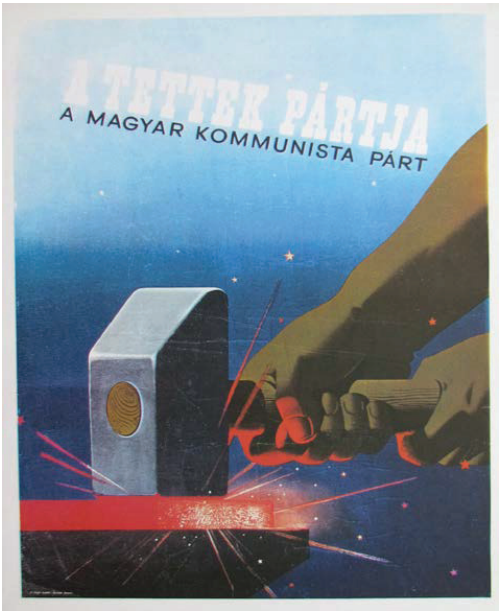
No. 33

TRONDHEIM STUDIES
ON EAST EUROPEAN CULTURES & SOCIETIES

ALFRED J. RIEBER



SALAMI TACTICS REVISITED
HUNGARIAN COMMUNISTS ON THE ROAD TO POWER

March 2013

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ISBN 978-82-995792-9-2
ISSN 1501-6684

Trondheim Studies on East European Cultures and Societies

Editors: **György Péteri** and **Sabrina P. Ramet**
Editorial Board: Trond Berge, Tanja Ellingsen, Knut Andreas Grimstad, Arne Halvorsen

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By

Alfred J. Rieber

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PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The genesis of this work goes back farther than most and tracing it would end up becoming a summary of my scholarly life. To be brief, my interest in Soviet foreign policy and its relations to foreign communist parties was inspired by Philip E. Mosely, my mentor at the Russian Institute (now the Harriman Institute) at Columbia University. In his seminar on Soviet foreign policy and the coming of the Cold War, I began to explore the activities of the French Communist Party (PCF) during the Resistance and immediate post-war years. In his view, the inaccessibility of the Soviet archives required an indirect approach to an understanding of Soviet foreign policy during the wartime and post war years through an analysis of a large and important west European communist party. His assumption was that despite the dissolution of the Comintern in 1943, the policy of the PCF would remain aligned with the aims of Soviet foreign policy; during the war the general party line would be relayed by radio broadcasts *en plein air* dictating the editorials of *Pravda* and probably also through the occasional courier. At the end of the war normal contacts would be renewed and any deviations corrected. Thus, the PCF clandestine and after the liberation the free press would present abundant material for an analysis taken together with a reading of the Soviet press. In addition, it would be possible to interview individuals in France who had worked with the Communists during the resistance under particularly close terms and possibly to gain access to private archives. A year in Paris in 1955-56 conducting research supported by the Ford Foundation proved most of his

assumptions to have been correct.

My dissertation was then published as *Stalin and the French Communist Party, 1941-1948.* My main thesis was that during the war the PCF had adopted the strongly nationalist propaganda line advocated by Moscow, but at the Liberation despite the very strong position they occupied in the Resistance had not attempted to establish local soviets or to take power. Instead they had prepared in the clandestine conditions of the Resistance to build the foundations for constructing a popular democracy in France. I must confess that my interpretation did not gain many adherents. The French thought I was seeing communist plots under every bed and the Americans thought I had failed to see that the Communists were already in the bed.

However, the year in France had also led to two unexpected openings, the full consequences of which I could not have anticipated. The first was a month's trip to the Soviet Union funded by the Ford Foundation which allowed me to work in the Lenin Library reading dissertations and making a few contacts that would later prove invaluable over decades in return trips. Second, on the way back from Moscow I made a transit stop in Budapest in January 1956 which kindled my interest in Hungary, gave me additional insights into communist politics in a country where a popular democracy had been established under very different conditions than prevailed in France and yet after a period of coalition politics that was very similar to that in France. I turned away from these openings when I returned to the Soviet Union on the first year of the cultural exchange in 1958-59. Clearly, access to archives on Soviet foreign policy was out of the question. Even access to the archives of the Foreign Ministry of Imperial Russia were denied. My interest shifted to other topics in nineteenth century Russian history where archives were open and

abundant. These occupied me for many years.

When it became possible after 1990 to work in Soviet archives, I returned to Moscow and to the topic of my youth. I was interested to find evidence that might confirm my interpretation of communist politics during and after the war. The first file I opened at the former Archive of the All Union Communist Party, renamed *Rossiiskii tsentr khraneniia i izucheniia dokumentov noveishei istorii* (RTsKhIDNI) subsequently again renamed *Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi arkhiv sotsial'no-politicheskoi istorii* (RGASPI) was fond 17 *Otdel mezhdunarodnoi informatsii TsK VKP*. It contained over 1200 items dealing with the communist parties. Only a fraction had then been declassified. In addition, I gained access to the Zhdanov papers, fond 77, opis' 3. I was also able to expand the resource base by working in the *Arkhiv vneshnei politiki Rossiiskoi Federatsii. Ministerstvo Inostrannykh del* (AVP).[1] My aim was to collect material dealing with the communist parties of Eastern Europe with a new project in mind: to expand the history of the Cold War by looking from the ground up, that is from the perspective of the local communist parties, as well as from the diplomatic and political heights of the Soviet, British and American policy makers. That project has occupied me to the present.

At the same time, beginning in 1995 I accepted the position as head of the History Department at the Central European University in Budapest. This unique institution with its international faculty and student body drawn mainly from the countries of the post-Soviet space expanded my intellectual horizons and enriched my understanding of the entire postwar period in Eastern, Central and Southeastern Europe, the three geographical areas which were designed to constitute the framework for the doctoral program at CEU.

The research and writing of the on-going project of which this monograph is

only a part was supported by the National Council for Soviet and East European Research, the International Research and Exchanges Board (IREX) and the Central European University Foundation, Budapest. The Open Society Institute of the Soros Foundation also provided a subsidy that made possible the publication of the invaluable two volume collection of documents *Vostochnaia Evropa v dokumentakh rossiiskikh arkhivov, 1944-48 and 1949-53* (Moscow, Sibirskii khronograf, 1997 and 1998). I wish to thank the staff of RGASPI and Tatiana Volokitina of the Institut slavianovedeniia i balkanistiki of the Academy of Sciences for advice, assistance and encouragement over a decade. I am also grateful to Katalin Zalai, Director of the Archives of the Institute of Political History and Trade Unions (*Politikatörténeti Intézet Levéltára*) in Budapest for making available to me Varga's letter to Zhdanov. I am very much indebted to Csaba Békés, Peter Kenez, György Péteri, István Rév and Balázs Szalontai for their critical reading and comments on this essay. They raised important problems and saved me from several errors, although our interpretations did not always mesh. I am of course responsible for any mistakes that may remain.

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INTRODUCTION

In 1952 the Hungarian Communist leader, Mátyás Rákosi boastfully attributed the successful Communist rise to power in Hungary to the judicious application of "salami tactics." He defined this as a step-by-step approach "to slice off, to cut up [bit by bit] the reactionary forces skulking in the Small Holder's Party which had won a majority in the election of 1945, the freest in Hungarian history until 1990.[2] Since then the metaphor has become enshrined in the vocabulary of accounts on the origins of the Cold War. Like most lasting metaphors in politics, it owes its survival to its vivid, simple and not altogether untruthful encapsulation of a complex phenomenon. As an explanatory device it raises questions on two levels. First, it implies a well-planned, deliberate and consistent policy; second, it lacks a historical dimension, omits other domestic political actors, ignores the social structure and the socio-psychological atmosphere in postwar Hungary. The present essay is an attempt to place "salami tactics" in the broader context framed by these factors.

