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Cold War, Détente and the 1956 Hungarian Revolution¹

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Recent historical research provides us with increasingly convincing proof that the fate of East-Central Europe until the fall of communist regimes was determined by the status quo that the allies set up in 1945. Both superpowers that controlled the bipolar world order after World War II—namely the United States and the Soviet Union—attributed a pivotal role to this tacit agreement in the East-West relationship, despite the fact that it has never been recorded in any official document. Their mutual consent started to work as an automatic rule of thumb in the chilliest years of the cold war era, and afterwards, when they sought to subdue sporadic East-West conflicts.

I. THE MAIN CHARACTERISTICS OF THE EAST-WEST RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN 1953 AND 1956: A REINTERPRETATION OF THE COLD WAR

It is more and more obvious that several set ideas about the Cold War have to be reassessed or rectified, as so far hidden archive sources became accessible in Western Europe in the 1970s and 1980s, and likewise in the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe at the beginning of the 1990s. A complete survey being impossible here, I will point out a few problems that might be reconsidered and amended, putting the history of East-West relations in a different context, which is a key factor of post-war international relationships. I strongly hope that it will help us understand the role that East-Central Europe and Hungary in particular played in the political changes of the last few decades.²

Caesuras

The landmark that started the *détente* in East-West relations is traditionally associated with Stalin's death in March 1953. Nonetheless, the analysis of long-known and recently revealed historical sources alike suggest that both in the Soviet Union and in the East-Central European communist states there were numerous tendencies that initiated the breakdown of complete isolation from Western Europe and aimed at relieving Cold War anxiety, even before 1953. Stalin himself asserted in an interview for *Pravda* in February 1951, barely half a year after the outbreak of the Korean war, that a war between the two military blocs was not entirely unavoidable.³ Even though his statement had no direct influence on the excessive development of war industry in the Soviet bloc, it certainly was an important message for the 'other side': it signalled that the Soviet Union, despite all the misgiving of Western states, was not interested in provoking a third world war. However strange it might seem at first sight, in fact Stalin's above statement became the basis of the policy that later, in the 20th congress of the Soviet Communist Party, was announced as the policy of peaceful coexistence.

In March 1952, in his famous note, Stalin once again proposed to his former allies the idea of a unified and neutral Germany. Western powers, however, declined the suggestion, reasoning that it was merely a false manoeuvre so that the Soviet Union can hinder the rearmament of West-Germany and its admission to NATO.⁴ In international historiography, however, the debate has been continually going on ever since whether Western states simply missed the opportunity of forming a unified Germany. Even though recently revealed Soviet sources do not provide us with relevant answers, it is quite likely that restarting East-West negotiations could have hastened the advent of the *détente* process, which finally happened after the death of Stalin.⁵ Research studies seem to prove that the economic policy of the Soviet Union and the East-Central European countries, focusing on the development of the war industry from the late 1940s, lost its potential as early as 1952. Certain signs of the coming crisis were noticeable in various aspects of social life.⁶ It is most likely that the Soviet leadership would have been compelled to somehow reform their previous policy both in the Soviet Union and in the so-called satellite states, even if Stalin had not died in March 1953. An international conference on improving East-West economic relations organised in Moscow

in April 1952 can surely be interpreted as an investigative initiation towards the West and of course an attempt at thus improving domestic economy.

It is not unprecedented in Hungary either that the authorities made attempts even before 1953 at restoring as best as they could the country's economic relationship with the West, which had been terminated in 1949. The Rákosi administration had secret negotiations with the British government between January 1952 and March 1953. The stakes were high: abolishing the trade embargo and restarting commercial and financial negotiations, which were terminated by the British in 1949 as a way of denouncing the imprisonment of British businessman Edgar Sanders at the time. The Hungarian government were willing to release the prisoner in return.⁷ The Hungarian leadership, however, were keen to keep up appearances so they wanted to disguise the transaction for the public as an exchange of prisoners. In return for Sanders, they asked the British to release a Malaysian communist called Li Meng, who was sentenced to death for terrorism in his own country — a colony of the British empire. The British government flatly refused the suggestion and the negotiations terminated in March 1953. One of the first strategic decisions of the government of Imre Nagy in foreign policy was that they unconditionally released Sanders from prison in August 1953. He left for England immediately. That done, the British administration lifted the embargo and then promptly started diplomatic preparations for resuming Hungarian-British financial and commercial negotiations. The preparation started in the autumn of 1953 and it became longer than expected: it ended with a Hungarian-British financial and trade agreement in June 1956.

Interdependence and compelled co-operation

The era between 1953 and 1956, after Stalin's death, is still a controversial issue regarding its importance in world politics. Public opinion holds that controversial political events and tendencies mark this era, such as the beginning of détente, a promising attempt at relieving the tension between East and West: the “spirit of Geneva”, and the 20th congress of the Soviet Communist Party, an event of historical importance on the one hand; serious crises,

such as the 1953 Berlin uprising, the rebellion of Poznan in June 1956, the October events in Poland, the Hungarian revolution and the Suez crisis on the other hand. As spectacular and palpable results (agreements) were not achieved in the East-West relationship during these years — apart from ending the Korean war and concluding the Austrian state treaty — while there were plenty of extraordinary events, it is usually presumed that something certainly started after 1953 but the logic of the Cold War was prevailing until and even after 1956, so real détente started only in the mid- sixties. This very opinion explains why so many think even today that the West abandoned and betrayed Hungary in 1956. According to the rules of the Cold War game, the American government, who declared themselves the “liberators of enslaved states” well until October 1956, had to look no further to find a better occasion to fulfil their promise than the Hungarian revolution. Nonetheless, the biggest paradox of this controversial era was that Eisenhower and Dulles announced this policy just at the very end of the classical Cold War era, in the framework of the presidential campaign in the autumn of 1952. This policy or rather propaganda certainly contributed to the Republican victory and then at the beginning of 1953 it was accepted as official government policy, which rendered a markedly different situation and conditions in world politics. Beyond the fact that the “peaceful liberation of enslaved nations” as Eisenhower imagined it meant nothing more than a *moral* obligation that the United States would fight by *peaceful means*, i.e. with words, or with exerting political pressure at the most, in the favourable international climate after Stalin’s death the authorities of both superpowers were interested in relieving cold war paranoia and, more tangibly, keeping down the gallop of the armaments race. The large scale arms race started in the late 1940s and — though neither party were ready to attack the other — not only had it exhausted the scarce internal resources of the Soviet Union, but it seriously curtailed the sources intended for the development of infrastructure and domestic consumption in the just emerged American welfare state, not to mention England and France, hardly recovered from the ruins of the war.

