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CURRENT INTELLIGENCE STUDY

FACTIONALISM IN THE HUNGARIAN WORKERS (COMMUNIST) PARTY (1945-1956)

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CURRENT INTELLIGENCE STUDY

Factionalism in the Hungarian Workers (Communist) Party

(1945-1956)

This study is a working paper. It attempts to discover and analyze the major cliques, factions and alignments in the Hungarian Workers (Communist) party since 1945 in terms of changing Soviet policy demands and the resultant conflict of interest with the needs of local leaders and the country as a whole. It is circulated to analysts of Soviet affairs as a contribution to current interpretation of Soviet policy. It is also designed in part to meet the IAC requirement of 27 December 1955 for studies of factionalism in the Satellite Communist parties.

CAESAR VI-B-57a

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FACTIONALISM IN THE HUNGARIAN WORKERS (COMMUNIST) PARTY

(1945-1956)

SUMMARY

The Hungarian Workers (Communist) Party from its inception in 1918 figured in Soviet policy as an instrument of penetration and, after 1944, domination in Hungary. At the height of its power it numbered almost one million members and, under the leadership of Matyas Rakosi, Hungary's "little Stalin," held control over every aspect of Hungarian life. The party was shattered as the result of a series of Soviet policy moves culminating in the de-Stalinization pronouncements of Khrushchev and Mikoyan at the 20th congress of the Soviet Communist Party. These measures split the party into hostile factions and precipitated dissension in the organization from top to bottom. The virtual destruction of the party was completed by the Soviet armed reconquest of Hungary in November 1956.

In violently anti-Communist and anti-Soviet Hungary, the mission imposed on the party required that it be headed by individuals completely loyal to the Kremlin. To secure such a top command, Moscow in past years built up a corps of carefully trained Hungarian emigrés, in large number Jewish, chosen for suppleness, tenacity, intelligence and lack of national sentiments. At the close of World War II this group of "Muscovites," led by Matyas Rakosi, returned with Soviet armies to rule Hungary in the interests of the Kremlin, using any tactics which appeared necessary for the purpose within the general framework of Soviet policies. He enlisted the support of optimists and opportunists who believed that the welfare of the country and their own advancement might be gained by collaboration with Moscow and a reasonable degree of socialization of the Hungarian economy and social structure. In the course of years, Rakosi built up a well-integrated hierarchy of officials, chosen from nativist Communists and collaborators, closely tied to himself personally, buttressed by an effective security police structure and sustained in the last analysis by the presence of Soviet troops in Hungary. These individuals were given careful training to fit them for their function of ruling Hungary in the interests of the Kremlin.

At each major Soviet policy change, the Hungarian party leadership was required to implement Moscow-dictated directives which often ran counter to Hungarian national interests, required the demotion or destruction of individuals in high

positions and evoked the bitter hatred of the Hungarian people. This situation confronted the Hungarian leaders with a direct conflict of interests. At various moments, certain Communists refused to abide by the Kremlin decisions and chose the interests of Hungary.

In the early years of Communist rule, the conflict of interests was played down in accordance with a formula permitting a "Hungarian road to socialism." The reversal of this toleration of "national Communism" following the break between Stalin and Tito led to the fall of leading Hungarian Communists, notably Laszlo Rajk. But the death of Rajk was only the first step in stamping out smouldering Hungarian resistance to ruthless Sovietization now imposed on the country under the leadership of Rakosi and his Muscovite colleagues Gero, Revai and Farkas. High-ranking Social Democrats who had joined the party soon proved unreliable (1950) and distinguished local Communists--notably Janos Kadar--who had attempted to co-operate following the death of Rajk also were imprisoned. As a result of these purges, all opposition elements in Hungary were either in prison or terrified into silence. The purged elements were replaced by young "hard" Communists provided with intensive Soviet indoctrination.

Major blows were dealt to the Muscovite leaders by the "Zionist" purges of 1952-53 and the concurrent economic crisis that led to replacements in the Hungarian planning apparatus. Although Rakosi managed these matters with great skill, the purges pointed up the predominantly Jewish character of the party leadership in a country where anti-Semitism was latent, and emphasized the disastrous effects of accelerated industrialization and collectivization on the Hungarian economy.

The proclamation of the New Course with Imre Nagy as premier in the summer of 1953 brought new personalities to the fore and instituted liberalized policies in agriculture and industry at the expense of doctrinaire Communists who had profited from earlier economic policies. Violent opposition from these elements was silenced by Rakosi, apparently on Moscow's orders, and the new policies enforced. During the summer of 1954, Nagy emerged as a genuine leader backed by the majority of the central committee. But Nagy's resort to extraparty mechanisms to gain popular support and his encouragement of unrestrained criticism of regime policies drove Rakosi to seek the support of the Kremlin against Nagy. Meanwhile, the liberation of Janos Kadar and other imprisoned Communists strengthened party moderate forces against the former leadership.

In late November Rakosi returned to Hungary, after two months in Moscow, to lay down a doctrinaire line on political and economic issues and, following the demotion of Malenkov in the Soviet Union, to demote Nagy and his adherents. The party leadership however, was unable to force Nagy--sustained by a large faction in the central committee--into submission and he therefore remained the rallying point for the rapidly growing opposition. The Rakosi-Gero clique renewed its emphasis on industrialization and collectivization, in connection with planning for the Second Five-Year Plan due to begin in 1956, and attempted to coerce its critics into submission. The group was greatly restrained, however, by the Kremlin's current attempt to present an appearance of moderation, particularly in its relations with Tito of Yugoslavia. These apparently liberal Soviet policies, however, stimulated the Hungarian opposition into mounting demands for a "thaw" in Hungary.

In the autumn of 1955, Hungarian writers apparently backed by a large faction in the party central committee resorted to open defiance of Rakosi (the so-called Writers' Revolt). The party leadership was forced to resort to coercive measures to silence its opponents. They found it necessary to take the long-delayed action of expelling Imre Nagy from the party as a means of quieting criticism in the central committee.

The extreme de-Stalinization pronouncements of Khrushchev and Mikoyan at the 20th congress of the Soviet Communist Party dealt a drastic blow to the Rakosi regime and encouraged his opponents into renewed efforts to oust him and institute liberalized policies. From this point forward, Rakosi was maintained in power only by the Kremlin which apparently believed that his experienced hand was needed to control the dangerous factionalism in the Hungarian party and contain Hungarian nationalism encouraged by the Kremlin's wooing of Tito. Yet the retention of Rakosi contrary to announced Soviet de-Stalinization measures drove the Hungarian opposition into a frenzy. At meetings at the Petofi Club, representatives of every sector of Hungarian life--including army officers and former partisan and underground fighters--demanded the removal of Rakosi. Rakosi sought in vain to convince his opponents that he was genuinely carrying out the correct Soviet line.

The mounting fury of the opposition, reaching a climax at the 27 June meeting of the Petofi Club--and Rakosi's decision to use harsh measures to bring his opponents into line--forced the Kremlin to make a decision. Mikoyan arrived in Budapest in mid-July, challenged Rakosi's proposals and was reportedly sustained by Khrushchev. On 18 July, Rakosi resigned as first secretary of the Hungarian Workers Party, giving as his reason serious violations of the "cult of personality."

At this point, the Kremlin might have restored unity to the Hungarian party by taking the bold course of rehabilitating Imre Nagy and promoting Kadar to the head of the party. Instead, Mikoyan approved the substitution of Gero for Rakosi. This move appeared to threaten a return to the policies of accelerated industrialization and forced collectivization, although Gero sketched out more moderate policies. Although Kadar and the former Social Democrat Marosan were elevated to the political committee, doctrinaire elements maintained their ascendancy.

Opposition elements from the pro-Nagy and pro-Kadar factions of the party were encouraged by these maneuvers to bargain with the regime. Indications that the Kremlin itself was vacillating between a crackdown on Polish nationalists and continued encouragement of the "thaw" also spurred the Hungarians to take a bolder course. On the other hand, Gero's continued stress on doctrinaire considerations kept his opponents alive to the possibility of a return to harsh measures--a possibility made more real by increasing symptoms of a tougher Soviet policy toward Yugoslavia. These varying developments combined to make the three months prior to the October revolution a period in which hope and fear combined to produce reckless daring among Hungarians.

The crisis came in early October--when Gero and Kadar were both out of the country. A mammoth demonstration staged by Nagy adherents in connection with the reburial of Laszlo Rajk in the national cemetery on 6 October turned into a nationalist manifestation with distinct anti-Soviet implications directed against the Gero regime. Mounting excitement throughout the nation encouraged by Polish defiance of the Kremlin reached a climax in the 23 October demonstration staged by students. When these demonstrations turned into riots leading to the full-scale fighting between AVH troops and the rioters (24 October), Soviet troops intervened. The revolution had begun.

The party leadership made a desperate--but vain--effort to maintain control of events. The central committee and political committee were called into session on the night of 23 October. Panicky party leaders--presumably Gero--called for Soviet aid under the Warsaw pact. During the stormy all-night session, the seven remaining Stalinists were replaced by two moderates and one Nagyist, and Nagy was reinstalled as premier. The following day (25 October), Gero was replaced by Janos Kadar. The change in leadership came far too late to win confidence from the rebels.

The moderates under Kadar and liberals led by Nagy maintained unity for a short period. Nagy's endorsement of increasingly anti-Communist and anti-Soviet moves--culminating in the

withdrawal of Hungary from the Warsaw pact and the proclamation of neutrality under the protection of the UN drove the so-called "moderates" to seek refuge with Soviet troops. The newly formed Hungarian Socialist Workers Party became the vehicle of the discredited Kadar party leadership. On 4 November, Kadar announced the formation of a new Revolutionary Workers and Peasants Government and appealed for Soviet aid to put down "counterrevolutionary" forces in Hungary.

These events mark the death of the Hungarian Communist Party as it existed for almost 40 years. Leading Stalinists are in the Soviet Union, dead, or in discard. Nagy and his associates after leaving their sanctuary in the Yugoslav embassy were seized by Soviet troops and are now being held in Rumania. The remaining "moderates" head a sham party--the Hungarian Socialist Workers Party--an organization of discredited functionaries from the Rakosi regime, claiming a membership of less than 100,000 and totally lacking in enthusiasm or sense of mission. It is the creature of the Soviet forces stationed in Hungary.

28 January 1957

CHAPTER I

THE HUNGARIAN COMMUNIST PARTY PRIOR TO 1945

1. The Bela Kun Revolution

The Hungarian Communist Party was founded on 20 November 1918 from an aggregation of former prisoners of war just returned from Russia and a few Hungarian extreme leftists nominally belonging to the Social Democratic Party. The new party's leader was Bela Kun, who had received extensive Bolshevik indoctrination in Russia and reportedly had been in contact with Lenin. Among his lieutenants were Eugene Varga, Matyas Rakosi and a number of individuals who subsequently formed the "Muscovite" corps of the Hungarian Communist Party leadership. Specially trained in the Soviet Union, closely related by their common experiences and in some cases by marriage, mainly of Jewish origin, these Communists form a closely knit group among whom it is difficult to detect significant differences.* Later evidence makes clear, however, that some of them were somewhat more nationalist in orientation than others (e.g. Imre Nagy).

In March 1918 this group seized control of the Hungarian government as a result of the vacillating policies of the existing regime in the face of the economic and political crisis resulting from WW I. They built up the party membership among troops demoralized by the defeat and disintegration of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy and unemployed industrial workers of extremist tendencies. They retained power for less than six months during which the attempt to overthrow and

* From the viewpoint of later Hungarian history, the following associates of Bela Kun are of special importance. Matyas Rakosi (Deputy Commissar of Commerce), Gyorgy Lukacs (Deputy Commissar for Education), Ferenc Munnich (commander of the Red garrison in Budapest and a political commissar in the Red army), Imre Nagy (reportedly Communist political boss in Somogy county in southern Hungary), Erno Gero, Jozsef Revai, Erzsebet Andics and her later husband Andor Berei, Lajos Bebrits, Gyula and Jozsef Hajdu, Gyula Hay, Imre Horvath, Sandor Nogradi (in army), Bela and Zoltan Szanto, Andras Szobek, Tibor Dery and Zoltan Vas (a fellow prisoner of Rakosi in Siberia). Bela Kun, Bela Szanto and Laszlo Rudas wrote accounts of the revolution.

Communize Hungary's social structure resulted in a blood bath. In August 1919, the Bela Kun regime was overcome as a result of Allied military intervention and the organization of stable elements within Hungary itself.

The chief result of the Communist revolution was to alienate the Hungarian people from Communism and cause them to support the Horthy government's policy of banning the party. Moreover, Communist terror tactics, the attempt to collectivize farms, and the subversion of the Social Democratic party had made active enemies of exactly the agrarian and working class elements which the Communists would have to win over in order to make a successful comeback under peacetime conditions. As a result, the number of Communists in Hungary prior to WW II remained small, faction-ridden and conspiratorial. To most elements of the Hungarian population, the Bela Kun regime remained an example of bloody and fruitless terror imposed by Russian agents on Hungary.

The episode nevertheless furnished Hungarian Communism with its future leadership and taught this leadership certain tactical lessons which were put to the test in 1945.

2. Comintern Leaders of the Hungarian Party

The interwar period is signalized by the continued attempt of Moscow, through the Comintern, to direct the tiny, illegal Hungarian Communist party in the interests of the Soviet Union. The instrument of this direction was the small band of expatriates left at the Kremlin's disposition by the failure of the Bela Kun revolution. These individuals took on Soviet citizenship and received careful training in Communist theory and methods of subversion. Several of them appear to have been taught Soviet economic theory at the institute administered by their compatriot, Eugene Varga.

a. Bela Kun: As chief of the Comintern's Hungarian section, Bela Kun was the acknowledged leader of Hungarian Communists until his elimination in 1937, although Stalinist historians later made every attempt to obscure his role. As a key man in the Comintern organization--Agitprop chief prior to 1935--Kun was a friend of Zinoviev, Bukharin and Karl Radek. From the limited evidence available, he appears to have been a "left" Communist who conceived of the party as a "united revolutionary party of the working class" and paid little attention to winning the support of peasants. In

Hungary, where agriculture played a major role, this concept would later be judged a major error by Stalinist critics.

b. Matyas Rakosi: Despite Kun's pre-eminence, it is clear that Matyas Rakosi quickly became a key figure in the Hungarian section of the Comintern. The son of a small Jewish merchant, Rakosi, like Kun, had served in the Austro-Hungarian army until his capture bv the Russians in 1915. This marked the decisive episode of his career. He received intensive Communist indoctrination and returned to Hungary to take a small role in the Bela Kun revolution. In the exercise of his reponsibilities, he demonstrated the enormous energy, driving will and absolute loyalty to the Kremlin that qualified him for his subsequent leadership of the Hungarian party. He went back to Russia in 1920, reported to the Third Comintern Congress on the Hungarian revolution and soon became secretary of the Comintern's Executive Committee. During his later career, he gained increasing ascendancy over the squabbling factions of the Hungarian party and outplayed his Comintern colleagues, hard-driving but austere Erno Gero and Jozsef Revai, the ideologist of the group. At some time he became identified with the opposition to Bela Kun. When and upon what grounds remain to be ascertained from evidence not presently available.

Rakosi's main quality, as it developed through the years, was a shrewdness and flexibility that enabled him to use people of all capabilities in the fulfillment of Soviet purposes. The most hated man in Hungary during the post-WW II years, he inspired terror by his ability to outmaneuver, confuse and divide his enemies and effect his own ends. There is no doubt that these qualities of Rakosi enormously contributed to the establishment of Soviet power in Hungary. There is also no doubt that the methods which he used robbed the party of any real basis of popular support in the country. Rakosi never willingly surrendered one iota of actual control to a local Communist who for any reason whatever possessed independent strength in Hungary. From the beginning, he relied on members of his own clique to conduct important liaison missions and selected members of minority groups--mainly Jewish--for active leadership in Hungary. In all these respects, Rakosi was the close counterpart of Stalin.

c. Efforts of the Comintern to Develop the Hungarian Party: At the instance of Bela Kun, the Comintern made a number of efforts to develop a strong Communist movement in Hungary. Success was at best mediocre. Three persons were sent, one after another, to assume leadership of the disorganized and mutually hostile factions of the illegal party--Erno Gero (1922), Matyas Rakosi (1924) and Zoltan Szanto (about 1927). All were arrested after brief periods of activity. In 1928 Kun himself was arrested in Austria while seeking to reorganize one dispersed faction of the party. Of these attempts, that of Rakosi was most successful. In 1924, after the Comintern had pronounced the dissolution of the Hungarian party--the first of three dissolutions imposed by Moscow--Rakosi arrived in Hungary, well supplied with money and aides, channeled through Vienna. With him came his right-hand man, Zoltan Vas (né Weinberger). They joined one faction of the disorganized party and organized the first party congress, held secretly in Vienna in August 1925. On their return to Hungary both were arrested, tried and sentenced to prison where they remained until 1940.

3. Hungarian Nativist Communists

The depression of the early thirties gave some impetus to Communism, which may also have profited from dimming memories of the Bela Kun revolution. A small contingent of fighting recruits was added to the illegal party from among students in Budapest and other large cities and among industrial workers. But the Party line propounded by Bela Kun remained essentially impotent to draw off real strength from the two major opposition parties then active in parliament--the Social Democrats, powerful in the growing Hungarian working class and the Independent Smallholders, representing the cause of agrarian reform.

a. Laszlo Rajk: The outstanding Hungarian recruit of Communism at this period was Laszlo Rajk. Neither Jewish nor "Muscovite" but of German origin, he was a product of Communist influence on Budapest college students. Apparently possessed of considerable dynamic charm, he succeeded in collecting around himself a group of "Hungarian" Communists, some of them his fellow students at Eotvos College. Expelled from school, he appears to have joined the construction workers union and become sufficiently active as an organizer to have been arrested by the police. The nature of his activities, however, is completely

obscured as a result of revisions of history undertaken by official Communist historians who first sought to build up his reputation and then to blacken it completely.

b. Communist Labor Leaders: A few Communist personalities gained some stature in the labor unions during the early thirties.* Among them, Janos Kadar was most important in terms of post-WW II politics. Of possible Yugoslav origin, he came from Fiume to Budapest where he became active in the steel workers union and, on the eve of WW II, an influential leader in the underground party organization. It is probable that he gained his abiding interest in security matters at this period. He did not, however, succeed in achieving top party leadership.

Other prominent Communists also were active in labor union politics, often as allies of left-wing Social Democrats. These individuals, after the Communist take-over, would be advanced as genuine representatives of the working class and given positions of power in the new government.