The question of how Hungary "went Communist" is also closely linked to two issues extending beyond the borders of Hungary. The first is the origins of the Cold War and the second is the aims of Soviet or, to be more precise, Stalin's foreign policy in East Central Europe during and after World War II. Was the Communist take over in Hungary a cause or an effect of the breakdown in the wartime alliance between the Soviet Union and the Western democracies? Did Stalin have a long range plan to sovietize Hungary and the rest of East Central Europe? To what extent was the Communist victory the result of direct Soviet intervention? How important in determining the outcome was the internal struggle for power?

In attempting to shed light on these questions this essay seeks to pursue three lines of inquiry. First, to demonstrate how a lost war, dismemberment and revolution had a distorting effect on the evolution of Hungarian parliamentary politics in the inter-war period; second to explore the shifts in Soviet "policies of liberation" toward Hungary during the final phase of World War II and the early postwar years; and third to analyze the complexities of inter-party as well as intra-party Communist politics during the interwar and post war periods. What has appeared to many observers as well-planned, coordinated march to power designed in Moscow and carried out faithfully by its communist minions in Hungary turns out to be more a much more complex process. Although this is not the place to make extended comparisons with other communist take- overs, it should be clear that the case of Hungary possessed its distinctive indeed unique aspects. Without taking these into consideration the uprising of 1956 is inexplicable as is the exit from communism in 1989. A thorough investigation of these connections, important as they are, lie outside the scope of the present study. It will be enough for the time being to lay the foundations here.

CHAPTER 1

DEFEAT AND REVISIONISM

The break-up of the Habsburg Monarchy in 1918 reduced Hungary from a partner in imperial rule to a small, truncated state. No country emerged from World War I more deeply scarred. The shock of defeat had been as great as in Germany. The army and people had thrown themselves wholeheartedly into the fight against the country's traditional enemies, the Slavs and the Rumanians. Following the military collapse of the Dual Monarchy, powerful aftershocks reverberated throughout Hungary. Like Russia it was wracked by civil war in 1919 accompanied by foreign intervention. New or enlarged and hostile successor states — Czechoslovakia, Romania and Yugoslavia — occupied the greater part of its former territory, leaving over three million Hungarians outside the borders of post war Hungary. The new frontiers sanctioned by the Treaty of Trianon in 1920 not only violated the Wilsonian principle of national self-determination but were economically irrational, cutting across transportation routes and separating natural resources from processing plants. The country never fully recovered politically or psychologically from its devastating effects. The political legacy of these traumas in the 1920s was a double schism in Hungarian society. At one level there was the division between the liberal-social democratic left and the nationalist Christian right, leaving only a small liberal center; at another level and along different social lines, there was a split between the Legitimists who favored a legal continuity of the Habsburg House in the symbolic form of the regency and the Free Electors who rejected Habsburg claims under any form. The social legacy was an upsurge of anti-Semitism spurred by the large Jewish representation in the brief extreme left wing government of 1919. These splits evolved in more extremist directions in the 1930s and again after the war reflecting the profoundly fragmented, yet highly polarized

and volatile character of Hungarian politics.[3]

There was, however, one constant — the cult of revisionism. From 1920 until well after the Communists takeover in 1948 with traces to the present day, a deep emotional attachment to the idea of revising the Treaty of Trianon was shared by all the political factions from the extreme right to the extreme left. But the right wing in Hungary attempted to blame the territorial losses on the left for its role in the anti-war movement of 1918 and in the revolution of 1919 which had weakened the state and alienated the victorious Entente powers. To be sure, the multiple plans for redrawing the frontiers drew upon different principles, ranging from the historic to ethnic. But the cult itself became embedded in official propaganda, popular culture and the interwar educational system. The Frontier Readjustment League, founded in 1927, was only the largest and most active of the public organizations dedicated to the revisionist cause.[4]

The most ardent advocates of revisionism were the 350,000-400,000 Hungarian refugees who had fled or been driven from the borderlands of Greater Hungary following the collapse of the Monarchy. Impoverished and demoralized, they became easy prey for extremist groups. They were conspicuous among every extreme right wing group in the post-Trianon period. In 1919-21 they lined up with the two major right wing parties and formed a number of secret societies united only by their hostility to the peace settlement and to the "Jewish Bolsheviks" whom they blamed for the loss of their homes, property and professions. They were gradually absorbed into the body politic but remained attached to the cause of revisionism. They were strongly represented in the state administration throughout the twenties and into the thirties.[5]

Revisionism was the compelling and consistent aim of Hungarian foreign policy in the twenties, thirties, and it will be argued later, in the forties as well. One of the foremost partisans of revisionism was a former landowner from the lost territory of Transylvania and

a conservative statesman, Count István Bethlen, who served as prime minister from 1921-1931. In the prewar era, he had been a staunch supporter of strengthening the position of ethnic Hungarians in Transylvania (including the Szeklers in the southeast corner) and the Banat against the growing economic and political pressure from the local Romanian and Serbian inhabitants. He resisted any concessions to the Romanian minority despite the growing risk of alienating Romania from the Triple Alliance. In defending the status quo, he argued that "we are convinced that because of the stifling embrace of the Slavic sea to the north and south of us, the Hungarian and Romanian race have to rely on each other."[6]

In the post war period, as all Hungarian politicians realized, revisionism carried with it a dangerous bacillus. As Prime Minister Bethlen frankly acknowledged: "*The fourth founding of the homeland [a revision of Trianon] cannot be expected to occur with external assistance only* as unfortunately so many of us want to make us believe. If we expect it we should recall the lessons learned after we were liberated from the Turkish yoke only to find that foreign assistance resulted in foreign captivity."[7] Bethlen had put his finger on the central problem of Hungary's foreign policy: the problem of the frontiers was indissolubly connected to the policies of its neighbors toward their Hungarian minorities and the interests of the Great Powers.

On the eve of the First World War, non-native Hungarian speakers of Greater Hungary excluding Croatia comprised just over forty-five percent of the total population roughly distributed in the border areas. Sole beneficiaries of the compromise with the Austrian Germans in 1867, the Magyars had pursued a policy of assimilation that steadily eroded the national identities of substantial elements in the non-Hungarian population, especially the Slovaks. These gains had been achieved at a cost of alienating other national groups, especially the Romanians in Transylvania and the Serbs in Banat and Voevodina. Among the non-Hungarian national groups, the Germans (Swabians) and Jews

displayed the highest level of loyalty to the government. In the post-Trianon world, approximately a quarter of the pre war population of Magyars (3.2 million) languished unhappily as minorities under the rule of Rumanians, Czechoslovaks, Poles, Yugoslavs, Austrians and Italians. With such enemies Hungary desperately needed friends. In the twenties, there were no serious takers. Backed by France the Little Entente was created to hem in the Hungarians and prevent a Habsburg restoration that seemed the only road to the restitution of Greater Hungary. Soviet Russia, an old enemy in a new uniform, was willing to flirt with Hungary as an anti-Versailles, revisionist power. But for ideological reasons Horthy would have none of it. Weimar Germany was too weak and absorbed in its own search for a new national identity and social peace. In Britain there were those who sympathized with Hungary, but their influence was confined to promoting financial stabilization and economic recovery.[8] Mussolini's Italy appeared willing to offer some support, but his greater interest in Yugoslavia and Romania, Hungary's traditional enemies, weakened his commitment.

