – Jelentés. London, July 22, 1957, pp. 27–29.

At his meeting with Turopoli, “Műszerész” provided his first report on a new type of telephone exchange called the step-by-step switch telephone exchange system. The operating principle behind it was that the caller was able to operate the system directly using the dial on their telephone. By dialing the first digit, the shaft in the switch was raised to the designated level of electric brushes, where its lever selected an open horizontal path with exceptional speed. The machine described by “Műszerész” had four brushes and 400 connecting points, with twenty rows of vertical connecting points and another twenty rows of horizontal ones. Each machine contained a total of eight electric brushes moving separately, and three wires (called “branches”) were sufficient to operate all eight: Branches A and B were line finders, while Branch C returned a dial tone, and could also be used by adding a fourth wire to check the lines. The first selector switch was linked to a second one, which allowed for the connection of additional digit groups. The second selector was technically identical to the first, but it only contained three to six electric brushes and fewer connecting points. When it received an electric pulse from the dialing of the second digit, it connected to the third selector, and so on. The caller circuit consisted of the local assembly and the first line finder circuit, where the former was composed of two relays. The circuit connected to the switches, where Branches A and B were connected to the dial tone and line finder top, while Branch C was connected to the line finder. In this system, every register circuit was connected through its own switch system, which resembled the switches described above. A register circuit consisted of a line finder and six selector switches, which were installed as a single unit and could be removed from the framework as needed. Depending on capacity, outgoing calls were connected to a third line finder or the main cable.²⁴

Based on the background check conducted by the Police Department of Borsod–Abaúj–Zemplén County, in 1956, Kiss was dismissed from the Borsod Chemical Combine for theft and misconduct and, according to control officer József Lengyel, “Műszerész” was unreliable as an employee: he requested pre-payment for maintenance but constantly postponed his deadlines, and in June 1956, he stole an amplifier from the Combine. He returned the stolen item during an impromptu inventory conducted at his workshop; however, a few days after making the catalogue, one of his subordinates used a valid certificate issued by Kiss himself to remove the item and transport it to the local train station, where Kiss received it and later sold it in Miskolc (the county seat) for 1,000 forints. Following the disciplinary procedure initiated at the company, Lengyel turned to the local police department but, during the Hungarian Revolution of 1956, the investigation materials were destroyed and, as Kiss had fled the country, the case was terminated. According to Zsigmond Pál, the

24 ÁBTL, 3.2.3. Mt-545/1, Z-110/1. “Műszerész” – Műszaki leírás. – London, July 22, 1957, pp. 230–250.

former head of personnel at the Borsod Chemical Combine, Kiss was professionally talented but lacked diligence and drive, and did not even complete executive training. One of Kiss's former neighbors, István Tamás, told Police Lieutenant János Tari that Kiss had been a member of the Tiszapalkonya militia and fled abroad for fear that he might face disciplinary action and, according to the neighbor's wife, Kiss's own wife was only able to learn of her husband's staying in London from her Canadian relatives. "Műszerész" later wrote to his spouse that he had every intention of repatriating, and also added that he was now working for the Hungarian legation in London.

On account of Kiss's unreliability as an employee, his disloyal behavior towards his family and his potentially "hostile" nature, the local Department of Political Investigation urged the termination of the case before British intelligence or counterintelligence might recruit and use him against the Hungarian People's Republic;²⁵ nevertheless, "Péter Palotás" (chief intelligence officer István Móró)²⁶ allowed the recruitment to proceed, with the caveat that the candidate's political views must be investigated thoroughly. At the same time, Kiss had to be pressured into silence about his connection with the Hungarian legation in London. The Centre first and foremost needed data on crossbar switching systems, where telephone lines were connected using automated equipment. Requests included configuration and inspection orders, and the sequence of connectors, as well as technical defects and how to prevent them. They were also interested in production blueprints for multi-contact relays and the circuit plans of sub-systems, and suggested that any candidate who worked at the right factory might also have access to the technical specifications and production technology of miniature and sub-miniature transistor transceivers. However, the London residency did not set explicit expectations; they only informed Kiss of what might interest and benefit the Hungarian telecommunications industry.²⁷

On July 29, 1957 at 6:30 p.m., Police Lieutenant Bazsó met Kiss in Marylebone Street outside the News Cinema, but they went to Regent's Park to discuss more confidential matters; there Kiss informed Bazsó of his current progress and results, and complained that his family had yet to receive support from the Hungarian government. Bazsó warned the candidate that he had yet to produce actual documentation or materials, and even received a few more pounds than necessary to cover his expenses. "Műszerész" backed down but also mentioned that he was currently working on

25 ÁBTL, 3.2.1. Bt-702, Z-110/1958. "Műszerész" – Tárgy: "Műszerész" ügye – Környezettanulmány. Budapest, July 8, 1957, pp. 54–56.

26 Fekete, É. (2013). Móró István. In Gyarmati, Gy. & Palasik, M. (Eds.), *Trójai faló a Belügyminisztériumban. Az ÁVH szervezete és vezérkara, 1953–1956*. ÁBTL – L'Harmattan Kiadó, pp. 351–352.

27 ÁBTL, 3.2.1. Bt-702, Z-110/1958. "Műszerész" – 6A/3. sz. Utasítás. Bakos elvtársnak, London. – Tárgy: Kiss László ügye. Budapest, July 16, 1957, pp. 89–91.

a crossbar switching system, and the assembly and connection blueprints were kept in the central premises, where he also found several copies of technical specifications and circuit blueprints. Other specifications were also necessary in order to reproduce the crossbar switching system completely, but Kiss claimed that these would be easy to obtain because the documentation was constantly available and the users were not registered. Despite these claims, Bazsó felt that the temporary or permanent removal of any of these materials could easily lead to exposure if anyone happened to be looking for the missing documents, and copying them was a lengthy process that sometimes could produce inaccurate results. Accordingly, Bazsó instructed Kiss not to bring any materials to their next meeting.

In order to improve his connections, Kiss regularly visited the engineering club of Standard Telephones and Cables to attend lectures held by experts and executives, but he managed to become acquainted with only one engineer; meanwhile, on László Csűrös's recommendation, he managed to apply to the Mindszenty Home Association (*Mindszenty Otthon*), which was directed by József Kalmári and Gyula Bornemissza. This institution was a cover for the Hungarian Freedom Group (*Magyar Szabadság Csoport*), where Kiss also applied for membership because he had already met several members, including Ferenc Takács, Sándor Puzsák, Sándor Vásárhelyi, Imre Bánki, István Borbás, Pál Dorogi, Károly Homonai, Adolf Mentz, Imre Torkos, Imre Szekos, Béla Zsendicki, and István Tiba. Bazsó required Kiss to find out if the aforementioned members of the Mindszenty Home Association were also members of the Freedom Association,²⁸ as Hungarian intelligence doubted that the two associations overlapped. The former, established in 1952 as a spiritual center for Hungarian Catholics in England, was founded by the Hungarian immigrants of 1945 and 1947,²⁹ while the latter was established in January 1957 by former active participants in the Hungarian Revolution of 1956.³⁰

On August 9, 1957, Bazsó and “Műszerész” met again on Baker Street but, as the latter had spent the three-day national holiday at the seaside to recuperate after working overtime, he informed Bazsó that he had not yet managed to visit the Mindszenty Home Association. Kiss proposed that he could obtain samples of certain machine parts, but also added that he might need drawing equipment and a typewriter to copy blueprints and specifications, to which Bazsó replied that Kiss was only allowed to figure out a way to obtain the documents.

28 ÁBTL, 3.2.3. Mt-545/1, Z-110/1. “Műszerész” – Tárgy: Találkozó “Műszerész”-szel. Jelentés. London, August 1, 1957, pp. 32–37.

29 Arday (2005), p. 410.

30 Borbándi, Gy. (1989). *A magyar emigráció életrajza, 1945–1985*. Európa Könyvkiadó, Vol. 1, pp. 421–448.

At the request of the London residency, Kiss observed his benefactor László Csűrös and reported the results to his liaison officer,³¹ who initially mistook him for Zoltán Csűrös, a private tutor at a polytechnic institute.³² László Csűrös (born on March 26, 1914) was a certified engineer³³ who had fled from Hungary at the end of World War II, and became a British citizen in 1953. He was a bachelor who lived in London with his mother³⁴ and, in 1957 was appointed as chief engineer at the British Electricity Authority. He was also the chief steward of the Hungarian Calvinist Church of England, and acted as an interpreter and organizer for the Hungarian émigré community. Though one of the lesser-known leading figures of the Hungarian émigrés, he was connected to the entire Hungarian diaspora in the United Kingdom and to every political association established by Hungarian immigrants. At the time, he was involved in reorganizing the British Refugee Freedom Fighter Association (*Angliai Menekült Szabadságharcos Szövetség*), because the original organization had been dissolved due to leadership disputes. This international exile organization was headed by Béla Király (1912–2009), a former General Staff colonel who had joined the Soviets at the beginning of 1945, received a life sentence in 1951, and became the commander of the National Guard in 1956.³⁵ The British branch of the organization was headed by István Losonci, a former captain of the Hungarian People's Army.

The British Refugee Freedom Fighter Association received its instructions from the US or Munich, and mainly recruited its members from the refugee camp in Hedenford,³⁶ which originally served as a barracks for the Royal Air Force and was transformed in 1956 into the largest refugee camp in the country to accommodate the incoming Hungarian refugees. As late as April 1957, there were approximately 2,500 refugees living in the camp,³⁷ who were of great interest to British emigrant organizations, British national security and, to a lesser extent, to the Hungarian intelligence station in London. We do not have access to British secret service materials, but found

31 ÁBTL, 3.2.3. Mt-545/1, Z-110/1. "Műszerész" – Tárgy: Találkozó "Műszerész"-szel. Jelentés. London, August 10, 1957, p. 37.

32 Archives of the Budapest University of Technology and Economics (*Budapesti Műszaki Egyetem Levéltára*, hereafter: BMEL), 119-3/c. kir. József Műegyetem Rektori Hivatala – Segédtanerők, tisztviselők, orvosok, sportolók összesített személyi név és tárgymutatója az 1917–1940 közti évekből. Budapest, July 28, 1938, p. 71.

33 BMEL, I. Gépészmérnöki oklevelek főkönyve 1-től 960-ig. – 265. szám. Budapest, June 16, 1937.

34 TNA HO, 334/372/28640. Certificate of Naturalization for László Csűrös known as Leslie Csuros – BNA 28640 – HO C 29421. October 22, 1953, pp. 1–2.

35 Ungváry (2013), p. 1538.

36 ÁBTL, 3.2.3. Mt-545/1, Z-110/1. "Műszerész" – Tárgy: Találkozó "Műszerész"-szel. Jelentés. London, August 10, 1957, pp. 37–38.

37 De Aranjó, A. G. A. (2013). *Assets and Liabilities: Refugees from Hungary and Egypt in France and in Britain, 1956–1960*. PhD Dissertation. University of Nottingham, pp. 159–161. Source: http://eprints.nottingham.ac.uk/13503/1/De_Aranjo_Thesis.pdf (accessed on September 18, 2022).

a document at the archives of the Foreign Office in which an FO official requested information from a competent department of the Home Office to confirm certain press rumors, according to which the general unrest among the refugees was due to the activities of former Hungarian state security officers hiding among their ranks. Unfortunately, we could not find the reply sent by the Home Office at the archives and therefore cannot confirm whether or not they considered the potential presence of former Hungarian state security officers at the refugee camp a serious problem.³⁸ Among the documents of the FO, we also found the transcript of a telephone call between a refugee who had repatriated and his girlfriend, still staying at the refugee camp in Crookham. The man asked his girlfriend to return to Hungary because she would come to no harm, and to encourage everyone else to return as well. He also told her that he was able to get his apartment back and received three months of his salary in one payment, and recommended that she bring back as much chewing gum as possible, because it was “like gold” in Hungary.³⁹

At the meeting on August 9, 1957, “Műszerész” told Bazsó that while visiting László Csűrös one time, he met three unknown Hungarian émigrés and an Englishman who only spoke very little Hungarian, and when one of them suggested that the Hungarian émigrés should follow the Polish example and organize their own counterintelligence service, Csűrös exclaimed, “[Kiss], you could play an important role in this organization as a radio expert.” At the time, Kiss did not consider the idea in earnest but, at his meeting with Bazsó, he suggested that he would certainly prove useful to Hungarian intelligence if he did join such an organization. He also complained that, without more money, he would not be able to get closer to the leaders of the Hungarian émigrés, because they tended to frequent more expensive venues. Bazsó warned Kiss that spending too much money might draw unwanted attention to him, but instructed his candidate to accept Csűrös’s offer, and in the event that Kiss needed to make an urgent call (if he learned that the Hungarian legation would be targeted, for instance), he should phone from a street booth and introduce himself under the code name “Kormos” to ask for assistance with his repatriation. (This extraordinary meeting took place on the day of the phone call at 7:00 p.m., on Marylebone Street outside the News Cinema.) Bazsó then warned Kiss not to speak of their working relationship to anyone, not even his wife. After the meeting, Bazsó reported that he had managed to convince the candidate of the possibility of producing results at no great expense, but his most important observation reads as follows: “*It appears that Csűrös does play a larger role among the émigrés than we hitherto believed.*”⁴⁰

38 TNA FO, 371/127711. K. G. Ritchie to W. B. Lyon – GP/22/148 – February 14, 1957, p. 81.

39 TNA HO, 352/145. Schenck, Elizabeth: Report on the Work and Some Experiences as an Interpreter in Haig Lines Crookham Camp near Aldershot. January 10, 1957, pp. 25–28.

40 ÁBTL, 3.2.3. Mt-545/1, Z-110/1. “Műszerész” – Tárgy: Találkozó “Műszerész”-szel. Jelentés. London, August 10, 1957, pp. 37–39/252.

According to Lieutenant Colonel Móró, “Műszerész” was serious about his promises, and therefore he believed it was time to formally recruit the candidate; however, recruitment could only proceed if Kiss was willing to stay in England for another two or three years, and either had excellent opportunities on the Hungarian émigré line or would be transferred to a war factory that produced miniature transistor radios or radar equipment.⁴¹ A few days later near Putney Bridge, Kiss told his liaison officer that, on August 25, there would be a grand celebration at the Mindszenty Home Association and he would be able to attend it as a member; at that time, the association helped establish a “Land Committee,” to be in charge of the redistribution of arable land in Hungary in the event of a political system change. The association also planned a youth lecture series for the fall and asked Kiss to hold a lecture on the basics of electrical engineering, which prompted Kiss to request that the Hungarian Legation obtain a copy of *Elektrotechnika* [‘Electric Engineering’] by Bertalan Víg.⁴²

At their meeting, “Műszerész” also told Bazsó what he had learned about certain Hungarian émigrés. He managed to make the acquaintance of Ferenc Bányai, a former legation chauffeur whose tenant was a member of the Freedom Association and therefore frequently visited Hednesford. Elsewhere, there were rumors that, in October 1956, Lajos Kepe, a Hungarian immigrant from an earlier refugee wave, had managed to transport a radio receiver worth £50 to Hungary, and then became an interpreter at one of the larger refugee camps. Through Csűrös, Kiss also met an employee of the Hungarian Department of the BBC called Láng, who asked for his help with a series of television programs depicting the events of 1956.⁴³ Bazsó advised Kiss to assist with the television series and make a statement, but warned him not to say too much and resist making outwardly hostile remarks about the Hungarian People’s Republic. It is important to note that this was likely the point where British intelligence started the double cross maneuver by identifying the person suspected of espionage or hostile agent.⁴⁴

For his mission, “Műszerész” received £10 pounds to procure copy materials, as he planned to obtain the technical specifications of a dozen subassemblies individually and lend them to the Hungarian Legation to be photographed. His liaison officer believed that they would need six to eight meetings to exchange materials⁴⁵ but, on September 6, 1957, Kiss arrived empty-handed because, at the end of August, Csűrös

41 ÁBTL, 3.2.1. Bt-702, Z-110/1958. “Műszerész” – 7/012. sz. utasítás. Bakos Elvtársnak! London. – Tárgy: “Műszerész” ügye. Budapest, August 15, 1957, p. 18.

42 Víg, B. & Gárdonyi, J. (1956). *Erősáramú elektrotechnika*. Műszaki Könyvkiadó.

43 ÁBTL, 3.2.3. Mt-545/1, Z-110/1. “Műszerész” – Tárgy: Találkozó “Műszerész”-szel. Jelentés. London, August 25, 1957, pp. 40–41.

44 Andrew (2009), pp. 283–284.

45 ÁBTL, 3.2.3. Mt-545/1, Z-110/1. “Műszerész” – Tárgy: Találkozó “Műszerész”-szel. Jelentés. London, August 25, 1957, p. 41.

warned him that Scotland Yard had made inquiries about him and even visited his apartment. After some attempts at secrecy, Kiss's landlady acknowledged that the police had indeed inquired after Kiss's habits, his friends and his professional background in Hungary, and they also instructed her not to speak of this to Kiss himself. Csűrös attempted to reassure Kiss by telling him that this had happened to other Hungarian emigrants as well, and attributed the inquiries to a potential future promotion. Meanwhile, Bazsó believed that the candidate was intimidated by his assigned tasks, and he was not convinced that Kiss was truly being investigated by Scotland Yard. He also withheld further financial support because Kiss's receipt for drawing equipment exceeded his budget by £6.

The only news "Műszerész" could share with his liaison officer was that, according to the members of the Mindszenty Home Association, the British had made a foolish mistake by acknowledging the communist representatives of the four-strong Hungarian delegation sent to the Inter-Parliamentary Union. Bazsó explicitly requested that Kiss contact him immediately in the event that the Hungarian émigrés planned to organize a protest in front of the Hungarian Legation, but was disturbed by the fact that the agent had not been interrogated by British counterintelligence.⁴⁶ This might be explained by the fact that, on August 18, 1957, Legation Secretary István Ádám requested asylum from Her Majesty's Government,⁴⁷ which meant that British intelligence managed to obtain a much more valuable asset in his person.

Department II/3 agreed that until "Műszerész" submitted his first batch of valuable materials, he should only receive £2 to £3 as financial support, and approved a reward of £10 to £15 for obtaining the full documentation requested. However, Lieutenant Colonel Móró disapproved of Kiss hand-copying these technical documents, because he doubted the candidate's skills and feared that even a few slight errors might make it extremely difficult to interpret the blueprints correctly, since these assemblies were virtually unknown to the experts in Hungary. Instead, he proposed that Kiss should obtain one of the copies already available at the factory; he also noted that the first edition of *Electrical Engineering* by Bertalan Víg was no longer available in Hungary, but he offered to get Kiss a copy of *Villamos szerelés és mérés* ['Electrical Assembly and Measurement'] by Elek Magyar,⁴⁸ *Távbeszélő és távjelző berendezések* ['Telephone and Signal Equipment'] by István Taraha⁴⁹ and *Távbeszélőkészülékek és gépelemek* ['Telephones and Mechanical Elements']

46 ÁBTL, 3.2.3. Mt-545/1, Z-110/1. "Műszerész" – Tárgy: Találkozó "Műszerész"-szel. Jelentés. London, September 6, 1957, pp. 51–52.