4. Shift of Soviet Tactics to the "United" and "Popular" Front

The major shift of Soviet tactics to the "anti-fascist peoples front" line enunciated by Dimitrov at the Seventh Comintern congress (1935) had drastic repercussions on the Hungarian party. According to the historian of the period, Gyula Kallai: "It was the historical task of the Communist parties of various countries to outline and put into practice these general principles in conformity with the peculiar conditions in their respective countries." The "letter of comradeship" of January 1936 conveying the new Soviet line instructed local leaders to abandon the long-standing concept of the small conspiratorial party working for immediate world revolution and to implement tactics calling for creation of a "broad

* Other Communists or crypto-Communists connected with trade unions include the following: Antal Apro (construction workers), Istvan Bata, Arpad Hazi, Istvan Hidas (metalworkers), Karoly Kiss (leatherworkers), Istvan Kovacs, Istvan Kristof (leatherworkers), Jozsef Kobol (woodworkers), Jozsef Mekis (ironworkers?), Sandor Nogradi (ironworkers), Gabor Peter, Laszlo Piros (butchers), Mihaly Zsofinyecz (foundry workers).

democratic national unity front" which would appeal to all elements of the population, including the peasantry. This program represented a sharp shift to the right in theoretical terms.

a. Repercussions of the Fall of Bela Kun: Bela Kun was a major victim of the change in tactics. He was eliminated from the Comintern leadership and put to death.* All members of the Hungarian party's central committee were assumed to be guilty of Kun's heresy. The party itself was dissolved.

These dramatic proceedings led to a crisis whose full extent was revealed only in the course of discussions of de-Stalinization in 1956. "Leftist" Communists denounced the sweeping use of "front" tactics outlined in Moscow and called for a return to original Communist objective, i.e. the immediate revolutionary establishment of a "dictatorship of the proletariat." In the words of Gyula Kallai, the chief historian of the period, "some workers do not understand that the policy of a united front does not mean the abandonment of the class struggle, but on the contrary is the only logical form of class struggle in a given situation." The dissenters were denounced as "Trotskyites" by the party leaders in Moscow.**

* Bela Kun was condemned at a 1937 meeting of the Comintern presidium presided over by Georgy Dimitrov. At this meeting Manuilsky presented charges that Kun had sharply criticized the Comintern direction of Hungarian party work and had attributed this failure in part to the "weak representation of the Soviet Communist Party in the Comintern." Unfortunately for Kun, the Soviet party's representative was Stalin. Kun's explanation that he meant Manuilsky was thrust aside. While Kun was led away by NKVD men, the other delegates sat in frozen horror. These delegates included Eugene Varga, his collaborator in the 1919 regime and rehabilitator in 1956. (Avro Tuominen, quoted by Daniel Norman, New Statesman and Nation, 1 Sept 56)

** Stalin defined the Trotskyite deviation as: (1) considering world revolution was necessary before Socialism could be built in the Soviet Union; (2) denying the possibility of drawing the peasant masses into socialist construction; (3) denying the necessity of iron discipline in the party and allowing freedom of factional groupings.

The full story of the consequences of the fall of Bela Kun remains to be written. Its immediate effect was to split off "Trotskyite" factions who claimed to preserve the original doctrine, to strengthen anti-Soviet elements in the party and to augment popular revulsion at Soviet policy. These divisive effects were later blurred over by party historians in an attempt to preserve the myth of party unity.

Matyas Rakosi was fortunate enough to be in a Hungarian prison during this period. He was thus enabled to escape the consequences of the Stalinist purges while acquiring the status of official martyr of the party. In the meantime, his "heroic fortitude" was carefully recorded for the Communist faithful by his secretary, Zoltan Vas.

5. "Front" Tactics in Hungary (1936-41)

The late thirties were the heyday of united front and popular front tactics in Hungary. The attempt to build an underground party organization, combat-ready for the hoped-for seizure of power, was postponed in favor of the broadest possible front tactics aimed at influencing legal parties to endorse Communist objectives. Meanwhile, Communists rebuilt their basic cells at the lowest level for the eventual reappearance of the party. As Kallai explains, the party needed members who were not known to the police in the event of war.

a. Moscow Leadership: In the absence of a central organization in Hungary, direction of the party cells was maintained from Moscow probably via Prague. During this period, top command appears to have been exercised by Jozsef Revai with the possible concurrence of Erno Gero and Mihaly Farkas. The correct theoretical line was imparted to Communists in Hungary by a clandestine publication, apparently printed in Prague from material furnished by Moscow.

Revai, the son of a well-to-do Jewish family and a Communist intellectual of some reputation, was the author of a major work on Marxism which was circulated in Hungary prior to the war. Gero was well known among Hungarian Communists as one of the original underground party leaders. Energetic, austere and fanatical, he reportedly had done organization work in Western European Communist parties prior to his participation in the Spanish Civil War as the Comintern representative. His Moscow training may have included

work at Eugene Varga's institute. Unlike Revai and Gero, Farkas apparently was not a veteran of the 1919 revolution. A Hungarian Jew born in Slovakia, Farkas had come into the Hungarian party via the Czechoslovak party. During the early thirties he was a Communist youth organizer in Western Europe and, like Gero, participated in the Spanish Civil War. He may have been the party's contact man in Prague during this period. With Rakosi, these three men--Revai, Gero and Farkas--constituted the top command of the Hungarian Communist party in the WW II and post-war period.

b. "United Front" Tactics: The new tactics imposed on Communists called for an energetic attempt to penetrate the Social Democratic Party in order to establish a "united front" of workers. While these tactics failed to win support among reputable Social Democrats, they contributed to laying the foundation for future co-operation with left-wing socialists (notably Arpad Szakasits) and thus the post-war subversion of the Social Democratic party. Communists conducted a steady attack on "right wing" socialist leaders in an effort to divide the workers from their leaders. They agitated for strikes. They loudly called for opposition to Hitler. Their divisive tactics, however, brought a sharp counterattack from Social Democratic spokesmen who pointed out that Soviet-inspired Communist tactics in Germany had largely contributed to the victory of Hitler in 1933.

c. The Debrecen Communist Group: Communist tactics had somewhat greater success among intellectuals and youth. A group of young intellectuals at the University of Debrecen responded to Communist lures and identified themselves with popular front tactics aiming at the penetration of radical agrarian organizations. Members of this Communist cell, led by Gyula Kallai, were of irreproachable Hungarian stock, some of them Protestant in background. They thus constituted one of the few authentically Hungarian elements in the party.* The concern of these young men for land reform ideally suited the party's program of attempting to gain a foothold in left-wing agrarian circles.

* The Debrecen Communist cell included, beside Kallai, Ferenc Donath, Geza Losonczi, Szilard Ujhely and Sandor Zold.

Kallai himself co-operated with the so-called "village explorers" in forming the "March Front" of 1937 and later worked on the Social Democratic newspaper (Nepszava), thus personally epitomizing the "anti-fascist popular front" approach. Kallai and other members of his group appear to have established contact with Rakosi in prison, though the channels are not known.

d. Penetration of the National Peasant Party: Communist backing enabled the "village explorers" to form the National Peasant party and thus laid the groundwork for penetration which enabled the Communists to use the organization to undercut the Smallholders in the post-WW II period. Certain of the agrarian leaders (Peter Veres, Jozsef Darvas, Ferenc Erdei) collaborated closely with the Communists in the period of WW II and afterward became for all practical purposes Communists.

e. Period of the Nazi-Soviet Pact (1939-41): By 1938, the Muscovite leaders were ready to reorganize a new party in Hungary. A new central committee was formed and the condemnation of certain members of the old committee apparently withdrawn the following year. By virtue of the Nazi-Soviet non-aggression pact and the ensuing resumption of diplomatic relations between Hungary and the Kremlin, the Communist party gained much greater freedom of action and even began to publish a legal periodical (Gondolat). Communists nevertheless still were viewed with great suspicion by the regime: Kallai states that a number of leaders were arrested in 1940. This period came to an end with the Hungarian declaration of war on the Soviet Union (27 March 1941).

Although Communists continued to achieve their greatest success among youth and intellectuals, their identification with the Soviet Union made them objects of suspicion at this time. As Kallai points out, after the signature of the Nazi-Soviet pact, it was difficult for Communists to convince workers that "Socialism and fascism are inexorable enemies!" Moreover, the Soviet attack on Finland brought them

great unpopularity. It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the party, on the eve of the Hungarian entry into the war, was a negligible factor in Hungarian politics and important only as a center of subversion serving Soviet interests.

6. "Popular Front" Tactics: Hungarians in the Spanish Civil War (1936-39)

The Spanish Civil War constituted a special training ground for the most enterprising Hungarian Communists during the late thirties. Soviet support for the Spanish Republican government took the form of sponsoring the formation of an International Brigade including heterogeneous Communist and "liberal" elements from various countries. Approximately one thousand Hungarian volunteers joined the brigade, formed the so-called "Rakosi Battalion" and thus acquired paramilitary experience that was of major importance during WW II. The commander of the brigade was Ferenc Munnich, former officer in the Bela Kun army and by now a Communist of international reputation. Both Erno Gero and Mihaly Farkas reportedly were involved in the fighting, Gero allegedly as special representative of the Comintern. Among the outstanding leaders of the Hungarians was the young Budapest youth and labor activist, Laszlo Rajk, who performed an excellent job as political officer of the Rakosi Battalion.

In French internment camps, following the close of hostilities, a number of the participants in the Spanish Civil War were brought into close contact with representatives of Western relief agencies, including Noel Field, and with Yugoslav members of the International Brigade. During this period (1939-41), the stage was set for the later tragedies of many Hungarian veterans. In these internment camps, Rajk and certain other Hungarians participated in discussions of Communist theory with Yugoslav leaders and apparently formed personal friendships which later marked them as potentially unreliable in the eyes of the Kremlin.*

Not all the "Spaniards," as the Civil War veterans were called, were involved in Western or Yugoslav contacts which later would be judged treasonable. Some appear to have joined

* The following Spanish Civil War veterans were implicated in the fall of Rajk and suffered death or imprisonment as a result: Sandor Cseresnyes, Frigyes Major, Laszlo Matyas, Laszlo Marschal, Karoly Rath, Mihaly Szalvay, Andras Tompe, Imre Gayer.

French resistance forces (e.g. Nogradi) and thus escaped the stigma of the internment camps. The alleged Comintern representative, Erno Gero, returned immediately to the Soviet Union and thus was available as secretary to Dimitrov or Manuilsky, to act as mentor for the Hungarian party during the remaining years before the advent of war.

7. Moscow Direction of the Hungarian Party in WW II (1940-45)

a. Formation of the Foreign Committee of the Hungarian Communist Party: The advent of WW II for the first time enabled all elements of the "Muscovite" leadership to gather in Moscow and following the Hungarian declaration of war on the Soviet Union (27 June 1941) to initiate intensive activity for Hungary's "liberation." Matyas Rakosi returned to Moscow in September 1940 in exchange for flags captured by the Russians in their invasion of Hungary (1848). He immediately took over top leadership of all activities. The Foreign Committee of the Hungarian Communist Party was formed shortly thereafter. Thus, even prior to Hungary's entry into the war, Communist leaders in Moscow were preparing a program for action in post-war Hungary.

These activities centered around the Comintern. Rakosi, as a member of the Comintern, apparently did not in theory hold the position of head of the Hungarian party but in practice he made himself responsible for all details of action and propaganda. Gero, Farkas, Revai and Zoltan Vas worked closely with him. Following the dissolution of the Comintern (17 May 1943), Gero may have played a somewhat greater role in directing propaganda aimed at Hungary.* There is no evidence, however, that he offered an opposition to Rakosi's leadership at any time. Instead, he appears to have acted as Rakosi's right hand man.

* Wolfgang Leonhard, an East German party official who defected to the Yugoslavs in 1949, states that Gero at this time supervised propaganda issued by the National Committee for Free Germany. Leonhard asserts that Gero was believed by the Germans to occupy a very high position in the Communist organization which continued the work of the Comintern after its dissolution (Die Revolution entlaesst ihre Kinder).

b. The Kossuth Radio: Direction of the important broadcasts to Hungary emanating from Radio Kossuth--named for the national hero of the Hungarian revolution of 1848--was confided to two Hungarians who are thus marked out as nationalist-oriented, Ferenc Munnich and Imre Nagy. Munnich enjoyed considerable prestige among Communists throughout Europe as a result of his leading role in the International Brigade in Spain. Imre Nagy, like the other Muscovites, had played a minor role in the Bela Kun episode and afterward had worked in the illegal Communist organization of a small provincial town (Kaposvar) prior to his emigration to the Soviet Union (about 1930). An authentic Hungarian peasant, possessed of considerable jovial humor, Nagy was trained in Soviet agricultural economics at the University of Moscow and reportedly had run a collective farm in Siberia. Now he was brought forward to issue propaganda whose target was the Hungarian peasant and which strongly emphasized the Communist intention of breaking up large estates and giving land to the farmers.

Radio communications formed the principal link between the Muscovite directors of the Hungarian party and their followers in Hungary. A daily news commentary, ideological discussions and directions for sabotage operations and training were issued by this medium. Rakosi himself spoke frequently over Radio Kossuth and for the first time acquired a relatively large audience in Hungary. These broadcasts emphasized "democracy," basic "rights," nationalization of great industrial enterprises and land reform as the future program of the Communists in Hungary.

c. "Anti-Fascist" Indoctrination of Prisoners of War: From the scanty and poor evidence available, it appears that the Foreign Committee concentrated on recruiting likely candidates from the 65,000 Hungarian prisoners captured in the fighting around Stalingrad. Spanish Civil War veterans and members of minority groups serving in labor battalions were a particular target for the recruiters. At two "anti-Fascist" schools, these "volunteers" were subjected to intensive indoctrination and then parachuted into combat zones or Hungary as couriers or partisan fighters. Direction of this training was in the hands of Gero, assisted by such fanatical Communists as Erzsebet Andics.

In addition to the schools for relatively low-level prisoners, there may have been an institution for more desirable recruits. Reports refer to a school set up near Moscow at which Revai, Nagy, the Varga-trained economist Istvan Friss and possibly Eugene Varga himself taught Hungarians.

8. Party Activities in Hungary during WW II

a. Leadership of the Underground: The whole story of the wartime activities of the Communists in Hungary is clothed in mystery as a result of the editing of historical fact by Stalinist historians intent upon building up or denigrating key individuals in the party, notably Laszlo Rajk. It is known that the party went underground following Hungary's declaration of war on the Soviet Union. Gyula Kallai, then linked very closely with left-wing Social Democrats and National Peasant Party leaders, appears to have exercised public leadership of the party. Two individuals who died in prison (Rozsa and Schonherz) were described as top party leaders. A group of labor union activists, including several individuals who came to the fore after the war (Janos Kadar, Gabor Peter, Istvan Kovacs, Antal Apro) apparently played a major role. The full and true story of these events remains to be written.

Many of the tried leaders of the party spent the war years in prison. Rajk was arrested shortly after his return to the country in the autumn of 1941 and remained under detention until October 1944, when he was turned over to military authorities and transported to Germany. Nevertheless, he continued apparently to maintain his connection with the resistance during this period. Certain other leaders remained free for a longer time and kept up liaison with Moscow, and probably with the Yugoslav partisans as well. Kadar, in particular, reportedly was arrested in 1944 while seeking to contact the Yugoslavs.

b. Front Tactics: On the surface, Communists cooperated with the Independence Movement led by Hungarians who opposed the alignment of their country

with Germany. Kallai put into effect the customary Communist tactics of supporting left-wing elements in legal parties (Social Democrat, Independent Smallholders and National Peasant parties) while attempting to divide the more radical elements in these parties from their "right-wing" leaders. These tactics led to a catastrophe for the Communist organization itself early in 1942. Kallai was responsible for pushing an apparently innocent nationalist celebration, on 15 March, into an anti-regime demonstration which was broken up by police. Communist plans for big May Day demonstrations keyed to the "peace" theme were also abortive. Police swooped down on party headquarters and arrested three Central Committee members of whom two (Rozsa and Schonherz) died in prison. Kallai himself was arrested on charges of treason but reportedly was acquitted.

A special effort was made to infiltrate Spanish Civil War veterans--i.e. paramilitary types--into key points in the labor movement. In the countryside, Communists sought to penetrate and control the non-political Peasants Association, using as their instrument the ostensible Smallholder party member, Istvan Dobi. These activities were closely supervised by the Foreign Section of the party in Moscow by means of directives broadcast over Radio Kossuth, illegal publications and personal liaison, often by parachute drops.

c. Dissolution of the Party: Formation of the "Peace Party": As a result of steadily increasing police pressure, local Communists lost heart and in June 1943 used the dissolution of the Comintern as an excuse for dissolving the official party organization. This move was later termed a "most serious error." It may have marked Kallai for eventual punishment as "an unreliable cadre." A new organization almost immediately took the place of the disbanded party under the name of the "Peace Party."

9. Formation of the Hungarian Independence Front (1944)

a. Re-establishment of the Communist Party: Communist resistance to the Germans was greatly stepped up after the German intervention to coerce the Horthy government on 19 March 1944. Only with the approach of Soviet armies to Hungary's borders, however, did these activities gain real impetus. The Communist party

was re-formed in September and the Communist youth organization was called into existence again. An official newspaper edited by Ferenc Donath also made its appearance. The new party took its place in the Hungarian Independence Front, along with the Independent Smallholders Party, the Social Democrats, and the National Peasant Party. Within the Front, Communists and left-wing Social Democrats cooperated very closely and, in fact, on 10 October signed an agreement looking toward eventual union of both parties.

b. Possible Role of Laszlo Rajk: Actual leadership of the Hungarian underground in October 1944 may have been exercised by Laszlo Rajk, although titular leader Gyula Kallai assumed public responsibility. Ostensibly confined in Margit-Korut prison, Rajk allegedly secured a measure of liberty from Horthy's counterespionage chief who himself belonged to the resistance. Rajk, for example, is credited with preparing the text of the agreement for eventual union of left-wing Social Democrats and Communists. Much research would be required to approximate the true story of Rajk's activities.

c. The "Western Communists": Somewhat peripheral to these activities but of later political importance were Hungarian Communist activities in Switzerland. Here a group of left-wing students and intellectuals linked with the Hungarian Independence Front carried on resistance activities geared into those of the Yugoslavs. Contemporary sources reported that participants in the Bela Kun revolution (the Hajdu brothers) were connected with this group. Their local leader, Tibor Szonyi, achieved sufficient stature in the Communist party to merit a relatively influential position (chief of cadres) in the Hungarian party on his return at the close of the war.

d. Resistance Fighters: Rapid organization of resistance committees under the aegis of the Front progressed in the Budapest district during the late autumn of 1944. The official Communist account* states that sabotage units were formed under the direction of Marton Horvath, a former Social Democratic newspaperman, Gyorgy Palffy, a Hungarian army officer and Lajos Feher, a National Peasant Party journalist from Debrecen. Members of the Communist youth group--workers and intellectuals--performed these missions. Similar units were formed in Budapest suburbs. One unit of the auxilliary battalions of the mobile police, organized from leftist Jewish elements, sabotaged transport in and out of Budapest.

10. The Partisans in Rakosi's Calculations

Rakosi apparently planned to have Hungarian partisans operating from the Ukraine and Slovakia effect a junction with resistance fighters in Hungary. These plans were aborted by the direct German take-over of Hungary on 15 October and the imposition of a Nazi-style Arrow Cross party dictatorship. Nevertheless, during the next month underground leaders in Budapest continued to make plans for a

* Kovacs and Florian, Champions hongrois de la liberte contre le fascisme (1946)

general rising while partisan forces led by Sandor Nogradi pressed southward from the mountains. Both schemes failed. The diverse elements composing the Hungarian Independence Front were, however, unable to agree on a date for a general insurrection.