The analysis of documents that have been recently revealed in Eastern and Western archives and mostly issued by the highest level of executive bodies makes it more and more

obvious that the most important trend between 1953 and 1956 was — despite any disturbing event or propaganda — the mutual and gradual realisation and understanding of the fact that the two prevailing political-military blocs and ideologies had to live side by side and tolerate one another in order to avoid a third world war, which would certainly lead to total destruction. The appreciation of this meant such a decisive change in the East-West relationship that it is not too far-fetched to distinguish two radically different phases of the Cold War: before and after 1953. In fact we could call them Cold War I and Cold War II. I consider the period between 1953 and 1956 — in lieu of what many think even today — not only a promising but misfired attempt at realising the policy of *détente* but a *major landmark*, after which the Cold War meant something else than before. The general assumption has been that the key to the Cold War was the bipolar world order based on the *opposition and competition* of the United States and the Soviet Union *all along*. In my opinion, however, the *main characteristic* in the relationship of the conflicting superpowers after 1953 was — despite the ever increasing competition — the continuous *interdependence* and *compelled co-operation* of the United States and the Soviet Union while immanent antagonism remained.

This model started to take shape from 1953, especially in 1955-1956, then produced more spectacular results from the mid-sixties, developing into a sometimes near-cynical co-operation, which time to time was disturbed by real and more often apparent crises that caused some temporary tension in East-West relations —sometimes not even that — before the mechanism of compelled co-operation was restored again.

This means that, in spite of what the traditional interpretation holds, dating the “classical Cold War” era between cc. 1947 and 1962,⁸ I assume that this early stage, based on the idea of total confrontation, lasted only until 1953. What came after that can be described, regarding the *logic* of the relationship, as the era of peaceful coexistence, a term generally used for *characterising* East-West relations in the period beginning in the mid-nineteen-sixties.⁹ Following the above argument this term should be rather changed to *compelled coexistence*.

Crises: real and apparent

Another important problem that needs to be revisited is the character of the crises occurring during the Cold War era. The multinational archival evidence now available for scholars proves convincingly that not at all every crisis which occurred during the Cold War era was attributable to the *Cold War* as far as its *main character* is concerned. After World War II, and especially until the mid-sixties, both Eastern and Western public opinion was determined by an ideological and strategic East-West opposition, thus automatically labelling all major internal crises within the Eastern bloc as well as other conflicts of the East-West relationship without differentiation as East-West, i.e. Cold War crises. This pattern has been more or less followed by scholarship as well, incorporating all these conflicts into the general history of the East-West relationship. Today it should be made clear, however, that most of these conflicts were not real crises *in this sense* because they did not exceed the above outlined co-operation framework of the superpowers, in spite of what their propaganda said, namely, they did not cause real threat to the interests of the opposing political-military bloc. Thus, in fact, they did not challenge the post World War II European status quo and consequently did not disturb the East-West relationship in the long run. Such *apparent East-West crises* that had their effect only at the level of public opinion and propaganda were the 1953 Berlin uprising, the events of 1956 in Poland and Hungary, the invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968 and finally the Polish conflict in 1980-1981.

These were, of course, serious *internal* crises both in the countries where they occurred and within the Soviet Bloc *per se*. Although these conflicts were rooted in the domestic situation, they were not isolated from international impacts. In fact they happened in a Cold War constellation and thus their initiation and course was partly effected while their outcome was basically determined by the Cold War. They were also perceived as real conflicts between East and West by contemporary public opinion (but not by policymakers) both in the East and the West and this evaluation has survived in public memory even after the

end of the Cold War. In *this sense* (and only in this sense) they could be called Cold War crises, but, as pointed out above, they were not crises of the East-West relationship.

The Suez crisis in 1956 has to be mentioned together with the above, a serious conflict which happened parallel with the Hungarian revolution but did not have an effect on the East-West relationship. It was rather a conflict within the Western alliance¹⁰, as the Soviet leadership assessed the situation realistically and decided not to be involved in it, not willing to directly confront the West in the defence of Egypt.¹¹

Basically different were from the above conflicts those crises, which did create a serious clash of interest between the East and the West and some of which raised the possibility of a general East-West military confrontation. Such real Cold War crises were the two Berlin crises, (in 1948 and then between 1958-1961), the Korean war, the Chinese off shore islands crises in the mid-and late fifties¹², the Cuban missile crisis, the war in Vietnam and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. These crises represented real threats to World peace and they had a long-lasting effect on East-west relationships both in their own time and in the long run, as opposed to the above mentioned apparent crises.

Similarly, this new interpretation of the essence of Cold War could explain a contradiction which is seemingly difficult to unravel: why is it that the most outspoken and direct military threat of the whole era (the ‘missile notes’ of Soviet prime minister Bulganin) happened during the Middle-East pseudo-crisis in 1956,¹³ while the most recent sources reveal how restrained in fact the leaders of the superpowers were, showing a strong sense of responsibility and well-meaning, when it came to rectifying the Cuban crisis, the largest ever threat to global peace to date.¹⁴

Détente and European Status Quo

When evaluating the international conditions of the 1956 Hungarian revolution, I hasten to note that the era between 1953 and 1956 truly had a major impact on what happened afterwards but one has to remember that the “indissoluble” basis of the co-operation of

superpowers, which started in 1953 and significantly increased in 1955-1956, was the European status quo, established at the end of World War II i.e. accepting that the Soviet Union conquered East-Central Europe. From time to time in the course of East-West negotiations after 1953 western politicians tried to raise the question of the independence of the so-called satellite states — predominantly to soothe their own conscience and satisfy the public opinion in their countries. All the same, they had to face permanent and definite refusal from the Soviet leaders, so western decision-makers tried to find alternative solutions that would make it possible to get rid of the problem which posed an increasing threat to the otherwise promising development of East-West relations with minimising the loss of prestige. That the United States had no concrete plans to liberate the satellite states became apparent from the decision of the National Security Council (NSC No.174) as early as December 1953. The next document recording the United States' East-European policy was the decision of July 1956 (NSC 5608), which openly accepted, as a result of the détente process, that there was no chance of restoring the independence of the satellite states in the near future, so the first step towards total freedom in these countries should be the forming of a national communist government, which has to be supported and assisted.¹⁵