47 Ungváry (2013), p. 1534.

48 Magyar, E. (1954). *Villamos szerelés és mérés*. Nehézipari Könyv és Folyóirat Kiadó Vállalat.

49 Taraba, I. (1952). *Távbeszélő és távjelző berendezések*. Népszava Szakszervezetek Országos Tanácsa Lap és Könyvkiadóvállalata.

by László Koczka.⁵⁰ Kiss was also told to accept his new position without further conditions.⁵¹

Meanwhile in Budapest, Hungarian party leadership decided that Sándor Rónai, János Péter, Erik Molnár, and Jenő Jakus should travel to London to represent Hungary at the 46th Congress of the Inter-Parliamentary Union,⁵² where the British leadership was preparing to discuss a serious incident that had occurred at the British Legation in Budapest. On the morning of September 18, 1957, Lord Birdwood asked for a private conversation with Rónai, who accepted the invitation, but raised objections regarding the designated interpreters; in the end, the British aristocrat was obliged to give up his own interpreter so he could talk to the leader of the Hungarian delegation. Lord Birdwood requested that Rónai use his influence in Hungary, where three Hungarian employees of the British Legation in Budapest had been detained; he hoped to have these employees released or at least to provide them with legal counsel, which in his opinion would have also helped improve Hungarian–British relations. Rónai however refused the request, claiming he did not know the details of the case, and that in his opinion, the employees in question were being rightfully detained. Lord Birdwood expressed the indignation of British public opinion over the retaliatory measures of Kádár’s government; at the same time, with the prior approval of H. B. Shepherd, the head of the Northern Department of the Foreign Office, he was preparing to publish an anonymous memorandum in the British press.⁵³ Shepherd believed that the Hungarian government could not be expected to allow the British Legation in Budapest to provide legal counsel to the detainees; however, in the absence of an official reply, the Lord would still have to make a statement on his meeting with Rónai.⁵⁴

Originally, the British Government planned to confront the Hungarian delegation over the complete lack of real representation in the Hungarian Parliament but, in the end, they opted for firmly protesting against political oppression in Hungary and the detention of the Hungarian employees of the British Legation in Budapest, as counsellor J. F. Wearing believed that taking a firm stance in the matter might

50 Koczka, L. (1953). *Távbeszélőkészülékek és gépelemek*. Közlekedési Kiadó.

51 ÁBTL, 3.2.3. Mt-545/1, Z-110/1. “Műszerész” – 8/7. sz. utasítás. Bakos Elvtársnak! London. – Tárgy: “Műszerész” ügye. Budapest, September 9, 1957, pp. 42–43.

52 National Archives of Hungary (*Magyar Nemzeti Levéltár Országos Levéltára*, hereafter: MNL OL), XVIII-11. IPU Iratok, 1923–1975 – Magyar csoport és a nemzetközi csoportok iratai, 11. d. Budapest, September 9, 1957.

53 TNA FO, 371/128867, NH 10110/671. Lord Birdwood reports his conversation with Mr. Sandor RONAI. – XLVth Inter-Parliamentary Conference. London: 12th to 19th September. September 18, 1957, pp. 44–49.

54 TNA FO, 371/128867, NH 10110/671. Lord Birdwood reports his conversation with Mr. Sandor RONAI. September 19, 1957, p. 42.

help advance the cause of the detained Hungarian employees.⁵⁵ To briefly summarize the case, on June 20, 1957, Hungarian State Security arrested László Regéczy-Nagy, British Minister Sir Leslie Fry's the chauffeur, and, on August 27, they also arrested translator István Zalutnay. The latter was released a year later, but Nagy-Regéczy was sentenced to fifteen years in prison by the People's Court on September 4, 1958. According to the allegations, the chauffeur acted as the middleman between First Secretary C. L. B. Cope of the British Legation in Budapest and former state minister and philosopher István Bibó,⁵⁶ and assisted them in smuggling Imre Nagy's final writings abroad.⁵⁷

When Kiss did not attend his meeting with Bazsó on September 20, 1957, his liaison officer supposed that the idea of his future tasks might have overwhelmed Kiss and he thought it best to terminate contact with the Hungarian Legation;⁵⁸ however, a week later, Kiss not only arrived on time, but also brought three technical specifications, one connection blueprint, and five more blueprints of less value. These documents were exchanged in a briefcase, and Bazsó returned the documents the next morning. On September 29, the liaison officer offered to drive the candidate on account of the rain, and the meeting took place in a deserted alley in Wimbledon. Here Kiss explained that he could not come to his last meeting on account of Láng, whom he described as a short, stout man in his fifties who had allegedly served as a member of the Hungarian General Staff and now posed as a British expert on the Hungarian issue. Back in August, Láng had inquired about Kiss's activities and his family in Hungary, and when they met at the Calvinist Club at the beginning of September, he asked Kiss to come to a restaurant on Edgware Road on September 20 at 6:00 p.m. Here Láng urged Kiss to join the Freedom Association by mentioning that several suspicious characters had infiltrated the association and, while they were talking, they were joined by the Englishman who Láng introduced as the head of the Hungarian department of a British government body. Láng served as the interpreter of the Englishman, who emphasized that "Műszerész" should join the Freedom Association and keep them updated on any developments. The Englishman was particularly worried about a teacher named Bódis and another person named Illés, who frequently reported to the Hungarian Legation.

55 TNA FO, 371/128867, NH 10110/671. Lord Birdwood reports his conversation with Mr. Sandor RONAI. September 26, 1957, p. 54.

56 Lítván, Gy. & S. Varga, K. (Eds.) (1995). *Bibó István (1911–1979). Életút dokumentumokban*. 1956-os Intézet – Osiris Kiadó – Századvég Kiadó.

57 TNA FO, 1087/22. Victimization of local staff at HM Legation. – Budapest, February 15, 1958 to December 19, 1958.

58 ÁBTL, 3.2.3. Mt-545/1, Z-110/1. "Műszerész" – Tárgy: "Műszerész" ügye. – Jelentés. London, September 25, 1957, p. 44.

At their meeting, Kiss informed Bazsó that Láng had given him the home address of one Endre Éliás (67 Gloucester Place, London W1), who was in charge of approving membership applications to the Freedom Association, but Kiss was warned not to mention that Láng had sent him, as Éliás was a professed leftist and they wished to remove him from the association due to his former activities at the so-called Military Political Department of the Hungarian Ministry of Home Defense.⁵⁹ In reality, Éliás had never been a member of the Military Intelligence and Security Service, which existed from 1945 to 1949, and it is more probable that he had been singled out by the Hungarian émigrés and the British authorities because of his Jewish ancestry and his “career” before 1956. In 1944, Éliás and his mother Ida Frankel were deported to Auschwitz, where the mother lost her life while her son was interned in Buchenwald, Magdeburg, and Halberstadt.⁶⁰ During the war, Éliás studied in Budapest: he graduated from the commercial school in Vas utca and finished four semesters at the Faculty of Law of Eötvös Loránd University.⁶¹ At the time he also attended the Marxist–Leninist Night School and a foreign affairs course, and learned English, French, German, and Russian. In 1945, Éliás joined the Hungarian Communist Party, but at the end of 1946, he transferred to the Social Democratic Party. On December 29, 1950, he was expelled from the Hungarian Working People’s Party (the successor of the Hungarian Communist Party) due to having lied about his transfer. At the beginning of 1951, Éliás was enlisted for army service, but, as he was unfit for normal duty, he was sent on an interpreting course and worked as an interpreter to the Soviet counselor at the Rákosi Tanker Military Academy; he then worked in a similar role at the Ministry of Home Defense.⁶² In 1953, Éliás was detained on charges of treason and espionage, but he was acquitted before the military court when it was discovered that he and his fiancée, Gyöngyi Hajnal, took no actual steps to leave Hungary illegally. Afterwards, Éliás worked at the Freedom Hotel, and was promoted to Deputy Director by the end of 1956. When the Soviet Army surrounded Budapest, he decided to leave the country, as he allegedly had connections within the revolutionary group in Rákóczi út. According to rumors, he took 20,000 forints from the hotel safe before he left.⁶³

59 ÁBTL, 3.2.3. Mt-545/1, Z-110/1. “Műszerész” – Tárgy: Találkozó “Műszerész”-szel. Jelentés. London, September 30, 1957, pp. 45–47.

60 Military History Institute and Museum (*Honvédelmi Minisztérium Hadtörténelmi Levéltár és Múzeum Központi Irattára*, hereafter: HM HLM KI), I. 2838, 1953. – Éliás Endre, 1929. 06. 12. Tokaj. Frenkel Ida. – Önéletrajz, pp. 1–2.

61 Archives of Eötvös Loránd University (*Eötvös Loránd Tudományegyetem Levéltára*, hereafter: ELTE Levéltár), 2/A/333. Kötet. 1947/48. II. D – H. February 16, 1948, p. 7039.

62 HM HLM KI, I. 2838, 1953. – Éliás Endre, 1929. 06. 12. Tokaj. Frenkel Ida. – Személyi adatlap. Budapest, February 27, 1953, pp. 1–17.

63 ÁBTL, 3.2.4. K-1124/T. Éliás Endre – 8/30 sz. utasítás. Bakos elvtársnak! London. – Tárgy: Éliás Endre ügye. Budapest, November 19, 1957, pp. 5–6/10.

Kiss informed Bazsó that Láng was looking for a reliable person who had no relatives in Hungary and therefore would be safe to send to the Hungarian Legation for more information; he asked Kiss for recommendations, and instructed him to call after meeting Éliás. On September 21, 1957, the candidate visited the leader of the Freedom Association, who complained about the organization's financial problems and asked Kiss whether he would like to join the Hungarian trade union, organized by émigré social democrat Imre Szélig. When Kiss proved willing to join, Éliás promised he would take care of his membership. Two days later, when Kiss informed Láng of these developments, the latter seemed surprised and put a hold on the operation. Kiss revealed that he had obtained his apartment through Bányai, who lived at 85 Edith Grove in Chelsea with his wife and four children under deplorable circumstances, and worked as a machine operator at a stone-cutting company. As for any actions planned against the Hungarian Legation, all Kiss could learn at the Mindszenty Home Association was that the British authorities had prohibited the planned protest against the Hungarian delegation of the Inter-Parliamentary Union.

At the end of their meeting, Bazsó instructed Kiss to acquire more technical specifications, observe Láng's group as well as the newly organized trade union, and report his findings on October 11, 1957. The liaison officer rewarded Kiss with £5 for his work but, as Kiss had spent £10 a month on his activities, this proved insufficient to support his family. The candidate argued that his wife had to pay 250–300 forints in customs per parcel sent, but his liaison officer considered these amounts disproportionate and explicitly told Kiss that he would not receive more financial support.

In Police Lieutenant Bazsó's opinion, "Műszerész" had interesting connections, but he did not consider it practical to recruit the candidate formally, as the Ministry of the Interior had proposed back in August. Kiss made it clear that he wished to repatriate in the fall of 1958, meaning that the idea of staying two or three years longer in England might have cooled his desire to cooperate. Bazsó also felt that "Műszerész" might have already been compromised due to the materials he had borrowed and the receipts he had signed at Standard Telephones and Cables; he therefore suggested it would be better to recruit Kiss if he proved willing to stay in England for a longer period of time. At the same time, Bazsó informed the Centre that it would be expedient to improve the financial situation of the candidate's family by either granting his wife a promotion at her current work place or transferring her to a higher position elsewhere, thereby raising her salary from 800 forints to 1,300–1,400 forints. The station chief only added that Kiss could be used to gain insight into the objectives and methods of British counterintelligence if he were to participate in observing Hungarian émigré groups.⁶⁴

64 ÁBTL, 3.2.3. Mt-545/1, Z-110/1. "Műszerész" – Tárgy: Találkozó "Műszerész"-szel. Jelentés. London, September 30, 1957, pp. 47–50.

Recruiting Agent “Műszerész”

On October 11, 1957, Kiss met Bazsó at High Street Kensington underground station to hand over three technical specifications complete with blueprints (to be photographed at the Hungarian intelligence station), and to inform his liaison officer that he was going to work in Banbury, a town 72 miles from London. The next day, at Bazsó's request, Kiss brought with him a declaration of “voluntary cooperation”, receipts of his expenses, and a report on Láng. As he was going to work in Banbury, his liaison officer tried to persuade him to observe the Hungarians living in rural refugee camps. At this meeting, Kiss made plans for obtaining mechanical parts used in telephone exchanges, but expected financial help to be able to maintain his apartment in London. After their meeting, Bazsó reported that the greatest achievement in this case so far was the successful formal recruitment of Agent “Műszerész”.⁶⁵

On October 26, 1957, Kiss and Bazsó exchanged briefcases in Holland Park so the agent could hand over ten technical specifications, an information booklet on his own tasks and responsibilities at Standard Telephones and Cables, a booklet on telephone exchanges, and a receipt; in exchange, his liaison officer gave him £10 in the afternoon and returned the previously photographed materials, but also noted that Kiss showed less enthusiasm for émigré-related tasks than he did for technical tasks. Agent “Műszerész” pointed out his lack of opportunities for observing Hungarian émigrés, but Bazsó reminded him that he should have had little difficulty in providing information on the location of the Mindszenty Home Association, the number of members, the management, their programs, and their propaganda activities. The agent complained that his instructions were unclear, to which his liaison officer responded by promising new and more detailed instructions, but insisted that Kiss must complete each task. Beyond obtaining technical information, Agent “Műszerész” was also charged with the task of mapping the entirety of the Mindszenty Home Association and infiltrating the Freedom Association, as well as the Hungarian trade union, with Éliás's assistance. The agent knew of some eight or ten Hungarian immigrants living near Banbury, but there were no larger refugee camps in the vicinity as the British authorities decided against opening a refugee camp in Oxfordshire, where the unemployment rate was already high.⁶⁶ As for the receipts, Bazsó considered the agent's expenses disproportionate to his tasks, and decided he would not cover Kiss's expenses next time.

When Bazsó asked for the agent's opinion of the developments in Hungary, Kiss stated that he was happy to see the consolidation of the new political system, but

65 ÁBTL, 3.2.3. Mt-545/1, Z-110/1. “Műszerész” – Tárgy: Találkozó “Műszerész”-szel. Jelentés. London, October 12, 1957, pp. 59/73–76.

66 De Aranjó (2013), p. 161.

complained that First Secretary János Kádár was being controlled by Soviet leadership. Kiss based his opinion on the fact that, back in October 1956, Kádár demanded the withdrawal of the Soviet troops from Hungary, but this issue had quickly disappeared from his agenda. Kiss also added that, considering the international state of affairs, he was somewhat reconciled to the Soviet military presence in Hungary but expressed a strong desire for the reestablishment of a multi-party system. In response, Bazsó argued that the competition between multiple political parties would only distract leadership from rebuilding the country, and mentioned France as an example of a multi-party system in a permanent state of government crisis.⁶⁷

On November 9, 1957, Agent “Műszerész” met Bazsó and handed over a description of the Mindszenty Home Association, and revealed that, as per his conversation with Láng at the Calvinist Club, he would be meeting a British engineer interested in Hungarian telephone networks at 2:00 p.m., an officer from the Foreign Office named Dean – who had also interrogated István Ádám after his return –, and a former employee of the British Legation in Budapest who spoke Hungarian. Kiss was anxious about the upcoming interrogation, but his liaison officer reassured him and gave him the following instructions: he was not to speak about the cable layouts of Hungarian state security telephone exchanges or the closed government telephone network known as the “G[overnment] lines” (‘K[ormányzati]-vonalak’ in Hungarian),⁶⁸ and to memorize the names of every person present at the interrogation, their questions, and Kiss’s own responses to their questions. In his report, Bazsó concluded that Kiss had come face to face with British intelligence or counterintelligence, and they were seeking to recruit him; nevertheless, Major Szolnok urged Kiss to play along and agree to their demands.⁶⁹ Despite these anticipated events, Láng ultimately canceled his meeting with Kiss because of his own engagements; in response, Bazsó contacted Kiss on November 10, 1957 to inform him that he had until November 23 to obtain the missing technical specifications and blueprints, and to provide descriptions of the management of the Mindszenty Home Association.⁷⁰

On November 23, 1957, Agent “Műszerész” met Bazsó right on schedule at the entrance to the Royal Albert Hall, where he handed over the requested documentation, a report on developments within the Freedom Association, and two letters, one of which was a reply by Dean to the letter Kiss had sent to 109 Sloane Street, London

67 ÁBTL, 3.2.3. Mt-545/1, Z-110/1. “Műszerész” – Tárgy: Találkozó “Műszerész”-szel. Jelentés. London, October 26, 1957, pp. 60–63.

68 Majtényi, Gy. (2009). *K-vonal. Uralmi elit és luxus a szocializmusban*. Nyitott könyvműhely.

69 ÁBTL, 3.2.3. Mt-545/1, Z-110/1. “Műszerész” – Tárgy: Találkozó “Műszerész”-szel. Jelentés. London, November 10, 1957, pp. 64–65.

70 ÁBTL, 3.2.3. Mt-545/1, Z-110/1. “Műszerész” – Tárgy: Találkozó “Műszerész”-szel. Jelentés. London, November 10, 1957, pp. 66–67.

SW1, and the other was an apology from Láng for canceling his meeting with Kiss. Bazsó noticed that, in his report, Kiss failed to mention the November 9 meeting being canceled or his conversation with Láng on the evening before. Moreover, the agent required much persuasion to hand over the messages written by the Englishmen, as he was afraid that he would be exposed by British intelligence as an agent and hanged for treason. According to his report, Kiss met Éliás on November 10, 1957 to receive his membership booklet; there he made the acquaintance of one Jenő Fazekas, and Éliás told him in confidence that the British acknowledged him and Fazekas as the leaders of the Freedom Association and had already designated their new office, and they were counting on Kiss to help update the electrical network of the building. On November 16, 1957, Kiss also met Láng, who requested information on Éliás's staff policy, because he believed that Éliás was being controlled by IO "Havasi".⁷¹

Bazsó thought that Kiss's story of Láng and Dean was confusing, and he was beginning to doubt the agent's sincerity; however, the station chief did not share Bazsó's suspicions and considered this chain of events plausible, even logical under the circumstances. Moreover, based on the report of Agent "Sárosi" (Ferenc Miklós Szabó),⁷² they concluded that Jenő Nádassy, a man suspected of being a British agent, was trying to turn his superiors against Endre Éliás, and counted on Kiss to help compromise the target. Major Szolnok encouraged Kiss to participate actively in the internal squabbles of the Hungarian emigrant organization, to disrupt it from within, but only after the agent had acquired the complete technical documentation they had requested.⁷³

Despite the results produced by Agent "Műszerész", the Ministry of the Interior continued to keep its reservations about the mistakes Kiss had made while fulfilling his tasks, and they also argued that Bazsó focused so much on obtaining blueprints for the telephone exchanges that he failed to pay attention to the agent's intelligence potential in other areas. The Centre noted that Bazsó had yet to ask questions about the agent's reasons for traveling to England or the conditions of his entry into the UK, and how his first months were spent in his new home; moreover, the intelligence residency attempted to persuade Kiss to cooperate as early as his first visit to the Hungarian Legation, when they were fully aware of the fact that British intelligence sometimes sent people to foreign representations as a means of provocation. Hungarian intelligence also noted that there were growing signs of MI5 having taken notice of the agent.

71 ÁBTL, 3.2.3. Mt-545/1, Z-110/1. "Műszerész" – Tárgy: Találkozó "Műszerész"-szel. Jelentés. London, November 24, 1957, pp. 53–55.

72 Várallyay, Gy. (2011). *Tévíúton. Ügynökök az ötvenhatos diákmozgalomban nyugaton*. 1956-os Intézet – ÁBTL – L'Harmattan Kiadó, p. 107.

73 ÁBTL, 3.2.3. Mt-545/1, Z-110/1. "Műszerész" – Tárgy: Találkozó "Műszerész"-szel. Jelentés. London, November 24, 1957, pp. 55–57.