In this situation, Rakosi, in good Stalinist fashion, exerted himself to maintain control of the Hungarian resistance. He despatched an emissary, Istvan Kossa, through the lines to reimpose Moscow's leadership on the disorganized and demoralized Communists in Budapest.

Soviet forces at Szeged and in eastern Hungary made no effort to reach Budapest but permitted the underground to be crushed by the Germans and their Arrow Cross allies. Only after heavy fighting was Budapest taken by Soviet armies the following January. This procedure permitted the Kremlin to avert the danger of a genuinely representative government being set up in Budapest. Instead, the Soviet leaders forced resistance representatives to come to Moscow to negotiate an armistice and agree to the formation of a hand-picked Provisional National Assembly which convened at Debrecen in December under the guns of the Russian army. This policy resembles in its general outlines Soviet policy toward the Polish underground, the sacrifice of the Polish resistance forces under General Bor-Komarowski and the establishment of the Lublin government under complete Russian domination.

The actual military influence of the Hungarian partisans and the underground resistance was minor. Nevertheless, the partisan and resistance leadership play a key political role in founding the new Communist regime and imposing the Muscovite leadership and Soviet alignment on the Hungarians. In the immediate postwar period, moreover, participation in resistance activities was the test for reliability of Communists and Communist collaborators which gave the participants importance far out of proportion to their numbers.*

* Partisan leaders who later gained prominence, beside Nogradi, included the following: Andor Tompe, Nogradi's political officer; Gyula Uszta, Pal Maleter (prominent figure in the 1956 revolution) and Istvan Dekan in northern Transylvania; Janos Ratulovszky and Jozsef Fazekas in the USSR; Mihaly Szalvay, Istvan Rostas and Laszlo Cseby in Yugoslavia (Kovacs and Florian, Champions Hongrois de La liberte.)

CHAPTER II

FORMATION OF THE HUNGARIAN WORKERS PARTY

1. The Muscovite Leadership of the Party

a. The Ruling Clique: The exiled Hungarian Communist leaders--the so-called "Muscovites"--accompanied the victorious Soviet armies into Hungary.* The contingent of Gero, Revai, Farkas and Imre Nagy reached the country first, on the heels of Soviet troops arriving at Szeged (6 November 1944). Rakosi himself came later and entered the ruins of Budapest after its capture by the Soviet army. With Zoltan Vas, these men comprise the six major Muscovite leaders. With the top leaders came the secondary contingent of lesser Muscovites, "anti-fascist" trainees and partisans. Certain other high-ranking Muscovites arrived somewhat later to take over special assignments.

Under cover of the doctrine that all classes not actually tainted with fascism could work toward building socialism in Hungary, the new leaders promptly began to implement a broad "national front" program aiming at building up Communist strength and subverting existing legal parties. As Rakosi later described the process, in a cynically candid address of 29 February 1952, the minority Communist party applied a ruthless program of splitting the opposition--termed by Rakosi, "slicing salami"--while taking step after step to set up a "dictatorship of the proletariat" called the Hungarian People's Democracy.

On the arrival of the top Muscovite leaders from the Soviet Union, the local bigwig Communists found themselves pushed into the background. The returning

* The term "Muscovite" is used to designate individuals who spent a long period of time in the Soviet Union--notably the period of WW II--and who received special training to fit them for a leading role in the Hungarian party. Several of these individuals are believed to hold Soviet citizenship (Rakosi, Gero, Farkas and others), although apparently Imre Nagy does not.

group of Stalinist functionaries, instead, took over key positions in party and government for themselves within the framework of the Provisional Government formed at Debrecen.* Rakosi, as secretary general, was the undisputed leader of the party; he took over the key government post of deputy premier in November 1945. Gero, Rakosi's right-hand man, assumed the Ministry of Trade and Communications, and soon demonstrated that he intended to rule Hungary's economy and effectively integrate it with the Soviet economy. Revai maintained his former role of chief party theoretician. Farkas's activities were more complicated. At first working only as a party official, he was appointed, in July 1945, political undersecretary in charge of police in the Ministry of the Interior. As party second secretary under Rakosi, he clearly exercised a decisive influence over security matters. Zoltan Vas, a general trouble shooter specializing in economic and financial operations of a clandestine sort, became mayor of Budapest and later head of the Supreme Economic Council. Among this ruling group, Erno Gero clearly was second only to Rakosi and to some observers during the early days of the Soviet occupation, he appeared more important than Rakosi.

b. "Nationalistic" Muscovites: Among the top Muscovites, Imre Nagy appears from the outset to have constituted a special case. Brought along to implement the land reform which was counted on to win peasant sympathies, he was appointed minister of agriculture in the Debrecen Provisional Government and held this post until November 1945. In drafting the measures for land redistribution, he relied on young local Communists, notably Ferenc Donath. Nagy next was appointed to the critically important post of minister of the interior in the cabinet of Premier Zoltan Tildy but held this position only four months, surrendering it in February 1946 to Laszlo Rajk. Characterized at that time as a "strong Hungarian nationalist," Nagy gained some popularity among Communists although he appears to have been regarded by the general public as indistinguishable from the ruling clique. The reasons for his relinquishment of the ministry have never been clarified,

* Only one local Communist received a post in the Debrecen Government. Erik Molnar, a very close associate of Rakosi, took the Ministry of Social Welfare which was counted on to give the Communists essential personnel information and provide them with a means of awarding or withholding benefits as desired. The all-important Ministry of the Interior was confided to a long-time Communist collaborator, Ferenc Erdei (National Peasant Party).

although speculation at that time attributed it to lack of energy or possibly lack of knowledge of local conditions. Nagy was demoted to the relatively innocuous position of speaker of the parliament. He nevertheless maintained his post as chief party expert on agricultural questions and continued to belong to the Politburo.

Several other Muscovites prominent in the first years of the Soviet occupation apparently were marked by a greater degree of Hungarian nationalism than was later considered safe by the regime or for other unclarified reasons were denied the advancement which they considered they had earned. In some cases, the reasons may have been linked to the factional quarrels of the 'twenties or 'thirties (e.g. Ferenc Munnich); in others, ambitious individuals with good connections in the Soviet Union (e.g. the writer Gyula Hay) were pushed into the background by rivals more closely connected with Rakosi. Since these individuals observed Communist discipline, the character or even the existence of their dissension from the ruling clique did not come to light until many years later.

c. Soviet Support for the Muscovite Clique: From the first day of the Communist regime in Hungary it was apparent that the authority of the ruling clique rested on the presence of Soviet armies and the emphatic assurance of Soviet political and economic support in moments of crisis.* Any withdrawal of Kremlin endorsement for

* Until the autumn of 1947 this meant the Soviet Element of the Allied Control Commission headed by Soviet Marshal Voroshilov and his deputy (and successor) Colonel General Sviridov. During this period, Rakosi formed close personal ties with Voroshilov which continued after the marshal returned to Moscow. After the withdrawal of the Allied Control Commission, Soviet political and economic officials--notably Soviet ambassadors beginning with Pushkin--played an increasingly important role in advising and shoring up the dominant Muscovites.

Rakosi personally would place him at the mercy of insurgent forces in the party and the country as a whole. Within certain limits, however, Rakosi clearly was accorded a large measure of autonomy in choosing methods and individuals to implement the prescribed over-all policies in Hungary.

2. Elements in the Party

a. The Nativist Hard Core: The first task of the Muscovites was to build a strong party mechanism to control the country in the interests of the Kremlin. They started almost from scratch. They possessed a small hard core of Hungarian members (about 30,000) hardened in the school of illegality and accustomed to following directives from Moscow. They could count on a strong youth element recruited among resistance fighters, Spanish Civil War veterans and partisans. A number of fanatical Communists returning from German concentration camps mustered around the party leaders. Several dynamic leaders who had spent the war years in Hungary were popular among local Communists--notably Laszlo Rajk, Janos Kadar, Gyula Kallai, Gabor Peter and Marton Horvath.* Nevertheless, popular support for the Communists was so small that their total popular vote in the relatively free elections of 4 November 1945 was only 797,000 or approximately 16.9 percent of the total.

b. The Opportunists: The broad "front" policies pursued by Rakosi during the first years of Soviet occupation encouraged individuals of many types to join the party. Many Hungarians accepted the new regime as inevitable and gave a measure of genuine co-operation in the hope that the regime would pursue a reasonable course under which Hungary could make a speedy recovery from the devastation of war and Soviet looting, and resume its place as a center of cultural and economic life in the

* In the general distribution of rewards to faithful Communists, Rajk took over leadership of the Budapest party organization with Kadar as his deputy, pending Rajk's appointment as minister of the interior in March 1946. Marton Horvath, resistance leader and reputed former Zionist, became editor of Szabad Nep and members of the Debrecen Communist cell received important posts: Kallai and Losonczi were awarded key propaganda positions; Ferenc Donath was appointed to the Ministry of Agriculture; Sandor Zold to the Ministry of Interior and Szilard Ujhely to the Ministry of Social Welfare. Other local Communists were provided with seats in parliament or jobs in the party apparatus.

Danubian basin. Optimists even hoped that this recovery could be effected with Western financial assistance, since it was clear that the war-torn Soviet Union was in no position to furnish adequate economic support. Other individuals hastened to join the party as a means of continuing their careers in government, the army or business. A large number of peasants came in as a result of the land reform. One important source of recruits was the plethora of low-level and middle-level Arrow Cross members proscribed by the other parties. As a result of these tactics, the total party membership rose to 150,000 by May 1945 with its major strength concentrated in Budapest. By the time of the third Communist Party congress, held in September and October 1946, party membership had attained almost 653,000.

c. Left-wing Dissidents in the Party: Such extreme "front" tactics aroused the anger of certain party extremists who had wanted to set up a "Red Budapest" immediately and who probably fancied that they might have profited to a greater degree from the Soviet conquest of Hungary. Certain unidentified older veterans of the 1919 revolution and many youthful fanatics (the "1945" youth group) appear to have become embittered at the tortuous path followed by Rakosi. Extreme left-wing "Trotskyite" elements supported by factory workers also gave trouble and were subjected to arrests in late 1945 and early 1946. Such dissension evoked sharp criticism from the Muscovites intent on building up party strength even at the expense of orthodox theories.

d. Social Democratic Elements: The Hungarian Workers Party: The Social Democratic Party had long been a major target of the Communists. Their wide influence over industrial workers and in trade unions made them a dangerous competitor, especially in view of the strong pro-Western orientation of their most reputable leaders.* As Rakosi said in his 1952 speech: "Our real competitors in the ranks of industrial workers were the Social

* The Social Democrats received 17.4 percent of the total vote in the 4 November elections i.e., one half of one percent greater than the Communists.

Democratic elements.... Their leaders would have welcomed the American or British occupation of Hungary and their great majority hated the Soviet Union."

In this situation, the Communists stepped up divisive tactics aimed at achieving an eventual merger of the two parties. They forced the formation of a "leftist bloc" including both the Social Democrats and the National Peasant Party as an initial means of gaining control. They purchased the support of certain trade union officials of Social Democratic antecedents by the gift of top factory management jobs. They bound collaborating left-wing leaders so closely to Communist policies that they were indistinguishable from party members. By 1948 the Communists, on Kremlin orders, were ready to effect the union of the two parties. Subservient left-wingers--notably Szakasits and Marosan--split the party and cajoled the rank and file into voting a merger with the Communists to form the Hungarian Workers Party.

The new party now possessed a membership of nearly one million. Ostensibly a united party, Communists maintained complete control over essential cadre affairs and soon began to purge former Social Democrats of suspected loyalty. Although Szakasits and Marosan were provided with high positions in the united party, they clearly were subordinate to Rakosi and his Muscovite cohorts. The effect of the merger therefore was to further increase unreliable elements in the party, although it subjected them to severe Communist discipline.

e. The Collaborators: Closely allied with the ruling Muscovite clique headed by Rakosi were a group of collaborating members from the nominally non-Communist National Peasant Party and a few figureheads forced over from the Independent Smallholders by brass-knuckle tactics of the Communists. Such collaborators were intended to undermine support from the majority Smallholders Party among the peasants and bourgeois elements by giving an appearance of a genuine democratic basis for the regime. Among these, the former "village explorers" Ferenc Erdei and Jozsef Darvas played the most consistently important "front" roles.

f. The Security Police: In view of the diverse and mutually hostile elements composing the party it is apparent that security police controls would be

extraordinarily important in the conduct of party affairs. For these reasons, the relationship between the party leadership and the State Security Authority (AVO and later AVH) assumes major interest. Nominally subservient to the Ministry of the Interior until 1949, this organization actually became the special security arm of the party leadership against enemies within and without the party. Peter himself, as a longtime Hungarian Communist of Jewish origin and underground fighter during WW II, reported, however, directly to the Central Committee or Rakosi (and probably Farkas) on all matters of importance.* The AVH thus acted as the key mechanism for preserving the hegemony of the Rakosi-Gero clique over the party and country.

* Gabor Peter never attained Politburo status, although he belonged to the Central Committee of the party.

CHAPTER III

COERCION OF NATIVIST ELEMENTS IN THE PARTY

1. The Experiment with "National Communism" (1945-48)*

a. The "Hungarian Road to Socialism": For the first three and a half years following the Soviet occupation, Hungarian party leaders encouraged Hungarians to believe that their country would be allowed to pursue a "specifically Hungarian road to socialism" within the framework of political and economic ties with the Soviet Union. This doctrine, termed "national Communism", was held by large numbers of Hungarians flocking into the party in the post-war years. It emphasized the immediate necessity of effecting "bourgeois-democratic tasks" instead of striving for purely Communist goals. Although this doctrine stressed co-operation with the Soviet Union, it tended to emphasize differences between Soviet and Hungarian institutions. While endorsing harsh tactics against "enemies of the state", it asserted nevertheless that progress toward Communism could be achieved without "dictatorship of the proletariat" i.e., institutionalized terror. Finally, it emphasized the importance of the peasant element in the "worker-peasant" alliance and played down the necessity of collectivization. In effect, national Communism took the view that the cause of Communism would best be served in Hungary if local needs and local situations were taken into account.

To emphasize their encouragement of national Communism, the Muscovites gave increasing prominence to certain local leaders. Two "Hungarian" Communists were eminently suited to the role of top representative of the nativist element in the party--Laszlo Rajk, a "national Communist" of great ability and determination and leader of a significant faction in the party, and Janos Kadar, a native Communist whose more pliant personality and working class background fitted him to symbolize Hungarian nationalism without constituting a threat to Soviet control.

* National Communism has been defined as a "regional or local interpretation of Marxist-Leninist theory, opportunistically adapted to achieve certain strategic objectives."

b. Laszlo Rajk: Laszlo Rajk was chosen to symbolize these policies. Upon his return to Hungary from a short period of internment in Germany he was allowed by the Muscovites to assume leadership of the Budapest party organization. This step was taken by party leaders fully aware that Rajk's two brothers both had been leading members of the Arrow Cross party. In November 1945, Rajk was apparently raised to the position of party secretary under Party Secretary General Rakosi. Then in March 1946 Rajk was installed in the key government position of minister of interior, where his main task was to weed out politically unreliable elements in the government. As minister, he had charge of Hungary's police and frontier forces. Staunchly reliable to the cause of Communism--as he interpreted it--Rajk took obvious pride, as he stated during his 1949 trial, in the claim of Hungary's "best Communist." But contemporary evidence bears out the view that he was a nationally oriented Communist who honestly believed it might be possible to "build a Hungarian road to Socialism" and who challenged even strong man Rakosi on this score. This did not mean, however, that Rajk was in any sense a "soft" Communist. As minister, he enforced completely ruthless policies.

c. National Communist Elements in the Party: The Muscovites permitted Communists of nationalist orientation to take key places in the government and party. Rajk, who possessed clear talents for organizations and was obviously allowed latitude in selecting his subordinates, installed former Spanish Civil War comrades in important posts in the civil police--although such

elements long ago had been liquidated in the Stalinist purges in the Soviet Union. The nationally oriented Tibor Szonyi, a representative of the Swiss emigration, had charge of the party's cadre section, subject to the supervision of more reliable Communists. Other non-Muscovites staffed the Foreign Ministry. Important Communists, in the small Hungarian army, also leaned toward national Communism: Inspector General Palffy-Osterreicher, who had set up the army's military political section (intelligence), was charged with this crime in 1949. In 1948 the nationalist elements occupied a number of significant power positions and Rajk--perhaps their leader--had his own organization in the Ministry of the Interior.

Rajk's popular following contained diverse elements ranging from extreme left-wing industrial workers of Budapest and other key centers of industry to former Arrow Cross members who supported the one outstanding non-Jewish leader of the party. He also reportedly inspired the admiration of Communist youth and intellectuals who had taken part in the resistance or served as partisans. Peasants who had received farms under the land reform and joined the party may also have looked to Rajk as a possible opponent of Soviet-style collectivization. All in all, Rajk's support in the party roughly parallels that of Imre Nagy in 1953-56. To non-Communist Hungarians, however, he was anathema.

2. The Condemnation of National Communism (1948)

The break between Tito and Stalin in the spring of 1948 inevitably produced drastic repercussions on Hungary. The increasing independence of Tito and his evident popularity among some Satellite Communists obviously had caused mounting concern to the Kremlin. From the Soviet viewpoint, the turning point may have come with Tito's visit to Budapest in December 1947--following a triumphal tour of other Satellite capitals--where he received a tumultuous welcome.

The communiqué issued by the Cominform on 28 June condemning Tito, made clear that the Soviet path to socialism was henceforth to serve as a model for all the Satellites including Hungary. "Class struggle" was to be intensified. The alleged Yugoslav over-reliance on the peasantry as one

"pillar of the state" was repudiated. The Yugoslav practice of subordinating, in appearance at least, the party to the Peoples' Front was expressly condemned. The role of the party was to be emphasized. All departures from Soviet party usages and procedures were castigated as "arrogance" or "nationalism."

This communiqué was a shattering blow to hopes of moderate Communists that Hungarian national interests and not the rigid imitation of the Soviet Union might form the basis of the new order in Hungary. The condemnation of Tito marked as politically unreliable all the Hungarian party leaders associated with national Communism. Rajk himself went to Moscow, probably in May, presumably to defend himself against such charges. He did not attend the Cominform meeting in June that expelled the Yugoslav party: the Hungarian representatives were three Muscovites--Rakosi, Farkas, and Gero.

The beginning of the end for Rajk started on 4 August when, following a reported visit to Budapest from Soviet party leader Zhdanov, he was transferred from the Ministry of the Interior to the less strategic post of minister of foreign affairs. Although he temporarily retained his Politburo and Orgburo memberships, the conclusive character of his fall was evident.