The attitude of the British government in the issue was all the way characterised by quite a degree of pragmatism and initiative drive. Prime Minister Churchill, hardly a month after Eisenhower's announcement of a peace offensive, held a speech in the House of Commons in May 1953, suggesting a summit meeting among the Great Powers' leaders, at the same time giving an explicit nod and accepting the right of the Soviet Union to maintaining their East-Central-European security zone. The British authorities continued to make every effort to resolve the conflict between East (i.e. the Soviet Union) and West, and to bring about political détente. As early as July 1954, Churchill suggested to Soviet leaders that he would be willing to go to Moscow. His successor, Eden, was prepared to present a security plan of the reunification of Germany at the Geneva summit, in July, 1955 which basically would have meant the consecration of the existent European status quo – for the rest of the continent - by heeding to the mutual security interests.¹⁶ Such a concession, however much in principle, was

unimaginable for the Americans at the time. Not to mention that the government of the Federal Republic of Germany also vetoed the idea, so the Eden plan could never be officially presented in Geneva. The suggestion, however, certainly proves that western politicians started to realise that the *de facto* acceptance of the status quo necessarily had to be superseded by its legal acceptance, *de jure*, in order to relieve cold war tension and strengthen the security of Europe, as early as the mid-fifties. These years not only fostered several ideas and suggestions in order to further develop the East-West relationship, some of which would later be realised in practice (i.e. Eisenhower's 'Open Skies' proposal) but even the roots of the most important result of the policy of détente, the 1975 Helsinki Agreement go back to 1955.

After all, the passivity of the West at the time of the Hungarian revolution is not so surprising and incomprehensible as contemporary public opinion in Hungary regarded it. The Hungarian uprising was not merely inconvenient for the western powers but it totally contradicted their policy which was aiming at a compromise with the Soviet Union through the mutual acquiescence of the existing status quo.

II. THE HUNGARIAN REVOLUTION AND THE SUPERPOWERS: IMPROVISATIONS AND DECISIONS OF HISTORICAL IMPORTANCE

In the following paragraphs I intend to have a closer look at the international relevance of two significant elements of the Hungarian revolution: the reaction of the two superpowers. My analysis focuses on two particular aspects: firstly, to what extent could the Soviet and American authorities make sensible decisions in such an inordinate situation, and secondly, whether their decisions were the right ones in defence of their political interests.¹⁷

News of the Hungarian revolution, contrary to what many expected, caused some havoc in Washington. The American government had no firm concept and strategic scenario, should such an unlikely event happen. Suddenly the Eisenhower administration had to face the

fact that despite their massive liberation propaganda in Eastern Europe, the United States, virtually the world's largest military power, had a very limited potential of intervention in the Soviet sphere of interest in case of an anti-Soviet uprising. To maintain their political prestige, though, it was most important for the United States to conceal their inadequacy as best as they could from international public opinion. This delicate situation prompted those improvisational steps that the American administration made as a reaction to the Hungarian revolution. One of these spectacular steps was that, initiated by the Americans, three Western Great Powers officially asked the UN Security Council to put the question of Soviet intervention in Hungary on the agenda of its session on 28 October.¹⁸

From a historical perspective, however, it proved to be more important that the American government, which already reassessed its policy towards the satellite states in July 1956 for "internal use", was now compelled to do the same for the general public as well. Nonetheless, the above mentioned No.5608 decision of the National Security Council was preceded by a long and meticulous preparation, with the participation of experts, there was no time for such accuracy in those stormy days at the end of October, so the new directives were formed in the midst of *ad hoc* negotiations of the highest authorities and on the basis of hasty, improvisational decisions.

Following a suggestion on 26 October by Harold E. Stassen, the president's advisor on disarmament, it was decided that Secretary of State John Foster Dulles, in his canvassing speech for a Dallas audience the following day, would incorporate a message for the Soviet Union, suggesting that if the East-European states achieved freedom and independence, it would not jeopardise the security of the Soviet Union, because the United States would accept that these countries receive a neutral status, similarly to Austria, and never become NATO members. In the very last moment, however, both the neutral status and the ban on NATO membership were excluded from the speech, so the famous declaration eventually conveyed no more than the following: "We do not look upon these nations as potential military allies."¹⁹ It is small wonder, after all, that in the current situation this emphatically defensive and topical

statement was interpreted in Moscow as the United States' confirmation that they would refrain from intervention in the interest of both Poland and Hungary.

The above cited declaration, however, was of historical importance even in this radically amended form — despite the fact that usually only its role in pacifying the Soviet Union is emphasised. All previous official statements of the Eisenhower administration regarding the satellite states were based on the assumption that should these states become independent one day, they would automatically be part of the western world, which in this context includes NATO membership at the same time.²⁰ Declaring that the United States do not consider these states as potential military allies, practically meant the repudiation of their former position, i.e. a significant *change of paradigm* in American foreign policy. In this way the Hungarian revolution and its subsequent suppression — reluctantly acknowledged by the Americans — became a catalyst in a process that started in the summer of 1956 and lasted until the mid-sixties, and which resulted in a new, more pragmatic American foreign policy towards Eastern Europe. The new principle was gradually leaning towards the *de jure* acknowledgement of the European status quo, and instead of liberating the satellite states - although in a historical perspective this hope was never given up, - it aimed at softening and liberalising the prevailing communist regimes, primarily through exerting economic pressure on them. The historical irony is that while the ideologically driven “liberation policy”, relying on every nation's innate right to independence, failed to positively influence the state of the region, the subsequent “defeatist” US policy of self-restraint contributed effectively to the fall of communist systems in Eastern Europe after the collapse of the Soviet Union.

Sooner or later after suppressed revolutions and uprisings the question often arises: could it have happened otherwise; was the defeat unavoidable or was there the slightest chance of victory, had it not been for the unlucky turn of internal and external conditions? Hungarian society has not been able to come to terms with the fall of the 1956 revolution — placing the event in amongst other historical traumas of the nation. Until recently, the public have assumed that the historic chance was missed because the western states eventually failed to deliver the expected assistance. Accordingly, when subsequently re-estimating the chances,

the focus of attention was always what the West and particularly the United States could and should have done in order to help the Hungarian cause. Although contemporary public opinion had every reason to expect genuine western support on the basis of American liberation propaganda, especially from a moral point of view, today we cannot disregard the above mentioned international conditions that fundamentally influenced the outcome of the Hungarian revolution. The facts reveal that the United States actually had no political means at its disposal to force the Soviet Union to give up on Hungary. Moreover, it is most likely that any form of military intervention could have resulted in a direct conflict between the superpowers, from which the outbreak of the third world war would have been just a step ahead.