Through Csűrös, Kiss was able to meet Láng and Bányai (who was presumably working for the British government), and an unknown Englishman who spoke very little Hungarian; the latter inquired into Kiss's personal problems and then charged him with counterintelligence tasks. Furthermore, while Scotland Yard was asking after him, Kiss continued to make financial demands without offering anything of value in return. In short, Department II/3 did not understand how Szolnok and Bazsó could ignore these problematic issues, and also concluded from their reports that the Security Service had realized the agent was connected to the London residency, and was therefore observing Kiss in order to either recruit or repatriate him as needed. Taking all this into consideration, the Hungarian intelligence station should not have prioritized material handovers over investigating Kiss's relationship with Csűrös and Láng.

In light of the above concerns, the Centre instructed the residency to interrogate Kiss for at least three hours to confirm the following: the agent's activities before he contacted the Hungarian Legation; his relationship with Csűrös, Láng, Bányai, and Kepe; anyone he had met through these four people; his meetings with the two Englishmen mentioned in the reports, and the circumstances under which Scotland Yard had taken notice of him. If they found that Kiss had been exposed as an agent connected to the Hungarian Legation, the residency was to cease meetings for at least four or five months; however, if it turned out that the agent had deceived them, he would have to be excluded from the network. Department II/3 determined that Kiss could receive financial compensation if he was sincere about cooperating, but, due to the increasing notice of MI5, only small sums could be paid at present. In spite of the mistakes Kiss had made during his missions, the Centre upheld that the agent should first and foremost focus on providing information on the methods of British intelligence and counterintelligence.⁷⁴

Double Agent

On December 7, 1957, Bazsó met Agent "Műszerész" by the entrance of the National Gallery from whence they traveled by car to a secluded alley in Wimbledon; there Bazsó turned on the radio and proceeded to interrogate Kiss on certain gray areas in his personal history. The agent claimed that he trusted no one except his liaison officer because he could not be certain whether the materials he had handed over would be safe or if they might fall into the wrong hands. His reservations arose from the fact that exposed members of the Hungarian state security had been imprisoned

74 ÁBTL, 3.2.1. Bt-702, Z-110/1958. "Műszerész" – 10/6. sz. utasítás. Bakos Elvtársnak! London. – Tárgy: "Műszerész" ügye. Budapest, November 28, 1957, pp. 19–24.

and others had defected.⁷⁵ These fears were not completely unfounded, because the records of the party organization of the Hungarian Legation had been seized by British authorities.⁷⁶ It was no coincidence either that chauffeur Oszkár Szöllösi did not return to his residence to collect his belongings,⁷⁷ as IO “Kiss” (Major Gyula Sógor)⁷⁸ believed that the office clerk Béla Szanyi was the primary suspect involved in exposing the activities of the residency.⁷⁹

During his interrogation, Kiss told Bazsó that he would no longer volunteer to obtain written materials and added that neither he nor his family had been compensated for his trouble; he felt that his sense of duty bound him to the Hungarian Legation, and though British authorities were interested in him, he would prefer to assist Hungarian intelligence instead. Bazsó politely but firmly argued that if the agent was only interested in supporting the Hungarian People’s Republic for money then his cooperation would no longer be required, and also reminded Kiss that he was not being forced to cooperate, because pressure never yielded any results: according to Bazsó, those who were Hungarian in spirit would know their duty. In response, Agent “Műszerész” tried to prove his willingness to cooperate, adding that his only fear was the sort of general ill will and betrayal that had caused the Hungarian Revolution of 1956 to escalate into violence. His liaison officer emphasized that everyone had learned their lessons from the events of 1956, and, by accepting these facts, Kiss would be showing trust in his liaison officer. Kiss seemed slightly relieved by Bazsó’s argument and told him about an unsuccessful date he had been on, which prompted Bazsó to warn Kiss that if he invited women over and they found anything suspicious in his apartment, they might contact the police,⁸⁰ as British intelligence probably had recourse to using “honey traps”, a practice developed by the KGB in which Western diplomats were blackmailed through their casual sexual partners.⁸¹

At the request of his liaison officer, Agent “Műszerész” talked of his past charges of theft and his activities during the Hungarian Revolution of 1956. Kiss claimed that he had bought the amplifier in question in Sajóabony, where the factory he had worked for shut down. When Kiss was transferred to the Borsod Chemical Combine, he used

75 ÁBTL, 3.2.1. Bt-702, Z-110/1958. “Műszerész” – Tárgy: Találkozó “Műszerész”-szel. Jelentés. London, December 7, 1957, p. 25.

76 TNA FO, 371/128743/NH 1903/1. Documents left by the Hungarian Cultural Attaché. January 28, 1957, pp. 5–29.

77 TNA FO, 371/128743/NH 1903/2. Enclosed passports of Szöllösi (formerly chauffeur at Hungarian Legation) & his wife. March 4, 1957, pp. 30–34.

78 Ungváry (2013), p. 1524.

79 Ungváry (2013), p. 1536.

80 ÁBTL, 3.2.1. Bt-702, Z-110/1958. “Műszerész” – Tárgy: Találkozó “Műszerész”-szel. Jelentés. London, December 7, 1957, pp. 25–26.

81 Pincher, C. (1991). *The Truth About Dirty Tricks from Harold Wilson to Margaret Thatcher*. Sidgwick & Jackson, pp. 262–264.

materials from the factory to repair and upgrade the amplifier, which he then sold for 1,000 forints. When an investigation was launched and the Combine dismissed him, Kiss moved to Tiszapalkonya to work as an electrician, and in October 1956 he was appointed as the commander of the local National Guard, though his activities were limited to protecting the factory's assets.⁸² The construction workers building the Tiszavidék Chemical Combine started their strike on October 26, 1956, and the next day, they appointed construction manager Ferenc Illés (also born in Transylvania, Romania) as the chair of the corporate workers' council. As the agitation that had seized the common convicts threatened to swell into an uproar, Illés requested weapons and ammunition from the local guard in Mezőcsát. They were granted four rifles and 20–80 ammunition cartridges, which were delivered by Kiss,⁸³ and, on October 28, he was appointed as the commander of the factory guard for his services and was also admitted into the local workers' council.⁸⁴

During his interrogation, Kiss related to his liaison officer the circumstances of his escape from Hungary and his settling in England. During the Hungarian Revolution of 1956, on November 4, one of the factory warehouses was ransacked, and some of the former members of the Hungarian Working People's Party blamed Kiss for the losses incurred under his watch as commander. Fearing the consequences of these accusations, Kiss fled the country for Austria on November 17, but, as the Union of Postal and Telecommunications Workers was unable to find him employment, he contacted the British Embassy to request an exit permit to Canada, where he planned to visit his wife's uncle. At the embassy, the acting officer recommended England instead, as Standard Telephones and Cables offered high wages to trained employees and Kiss was a certified telephone technician.⁸⁵ Kiss's name was indeed found in the collective passport issued by the British Embassy in Vienna, which contained the names of refugees who had left the country by train on November 30, 1956.⁸⁶ While the majority of refugees were transported by airplane, others reached

82 ÁBTL, 3.2.1. Bt-702, Z-110/1958. "Műszerész" – Tárgy: Találkozó "Műszerész"-szel. Jelentés. London, December 7, 1957, pp. 26–27.

83 National Archives of Hungary, Archives of Borsod–Abaúj–Zemplén County (*Magyar Országos Levéltár Borsod Abaúj Zemplén Megyei Levéltára*, hereafter: MNL BAZ ML), XXV. 21/C. 1191/1957. Illés Ferenc és Társa 1957. IV. 16. – 1958. II. 15. – Jegyzőkönyv: Készült a demokratikus államrend megdöntésére irányuló mozgalomban való tevékeny részvétel miatt Illés Ferenc és társa ellen indított bűnügyben a miskolci megyei bíróságon 1957. november hó 11 és 12 napján megtartott nyilvános tárgyaláson. Szeptember 11–12, 1957, p. 6.

84 MNL BAZ ML, XXV. 21/C. 1191/1957. Illés Ferenc és Társa 1957. IV. 16. – 1958. II. 15. – BM. BAZ. Megyei Rendőrfőkapitányság Politikai Nyomozó Osztálya Miskolc. Jegyzőkönyv Vinnai István kihallgatásáról. May 8, 1957, p. 139.

85 ÁBTL, 3.2.1. Bt-702, Z-110/1958. "Műszerész" – Tárgy: Találkozó "Műszerész"-szel. Jelentés. London, December 7, 1957, p. 27.

86 Arolsen Archives, Reference Code: 1296085. November 30, 1956, p. 26. Source: <https://collections.arolsen-archives.org/en/document/81771658> (accessed on September 18, 2022).

the UK by train. According to statistics, by December 31, 1956, a total of 12,115 Hungarian refugees had entered Great Britain, of whom 7,258 arrived by airplane, 4,206 by train, and 651 by bus.⁸⁷

By December 2, 1956, Kiss had reached Dover, and a week later, he was transported to Peterborough, where he received working accommodation at a brick factory. A few weeks later, the refugees were visited by a pastor from London named Scott, and Kiss told him with the help of an interpreter what he had been promised at the British Embassy in Vienna, and how nothing had come of his employment by Standard Telephones and Cables. In response, Scott gave him László Csűrös's address, to whom Kiss repeated these complaints in a letter.

At the very beginning of 1957, Standard Telephones and Cables sent a questionnaire to Kiss, in which they asked about his qualifications, and on January 24, he received another letter that invited him to London. Following a successful interview, the British Council for the Aid of Refugees⁸⁸ directed Kiss to a boarding house, where a guest named Róbert Lányi soon helped him become acquainted with Ferenc Bányai. Despite the fact that Bányai helped him secure a permanent residence, Agent "Műszerész" claimed that he did not have a close relationship with Bányai, who lived under very modest circumstances. (Bányai had probably considered moving across the ocean to improve his financial situation, which would explain why he only became a British citizen in 1968.)⁸⁹ Kiss also visited the address provided by Scott and entered the Calvinist Club, where he not only met the interpreter from Peterborough, but was also able to see Csűrös in person; the latter interrogated him on his Hungarian background, his family, and his profession, and asked him to come again.

Kiss told his liaison officer that, because he missed his family very much, he decided to contact the Hungarian consulate early on to inform them of his intention to repatriate, hoping this would help him secure his permit. When he contacted the Hungarian consulate, he was not prepared to find himself working for the Ministry of the Interior; however, when Major Turopoli suggested it, he began to entertain the idea of assisting the Hungarian People's Republic in order to support his own family.

Near the end of July 1957, after a service held at the Calvinist Club, Kiss met Csűrös, who introduced him to two Englishmen and Láng; the latter kindly inquired after Kiss's family, and when he learned that Kiss was a telephone technician, he

87 TNA FO, 371/127703. Statement of Cost of Movements of Hungarian Refugees from Austria to the United Kingdom, Excluding Miners. Intergovernmental Committee for European Migration, Geneva, Switzerland, January 25, 1957, p. 91.

88 Hartley, C. (2003). Dame Ann May Curwen. In Hartley, C. (Ed.), *A Historical Dictionary of British Women*. Europa Publishing Limited, p. 125.

89 TNA HO, 334/1213/100337. Certificate of Naturalization for Ferenc Bányai – Home Office No. B. 63643. August 1, 1968, pp. 1–2.

suggested further meetings. Two weeks later, Csűrös asked Kiss to join the Calvinist Church and invited him for a visit on Saturday at 9:00 a.m., where Kiss also met Láng and the two Englishmen. One was a gentleman in his fifties who used to work at the British Legation in Budapest in the early 1940s and spoke fluent Hungarian, while the other had the appearance of a military officer but did not speak a word. At this visit, Láng emphasized that a lot of Hungarian state security agents and communists had arrived in England under the guise of being refugees, and therefore the Hungarian émigrés needed to follow the Polish immigrants' example and organize their own counterintelligence service. Láng then instructed Kiss to report anything suspicious within the Hungarian émigré community. Another two weeks later, Láng also encouraged Kiss to join the Freedom Association, because they had no information on this "rather suspicious" organization, and gave Kiss his telephone number. Kiss informed Bazsó that he had called the number on multiple occasions, and it was answered several times by a Hungarian woman.

Following Kiss's meeting with Láng, Csűrös noted at the next service at the Calvinist Club that Scotland Yard had inquired after Kiss, which was nothing unusual, and at the beginning of September 1957, Láng told Kiss that he wished to have a long conversation with him at 6:00 p.m. on September 20 at a café on Edgware Road. When Kiss arrived, Láng was already there waiting for him, and they were soon joined by an Englishman, who was none other than the aforementioned Dean. Láng and Kiss joined Dean in his car and he drove them to the bank of the Thames, where he showed great interest in Kiss's living situation and family in Hungary, and Láng openly pressured him into applying for membership of the Freedom Association. Kiss rightfully believed that Dean wished to know him better, and, after being pressured by the Englishman, he did contact Endre Éliás from the Freedom Association and then reported the meeting to Láng. At this point in their conversation, Bazsó asked Kiss whether he had spoken to anyone of their working relationship, and Kiss confessed that Láng and Dean did inquire about his connection with the Hungarian Legation, and he did not deny that he had contacted the legation on two occasions. Kiss added that Láng and Dean warned him to be careful, because if the Hungarian Legation learned about their involvement they might avenge themselves on Kiss's family; at the same time, they did not ask who Kiss had met at the consulate or what he had discussed with the employees. Bazsó rebuked the agent for not telling him about this sooner, and Kiss argued that, at the time, he considered terminating contact in earnest and began to procrastinate on his tasks, but firmly believed that Dean and his associates did not know of Bazsó's involvement.

On November 2, 1957, Kiss met Láng at the Calvinist Club and learned that Láng wished to introduce him to certain persons interested in Hungarian telephone networks. Besides Dean, another person who wanted to meet him was the British diplomat

who had been to Hungary in the 1940s and the technical expert; however, that person had prior engagements and could not attend. Láng had previously given Kiss an address (109 Sloane Street, London SW1) where he could apply for help if he had any problems. The agent wrote a letter stating that he could only answer questions about Hungarian telecommunications after proper preparation, and received an answer from Dean. In the end, however, Kiss was notified by Láng that the proposed meeting had been canceled.

On November 30, 1957, Láng contacted Kiss via telephone and informed him that he was expected at 109 Sloane Street, where he was greeted by Dean in the reception area of a dental surgery; the former British diplomat served as their interpreter, and a telephone expert was also present for the interrogation. Dean inquired about the location of the Hungarian government lines and the telephone exchanges of Hungarian state security, and Kiss told him that the former was around Akadémia utca and the latter were on the bank of the Danube and in József Attila utca. Kiss claimed that the microwave transmission systems were in Hatvan and Miskolc, and that he had no knowledge of the jamming station in Lillafüred. Dean also quizzed him on munition production and then settled that Kiss would receive a map of Hungary in the mail, on which he must mark the locations of weapon factories and power plants. Kiss received the map the following Monday and marked the locations of the power plants of Tiszapalkonya, Kazincbarcika, and Berente, the munition factory in Sajóbánya, and the radio station in Mátraháza. On Friday, upon Kiss's return to London, the former British diplomat waited for him at Paddington Station and accepted the map; meanwhile, Láng proposed a meeting for October 7, 1957.

When Police Lieutenant Bazsó asked Agent “Műszerész” what he thought Dean and Láng's group wanted from him, Kiss suggested that they might be seeking someone to infiltrate the Freedom Association and provide information and materials on Hungarian telephone networks; his liaison officer believed him to be sincere, and shared three plausible alternatives. In the first scenario, the group wanted to recruit Kiss for counterintelligence tasks among the Hungarian immigrants in the UK, and also hoped he would provide information from Hungary. In the second scenario, the group might be planning Kiss's repatriation, and, in the third scenario, the group might have already learned of his connection to the Hungarian Legation, and were seeking to use him against the residency. Bazsó considered the first scenario to be the most probable, as the group had already asked the agent for information and proposed that he should infiltrate the Freedom Association, and he reminded Kiss that no matter what tasks he received from the group, he was to act naturally and not disclose his connection with the Hungarian Legation. The agent's instructions included asking for methodological guidance, and he was allowed to share Hungarian information except for state secrets. Bazsó encouraged Kiss to visit the Freedom Association as

often as possible and to report his findings, as well as any instructions he might receive from Láng, and if the group ever requested that he participate in an action against the Hungarian Legation, he was to request an extraordinary meeting with his liaison officer without delay.

In the event that Dean and Láng sought to repatriate Kiss, Bazsó instructed him to show hesitation and then accept the mission, and immediately submit a report to the residency; the agent also had to firmly refuse any tasks related to the Hungarian Legation in London on the grounds that he had not met any Hungarian diplomats since his past visits at the consular office. Kiss was once again concerned about his potential exposure, to which Bazsó replied that adhering to the rules would ensure his safety; however, if Kiss were indeed exposed, the London residency would arrange for his departure from the UK. They also agreed to move their liaison meetings to Sundays in the early afternoon, as the possibility of being observed was very low at that time of day.⁹⁰ The intelligence station probably intended to offer the same means of escape that Guy Burgess and Donald Maclean took advantage of at the end of May 1951;⁹¹ at the same time, they also moved the liaison meetings to Sunday because, due to a lack of human resources, MI5 only conducted surveillance from Monday morning to Saturday noon.⁹² Bazsó emphasized that if Kiss noticed anything suspicious at all, he was to cancel his liaison meeting, and then instructed the agent on detecting the presence of intelligence agents in the underground, in taxis, or on the streets.

Bazsó agreed that Agent “Műszerész” should obtain new materials for the London residency, but was adamant that this should not be his one and only task and instructed Kiss to observe the connections of Láng and Dean, and to report on the Freedom Association and the Mindszenty Home Association. The agent brought up his financial problems again and claimed he had incurred a debt of 60 forints by sending parcels home; his expenses had exhausted the meager sums paid by the intelligence station, and, despite every promise, his family had so far received no financial support in Hungary. Bazsó told the agent that the Hungarian state could not afford to cover all of his expenses, and Kiss had so far produced few results. In the end, Kiss was promised £10 for Christmas, which Kiss claimed he would be able to spend without raising suspicion, and Bazsó proposed to the intelligence station that the agent should receive a monthly allowance of £25 because his materialistic attitude made him difficult to manage. Nevertheless, at the end of their four-hour-long interview, Bazsó concluded that Agent “Műszerész” would prove useful because he

90 ÁBTL, 3.2.1. Bt-702, Z-110/1958. “Műszerész” – Tárgy: Találkozó “Műszerész”-szel. Jelentés. London, December 7, 1957, pp. 27–28.