3. Establishment of "Dictatorship of the Proletariat"

The condemnation of national Communism was followed by a sharp turn to the left in ideological terms and the imposition of a full-dress Stalinist type dictatorship with Rakosi as little Stalin. "Reactionary elements in the party"--i.e., moderates--received a sharp warning to fall into line from the trial of Cardinal Mindszenty in February 1949. On 1 February, a new Communist-controlled Peoples' Independence Front was formed to maintain the pretext of a democratic system, followed by Communist-style elections and the proclamation of a Hungarian Peoples Democracy. In theoretical terms, this meant that the "dictatorship of the proletariat" had begun and Hungary now was to "build the foundations of socialism" along purely Soviet lines.

Ideological Czar Revai stated the facts of Communist domination with complete frankness in the party's theoretical journal of March-April 1949. The Communist party, although a minority party in parliament and government, guided and controlled the country by virtue of its decisive control of the police and the presence of Soviet troops, always ready to support party officials. He appealed to party members not to be squeamish about the use of force: "We must clearly realize that periods may come in our evolution when the chief function

of the dictatorship of the proletariat will consist of exercising force against enemies from within and from without."

Revai's unvarnished warning to party members reportedly caused consternation among optimists in the party who still hoped that the term "peoples democracy" might include at least some elements of Western democracy. However, there was little they could do. Just to make the situation unmistakably clear, a mounting propaganda campaign called for "vigilance" against Yugoslavia, the West and internal enemies.

4. Destruction of National Communist Elements in the Party (1949)

a. The Rajk Trial: The regime now moved to eliminate the national Communists from the government and party. A wave of arrests culminated with the detention of Rajk, Inspector General Palffy-Osterreicher, Police Colonel Bela Korondy, party cadre chief Tibor Szonyi, his deputy Andras Szalai, Pal Justus of the Hungarian Radio and Lazar Brankov, former counsellor of the Yugoslav legation. In mid-June Rajk was expelled from the party as a "spy of foreign imperialist powers and Trotskyist agent." One-third of the party was purged.

On 16 September Rajk and his associates were brought to trial for treason, espionage and "activities calculated to overthrow the democratic state order." They were charged with plotting with Yugoslav and Western intelligence agencies to organize a conspiracy of party, police and army groups to split the party, murder the Muscovite leaders and seize power in the interests of Tito and the "American imperialists." The prosecution sought to show that this conspiracy had been organized behind the back of party and government officials and without the knowledge of Soviet authorities. Anti-Zionist aspects of the trial were played up as were the alleged contacts of Rajk with Noel Field. "Evidence" produced in the Rajk trial boiled down to the fact that any contact with erstwhile friends of the Soviet Union constituted treason when Soviet policy was reversed. In this sense, Rajk was the scapegoat for the Bloc's condemnation of Tito.

All the major figures in the Rajk trial were put to death. The less important principals (Pal Justus and Lazar Brankov) survived under sentence of life imprisonment. A number of middle-level party and government officials, however, spent long years in prison but re-emerged during the New Course.

b. High-Level Muscovites Adversely Affected by the New Party Line: The group of "moderate" nationalist Muscovites, including Imre Nagy, was affected adversely by the shift in Soviet policy but was not destroyed, presumably because its members did not constitute a basic threat to Communist and Soviet control.

Imre Nagy was dropped from the Politburo in 1949 as the defender of individual farming. As Rakosi revealed at the party Central Leadership meeting of 14 April 1955, Nagy was then accused of "right-wing opportunistic" views, convicted of "anti-Marxist", "anti-party behavior" and eliminated from the Politburo (though not from the Central Committee.) By 1951 Nagy was able, however, to work his way back to the Politburo. It is probable that Nagy, as the only one of the original top six Muscovites who enjoyed any popularity in Hungary, was too useful to be sacrificied at this time and had to be saved for future employment in the event of a change in Soviet policies.

A "Muscovite" Spanish Civil War veteran, General of Police Ferenc Munnich, was caught in the backwash of the break with Tito, Munnich, who had held the important job of chief of Budapest police forces under Rajk, was suddenly assigned as minister to Finland and later transferred to Sofia. He remained in the latter relatively insignificant position until 1954, when he was given the key post of ambassador to Moscow by Imre Nagy.

Another high-level Muscovite adversely affected by the repudiation of national Communism was the philosopher Gyorgy Lukacs. In the scathing criticism by Revai in the winter of 1950, Lukacs was made to symbolize "liberal", Western-oriented Communist intellectuals who believed in a "third road to socialism" and "underestimated" Soviet culture. Revai demanded that all writers conform to Soviet usages and follow party dictation.

5. Advancement of "Moderate Nationalists" (1948-51)

a. The Moderate Nationalist Leaders: The ruling Muscovite clique sought to maintain a pretense of nationalist orientation and build a base of support in the party by promoting leaders of the moderate nationalist group to replace Rajk and the national Communists. This expedient achieved a degree of success in the 1948-50 period but came to an end with the deterioration of international relations resulting from the Korean War.

The group chosen to represent this policy included Kadar, Kallai and other members of the Debrecen Communist group and the former Social Democrats Szakasits and Marosan. These individuals appear to have been rather closely connected with Jozsef Revai who exercised a marked influence during this period.

Kadar took over Rajk's place as minister of interior (August 1948) and thus assumed the position of leader of the moderates. Like Rajk neither Jewish nor Muscovite, his presence in this critical ministry was intended to serve as a front to conceal rapid Sovietization of Hungary. Apparently leaning toward a "hard" line based on the industrial proletariat, Kadar appears to have gone along with the program of rapid industrialization under the new Five Year Plan. In fact, his ministry soon lost even nominal control of the AVH during 1949-50, although some semblance of authority was reserved to Kadar personally. There is no evidence that he opposed Sovietization; in fact, his presence at the November 1949 meeting of the Cominform in Budapest indicates that he supported the condemnation of national Communism.

Gyula Kallai was also called upon to play an increasing public role in maintaining the pretense of nativist representation. He took over the Ministry of Foreign Affairs following Rajk's removal on the eve of his trial (June 1949). In this position, he was effectively barred from taking any independent initiative by the presence of the Muscovite Andor Berei as his first deputy. Other native Communists advanced during the course of 1948-49 found themselves in a similar situation.

b. Sovietization: The rapid and nearly complete Sovietization of Hungary was proceeding under cover of these moves. This in turn strengthened the position of the

Rakosi clique. Rakosi as party secretary general and deputy premier directed over-all policies. Gero's hold over the country's economic life was strengthened by his assumption of the position of chief of the newly established Peoples Economic Council. Revai, appointed Minister of Peoples Culture in June 1949, supervised intellectual life and indoctrination. Mihaly Farkas took over a new sphere of responsibility in September 1948, when he became Minister of Defense. His earlier involvement in security matters presumably gave him special qualifications for replacing "security risks" in the armed forces. His military qualifications were less evident; he had fought in the Spanish Civil War but lacked formal military training.

Economic Sovietization contributed greatly to providing adherents of the Rakosi clique with jobs and influence. Rapid plant expansion took place by virtue of the plans prepared by Gero. The new enterprises were stamping grounds of minor Muscovites and associates of the ruling group. Party activities were stepped up throughout the economy in an effort to induce workers to produce more and endure the regime. This again provided adherents of Rakosi with positions.

6. Elimination of Moderate Nationalists

The advent of the Five Year Plan in 1950, the sharp stepping up of planned industrial output targets in the winter of 1951 and the mounting "class warfare" on the land resulting from forced collectivization of the peasantry appear to have led to the purge of the moderate nationalist group. Such individuals were gradually eliminated from all positions of power during 1950 and 1951. Even an obedient Communist tool like Kadar apparently could not be trusted to implement Soviet directives correctly.

The dreary series of purges opened with clean-ups in the army and the AVH. The last remaining high-level nativist officers including General Laszlo Solyom, Chief of Staff, were removed from the army in the summer of 1950. Next, certain AVH officials who had participated in the collection of evidence for the Rajk trial were eliminated. During this purge, Farkas succeeded in gaining greater influence by installing his son as chief of the department of foreign intelligence (including operations in Yugoslavia). Political reliability became the secret of success in the army and the security service.

In the autumn of 1950, the purge extended to the Social Democrats. Even such stalking horses for the Communists as

Arpad Szakasits and Gyorgy Marosan disappeared into prison under a barrage of charges by Rakosi that they had been in communication with British, American and Yugoslav espionage organizations. No doubt their availability as collaborators had been seriously impaired by the imposition of Soviet work norms and methods on Hungarian workers, although there is no available evidence to show that they opposed these measures. The removal of the Social Democrats--except faceless collaborators--was accompanied by the Sovietization of the labor unions to give full control to the regime.

The pretense of moderate nationalist representation in the party and government continued for a few more months. When Kadar resigned as Minister of Interior in July 1950,* he was replaced by a member of the Debrecen group, Sandor Zold. Moreover, at this point Imre Nagy returned to the government as minister of food, presumably because his talents could be put to good use in this sector.

The second Hungarian Workers Party Congress (February-March 1951) marked the end of the last show of a broadly-based party. Rakosi and his Muscovite colleagues held the stage, calling for a vast speed-up in industrialization to meet with Soviet demands resulting from the Korean war. This appears to have been the last blow to the willingness of doctrinaires to draw upon moderate support. In the spring of 1951, one after another, the old-time Hungarian Communist labor and intellectualist elements disappeared into prison. By the end of the year, Kadar, Kallai, Zold, Losonczy, and Donath were in prison. Only Istvan Kovacs held out as an ostensible nativist representative in the Politburo.

The elimination of the moderates evoked widespread hostile reactions among the populace and in the party itself. The disappearance of Kadar instantly provoked violent indignation within the party. Trials of the purgees were held in secret for fear that publicity would lead to a schism in the party. According [redacted] when Kadar was believed to have been executed, large numbers of threatening letters were addressed to party functionaries by individuals who signed themselves "Kadar Guard."

* Kadar ostensibly was relieved at this time to accomplish "other important work"; Istvan Kovacs was concurrently relieved of his position as secretary of the Greater Budapest party organization for the same purpose. It has been speculated that both men took part in the purge of the Social Democrats.

CHAPTER IV

THE STALINIST PARTY

(1951-1953)

1. Rule of the Rakosi-Gero Clique

With the elimination of the remaining moderate nationalists, Rakosi ruled Hungary with the aid of a small band of Muscovites, among whom Gero was clearly pre-eminent, and a rising group of young "hard" Communist careerists of pronounced Soviet orientation and a minimum of Hungarian national sentiments.* The Hungarian Workers Party with its adjunct the AVH ran the Hungarian state--but the party in effect was the inner clique of Muscovites.

Industrial enterprises of the country, labor unions and agriculture were firmly under control of the party overlords. Such young fanatics as Istvan Hidas and Andras Hegedus were pulled into the central committee during 1950 and 1951 and rapidly promoted with a view to taking over top party leadership of heavy industry and agriculture. Another newcomer, Arpad Hazi, a Gero protegé and former chief of the economic security agency (State Control Center), was appointed minister of interior in April 1951.

* The Rakosi-Gero clique includes the following individuals and their special fields of interest (underlined names are individuals identified on 14 November by the central executive of the Hungarian Socialist Workers Party as adherents of the "harmful policy of the Rakosi clique"): Erzsebet Andics (ideology; women), Antal Apro (labor), Andor Berei (economic planning and foreign affairs), Mihaly Farkas (security, military and youth affairs), Istvan Friss (economic matters, Erno Gero (over-all economic direction), Arpad Hazi economic and civil police functions), Andras Hegedus (agriculture), Istvan Hidas (heavy industry), Marton Horvath (director of Szabad Nep), Karoly Kiss (cadre and foreign affairs), Jozsef Kobol (labor problems), Istvan Kossa (industry, general trouble shooter), Istvan Kovacs (party cadre matters), Istvan Kristof (labor), Erik Molnar (foreign affairs, law and justice), Sandor Nogradi (military political affairs), Gyorgy Non (ideology and justice), Karoly Olt (finance), Laszlo Piros (security), Jozsef Revai (ideology), Bela Szalai (planning), Bela Veg, Zoltan Vas, Mihaly Zsofinyecz, Lajos Acs (party cadre affairs) and Istvan Bata (army). Certain of these individuals (Apro, Kiss, Kobol, and Kristof) represent somewhat more moderate tendencies.

The party had taken over control of youth and regimented it in the Hungarian Youth Association (DISZ). Proteges of Rakosi--e.g., Bela Szalai and Gyorgy Non--dominated the organization in the interests of the ruling clique. Factionalism among the some 659,000 members was ruthlessly suppressed by continued indoctrination and para-military training on the Soviet model.

In the party, no opposition was permitted. Chief representatives of opposing tendencies were dead or in prison; rank and file opponents were reduced to silence. Rakosi, boasting of the success of his "salami slicing" methods, might better have described them as the destruction of every element which gave any popularity to the regime. It was only too plain to all Hungarians that Rakosi's assertion was brutally true that Communist power rested in the last analysis on the presence of Soviet troops.

2. Increased Pressure on the Rakosi Leadership (Spring-Summer 1952)

Despite the success of these control measures, from the early spring of 1952, Rakosi clearly was under sharp pressure as a result of the general deterioration of the country's economic position culminating in the disastrous crop failure of 1952. Although his rigid dictatorship based on absolute control of the party and the AVH continued to function as before, the appearance of anti-Semitic pressures in the Bloc (e.g., the fall of Ana Pauker in Rumania) threatened to encourage latent anti-Semitism in the Hungarian party as well as the nation as a whole.

3. Rakosi Asserts his Leadership (Autumn 1952)

Signs appeared early in 1952 that Rakosi might be under a cloud but by autumn he clearly was in full control of the situation. He assumed the premiership on 14 August, and took a series of steps intended to enhance his own personal standing, strengthen the top party leadership, purge "Zionist" elements in the AVH and improve the country's planning apparatus. His "salami tactics" speech of 29 February, received favorable comment, after long delay, in the party theoretical journal of June-July. The fact that this comment was written by Istvan Friss, generally looked on as liaison man with the Kremlin, was interpreted as signifying that Rakosi's ruthless methods received full Soviet approval. Reinforced by this endorsement, Rakosi gave enthusiastic encouragement to the "cult of personality" in Hungary.

4. Changes in the Relative Positions of the Top Party Leadership

Personnel shifts during the late autumn of 1952 had the effect of bringing forward an inner group of top leaders as the supreme heads of the government and party. This group included the Muscovites Rakosi, Gero, Revai and Nagy--but not Mihaly Farkas or Zoltan Vas--and a group of local "hard" Communists (Hidas, Hegedus, Istvan Kovacs, Arpad Hazi and Karoly Kiss), most of whom were of non-Jewish background. An eight-man committee appointed on 23 October to consider the report on the applications of the 19th Congress of the Soviet Communist Party (CPSU) included Rakosi, Gero, Revai, Nagy, Hegedus, Hidas, Kovacs and Hazi. The inner cabinet of five deputy premiers appointed on 15 November included Gero, Hidas, Nagy, Kiss and Hozi, presumably representing respectively over-all direction of industry, heavy industry, agriculture, foreign affairs and police and security affairs.

a. Up- grading of Imre Nagy: The re-emergence of Imre Nagy in the top echelon of the government and of the party pointed up the change in the relative standings of the hierarchy. His increased stature was emphasized by his being chosen to deliver the main address in honor of the Bolshevik revolution (6 November). The speech itself followed the usual Stalinist pattern, stressing statements made by Stalin, Malenkov, Bulganin and Rakosi at the party congress. Nagy's re-emergence suggests that the critical problems of Hungarian agriculture were under consideration but does not clarify the positions taken by the various policy makers either in the Soviet Union or in Hungary. Nagy himself had been a proponent of individual farming in 1945 but in more recent years had been identified with the harsh crop-collection methods applied during the 1952 drought. His attitude toward the forced-draft collectivization instituted during the fall of 1952 is not known.

b. Status of Mihaly Farkas: The omission of Mihaly Farkas from the top party and government bodies appointed during the autumn is striking. His failure to be appointed deputy premier meant that no representative of the Defense Ministry was included at this level. It is true that Farkas several days later was awarded the consolation title of General of the Army and that he continued to hold his position as minister of defense and politburo member until the following summer.

5. The "Anti-Zionist" Purge

The Hungarian counterpart of the Soviet doctors' plot was a thoroughgoing purge of Jewish elements in the AVH, Justice Ministry and, to a lesser degree, the Foreign Ministry. This purge appears to have been staged by Rakosi and Farkas in an effort to support the anti-Zionist campaign in the Soviet Union.

The Jewish leadership in Hungary was particularly vulnerable to charges of collaboration with "Zionist" agencies. Unlike the other Satellites, Hungary had never completely halted the operations of the Jewish welfare organization, the American Joint Distribution Committee (known as Joint). Since the agreement with Joint was made by Zoltan Vas with the concurrence of Rakosi, and since Rakosi also assumed final responsibility for security police operations, any purge of "Zionist" elements in Hungary threatened to involve the very top of the hierarchy. Farkas, moreover, was also deeply implicated in security police misdeeds. His son was chief of the important foreign intelligence department of the AVH and Farkas long had played a key supervisory role for the party.

The sequence of events as narrated by [redacted] shows that the purge began before Christmas 1952, when Rakosi reportedly authorized the arrest of Gabor Peter, chief of the AVH, and other high officials. These orders were executed by Farkas and his son shortly after Christmas. Young Farkas announced, at a meeting of AVH division chiefs held on 13 January 1953, that the arrests had been effected on the basis of evidence supplied by the party which had kept the arrestees under surveillance for some 18 months prior to their actual arrest. Farkas informed his colleagues that Peter had carried on a conspiracy within the AVH, was an American agent and had been an informer under the Horthy regime.*

The purge was revealed to the public in a barrage of anti-Zionist and anti-Western propaganda published in comment on the

[redacted]

Soviet doctors' plot. On 15 January, Szabad Nep announced that in Hungary "the danger and possibility of hostile undermining work is much greater" than in the Soviet Union. Newspapers declared that a "Zionist plot" had been unearthed, centering in the American Joint Distribution Committee and supported by American, British and Israeli intelligence organizations. The arrests of several leaders of the Jewish community, including the brother-in-law of Zoltan Vas, were disclosed. Finally, on 8 January, the removal of minister of justice Gyula Decsi was announced. In the meantime, both Peter and Vas had disappeared from the public view.

A new leadership replaced the Gabor Peter clique in the AVH. Laszlo Piros, former chief of the border guard and reputed protegé of Gero, became acting commander. An alternate member of the politburo and Moscow-trained partisan fighter in World War II, Piros fulfilled two major requirements: he represented the young "hard" party leadership and he was not apparently Jewish.

6. Removal of Zoltan Vas as Planning Chief

The possible ramifications of the alleged Zionist plot cannot be suggested without reference to the reported struggle between Zoltan Vas and Erno Gero to fix responsibility for the economic crisis which was reducing Hungary to bankruptcy. The tip-off was given by Gero in his November report to the central committee of the party. At that time, Gero sharply attacked the State Planning Office directed by Vas for poor work--although Gero himself, as economic czar, obviously bore final responsibility.