In the mid-thirties, the rise to power of Hitler appeared to offer Hungary an opportunity to line up with a radical and increasingly powerful revisionist state. But Hungarian statesmen were repelled by Hitler's brutal tactics. In 1938 they resisted his attempt to embroil them in a joint military campaign against Czechoslovakia. There were still hopes, illusory at best, of keeping the lines open to Britain as a counterweight to Germany. But this was no more successful than the post war effort to maintain a similar balance between Britain and the Soviet Union. Squeezed between Germany and Soviet Russia Hungary, like Poland and Romania, had little choice but to line up with one or the other. The economic penetration of Germany considerably narrowed their options. Nevertheless, the Hungarians struggled to find an alternative. The Horthy government's foreign policy in the late thirties consisted of a series of complex maneuvers. First,

Hungary attempted to balance between Italy and Germany. When Mussolini subordinated himself to Hitler, they sought to take advantage of Hitler's aggressive actions to redraw the map of Central Europe without becoming dependent on him; that is, to follow the logic of Bethlen's line.[9] But they succumbed to the temptations of revisionism. According to the terms of the First Vienna Award in November 1938, Hungary, encouraged and supported by Italy and Germany, recovered the border areas of Czechoslovakia which were inhabited by Hungarian majorities. In the Second Vienna Award I of August 1940, Hungary was assigned about half the territory of Transylvania ceded to Romania by the Treaty of Trianon. Yet the Hungarians were left dissatisfied with the results. The new frontier cut across ethnic and economic lines, denying them most of the energy resources necessary for the metallurgical industry that the Romanians had built up in the interwar period. The arbitrary partition of Transylvania increased the dependence of both Hungary and Romania on Germany. To keep or to recover northern Transylvania proved to be a major incentive in the participation of both powers in Hitler's invasion of the Soviet Union.[10] Gradually, Hungary was drawn deeper into the war with the Soviet Union, ultimately committing over 200,000 men to the fight. The outcome was disastrous when in 1943 the Hungarian Second Army was destroyed by a Soviet counter offensive on the Don River Bend near Voronezh. Appalled by the losses and convinced that Germany had lost the war, Horthy attempted to disengage Hungary from Hitler's embrace by appealing to the British to negotiate a separate peace. He hoped to prevent the country from falling under Soviet domination while at the same time retaining the territorial gains acquired from the alliance with Germany. It was a hopeless gambit. His diplomatic efforts were badly mismanaged. He had led Hungary into the worst possible outcome. The Germans, aware of his maneuvers, invaded Hungary to prevent the conclusion of a separate peace, stripped the country of treasure and resources and turned it into a battleground. The Red Army, having

suffered great losses in the battle for Budapest, unleashed a terrible vengeance on the population, engaging in mass rapes and looting in their turn.

The course of Hungary's domestic policy led to equally destructive consequences in the postwar period. Here too the loss of a share in imperial rule and virtual dismemberment embittered the old ruling elite; the mass of the population was excluded from a share in political power and much needed social reform was indefinitely postponed. Hungary had suffered the horrors of civil war in the aftermath of World War I, and the shadow of "Red" 1919 hung ominously over Hungarian politics. After the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy in 1918, a short-lived liberal democratic government under Mihály Károlyi was unable to check the armed intervention of the Czechs and Romanians who were determined to break up Great Hungary and incorporate those parts inhabited by substantial elements of the co-nationals. At the same time, Károlyi's domestic reforms aroused fierce internal opposition from both the right and the left, rehearsing the first act in a lengthy drama of political polarization.[11]

In the confusion a small Communist Party inspired by the Russian revolution and supported by a majority of Social Democrats seized power. The government was headed by a Social Democrat, Sándor Garbai, but the real power was the people's commissar of foreign affairs, Béla Kun, a returned prisoner of war from Russia. The leadership proclaimed a Federal Socialist Soviet Republic of Hungary (Magyaroszági Szocialista Szövetséges Tanácsköztársaság). It churned out a series of social and economic measures that in some cases, such as the land decree, were more radical than the Soviet Russian policies under War Communism.[12] The Hungarian Red Army scored a few successes against the Czechs, leading to the proclamation of a Slovak Soviet Republic in June 1919. Disappointed in its hope for a link up with the Bolsheviks, opposed by the Western Powers sitting in Versailles and challenged by a counter revolution at home, the

Hungarian Red Army retreated. Overwhelmed by a numerically superior Romanian Army backed by the Entente, the Soviet Republic collapsed. Within a few months, units of a newly formed Hungarian National Army under the leadership of Admiral Miklós Horthy, a war hero, launched a counter-revolution and instituted a White reign of terror that surpassed the Red version. The notorious armored train of the Reds had terrorized the countryside piling up several hundred peasant victims. But the Whites, mainly army officers, arrested 70,000, executed several hundred after trials and summarily killed around 1000 people. The new ruler, Admiral Horthy, personally ordered the assassination of the editor of the Social Democratic newspaper. Tens of thousands went into hiding or, as in the case of the deposed communist leadership of the Soviet Republic, fled the country.[13]

CHAPTER 2

A "NEO-BAROQUE EDIFICE"

The drama of mainstream interwar Hungarian politics may be summarized as a struggle of the old elites to control the radicalization of the masses by the right. The old elites succeeded in creating a regime that held off the fascist threat until the waning days of World War II. The architect of what one Hungarian historian has called "a neo-baroque edifice" was Count István Bethlen.[14] More sympathetic writers have called it "a limited parliamentary democracy with distinctly authoritarian features."[15] Bethlen's policy was first to exclude the lower classes from politics by reducing the electorate to less than half of the voting age population and to control the rest by re-introducing open voting in the countryside.[16] As a result the percentage of aristocrats and gentry in parliament hovered around forty percent. Second, he cut a deal with the parties that represented a potentially powerful opposition. As we shall see in greater detail, he bought off the Social Democrats led by Károly Peyer, who became a staunch opponent of cooperation with the Communists after World War II, by allowing them to organize and run for parliament in exchange for their promise to accept the political system he created.[17] He bought off the Agrarians led by István Szabó, the Minister of Agriculture in the short-lived Károlyi government, by negotiating a very modest land reform in 1920 that left virtually intact the pre war agricultural system.[18] Throughout the interwar period a variety of parties were born, amalgamated and died with great frequency than almost anywhere else in Europe.

The strongly conservative Catholic hierarchy firmly supported the regime although it did not bestow its blessing on any one political party. It occupied a strong institutional position being the largest landowner and operating a vast network of social and charitable organizations. Its greatest influence was on the educational policy of the regime which

stressed Christian values and introduced a *Numerus Clausus* in 1920 reducing the percentage of Jewish university students from a third to a tenth. The anti-Semitism of the upper classes and ruling elites took different forms depending on the degree of assimilation. It was more "genteel" in Budapest and the old core provinces of Greater Hungary where Jews were mainly urban, middle class and spoke Hungarian. It was a different matter with the less assimilated Jewish refugees entering post-Trianon Hungary from the old borderlands of Greater Hungary — Transylvania and the Voevodina — who were regarded as alien, although ironically they had always supported their Hungarian identity under the Habsburg Monarchy. The "Galician Jews" immigrants from Carpatho-Ruthenian rural areas who spoke Yiddish and adhered to their traditional life styles were regarded by Hungarians with open disdain and hostility. These distinctions had terrible consequences for them in 1944. Legal restrictions on Jews were introduced by a series of Anti-Jewish Laws in 1938, 1939, 1941 and 1942. The Church supported the first of these, but defended Jewish converts; in its view religion not race made the decisive difference. The prime minister who implemented the second of these was Pál Teleki, another former Transylvanian landlord. [19]

The Communists

Unlike Finland where in the interwar period the rebellious left was reintegrated into the political mainstream, the defeated Hungarian left barely survived on the margin of politics. Officially banned, the Communists virtually disappeared from the scene. The party had been deeply scarred by the experience of 1919, when it had taken but failed to hold power because of its sectarian excesses and the armed intervention of the Czechs and Romanians. Its leaders had dispersed to Paris, Berlin, Prague, Vienna and Moscow. In

exile they continued to debate the issue of responsibility for the debacle in 1919. Kun, despite Lenin's repeated criticism of his leftist excesses, clung doggedly to the leadership of the faction-ridden party. If there was one sin that the Soviet leadership deplored more than left wing excesses it was right wing deviation. So, the veterans of 1919 continued to occupy responsible positions in the Comintern; many became Soviet citizens. Although they kept in touch with Hungary, their influence in the labor force and among intellectuals was marginal at best. The party's repeated, often clumsy attempts to intervene in the political life of Hungary led to a series of disasters involving arrests, trials, prison terms and execution. [20] Time and again, the party was so completely decimated that it seems in retrospect something of a miracle that it survived even in the form of a small sect. The explanation lies partly with the peculiarities of the domestic political situation.