91 Macintyre, B. (2015). *Kém a csapatban. Kim Philby és a nagy árulás*. Gabo Kiadó, pp. 176–183.

92 Andrew (2009), p. 425.

allowed the London residency station to infiltrate a British intelligence team in which Csűrös was responsible for scouting and Láng studied potential candidates based on Dean's instructions.⁹³

The New British Contact Person: László Veress

On December 15, 1957, Agent “Műszerész” was to meet Bazsó again, but, as Kiss had accidentally slept in, they could only discuss new developments a week later on Barnes Common, where Kiss reported to Bazsó that Láng had canceled their meeting on December 7 and informed Kiss that next Saturday, a certain László Veress would be waiting for him at 64 Seafield Road, London N11. On December 14 at 7:00 p.m., Kiss managed to meet Veress at the Calvinist Club, where he was escorted by a pastor called Sándor (presumably Sándor Tamás) into a special room where people were discussing the situation in Hungary and international politics. Veress prefaced his speech by arguing that the Western superpowers wished to settle international disputes peacefully – which, in the case of Hungary, would mean the withdrawal of the Soviet troops –, but it was also probable that the situation could only be resolved by another war. In order to advance the Hungarian cause, they requested information from Hungarian freedom fighters on the locations of war factories, military units, telephone exchanges, and radio stations in Hungary. Veress was informed that Kiss used to work at the munition factory in Sajóbabony and therefore would know its location, organizational structure, security equipment, and security duty schedule. Veress even told Kiss that his now faded memories would be no obstacle, as he had already drafted a map for Kiss to revise. Agent “Műszerész” described Veress as a short, stout, round-faced and silver-haired man in his fifties.⁹⁴ Born in 1908 in Sepsiszentgyörgy, Veress studied law and worked as a diplomat: until 1943; he was the press rapporteur of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and later became a member of the Hungarian delegation sent to Ankara for secret negotiations with the Great Powers.⁹⁵ From 1945, he worked as a secretary representing the Ministry of Foreign Affairs,⁹⁶ and on March 21, 1947, he was appointed as the Government Commissioner for

93 ÁBTL, 3.2.1. Bt-702, Z-110/1958. “Műszerész” – Tárgy: Találkozó “Műszerész”-szel. Jelentés. London, December 7, 1957, pp. 25–36.

94 ÁBTL, 3.2.3. Mt-545/1, Z-110/1. “Műszerész” – Tárgy: Találkozó “Műszerész”-szel. Jelentés. London, December 22, 1957, pp. 68–70.

95 Borhi, L. (1997). Veress László. In Sipos, P. (Ed.), *Magyarország a második világháborúban. Lexikon A–ZS*. 1st edition. PETIT REAL Könyvkiadó, p. 1228.

96 TNA FO, 372/65015/2, German Economic (CE) 131, March 13, 1947. Dr. L. Veress as head of the Hungarian Restitution Mission – British Political Mission to Hungary. Budapest, February 26, 1947, p. 2.

Hungarian Property Restitution in the British Occupation Zone in Germany.⁹⁷ After the dissolution of the Hungarian multi-party political system, Veress fled to London in April 1948, and, for the next eighteen months, he intercepted foreign radio broadcasts in Caversham;⁹⁸ afterwards, he became a political commentator at the Hungarian Department of the BBC.⁹⁹

Bazsó told Agent “Műszerész” to provide more information on Veress and the questions he had asked at the meeting, and also instructed Kiss to ask about the roles that the Hungarian émigrés would play in the event of a potential Western military intervention in Hungary. The liaison officer concluded that Kiss had been relegated to Veress, who was actively investigated by Hungarian intelligence until 1956.¹⁰⁰

On January 5, 1958, Agent “Műszerész” met Bazsó in front of the Zeeta House restaurant on Upper Richmond Road; the agent was punctual but came empty-handed, and explained that he was only able to travel to London once a week and therefore had little time to spare for his targets. His liaison officer instructed him to enroll in a language course for Hungarian refugees because, based on Kiss’s results, either his superior at work or (in a worst-case scenario) Csűrös might be able to assist him in returning to London. Bazsó wanted detailed reports on Csűrös, his friends and their activities among the Calvinist congregation, and demanded that Kiss complete all of his tasks. Bazsó also tried to flaunt the achievements of the consolidation of Kádár’s government by claiming that some 1,500 refugees had managed to repatriate from England by the end of 1957;¹⁰¹ according to the statistics of the Home Office, however, only 1,161 refugees had returned to Hungary by December 31, 1957.¹⁰² The British authorities also learned from the refugees that the Hungarian Legation in London requested £12 from potential repatriates to cover their travel expenses.¹⁰³

On January 19, 1958, Agent “Műszerész” reported to Bazsó that, according to a long-time Hungarian immigrant named Kovács, the Mindszenty Home Association had been stagnating ever since the previous chair, Dr. József Kohári, left England for Canada two years earlier. This information was corroborated by a similar report

97 TNA FO, 371/65015/8, CE 550, March 24, 1947. Appointment of Mr. LASZLÓ VERESS. London, April 21, 1947, pp. 1–2.

98 Veress, L-L. (1995). *Clear the Line: Hungary’s Struggle to Leave the Axis During the Second World War*. Prospero Publications, pp. 344–349.

99 Sárközi, M. (2014). *Csé. Kortárs Kiadó*, p. 114.

100 ÁBTL, 3.2.3. Mt-545/1, Z-110/1. “Műszerész” – Tárgy: Találkozó “Műszerész”-szel. Jelentés. London, December 22, 1957, pp. 68–72.

101 ÁBTL, 3.2.3. Mt-545/1, Z-110/1. “Műszerész” – Tárgy: Találkozó “Műszerész”-szel. Jelentés. London, January 5, 1958, pp. 73–76.

102 TNA HO, 352/142.

103 TNA HO, 352/145. Schenck, Elizabeth: Report on the Work and Some Experiences as an Interpreter in Haig Lines Crookham Camp near Aldershot. January 10, 1957, p. 14.

from Agent “Szekeres”¹⁰⁴ (János Erdőssy or Frank Louis Erdős),¹⁰⁵ one of the contacts of the Hungarian intelligence station, meaning that Kiss did in fact visit the Mindszenty Home Association and made inquiries.

Kiss had learned from Csűrös that the latter was in a managerial position at the High Voltage Network Department of the Electricity Board, and he was also a member of the twelve-person committee established by the British Council for the Aid of Refugees in order to help Hungarian refugees. Kiss asked Csűrös to put in a good word for him so that he might return to London, and the engineer promised to help him with the assistance of one of the directors of Standard Telephones and Cables, while his immediate superior attempted to persuade Kiss to at least wait until the on-going assembly was completed. Kiss also reported that he had not heard from László Veress for some time, but received news from Hungary that his family was troubled by the behavior of his two children. Kiss also planned to obtain more mechanical parts for the telephone exchange, but decided to wait because he had received no new instructions from Budapest on the subject.

At the end of the meeting, Kiss informed Bazsó that he had received a summons to the Immigration Office on York Road for January 23, 1958. His liaison officer instructed him to keep calm during the interrogation and answer every question, but warned Kiss that he should not under any circumstances mention his connection to the Hungarian Legation; Kiss was allowed to acknowledge that he had contacted the consulate in the past, and he had to issue a report on his interrogation as soon as possible.¹⁰⁶

In light of the importance of conducting intelligence work among the Hungarian émigrés in London, the new head of Department II/3, Major General András Tömpe, strongly criticized the station chief’s failure to instruct the liaison officer in charge of Agent “Műszerész” properly. Their meeting on December 7, 1957 did include general instructions, but the Centre noted several troubling factors in the case, such as the fact that the agent refused to submit written reports because he trusted no one but his liaison officer, and could only be persuaded by the latter to reconsider. Tömpe believed that, in a certain sense, Kiss allowed himself to be persuaded into continuing their old-fashioned cooperation for two reasons. On the one hand, it was possible that British counterintelligence had uncovered his working relationship with Bazsó, and, on the other hand, it was possible that Kiss was only interested in improving his financial situation. His liaison officer was instructed to proceed with the utmost

104 ÁBTL, 3.2.4. K-32. “Szekeres” [Erdőssy János] – Kérdőjegy. Budapest, September 20, 1960, p. 37.

105 TNA HO, 334/1106/1195512. Certificate of Naturalization for Franck Louis Erdoss known as Frank Louis Erdos. July 20, 1964, pp. 1–2.

106 ÁBTL, 3.2.3. Mt-545/1, Z-110/1. “Műszerész” – Tárgy: Találkozó “Műszerész”-szel. Jelentés. London, January 20, 1958, pp. 77–80.

caution and care, as he and the agent too often chose Zeeta House or its environs for their meetings, spent hours talking in the vehicle of the residency, and Bazsó also drove Kiss back from any meetings taking place outside of London.

According to Tömpe, the appearance of Ferenc Bányai clearly indicated that MI5 was using the former chauffeur of the Hungarian Legation to observe Kiss, and it was probable that Kiss and Bányai had remained in touch. The major general also pointed out that Kiss had little chance of becoming properly involved in the screening of the Freedom Association, as British counterintelligence only permitted the operation of this émigré group on condition that it would be under close observation, and the leaders were also chosen from among their own ranks.

Tömpe also shared his suspicions about Agent “Műszerész”. He complained that Kiss had several telephone conversations with Láng, but never reported these calls to the London residency, and Bazsó had to remind the agent on several occasions that he was not allowed to take any steps that might attract the attention of British counterintelligence without permission from his liaison officer. László Csűrös chose to warn Kiss that Scotland Yard had inquired after him, and yet Kiss refused to divulge anything more about their relationship, and the appearance of László Veress and his interest in Kiss also made it uncertain whether the agent should be used against the Freedom Association. Moreover, Dean not only neglected to inquire about Kiss’s connection to the Hungarian Legation, but requested more meetings, asked questions about Hungarian telecommunications, and gave the agent intelligence tasks, all without any apparent sign of regular contact between them. Tömpe suspected that Kiss had been recruited by the British, who tried to give the impression that MI5 had lost interest in Kiss and relegated him to Veress.

Tömpe noted that Bazsó’s reports contained little to no information on the conversations between Agent “Műszerész” and Dean, Láng, and Veress, which meant that the Hungarian Ministry of the Interior was unable to provide proper assistance in the case. Tömpe also mentioned Kepe, a former target of IO “Havasi” (who at the time operated under the code name “Rezes”),¹⁰⁷ and the fact that Bazsó had never mentioned this provocateur to the aforementioned agent. Tömpe then pointed out that it was a mistake to tell Kiss early on about the assessment issued by the Centre: as Kiss had already provided certain materials to the British, any future reports would serve to help MI5 discern what progress Hungarian intelligence had made through Agent “Műszerész”. Tömpe also argued that Bazsó’s promise to help Kiss leave the UK in the event of an emergency was problematic, because if Kiss ever needed to exercise that option, then Bazsó might find himself in a serious predicament. Tömpe

107 Ungváry (2013), pp. 1529–1530.

concluded by observing that the case was so unclear to him that he was unable to assist with any plans for the agent's future employment.¹⁰⁸

The Agent's Confession

On January 25, 1958 at 10:00 a.m., Bazsó met Agent "Műszerész" at the terminal of bus number 22 on Richmond Road, from whence they went to a café so Kiss could submit a report on Csűrös, Láng and Dean's case, and his interrogation at the headquarters of the Immigration Office two days prior. Kiss noted that his connection to the Hungarian Legation had never even been touched upon, and then he proceeded to inquire about the possibility of his repatriation, but Bazsó warned him that, according to their agreement, Kiss had to stay in England until at least the fall of 1958, and he also questioned the agent's sincerity.

As a proof of goodwill, Kiss confessed something that he had hoped to tell his liaison officer at a later date, namely that he had long been recruited by British security service. As this was a delicate subject, the men left the café and boarded bus number 73, and continued their conversation in the park near its terminus. Bazsó was outraged by Kiss's confession of being a double agent, but ultimately agreed to let Kiss explain the circumstances of his recruitment.

According to Kiss, not long after his first visit to the Hungarian consulate, Bányai unexpectedly invited him for lunch, and when the two of them remained alone on that Sunday afternoon, Bányai told him that he knew of Kiss's intention to repatriate. The agent acknowledged it was true, at which point Bányai observed that IO "Havasi" used repatriation applicants to gather information. Kiss did not deny this, and the former chauffeur argued that decent people like Kiss should help the British authorities expose those who provided information to the Hungarian Legation.

Following the meeting mentioned above, Bányai introduced Kiss to Veress – as it turned out, the man Kiss had referred to as "Láng" was actually László Veress all along –, and the latter quizzed Kiss about his past in great detail before proposing that Kiss would be of great use to the British authorities if he helped uncover the contacts of the Hungarian Legation. The agent did not wish to participate in the affairs of the various Hungarian émigré groups, but showed interest in meeting the British officials in charge, and, two days later, Veress introduced him to Dean and another Englishman who spoke Hungarian. Afterwards, they traveled by car to one of the buildings of the Foreign Office, where Kiss was interrogated for an hour.

108 ÁBTL, 3.2.1. Bt-702, Z-110/1958. "Műszerész" – 1/4/"C"/A sz. utasítás. Bakos elvtársnak! London. – Tárgy: Műszerész ügye. Budapest, January 25, 1958, pp. 37–41.

At the Foreign Office, the British instructed Kiss to contact the Hungarian consulate and tell Major Turopoli that the agent had considered his proposal and was willing to assist the Hungarian People's Republic in exchange for securing financial support for his family. Dean was primarily interested in the contacts and persons of interest of the Hungarian Legation, and Veress gave him his address so Kiss could report his findings once his tasks were finished.

Kiss also confessed to Bazsó that Veress knew of their meetings and the tasks had been given by him; in response, the lieutenant talked of treason, but what puzzled him most was why Kiss had never spoken of these developments before. The agent brought up his fears of British counterintelligence discovering that he was working for Hungarian state security, and he wanted to make sure his information would not fall into the hands of MI5, which was his true reason for mentioning Dean despite receiving instructions to the contrary.

Agent "Műszerész" claimed that he had originally planned to confess to Bazsó at the beginning of 1958, by which time he would have reasonably gained the trust of the British; however, he still asked his liaison officer not to tell his superiors about the matter. Kiss added that another reason for postponing his confession was that he thought the London residency would want to employ him for a longer period if they realized that he was involved with the Security Service.

Bazsó reprimanded Agent "Műszerész," saying that if Kiss had had any decency, he would not have lied to the Hungarian intelligence station for a whole year, at which point Kiss also confessed that his reports had not always been completely truthful. With Veress's assistance, he managed to access the technical specifications at Standard Telephones and Cables, but he always included additional details in the documentation.¹⁰⁹ Such tampering is consistent with the second phase of the double-cross maneuver where the enemy is consistently misinformed using previously prepared documents containing deliberate inaccuracies.¹¹⁰

Agent "Műszerész" informed Bazsó that he had been interrogated about telephone exchanges and munition factories in Hungary, and he was reporting these developments to his liaison officer in spite of Dean's instructions. Dean wanted to know what issues Bazsó was interested in and, after Kiss's interrogation, Veress also assisted him in compiling reports on the Mindszenty Home Association and the Freedom Association. In November 1957, Kiss was relegated to Dean, who now requested military information, and instructed Kiss to submit reports on the meetings between him and his liaison officer via mail sent to Box No. 392, London EC1. In his

109 ÁBTL, 3.2.1. Bt-702, Z-110/1958. "Műszerész" – Tárgy: Találkozó "Műszerész"-szel. Jelentés. London, January 25, 1958, pp. 42–46.

110 Andrew (2009), pp. 294–317.

replies, the Englishman designated their meeting places, but in his last letter to Kiss, he informed the latter that he would be abroad for the next six weeks.

Bazsó considered rejecting Kiss's request for repatriation, but Agent "Műszerész" insisted he was not a traitor, and when his liaison officer asked what Kiss planned to do in the future as an agent, Kiss claimed that he would use his current methods to uncover the contacts of British intelligence, as he already knew Veress, Dean, and the former diplomat who had worked for the British Legation in Budapest, and he was also planning to meet Dean's substitute in the near future.

Bazsó could not help but think that Agent "Műszerész" had deceived him for money, and requested a full and accurate report on Kiss's life in the UK, as well as his recruitment by the British. As for future tasks, Bazsó instructed the agent to observe Csűrös and continue his investigation of the Freedom Association, adding that Kiss was allowed to share those results with Dean. Bazsó believed that British counterintelligence had recruited Kiss to use him against the Hungarian Legation, as Bányai, Veress, and Dean were charged with that exact task, and his suspicions were confirmed by the fact that whenever Agent "Műszerész" managed to obtain technical documentation, he asked to relay these to his liaison officer via a third person or drop box "just to be safe", likely at the instruction of the Security Service. Bazsó also found it suspicious that Kiss asked him for advice on target persons and target groups observed by the London residency; he would have considered the agent's story to be pure fiction had it not been for the persons mentioned.¹¹¹

On February 2, 1958, Agent "Műszerész" went to Hyde Park Corner, where Bazsó was waiting for him in the company of Co-optee "Tóth" (legation chauffeur Sándor Bérczi),¹¹² who was in charge of securing the meeting. In the course of the previous week, Kiss had been introduced to his new British contact person, to whom he had issued a report at the end of January about his meeting on January 25, 1958 by mailing to a designated address. According to his report, Bazsó encouraged him to move to London as soon as possible and requested information on Csűrös and the Freedom Association. Dean was quick to reply, and asked Kiss to meet him at Earl's Court underground station the following Saturday at 10:00 a.m. Dean arrived by car, and he was accompanied by the former diplomat from the British Legation in Budapest and the new contact person. Kiss did not catch the name of the latter, but described him as a blond man in his mid-twenties.

At their meeting, Kiss told Bazsó that he did not bring the note sent by the British or the report he had written on his recruitment for fear of detection; Bazsó once

111 ÁBTL, 3.2.1. Bt-702, Z-110/1958. "Műszerész" – Tárgy: Találkozó "Műszerész"-szel. Jelentés. London, January 25, 1958, pp. 46–48.

112 ÁBTL, 3.2.4. K-32. "Szekeres" – IV/13. sz. utasítás. Szirtes elvtársnak! London. – Tárgy: "Szekeres" ügye. Budapest, March 27, 1961, pp. 137–139.

again accused him of treason, but the agent pointed out that he had never provided any information that could be dangerous to the Hungarian state. Bazsó argued that Kiss had personally exposed him to MI5, revealed his own methods, and confirmed that there were intelligence agents at the foreign representation of the Hungarian People's Republic. He also refused to believe that Kiss had accepted the offer of British counterintelligence in order to benefit the London residency; he pointed out that it would have been better if Kiss had mentioned that he was in contact with the Security Service at the very first meeting.

Bazsó ultimately threatened Agent "Műszerész" that, unless he changed his approach to intelligence work, Bazsó would terminate all contact and do everything in his power to prevent Kiss's repatriation, but when Kiss burst into tears at his own misfortune, Bazsó relented and told him that his mistakes could still be rectified. In order to make amends, the agent was to submit a report on his activities between March 1957 and February 1958; Kiss promised to submit the report at their next meeting, and swore that the MI5 had not inquired after Bazsó at all. In the end, the lieutenant felt that his threats had proven effective, but he refused to believe that the British had not instructed Kiss to observe him.¹¹³

The New Official Liaison Officers

On February 16, 1958, Agent "Műszerész" met Bazsó and confessed that, right after receiving strong criticism from his liaison officer, he issued a report to British counterintelligence to the effect that the Hungarian state security was dissatisfied with his efforts to return to London and with his work in the Freedom Association, and instructed him to map out Csűrös's connections. The agent also informed Bazsó that, on February 14, he took the 7:40 a.m. train from Banbury to Paddington Station, and, as promised by his British contact, Kiss was greeted there by his assigned case officer and the alleged former diplomat who spoke Hungarian, who introduced themselves as Sinclair and Sanderson, respectively. The three men left the station by car; Sinclair was driving, and they stopped in a side-street to hold a meeting.