The precise economic doctrines espoused by the two men are not known. Vas, as chief of the Supreme Economic Council until June 1949 had been associated with a number of shady deals calculated to turn a quick forint to save the financially hard pressed regime. Gero, as chief of the Peoples Economic Council established in 1949 appeared to follow more orthodox methods of industrialization. Vas, an opportunist of many skills and amazing political agility, probably was personally antipathetic to the rigidly puritanical Gero. Vas, moreover, was personally vulnerable: he had been closely related to several high-level defectors and was directly involved in the security police purge through his connection with the Joint agreement.

Information on the possible backing of Gero by individuals in Moscow is scanty. [redacted] states that Gero called on Eugene Varga for support. Varga allegedly came to Budapest and underwrote Gero's policies. This support emboldened Gero to continue his

attack on Vas. [redacted] report that Vas was dismissed from the Planning Office after Gero forced him to admit to "gaping indolence" in the discharge of his duties. He was replaced by Ferenc Herceg, an obscure functionary in the Planning Office.

Vas probably was saved from severe punishment by the intervention of Rakosi and the death of Stalin. Although the report that Rakosi appealed to Suslov to save Vas from trial has not been confirmed, it is possible that Rakosi used this channel to save his old friend from involvement in the purge of Beria elements in Hungary.* As a result, Vas' punishment was limited to dismissal from the Planning Office and banishment to the Komlo hard coal mines as director, presumably for the purpose of purging himself of guilt by demonstrating his merits as a good Communist manager. Although his elimination from the politburo was not immediately revealed, it was clear that his career as a top government and party official was at an end.

7. Alleged Rakosi-Gero Rivalry

It would be an attractive hypothesis to speculate that the dismissal of Vas and the security police purge were reflections of an alleged rivalry between Gero and Rakosi for top position in Hungary. During the winter and spring of 1953 individuals who had been particularly associated with Gero--Piros, Hazi and the new planning chief Herceg--were in the ascendant, while individuals who had been closely associated with Rakosi--notably Vas--were under a cloud. There is, however, no firm evidence to substantiate this contention. It is more likely that Rakosi, in order to cope with the desperate economic situation, sacrificed his friend Vas as he had jettisoned a long line of earlier protegés. All evidence points to Rakosi and Gero working very closely together to set up a system which would satisfy Soviet requirements and ensure the continued tenure of power by their own clique.

* Vas was also said to be a personal friend of Soviet Marshal Voroshilov and his wife.

CHAPTER V

THE NEW COURSE: PHASE 1

(March 1953-April 1954)

1. Immediate Consequences of Stalin's Death

a. Status of the Ruling Clique: The abrupt announcement on 6 March that the old despot was dead gave a breathing space to the Rakosi clique. Rakosi went to Stalin's funeral, attended by a new protegé, Rudolf Foldvari, who appeared out of the blue at this juncture. The continued high position of Imre Nagy in the government was confirmed when he was chosen to deliver the principal memorial address in parliament (8 March). Gero's position appeared unchanged. In short, the Rakosi clique gave every evidence of being in full control of developments.

b. Partial Reversal of the "Zionist Plot": The immediate reaction to Stalin's death was the partial reversal of the Hungarian "Zionist Plot." The party press on 10 March reported that a doctor at the AVH hospital had been arrested for illegal use of "truth" drugs on prisoners and noted that two other doctors had been suspended at the same time. One of the latter had recently written a denunciation of the arrestees in the Soviet doctors' plot. Later evidence identified the drugged patient as a close associate of Gabor Peter. Nevertheless, Peter was not released.

Six days later, the elusive Zoltan Vas was partially rehabilitated. He appeared at the opening of parliament, smiling broadly and arm-in-arm with two old friends. It appeared that certain members of the Rakosi clique had been saved by the opportune death of Stalin.

2. Indications of Vacillation and Lack of Directives

The three months following Stalin's death form a period of confusion and conflicting "hard" and "soft" tendencies in Hungary. Although proponents of the "hard" course appeared to hold the upper hand, representatives of a new "soft" approach began to raise their heads. This confused situation clearly indicated an absence of firm directives from Moscow and the consequent insecure position of Rakosi.

a. Rakosi and "Proletarian internationalism": The initial propaganda line of the new era was set by Rakosi in an article in Pravda (11 March), while he was still in Moscow, entitled "The invincible Stalinist banner of proletarian internationalism." Rakosi presented the orthodox themes of Stalin worship, imitation of the Soviet Union and denunciation of imperialism. There was no hint of softer policies to come.

The choice of Arpad Hazi, who was popularly credited with carrying out the anti-Zionist purge, to deliver the 4 April "Liberation Day" address also marked a victory for the doctrinaires. The speech gave evidence of last minute preparation--it was based almost entirely on a very "hard" article just published in the Cominform journal by Szabad Nep editor Marton Horvath. Campaign speeches prior to the 17 May elections likewise bore the stamp of the doctrinaires. The clearest evidence of the continued domination of orthodox emphasis on heavy industry was presented in Rakosi's revelation of plans for the second Five Year Plan due to begin in 1955. Other articles and pronouncements bore a similar imprint.

b. Possible First Evidence of the "Thaw": The first sign of the "thaw" appears to be an article of 11 April by Laszlo Hay, first deputy minister of foreign trade, emphasizing the satisfaction of the "constantly increasing material and cultural requirements of the whole society." In a discussion of Stalin's Economic Problems of Socialism, Hay underlined the theme that the party had the primary duty of "caring for men," increasing "the well-being and education of the people" and supplying "ever-increasing quantities of consumers goods" to the people. Various other themes later identified with the New Course were voiced by Hay in this article.*

* Hay himself was identified with the ruling Rakosi clique but as deputy foreign trade minister had stood somewhat out of the main line of "Stalinist" policies. During World War II, Hay had served in the Soviet Ministry of Foreign Trade under Mikoyan and, in the spring of 1952 had attended the Moscow International Economic Conference. His emergence as harbinger of the New Course in Hungary assumes special interest in this context.

3. Prelude to the Announcement of the New Course

Immediate antecedents of the announcement of the New Course included a reported major purge of the judiciary and State Prosecutors Office (early June), a visit by Rakosi accompanied by Farkas to Moscow (early June), a counterpart trip of Voroshilov to Budapest (19 June) and the sudden appearance of a campaign of letters of complaint addressed by workers to the party. These developments may have been accelerated by the East German rebellion of 17 June and the Czech riots at Plzen at the end of May. Although evidence is lacking, these developments suggest that the party leaders may have received the nod from Moscow to go ahead with a program of conciliating the masses.

On 21 June, the New Course was directly foreshadowed in a Szabad Nep article which asserted: "We realize that the standard of living must be constantly raised. We have received a lesson from the people. In Hungary...neglect of the workers' interests is apt to seriously weaken the ties between the Party and the masses."

4. The New Course

a. The Program: The New Course, announced abruptly between the end of June and 4 July, was designed to unify and revitalize the party through the formula voiced by Imre Nagy calling for the creation of a genuine popular Communism and encouragement to the national pride of Hungarians. The counterpart of this political program was a more popular system of economics aimed at giving better support to private farming in order to augment production and providing more consumer goods for the needs of the people. In the new terminology, the devils were "burocracy," "excessive industrialization" and "mechanical imitation of the Soviet Union;" the magic words were "collective leadership," "socialist legality," and "unity."

b. Rakosi and Nagy: The New Course was dominated by two personalities, Matyas Rakosi and Imre Nagy. Rakosi, the old master of Communist tactics, at the beginning obviously felt sure that he could control the country's evolution toward a period of greater relaxation, through

his complete domination of the party network, and thus retire into the background without surrender of essential positions. The repeated endorsement given his leadership by Marshal Voroshilov and Suslov suggests that the Soviet party leadership approved of his approach to the problem of effecting the transition from the Stalin regime to a new and as yet undefined era.

Imre Nagy, in July 1953, was the least known of the major Muscovites who arrived in Hungary with the Soviet armies. In the popular mind, his identification with the land reform had been somewhat compromised by his harsh tactics as crop control minister. Nevertheless, he alone among the original top Muscovites enjoyed sufficient popularity to enable him to announce a program of incentive measures intended to regain goodwill and increase production in Hungary. Moreover, as a Soviet-trained agricultural expert, he had stature to undertake a program designed to expand Hungary's agricultural production. He had given evidence of genuine leadership qualities in 1945; at other periods he had demonstrated his ability to perform an assignment competently.

From Rakosi's viewpoint, Nagy at this time probably appeared to be personally weak and therefore well fitted to be a tool of the party leadership. Still suffering from the stigma of the 1949 censure, Nagy might be expected to show docility to party direction. The increasing self-confidence and authority which marked Nagy's career after the summer of 1954 probably came as a surprise to Rakosi.

5. Announcement of the New Course

The New Course was revealed in Hungary in two steps,--the party reorganization of 27-28 June and the government reshuffle of 2-4 July. At a meeting of the central committee, following a visit by Rakosi to Moscow, outwardly drastic changes in the top party leadership were announced. Thirteen top-level politburo members were dropped, including three of the original six

top Muscovites (Farkas, Revai, Vas) and the body--now called the political committee--was reduced to nine full members and two alternates. The orgburo was abolished, while the secretariat was completely recast. Rakosi retained his leadership as party first secretary, with two rather obscure young men as secretaries. By these moves, the political committee was reduced to a hard core "collective leadership" while the secretariat, with expanded policy-making powers, was the docile instrument of Rakosi.

On 4 July, Imre Nagy, as premier, spelled out the elements of the New Course. Concurrent changes in the government were announced to streamline the governmental machinery. Assignments to the new cabinet underlined the continued control of the Rakosi clique, although Rakosi himself was replaced by Nagy. Two deputy premiers were named--Gero and Hegedus. Gero took the key post of minister of interior. Several young Moscow-oriented men assumed important ministries, notably Hegedus as minister of agriculture and Bela Szalai as chief of the State Planning Office. Revai left the Ministry of Peoples Culture but dominant control continued to be exercised by a protegé of Rakosi, Gyorgy Non.

a. Status of Farkas: Mihaly Farkas was dropped from the Politburo and lost his post as minister of defense. His lack of military training probably disqualified him for retention of the defense post where he was replaced by an officer with better qualifications. His past association with security police matters may also have constituted a serious liability in an epoch when the Kremlin sought to show its repudiation of security policy tyranny by the dramatic purging of Beria and his associates. Doubtless he owed his restoration to high position to Rakosi. In any case, he was appointed secretary of the central committee on 16 August.

b. Gero as Minister of Interior: The appointment of No. 2 party leader Gero as minister of interior and the concurrent incorporation of the AVH within the ministry reflected the obvious concern of the ruling clique over retaining the closest possible control of the security police. According to [redacted] the move was a victory for the AVH itself, since it was enabled in this manner to establish control over the regular police, and to strengthen its own position within the government. The acting chief of the

AVH, Laszlo Piros, became first deputy minister of Interior and later replaced Gero as minister. The continued exceptional jurisdiction of the AVH over cases of anti-regime activity was assured by assigning to them investigations of cases involving treason, espionage and "other especially dangerous anti-state criminal activity."

6. Rakosi's 11 July Pronouncement

Repercussions among middle and low level party leaders confronted with these developments were immediate and shattering. These functionaries obviously were unprepared for the sudden shift in tactics and apparent goals announced by Nagy. They were not sure whether there had been a real change in the party leadership itself. Officials in the countryside, faced with the unauthorized exodus of farmers from collectives, sometimes fled to the city. The demoralization of the party officials constituted the first serious blow to the party's hold on Hungary following Stalin's death.

In this situation, Rakosi took the rostrum on 11 July to reassure officials that the new policies were genuine but that basic Communist doctrines would not be sacrificed. He also asserted that high party officials eliminated from the Politburo and governmental posts had not been purged but merely reassigned to other duties. He betrayed a doctrinaire attitude on agricultural politics. "The kulak," he declared, "remains a kulak.... The leopard cannot change his spots."

Rakosi's move had two consequences. It clearly showed that only the old master himself at this juncture was able to command the allegiance of the party machinery which he and his Muscovite associates had brought into being. Upon the general public, however, the address produced an immediate dampening effect. Nevertheless, even Rakosi's partial endorsement of the new policies had the effect in the long run of convincing the public that certain genuine benefits and a real relaxation of tension were in prospect.

7. Doctrinaire Opposition to New Course Economic Policies

The basic lines of doctrinal opposition to New Course economic policies became clear in October. At the meeting of the party central committee, "left-wing" critics apparently championed the view that only orthodox Communist remedies--stepped-up industrialization and coercion--could cure Hungary's basic economic ailment, low productivity. A more moderate group appeared to believe that concessions along New Course

lines were a necessary temporary expedient to regain control of the situation prior to the inauguration of the Second Five Year Plan. At this meeting, Rakosi supported the Nagy policies.

a. Extreme Doctrinaries: The spokesman for this group appears to have been Istvan Friss, a "mysterious hunchback" who long had acted as economic liaison man with Moscow. This group was subjected to sharp criticism by the central committee resolution published on 6 November for "lack of understanding, adherence to the old and accustomed way and even opposition." Singled out for special criticism were the State Planning Office, the Ministries of Heavy Industry, of Foundry and Machine Industry and the planning and financial section of the central committee--i.e.,Friss.

b. Moderate Doctrinaires: During the first months of the New Course Gero identified himself with a moderately critical attitude toward the Nagy policies, in line with Rakosi's position. It became apparent, however, that the sacrifice of orthodox industrialization policies to the necessity of building up the agricultural sector and gaining popular goodwill was basically antipathetic to Gero. Nevertheless, in his Lenin Day address (January 1954), Gero performed self-criticism for past "exaggerated policy of socialist industrialization" at the expense of the standard of living of workers. He endorsed Nagy's policies, although with certain reservations. For example, he declared: "Every socialist country must support the peasants to the full--and small farmers as long as they remain small farmers."

8. Strengthening "Collective Leadership"

During the autumn of 1953, warnings that "collective leadership" must be strengthened became increasingly frequent. These warnings reached a crescendo in January on the eve of elections for delegates to the Third Party Congress due to meet in the spring. The official party newspaper during this period urgently instructed party members to unseat the "little kings" and "burocrats" who had domineered over the party and robbed members of initiative.

9. The Repercussions of the Beria Case

Rakosi managed with his old skill the domestic repercussions of the Soviet announcement of Beria's execution. On 13 March,

Hungarian authorities released the news that Gabor Peter had received a sentence of life imprisonment for "crimes against the people and state," while other former security police officials also had been given heavy sentences. Lesser individuals involved in the "Zionist plot" were given shorter prison terms for such minor offenses as black-market operations. Some were released. The liquidation of Soviet holdings in Hungary also passed off without incident. Outwardly at least, it appeared that Hungary might be throwing off the onus of "Stalinism" without serious political repercussions.

CHAPTER VI

THE NEW COURSE: PHASE 2: NAGY ASSERTS LEADERSHIP

(May-November 1954)

1. The Third Party Congress (24-30 May)

At the third congress of the Hungarian Workers Party, Rakosi clearly appeared to dominate the party. Just home from a visit to Moscow with Nagy and Gero, Rakosi appeared in company with his old friend Voroshilov who acted as Soviet representative at the congress. Voroshilov's speech sharply underlined the necessity of collective leadership, avoided personal endorsement of either Rakosi or Nagy, and emphasized Hungarian national traditions, including "traditional" Hungarian-Soviet friendship.

Rakosi's five-hour address was marked by emphatic declarations that new course tendencies would continue under the Second Five-Year Plan due to start in 1956 in co-ordination with the other bloc countries. His stern warnings against "right-wing opportunistic" excesses, however, reveal that party leaders were seriously alarmed at evidence of relaxation of discipline coming to light in the party and nation. He emphasized the necessity of "iron discipline" and declared: "The correct policy of our party must be defended against both left-wing and right-wing dangers and distortions.... We must take a stand everywhere against the spirit of impermissible liberalism and forbearance, which prevails in many places in our party and government." He disclosed that the very large number of withdrawals from collective farms was causing concern to the regime and made clear that collectivization would continue: "Not for a moment can we forget that this unavoidably is the road to build socialism in the countryside." He also revealed that a new Peoples Front was to be formed in the near future.

Gero's report on industrial problems was even more pessimistic in tone than Rakosi's address, marking him clearly as the leader of the doctrinaire--though reasonable--critics of the new course. He emphasized that the country's economic problems were not being solved by the new measures but were even growing. He dwelt on declining productivity and rising production costs. His gloomy evaluation was echoed by his young "hard" disciple, Istvan Hidas.

Imre Nagy, in his address to the congress, reflected greater authority than had previously been noted by observers. In his

report on governmental policies, he laid major emphasis on the necessary separation of government and party, stressed the role of local government organs and demanded much closer contact between party and government functionaries and the masses of the people. It was evident that he interpreted his mission as calling for the establishment of popular confidence in the regime, although in a completely "Leninist" sense. The vehicle for gaining this popularity was to be the new Peoples Front, "that broad and all-inclusive mass movement, the backbone of which is the worker-peasant alliance...." This definition obviously differed from the concept of Rakosi which remained that of a party functionary.

Certain organizational changes were made at the congress which had the effect of strengthening collective leadership. The political committee was reduced to seven full members and two alternates.* The secretariat was stripped of its policy-making powers, in theory at least, and under the revised party statutes became an administrative body.** Subsequent evidence suggests that elections to the central committee by the congress made it more responsive to the leadership of Imre Nagy.

2. Emergence of a "Nagy Team"

The first significant appointment indicating that Nagy was beginning to build up a special governmental team to implement his policies occurred prior to the congress. On 27 March, Nagy appointed Zoltan Szanto to head a newly instituted information bureau reporting directly to the Council of Ministers.*** The new bureau was at least nominally independent of the Ministry of People's Culture. Szanto's deputy, appointed somewhat later, was Miklos Vasarhelyi, a leading journalist who later took an important role in the so-called Writers Revolt. It seems possible that the information office was one of the connecting links between Nagy, as head of the government, and the group of young Communist intellectuals who were pushing for reform at a rate faster than the party leadership desired.

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* Full members were: Rakosi, Gero, Nagy, Farkas, Apro, Hidas, Hegedus, Acs and Szalai; candidate members were Bata and Mekis.

** Rakosi and Farkas were the only well-known members of the secretariat. Other members were Acs, Veg and Matolcsi.

*** Szanto was subsequently elected to the party's central leadership at the third party congress. A brother-in-law of Jozsef Revai, he was ambassador to Yugoslavia prior to 1949. After the break with Tito, Szanto was appointed minister to Paris where he remained until his appointment to the information office.

A second Muscovite who rose to high position during the Nagy era was Ferenc Munnich, Nagy's former colleague on Radio Kossuth during World War II. On 1 September, Munnich was chosen to serve as Hungarian ambassador to Moscow, thus achieving for the first time a rank commensurate with the reputation he had enjoyed in earlier years as a leading Hungarian Communist. The fact that both Szanto and Munnich, both Spanish Civil War veterans and "old Bolsheviks," would presumably be acceptable to Tito may have played a part in motivating these appointments.

A third Muscovite who seems to have prospered during the Nagy era was Laszlo Hay, long-time deputy minister of foreign trade who on 6 July was advanced to full minister. It will be recalled that Hay's article of 11 April 1953 was one of the earliest public appearances of new course doctrine on consumers goods and welfare of workers.