In dealing with the exiled Hungarian Communists, Stalin played his favorite game of manipulating various factions against one another. In the glow of the Popular Front, Kun was vulnerable because of his "1919ism." At the height of the purges, he proved an easy target for his enemies. A majority of the Hungarian central committee went down with him. The survivors in Moscow like Jenő (Evgenyi) Varga, Imre Nagy, Zoltán Szántó and József Révai eked out a precarious existence, attempting to protect one another when possible, in a Byzantine atmosphere of denunciations and intrigues. Varga and Nagy both denounced the land reform excesses of the Hungarian revolution of 1919 and Bukharin's left position which at that time Varga had favored! Later they quietly adopted Bukharin's subsequent views on the gradual transition to socialism in the countryside when those views were under attack by Stalin.[21]

Standing to one side of this group, or above it if his intellectual powers are fully appreciated, was the Marxist philosopher, György Lukács. A member of Kun's revolutionary government, Lukács had fled to Moscow where he became involved in the

arcane politics of the intra-party struggle within the CPSU. In the mid-twenties he drafted a theoretical program for the Second Hungarian Communist Party Congress known as "the Blum Thesis." By his own account he aimed to define revolution as a process opening up an ideological path which led to democracy."[22] When Lukács returned to Hungary in 1945, he expanded on his ideas first adumbrated in the Blum thesis. In a number of essays, he envisaged the creation of a plebian or popular democracy as a transition to socialism. It was, he stated, a combination of the best ideas of the Popular Front and the anti-Axis Grand Alliance. It might, he estimated, last from ten to twenty years.[23]

These Hungarian émigré proponents of a transitional period from socialism to communism under the rubric of popular democracy reemerged in the postwar period with the tacit approval of Stalin. Despite their ideological sympathies with Bukharin, they had survived the terrible purges which had decimated their comrades as well as most other parties in the Comintern. Their survival in Moscow suggests once again that while ideology mattered in intra-party struggles, so did patronage and personal relationships.

Others escaped Stalin's wrath because they were in Spain, either fighting like the former university student, László Rajk or, executing Anarchists for the NKVD like Ernő Gerő. A few like Rákosi and Zoltán Vas owed their lives to the shelter of fascist jails until 1940 when they reached Moscow in a bizarre exchange for flags taken by the Russians in 1849. János Kádár was one of the few survivors in the Budapest underground. A handful of 1919 veterans like József Révai and Ferenc Münnich rounded out the reconstructed, motley leadership that was bound together by little more than Stalin's trust, hardly a gilt edge security. By the end of 1940, Stalin had assembled a core of Hungarian communist leaders whose loyalty he had tested. They were allowed to form a Foreign Committee of the Hungarian Communist Party. Four of the top five men, Rákosi, Ernő Gerő, József Révai and Mihály Farkas were Jewish which limited their national appeal in Hungary and

made them all the more dependent on Stalin. The fifth was Imre Nagy.

Within Hungary the tiny communist underground organization was liquidated by the Comintern in 1936-37 when Kun was executed. An entirely new Central Committee was appointed, half to sit in Prague and half in Budapest. But the German occupation of Czechoslovakia wiped out the Prague group. In January 1941 the Budapest group, designated as the Central Committee and Secretariat received instructions from the Comintern to revive the policy of the Popular Front. Following the German invasion of Yugoslavia carried out in part through Hungarian territory, they issued a call for reforms along democratic lines with a special place reserved for "workers, peasants and progressive intellectuals" in the spirit of 1848. The so-called Independence Front picked up a few supporters among the democratic parties like Imre Kovács. Several Social Democrats, including an important future ally, Árpád Szakasits, joined in, but the official party leadership remained aloof. The Budapest communist central committee lived a precarious existence until 1942 when the Horthy regime, under German pressure, cracked down, arresting and imprisoning most of its members. The few who remained at large, including Kádár, were determined to keep alive the prospects of a clandestine, democratic coalition. They took the extreme step of dissolving the party in response to the abolition of the Comintern thereby incurring Moscow's displeasure. After the Italian surrender, they hastened to reconstitute themselves as the Peace Party. They renewed their efforts to cooperate with the Smallholders and the Social Democrats who had, in the meantime, recognized the need for social reforms and parliamentary cooperation in the postwar period.[24] But the rapprochement was not easy. The Communists expressed doubts that the populists would be reliable allies. Both the Social Democrats, who enjoyed a brief revival of the trade unions in the early forties, and the Smallholders demanded the Communists renounce illegal activities. Moreover, most centrist politicians clung to the

illusory hope that a democratic coalition excluding the Communists would be able to lead Hungary out of the war under the protection of a liberating army from the West.[25]

The Social Democrats

The Social Democrats sought to make their peace with the new regime by negotiating the so-called Bethlen-Peyer Pact of December 1921. In many ways it recalled the kind of traditional politics of the Habsburg era, a compromise between the traditional right represented by Bethlen and the moderate Social Democrats represented by Károly Peyer. According to its provisions the Social Democratic Party would support the government's foreign policy, discontinue its cooperation with the liberal-democratic opposition, refrain from propagating republicanism, or unionizing public employees, or creating new unions among agricultural workers or initiating political strikes. In return the government undertook to return the confiscated offices of the party, allow the distribution of party newspapers and the normal activities of its trade unions, phase out wartime censorship and improve the social security system.[26] Neither side abided strictly to its provisions.

For the Social Democrats the price for staying alive on a meager diet was a steady loss of votes, from ten percent of the assembly seats in 1922 to four percent in 1935 and two percent in 1939. Disaffected by the party's passivity, a left wing faction broke away in 1924 and under clandestine Communist influence formed a Hungarian Socialist Workers Party. In 1926 the party leaders outlined an agrarian reform and demanded the restoration of a republican form of government. The following year the leader of the party's remaining left, Árpád Szakasits, a key collaborator of the Communists after the war, advocated a rigorous recruiting policy in the countryside. The party sought to follow this up until the

government cracked down on the rural organizers.[27]

The party was able to organize only about thirteen percent of the total working class population. The trade union workers were concentrated in Budapest, the smaller cities and among the German (Swabian) miners and other workers in the villages close to the capital. By devoting their efforts to bread and butter issues and avoiding confrontation with the regime, the party helped to secure substantial improvements in the standard of living and social welfare of the skilled workers compared to the majority of industrial and agricultural laborers. The Social Democrats and the trade unions steadily lost their militant traditions of the early twentieth century and acquired a reputation as a docile opposition. The Horthy regime encouraged their political passivity by supporting modest social programs and practicing divide and conquer. For example, it cultivated the transport and public service workers who were state employees and prevented them from organizing under the Bethlen-Peyer Pact. The non-industrial working class was drawn heavily from village girls who came to Budapest as household servants. The factory workers constituted only about half of the proletariat. A third of these were women in light industry mostly unskilled. The hard core of the working class constituted another third coming for the second or third generation. The trade union membership numbering from 100,000 to 150,000 was susceptible to agitation from the Arrow Cross due in part to the illegality of the Communist Party. Living conditions in the interwar period stagnated and the depression cost one third of the workers their jobs, and wages never reached the pre-1914 levels. The standard of living of the semi-skilled and unskilled was miserable; at the end of the twenties half the workers had no electricity. Although conditions improved over the next decade, the war erased all these gains.[28]