At their meeting, Agent "Műszerész" informed the Englishmen that he was met with distrust at the Freedom Association, where hardly anyone cared to speak to him besides Csűrös. In response, Sinclair referred him to Veress and instructed Kiss to undertake moving to London only on the condition that the Hungarian Legation provided him an allowance of £2 per week; however, in the event that Kiss's terms

113 ÁBTL, 3.2.3. Mt-545/1, Z-110/1. "Műszerész" – Tárgy: Találkozó "Műszerész"-szel. Jelentés. London, February 3, 1958, pp. 81–85.

were met, MI5 would have still wished to postpone his return to London. Regarding Csűrös and the Freedom Association, Kiss could only provide general information, such as the hostility shown towards Éliás. The agent also reported to his British contacts that the London residency wanted concrete materials, but Sinclair replied that Kiss should not bother with handovers because they were certain that this was no cause for the Hungarian state security to dismiss him as an agent.

Bazsó confronted Kiss about his reluctance to share more information about his dealings with the British and demanded an explanation for his unjustifiable request for further financial support. Kiss argued that, according to British law, he was supposed to hand over any money received from the Hungarian intelligence to the treasury; he had done so twice already, and since then had been trying to avoid this obligation by claiming that his Hungarian liaison officer had failed to pay him for his services. The agent also confessed that MI5 was paying him £5 a month, contrary to his previous claims that, in order to avoid detection, he received no financial support from the British at all. Bazsó failed to understand why the agent continued to lie and what he was trying to achieve, to which Kiss replied that he sincerely wanted to help the Hungarian People's Republic, but as they showed no concern for his safety, it was meaningless to carry on with his tasks.

Bazsó once again reassured Agent "Műszerész" that if he told the truth and complied with the instructions of the residency, he would safely avoid detection, but Kiss suddenly revived his former concerns about submitting written reports for fear that they might fall into British hands, and at Bazsó's request, he also gave an example. On the evening of February 15, 1958, when he complained of the distrust with which he was met at the Freedom Association, Veress reassured him that the newly arrived Hungarian emigrants were afraid of potential communists and state security agents hiding among their ranks, some of whom had since repatriated to Hungary. Veress instructed Kiss to keep his eyes open when in the company of Hungarian emigrants and provide some information to Hungarian intelligence. Kiss thought it self-evident that he should tell them everything, but Veress retorted that he knew of Kiss's plans to repatriate in September 1958. The agent claimed that he had never mentioned his intentions to Veress, who refused to tell him where he had received his information. Kiss added that he had never told anyone besides Bazsó, which suggested that the information came from the London residency. His liaison officer firmly dismissed these accusations by pointing out that Kiss had written about his intention to repatriate to his wife, which had likely caught the attention of British mail inspection. (The latter has been functioning as the first line of defense of British security at the beginning of the twentieth century).¹¹⁴ Agent

114 Walton, C. (2013). *Empire of Secrets: British Intelligence, the Cold War and the Twilight of Empire*. Harper Press, pp. 11–23.

“Műszerész” gave this considerable thought, and then replied that he had received instructions from the Security Service to reassure his wife about his intention to repatriate.

At the end of his meeting with Bazsó, Agent “Műszerész” refused to hand over his report for fear that it would fall into British hands and, in his despair, he accused Bazsó of wanting a written confession because he himself worked for the other side. His liaison officer firmly dismissed these accusations and warned Kiss that unless he complied with his instructions, all contact would be terminated and he would never step on Hungarian soil again. Kiss was taken aback and argued that his current report was less detailed because he did not have enough time to compose a proper report, and finally asked for a period of two weeks to reflect. Bazsó agreed, but demanded an extremely thorough report by the end of those two weeks, and Kiss had to communicate to the MI5 that the Hungarian state security would not compensate him for the expenses incurred by his moving to London, and they were also dissatisfied with his efforts to map Csűrös’s network of connections.

In his own report, Bazsó considered it likely that Kiss’s report was full of lies; in response, the residency chief instructed Co-optee “Tóth” to be at Paddington Station on February 28, 1958 in case Kiss might be meeting someone there.¹¹⁵ Five days later, Major General Tömpe also warned the station chief to put more effort into preparing Police Lieutenant Bazsó for his meetings with Agent “Műszerész”, as he found it insupportable that a member of the London residency had been misinformed for over a year by an agent of British counterintelligence.

In light of Kiss’s confession, it is especially interesting that Department II/3 pointed out to Police Lieutenant Bazsó several times that the agent was probably controlled by the British. In their opinion, Bazsó was too focused on obtaining materials on telephone exchanges when he should have been suspicious from the moment Bányai’s name had been mentioned, and he should have realized that Kiss might be collaborating with the British authorities. Investigations into Kiss’s circumstances also progressed at an unusually slow pace, and yet Bazsó wasted no time to inform the agent of the residency’s assessment. Furthermore, in his reports, Kiss omitted to mention any of the methods used by British counterintelligence, such as selecting and employing candidates, what tasks Kiss had received regarding other diplomats of the Hungarian Legation, the financial compensation he had received, and who his liaison officers were. In Tömpe’s opinion, Kiss was not so important an agent as to have several liaison officers.

The Ministry of the Interior also criticized the fact that, as soon as Kiss contacted the Hungarian consulate as an emigrant of 1956, he was immediately asked to obtain

115 ÁBTL, 3.2.3. Mt-545/1, Z-110/1. “Műszerész” – Tárgy: Találkozó “Műszerész”-szel. Jelentés. London, February 20, 1958, pp. 91–97.

intelligence materials, and, after his second visit to the consulate, a secure meeting was held without the prior permission of the Centre and it concluded with the candidate's recruitment. In the experience of Hungarian intelligence, the Hungarian consulate in London was often contacted by British agents as well as provocateurs; in light of that possibility, Tömpe argued that it was a grave mistake to pressure Kiss into cooperating, as MI5 was able to exploit their connection against the Hungarian state security. Kiss's character studies however seemed realistic, so the Centre requested detailed reports on his meetings with Bányai, Csűrös, "Láng" (identical to Veress), and Dean. The most important aspect of these reports was two statements about Police Lieutenant Bazsó and Major Turopoli, respectively.

Spymaster Tömpe concluded that if Agent "Műszerész" was found to be sincere, he could be used to deceive British intelligence, but future meeting places would have to be chosen with greater care in order to confirm the potential presence of MI5 agents: for example, Hyde Park Corner was not a good choice because it lay only a few hundred meters away from the Hungarian Legation, and that distance was insufficient for the purpose. Major General Tömpe primarily complained that, after almost a year of meetings, Bazsó had yet to issue a statement on the case and was actually trying to dismiss the agent instead, as suggested by his comment that it might be best to allow Kiss to repatriate at the request of British intelligence. The Ministry of the Interior refused to approve the agent's repatriation request until his situation vis-a-vis British intelligence was completely understood.¹¹⁶

The Methods of MI5 and the Agent's Sincerity

The next meeting between Agent "Műszerész" and his liaison officer took place on March 2, 1958 outside the cinema by Richmond Station, where Kiss confronted Bazsó and asked why the Hungarian Ministry of the Interior was harassing his wife in order to coerce him to confess. According to Kiss, his spouse told him in a letter that her workplace had suddenly decided to deduct from her already meager salary the cost of a camera she had lost eighteen months before. Bazsó considered this a simple case of employee liability, but the agent pointed out the uncanny timing of the deduction. As for Kiss, he did not manage to complete his report on the history of his recruitment by the British. He claimed that he had planned to record his conversations with Veress and British counterintelligence using a portable tape recorder, but Bazsó continued to insist on a detailed written report on Kiss's recruitment and activities.

116 ÁBTL, 3.2.3. Mt-545/1, Z-110/1. "Műszerész" – 2/3"C"/A. sz. utasítás. Bakos elvtársnak! London. – Tárgy: "Műszerész" ügye. Budapest, February 25, 1958, pp. 86–90.

Agent “Műszerész” informed Bazsó that, in response to his report issued on February 16, 1958, MI5 contacted him on Wednesday to request a meeting at the station on Friday; come Friday, Sinclair and Sanderson took him to a special apartment in one of the streets off Bayswater Road, where they served him Tokaji wine and gave him a detailed map of Budapest so he could mark the locations of telephone exchanges. While they were drinking wine, Sanderson remarked that the British secret services had several apartments in London, and Kiss was instructed to recite to Sinclair the report he had written for the residency. At the end of the meeting, the Englishmen told Kiss that they would discuss other matters on March 28 by Marble Arch.

On the day of the proposed meeting between Kiss and MI5, Co-optee “Tóth” was waiting at Paddington Station, but Kiss simply continued down the District Line without speaking to anyone. Bazsó did not ask to see the map Kiss had mentioned earlier, but warned him that if the agent failed to submit a written report on his life in the UK by their next meeting, all contact would be terminated. He also instructed Kiss to keep an eye on the Hungarian immigrants as preparations for the anniversary of the Hungarian Revolution of (March 15) 1848 drew near.

Bazsó highly doubted that “Műszerész” was an agent of British counterintelligence, but had certain suspicions regarding Kiss. For instance, eight weeks had passed between the first and second visit to the Hungarian consulate, which the agent could have spent training for intelligence work at MI5. Bazsó could also verify the connection between Bányai, Veress, Dean, and the Security Service, as well as Kiss’s descriptions of 109 Sloane Street and Veress’s house. Moreover, the agent wanted to conduct material handovers using a contact person, which would have allowed MI5 to identify the contact persons or drop boxes of the London residency.

Despite some evidence to the contrary, the agent’s expediency to the British also remained doubtful, because “Műszerész” had received no substantial tasks from Hungarian state security for quite some time: Bazsó no longer requested any technical specifications or blueprints, a point that Security Service had suspiciously ignored, and they also showed no interest in Bazsó himself. Moreover, the agent was allowed to conduct his meetings without prior directions or external observation and used primitive contact methods; the British side had waived Kiss’s obligation to hand over any money he received from Bazsó, and Sanderson told the agent of the existence of MI5 safe houses.

From the above, Police Lieutenant Bazsó drew two alternative conclusions. In the first scenario, Kiss was recruited in April 1957 by MI5 for financial compensation and he enthusiastically accepted the role, but when his sincerity was called into question at the beginning of 1958, Kiss began to worry about his detection, and for the sake of his pending repatriation, he considered it best to reveal his connection to the Security Service. However, Bazsó could not tell whether the agent had done so voluntarily or at

MI5's the instruction. As Kiss did not dare reveal his activities on that side, he ended up contradicting himself, hence his attempts to procrastinate regarding the report on his recruitment by British counterintelligence. In the second scenario, either Veress or Dean failed to realize that the agent was connected to the London residency, and therefore requested information on Hungary instead. When Kiss revealed this to Bazsó, he noticed that his liaison officer was interested in Veress and Dean, and therefore talked about his recruitment by the British, but was then frightened by Bazsó's accusations of treason.

In his report, Bazsó recommended to the residency chief that, for the next three weeks, Agent "Műszerész" should be observed every Friday from his arrival at Paddington Station to his entering his apartment, and Bazsó also wanted to examine the letters sent by his British contact persons in order to verify the signatures. In the event that the agent was truly connected to MI5 or MI6 (Military Intelligence Section 6 or Secret Intelligence Service, in charge of operations abroad), they would allow Kiss to repatriate in the summer of 1958 in order to continue his investigation in Hungary; however, if Kiss turned out to be unconnected to the British, then they would immediately exclude him from the network.¹¹⁷

In his instructions issued on March 22, 1958, Major General Tömpe commended Bazsó's latest report, for which he received praise from the station chief. Agent "Műszerész" was now better managed, but until his sincerity was confirmed he would not be employed on the line of British intelligence and counterintelligence. According to Tömpe, Bazsó had voiced his distrust and threatened to terminate all contact so many times that Kiss was no longer taking him seriously; moreover, the fact that they continued to hold meetings suggested that the London residency did in fact need the agent.

Based on Tömpe's instructions, if Agent "Műszerész" failed to complete his tasks by the next meeting, he would have to be dismissed immediately without listening to his excuses and explanations. In other words, if Kiss failed to understand that Bazsó doubted his willingness to cooperate, then Hungarian intelligence service would not endorse his employment as an agent. However, the residency could not exclude the agent from the network without the permission of Hungarian Ministry of Interior, because exclusion also required taking certain measures to ensure that Kiss could not be used against them in the future.

Major General Tömpe's main criticism was that, for a long time, Police Lieutenant Bazsó was not properly prepared for his meetings, and therefore could not reliably assess the veracity of the agent's statements. He instructed Bazsó to interrogate Kiss about the tasks he had received and the agents who had assigned them, and how he

117 ÁBTL, 3.2.3. Mt-545/1, Z-110/1. "Műszerész" – Tárgy: Találkozó "Műszerész"-szel. Megjegyzés. London, March 2, 1958, pp. 97–105.

complied with his instructions; here the goal was to compromise any hostile British agents with his assistance.¹¹⁸ Bazsó attributed his mistakes not to negligence in the case, but to a lack of experience in intelligence work and his lack of insight into human nature; however, he disagreed whether Department II/3 had warned him several times of the possibility that Agent “Műszerész” was affiliated with the British secret services. It is worth noting that Tömpe himself only mentioned the possibility once, when the liaison officer mentioned certain contradictions regarding “Láng” and Dean. The second and third instructions urged recruitment; at the same time, Bazsó had also interrogated the agent on the subject of Bányaí and the inquiries made by Scotland Yard. In his own defense, Bazsó pointed out that as soon as he had reason to believe that Kiss cooperated with British counterintelligence, he dropped his requests for technical specifications; however, he did not dispute the fact that any persons contacting the Hungarian consulate had to be handled with the utmost caution, and could only be employed as agents after a very extensive background check, which did not happen in this particular case. As for their meetings, the third meeting was secured on account of the proposed recruitment, and Hyde Park Corner was only chosen as a meeting place due to having exceptionally low traffic on Sunday mornings.¹¹⁹

On March 22, 1958, Bazsó set out to meet Agent “Műszerész” at the entrance to Holland Park via Kensington High Street. The liaison officer left his apartment and took the bus, purchased a book on Oxford Street, and returned to the department store on Baker Street to peruse the toy section before walking to the designated meeting place. Kiss was punctual, but he did not complete his tasks, and requested permission to hand over his materials at his own apartment. As usual, the agent immediately asked about financial compensation, and in return Bazsó reminded him of his obligations; afterwards, they took two transfers to Kiss’s new apartment, where they sat down at a quiet pub nearby.

For his meeting, Agent “Műszerész” only managed to complete the first part of his recruitment history, made no copies of his reports to British counterintelligence, and only brought with him the last letter sent by his British case officer; he claimed he had no time to complete the first two tasks and forgot about the third one. Bazsó instructed him to rectify these deficiencies and seek out Veress at least two or three times before his next meeting with his liaison officer. Bazsó also required an accurate report on their conversation, any changes in the management of the Mindszenty Home Association, the difficulties of the Freedom Association, the Calvinist Club, and Csűrös’s connections.

118 ÁBTL, 3.2.3. Mt-545/1, Z-110/1. “Műszerész” – 3/7“C”/A. sz. utasítás. Bakos elvtársnak! London. – Tárgy: “Műszerész” ügye. Budapest, March 22, 1958, pp. 106–108.

119 ÁBTL, 3.2.3. Mt-545/1, Z-110/1. “Műszerész” – Tárgy: “Műszerész” ügye. London, March 23, 1958, pp. 116–117.

Agent “Műszerész” gave his word to complete the tasks assigned by his liaison officer, and reported on the events of the previous three weeks. He spent his previous weekend putting his new apartment in order, as Kiss had decided to rent a private chamber from the British owner of 33 Roehampton Lane, London SW15. He issued a report to MI5 on his March 2, 1958 meeting on the very day, but only received their reply on the following week. Sinclair instructed him to be at the station on Friday evening, but the agent was too late to catch the 7:40 p.m. train and, when he called Sinclair to apologize, the latter only told him that they would notify him of the next meeting. By that time, the British case officer had been informed that Kiss had moved into a new apartment and now worked in the town of Hatfield, which lay closer to London than Banbury.

On March 15, 1958, Kiss was late for the assembly organized at the Mindszenty Home Association, but, while watching the film *Budapest in Flames*, he spotted Veress, who invited him immediately after the screening to his apartment for an urgent meeting. According to Kiss, MI5 strongly objected to their official relationship because they feared that Veress might expose himself, and because Veress tried to bypass them in order to keep an eye on Éliás. Hence, they decided to take over his network of informants.

Agent “Műszerész” also informed Bazsó that he had ordered a portable tape recorder and had already paid £15 in advance, but the seller refused to hand it over until he paid at least one more instalment. In response, Bazsó told the agent that he would not receive financial compensation until the Hungarian Ministry of Interior was certain of his sincerity, and reminded Kiss that he did not receive permission from the London residency to record any conversations. In the end, Bazsó instructed Kiss to purchase the tape recorder in several installments, but he was not allowed to use it during missions without prior testing.

Kiss reported to Bazsó that, on March 21, 1958, he received a letter from Sinclair, who instructed the agent to contact him via Grosvenor 7817, but the next morning, Sinclair only told him that he would see him on March 28 at King’s Cross. In response, his liaison officer pointed out that Kiss had made no effort to rectify his mistakes because he had only given a vague account of his own personal history, and, after several requests to see his correspondence with the British, Kiss still had failed to produce any letters, and did not inform Bazsó of the instructions he had received from them. Kiss returned to his apartment to fetch a report for his liaison officer and Bazsó judged it to be credible. He considered it likely that the agent had been working for British counterintelligence from the beginning; nevertheless, he proposed a small payment to assist Kiss with his purchase in the hopes that Veress might compromise himself and the London residency would have evidence of his connection to MI5.¹²⁰

120 ÁBTL, 3.2.3. Mt-545/1, Z-110/1. “Műszerész” – Tárgy: Találkozó “Műszerész”-szel. London, March 23, 1958, pp. 122–128.

On May 28, 1958, Kiss arrived on the 6:40 p.m. train at King's Cross and was one of the first to enter the lobby of the train station, where Co-optee "Tóth" noticed that he was greeted by a blond bespectacled man in his mid-thirties. The two men left the train station, got into a black Ford Zephyr (license plate number: OYP 715), and drove towards Great Portland Street. Co-optee "Tóth" proposed that the London residency should provide him with an unmarked vehicle by the next meeting, which would enable him to track his targets unnoticed.¹²¹

Secrets and More Lies

On April 12, 1958, Bazsó decided to drive to his 9:00 a.m. meeting with Agent "Műszerész", only stopping along the way to buy stationery at a department store; he parked the car near Putney Bridge and took bus number 22 to its terminus, from whence he walked to a restaurant by Barnes Common on Upper Richmond Road. Kiss was punctual, but he had not written down his personal history over the last eighteen months because he had been informed that Bányai wanted to see his correspondence. Bazsó pointed out that reports were meant to be finalized within twenty-four hours of meeting one's liaison officer, and repeated his threats to terminate all contact with Kiss. In the period leading up to their meeting, Kiss had only been to the Calvinist Club, made no copies of his reports to the Security Service, and provided no descriptions of his British case officers. He did bring a sealed envelope containing instructions from MI5, but Bazsó was unable to inspect them during the meeting; however, at the Hungarian Legation, he found that the envelope contained only a blank sheet of paper.

Kiss claimed that, within the past three weeks, he had only met the officers of the Security Service on April 9, 1958: Sanderson was waiting for him near King's Cross and Dean greeted him cordially in the car, informing him that he would be taking over as Kiss's next case officer. Dean requested a report on Kiss's experiences at the Calvinist Club, and he also had to discover which members of the Hungarian émigré community were of interest to Police Lieutenant Bazsó.¹²²

All Kiss had to report to Bazsó was that, on March 22, 1958, the Hungarian folk-dance group established in 1952 by József Baracsi performed at the Calvinist Club, where their reception was lukewarm at best. In Baracsi's opinion, the group was facing severe financial difficulties. Meanwhile, the Calvinist congregation launched

121 ÁBTL, 3.2.3. Mt-545/1, Z-110/1. "Műszerész" – Tárgy: "Műszerész" ellenőrzéséről. London, March 29, 1958, p. 121.