Other individuals who now or later were closely identified with the implementation of the Nagy policies were his son-in-law Ferenc Janosi and several younger Communists including Geza Losonczi and Ferenc Donath. Janosi occupied the position of first deputy minister of people's culture for the period 1951 to 1955, with the exception of a short interval between March and July 1953 when he was apparently replaced by Rakosi's protege Gyorgy Non. Losonczi and Donath had been closely associated with Nagy in the immediate post-war period during the implementation of the land reform and popular front policies.

Two of Rakosi's former closest associates were linked with the Nagy regime--Mihaly Farkas and Zoltan Vas. Farkas appears to have been seeking to bolster his own position, exceedingly

shaky as a result of mounting attacks throughout the bloc on past security police misdeeds. Zoltan Vas, opportunist and scapegoat for economic failures under the First Five-Year Plan, apparently also sought to work his way back to a position of power by supporting Nagy. From March 1954 he was attached to the Council of Ministers in an undefined economic capacity.

3. Party Dissension over Role of Patriotic People's Front

The first evidence that Nagy, in an effort to win popular support for the regime and implement new course policies, would attempt to circumvent Rakosi's directives appears in party discussions leading to the formation in August of the Patriotic People's Front (PPF). It is also possible that Nagy was able to exert greater influence on Szabad Nep during the summer. Observers noted that this newspaper began to show signs of considerably freer criticism of conditions in Hungary.

As envisaged by Rakosi at the party congress, the front was designed to be another means of regimenting the public, organized in Communist-controlled mass organizations, for the purpose of endorsing the government policies in the local government elections scheduled for 28 November. According to Rakosi's report to the central committee on 14 April 1955, Nagy from the outset disagreed with the party leadership on the composition and functioning of the PPF. Nagy, who was not present at the party meeting, had contended that the front must be formed by individuals and not mass organizations. Rakosi rejected this proposal on grounds that the PPF would become a "political organization," i.e., a rival of the party itself. The matter appears to have been left in this form for consideration by the forthcoming central committee meeting.

4. The "Test of Strength" (1-3 October)

The meeting of the central committee on 1-3 October was, in Nagy's phrase, the "test of strength" between new course adherents and their critics. An open clash apparently occurred when the latter demanded that curbs be placed on the purchasing power of peasants in order to halt inflation. Nagy countered with strong arguments that the confidence of the peasants must not be destroyed by such measures if the regime hoped to increase agricultural production. Instead, their confidence must be

retained by augmenting the supply of consumers goods. He sharply condemned the defenders of accelerated industrialization and charged such policies "undermined" the worker-peasant alliance. He further charged: "The faults of our economic policy" and "mistakes in party leadership" had the same root: "one-man" leadership. This address, published in Szabad Nep on 20 October, was the clearest statement to date of Nagy's doctrine.

Nagy was able to carry the majority of the central committee along with him, apparently over the head of Rakosi. The committee resolved to continue New Course policies and condemned "resistance fostered by ideologically unsubstantiated and mistaken conceptions which mean to solve our difficulties by a curtailment of purchasing power--that is, by lowering the standard of living of workers and peasants." The resolution further excoriated the "resistance...fostered by those who regard certain measures aiming at the development of agriculture...as a one-sided peasant policy." It called upon the political committee to formulate "within this year" a detailed program for the application of new course policies. This resolution was published in Szabad Nep, three weeks after the meeting on 22 October.

All the top party figures--except Rakosi--now published endorsements of the central committee resolution, emphasizing different facets of the doctrine. Farkas, speaking to university activists on 28 October, condemned "mechanical imitation of the experience of the Soviet Union" and made the point: "In our country the building of socialism proceeds in an international context entirely different from that of the USSR.... What was correct in the Soviet Union had proved wrong in our country, in a historically totally different situation." Zoltan Vas, in Szabad Nep on 27 October, laid himself open for future criticism by stigmatizing as "irrational" the concept--dear to doctrinaires--of Hungary as "a land of iron and steel " and ridiculing the great Stalin City (Sztalinvaros) show project. Erno Gero, who more than any other individual was responsible for "old course" policies, had the task of reaffirming the decisions of the central committee. He declared: "Those who stand in the way of party policy must be swept aside!"

As a direct warning to "left-wing sectarians," Istvan Friss was relieved of his functions as chief of the party's economic and financial department and relegated to an honorary post. Simultaneously, a ministerial reshuffle placed Bela Szalai, former planning chief, at the head of the Ministry of Light Industry with the mission of stepping up consumers goods production. On the other hand, the appointment of Andor Berei, an old-time associate of Gero, to replace Szalai as chief of the planning office was not reassuring to new course proponents. Moreover, Erik Molnar, Rakosi's long-time tool, now took over the Ministry of Justice.

This central committee meeting marks the high point of Nagy's control of the party. But the departure of party leader Rakosi for Moscow, either during or immediately after the central committee meeting, was a clear warning that he was exceedingly concerned over exaggerated new course tendencies and was consulting with friends in the Kremlin.

5. Patriotic People's Front

The two-month period during which Rakosi remained in Moscow was the high point of the Nagy era. In Rakosi's absence, Nagy remade the PPF to conform with his own interpretation--i.e., to embody "the poetic concept of the people's sovereignty" and, if possible, reawaken the genuine communist enthusiasm of the postwar period. Szabad Nep set the tone in a 10 October editorial denouncing "left-wing narrowmindedness, factionalism" and calling for party domination of the new organization. Nagy induced the central committee to elect the author Pal Szabo as president of the PPF and, as secretary general, his own son-in-law, Ferenc Janosi. Nagy also induced the politburo to adopt as the official PPF organ, not Szabad Nep, but the unaffiliated newspaper Magyar Nemzet. The ostensibly non-Communist editors of this newspaper were kept at the helm.

By these steps Nagy provided himself with a political organization and newspaper independent to some degree of Rakosi's control. From its first congress (23-24 October), the PPF strongly emphasized "Hungarian" themes that drew support from young party intellectuals and provided a forum for ambitious newcomers in the countryside. Intended--as its president, Pal Szabo, phrased it--to "deliver the country from indifference, apathy and strife," the PPF afforded a platform for opposition forces who had been barred from free expression by the stranglehold of the Rakosi clique on intellectual life.

6. Release of "Victims of Stalinist Oppression"

Following the central committee meeting of 1-3 October, Istvan Kovacs revealed that the regime had begun to release Communists "unjustly" imprisoned on the basis of evidence falsified by former AVH chief Gabor Peter and his associates. This move, intended to restore initiative and unity to the party, came as a result of Soviet pressure on the Rakosi regime. The releases may also have been designed to facilitate the resumption of friendly relations with Yugoslavia.

Members of the nativist group arrested in 1951 were the first to reappear. Janos Kadar was reportedly liberated in

September and was immediately appointed to head a district party organization in Budapest. Gyula Kallai was freed about the same time. Other party moderates were released concurrently. The institution of the PPF gave a mechanism where their services could be utilized pending their full rehabilitation by the party. Both Kadar and Kallai were elected members of the PPF council at its October congress.

Other political prisoners were liberated later in the autumn, including Noel and Herta Field former Social Democrats like Gyorgy Marosan and even right-wing socialists who had opposed fusion with the Communists were released in coming months in a move to evoke favorable comment from foreign socialists who had long agitated for the releases.

The liberation of large numbers of arrestees, many of them not completely rehabilitated, meant that many embittered, fearful men had been given a measure of freedom which might be withdrawn at any time by a change of policy. For this reason, any future indications that the regime intended to revert to harsh coercive tactics might drive certain of these individuals to join with any resistance forces which might be available. But, more immediately important for the Rakosi leadership, the move greatly reinforced opposition forces within the party and pointed up the incongruity of continued retention of power by men who, like Rakosi and Farkas, were identified with the avowedly unjust punishment of former party leaders like Janos Kadar.

7. Status of Affairs, Autumn 1954

Foreigners noted during the summer and fall of 1954 a change for the better in the well-being and self-confidence of Hungarians. Economic conditions were somewhat improved and consumers goods were more available. Peasants enjoyed a real increase in their standard of living. These improvements were accompanied by a growing popular willingness to criticise the regime and demand changes in the Communist system--or even a completely new system. Leaders of the PPF echoed these criticisms. Taking their cue from the far-reaching castigation of past and current mistakes embodied in the central committee's October resolution, these orators and writers touched on all aspects of the national life.

Nagy's opponents manifested growing concern over the unstable economic situation in the country, rising unemployment resulting from economy measures, continued low labor productivity, and the growing independence of private peasants who appeared to be reaping the harvest of the new course. The Communist managerial class, uneasy at the possibility that

de-emphasis on heavy industry would threaten its empire, sabotaged measures for converting to consumers goods production. Spokesmen for this class even suggested that implementation of the new course policies would require a complete transformation of the whole Communist economic system (e.g., radio statement by Pal Rubinyi, a functionary in the Ministry of Internal Trade, 2 November). These fears were exacerbated by alarm at the political tendencies of new course proponents--Nagy's increasing reliance on the PPF at the expense of the party and sharpening criticism of past mistakes. Orthodox Communists feared that encouragement of criticism would spark popular hatred of Communism and set off an explosion. To some Communists, their regime appeared to be in danger.

Stinging criticism of the youth organization, DISZ, by PPF president Pal Szabo on 14 November and more moderate criticism by Farkas on 28 October, appear to have been the last straw. Minister of People's Culture Darvas, an old Rakosi puppet, on 21 November delivered a resounding rebuke in the columns of Szabad Nep. Charging that public criticism stimulated by the new course was overstepping all bounds, he denounced "anarchistic views" in the cultural field and declared: "We will be guilty...unless we oppose the petty bourgeois practice of overstatement, criticism, demagogy, undermining of confidence, denunciation of our past achievements, petty bourgeois revisionism and the destruction of the faith and confidence of our people."

CHAPTER VII

RAKOSI'S RETURN TO POWER

(December 1954-January 1956)

1. Rakosi Takes Over

Rakosi reintervened decisively to check growing criticism encouraged by the PPF. Returning from Moscow on 27 November with a strong Soviet endorsement, Rakosi on 3 December delivered a slashing onslaught on critics of the Communist youth organization. "The party repudiates most sharply the attacks against DISZ which," he declared, "under the pretext of real failures of the organization, tend toward the elimination of DISZ and the weakening of the party itself." The party clearly was exceedingly reluctant to surrender one iota of control over the youth organization and looked on proposals for reform as directed against the party itself.

At a special commemorative meeting of the Hungarian parliament held in Debrecen on 22 December, Rakosi made his return to the helm even more apparent. He delivered a typically "hard" address, demanding strengthened discipline in all sectors of national life, greater emphasis on industrialization and increased stress on collectivization. It was clear to all observers that Rakosi had openly taken charge.

Doctrinaire elements in the party who had remained relatively neutral in recent months were encouraged by Rakosi's endorsement by the Kremlin--which had been communicated to the party--to take a stronger line against New Course tendencies. Nevertheless, it remained to be determined how far the reversal would involve changes in economic and political policies or how many individuals would be demoted. Party leaders at all levels showed major confusion in this situation.

The return to orthodox Communist emphasis on heavy industry was announced by Szabad Nep in its New Year's Day editorial. Rakosi spelled out the new line on 23 January, in a speech to miners. He declared that "the vigorous program of industrialization" would be followed during the Second Five-Year Plan due to begin in 1956. These pronouncements resembled statements made by Khrushchev during December and January.

2. Condemnation of the Nagy Policies (March)

The demotion of Malenkov was announced on 6 February; two days later Molotov referred to "serious shortcomings" in the Satellites. These Soviet moves were immediately followed in Hungary by measures against Nagy and his adherents. Nagy's son-in-law Janosi was replaced as first deputy minister of people's culture on 19 February by Rakosi's special protege Gyorgy Non. On the 20th, it was announced that Nagy was ill with coronary thrombosis. From this point until the autumn of 1956 Nagy remained out of power.

Soviet endorsement of the forthcoming condemnation of Nagy took the unusual form of a warning article published in the Cominform journal on 25 February, two weeks before the meeting of the Hungarian central committee which pronounced the verdict on the Nagy policies. This article blasted Hungarian policies implemented during the preceding eight months and sharply criticized Szabad Nep for its attitude during this period. At approximately the same time, Cominform chief Suslov spent some ten days in Hungary making a thorough study of the political situation. He then threw his powerful support to Rakosi, although reportedly counseling him to use moderation in dealing with the popular premier.

Condemnation of the Nagy policies by the central committee followed on 9 March. This "March Resolution," in the name of party "unity" and "discipline," condemned the following policies: (1) sacrifice of heavy industry, which "also worked against agriculture, light industry and defense:" (2) excessive encouragement given to free peasants at the expense of collectives; (3) measures, taken in connection with the PPF, aimed at diminishing the party's importance and giving control of local government organs to the PPF committee. The resolution castigated nationalism and "chauvinism" as "among the most dangerous manifestations," and declared that a "merciless" battle must be waged on both tendencies. The resolution also criticized Nagy personally for: (1) supporting anti-Marxist views in his speeches and actions; (2) encouraging "petty bourgeois" elements to step up their activity against the party; (3) attempting to ignore the leadership of the working class; and (4) leading the working class into error by demagogic promises. The March Resolution, however, did not reject the party resolution of June 1953 instituting the New Course and reiterated policies of moderation.

Another charge reportedly levelled against Nagy was discrimination against the AVH. This accusation apparently was not publicized.

The reference to nationalism was spelled out in an 8 April editorial in Szabad Nep, which revealed that the condemnation was actually directed against the doctrine of "national Communism." The editorial asserted: "If we analyze the rightist views, we clearly see that they are aimed, willy-nilly, at making the party deviate from the road followed by the Soviet Union--and at making Hungary follow another, the specifically Hungarian, road that was supposed to lead to socialism." This blast may have been directed at Farkas as well as Nagy.

Public Soviet endorsement of Rakosi was given by Marshal Voroshilov on 4 April at the Liberation Day ceremonies. Voroshilov transmitted the express approval of the Soviet central committee for measures taken by the Hungarian party to correct "errors" in the economy and socialist structure of Hungary.

3. Party Condemnation of Nagy (April)

Party disciplining of the principal figures of the Nagy regime followed on 14 April at the meeting of the political committee. Nagy was expelled from the political committee, the central committee, "and every other function with which he was entrusted by the party." Farkas was expelled from the political committee and the secretariat but "entrusted with other party work." Doubtless the leniency shown to Nagy and Farkas was a reflection of the current Soviet policy which required the greatest possible appearance of moderation be shown by Hungarian leaders.

The report of the central committee, published on 18 April, declared that Nagy had "turned against the party's policy, the teachings of Marxism and Leninism and the interests of the people." His activities, it asserted, "aimed at the bastion of socialism--the leading role of the working class and the party, the development of heavy industry and the socialist reorganization of agriculture." Nagy's deviation of 1949 was cited as proof of his long-standing unre-

liability. He was excoriated for failing to learn from his faults: "In fact, during the last 20 months, he aggravated these faults until they became a whole coherent system and caused great damage to his country."

Nagy was replaced by the Rakosi protegé, Andras Hegedus, as premier on 18 April. Hegedus' nomination presumably signified the continued priority of agriculture, since he was an agricultural expert. As a product of the Hungarian youth organization, he presumably would be popular among younger party members. Finally, as a newcomer, Hegedus was free of the onus of the Rajk case. Soviet wooing of Tito gave the last point importance.

a. Nagy's Defiance to the Central Committee: Nagy's flat refusal to appear before the political committee, on grounds that as head of the government he could not be removed by the party, suggests that he felt confident of support within the party for himself and his policies. Rakosi's continued failure to force Nagy to do penance may indicate that the party leadership was unwilling to sacrifice the former premier, who had become a symbol of "national Communism." As Rakosi explained, he hoped Nagy might "turn back" and try to make good "the immeasurable damage he caused to our party, people's democracy and our building of socialism." Nagy's continued defiance, however, encouraged his supporters to continue their resistance.

b. The Condemnation of Farkas and Vas: The condemnation of Farkas, on grounds that "for a long time" he had been the "chief backer" of Nagy, had drastic implications for the Rakosi clique. Farkas had connections with leading Hungarian army circles. His son, Vladimir Farkas, a leading AVH official, was related by marriage with high-ranking Muscovites and on friendly terms with important officials. The fall of Farkas, therefore, although he was temporarily saved from its worst consequences by Rakosi, threatened to implicate other very

prominent individuals.

Zoltan Vas was also involved in the fall of Nagy. He was deprived of his special position in the council of ministers and demoted to deputy minister of foreign trade. The conclusive nature of his condemnation was shown by the statement in the April issue of the party theoretical journal which asserted that Vas' castigation of Five-Year-Plan show projects reflected the "influence of the class enemy and capitalistic circles which are trying to weaken the popular base of the regime by slander."

c. Continued Strong Position of Munnich and Szanto: Neither Ferenc Munnich nor Zoltan Szanto was injured by the fall of Nagy. Munnich continued to be ambassador to Moscow, while Szanto was appointed minister to Warsaw in June. Both men thus played important roles in linking Hungary with the Kremlin and Poland. Both men reappeared in Hungary on the eve of the revolution in 1956.

4. Increasing Emphasis on "Hard" Domestic Policies (June)

During the spring of 1955, Hungarian domestic policies took on an increasingly "hard" look, although party leaders made a show of continuing moderation. The apparatus of economic coercion was somewhat strengthened when in August the State Control Office was raised to the status of ministry with Arpad Hazi as minister. Moreover, economic policies unveiled by the regime at the June meeting of the central committee implied the return of intensified industrialization and collectivization under the Second Five-Year Plan due to begin in 1956.

Erno Gero now openly supported these policies, although he attempted to maintain his "moderate doctrinaire" attitude. In a 12 June article in Szabad Nep commenting on the recent central committee meeting, he declared that socialist industrialization, better work by collectives and state farms and improved operation of machine tractor stations must be the means of "convincing several hundred thousand peasant families" to join collectives. He conceded that this would bring intensified pressure on "kulaks," i.e., the peasantry as a whole. "Agricultural production can be raised substantially," he declared, "only if we attain in the next few years a change in the socialist reorganization of agriculture as well. Imre Nagy and in general the rightist deviationists started from the assumption that we either build socialism in the villages, in which case agricultural production could not be raised, or we raise agricultural production and yields and then it would be impossible to build

socialism in the villages." Gero thus decisively ranged himself on the side of the enemies of Nagy's agricultural policies.

This approach to Hungary's grave economic problems satisfied no one. Proponents of New Course policies were alarmed by the implications of the return to collectivization and industrialization while leaders of the Communist managerial class whose careers and advancement depended on expanding industry were disaffected by the failure to speed up the return to a stronger emphasis on heavy industry. The cleavage in top party circles therefore remained acute.