Relations between the Social Democrats and the Communists in Hungary as elsewhere in Europe changed as a result of the Stalin's belated response to the rise of

Hitler and the establishment of the Popular Front. The Comintern instructed members of the illegal Communist Party of Hungary to dissolve their clandestine organs and join the Social Democratic Party in order to strengthen its left wing. The adherence of several hundred Communists did not, however, convince the Social Democratic leadership to endorse the Popular Front. The increased influence of the left wing resulted rather from external pressures. The Party felt compelled to compete with the more radical socio-economic programs of the extreme right and to defend itself against anti-Semitic attacks by replacing a number of prominent moderate leaders of Jewish origin. In 1939 the Socialist Party Congress elected Szakasits General Secretary, opening the way for greater cooperation with the Communists and their deeper penetration. Although not a Communist stooge, Szakasits was reputedly a weak-willed person. He had been scarred by the effects of the counter-revolution and was fearful of its revival after the war. He was attached to unity of the left although wary of being dominated by the Communists and not always in agreement with them.[29] During the war the left wing of the Social Democrats gained strength bolstered by additional Communist recruits. The German occupation of March 1944 intensified the pressure for closer cooperation with the underground Communist Party. A sub-rosa struggle ensued for control of the party.[30]

The Populists

A third political grouping which greatly assisted the Communist drive for power in the postwar years came out of the so-called Populist Movement. Composed of writers, rural sociologists and musicians who championed the rural masses, they had begun to coalesce into something resembling a social movement in the late twenties when their forays into the countryside earned them the sobriquet of "village explorers." Politically

diverse, they were equally contemptuous of the traditional views of the ruling elite and of "bourgeois democracy." They were utopian and anti-urban, emitting anti-Semitic overtones. They shared a common admiration for peasant culture as the embodiment of Hungary's national or manifest destiny. Like other populist movements in Eastern Europe they favored a "third way" that would avoid the worst excesses of market capitalism but spare the countryside the ordeal of collectivization. Their dream was a "garden Hungary" of small to medium holdings, voluntary cooperation and traditional mores. [31]

In the heated political atmosphere of the mid-thirties several Populists took the lead in proclaiming a program of radical reforms that kindled the interest of communist youth and opened the way for the Hungarian Communist Party to break out of its isolation. A small number of radical university students and intellectuals of middle class background from Transylvania seized the opportunity to forge ties with the Populists.

In the spring of 1937, following the lead of the Communists they associated themselves with the so-called March Front that encouraged active cooperation among the workers, peasants and intellectuals in the interests of a democratic Hungary. Although the Front proved ephemeral and ineffective, it left a mark on both communist and populist youth who perceived the advantages that each offered the other in advancing their aims.[32]

The Populists had little success in disseminating their views in the countryside, but they had a lasting effect on the country's intellectuals through the power of their literary and scholarly work which dramatically illustrated the plight of the peasantry. Hungary remained a nation of "three million beggars" in a catch phrase that resounded throughout the period between the wars.[33] There were approximately 600,000 farm laborers attached to large estates, another approximately 955,000 landless agricultural workers, 271,000 leaseholders or owners of dwarf holdings (under one yoke), and 1.145 small landholders or leaseholders (under 5 yoke). A third of the entire population which lived under wretched

conditions.[34] Behind the heap of statistics and sociological descriptions lay a thick texture of daily existence that was so poignantly captured by the great populist writers, like Gyula Illyés.[35] As late as 1937, three quarters of the houses in Hungary were made of loam and wood and half had dirt floors. This misery when combined with poor diet and extremely harsh working conditions pushed Hungary's tuberculosis rate to one of the highest levels in Europe. But social and economic differences divided them; the authorities vigorously discouraged any attempt at political organization; and the three million beggars were left unrepresented and defenseless. Peasant indebtedness sharply increased during the depression. In the last decade before the end of the war, the peasants were losing their farms at a rate of 16-18,000 a year. During the war the peasants' standard of living declined to a bare subsistence level; they were reduced to a diet of bread and potatoes with virtually no fat.[36]

Numerous plans for agrarian reform were drafted between the wars, mainly by populist intellectuals. But the government representing the old elites and fearful of mass action hesitated to tamper with the ancient legal system under which two thirds of the land was inalienable through entail or church holdings. When in 1944 the reconstructed parties - Smallholders, Communist and Social Democrat and the National Peasants - emerged at liberation they were all committed to some form of radical agrarian reform. The question that divided them was how extensively and rapidly could it be carried out.

The Extreme Right

National humiliation and the reaction to Red Hungary in 1919 created a fascist movement in Hungary, but the depression of the early 1930s transformed it from a middle class to a mass phenomenon.[37] Side by side with the conservative movement of the old

elites under Count Bethlen, a Hungarian fascist movement born in the southern town of Szeged, rapidly spread throughout the country. It took two forms, the death squads of military officers and a mass movement with occasional terrorist actions. Their nebulous program called "the Szeged idea" was a mélange of chauvinism. anti-Semitism, class hatred and anti-liberalism. Its organizational core was the Alliance of Social Organizations (*Társadalmi Egyesületek Szövetsége* or T.E.Sz.) a loose association of local groups that at its peak could boast of having established 10,000 branches.[38]

The most important of the constituent fascist secret societies, the Hungarian Defense Union (*Magyar Országos Véderőegylet*) was led by a captain on the general staff, Gyula Gömbös, born in Transdanubia of a Swabian mother and Hungarian father. He aspired to be the Mussolini of Hungary. In 1923 he formed Hungary's radical right wing party dedicated to the defense of Christian values, the defense of property rights, the reorganization of parliament along corporate lines, and a revision of Trianon with western help. His program included a heavy dose of anti-Jewish legislation aimed particularly at the large Jewish business and professional class which he identified with "the excesses of capitalism." The old elites managed to keep him under control until the economic crisis struck Hungary in two waves; the first in 1930 led to widespread unemployment and tax defaults leading to forced collection by the Royal Gendarmerie; the second began the following year with the failure of the Kreditanstalt and the collapse of Hungary's international credit. As in Germany the politically bankrupt old elites yielded power to the fascists in hopes of manipulating it from backstage for their own ends. Their gamble came closer to succeeding in Hungary than in Germany mainly because Gömbös died suddenly in 1936 before he could carry out a *Gleichschaltung* along Nazi lines. There are indications that he was moving in that direction by building up a fascist para-military force and organizing a youth movement. But he also sought to appeal to the conservative right by

muting his radical rhetoric. His attempts to radicalize the armed forces were resisted by Horthy. Shortly before his death he persuaded the Regent to call elections which gave the radical right a majority. Gömbös was poised to take power. The newly formed Smallholders Party which claimed to represent the peasant masses was hardly a rival. Its dominant figure, Tibor Eckhardt, a staunch nationalist, had been a collaborator of Gömbös in the twenties.[39]

For all his electoral appeal Gömbös did not tap into the mass of discontented agricultural laborers and urban working class; that was the achievement of Ferenc Szálasi, the leader of the Arrow Cross. Like many of the radical political leaders in the Hungary, he came from a minority group, in his case a mix of Armenian and probably Ruthenian stock. Like Gömbös too he had been an army officer, but he also had intellectual pretensions with disastrous consequences. His theory of "Hungarism" was chaotic. When he died it seemed to have perished with him. But similar ideas have periodically surfaced in Hungary since then, most recently at the present time. Gömbös' direct appeal to wage earners, his endorsement of social justice and his religio-nationalist if not racist anti-Semitism touched a chord among the a broad spectrum of former socialists and Communists, factory workers, the rural poor, junior army officers and lower level white collar workers who were casting about for a radical program to break down the "neo-baroque edifice" without abandoning the nationalist mystique. [40]