122 ÁBTL, 3.2.3. Mt-545/1, Z-110/1. "Műszerész" – Tárgy: Találkozó "Műszerész"-szel. London, April 14, 1958, pp. 132–135.

a campaign to make a census of Calvinists living outside of London, and also issued a circular on their financial, religious, and administrative problems. The documents provided by Kiss confirmed that the pastor was a man named Sándor Varga, László Csűrös was the secular chair and chief steward, and the treasurer was Miklós Udvarhelyi.¹²³

The meeting on April 19, 1958 took place by the hospital in Putney, where Agent “Műszerész” arrived over fifteen minutes late, and excused himself by saying he had been busy trying to fix his landlady’s car. Kiss only brought with him the letters sent by British counterintelligence, because he had a large batch of radio devices to repair by Saturday, and he still had reservations about putting certain subjects in writing. He then brought up his previous plan to record his conversations with a tape recorder, but Bazsó reprimanded him and pointed out that the agent’s proposal was no less dangerous than writing down the events of the past months on paper. Bazsó was forced to admit that Kiss had been somewhat expedient to the London residency, but added that the agent would have been much more useful if he had told the truth from the beginning.

Agent “Műszerész” informed his liaison officer that, on April 13, 1958 at 7:00 p.m., he visited Veress’s home as per their previous phone call. Kiss reported that he had arrived at 7:10 p.m. and was let in by his host, but the conversation took place in the back room. Kiss revealed to Veress that Bazsó had requested information on the Calvinist Club, the Mindszenty Home Association, and the Freedom Association; Veress was not surprised and asked Kiss if there was any point in meeting with his liaison officer at all. The agent admitted to Veress that he was unable to complete the tasks assigned by Bazsó, as he had repeatedly requested that he issue reports on Csűrös’s connections as well as the management of the Mindszenty Home Association and the Freedom Association. Kiss also complained that he received no materials from the British that he could have shown to his liaison officer, and requested his host’s assistance; however, Veress was not competent in the matter, and only made a promise to talk to Dean. In return, he asked the agent to confirm how much Bazsó knew of the conference in Paris that was organized in March by the Freedom Association, and then asked Kiss to name engineers and party leaders with whom he had become acquainted in Kazincbarcika. Kiss mentioned a few names, but none of them interested Veress except for a man named Tarján, who used to be the head of the planning department at the Borsod Chemical Combine. Veress claimed that Tarján was an agent of Hungarian state security and instructed Kiss to gather information on Hungarian refugees from Kazincbarcika, a task that would have required help from Kiss’s wife. Bazsó told the

123 ÁBTL, 3.2.3. Mt-545/1, Z-110/1. “Műszerész” – Információs jelentés. Adta: “Műszerész”. Vette: “Szepesi”. London, April 14, 1958, p. 146.

agent that he had learned about Éliás's troubles from the British press, and he was no stranger to the group within the Freedom Association led by Ferenc Szabó with the approval of British counterintelligence, but his only source of information on the conference in Paris was the newspaper *Nemzetőr* ['National Guard'].

According to Veress, Éliás and his associates had withdrawn £900–£1,200 to provide aid to wounded freedom fighters, but had no receipts to account for the sum they had taken; at the same time, Sándor Gábel had rented out several apartments on behalf of the Freedom Association, and, with regard to the criminal liability law in force until 1967,¹²⁴ he only used these apartments to lend them to homosexuals for money. Veress gave Kiss permission to relay this to his liaison officer as information on the former leaders of the Freedom Association. On April 16, 1958, Dean called Kiss to meet him at the station on Friday at 5:00 p.m., where his British case officer gave him £5 and told him to follow Veress's instructions.

Upon inspection, Police Lieutenant Bazsó confirmed that the letters provided by Kiss were real and not fabricated, as evidenced by the fluent English writing and two envelopes bearing an OXON stamp indicating Oxfordshire. Bazsó believed that the Hungarian letters had been written by Sanderson, but found significant differences between the incorrect language of the letter dated December 12, and the acceptable language of the letters dated October 23 and 31. He noticed a single inconsistency in the date of postage, but, in general, the creases of the letters confirmed that they were genuine.

Before the end of their meeting, Bazsó instructed Agent "Műszerész" to call Veress's number so he could eavesdrop on their conversation, and while Kiss agreed at once, he asked his liaison officer for change to use the telephone. The agent proceeded to dial ENT 7103, and when Veress answered on the third ring, Kiss addressed him as "Uncle Laci". Bazsó could clearly hear Veress tell the agent that Csűrös was the solution to his financial problems, and when Kiss mentioned Szabó, Veress told him that he had not received permission from the Security Service to provide information about the latter; nevertheless, he was more willing to consider handing Kiss a copy of the resolution issued at the conference in Paris. Kiss spoke of his plans to contact Éliás in the hopes of gleaning new information, but Veress explicitly instructed him to wait until Sunday, at which point the agent politely said goodbye and hung up. Bazsó paid the agent £5 and instructed Kiss to say that their meeting had ended at noon, and Kiss called Veress at 12:30 p.m.

According to Bazsó's report, he felt that he had made some progress in confirming the agent's sincerity, as the phone call showed that Kiss was able to talk to Veress openly. However, the fact that Veress questioned the necessity of Kiss's meeting his liaison

124 Egedy, G. (1998). *Nagy-Britannia története*. Aula, p. 321.

officer at all gave Bazsó the impression that Kiss no longer had anything of interest to tell British counterintelligence. Bazsó suspected that the agent wished to detach himself from both sides, which would have explained why he provided no information to MI5 and deliberately sabotaged any tasks given by Hungarian state security. Bazsó concluded that, once they were acquainted with Kiss's full history, they might be able to use the agent to compromise Veress; however, he would receive no more tasks in order to prevent further betrayal.¹²⁵

Department II/3 agreed with Bazsó's assessment on Agent "Műszerész"; however, they requested a detailed report on Bányai and the involvement of Scotland Yard, and did not approve Bazsó and the agent traveling across London rather than holding their meetings at secured meeting places. The draft report written by the agent never reached the Hungarian Ministry of the Interior, and the paper scraps attached to the report proved absolutely useless. Major General Tömpe noted that if those scraps were supposed to be the report itself, then IO "Szepesi" was wrong to accept them at all. He also instructed the London residency not to provide financial support to Kiss for the tape recorder until the agent was interrogated and a proper plan was devised for using the tape recorder, which could also be used to compromise him in the eyes of Scotland Yard.¹²⁶

On Saturday, May 10, 1958 at 10:00 a.m., Agent "Műszerész" met Bazsó by the ramp to Putney Bridge, where he handed over the second part of the history of his recruitment by British counterintelligence and a description of the everyday activities of the Mindszenty Home Association, but failed to provide descriptions of the MI5 officers due to time constraints. Kiss was in a bad mood because his oldest son's behavior troubled him, and he also received instructions from his superior at work that, on May 19, he must travel to Newcastle, a city lying 480 miles from London, and apply for work there. As the foreman was not fond of Hungarians in general, Kiss decided to make no opposition; in response, Bazsó instructed Kiss to prevent his own transfer by seeking help from Dean and his associates.

On April 20, 1958, Kiss tried to visit Éliás, but he was informed by an older woman that Éliás had left his home a month ago and moved to an unknown address; Kiss also added that, when he informed Veress of this development, Veress relieved Kiss of all tasks related to the Freedom Association.¹²⁷ The association was already sinking into insignificance because Béla Király was now preoccupied with his entrance examination to Columbia University in New York, which he hoped would be the foundation

125 ÁBTL, 3.2.3. Mt-545/1, Z-110/1. "Műszerész" – Tárgy; Találkozó "Műszerész"-szel. Jelentés. London, April 21, 1958, pp. 150–159.

126 ÁBTL, 3.2.3. Mt-545/1, Z-110/1. "Műszerész" – 4/3"C"/A. sz. utasítás. Bakos elvtársnak! London. – Tárgy: "Műszerész" ügye. Budapest, April 26, 1958, pp. 129–131.

127 ÁBTL, 3.2.3. Mt-545/1, Z-110/1. "Műszerész" – Tárgy; Találkozó "Műszerész"-szel. Információs jelentés. Adta: "Műszerész". Vette: "Szepesi". London, May 10, 1958, pp. 137–139.

of his future career in academia.¹²⁸ With his retirement, two new organizations sprang up under similar names: one was led by Gergely Pongrácz, the leader of the revolutionary group in Corvin köz, while the more influential Global Hungarian Freedom Fighter Association (*Magyar Szabadságharcos Világszövetség*) operated under the leadership of former Home Defense Lieutenant General Lajos Veress of Dálnok.¹²⁹

On April 26, 1958, Kiss visited the Mindszenty Home Association, where approximately forty members were attending a board meeting: at the pulpit, Association Secretary Baron Gyula Bornemissza sat in the company of a Catholic priest, who was currently wrapping up his financial report. The previous week, they had purchased a large refrigerator for £106, and in exchange for £350 they also managed to settle with their previous tenants, which allowed the England Association of Roman Catholic Hungarians to move into the basement of the building. Regarding the second point of the agenda, the priest requested that the association approve voting by mail for members who had difficulties attending in person, and to display the constitution of the association in a public space. Some of the founding members complained about the delay in the information, including Tamás Mantuánó Márffy (1907–1969),¹³⁰ who had served at the Hungarian Legation in Ankara from 1941 to 1943, and fled to London in 1948. Later, the Hungarian state security later tried to pressure him into cooperation by offering to release his son, to no avail.¹³¹ The former diplomat was especially displeased because the association only managed to call upon a total of 120 persons out of a congregation of approximately 3,500 Hungarian Catholics. Board member Péter Törzs informed those attending that they had sent letters to every person on the list of members, but only four of them replied.

According to Kiss, following the exchange above, the newly arrived members and the older members of the Mindszenty Home Association clashed; the latter then left the chamber while the former proceeded to vote on the proposed changes. At the end of the board meeting, Kiss also learned that the England Association of Roman Catholic Hungarians had purchased a larger building by Holland Park exclusively for their leader's personal use, and this was criticized by the founders, because they had experienced serious financial disputes with the last two spiritual leaders of the association.

At their meeting, Kiss reported to Bazsó that, on April 25, 1958, he had met Dean and Sanderson, and he issued a report in two copies to them on the events of the previous day, but Dean returned his own copy and instructed Kiss to give his handwritten copy to his liaison officer at the London residency. Kiss had little else to convey

128 Király, B. (2004). *Amire nincs ige. Visszaemlékezések, 1912–2004*. HVG Kiadói Rt., p. 305.

129 Borbándi (1989), pp. 449–450.

130 ÁBTL, 3.2.3. Mt-545/1, Z-110/1. “Műszerész” – Tárgy: Találkozó “Műszerész”-szel. Információs jelentés. Adta: “Műszerész”. Vette: “Szepesi”. London, May 10, 1958, pp. 139–140.

131 Ötvös, I. (2012). Államvédelem a kalapszalonn nyomában. Márffy Mantuánó Tamás szervezési kísérlete. *Kommentár*, 7(2), 71–79.

besides a conversation with István Tóth, a tailor from Dévaványa, who told Kiss that, in the summer of 1957, he had warned Károly Pék, the leader of the refugee camp in Hednesford, that one of his acquaintances who now stayed in England, Ministry of Foreign Affairs courier István L. Papp, had previously been employed on intelligence missions.¹³²

On May 17, 1958, Agent “Műszerész” deposited his description of Veress at a telephone booth near Putney Bridge, from where an officer of the residency immediately delivered it to the legation; upon inspecting the report, Police Lieutenant Bazsó was displeased that the agent had yet to complete his other tasks, but thought it a favorable development that Kiss’s dispute with his supervisor had been successfully resolved. On Monday, May 12, Dean instructed Kiss to refuse being transferred, and promised to help him find a new position. Accordingly, Kiss talked to his supervisor the next morning and threatened to quit, and two days later, on May 14, the director settled the matter by canceling Kiss’s transfer to Newcastle.

Aside from solving Kiss’s employment problems, Dean only instructed the agent to provide the Hungarian state security with information on the Mindszenty Home Association, and continued to show no interest in his liaison officer. Bazsó pointed out that, unless Kiss regularly visited the Mindszenty Home Association, the Calvinist Club, and the Freedom Association, he would not be able to meet new people that might interest Hungarian intelligence. Kiss complained about his expenses, and Bazsó proposed that, if the agent met someone interesting and submitted a detailed report of their acquaintance and conversation, the residency would compensate him.

Agent “Műszerész” also complained to Bazsó that Veress had repeatedly refused to meet him in person, and did not call him back. In his opinion, Veress was an active agent of British intelligence because he was extremely well-informed on Hungarian events and his home was full of relevant literature, manuals, encyclopedias, and maps; moreover, he seemed to have a good working relationship with the British officials, who regularly sought his opinion. Veress used Bányai and other earlier Hungarian émigrés to search for promising candidates among the new wave of Hungarian refugees, and then introduced them to British intelligence and security services. However, as he had relatives in Hungary who needed protection, British intelligence did not allow Veress to serve as a case officer. His uncle, Lajos Veress of Dálnok (1889–1976),¹³³ played a prominent role in Hungarian émigré circles, and Veress himself entertained hopes that he would become a member of Hungarian leadership in the event of a political system change in Hungary.

132 ÁBTL, 3.2.3. Mt-545/1, Z-110/1. “Műszerész” – Tárgy: Találkozó “Műszerész”-szel. Információs jelentés. Adta: “Műszerész”. Vette: “Szepesi”. London, May 10, 1958, pp. 140–145.

133 Szakály, S. (2015). *A 2. vkf osztály: Tanulmányok a magyar katonai hírszerzés és elhárítás történetéből 1918–1945*. 2nd edition. Veritas, pp. 243–245.

According to Kiss, the former diplomat was very polite and seemed like an intelligent man; he considered himself important, but was not conceited.¹³⁴ His wife had been working as a secretary for the BBC since 1950, and in 1959, her daughter Dalma (who was born from her first marriage) married mathematician Lajos Takács, who was attending a conference in Scotland. Veress's father had passed away, but his mother still lived in Budapest and regularly corresponded with her son.¹³⁵

A “Favorable” Turn

In order to complete his report on the history of his recruitment by British counterintelligence, Agent “Műszerész” had to recount his memories from a year ago, which meant that Bazsó could only focus on the more glaring contradictions in Kiss's narrative. For instance, on January 25, 1958, Kiss claimed that he had contacted the Hungarian consulate of his own volition and Bányai disapproved of his intention to repatriate, but, in the new version, he claimed that he had asked Bányai for directions to the legation. Kiss had also told Bányai of his entire conversation with Major Turopoli, a fact he attempted to deny in his current report. The agent consistently claimed that Bányai had introduced him to Veress at his own apartment, where the latter requested his personal information, and now he also attributed the idea of following the Polish example and establishing a Hungarian counterintelligence organization to Veress, when in his report from August 1957, Kiss claimed that he had heard “Láng” and two Englishmen talk about it at the Calvinist Club. In his new report, the agent also warned Bazsó that Security Service knew of the contents of Kiss's conversation with Hungarian Consul Imre Turopoli, which gave Kiss the impression that MI5 had managed to infiltrate the foreign representation of the Hungarian People's Republic, though the defection of former secretary Ádám would have also explained the matter. At the end of January 1957, Kiss claimed that Veress had introduced him to Dean and to another Englishman who spoke Hungarian, and the two took him to the Foreign Office; according to his report in May 1958, however, Veress invited him somewhere else, where he was greeted by General “Láng” and Dean, who were both dressed as ordinary civilians. Originally, Kiss stated that he had been instructed by Dean to visit the Hungarian legation and report to Veress afterwards, but later he claimed that Veress had prepared him for the visit.

134 ÁBTL, 3.2.3. Mt-545/1, Z-110/1. “Műszerész” – Információs jelentés. Adta: “Műszerész”. Vette: “Szepesi”. London, May 18, 1958, pp. 162–167.

135 Veress (1995), pp. 350–363.

Bazsó considered Kiss's reports from May 1958 more or less credible compared to his subsequent reports,¹³⁶ while Major General Tömpe pointed out a significant departure from the agent's earlier statements. He concluded that Kiss would have to be interrogated about Tarján from the Borsod Chemical Combine, and, with an appropriate action plan, he felt that Kiss could prove useful in compromising Veress; at the same time, they had to figure out why Agent "Műszerész" refrained from submitting written reports. According to Tömpe, Kiss shared the opinion of British intelligence that the London residency needed his services, and therefore would not terminate contact with him, and he also noted that his instructions from MI5 had barely changed at all, but, to preserve the agent's trust, they had to refrain from interrogating him about his discussions with British counterintelligence.

In his assessment, Tömpe argued that, when Kiss had finally provided proof of his sincerity, the residency should have mentioned certain Hungarian émigrés who had participated in provocations against the foreign representations and other interests of the Hungarian People's Republic.¹³⁷ On May 18, 1957, a group of twenty-five people trashed the Hungarian Club of London, which was known for its communist ties.¹³⁸ The incident was even reported by the London newspapers, and when seven members of the group were brought to court a few months later, one of them defended himself by claiming that his father had been executed in Hungary during the reprisals that followed the Hungarian Revolution of 1956.¹³⁹ On the night of the one-year anniversary of the revolt, a group of Hungarian refugees smashed the windows of the Hungarian consulate,¹⁴⁰ and later it was discovered that, contrary to their information, István L. Papp had not fled to the West. Police Colonel Artúr Lehel suspected that István Tóth was merely bragging there but, at the same time, he did not rule out the possibility that this was an act of provocation instigated by British counterintelligence.¹⁴¹

On June 7, 1958, Agent "Műszerész" was late for his meeting by the entrance of Bishops Park near Putney on account of traffic jams, and informed Bazsó that he had been summoned to Scotland Yard for 11:30 a.m. Kiss was baffled by the summons, but his liaison officer thought it would be yet another interrogation, and only warned

136 ÁBTL, 3.2.1. Bt-702, Z-110/1958. "Műszerész" – Tárgy: "Műszerész" szervezéséről szóló jelentés értékelése. Jelentés. London, May 20, 1958, pp. 49–51.

137 ÁBTL, 3.2.3. Mt-545/1, Z-110/1. "Műszerész" – 5/2"C"/A. sz. utasítás. Bakos elvtársnak! London. – Tárgy: "Műszerész" ügye. Budapest, May 26, 1958, pp. 168–170.

138 MNL OL, XIX-J-41-a. Londoni követség, 1946–1961 – 21. d., 170/szt./1957. Tárgy: A Magyar Klub elleni támadás. London, May 27, 1957, pp. 3–8.

139 "Near Riot at Hungarian Club: Seven Refugees Sent for Trial." *The Manchester Guardian*, July 25, 1957.

140 MNL OL, XIX-J-1-j. Nagy-Britannia, 1945–1964 – 5. d., 14. tétel, 005165, 367 /szig. titk./ Tárgy: Tiltakozás a konzulátus ablakainak betörése ellen. London, October 24, 1957, pp. 1–2.

141 ÁBTL, 3.2.3. Mt-545/1, Z-110/1. "Műszerész" – Értékelő jelentés. Budapest, June 9, 1958, pp. 167.