5. The Yugoslav Issue

The Soviet rapprochement with Tito became a major factor in Hungarian political life by the summer of 1955. Since Tito was widely envied in Hungary as a successful rebel against Kremlin controls, his courting by the Kremlin leaders exacerbated confusion and dissension already rampant in the Hungarian party as a result of the fall of Nagy and the general hardening of the domestic line which appeared in sharp contrast to Soviet assurances to the Yugoslavs. The pilgrimage of Khrushchev and his colleagues to Yugoslavia in May brought this confusion to a high pitch. It afforded the highest possible affirmation that the doctrine of "separate roads to socialism" was again respectable as regards Yugoslavia.

The Hungarian party leaders were aware of their dilemma but clearly hoped to accommodate themselves to the new Soviet policies. The Rajk case now became a major stumbling block. It would be exceedingly difficult for Rakosi to do public penance for the death of Rajk without seriously damaging his authority. It became unmistakably clear, however, that nothing less than such a public repudiation would satisfy Tito. The Hungarian tactic of blaming the whole affair on Gabor Peter--following the Soviet line on Beria--was not satisfactory.

President Tito spelled out his demands in a 27 July speech. He charged that "certain men in neighboring countries...especially Hungary" were not pleased with the improvement in Soviet-Yugoslav relations and "were intriguing under cover" against Yugoslavia. Such men, he declared, who had sentenced "innocent men" to death, were afraid to admit their mistakes and follow a new path. "These men," Tito concluded, "will inevitably fall into their own political traps!"

It soon became evident that the Hungarians were under strong Soviet pressure to improve relations, although at the moment only economic rapprochement was demanded. The Hungarian party instituted special meetings to explain Soviet policy on Yugoslavia to party activists and blame the 1948 break on Gabor Peter. Without fanfare, however, the party concurrently released minor victims of the Rajk trial.

Tito's intransigence unquestionably strengthened the initiative of anti-Rakosi elements in Hungary who genuinely believedin the possibility of national Communism and hoped for the reinstitution of the Nagy leadership.

6. Appearance of Revolutionary Elements: The Writers Revolt (September-November)

The full impact of the harsher policies designed to crush Nagy supporters fell on Hungarian intellectuals, especially the young Communist journalists and writers who looked for increased liberalization in Hungary as a result of the apparently more tolerant attitude of the Kremlin. From early spring onwards, the regime sought to convince the writers that they should fall into line and specifically support the party. When persuasion failed leading journalists were dismissed from Szabad Nep; books were banned; the party cracked down on the Writers' Union in an attempt to intimidate potentially rebellious elements.

The actual starting point of the so-called Writers'Revolt appears to have been an article published by Gyula Hay in the 10 September issue of Irodalmi Ujsag, organ of the Writers' Union, delcaring that excessive bureaucratic restraints were destroying Hungarian literature as an art. The next number of the journal carried an article by Laszlo Benjamin criticizing Jozsef Darvas, minister of people's culture. The issue was suppressed by the authorities.

The regime's attempt to discipline the writers provoked an outburst. At a meeting of the Writers' Association, apparently held on 10 November, spokesmen of the party (Marton Horvath and Erzsebet Andics) were shouted down. A group of writers presented a draft memorandum attacking the "necessity and right" of the party to direct literature. The resolution--or

resolutions--took the basic position that acts of the Hungarian central committee conflicted with party policy and were "in direct contradiction" with the "broadminded approach to cultural work practiced by the Soviet Union." The only means by which "wrong views" could be defeated, creative cultural work developed and socialism advanced would be establishment of a "free, sincere, healthy and democratic atmosphere imbued with the spirit of popular democracy."

7. Counteroffensive of the Party (November-December)

In the face of the writers and their widespread popular support, the party leadership apparently carried out its counteroffensive with great caution. Although the party central committee adopted a resolution condemning the writers, it was published only after a long delay in the 10 December issue of the writers journal, Irodalmi Ujsag, no doubt as a result of mounting dissension within the committee. It strongly appears that the Rakosi-dominated wing of the committee found it necessary to break the resistance of the pro-Nagy faction before steps could be taken to discipline the writers. Rakosi apparently resolved to give a drastic lesson to opposition elements by finally cracking down on Nagy himself. At a special session of the central committee convened on 3 December, Nagy was expelled from the party. Thus, after eight months delay, the disciplinary action which should logically have been taken in April was carried through. But the long delay and the semi-clandestine character of the move robbed it of much of its impact.

The Rakosi-Gero leadership of the party now initiated a campaign to daunt the opposition. On 6 December, party bigwig

Istvan Kovacs addressed a meeting of Budapest party activists with threats against the insurgents. He denounced leaders of the Writers' Revolt by name and declared that the writers' memorandum was an "anti-party" maneuver designed to encourage opposition to the party among the general public.

On 10 December the central committee resolution was finally published in Irodalmi Ujsag. This sweeping condemnation stigmatized the "greater part" of recent literature on the peasantry as antisocialist ("schematist"), declared it was "political" in character, and scathingly denounced the individuals who had signed the writers' memorandum. "This memorandum," it declared, "is an attack against the party and state leadership. It casts doubt on the right of the central committee to remove rightist opportunists from the board of editors of its own central newspaper.... This memorandum is in fact an anti-party program.... At the present time rightist opportunism manifests itself in the most dangerous, most undisguised and most organized form in the field of literary life.... The central committee most emphatically condemns this rightist factionalism...."*

In consequence of the party decision, several leading journalists were expelled from the party. This move marked the open break between intellectuals backing Imre Nagy and the party. It also had the effect of forming a group of "outcasts" ready to resort to strong measures to secure assurance of their freedom and livelihood.

* The following individuals were condemned by name: Tibor Dery, Zoltan Zelk, Tamas Aczel, Gyula Hay and Tibor Meray.

CHAPTER VIII

DISINTEGRATION OF THE HUNGARIAN WORKERS PARTY

(22 February - 24 October 1956)

1. Effects of the 20th Soviet Party

The dramatic revelation of the decanonization of Stalin by Khrushchev and Mikoyan at the 20th party congress vastly sparked dissension in the Hungarian Workers Party.* It encouraged opponents of Rakosi in the central committee to step up their attacks and gave heart to supporters of Imre Nagy. It stimulated Hungarian party members at all levels to demand drastic changes in the regime at a greatly accelerated speed. Simultaneously emphasis on a "variety of roads to socialism" encouraged nationalists to hope that there would be a genuine understanding of Hungary's problems and traditions in the forthcoming period.

Rakosi was clearly guilty of the crimes charged by Khrushchev against Stalin. He had encouraged the "cult of personality." He had condemned good Communists and Spanish Civil War veterans by the use of fabricated evidence, notably Laszlo Rajk. He had protected those who tortured "innocent men," notably the Farkases. He had supported the expulsion of Tito from the Cominform and, with Farkas, had led the chorus of denunciation against him. Rakosi's continued presence at the head of the Hungarian party therefore contradicted the new Soviet party line and constituted a ban to resumption of party relations with Yugoslavia--and Tito made clear that he considered men like Rakosi a barrier. That Rakosi had done these things in response to Soviet orders only involved him further in the guilt of Stalin and "Beria." The rapid elimination of Rakosi from power therefore constituted a test case of the genuineness of the reform policies promised by Khrushchev.

The revelations of the 20th party congress split the Hungarian party from top to bottom. The denigration of Stalin caused despair among party members of doctrinaire tendencies. Some reportedly even threatened to leave the party because "the negation of Stalin means the negation of Communism." On the other hand, the congress declaration produced jubilation among the supporters of Imre Nagy.

* Hungarian delegates to the congress were Rakosi, Szalai and Kovacs.

Other measures taken in connection with the 20th party congress gave further encouragement to Rakosi's enemies. The formal rehabilitation of Bela Kun, effected by Eugene Varga in Pravda on 21 February, heartened "old Bolsheviks" long under a cloud (e.g. Gyorgy Lukacs) to take more active roles in opposing the Rakosi regime. Encouragement by the congress of far-reaching criticism and self-criticism spurred malcontents to use every avaialble medium to denounce the regime and notably sanctioned the scathing criticism voiced at the Petofi Club, the meeting place of the opposition.

2. Dissension in the Central Committee

Reflections of this factionalism emerged sharply at the 12-13 March meeting of the central committee following the congress. Rakosi, backed by his protegés in the secretariat, a few central committee members (e.g. Marton Horvath, Erzsebet Andics) and in general by Gero, was the target of attacks calling for the punishment of Mihaly and Vladimir Farkas as "Stalinists." Imre Nagy allegedly appeared before the committee to request rehabilitation and attack the "cult of personality." Although Nagy's request was rejected after heated debate, factionalism in the governing body of the party now was rampant.

3. Stalinists, Liberals and Moderates

The basic line of cleavage lay between Rakosi, representing "Stalinism," and Imre Nagy, representing "liberalism," i.e. nationalist tendencies which remained Communist but judging from Nagy's willingness to resort to extreme conciliatory expedients, might go very far to the right indeed. Between these extremes was the group of rehabilitated Communists headed by Janos Kadar.

Nagy's claims for full rehabilitation were apparently supported by a large faction--possibly the majority--of the central committee, probably because they realized the tremendous popular enthusiasm for Nagy must be satisfied. There is little doubt, however, that leading party elements were greatly alarmed at the extremely "liberal" character of Nagy's own personal following. These included the "outcast" young writers recently disciplined for challenging party control (e.g. Tibor Dery, Tibor Tardos, Miklos Vasarhelyi*) and certain partially rehabilitated intellectuals who supported his cultural and agrarian policies,

* Vasarhelyi reportedly was expelled from the party prior to the CPSU congress for charging Rakosi with responsibility for the Rajk case.

notably Geza Losonczi and Ferenc Donath. The fervor of their allegiance to Nagy was probably augmented by their exposed position in the event of a return to harsh coercive policies.

Outside the central committee was the important group of rehabilitated moderate nationalists (Janos Kadar, Gyula Kallai, Gyorgy Marosan) who had very strong support within the central committee. Kadar, a bitter personal enemy of Rakosi, as yet held only the relatively minor post of party secretary for Pest county and apparently was ambitious for advancement. His candidacy may have been backed by Jozsef Revai, who had been closely associated with this group in the 1948-51 period.

The majority of the party's political committee (Acs, Hegedus, Szalai, Hidas, Bata, Mekis, Kovacs and Piros) supported Rakosi pending orders from Moscow, although they personally opposed Rakosi's continued tenure of power. Most of these individuals owed their careers to Rakosi but they were prepared to overthrow him at a moment's notice.

4. The Kremlin's Dilemma

The balance of power clearly lay in the hand of the Kremlin. The Soviet directors of Hungary's fate, however, were caught in a dilemma. Moscow believed that only an experienced hand like Rakosi's could control the dangerous factionalism rampant in the Hungarian party and contain explosive nationalist tendencies encouraged by the current Soviet rapprochement with Tito. Yet the continued retention of Rakosi conflicted with the de-Stalinization pronouncements of the 20th Soviet Party Congress, exacerbated dissension in the Hungarian party and further undermined the prestige of the party among the Hungarian public.

A major stumbling block to the Kremlin appears to have been the absence of a suitable successor to Rakosi. The installation of Imre Nagy, whose policies had been formally condemned, would amount to a Soviet capitulation before the demands of Hungarian public opinion--a procedure contrary to the whole conception of Soviet-Satellite relations. As the crisis within the Hungarian party grew worse, Janos Kadar may have been designated as eventual replacement for Rakosi. He had the advantage of typifying a policy based on the industrial working class and he was still, as in 1948, manageable by the Kremlin. The moment when he could assume this post appeared to be far off, since he had not yet been readmitted to any top governing body of the party.

In this situation, the "collective" leadership in Moscow continued to support Rakosi by public endorsements while postponing the question of an eventual successor. Such vacillation only stimulated the opposition to Rakosi into more vehement demands for his ouster.

5. Growing Strength of the Anti-Rakosi Opposition

To most Hungarians, the elimination of Rakosi would have been one guarantee that the Kremlin really intended to put an end to the oppressive Stalinist system and allow genuine "relaxation" in Hungary. The opposition therefore concentrated on demands for the repudiation of Rakosi. It was further encouraged by the joint Soviet-Yugoslav declaration of 20 June asserting that "the roads of Socialist development are different in different countries and conditions" to believe that the Kremlin might really permit more liberal policies in Hungary.

During the spring, the opposition led by the writers broadened to include intellectuals, students, ex-partisans and numerous military officers. Intensified government economy measures resulting in the dismissal of many government officials also contributed to throwing these individuals into the pro-Nagy opposition centered in the Petofi Club.

a. Rakosi Seeks to Conform with the Soviet Congress Line: Confronted with mounting demands for his removal, Rakosi sought to convince the opposition that he was in fact complying with the directives of the Soviet congress. His report to the central committee's March meeting reflects this attempt to tailor the general line of policy, which continued to be on the March resolution of 1955 while encouraging greater freedom of criticism and stepping up the rehabilitation of imprisoned individuals. The effect of this partial "thaw" was considerably marred by his repeated admonitions that Communist discipline must be maintained.

On 27 March, Rakosi fell in line with Soviet policies toward Yugoslavia by publicly rehabilitating Laszlo Rajk and performing self-criticism for his execution. The effect of this move was undercut by an assertion made in Szabad Nep the same day that because Hungary was in a transitional state between capitalism and socialism the "class enemy" in Hungary was stronger than in the Soviet Union and repressive measures against regime enemies were necessary.

b. The Second Writers Revolt: Rakosi's failure to implement a bold program based on what optimistic Hungarian party members believed was the program of the 20th party congress evoked heightened opposition among members of the Writers Club who spearheaded the opposition. The writers organ Irodalmi Ujsag promptly retorted on 24 March with an attack on "dogmatisms closely connected with the cult of personality" and political control based on "pretensions of infallibility by party and state organizations." New recruits began to join the insurgent writers during March and April. Their attitude was well expressed by Tibor Tardos in a 7 April article in Irodalmi Ujsag. Referring to his own past acquiescence in crimes committed in the name of party discipline, he wrote:

> Yet the time came when we had discarded respect for human life...and had sacrificed it to our faith /in Communism/. We, who sometime long ago in our youth had sworn by the tremendous power of thought, now stood with crystal-clear hearts but with empty heads, like amphorae in the glass cabinet of a museum. And these amphorae nodded their consent to everything.

c. Rakosi Attempts to Answer His Critics: Rakosi sought to answer his critics by convincing them that he himself had thoroughly reformed, that the genuine policies of the Soviet congress were being carried out under his direction and by demonstrating the need for Communist discipline. It nevertheless remained clear that Rakosi remained a Stalinist in economic theory and predisposition to authoritarian methods. This emerges clearly in his major address of the spring, made to Budapest party activists on 18 May. Rakosi declared that no fewer than 9,000 persons had been amnestied since the preceding November and criminal proceedings had been quashed against 11,000 others. He performed humiliating self-criticism. He promised that coercion would be played down. But he nettled his audience by reverting to self-justification and demands for "discipline." It was now apparent to most observers that Rakosi had outlived his usefulness.

d. The Petofi Club: In this situation, the decisive center of organized opposition to Rakosi became the Petofi Club in Budapest. From the end of May, meetings organized under the sponsorship of the youth organization (DISZ) were transformed by party dissidents into

full-scale demonstrations against Rakosi during which representatives of many sectors of Hungarian society scathingly attacked the major evils of the past years and even unearthed party quarrels of the thirties. This freedom of debate was encouraged by Szabad Nep which as late as the third week in June characterized the Petofi Club as a "valuable forum."

The Rajk affair was a favorite stick to beat the regime. For example, one dissident charged: "In 1949 Rakosi said Rajk was a Titoist; in 1955 he said he was a provocateur; this year he calls him comrade." At another meeting, Mrs. Julia Rajk, widow of the national Communist, evoked tremendous applause from a capacity audience which included many military officers, with bitter charges that her husband had been murdered and demands for punishment of his murderers.

By the end of June, attacks on Rakosi at Petofi Club meetings reached a climax with shouts: "Down with the skin-haired fathead!"

e. Attack on Soviet Party Disciplining of Writers: The increasing self-assurance and radicalism of insurgent writers finally reached the stage of attacking the suppression of creative thought by authorities of the CPSU. In early June, in answer to an article by a Soviet writer printed in Irodalmi Ujsag, organ of the Writers Club, some twenty Hungarian writers drafted a reply challenging the right of the party to dictate themes. Their attitude toward the Hungarian regime was even more violent. By the end of June the Writers Association refused even to conduct discussions with Hungarian party officials until the central committee resolution of December 1955 had been withdrawn.

7. Continued Vacillation by the Kremlin

The Kremlin still vacillated on the problem of party leadership in Hungary. In early June ex-Cominform chief M. A. Suslov made a week-long visit to Budapest, ostensibly on vacation, to survey the situation. During this visit, he held private conversations with Imre Nagy and Janos Kadar. But when Suslov left Hungary without making any overt move, the evidence that the Kremlin might be considering a successor to Rakosi stimulated the opposition into renewed vehemence.

Two weeks later (23 June), Rakosi, and probably Gero and Hegedus went to Moscow for undisclosed reasons, following Tito's

triumphant visit to Moscow. Kadar was also said to be in the Soviet capital at this time. It appeared that the Kremlin still considered Rakosi indispensable.

8. Rakosi Reverts to Harsh Tactics

Developments in the Satellites reached fever-heat in the last week in June. In Poland, the Poznan riots of 28 June coincided almost exactly with the most extreme anti-regime demonstrations at the Petofi Club in Hungary. As reported by Politika in Belgrade, this 27 June demonstration lasted nine hours, during which the full extent of party and popular hostility to the regime became apparent to the participants and to the regime. The government spokesmen, Marton Horvath and Zoltan Vas were shouted down when they attempted to defend Rakosi's policies. As a climax, the demonstrators shouted: "Down with the regime! Long live Imre Nagy!"

This demonstration evoked immediate repressive measures by the regime. Rakosi called a special session of the central committee on 30 June and forced through a harsh resolution--reportedly seen by only a few members--denouncing "anti-party manifestations" at the Petofi Club and calling on the party central control commission to expel the ringleaders of the opposition, Tibor Tardos and Tibor Dery. The following day Szabad Nep published the central committee resolution and launched a campaign against "right-wing deviation," raised the cry of "vigilance" and denounced the Petofi Club as a hotbed of dissension. "These debates were attended not only by honest people who love the party," Szabad Nep editorialized on 3 July, "but by individuals who oppose the party.... Opportunist, harmful and anti-party views were expressed by those who still maintain close and sympathetic contact with Imre Nagy, who has been expelled from the party because of his anti-Marxist views, his hostility to the party and his factionalism."

Rakosi appears to have been trapped between the growing violence of the opposition and Kremlin directives to maintain a show of moderation. In this dilemma, he returned to Moscow about 7 July. He returned to Budapest with the obvious intention of implementing very strong measures to cope with unrest. Possibly he received encouragement for a harsher policy from the authoritative Pravda editorial of 16 July which reaffirmed the "unshakable solidarity of the socialist camp," attacked the idea of national Communism, condemned the Petofi Club demonstrations and appeared to throw Soviet support behind leaders who wished to reimpose discipline on insurgents.