From mid-1938 to mid-1939 his party increased more than ten-fold to an estimated membership of 200,000-300,000. This was an early example of the kind of explosion of mass party membership that characterized periods of crisis in the thirties and again after the liberation.[41] After liberation many Arrow Cross members crossed over to the Communists where slogans of nationalism and social reform resonated strongly among a population subjected for the second time in a generation to the horrors of defeat and

occupation.[42]

CHAPTER 3

THE IMPACT OF THE WAR AND LIBERATION

The Hungarian Communist Party in exile in Moscow long resisted the Popular Front even after the purge and execution in May 1936 of the main hard-liner, Béla Kun. Although the change was signaled in Moscow by József Révai in 1941, the surviving members of the party in the underground in Budapest insisted that "reconciliation and coordination were impossible."[43] During the war the Communists attempted to organize a resistance movement in Hungary with indifferent success, although accounts differ as to the extent and effectiveness of their activities.[44] It is difficult to draw the line between opposition to the war, reflected in strikes, desertions from the Hungarian Army to the Soviet partisans and other manifestations from support for the Communists or the peace faction among the parties of the center and left. However, there is evidence of an incipient civil war. The siege of Budapest offers the most striking evidence of this. Three Hungarian infantry divisions operated with the Wehrmacht in defense of the city while a much smaller number of twenty companies of Hungarian soldiers, numbering more than 2500 men fought together with the Red Army and participated in storming the Buda fortress.[45]

The German occupation of Hungary in March 1944 transformed the situation by installing a strongly pro-German government headed by Döme Sztójay, Hungary's former ambassador to Berlin. The Regent, Horthy, had agreed with Hitler on the occupation; consequently, there had been no resistance to the German invaders. With his approval, the new government outlawed all opposition parties and cooperated with the Gestapo in arresting political opponents. It also increased the First Hungarian Army to almost 300,000 men and dispatched it to the Eastern Front.[46]. The Communists along with the socialists and Smallholders were driven deep underground where in the short run they were

rendered impotent. In the long run they shared the common fate of illegal political movements. The barriers to cooperation crumbled and the groundwork was laid for their coalition at liberation. Ironically, the German imposition of a radical Arrow Cross government in October 1944 and its last ditch defense of Budapest doomed the plans of the anti-communist moderates and opened the way at liberation for the tripartite cooperation of the Communists, socialists and Smallholders.

Despite the disappointing response of the democratic parties, the Communists persisted in their efforts to end their isolation. In May 1944 they established contacts with a few leaders of the democratic parties who were willing to issue a joint appeal for resistance. Predictably, they elicited no response from the population which was fearful of the Soviet advance, cowed by German occupation and still hopeful of salvation from the West. In the meantime the Communists were rebuilding their shattered organization. In September 1944, László Rajk, a former Central Committee member in Budapest, returned from a concentration camp, assumed the duties of secretary general, and undertook to reconstitute the Hungarian Communist Party. In their attempts to reassure skeptics outside the party, the leaders sought a formula that would express an intermediate form between bourgeois democracy and a dictatorship of the proletariat. They proposed a "radical people's democracy" and a "workers-peasants democratic dictatorship."[47] But the democratic parties resisted these blandishments, expecting Horthy to pull off a miracle that would take them out of the war without exposing them to Soviet occupation.

Soviet officials had been suspicious of the early peace feelers of the Horthy regime to the British in 1943 which they interpreted as a strategy to avoid the occupation of the country by the Red Army and retain their present frontiers. In their view the Hungarians were counting on a Western descent in the Balkans. They would then block the Germans from crossing their territory in order to meet the attack. In the event of a Soviet invasion,

however, the Hungarian Army, fearing a repetition of 1919, would fight to the death.[48] The rapid German response to the surrender of Italy and the slow progress of the Allied advance in southern Italy ended this phase of negotiations for a separate peace. It was not until October 1944 that Horthy once gain opened negotiations with Moscow, this time at the urging of the West. In a letter to Stalin Horthy virtually threw himself on the mercy of the Soviet leader. He excused Hungary's participation of the war by blaming a German fifth column — the culmination of a thousand years of subjugation by the "German colossus." He contrasted the absence of Hungarian territorial claims on the Soviet Union to the Romanian's seizure of Bessarabia and Transnistria as well as their "monstrous" attitude toward Hungarians in Transylvania.[49] After much hesitation and western pressure, the Regent finally decided to proclaim an armistice that his envoys had been secretly negotiating in Moscow.

According to the armistice terms, Hungary agreed within ten days to evacuate its troops and officials from the territories they had occupied in Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia and Romania and withdraw them to its 1937 boundaries. To verify and control the evacuation, "the three allied powers would send their representatives to Hungary who would act in the capacity of a Unified Allied Military Mission with a Soviet representative serving as president." Hungary was then to declare war on Germany with the assurance of receiving help from the Soviet armed forces. At the same time, Horthy also requested a halt to the advance of the Red Army on Budapest in order to give a chance for the Hungarian army to turn its front line units against the superior German forces in Budapest and avert a German assault (*udar*) that would lead to killings and pogroms.[50] The Soviet Union agreed to the request to delay operations in the Budapest area. But according to a note from the deputy chief of staff of the Red Army, General A.I. Antonov, to the Hungarian delegation on October 14 while Horthy was still in command in Budapest, the Hungarian

government "not only did not withdraw its troops from the Tisza River for an advance on Budapest, but increased the operations of their troops (*aktivizirovalo deistviia svoikh voisk*) especially in the Szolnok region, thus violating the preliminary terms of the armistice agreement. [51]

The Germans informed of the negotiations promptly deposed Horthy. On October 15 they installed the Arrow Cross leader, Ferenc Szálasi, who unleashed a rule of terror throughout the country. There would be no reversal of fronts as in Rumania. Horthy had waited too long to act; the democratic parties had hesitated to organize a coup; and the local Communists remained isolated, their credit with Moscow having reached a low point. When, following the German sponsored coup, elements of the Hungarian army led by General Béla Dálnoki Miklós and the chief of staff, János Vörös, went over the Red Army, Stalin grasped the chance to deal with them as the nucleus of an anti-fascist provisional government. The local Communists would have to earn their spurs in the new situation.[52]

The final year of World War II had a terrible effect on the Hungarian economy and standards of living that was in the words of one historian, "comparable to the period of the Mongol occupation in Hungary's history."[53] The heavy fighting on Hungarian soil had destroyed the transportation infrastructure. Budapest was in ruins. All the major Danube bridges had been blown; forty per cent of the railroad track and seventy per cent of the rolling stock had been destroyed. A quarter of the country's industrial capacity lay in ruins and the mining industry had virtually collapsed. Industrial production had declined to twenty per cent of the already depressed level of 1944. The situation in the countryside was hardly better; fifty per cent of the livestock had been lost. Inflation, which had started before the war, became serious in 1944 and astronomical within a year after liberation. The danger of famine forced the first post-liberation government to introduce a calorie-salary system.