Kiss not to mention his name. According to Dean's instructions, Kiss was forbidden to reveal his connection to MI5 or Hungarian state security. Kiss and Bazsó agreed to meet on June 9 at 7:00 p.m. by Putney Bridge to discuss Kiss's summons, but the agent was once again summoned to Scotland Yard on the same day, after work hours.

At their next meeting, Agent "Műszerész" submitted a report on his summons to Scotland Yard, and recounted the events of the past months to Bazsó. On May 20, 1958, Kiss called Dean to inform him that the London residency had given orders to expand his connections at the Mindszenty Home Association and the Freedom Association. His British liaison officer did not ask for a report and merely told Kiss that they would arrange their next meeting via telephone. On May 24, Kiss visited the Mindszenty Home Association, where Péter Törzs had just proposed to the Hungarian members present that the institute should start preparations for establishing its own youth organization. On May 27, Kiss's landlady warned him that he had received a call from Scotland Yard to the effect that the police would visit him on Saturday morning, but later Kiss received another call that canceled the visit and instead issued a summons to Scotland Yard for next week at 10:30 a.m.; they also added that they were only conducting a general investigation. On the evening of June 4, 1958, Kiss met Dean at Earl's Court, where Dean instructed him to inform Bazsó of the youth organization forming at the Mindszenty Home Association and that, according to its members, the Freedom Association existed in name only. Kiss was not allowed to speak of his working relationship with Dean, and also had to report to him after his interrogation by Scotland Yard.

On June 7, 1958, Kiss hurried to the main entrance of New Scotland Yard by the Thames, where he told the police officer stationed by the gate that he had been summoned by "Mr. Tite". Kiss had to fill out a pink form with his name, occupation, and address, and then he was escorted by Tite to his office on the third floor, where they talked without an interpreter present. At first Tite only wished to clarify a few points and inquired about Kiss's current situation in England, then asked questions about his past, based on the interrogation minutes issued by the Immigration Office. Kiss repeated his earlier replies from eighteen months before, at which point Tite suddenly inquired about his connection to the Hungarian Legation. The agent admitted that in March 1957, he had contacted the legation to seek help with moving the rest of his family to England. The inspector mentioned Major Turopoli by name and repeated his question and, when he received a reply in the negative, he told Kiss that Scotland Yard had received several anonymous reports about his meetings with employees of the legation and the handover of various blueprints. Kiss rejected these accusations by claiming that he always carried documents that were necessary for his work. Tite suggested that the reports might have been filed with malicious intent, but requested that Kiss return on Monday to show him the technical specifications in question,

and also expected Kiss to report any communists he might meet at the Mindszenty Home Association and the Calvinist Club. The inspector emphasized that they were well aware of the presence of Hungarian state security informants hiding among the Hungarian refugees, and that Major Turopoli was an intelligence agent. Kiss nodded in agreement, and on Monday evening, he presented a few connection blueprints he had taken home to study. Tite quickly looked through the blueprints and informed Kiss that he should contact the British Council for the Aid of Refugees for help if he really wished to move his family to England.

At the end of their consultation, Inspector Tite offered Kiss a cup of tea and informed him that Hungarian state security, which was called the Department of Political Investigation,¹⁴² often used information gathered by its agents abroad to exert pressure on Hungarian refugees through their relatives in Hungary in order to force them to repatriate. The inspector then reminded Kiss of his reporting obligation, and the two parted on cordial terms. The next day, Dean instructed Kiss to inform his liaison officer of everything except for the presence of Hungarian state security agents in the UK and his commitment to inform the Scotland Yard. He also warned Kiss not to keep any documents or materials related to his connections in his home or at his workplace, because the police might conduct searches in the future. Kiss presumed that his former landlord might have been behind the anonymous blackmail because the latter's wife was attracted to him.

Bazsó instructed Kiss to tell MI5 that his liaison officer had interrogated him to figure out who might know about his connection to the London residency and of the blueprints he kept in his home, and also wanted to know more about Lajos Hericz and Tibor Tóth, who were involved in the vandalism against the Hungarian Club of London before the former applied for repatriation. In the meantime, Kiss's wife informed her husband in a letter that Tarján had disappeared from Kazincbarcika so she could take a photograph of him. Bazsó instructed Kiss to call Veress (who the agent had not seen for quite some time) and inform him about the results of the house search.¹⁴³ From the agent's report, the residency concluded that Inspector Tite was in charge of counterintelligence among Hungarian émigrés and vis-a-vis the Hungarian Legation. His name was not mentioned in any other case file, which suggested that Kiss had met a member of the Special Branch, and the report on the youth organization being formed was also corroborated by Agent "Szekeres".¹⁴⁴

142 Palasik, M. (2013). A BM II/3. (Hírszerző) Osztály. In Cseh, G. B. & Okváth, I. (Eds.), *A megtorlás szervezete. A politikai rendőrség újjászervezése és működése, 1957–1962*. ÁBTL – L'Harmattan Kiadó, pp. 47–59.

143 ÁBTL, 3.2.3. Mt-545/1, Z-110/1. "Műszerész" – Tárgy: "Műszerész" ügye. Jelentés. London, June 17, 1958, pp. 171–177.

144 ÁBTL, 3.2.3. Mt-545/1, Z-110/1. "Műszerész" – Információs jelentés. Adta: "Műszerész". Vette: "Szepesi". London, June 17, 1958, pp. 195–196.

On June 20, 1958, Bazsó was waiting by the entrance of Holland Park for Agent “Műszerész”, who was fifteen minutes late for their 7:30 p.m. meeting, and submitted a report on the Mindszenty Home Association’s reception of the execution of former Prime Minister Imre Nagy and his associates. The news of their death sentence was met without particular outrage, and the meeting on June 18 was only attended by eight or ten people. The group criticized Kádár’s government and the Russians, but they agreed that the court’s decision was to be expected, and the steward argued that the Western superpowers were too cowardly to do anything substantial to support Hungary. Bazsó pointed out that, on March 15, 1958, the Mindszenty Home Association had attracted a much larger number of people, and therefore the abovementioned meeting was of no great consequence. On June 17, Kiss received instructions from Dean to visit the Mindszenty Home Association and inquire after the two persons mentioned by the London residency (Hericz and Tóth), and promised to supplement his report with additional information. When they parted, Police Lieutenant Bazsó noticed that the agent was driving a Vauxhall (license plate number: BJK-494) in good condition.¹⁴⁵

Agent “Műszerész” also gave Bazsó a description of Dean, a tall, blond, cordial Englishman in his early thirties, who Kiss had first met during his initial administration at the Immigration Office. After that first meeting, however, his affairs were always handled by his Hungarian acquaintance. Dean’s methods were based on secrecy: he never revealed any details and only gave Kiss instructions on how to gather information. Dean only intervened when the agent could no longer make any progress; nevertheless, Kiss considered him cooperative and helpful, as Dean proved reliable whenever Kiss had problems with his finances, his apartment, or his workplace. In such cases, Dean paid his monthly allowance in advance, brought him a list of landlords from the office, or found him a different job. Kiss noted that Dean often criticized the practices of MI5, but showed no interest in deviating from standard procedures.

When Agent “Műszerész” complained to Dean of his loneliness and asked about the possibility of his repatriation, Dean informed Kiss that he would not be obstructed by British counterintelligence, but Dean himself would not advise him to repatriate. He explained that Kiss would only be imprisoned upon his return, and in the event of an interrogation, Dean would also be exposed; moreover, he argued that Kiss would be able to support his country more effectively from England. The agent himself felt that his activities had yielded no tangible results, but Dean reassured him that MI5 was satisfied with him, and only his superiors would be able to judge his true worth as an agent. Dean was not interested in information about Hungary,

145 ÁBTL, 3.2.3. Mt-545/1, Z-110/1. “Műszerész” – Információs jelentés. Adta: “Műszerész”. Vette: “Szepesi”. London, June 21, 1958, pp. 178–179/197.

as that was outside his sphere of competence; in this regard, he only forwarded the requests of other services.

According to Dean's original plan, Agent "Műszerész" would have had to take certain technical specifications from his workplace, but, to avoid exposure and a potential investigation by the police, Dean revised the plan as follows: Kiss would obtain the blueprints through the office, and, with the prior assessment and approval of British intelligence, the agent would forward these blueprints to the London residency Dean never instructed Kiss to observe Hungarian refugees or detect communists among their ranks; instead, he requested a report on the methods and interests of Hungarian intelligence. Dean usually arrived by car and conducted their meetings in secluded places but, on a few occasions, he also invited Kiss to dinner.¹⁴⁶

On June 21, 1958, Bazsó prepared an action plan for Agent "Műszerész", according to which the residency would first strengthen the trust of British secret services in the agent and then charge him with the task of compromising any persons hostile to the Kádár system. Hoping to spark the interest of Dean and his associates, the London residency planned to provide Kiss with materials on cases that Ministry of the Interior considered hopeless (including the case of Hericz and Tóth), or on Hungarian emigrants such as journalist Ferenc Rentoul. (The head of the Hungarian department of the BBC was born Ferenc Galló and received his English surname after he had married the daughter of conservative politician Gervais Rentoul).¹⁴⁷ The next stage of the plan was to interest Veress in some of Kiss's Hungarian acquaintances in the UK, and to use the agent to compromise Sándor Gábor and Károly Pék by spreading rumors of their acquaintances being affiliated with the Legation of the Hungarian People's Republic.

The residency entertained the idea of requesting a list of high-ranking officials who were not particularly supportive of the Kádár system; if any were discovered by Agent "Műszerész", they would have been pressured into cooperation by Hungarian counterintelligence to report anyone who contacted them at Veress's request or recommendation immediately. At the same time, Bazsó believed that if Kiss was truly determined to repatriate, MI6 might charge him with tasks related to Hungarian affairs. According to his action plan, in October 1958, the agent would tell MI5 that he had received a difficult task from the London residency (such as obtaining a resolution or list of names) in return for permission to repatriate. Bazsó believed that the British would assist Kiss in such a task, and therefore proposed that Kiss should receive permission to repatriate as a Christmas present.¹⁴⁸

146 ÁBTL, 3.2.3. Mt-545/1, Z-110/1. "Műszerész" – Tárgy: Dean jellemzése. Jelentés. Adta: "Műszerész". London, June 21, 1958, pp. 182/1–8.

147 Sárközi (2014), p. 112.

148 ÁBTL, 3.2.3. Mt-545/1, Z-110/1. "Műszerész" – Tárgy: "Műszerész" foglalkoztatási terve. Javaslat. London, June 21, 1958, pp. 191–194.

On the evening of June 23, 1958, Agent “Műszerész” arrived on time to the Odeon Cinema on Kensington High Street and at last submitted descriptions of the two Englishmen associated with Dean and a character study of Tarján; he also reported to Bazsó that he had heard nothing of any plans for protesting against the execution of Imre Nagy. Bazsó decided to ask Kiss whether he had borrowed a car for their last meeting, namely the car his landlady had once asked him to fix, at which point Kiss confessed that he had purchased the Vauxhall three weeks before for a total of £550: he had paid £120s in advance, and he would be paying the rest in installments of £16 per month. His officer reprimanded him for not seeking his opinion or permission, especially in light of Kiss’s constant complaints about his financial difficulties. Kiss seemed embarrassed and argued that he was a huge fan of cars and this was his one and only indulgence, then added that he considered using the car for missions, but had no plans for taking it back to Hungary because he would not be able to pay the remaining sum in one installment. He claimed that MI5 knew of the car, but gave him no financial support for his purchase. In Bazsó’s opinion, Kiss should have been able to get a perfectly suitable car for £100–£150, and such a car would not have required a garage, either, as that was one of the reasons Kiss wanted to move to a new apartment.

Bazsó accepted Kiss’s report on his interrogation by Scotland Yard as credible, and shared the opinion that the anonymous reports against Agent “Műszerész” might have been filed by his former landlord, who had the means of searching the agent’s belongings and discovering the blueprints. However, judging by the almost cordial proceedings at Scotland Yard, Bazsó concluded that Dean must have made a call to request that the officers go easy on his informant. Bazsó believed that the agent missed his family exceedingly, which would explain his diligence in the past months; the new car he had purchased somewhat contradicted this theory, but Bazsó understood that many Hungarian emigrants were anxious to own a car, and also suspected that British counterintelligence had supported the purchase in order to entice Kiss to remain in England.¹⁴⁹

According to Agent “Műszerész”, Sinclair showed no great interest in his case, and they had only met three times, and Kiss was currently awaiting Dean’s return to complete his tasks, because whenever the agent had problems, he could only proceed after consulting the Security Service. Sinclair was tall, thin, blond, and wore spectacles; he enjoyed wine and certain delicacies, which suggested that he had traveled extensively. Unlike Dean, he lacked flexibility and followed the instructions of the office to the letter, never once risking a personal observation.¹⁵⁰

149 ÁBTL, 3.2.3. Mt-545/1, Z-110/1. “Műszerész” – Információs jelentés. Adta: “Műszerész”. Vette: “Szepesi”. London, June 24, 1958, pp. 180–181/200.

150 ÁBTL, 3.2.3. Mt-545/1, Z-110/1. “Műszerész” – Tárgy: Mr. Sinclair jellemzése. Jelentés. Adta: “Műszerész”. London, 1958, pp. 183/1–2.

According to Kiss, Sanderson was a short man in his fifties with black hair and brown skin, which made the agent suspect that he was not born in the UK. The man spoke Hungarian with a nearly imperceptible foreign accent due to having lived in Hungary for a long time before the war. He claimed that he only had Hungarian friends and girlfriends, and only visited the Hungarian Legation to pick up his salary. Sanderson was fond of Northern Hungary, as he had lived for a long time in the region that Hungary had reclaimed – following the First Vienna Award¹⁵¹ – from Czechoslovakia but, at the same time, he was also familiar with the streets of Budapest. He usually served as an interpreter and was ready to assist the agent as such, but attempted to dissuade him from repatriating.¹⁵² We have no means of confirming, but it is probable that Sanderson came to Hungary as a member of the Z Network headed by Claude Dansey under the supervision of MI6, since Dansey's team typically consisted of businessmen whose foreign birth allowed them to enter countries hostile to the British Empire, and several of them had been living in Hungary before the war.¹⁵³

For their meeting on July 21, 1958, Bazsó instructed Agent “Műszerész” not to bring a report, because his primary task was to observe László Jónás, who the agent had visited on July 12 under the pretense that, according to his information from the British Council for the Aid of Refugees, Jónás had also worked in Kazincbarcika. Jónás and his housemate István Pázmándi received him very warmly and they quickly became friends.

Agent “Műszerész” informed Bazsó that British counterintelligence had recently assigned him a new liaison officer by the name of Hedge, who warned him of the necessity of producing new results. Hedge instructed Kiss to tell Bazsó that he feared exposure due to their long-standing connection, ask the London residency to assign him a new liaison officer with only occasional supervision by Bazsó, and request the use of a third person or drop box to submit materials to the Hungarian Legation. Bazsó instructed the agent to report to MI5 that he was still charged with the task of observing Hericz, Tóth, and the cultural staff of the Mindszenty Home Association. Bazsó told the agent not to reveal to the Security Service that they had planned a meeting for July 28, 1958 by the tennis courts in Fulham; he was only allowed to mention the meeting proposed for August 4 by the entrance to Bishops Park.

On July 28, 1958, Agent “Műszerész” reported to Bazsó that, on the previous day, he had traveled to Reading by car in the company of Jónás and Pázmándi to visit an old acquaintance of the latter, electric technician István Sisitka, who worked at the

151 Sallai, G. (2002). *Az első bécsi döntés*. Osiris Kiadó, pp. 141–152.

152 ÁBTL, 3.2.3. Mt-545/1, Z-110/1. “Műszerész” – Tárgy: Sanderson jellemzése. Adta: “Műszerész”. Jelentés. London, 1958, pp. 184/1–3.

153 Volkman, E. (1994). *Spies: Secret Agents Who Changed the Course of History*. John Wiley & Sons Inc., pp. 188–194.

Atomic Weapons Establishment in Aldermaston. Sisitka, aged 35, first traveled to Germany after the war, and moved to England in 1950. The technician gave them his Reading address and asked Kiss to visit him again sometime.

On August 5, 1958, Agent “Műszerész” informed Bazsó that he had received no new instructions from Hedge, who emphasized that the agent’s primary task was to discover what persons or cases interested his liaison officer. As Bazsó was preparing to go on vacation, he instructed Kiss not to neglect his new acquaintance, who was not registered at the Hungarian consulate. The agent was told to report to British counterintelligence that his task was to observe the everyday activities and changes occurring at the Mindszenty Home Association, and to provide information on the Freedom Association. Kiss also had to request new tasks from MI5, and continue observing Jónás, Pázmándi, and Sisitka without their knowledge.¹⁵⁴

Endgame

According to an assessment issued at the end of the summer of 1958, Agent “Műszerész” had essentially proved his sincerity to the London residency, and he supported socialism as a political system despite his wish that the Soviet troops would withdraw from Hungary. He also loved his wife and two children, but the behavior of his eldest son distressed him so much that he requested the help of the Hungarian Ministry of the Interior in accommodating him at a reform school. Nevertheless, Police Lieutenant Bazsó still considered the agent careless, as he chose to purchase an expensive car instead of supporting his struggling family. Bazsó proposed a higher salary or promotion for Kiss’s wife and the accommodation of the children to remedy the family’s financial problems, and, in the event of the agent’s successful employment, Bazsó would approve of his request to repatriate within the next four or five months.¹⁵⁵

After his vacation, on September 29, 1958 at 7:00 p.m., Police Lieutenant Bazsó met Agent “Műszerész” outside a restaurant on Fulham Road. Bazsó had set out at 5:30 p.m. in the company of Co-optee “Tóth”, but when their car became stuck in a line of forty cars on one of the busy but narrow streets of London, Bazsó suddenly exited the vehicle to continue his journey via bus and underground, thus taking a longer route to the designated meeting place. Kiss was punctual, but his despair was evident: on September 4 and the evening of September 5, 1958, he was interrogated at the War Office, where the highest-ranking officer – probably the commander of the

154 ÁBTL, 3.2.3. Mt-545/1, Z-110/1. “Műszerész” – Tárgy: Találkozók “Műszerész”-szel. Jelentés. London, August 24, 1958, pp. 206–213.

155 ÁBTL, 3.2.1. Bt-702, Z-110/1958. “Műszerész” – Tárgy: “Műszerész” ügyében értékelés. Jelentés. Budapest, August 28, 1958, pp. 65–66.

Hungarian section of MI5 – confronted him with the fact that they knew of his connection to the Hungarian intelligence station. According to the commander's instructions, Kiss had to terminate contact with Bazsó and explain his decision by claiming that the police had warned him of the severe consequences of maintaining contact with an employee of the Hungarian Legation. Bazsó wanted to know the details of Kiss's interrogation, but Kiss insisted he would be imprisoned if the Security Service found out about his confession; his liaison officer was displeased and said goodbye, at which point the agent slowly revealed the events of his interrogation.

On September 4, 1958, Agent "Műszerész" met Hedge at Earl's Court underground station, where Hedge only told the agent that the commander wanted to speak to him. Hedge took Kiss by car to Charing Cross Road, where, on the ground floor in Room 55 of the War Office,¹⁵⁶ Sanderson (acting as the interpreter) and a tall, typical English gentleman awaited him. Kiss was received very cordially and they first inquired about his family, and the commander concluded that he was serious about his repatriation. The agent admitted that he was considering it, should the political situation in Hungary improve, at which point he was interrogated at length about his previous places of employment. (When and where was he hired? How did he find his jobs?) The commander soon informed him that they were aware of the fact that the Hungarian state security did not allow anyone to work on their telecommunication system but he most trustworthy individuals of the Hungarian society, namely, first and foremost, communist party members. As such, the high-ranking officer found it curious that a non-member would be invited to cooperate with the Ministry of the Interior in their very sensitive technical projects.