This all means that the outcome of the Hungarian events in fact depended not so much on the western attitude as on how Soviet leaders could handle the political crisis that started on 23 October 1956. It is well-known that Tito in his speech delivered in Pula on 11 November 1956 considered the first Russian intervention a mistake, yet it is surprising how much neglected the fact is that the Soviets alone (and no one else) were in an *exclusive situation to decide* on 23 October 1956, that is they could have decided differently *then and there*. There was nothing to prevent that the Soviets use the Polish scenario in Hungary. More than that, at the meeting of the CPSU Presidium in the evening of 23 October, a distinguished member of the leadership, Mikoyan, who was most familiar with the Hungarian situation, clearly outlined the alternative solution: “Without Imre Nagy they can’t get control of the movement, and it’s also cheaper for us. (...) What are we losing? The Hungarians themselves will restore order on their own. We should try political measures, and only then send troops.”²¹ Mikoyan’s suggestion was practically the only sensible alternative in the given situation, yet he was alone with his opinion at the Politburo meeting. The Soviet leaders, who showed a pragmatic approach towards the main issues of world politics after 1953, who managed to give up on the idea of military intervention in the last moment when resolving the Polish crisis — an intervention which would have been prompted by the ideological and emotional motivation of cold war reflexes — were unable to exercise the same policy of self-restraint when it came

to the Hungarian uprising. In this way Khrushchev and his companions made the worst possible political decision *from their own point of view* as well, starting a process — virtually the only anti-Soviet freedom fight in the history of the Cold War²² — the uncomfortable consequences of which they thought to avoid by resorting to an imminent military campaign. Of course it cannot even be guessed how the situation was to have developed in Hungary, had the Hungarian government and its military forces been entrusted with the task of pacification. It is more than likely, though, that in such a case there would have been a slight chance of consolidating the situation and, similarly to Poland, of establishing a promptly introduced but firmly controlled and limited reform policy, which the Soviets would later accept as a passable solution that does not jeopardise their fundamental strategic interests. In this case, however, we would rather talk about the victory of the reform communist movement instead of the Hungarian revolution of 1956. Having said that, it is just as conceivable that the government of Imre Nagy would have been unable to cope with the conflict gradually slipping in an increasingly radical direction, and the Soviet Union would have had to subdue the uprising with military intervention in a few days or weeks. In the latter case, however, they could have said that they really did everything in their power to bring about a peaceful solution and it was not their fault that they failed.²³ It is therefore not too farfetched to say that in handling the crises of East-Central Europe between 1953 and 1981, 23 October 1956 was the only occasion when the Soviet leadership made a totally wrong decision — considering their own imperial interests — which resulted in a situation directly opposed to their original intention. At the same time, it means that the invasion of 4 November, 1956 was a logical and unavoidable consequence of a principally wrong political decision. The *first* Soviet intervention propelled such a dynamic impetus in the Hungarian events which after a certain point could not be handled by political means within the framework of the system any more, unlike in Poland. Consequently, by the end of October the rapid collapse of the communist system became more and more apparent, which in turn posed a genuine threat to the integrity of the Soviet bloc. *By that time* there was no alternative decision that the Soviets could make: their only reaction was to be armed intervention.

While it is so rarely emphasised or even realised in old and recent analyses of the subject how decisive the *first* Soviet intervention was, the *general* reinterpretation of Soviet policy towards the Hungarian revolution has recently received a new impetus, following the disclosure of the so-called Malin notes.²⁴ These notes give a non-verbatim, often fragmentary yet immensely informative account of debates about the Hungarian crisis in the Soviet Politburo giving an insight for the first time into the polemics of the highest echelons of Moscow, which eventually led to the decisions we know all too well. These documents confirm those earlier presumptions that there were serious, often heated debates in the Kremlin about the right policy to follow. Researchers have widely different opinions about what was actually *at stake* in these debates, even in the light of the lately disclosed historical sources.

Basically two different points of view can be identified. According to the first one, the Soviet authorities were more open towards handling the crisis than we have thought so far, and consequently the final suppression of the uprising was not the only alternative. Had the events taken a more favourable — and usually not specified — turn, there would have been a fair chance for the revolution to be victorious. Going one step further, some presume that the liberation of East-Central Europe could have happened 33 years before the actual event — 1989 and 1990. According to the second, directly opposing opinion, the message of the Malin notes does not contravene our previous assumption about Soviet policy in the issue, what is more, it generally confirms what we could only guess before. The debates within the presidential body were indeed serious and perhaps more heated than one could imagine, the real aim of the dispute between “liberals” and “conservatives”²⁵, however, was not at all giving up on Hungary (i.e. realising the triumph of the revolution) as merely deciding what compromises and sanctions could be granted to the government of Imre Nagy in the given situation, so that they could consolidate the situation within the framework of the communist system. Although I hasten to add that I personally represent the latter theory,²⁶ it is worth conducting a brief survey to find out what kind of facts and information seem to confirm the idea that the Soviets would have been ready to give up Hungary if need be. It might sound surprising but in the minutes of Politburo meetings between 23 October and 4 November 1956

there is only one really important but vaguely decisive piece of information which could be utilised for such an interpretation: on 30 October the Presidium — under pressure from the Chinese delegation who came to Moscow²⁷ — unanimously (!) declared that Soviet troops should be withdrawn from Hungary. Nevertheless, the key to the interpretation of the often fragmentary Malin notes is that new information had better be construed in view of *all* known and recently disclosed information on the one hand, and in the global context of world politics and East-West relations on the other hand.²⁸ In this respect, it is more than obvious that the potential of such favourable decision from the Soviet authorities depended by no means on their disposition to “give up” Hungary as such; just opposite: it would have been the *maximum political concession* that Soviet leaders were willing to make — to avoid what even they thought would be the worst possible solution: military intervention — had the government of Imre Nagy been able to consolidate the situation without jeopardising the communist regime and the integrity of the Soviet bloc. There are several concrete examples in the Malin notes in this regard, proving that the withdrawal of Soviet troops would have been possible only if these two conditions had been met. Suffice it to mention two specific, poignantly expressed and documented examples. Foreign Minister Shepilov, who took part in the debates mostly as the representative of the “liberal alternative”,²⁹ said the following when supporting the above decision: “With the agreement of the government of Hungary, we are ready to withdraw troops. We’ll have to keep up a struggle with national-Communism for a long time.”³⁰ That is the well-calculated consequence of their step was by no means the restoration of the capitalist system but the consolidation of a situation similar to that of Poland, i.e. the formation of a well-defined communist system, which could operate with more autonomy, yet loyal to Moscow and within the framework of the Soviet bloc.