9. The Fall of Rakosi

The drastic measures envisaged by Rakosi to crush opposition apparently alarmed the Kremlin, which dispatched Mikoyan to Hungary to investigate the situation. Mikoyan reportedly arrived on 14 July, rejected Rakosi's proposal for the arrest of some 400 persons, including some forty writers and possibly Imre Nagy, and apparently was sustained in his verdict by Khrushchev. It strongly appears that Rakosi was forced to resign as party chief when his plans for coping with the opposition were rejected. Rakosi's subsequent references to his guilt of "cult of personality" suggests that Mikoyan may have lectured him on the subject during his visit to Budapest.

At the meeting of the central committee (18-21 July), Rakosi resigned as first secretary of the Hungarian Workers Party. In his letter of resignation, he confessed: "The bulk and effect of mistakes in the fields of personality cult and socialist legality were greater than I thought...and the harm done to our party in consequence of these mistakes was much more serious than I thought originally."

After thirty-six years as a major leader of the Hungarian Communist party, Rakosi--evidently a broken man--departed for the Soviet Union.

10. Gero as Party Chief

At this juncture, the Kremlin by a bold strike--the full rehabilitation of Imre Nagy and the promotion of Janos Kadar to leadership of the party--might have saved the scraps of prestige still remaining to the Hungarian party and convinced the Hungarian people that a genuine de-Stalinization program was in sight. Instead, Mikoyan designated Gero as first secretary of the Hungarian party. By this move, which outraged the liberals and dissatisfied the moderates, he perpetuated the schism in the party leadership and laid the groundwork for revolution. Gero, the right-hand man of Rakosi in past years was known as a tactless though hard driving doctrinaire with little sympathy for Hungarian national aspirations.

An important place was nevertheless given to the moderate element. Janos Kadar, Gyorgy Marosan, and Karoly Kiss were admitted to the political committee and Gyula Kallai was elected to the central committee. The balance of power remained with Stalinists, however. The appointment of Jozsef Revai, well-known as spokesman for the dictatorship of the proletariat, also appeared to stregthen the Stalinist faction, although Revai had past connections with the Kadar group.

Gero nevertheless set out to give the appearance of greater liberalization without relaxation of vigilance. Warning that "it would be a very grave mistake if we failed to draw the necessary conclusions from the provocation in Poznan in our own country," he assured the party in his 18 July speech accepting the post of first secretary that a "large-scale process of democratization" would take place in Hungary.*

11. The Gero Policies

In line with this promise, the party leadership began to implement a policy of picemeal de-Stalinization. The central committee approved the disgrace of Mihaly Farkas and set in motion changes in the defense establishment. Farkas was reduced to the rank of private. Other high political officers were replaced at this time. It appeared that the new central committee was intent upon implementing de-Stalinization measures at a much faster rate than heretofore--and probably at a faster rate than its nominal leader, Gero.

The regime also took steps to cope with the long-unsolved problems of the Hungarian economy or at least to institute a general examination of the economic policies of Hungary prior

* The following were full members of the new politburo: Revai, Kadar, Kiss, Morosan, Acs, Hidas, Hegedus, Szalai, Istvan Kovacs, Apro; and alternate members: Bata and Mekis. All except Kadar, Marosan, Revai and Kiss had belonged to the previous political committee under Rakosi.

to the unveiling of the long-deferred Second Five Year Plan. There were no indications, however, that Gero himself had evolved economic policies which could answer the crying needs of the people.

In an effort to restore "unity" in the central committee and regain the support of the insurgent intellectualist elements, the party leadership directed overtures toward the "outcast" writers and the Nagy wing of the party. A central committee resolution published on 30 July took the initial step by promising concessions. In comment on this resolution, Szabad Nep editor Marton Horvath on 12 August admitted: "Never before in the history of the Hungarian party have the intellectuals shown such unanimity in opposing the party's management." By blaming this situation to a large degree on Rakosi's misdeeds, the party left the door open to the rehabilitation of the "outcasts." It remained to be seen whether the attempt to make Rakosi the scapegoat for past evils would be any more successful than Rakosi's own effort to foist the blame on Gabor Peter.

Indications that party leaders were prepared to bargain had the consequence of encouraging the appetite of the opposition and thus forcing the regime to go beyond its original intentions. Moreover, indications that the Kremlin itself was vacillating between a crackdown on Polish insurgents and continued encouragement of the "thaw" spurred the Hungarians to take a bolder course. On the other hand, Gero's continued stress on doctrinaire considerations kept his opponents alive to the possibility that a return to harsh measures might occur at any time, while increasing symptoms of tougher Soviet policies toward Yugoslavia made them fear such a reversal might be fast approaching. These developments combined to make the next three months a period in which hope and fear combined to produce reckless daring among the leaders of the Hungarian opposition.

12. The "Moderate Nationalist" Position

Janos Kadar, during the three months before the revolution, came to the front as the representative of Communist middle-of-the-road tendencies. Free of the taint of "Stalinism," he stood between the fundamentally doctrinaire position of Gero and the "liberal" stand of the Nagy adherents. This position appears to have been endorsed by the Kremlin, judging from the reported remark of the Soviet ambassador that he "liked Kadar very much," and the allegation that Mikoyan had given his support to Kadar. In his first major political speech, made to miners in the north Hungarian industrial area on 12 August,

Kadar supported the line that Rakosi's crimes had caused the exaggeration of New Course tendencies, but he appeared to take a slightly more liberal view of the internal Hungarian problems than Gero. Significantly, he asserted: "You must not be afraid of listening to the opinions expressed by non-party workers and the PPF and of hearing from time to time views which are neither Marxist nor Communist." As a sign of his increasing stature in the party, Kadar was chosen to head the delegation sent to represent Hungary at the congress of the Chinese Communist party.*

To support the more moderate line, Gyorgy Marosan also took a prominent role during the pre-revolutionary period. As a former left-wing Social Democrat, Marosan was counted on to exercise influence over the dangerously antagonized industrial working class. This line was spelled out by Marosan in Szabad Nep on 19 August when he declared: "Life has belied the erroneous view which holds that there are irreconcilable differences between Socialists and Communists."

13. Demands of the Nagy Faction

The strong pro-Nagy element spearheaded by liberal writers now revealed that its goals were full rehabilitation of Nagy and liberals who had supported him. They also demanded--and received--full freedom of debate in the Petofi Club. Their further objectives of political and economic liberalization and participation in the government became apparent with the passage of time. Taken in the context of Nagy's known opinions

* He left Budapest about 9 September and returned one month later. Zoltan Szanto and Istvan Hidas accompanied him. All three thus were absent from Hungary during the critical period of September and early October.

on the relative place of agriculture and heavy industry in the economy and demands for full intellectual freedom voiced by his adherents, the Nagy program by mid-September implicitly called into question basic Communist doctrines and ties with the Soviet Union.

It appears probable, nevertheless, that moderate elements in the central committee were giving strong support to Nagy's bid for leadership in the government, and that, in fact, a coalition of moderates and liberals had come into existence. The common interest of both factions lay in their demand for political and economic policies suitable for Hungary, even at the expense of weakening ties with the Soviet Union.

14. The Yugoslav Factor

The rapprochement of the Hungarian party with the Yugoslav Communists, promised by Gero in his 18 July speech, hung fire until mid-October.* It is true that the letter of apology for "slanders" against Tito was by far the strongest sent by any Bloc

* The central committee resolution published on 23 July defined the question of permitted variations in socialism in an ambiguous fashion that would cover all eventualities:

> Under specific Hungarian conditions of building socialism, the party...does not lose sight for a moment of the fact that it is ceaselessly strengthening the unity of the socialist camp, its relations with the Soviet Union, the countries of the socialist camp and socialist working class movements throughout the world. For this reason, the party once again intensified the struggle against manifestations of nationalism, chauvinism and anti-Semitism... The party is strengthening its ties with the CPSU because both the CPSU and the HWP hold identical views on every ideological question--in the assessment of the international situation and the perspectives of socialism.

party. Moreover, the appointment of Ferenc Munnich, ex-ambassador to the Soviet Union, as ambassador to Yugoslavia on 4 August placed in Belgrade an individual of sufficient stature and past connections with Tito to handle the delicate relations. Nonetheless, the actual meeting of leaders of the Hungarian regime with Tito was long delayed. The cooling of Soviet-Yugoslav relations, reflected in the 3 September circular letter from the CPSU central committee to Satellite parties acted as a damper to closer rapprochement. This circular warned the Satellite central committees against adopting Yugoslav practices and instead, instructed them to look to the Soviet party for their example. Thereafter, the dramatic conversations of Khrushchev and Tito at Brioni and Yalta gave impetus to Hungarian elements favoring increased liberalization.

Resumption of relations became closely tied to the rehabilitation of Imre Nagy, a symbol of genuine liberalization of Communist practices. Negotiations on both subjects appear to have been conducted by Gero at conferences with Tito and Khrushchev at Yalta (1 October).* When the Hungarian delegation led by Gero and including Kadar, Kovacs, Apro and Hegedus finally left for Belgrade on 14 October, Nagy's readmission to the party was announced simultaneously in Budapest. At this point, however, the question of Yugoslav relations was secondary to dramatic internal developments in Hungary.

15. The Eve of the Revolution

Decisive steps to de-Stalinize the Hungarian regime were taken in early October while Gero and other top party leaders were absent in the Soviet Union. These included the rehabilitation of Imre Nagy, forecast in his defiant letter of 4 October to the central committee announcing that he submitted to party discipline but refused to make a further statement until full and free discussion was permitted. On the same day, Istvan Kovacs threatened to remove all individuals who would not adjust to the liberalized party line. Concurrently high-level changes were effected in the Ministry of Defense. The following day, Vladimir Farkas was arrested.

* Note that Gero left for the Soviet Union on 8 September and remained there for one month. He therefore was absent from Hungary during the critical period.

On 6 October, a startling outburst of nationalist sentiments occurred when, under government auspices, the remains of Laszlo Rajk were solemnly reinterred in the national cemetery. The ceremony turned into a mammoth demonstration for Imre Nagy. This occurred on a holiday commemorating the execution of Hungarian generals as a result of the Russian invasion to crush the Hungarian revolution of 1848-49. The dangerous implications of such a demonstration must have been fully apparent to those who staged it.

Budapest newspapers linked the demonstration with the continued tenure of power by Stalinists, i.e. Gero and his associates. The trade union organ spelled out the warning: "History and the people have already held a retrial. At this trial, those who caused their death are accused."

From this point forward, the party ceased to be important; the Hungarian nation took over command of events.

16. The Polish Example

The successful defiance by the Poles of the Soviet Communists stirred the rising flames of Hungarian nationalism. The purge of Hilary Minc, the counterpart of Erno Gero as economic czar during the Stalinist period, evoked the following comment from the Budapest trade union newspaper Nepszava: "Our Polish comrades do not hesitate to draw the necessary conclusions without regard to persons involved, in removing obstacles to democratization." The bold challenge by Gomulka to Khrushchev on 19 October set the example for the Nagy faction in Hungary and led directly to the national demonstration of 23 October which sparked the revolution.

17. Nagy and Kadar Take Over

The climax followed rapidly. On 23 October, a student demonstration honoring the Poles for their successful resistance to the Kremlin developed into a full-scale nationalist manifestation which demanded the withdrawal of Soviet troops, the restoration of Imre Nagy to the premiership, a new government, free elections and the return of the multi-party system of government. Rioting broke out and continued into the following day. Fighting began when AVH troops fired on the demonstrators and Soviet troops stationed in Budapest entered into action to support the security forces. The revolution had begun.

Confronted with this crisis, the party central committee and politburo were called into hasty session on the night of 23-24 October. Panicky party leaders--presumably Gero--appealed for Soviet aid against the revolutionaries on the basis of the Warsaw pact. During the stormy all-night session seven Stalinists were thrown out of the political committee (Hidas, Mekis, Kovacs, Revai, Acs, Bata and Piros) and replaced by two moderates (Szanto and Kobol) and one Nagyist, Losonczi. In the early morning hours, Nagy was chosen premier. The following day--25 October--with the fighting mounting in violence, Erno Gero was deposed as party first secretary and Janos Kadar elected in his place. The change in leadership came far too late to affect events. The revolution continued in spite of the party leadership.

POSTLUDE

DESTRUCTION OF THE HUNGARIAN WORKERS PARTY

(23 October - 4 November 1956)

The Hungarian national revolution of 23 October-4 November destroyed the hard core leadership and subordinate organization of the Hungarian Workers Party, physically destroyed the old state security apparatus and proclaimed a neutralized Hungary independent of Moscow. The rising was national in character, anti-Communist and anti-Soviet, although Communist formations and discipline contributed to its initial success. Many partisans and underground fighters who had aided Soviet armies in World War II (e.g. Colonel Pal Maleter and Major General Kovacs) took arms against the Soviet troops. The cadres of the youth organization formed the revolutionary committees of youth that bore the brunt of the fighting.

1. Initial Co-operation of Liberals and Moderates in Support of Revolution

The party leaders attempted in vain to control events. At first, the moderates and liberals of the Hungarian party worked together for reform and against the Stalinists. The revolutionary coalition in the central committee on 26 October called for the formation of a new government on the basis of "the broadest national foundations" which would initiate negotiations with the Soviet Union to settle the future relationship of the two countries. The resolution further called for the withdrawal of Soviet troops after the restoration of order. It underlined the intention of the central committee and government to defend the people's democracy, i.e., the Communist regime, and it asserted that opponents of the regime would be "annihilated without mercy."

In line with this policy, a seven-man committee was set up to form a new party--the Hungarian Socialist Workers Party--which would stand for "national independence and friendship with all countries." This joint committee included Nagy and his two closest adherents, Losonczi and Donath, the old Bolsheviks" Gyorgy Lukacs and Zoltan Szanto and, representing the moderates, Kadar.

2. Increasingly Revolutionary Character of Nagy Government

In the new government of 27 October, Nagy again held the premiership. The "moderate" Ferenc Munnich, former ambassador to Yugoslavia, took over the critical post of minister of interior, thus symbolizing the union of the remaining wings of the party.

Nagy from the outset took a more extreme position than the moderates. On 28 October he declared that the bloody fighting between revolutionaries and Soviet and AVH forces was due to "mistakes and crimes" of the past ten years, and denied that counterrevolutionary elements were behind the insurrection. He acquiesced in the destruction of the one-party system of government, the reformation of long-dissolved "bourgeois" parties and, on 3 November, the organization of a cabinet in which there were only two Communists--himself and his adherent Geza Losonczi. He assented to the suspension of collectivization (28 October) and abolition of the crop collection system (30 October). He promised free elections, the formation of workers' management councils which had been set up throughout Hungary. He permitted the revolutionary reorganization of the Defense Ministry and the appointment of revolutionaries (Maleter and Kovacs) and ex-prisoners (e.g., Bela Kiraly) to top military posts. On 1 November, presumably under the influence of extreme revolutionaries and faced with the build-up of Soviet armies, Nagy took the extreme step of proclaiming Hungary's withdrawal from the Warsaw pact and asking for the neutralization of Hungary under the protection of the United Nations. In an appeal to all Hungarians, he declared that the people of Hungary "desire the consolidation and further development of the achievements of the national revolution without joining any power blocs."

3. The "Moderates" Sabotage the Revolution

The "moderate nationalists" went along with the revolution up to 2 November despite obvious misgivings. Kadar had repeatedly warned against the rise of "counterrevolutionary elements," and other moderates echoed his fears. The threat to Communism and the Soviet alliance implicit in Nagy's increasingly revolutionary moves led to their betrayal of the revolution. Possibly under the influence of a second visit by Mikoyan and Suslov on 1 November, Kadar and Munnich took steps to form a new government.

On 4 November, under protection of Soviet troops holding the important railroad junction of Szolnok, Kadar announced the formation of a "Revolutionary Workers' and Peasants' Government" which included Ferenc Munnich as minister of the combined defense and security forces and Gyorgy Marosan as minister of state. Several discredited "moderates" filled the remaining posts in the small cabinet (Imre Horvath, Istvan Kossa, Antal Apro, Imre Dogei and Sandor Ronai). This government appealed for Soviet aid against the revolution, thus giving the legal pretense for the Soviet reconquest of Hungary.

4. Fate of Nagy and His Adherents

As Soviet armies moved into action on 4 November, Nagy broadcast a despairing appeal for aid "to the Hungarian people and the world." As Hungarians fought advancing Russian tanks, Nagy and his closest associates fled to the Yugoslav embassy for protection. The were later surrendered by the Yugoslavs on the basis of an agreement with the Kadar government calling for their safety (21 November). Soviet troops violated the understanding and carried Nagy and members of the group off to Rumania where they presumably remain pending future Soviet action.*

Soviet forces fought their way into Budapest against desperate resistance; "complete liquidation of the counter-revolution was under way."

5. Fate of the Stalinists

Of the former top Muscovites, Rakosi and Gero are believed to be in the Soviet Union. The Kadar regime has stigmatized them as "infamous leaders" and the trade-union newspaper has called for their trial for "crimes committed against the Hungarian people." Their fate will depend on the Kremlin. Mihaly and Vladimir Farkas and "many high-ranking officers of the AVH" are in prison with Gabor Peter and Gyula Decsi while preparations for their trial are being made. Former high-level members of the Rakosi-Gero clique who, like Rudolf Foldvari, supported the revolution are now termed "political chameleons and careerists." Twelve high-ranking members of the clique were

* The following individuals took refuge in the Yugoslav embassy and left it under terms of the 21 November agreement: Imre Nagy, Geza Losonczi, Ferenc Janosi, Ferenc Donath, Sandor Haraszti, Szilard Ujhely, Miklos Vasarhelyi, Julia (Mrs. Laszlo) Rajk, Janos Szilagy and Gyorgy Fazekas. The following also took temporary refuge there and are presumably covered by the same agreement: Zoltan Szanto, Gyorgy Lukacs, Zoltan Vas, Peter Erdes and Ferenc Nador. The communiqué of the Yugoslav State Secretariat for Foreign Affairs stated that members of Nagy's government first approached the Yugoslavs on 2 November.

formally deprived of their positions by the government.* Lesser individuals have been ordered to return to the occupations they held before their rise in the party.

6. The Hungarian Socialist Workers Party

The present Hungarian Socialist Workers Party headed by Kadar represents the last fragments of the center group of the old Hungarian Workers Party which once numbered one million members and now claims less than one hundred thousand. Its leadership is composed of individuals who like Kadar were imprisoned by Rakosi or like Munnich were in the background during the Stalinist era. Its second-level leadership consists of a few hold-overs left alive and in the country by the backwash of de-Stalinization and revolution. Completely discredited by its resort to violence against Hungarian workers which it ostensibly represents, the party of Kadar and Munnich, torn by dissension, will be condemned to act as the Kremlin dictates. Kadar thus finds himself in the same position as Rakosi--a dictator dependent upon Soviet troops for support--but without the carefully trained Muscovite subordinates or well-integrated party machine of Rakosi and completely without the optimism that surrounded the early days of Communist domination of Hungary.

* The Stalinists dismissed were: Erzsebet Andics, Lajos Acs, Istvan Bata, Andor Berei, Andras Hegedus, Istvan Hidas, Erno Gero, Istvan Kovacs, Bela Szalai, Laszlo Piros, Bela Veg and Gyorgy Non.