During the war Germany had treated Hungary like an economic colony. In the final

year it had forced delivery of more than three quarters of Hungarian oil and grain at fixed prices. During their destructive occupation of the country the Nazis had seized the Hungarian gold reserve and the Danube fleet which still had not been returned by mid-1946.[54] What is often forgotten in histories attributing Hungary's postwar economic plight, is the scorched earth policy of the Hungarian government during the retreat across the Hungarian plain in the summer of 1945 and the massive transfer of property to Germany.[55]

The mass murder of the majority of Hungarian Jews was not only a crime against humanity but an enormous depletion of the talented pool of the population. Under the Habsburg Monarchy the Hungarians of Jewish origins living in urban centers, especially Budapest were highly assimilated and occupied leading positions in the economic and cultural life of the country. The anti-Semitic legislation of the Horthy regime drove many of the best scientists and creative people into exile and created an atmosphere in which discrimination led to persecution and finally to extermination. In 1941 after a spate of anti-Semitic legislation, the regime ordered the expulsion of so-called Galician Jews living in the newly annexed territories, which had been formerly part of Hungary, on the pretext that they were "alien". Approximately 18,000 were shipped to the border where they were turned over to the SS and killed. At the same time Hungarian army units in the annexed Voevodina, which before 1914 had been part of Greater Hungary, massacred about 1000 Jews in addition to twice as many Serbs. Finally, after the German occupation in March 1944, the Hungarian authorities helped to plan, organize, and execute the deportation for extermination at Auschwitz of as many as 440,000 Jews, mainly from the provinces outside Budapest. About eighty percent of them were murdered there. The Hungarians also organized the systematic looting of Jewish property and personal valuables in Budapest. The myth has survived that Horthy saved the Jews in Budapest. He halted the deportation in June 1944, hoping to keep the economy going and use the Jews as a bargaining point

with the allies in negotiating Hungary out of the war. When he abdicated in October, he left the Jews to the tender mercies of the Arrow Cross. They packed the Budapest Jews into a ghetto, exposing them to disease and malnutrition while others were taken out to the Danube rampart, shot and dumped into the river. About 50,000 Jews died under the Szálasi regime.[56] Post war polemics, revived in post-socialist Hungary, have raged over who was responsible for the Holocaust in Hungary and to what degree. It is unlikely a consensus will ever emerge, but the loss for Hungary was incalculable.[57]

The campaign of the Red Army in Hungary had a devastating effect on the civilian population. The looting, rapes, random killings, forced labor and deportations of Germans or people with German sounding names were comparable only to the atrocities the Red Army inflicted on the population of Germany. There are various explanations for this virtual reign of terror which was, however, less extreme and extensive than the mass killings of Hungarian Jews by the Germans. The Hungarian Second Army fought side by side with the Germans on the Eastern front and had committed its share of atrocities before being virtually annihilated in the great battles on the Don during the German debacle at Stalingrad. The remaining Hungarian forces had participated with the Germans in the ferocious defense of Budapest which lasted over a hundred days and cost the Red Army extremely heavy casualties. As elsewhere on the Eastern front, the Red Army had been exposed to the constant bombardment of hate propaganda against the enemy. The rank and file did not enjoy any "rest and relaxation" facilities like the western armies and no leaves from continuous service. By this time in the war raw cadres were sent into battle, many from remote areas of Siberia and Central Asia were astounded by the relatively high standard of living in the liberated territories which helps to explain their apparently bizarre fascination with stealing everything they could carry but especially and notoriously wrist watches. Apparently, the Soviet command believed that the soldiers could only be driven

relentlessly into the cauldron of the bitter fighting in Germany and Hungary by releasing them from any constraints in treating the local population; it was a brutal alternative to the breakdown of military discipline. The Hungarian Communists deplored the behavior of the Red Army which deeply embittered the Hungarian population and greatly complicated their self-representation as party defending national interests.[58]

The Soviet demand for reparations added to Hungary's economic woes even though Molotov claimed that Hungary would enjoy special treatment. In contrast to Finland and Rumania, Hungary would be expected to pay only two hundred million dollars to the USSR and one hundred million dollars to Yugoslavia. The final figure for the USSR remained the same but the Yugoslav share was pared to seventy million dollars with the remaining thirty million dollars going to Czechoslovakia. In any case, the awards amounted to a fraction of the damages Hungary had inflicted upon its neighbors. Ambassador Harriman was not unsympathetic to the Soviet demands but calculated nonetheless, that this would amount to a third of the pre war exports of Hungary and about 3.5% of its national income.[59] In addition Hungary paid out 160-170 million dollars to citizens of member states of the United Nations who had suffered losses on Hungarian territory. As in Austria, Romanian and Bulgaria, the Soviet Union confiscated all German property in Hungary including four hundred factories that the Germans had seized from prosperous Jews. Finally, the Soviet Union also insisted that Hungary renounce the debts owed to it by Germany for war production and pay it instead to the Soviet Union. This added another 200 million dollars to Hungary's burden of payments. The lack of any economic realism in the Soviet demands on the war torn country and the irrational removal of factories, as in Germany, Austria and Manchuria, makes it hard to believe that this was a conscious policy designed by Stalin to prepare the way for a communist takeover of Hungary.[60] Rather, these actions antagonized wide sections of the population including elements of the

working class. That the Hungarians were able to restore their shattered economy in a remarkably short period was due in large measure to the discipline and work ethic of the population, the cooperation among the parties and the determination of the Communists to prevent strikes and campaign for higher productivity. For a brief but crucial period after the war the coalition worked in Hungary.

At liberation, it is fair to say, Hungarian politics were in a state of greater disarray than anywhere else in East Central Europe. The Left, badly battered and depleted by the repressive policies of the interwar governments, was split into three parts: the Communists, the populists and the Social Democrats; the latter two were themselves divided into two sharply defined wings. The radical right had been wholly discredited by the debacle of Hungary's defeat and even more by its association, however ambivalent and involuntary, with the Third Reich up to the final moments of its collapse. The center, occupied by the Smallholders Party was also deeply split; its right wing sheltering refugees from the right seeking protective coloration in the postwar period; its center tainted by years of ineffective opposition to the Horthy regime; its left exposed to communist infiltration. The Catholic Church remained a powerful force for conservatism but they were not allowed to organize a party until 1947 when the Communists sought to divide the right.

When the Red Army crossed the Hungarian frontier in late September, the Moscow based Hungarian Communists began to organize ad hoc national committees to administer the liberated areas. But Stalin waited more than a month after the October fascist coup in Budapest before deciding on the form of government for the country. In the first days of December, Gerő joined Imre Nagy and Rákosi in Moscow where they argued for a provisional government while Molotov and his deputy, V.G. Dekanozov, and the future chairman of the ACC and then Soviet minister in Budapest, Georgii Pushkin, at first preferred a national liberation committee on the Free French model. Molotov's main

concern was to find democratic figures who "enjoyed authority in Hungary…we do not have in mind Hungarian Jews, it is only a question of Hungarians."[61] Stalin personally intervened several times in the discussions supporting the Communists on the formation of a provisional government. He declared that Horthy had "committed political suicide" in failing to take Hungary out of the war and recommended the formation of a new national council. Surprisingly, he proposed to exclude the participation of Communists exchanged before the war, like Rákosi, but to include members of the defunct armistice delegation. Subsequent negotiations produced a plan to organized elections in the liberated territories of a provisional national assembly that would elect the provisional government. Stalin exercised a moderate influence on the proceedings, insisting on a program that would stress the protection of private property and the continuity of the civil service.[62] As elsewhere in the liberated territories, he sought to avoid chaotic conditions in the rear of the advancing Red Army.

Under the supervision of zealous local Communists, the hastily organized elections produced an assembly in which the left was heavily overrepresented. In December it endorsed Soviet recommendations for a cabinet headed by General Miklós with Vörös as defense minister and the Smallholder leader János Gyöngyösi as foreign minister. The other key Ministry, Interior, went to Ferenc Erdei, as a compromise. A well-known Communist sympathizer in the National Peasant Party he had secretly joined the Hungarian Communist Party. The other communist minister was Imre Nagy at Agriculture.[63] Despite the failure of the Hungarian elites to reverse fronts, they had been rewarded with a government that resembled that of Rumania. But the resemblance was only superficial.