Typically, it was Mikoyan who expressed most clearly the necessity of keeping up the status quo by hook or by crook, even though he always represented the most liberal opinion in terms of Hungary all along: “We simply cannot allow Hungary to be removed from our camp,” he said at the Politburo meeting on 1 November, one day after the decision was made about the need for intervention, while he tried to convince the others that there were still political means

to find a solution, and they should wait another 10-15 days before launching an intervention.³¹ The irony of fate is that while on 23 October Mikoyan was the only one who assessed the situation sensibly, pushing the strategy of wait and see *then*, on 1 November the same position meant that now he was the only one in the leadership who could not understand (or accept) that the Hungarian events were indeed beyond the scope that the Soviet Union could tolerate. Today it is generally accepted that by the very end of October Hungary experienced such an irreversible democratic transition, which undoubtedly could have resulted in the complete elimination of communist dictatorship, had it not been for outside intervention. The events between 1 and 3 November only reinforced this opinion; it was not incidental that at the Politburo meeting on 3 November now it was Mikoyan himself who suggested János Kádár for heading the new government.³²

All in all, we can conclude that the Malin notes do not contain any fact or information which would imply that anyone in the Soviet leadership was willing to accept the changes in Hungary, together with the more and more apparent consequences, i.e. the emergence of a democratic system. Come to think of it, it is not that surprising. Allow me to refer once again to a well-known fact: it has been common knowledge for long that Tito himself agreed to the plan of Soviet invasion on the night of 2 and 3 November on the island of Brioni, in order to save the communist system in Hungary. More than that, he later officially declared that the second invasion was unavoidable. Having said that, it is beyond doubt that other than Tito there was no one more interested in the victory of national communism, that is in the success of the Imre Nagy administration in this particular case. Consequently, if at the beginning of November even Tito thought -- despite his fundamentally positive disposition, and rightly -- that the communist dictatorship in Hungary was in intractable jeopardy, it would have been most peculiar if the Soviet leaders, who had conceded even more moderate changes within the political framework of communism only under the pressure of a serious crisis, had shown more compliance than the Yugoslav authorities.³³

After the intervention of 4 November it seemed that the proposal made by the CPSU Presidium at their meeting on 30 October, which did not concern fundamental issues but was

of historical importance nevertheless, lost its relevance once and for all. Paradoxically, though, out of all the East-Central European states it was Hungary — the Kádár leadership, which came to power in those days and consolidated their supremacy rapidly with the dual strategy of stick and carrot — who could stretch the boundaries of Moscow's tolerance at all times, and achieve a relatively independent *internal* development for decades after 1956. Paradoxically, a relatively independent *foreign policy*, just about tolerated by the Soviet Union, was achieved by Romania, a state whose internal system was in many respect more retrograde than the post-Stalinist Soviet system.

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

III. THE INTERNATIONAL AFTERMATH OF THE REVOLUTION

In the following paragraphs I intend to give a sketchy outline of the significance of the Hungarian revolution in the further development of the East-West relationship, in the détente process, and how the events of 1956 later influenced Hungary's position and diplomatic elbowroom in international politics.³⁴

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

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

This guarantee of security policy, gained in 1956 and lasting until the collapse of the Soviet Union — together with scientific results in missile technology and space research in the late 1950s — contributed to the strengthening of the international position of the Soviet Union and gave a boost to the self-confidence of Soviet leaders. Later it would indirectly influence the strengthening of two completely opposite tendencies: the elaboration of Khrushchev’s adventurist foreign policy, the second Berlin crisis and the Cuban missile crisis in the short run. In the long run, however, the increasing self-confidence strengthened the emancipation tendency, which made the Soviet Union a superpower on a *par* with the United States from a military and strategic point of view by the end of the 1960s. However, it indirectly helped the

deepening of the classical *détente* policy from the end of the sixties, contributed to the signing of the Helsinki Agreement (1975) on the basis of *de jure* accepting the European status quo, and helped realising the practice of “peaceful coexistence”.

The revolution influenced in a peculiar way Hungary’s later role in the East-West relationship, and her position in international politics. Learning from their experiences in 1956, the Kádár regime, to say the least, did not strive for a more or less independent foreign policy; moreover, they openly proclaimed both in Hungary and abroad that they rigorously followed the directives of Moscow at all times. In less spectacular and more disguised spheres of foreign policy (such as the economic relations with the West, secret missions at mediating in the Vietnam war and in the Czechoslovak crisis in 1968, etc.) there prevailed a cautious but firm tendency all along, which aimed at utilising the available political leeway most effectively but without drawing much attention.³⁵ This practice was directly the opposite of the Romanian strategy, which proclaimed both for their domestic public and abroad that they dissented the Soviet line from the mid-sixties on, eager to prove the existence of a truly independent Romanian foreign policy, while in fact the country, - as far as the basic interests and aims were concerned - similarly to Hungary, remained a solid member of the Soviet system of alliance.

On the basis of official and spontaneous social reaction in the West to the suppression of the revolution, and the commitment of the UN General Assembly to the issue of Hungary, many might have thought that the Kádár regime would not be able to consolidate its relationship with the West ever or at least for a long time. Nonetheless, the defeat of the Hungarian uprising rather prompted western politicians to carry on with the policy of reinterpretation, which meant that after 1956 they completely did away with the theory of liberating enslaved nations; from then on, the new goal was “softening” and liberalising the communist regimes of East-Central Europe. In this respect the Kádár administration, aiming at the systematic *rehabilitation* of the communist regime after November 1956, i.e. trying to organise a system that works effectively, proved to be a most promising partner.³⁶ Having said that, it is not surprising that the British declared their intention to stabilise relations with Hungary as early as the Spring of 1957 — true enough, they did it only for “internal use” for

the time being, given the circumstances. Discretion was necessary, as the Kádár regime wanted to accomplish a specifically Hungarian variation of the post-Stalinist system *parallel with* the inconceivably brutal and widespread retaliation campaign after the revolution, to which western politicians responded with morally righteous indignation. Thinking sensibly and considering the security interests of the Soviet Union they admitted the necessity of pacification and restoring law and order, nonetheless, partly under pressure from public opinion on home ground, they expected the Hungarian government to forgive the “delinquents” and “deviants” just as magnanimously as pragmatically they intended to win over the majority of the population for their policy. Perhaps we can risk the presumption that should the West, and primarily the United States, have exerted pressure on the Hungarian government — to make them moderate the zeal of political retribution — directly, by means of secret negotiations, as it happened later in 1960-1962,³⁷ instead of appealing to the widest public, such as the diplomatic forums of the UN, they might have forced more serious compromises from the Hungarian government much earlier. This would have resulted in not only what happened years later — namely that the Hungarian case was taken off the agenda of the UN General Assembly in December 1962, in return for which Hungary granted amnesty to the majority of those convicted for their participation in the revolution — but the retribution campaign itself could have been influenced, mitigating its austerity and thus directly saving dozens of human lives.³⁸ What makes it all plausible is that the main objective of the Kádár regime in their foreign policy right after 1956 was to break out of the almost complete diplomatic isolation and to prove that even from a western point of view the new system, although its conception was far from being immaculate, is no worse, or even better than other communist regimes. Apparently the West registered this attempt quite soon, but the recurring issue of Hungary in the UN was so instrumental, especially for the United States, in the struggle of superpowers for the influence over the third world, that direct negotiations with the Hungarian authorities only became possible once the UN debate had obviously exhausted.³⁹