The next evening, on September 5, 1958, the War Office resumed Kiss's interrogation and asked him if he had told them everything about his relationship with Police Lieutenant Bazsó; the agent nodded, at which point they asked if he destroyed the written instructions he had received. Agent "Műszerész" replied in the affirmative, but had a feeling that British counterintelligence knew he had relayed each one to his liaison officer. Kiss repeatedly emphasized that he always reported his meetings with Bazsó, but the commander still accused him of being loyal to the Hungarian state security, though he appeared to sympathize with Kiss's circumstances and merely asked him to be completely sincere. Kiss gave evasive answers, and the high-ranking MI5 officer concluded that there was no point in maintaining his connection with the Hungarian Legation, and instructed Kiss to terminate contact with his liaison officer gradually.

Police Lieutenant Bazsó was surprised that two evening interrogations would yield so little information, but Agent "Műszerész" replied that he had reported everything relevant and he could not and would not talk about the rest. In Bazsó's

156 West, N. (1983). *MI5: British Security Service Operations 1909–1945*. Triad Grafton Books, p. 151.

opinion, MI5 had no concrete evidence of the true nature of their relationship, and therefore had no grounds to imprison Kiss. On the subject of repatriation, he informed Kiss that it would only be possible in the long term, at which point Kiss burst into tears and lamented that he had completed his tasks for nothing. This caused Bazsó to question the credibility of the agent's story, and declared that he would terminate contact with Kiss.

Agent "Műszerész" complained to Bazsó that Security Service had been observing him for the past two months and they obstructed him at every turn. As soon as he moved into his new apartment under 224 Walm Lane, London NW2, the police had contacted him within seventy-two hours to inquire into his reasons for changing residence; he was simultaneously demoted at his workplace but did not notice anyone observing him. Bazsó attempted to raise Kiss's spirits by telling him of the improvement of living standards in Hungary and the process required to secure accommodation for his eldest son at a reform school, then instructed the agent to tell British intelligence about how firmly his liaison officer had protested at terminating all contact with the agent, and only accepted after Kiss had repeatedly and resolutely requested it.

According to Police Lieutenant Bazsó's assessment, MI5 would not have settled the case of Agent "Műszerész" so easily if they were certain that he was pulling a double-cross, as the commander had accused him of nothing that suggested exposure; at the same time, Bazsó was baffled by the fact that Kiss had only given him a relatively short oral report after going through two evening interrogations in a row. From the agent's behavior, Bazsó concluded that he no longer wished to work for the Hungarian People's Republic and was hoping to terminate contact with the London residency so he could tell MI5 that the Hungarian Legation had dismissed him because he could provide no new materials or information. In the event that British counterintelligence forced a written and signed confession from the agent with which he could be blackmailed, the Ministry of the Interior could expect his future repatriation. As Bazsó thought it possible that Kiss might reapply at the Hungarian consulate in the future with a cover story, Bazsó requested a written report on the agent's interrogation by MI5.¹⁵⁷

On October 2, 1958, Agent "Műszerész" communicated to Bazsó that MI5 was determined to prove his treason and continuously observed him to ensure he would not be able to meet his liaison officer; in response, the London residency allowed the agent to go dormant.¹⁵⁸ Meanwhile, Department II/3 pointed out that the agent's reports on the Hungarian émigrés had no real operational value; for their own

157 ÁBTL, 3.2.3. Mt-545/1, Z-110/1. "Műszerész" – Tárgy: Találkozó "Műszerész"-szel. Jelentés. London, October 1, 1958, pp. 214–219.

158 ÁBTL, 3.2.3. Mt-545/1, Z-110/1. "Műszerész" – Távirat. London, October 2, 1958, p. 224.

assessment, they were only able to use information from one of his reports on the reaction to Imre Nagy's execution.¹⁵⁹

At the beginning of November 1958, Agent “Műszerész” submitted his request for permission to repatriate, and the Hungarian Ministry of the Interior had no objections. Major General Tömpe declared that they had no means of clarifying the matter in London, but suspected that the repatriation had been initiated by the Secret Intelligence Service.¹⁶⁰ At the beginning of March 1959, Kiss visited the Hungarian consulate despite the fact his passport would only be issued in April, and communicated that he was no longer of interest to MI5 even though Veress had informed them of his intention to repatriate.¹⁶¹ In April 1959, Kiss received permission to repatriate, but, as late as September, he failed to apply at the Hungarian consulate to receive his visa,¹⁶² therefore his case was finally closed in February 1960.¹⁶³

Consequences

On May 6, 1959, the British Foreign Office declared Legation Counsellor Péter Szolnok a *persona non grata* for his coercive attempts to recruit atomic physicist Péter Faragó, who had fled to Great Britain in 1956;¹⁶⁴ simultaneously, the Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs expelled British diplomat Sir James Cable from the Hungarian People's Republic. Ten days later, the British press picked up the case again to add that, according to MI5, at least five Hungarian diplomats were involved in such recruitment attempts, such as press attaché István Varga, who did little more at the legation than relay information to the British press and occasionally write an article for publication,¹⁶⁵ and who had already been recalled by the Hungarian government.¹⁶⁶ On September 28, 1959, Tibor Bazsó's mission ended the same way,¹⁶⁷

159 ÁBTL, 3.2.3. Mt-545/1, Z-110/1. “Műszerész” – Értékelő jelentés. London, November 8, 1958, p. 220.

160 ÁBTL, 3.2.3. Mt-545/1, Z-110/1. “Műszerész” – 10/1“C”/A. sz. utasítás. Bakos elvtársnak! London. – Tárgy: Műszerész ügye. Budapest, November 26, 1958, p. 221.

161 ÁBTL, 3.2.3. Mt-545/1, Z-110/1. “Műszerész” – 10/1“C”/A sz. utasítás. Bakos elvtársnak! London. – Tárgy: “Műszerész” ügye. London, March 1, 1959, p. 342.

162 ÁBTL, 3.2.1. Bt-702, Z-110/1958. “Műszerész” – Tárgy: “Műszerész” fn. ügynök ügye. Jelentés. Budapest, September 29, 1959, p. 73.

163 ÁBTL, 3.2.1. Bt-702, Z-110/1958. “Műszerész” – Zárólap. Budapest, February 25, 1960, p. 75.

164 Székér, N. (2020). Fizikus az állambiztonság hálójában. *Betekintő*, 14(4), pp. 63–65.

165 TNA FO, 134922/ NH1903/10/G (58). Information and Allied Activities of the Hungarian Legation in London. London, March 10, 1959.

166 MNL OL, XIX-J-1-j. KÜM, Nagy-Britannia, 1945–1964 – 9. d., 004352, 117/1959. Tárgy: Szolnok Péter londoni követségünk tanácsosa kiutasításának visszhangja. Budapest, May 20, 1959, p. 1.

167 MNL OL, XIX-J-41-a. Londoni Követség, 1946–1961 – 3. d., 642/1959. Tárgy: Bazsó és Molnár elvtársak hazautazása. London, September 3, 1959, pp. 218–219.

presumably because the Hungarian People's Republic wanted to avoid having another diplomat expelled from the UK, and, as mentioned earlier, in September 1959, Kiss had still not applied at the consulate to receive his visa to Hungary;¹⁶⁸ therefore, in February 1960, his case was closed by Hungarian intelligence.¹⁶⁹

On June 9, 1961, the case of Agent "Műszerész" was closed by Police Captain Gyula Baranyi, who officially served as the cultural attaché of the Hungarian Legation in London from May 31, 1958¹⁷⁰ but, in November 1958, simultaneously with the appointment of cultural counsellor László Báti, he became suspicious to the MI5.¹⁷¹ In his assessment, Baranyi described László Kiss as a hostile liar of low intelligence, whose case was one of gross negligence on the part of the London residency. When Kiss offered his services voluntarily, he was immediately approved and recruited; the technical specifications he had provided were not examined sufficiently but accepted as credible and reliable documentation; with the approval of the Ministry of the Interior, the residency decided to use Kiss against British intelligence or security services without confirming his reliability or gauging his commitment to the British despite his unstable character; and the agent was only excluded two years after all contact had ceased.¹⁷²

Major Ferenc Kolláth's assessment of the case was even more critical of those involved than Baranyi's: in his opinion, nothing justified the recruitment of Agent "Műszerész", and the London residency charged him with the task of obtaining technical specifications and blueprints for British telephone exchanges without first conducting a thorough background check. Kolláth first and foremost held Major Imre Turopoli, Police Lieutenant Bazsó, and Major Péter Szikla responsible for the agent's hasty recruitment and employment, but argued that the station chief had committed the gravest mistake by allowing his subordinates to act so irresponsibly. Kolláth also pointed out the mistakes of the Centre, as the political department of the competent county police had advised Hungarian Ministry of the Interior from the beginning that the London residency should reject the candidate's offer. An order issued on July 16, 1957 informed Szolnok and Bazsó that, in 1945, Kiss was in US captivity, and in 1948 attempted to flee to Austria and was detained and deported back to Hungary. On this account, Kolláth placed the blame on Captain Pál Iglói and the head of

168 ÁBTL, 3.2.1. Bt-702, Z-110/1958. "Műszerész" – Tárgy: "Műszerész" fn. ügynök ügye. Jelentés. Budapest, September 29, 1959, p. 73.

169 ÁBTL, 3.2.1. Bt-702, Z-110/1958. "Műszerész" – Zárólap. Budapest, February 25, 1960, p. 75.

170 TNA FO, 134922/ NH1903/10/G. Information and Allied Activities of the Hungarian Legation in London. London, December 16, 1958.

171 TNA FO, 134922/ NH1903/10/G. Information and Allied Activities of the Hungarian Legation in London. Box No. 500 Parliament Street B. O. London, S. W. 1. London, February 25, 1959.

172 ÁBTL, 3.2.1. Bt-702, Z-110/1958. "Műszerész" – Tárgy: "Műszerész" kizárt ügynök felülvizsgálatáról. Jelentés. Budapest, June 9, 1961, pp. 79–80.

Hungarian intelligence. (It is important to note that, according to our research, the order in question had never reached London.)

Kolláth criticized the fact that Agent “Műszerész” was recruited after his first meeting with the employees of the Hungarian Legation, which meant that his later declaration of cooperation was not only not binding, but actually worthless, because he issued it with the permission of British counterintelligence. The agent also received subpar instructions and supervision, and his liaison officer failed to recognize even the most glaring signs of treason; for example, Police Lieutenant Bazsó dismissed the fact that Kiss had openly criticized the measures of the Kádár government and the Soviet Union. The agent had repeatedly given his liaison officer fabrications on his recruitment by British intelligence, and yet, except for two occasions, Szikla and Bazsó accepted his reports without criticism. Agent “Műszerész” also failed to follow instructions and complete his tasks, and once had the audacity to submit a blank sheet of paper in a sealed envelope in lieu of a report; at the same time, he never supplied any copies of his reports to MI5.

Kolláth pointed out that officers Gyula Rossz and Károly Sipos should have questioned the loyalty of Agent “Műszerész” when he refused to hand over the reports he had prepared for the British.¹⁷³ Kolláth supposed that the enemy might have forced Kiss to procrastinate over his tasks because the success of the double-cross maneuver depended in no small part on knowing the codes used by their opponent; however, according to our current knowledge of the case, in 1957 and 1958, these codes were not available.¹⁷⁴ At the same time, Department II/3 should have noted the agent’s complaints that his liaison officer did not prepare him adequately for his missions, or the fact that Kiss had asked for a third person or drop box to deliver his materials, all of which must have been instigated by British counterintelligence in order to discover the methods, officers, and contact persons of the London residency.

In his assessment, Kolláth concluded that Kiss’s talk of his family and his efforts to repatriate were only a ruse, because the Ministry of the Interior even had written proof to the contrary; even so, the London residency only realized Kiss’s real intentions when the Security Service attempted to detach him from the Hungarian Legation. In 1958, Kiss only submitted three useless reports on the internal affairs of the Hungarian émigrés, and yet he was given a total of £120 for his expenses over the course of some forty meetings with his liaison officer.

Based on Kiss’s reports, only Ferenc Bányai and László Veress of Dálnok could be identified, while Imre Turopoli and Tibor Bazsó became compromised: the latter had

173 ÁBTL, 3.2.1. Bt-702, Z-110/1958. “Műszerész” – Tárgy: “Műszerész” kizárt ügynök felülvizsgálata. Jelentés. Budapest, June 24, 1961, pp. 81–85.

174 Andrew (2009), pp. 317–318.

spent two years committing himself to a case that yielded no results beyond putting him at risk of exposure and expulsion from the UK, which was a textbook example of an irresponsible quest for results at any cost.¹⁷⁵ Not long afterwards, the Centre also closed the case of Endre Éliás, as they were informed that he was being investigated by Scotland Yard for embezzlement.¹⁷⁶ In 1964, following the reorganization of 1962,¹⁷⁷ the III/I. (Intelligence) Directorate of the Ministry of the Interior issued a decision to preserve the dossiers of Agent “Műszerész” in case he might reappear at some other foreign representation in the future.¹⁷⁸

László Kiss was one of the countless double agents employed during the Cold War, but his life and activities had received little attention until now. In his book *Spycatcher*, written after his retirement in 1987, former MI5 principal scientific officer Peter Wright points out that the double-cross maneuver was useless against the Soviets and their surrogate services. According to Wright, Graham Mitchell, the commander of D4, the section in charge of instructing agents,¹⁷⁹ insisted on using the double-cross maneuver as a stalling method, but was oblivious to the fact that it was draining the resources and exposing MI5 officers and their agents to the KGB.¹⁸⁰ In reality, the double-cross was much more viable against the satellite states of the Soviet Union than Wright suggested. In 1958, it led to the exposure of 31 Polish state security agents, the majority of whom ended up working for MI5. To the relief of Head of Government Harold Macmillan, the British press did not disclose the case,¹⁸¹ however, we may safely conclude from the case of László Kiss (and indirectly from the case of János Erdőssy, mentioned only briefly in this study) that the methods of the double-cross maneuver were also effective against Hungarian intelligence. Besides these two, other informants of the London residency, such as “Fodor” (electric engineer Attila Boronkay),¹⁸² “Varjas” (former police sergeant Istvan Vörös),¹⁸³ and “Ladányi” (a former midlevel cadre of the Hungarian Social Democratic Party Barnabás Lányi)¹⁸⁴ also seem to have been acting in the British double-cross operation. All in all, the clarification of the issue would demand further research.

175 ÁBTL, 3.2.1. Bt-702, Z-110/1958. “Műszerész” – Tárgy: “Műszerész” kizárt ügynök felülvizsgálata. Jelentés. Budapest, June 24, 1961, pp. 85–86.

176 ÁBTL, 3.2.4. K-1124/T. Éliás Endre – Feljegyzés. Budapest, April 5, 1962, p. 7.

177 Palasik (2013), p. 101.

178 ÁBTL, 3.2.1. Bt-702, Z-110/1958. “Műszerész” – Tárgy: “Műszerész” fn. hálózatból kizárt ügynök anyagainak felülvizsgálása. Jelentés. Budapest, June 19, 1964, pp. 130–131.

179 West (1985), p. 51.

180 Wright, P. (1987). *Spycatcher: The Candid Autobiography of a Senior Intelligence Officer with Paul Greengrass*. Viking Penguin Inc., pp. 120–122.

181 Andrew (2009), pp. 483–487.

182 ÁBT, 323. Mt-525/1, 10-64.757. “Fodor” – Years: 1951–1959., pp. 58–173.

183 ÁBTL, 3.2.3. 10-69656/1 Mt-495/1 – “Varjas”. Years: 1958.

184 ÁBTL 3.2.3. H-10202/56 Mt-470/1 – “Ladányi” Years: 1957–1958.

What Do We Know of The Players in the Spy Game?

On November 5, 1968, László Kiss became a British citizen, but we only have fragmentary or partially confirmed information on his subsequent fate. For a while he lived in north London, in Alperton, Wembley, and his certificate of naturalization lists a Wembley address. A comment posted on an online family history forum state that Kiss later moved to the village of Cynghordy in Wales and afterwards lived near Norwich.¹⁸⁵ According to the Freedom of Information Act of 2000, it is possible to apply to government bodies for information on persons either over the age of 100 or confirmed deceased, but intelligence services are exempt from providing such information. In addition, MI5 has yet to disclose the files of Hungarian émigrés who had fled to Great Britain after the suppression of the Hungarian Revolution of 1956.

The identity of British liaison officers is considered classified information that cannot be disclosed by the competent government bodies on principle;¹⁸⁶ however, we do have some information on the players in the spy game. At the beginning of the 1960s, Endre Éliás and his wife moved to New Zealand; on June 4, 1969, he applied for citizenship and received his certificate of naturalization on July 30, 1970. Unfortunately, we have no further information on the procedure, as the documents will only become accessible in 2029.¹⁸⁷ In 1959, László Veress left the BBC for political and personal reasons; he was especially dissatisfied with the Hungarian section's lack of serious commitment to anti-communism. His wife's memoirs contain no information on his career in the 1960s;¹⁸⁸ all we know is that he died in London on September 23, 1980.¹⁸⁹ On November 1, 1961, science attaché Tibor Bazsó was transferred to the Hungarian Legation in Washington, where he assumed the same position, and he was also charged with consular tasks from the fall of 1962.¹⁹⁰ Following his repatriation, from October 1965, Bazsó was promoted to the rank of major and became the head of Sub-department III/I-4-F. From 1969 he directed the Sub-department III/I-5-N (Scientific Intelligence) with the rank of lieutenant

185 Denbeigh, J. (2010). Looking for Laszlo Kiss born 1925. Source: <https://www.radixforum.com/surnames/kiss/> (accessed on September 18, 2022).

186 Thomas, G. (2008). *A brit titkosszolgálatok világa*. J LX Kiadó, pp. 107–110.

187 Archives New Zealand (ANZ), Alien registration files 1949–77 system, Series/504 Item/R24655363/ Box number: 1624 Record number: AL91607 Kassay, Elias Endre (Hungarian) – applied for Citizenship 4 June 1969 – Alien file taken 3 July 1969 – Granted Certificate of Naturalization 30 July 1970.

188 Veress (1995), pp. 364–366.

189 Veress (1995), pp. XIV–XV.

190 MNL OL, XIX-J-1-j. USA, 1945–1964 – 2. d., 002665, 582/1963. Szt. Tárgy: Hazautazó Bazsó Tibor elvtárs beszámolója. Washington, June 19, 1963, pp. 876–878.

colonel. In 1977, Bazsó was appointed to the position of deputy head of department, and in 1979, he was placed in charge of scientific intelligence operations. In 1981, he was promoted to the rank of colonel, and in 1983, he was appointed Deputy Head of Directorate. Bazsó retired in 1986,¹⁹¹ and died in Budapest on July 28, 2012.¹⁹²

Translated by: Eva Misits

191 ÁBTL, Archontológia 80/940. Életrajzok: Bazsó Tibor. Source: https://www.abtl.hu/ords/archontologia/f?p=108:5:2120000538986809::NO::P5_PRS_ID:1082071 (accessed on September 18, 2022).

192 Government Office of the Capital City Budapest (*Budapest Főváros Kormányhivatal*, BFKH), BFKH XII. Kerületi Hivatala. BP-12/102/00099-2/2021. sz. Határozat. Budapest, January 19, 2021, pp. 1-2.

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