In this way in Western policy Hungary only gained the status of *bloc normal* — i.e. the same recognition as the other communist states — after the amnesty of 1963. Having said that,

Hungary became a favourite straight away, together with Poland. The peculiarly Hungarian variation of the post-Stalinist system — worked out by the mid-sixties, relying mostly on the lesson of the revolution — created a more flexible and liberal communist model of its own kind, which happened to align with the goal of American foreign policy after 1956: a policy that abandoned the rhetoric of liberation for good. Paradoxically the Hungarian revolution of 1956, striving for the principle of universal human freedom, was totally out of tune with the actual objectives of western politics — even though many thought that the uprising renders the conditions of “liberation”. The Kádár regime, however, with their pragmatic approach, managed to align with western expectations of the time more than any other country of the Soviet bloc for decades after 1956

NOTES

- ¹ An earlier version of this paper was published as: Hidegháború, enyhülés és az 1956-os magyar forradalom, Évkönyv V. 1996-1997, 1956-os Intézet, Budapest, 1997, 201-213. pp. This working paper was finished during my fellowship at New York University where I spent the 2001/2002 academic year as a Center Fellow of the Project on the Cold War as a Global Conflict at the International Center for Advanced Studies. While the tragedy of September 11 hindered my work in an indescribable way for a long time, the excellent working conditions provided by the staff of ICAS, Director Tom Bender, Project Director Marilyn Young, Project Co-Director Allen Hunter and Administrator Jeryl Martin Hannibal eventually gave me ample compensation. Similarly, the extremely stimulating company of my fellow-fellows and the larger community of the Friday seminars’ participants helped me a lot to prevail over my initial depression. I am

especially grateful for the comments and observations of my colleagues during the discussion of the manuscript of this paper, particularly for those of Mario del Pero, John Prados and Carolyne Eisenberg.

²Parallel with revealing new sources, - especially from archives of the former Soviet Bloc-international historiography, mainly in the United States, has been reinterpreting the history of the Cold War since the early 1990s. It is worth noting a few important works of the already bulky collection of new interpretations: Richard H. Immerman (ed.): *John Foster Dulles and the Diplomacy of the Cold War*. Princeton, N.J., Princeton University Press, 1990; David Holloway: *Stalin and the Bomb: the Soviet Union and Atomic Energy, 1939-1956*. New Haven, 1994; Melvyn P. Leffler, Davis S. Painter (eds.): *Origins of the Cold War. An International History*. London—New York, Routledge, 1994; Vojtech Mastny: *The Cold War and Soviet Insecurity: The Stalin Years*. New York, 1996; Vladislav Zubok — Konstantin Pleshakov: *Inside the Kremlin's Cold War. From Stalin to Khrushchev*. Harvard University Press, 1996; John Lewis Gaddis: *We Now Know*. New York, 1997; Marc Trachtenberg: *A Constructed Peace. The Making of the European Settlement 1945-1963* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999. See also *Bulletin* (Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars Cold War International History Project, Washington D.C. — hereinafter called *CWIHP Bulletin*), Nos.1-12/13. and CWIHP Working Papers

³ William H. Hyland: *The Cold War. Fifty Years of Conflict*. Times Books, 1990. p.59.

⁴ Cf. Rolf Steininger: *The German Question: The Stalin Note of 1952 and the Problem of Reunification*. Trans. Jane T. Hedges. New York, 1990. The history of the note was studied by Stein Bjornstad on the basis of Moscow archive materials in *Soviet German Policy and the*

Stalin Note of 10 March 1952. Hovedoppgave, University of Oslo, Department of History, Fall, 1996.

⁵ Cf. Jim Hershberg: “Germany and the Cold War: New Evidence from East Bloc Archives”. *CWIHP Bulletin*, Issue 4, Fall, 1994.

⁶ The importance of the year 1952 as a landmark was first pointed out by Melinda Kalmár, in an analysis of literary policy in Hungary. Cf. Melinda Kalmár: *A politika poetikája. Irodalomideológia az ötvenes évek első felében*. [Poetics of Politics. Literary ideology in the early 1950s.] in *Holmi*, No.5, 1993. The economic crisis that started in 1952 is pointed out by Károly Urbán: *Sztálin haláltól a forradalom kitöréséig. A magyar-szovjet kapcsolatok története (1953-1956)*. [From the Death of Stalin to the Outbreak of the Revolution. The History of Hungarian-Soviet Relations (1953-1956).] 1996, manuscript. A less specific reference to the same issue was made by the so-called Fact-finding Committee set up by the HSWP CC in July, 1988 in one of their reports. Cf. *Történelmi utunk. A Munkabizottság állásfoglalása a jelen helyzet kialakulásának okairól*. [Our Historical Route. Some Notes by the Committee about the Basis of our Present Situation.] In *Társadalmi Szemle*, special issue, 1989, p.26.

⁷ Hungarian National Archive, XIX-J-1-j, Foreign Ministry, Great Britain, Top Secret documents, 00183/13/1953. It is worth noting that the Hungarian negotiators, expecting that the British were in a difficult situation, tried to have the ban lifted on some articles from the COCOM list, which restricted the export of certain strategic items to communist countries.

⁸ This chronology is generally used in international historiography.

⁹ The term “peaceful coexistence” was originally used by Lenin and then reinvented by the old-new Soviet leadership right after Stalin’s death. For a long time, however it remained a *Soviet* category, since the Western powers, especially the US were unwilling to accept this concept. This happened only gradually from the mid-nineteen-sixties.

¹⁰ While the view that the Suez crisis was basically a conflict within the Western alliance is quite generally accepted in Western scholarship, interestingly enough, in the former Soviet Bloc countries it is still widely regarded a serious East-West conflict. This contradiction itself suggests that the further examination of the nature and the contemporary and retrospective perception of the crises during the Cold War era would be beneficial not only for history writing but for other disciplines like sociology, anthropology and political science as well.

¹¹ A fine example of this pragmatic Soviet opinion is Khrushchev's announcement at the meeting of the CPSU Presidium on 31 October 1956, hastening an armed intervention in Hungary: "If we depart from Hungary, it will give a great boost to the Americans, English and French - the imperialists. They will perceive it as weaknesses on our part and will go onto the offensive.... To Egypt they will then add Hungary." Namely, the possibility of backing president Nasser was not even considered, the Soviet leaders gave up on Egypt at the very moment of the Israeli-British-French attack. Cf. The "Malin Notes" on the Crises in Hungary and Poland, 1956. Mark Kramer ed. *CWIHP Bulletin*, Issue 8-9. p. 393.

¹² Communist China started to shell the offshore islands of Quemou and Matsou, occupied by the Chinese Nationalist government in Taiwan in 1954. Although it became never clear what the real motives of the Beijing leadership were (as eventually they did not invade the islands) these attempts potentially posed a continuous danger of "hot war" between the two military alliances in the mid- and late fifties because of an US security guarantee defending the territorial integrity of Taiwan. The historical importance of this crisis, however, has been generally and unduly underestimated in public memory both in the East and the West. For a recent account on this crisis see: Chen Jian: *Mao's China and the Cold War*, The University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill and London, 2001, 163-204 pp. For the fascinating minutes of

conversations between Mao and Khrushchev discussing also this issue in 1958 and 1959, see: Vladislav Zubok: *The Khrushchev-Mao Conversations*, 31 July-3 August 1958 and 2 October 1959, *CWIHP Bulletin*, Issue 12/13, Fall/Winter 2001, 243-272 pp..

¹³ Once it became apparent from the reaction of American leaders that the Israeli-British-French coalition would be forced to retreat by the United States, the Soviet Union came up with the biggest ever political bluff of the Cold War era: Prime Minister Bulganin sent telegrams to his British and French colleagues on 5 November 1956, demanding an imminent cease-fire, otherwise he indirectly threatened both states with a missile attack against Paris and London. At the same time, in a telegram sent to the Israeli government, there was a clear reference to the potential questioning the very existence of Israel as a state.

¹⁴ For the latest research on the Cuban crisis, see *CWIHP Bulletin*, Issues 1 (Spring, 1992), 3 (Fall, 1993) and 5 (Spring, 1995). See also *The Cuban Missile Crisis, 1962*, a National Security Archive Documents Reader, Washington D.C.

¹⁵ For the East-European policy of the American government, see Bennett Kovrig: *Of Walls and Bridges: The United States and Eastern Europe*. New York, New York University Press, 1991; and *The Myth of Liberation: East-Central Europe in U.S. Diplomacy and Politics since 1941*. Baltimore, The John Hopkins University Press, 1973; Marchio, David James: *Rhetoric and Reality: The Eisenhower Administration and Unrest in Eastern Europe, 1953-1959*. University Microfilms International, 1992. For a recent assessment of East-West relations in these years, see Csaba Békés: *The 1956 Revolution and World Politics*. CWIHP Working Paper 16. Washington D.C. 1996. The author's analysis of this topic is largely based on his extensive archival research in the following collections in the US and Great Britain: *Seeley G. Mudd*

Manuscript Library, Princeton University, Princeton, New Jersey, Dulles. A. W.: Papers, Dulles. J. F.: Papers. *Dwight D. Eisenhower Library*, Abilene, Kansas, Eisenhower D. D.: Papers as President of the United States. (Ann Whitman File) Eisenhower, D. D.: Records as President. White House Central Files. Confidential Files, Jackson. C. D.: Papers, White House Office, Office of the Staff Secretary: Records of Paul T. Carroll, Andrew J. Goodpastor, L. Arthur Minnich. and Christopher H. Russell, White House Office. National Security Council Staff: Papers, Dulles, J.F. Papers, *National Archives*, Washington, D.C. National Security Council Reports, RG 273. Department of State, Central Decimal Files, RG 59, Records of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, RG 330, Papers of Admiral Radford, RG 218, Records of U.S. Department of State. Office of Public Opinion Studies, RG 59, *United Nations Archives*, New York, N. Y. PSCA Confidential Notes, Chronological Summary regarding Hungary, Andrew Cordier File, *National Security Archive*, Washington, D.C. *Public Record Office*, London, Kew, Cabinet meetings, Prime Minister A. Eden papers, Foreign Secretary S. Lloyd papers, Foreign Office, General Correspondence.

¹⁶ Brian White: *Britain, Détente and Changing East-West Relations*, London—New York, Routledge, 1992. pp.55-56. On the Eden Plan see: Sacki Dockrill: The Eden Plan In: *Cold War Respite: The Geneva Summit of 1955*, (eds) Günter Bischof, Saki Dockrill, 117-154. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2000.

¹⁷ Generally about the policy of the superpowers see Bence Kovrig: “Liberators: the superpowers and Hungary in 1956”. In *Hungary and the Superpowers in the 20th century*. Ed. Ignác Romsics. Budapest, László Teleki Foundation, 1995; Csaba Békés: *The 1956 Hungarian Revolution in World Politics*. About the reaction of the individual great powers, including the decisions of the Soviet Union, see the articles of János M. Rainer, Viatcheslav Sereda, Vladislav Zubok, Mark Kramer, Leonid Ghibiansky, Chen Chien, Raymond L.

Garthoff, Ronald Pruessen, Vitaly Afiany and Daniel Calhoun in a forthcoming volume of essays on the 1956 Revolution to be published by Wilson Center Press. For the most up to date account and documentation on the revolution see: *The 1956 Hungarian Revolution: A History in Documents*. A National Security Archive Documents Reader (eds.) Csaba Békés, Malcolm Byrne and János M. Rainer., Central European University Press, 2002.

¹⁸ For the UN debate on the Hungarian issue, see Csaba Békés: *A brit kormány és az 1956-os magyar forradalom*. [The British Government and the 1956 Hungarian Revolution.] In *Évkönyv I*. Budapest, 1956 Institute, 1992. And by the same author: *A magyar kérdés az ENSZ-ben és a nyugati nagyhatalmak titkos tárgyalásai 1956. október 28. - november 4.* (Brit külügyi dokumentumok) [The Hungarian issue in the UN and the secret negotiations of the Western Great Powers 28 October – 4 November 1956. (Documents of British foreign affairs).] In *Évkönyv II*. Budapest, 1956 Institute, 1993. László Borhi: Rollback, Liberation, Containment or Inaction? U.S. Policy and Eastern Europe in the 1950s. *Journal of Cold War Studies*, Volume I, Number 3, Fall 1999.

¹⁹ An abridged version of the speech is printed in *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1955-1957*. Volume XXV. Eastern Europe. Washington, United States Government Printing Office, p. 318.

²⁰This thesis is indirectly proved by the reluctance showed by the US in accepting the idea of Austria's neutrality prior to the conclusion of the Austrian state treaty in 1955. The above mentioned fact, i.e. that in the last minute the reference to the ban on NATO membership and to neutrality were omitted from the speech of Dulles on October 27, 1956 seems strongly supporting the idea that up till that moment the *potential* incorporation of the East-Central European countries into NATO had been a serious intention of the US leadership.

²¹The “Malin Notes” on the Crises in Hungary and Poland, 1956. Mark Kramer ed. *CWIHP Bulletin*, Issue 8-9. p. 389.

²² In this context I disregard the partisan warfare in Afghanistan against Soviet occupation, because of the peculiar circumstances of the invasion.

²³ Typically enough, although the Soviet leadership was well aware of the rapid escalation of Hungarian events, at the Politburo meetings after 23 October no one cared to attribute it to the wrong decision. Moreover, with the exception of Mikoyan, they all assessed it as a wise step afterwards.

²⁴ These notes have been published in several studies since their disclosure in 1995: *Döntés a Kremlben, 1956* [*Decision-making in the Kremlin, 1956*] János M. Rainer, Viatcheslav Sereda (eds.) 1956 Institute, Budapest, 1996, *Istorichesky Archiv*, (Viatcheslav Sereda, ed.) 1996, No.2, 3.; *The Hungarian Quarterly*, 1996, No.142, 143. (János M. Rainer, ed.); *The Hidden History of Hungary 1956: A Compendium of Declassified Documents*. Csaba Békés, Christian F. Ostermann, Malcolm Byrne (eds.). Budapest—Washington D.C., The Institute for the History of the 1956 Hungarian Revolution — The National Security Archive, 1996; *CWIHP Bulletin*, Issue 8-9, Winter 1996-1997 (Mark Kramer ed.), *The 1956 Hungarian Revolution: A History in Documents*.

²⁵Categories used by János M. Rainer. Cf. *Döntés a Kremlben, 1956* [*Decision-making in the Kremlin, 1956*.]

²⁶ For the first publication of this view see: Csaba Békés — Melinda Kalmár: Optimizmusra szükség van - de illúziók nélkül. Volt-e esély 1956-ban? [Optimism is a must have — but without illusions. Was there a chance in 1956?]. *Népszabadság*, 22 October 1996.

²⁷For the ambiguous role of the Chinese leadership see Chen Jian: op.cit. Chapter 6

²⁸ Just as important, yet often overlooked by scholars is the significance of so-called *negative information*; i.e. the analysis of what party leaders *did not* talk about. On the basis of this, it is

apparent that Soviet leaders were not afraid of western intervention in Hungary, because there are no important contributions of this issue recorded in the notes. If they had reckoned with such an exigency, they would not only have had to put it on the agenda for discussion but immediate security measures would have been taken (e.g. total mobilisation of the armed forces, etc.)

²⁹ A category used by János M. Rainer. Cf. *Döntés a Kremlben, 1956* [Decision-making in the Kremlin, 1956.]

³⁰ The “Malin Notes” on the Crises in Hungary and Poland, 1956. Mark Kramer ed. *CWIHP Bulletin*, Issue 8-9. p. 392.

³¹ *ibid.* p. 394.

³² *ibid.* p. 397.

³³ About the Yugoslav opinion on Soviet intervention new information has been disclosed in recently published Soviet sources: according to these, in the course of negotiations with Soviet leaders in November and December 1956, Yugoslav leaders, Tito among them, expressed that Yugoslav troops would have intervened to subdue the Hungarian uprising, had the Soviet army not marched in on 4 November. *Hiányzó lapok 1956 történetéből. Dokumentumok a volt SZKP KB levéltárából.* [Missing Pages from the History of 1956. Documents from the Archive of the Central Committee of the Former Soviet Communist Party.] Compilation, notes and foreword by Viatcheslav Sereda and Alexandr Stikalín. Budapest, Móra, 1993. p.249; *Top Secret. Magyar-jugoszláv kapcsolatok 1956-1959.* [Top Secret. Hungarian-Yugoslav Relations 1956-1959.] Documents. Ed. József Kiss, Zoltán Ripp, István Vida. Budapest, Committee on the Contemporary History of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, 1997. p.99. This surprising fact, which has not yet been confirmed by Yugoslav sources, was first published by Swiss historian Pierre Maurer: *Az 1956-os magyar forradalom helye a szovjet kommunista rendszer összeomlásában.* [The contribution of the 1956 Hungarian revolution to the collapse of the

Soviet communist system.] Minutes of the international conference, 13-15 June, 1991, Budapest, National Széchényi Library. Manuscript. Ed. Csaba Békés. Budapest, 1956 Institute, 1993. p.53. On the role of Yugoslavia see Leonid Gibianskii: Soviet-Hungarian Relations and the Hungarian Revolution of 1956, CWIHP Bulletin, Issue 10, March, 1998, 139-148 pp.

³⁴ For more detailed recent analyses on the aftermath and effect of the revolution see Péter Kende: Mégegyszer a magyar forradalom világpolitikai jelentőségéről. [Once again on the significance of the Hungarian revolution and world politics.] In *Évkönyv IV*. Budapest, 1956 Institute, 1995. pp.7-23; Csaba Békés: *The 1956 Hungarian Revolution in World Politics*, Chapter III.

³⁵ About Hungarian foreign policy after 1956, see Charles Gati: *Hungary and the Soviet Bloc*. Durham, Duke UP. Chapter 7; András Felkay: “The Relationship of Hungary and the Soviet Union in the Years of the Kádár Regime, 1956-1988.” In *Hungary and the Great Powers in the 20th Century*, pp.215-227; Jungwon Park: “Conformity and Relative Autonomy in the Soviet Bloc: Hungary’s Westward Policy Since the 1956 Revolution”. Ph.D. thesis, manuscript. Budapest, 1994; Békés Csaba: A Kádári külpolitika 1956-1968. [Kádár’s foreign policy 1956-1968.] *Rubicon* 1998. 1.

³⁶ Instead of the terms “restoration” and “consolidation” commonly used -- with opposite political bias -- for describing the reconstruction period following 1956, in recent scholarship Melinda Kalmár introduced a term much more appropriate for an academic analysis: *rehabilitation*. Cf. Melinda Kalmár: *Ennivaló és hozomány. A kora kádárizmus ideológiája*. [The ideology of the early Kádár era.] Budapest, Magvető kiadó, 1998.

³⁷ On Hungarian-American secret negotiations see János Radványi: *Hungary and the Superpowers. The 1956 Revolution and Realpolitik*. California, Hoover Institution Press Stanford, 1972.

³⁸ The number of those, sentenced to death because of their participation in the revolution was incredibly high: altogether 229 people were executed.

³⁹Cf. Csaba Békés: A magyarkérdés az ENSZ-ben. [The Hungarian question in the UN.] Rubicon, 1996. 8-9.