For reasons peculiar to Hungary's recent political history and longer term social conditions, its postwar governments were what Seton-Watson called genuine coalitions.[64]

As in Finland, Austria and Germany, there had not been in Hungary during the war a large scale resistance movement. Nor had there been a nationalist government in exile with which the Soviet Union had to negotiate over the conditions of its return home. Unlike in Rumania, Bulgaria and Poland there was no organized right opposition in Hungary in the first two and a half years after liberation. Instead the coalition partners vigorously rejected the prewar regime and supported widespread structural reforms in the state and society. Even the small postwar Citizens (or Bourgeois) Democratic Party did not challenge the coalition's socio-economic program. The large scale agrarian reform of 1945-46, supported more or less enthusiastically by all the coalition partners destroyed the material and cultural foundations of the old elites. The old officer corps was discredited and its pro-German command was replaced. Many of the old elites emigrated abroad, never to return. The rapid purge of the pro-fascist bureaucracy had created a left leaning bureaucracy in which the three partners held over three quarters of the top positions in government — virtually none of whom had held state office before — leaving only 23 percent non-party officials, mainly holdovers from the Horthy regime.[65] Moreover, none of the coalition parties including the Communists was strictly speaking a class party. Their slogans, programs and recruitment policies appealed to a broad spectrum of groups. In its foreign relations the Hungarian government proved as "friendly" to the Soviet Union as in its domestic policy by making a reasonable attempt to carry out the armistice terms even though they imposed great sacrifices on the population.

As Mark Pittaway has so cogently argued, the postwar Hungarian government suffered from a profound crisis of legitimacy inherited from the interwar period and deepened by the war.[66] The democratic conservatives had been compromised by their willingness to collaborate, however reluctantly, with the authoritarian, irredentist, anti-Semitic regime of Admiral Horthy. The Communists insisted that this compromise had

blurred the line between the legal parties of the center-right and the radical right. On the left the Social Democrats had also entered the devil's bargain, and the Communists, having been outlawed, had no choice if they wished to remain active in politics but to enroll in their ranks while disguising their real loyalties. After the war they were instructed by the communist leadership to remain in order to undermine the pre-war Social Democrat leaders. So, the line between the socialists and the Communists had also become blurred. During the war the gap between the right and left widened as the radical right increased its power and finally took over the government repressing the left or driving it deep into the underground. There was only a small resistance movement in Hungary, nothing comparable to what existed in France or Italy where tripartite postwar governments were also established but with the participation of Catholic anti-fascists. In Hungary the Catholic Church had staunchly defended the Horthy regime. After the war the Smallholders became a catch-all party. In the absence of a legal right wing party, former supporters of the Horthy regime had nowhere else to go. As a result some dubious elements joined the party, exposing it to attacks by the left as a potential source of reactionary resurgence. The governing Smallholder, Socialist and Communist parties had no experience of cooperation to hold them together for very long. As István Bibó remarked at the time, both the left and right were governed by fears that the other side was dominated by extremists, leading to a social polarization between those who feared a restoration of the prewar regime and those who feared a dictatorship of the proletariat.[67] The middle ground, always narrow, rapidly disappeared.

CHAPTER 4

THE FORMATION OF THE COALITION

The leaders of the Hungarian Communist Party were not as satisfied as the Soviet leaders with the outcome of the liberation. After the party was legalized and assumed a leading role in the coalition government of December 1944, it did not grow as rapidly as those in Poland, Rumania and Bulgaria. In the first few months after liberation it struggled to recruit 30,000 members. With the exception of the miners from Pécs the newcomers belonged mainly to the fringes of prewar Hungarian society: the terrified remnants of the Hungarian Jews huddled in the capital, landless peasants and itinerant workers in the traditionally radical southeast and a handful of civil servants in the big towns of eastern Hungary fearful of losing their jobs.[68] As in the rest of Eastern Europe, the party also attracted ambitious and idealistic elements among the youth who blamed the old elites for the disastrous war and narrow, class based social policies. Many were seduced by the opportunity for rapid advancement in the state bureaucracy and cultural sphere which in the traditional society would have been impossible. Some were willing to set aside their scruples over Communist tactics in their headlong rush toward the bright new life.[69]

By May 1945 Communist Party membership had reached 150,000, still lagging behind the two other major parties, the Smallholders and the Social Democrats, but a startling increase over its minuscule prewar cadre. It continued to draw heavily from non-trade union workers or workers who had been members of other parties, particularly on the left wing of the Social Democrats. Peasants, handicraft workers and other urban elements constituted only fifteen percent of the party. Among the unskilled workers, recent immigrants from the countryside and employees of small enterprises that streamed into the party there were no small number of former members of the Arrow Cross. This helped

contribute to the wild and undisciplined character of the rank and file that alarmed the Soviet representatives.[70] Throughout 1945 a small group of veterans of 1919 continued to press for a more rapid pace of socialization and elimination of class enemies. The leadership faced a dilemma in dealing with them. It attempted to bring them into line, but it could not afford to lose the few experienced cadres that they represented within the party.[71]

If the party rank and file was heterogeneous and undisciplined, the leadership was scarcely monolithic. At the time Rákosi reassured his Soviet mentors that the Hungarian leadership was united unlike in the past when factionalism was rife.[72] But he was covering up the cracks in order to legitimize his authority. Much has been made of the differences between the Muscovites and the home-grown Communists, but ideological preferences, personal rivalries and ambitions cut across these lines as well. In general, to be sure, the domestic Communists were more militant and impatient in their efforts to force the pace of socialization. Yet some of them, like Kádár, had initiated the dissolution of the party in 1943 and its replacement by the Peace Party. Others like Gábor Péter who became head of the notorious State Defense Department were under the control of the NKVD which ran its own operations in Hungary. After the communist consolidation of power, Péter and his political police helped undermine and destroy Rajk, his former colleague in the underground.[73] Of the Muscovites Nagy was clearly a man apart even in the mid-forties when he strongly opposed any move toward collectivization and subsequently, after Stalin's death, denounced Rákosi's dictatorial policies to his comrades in private.[74] In part the falling out of the leadership in the mid-fifties was a product of the scramble to find scapegoats for the disastrous policies of hasty sovietization in the late forties. But the roots of the rivalries went deeper and help explain the party's dilemma in its attempts to carry out a consistent policy of gradualism in the post-liberation period.

One of the most serious shortcomings of the Communists in the early months after liberation was their overreliance on brutal police methods to punish their enemies and intimidate the population. The history of the organization of the political police is still obscure.[75] In January 1945 even before the end of the fighting in Budapest, the Budapest National Council dominated by the Communists appointed Gábor Péter to organize the political department of the police. Described by one historian as "a particularly unsavory character" and criticized by several of his Communist colleagues including Rákosi for his vanity and ignorance, he recruited other unsavory characters and wielded arbitrary power. In March 1945 Rákosi reported to Dimitrov that the Communists were under pressure by the other parties to end their monopoly over the police: "we had to give in a bit on this question…but we will try to hold the key positions in our hands."[76] In June Rákosi remained defensive about the police. He deplored the lack of professionals who he wrote at least should know how to draw up an interrogation document. "Our comrades do not understand this. They have remembered only how to beat during an arrest. This is one thing they know…this is a very weak side of the party." By July, Péter's department had arrested over 22,000 people often on the basis of denunciations. These were not the major war criminals and some were freed and then rearrested.[77] In reviewing the political situation in the fall of 1945, Voroshilov remarked on the numerous criminal elements in the party and all kinds of adventurers, careerists and former fascists. He blamed the party leadership for failing to weed them out. The party leaders were too absorbed in meetings, he wrote, and in attacking the Smallholders with whom it was necessary to cooperate.[78]

Despite its internal difficulties, the Communists took advantage of their better organization, the widespread purge of officials and the presence of the Red Army to gain a very strong position in the government bureaucracy. By the spring of 1946 the Communists occupied just under a third of the 691 top policy positions which compares very favorably

with their electoral strength of under twenty percent.[79] The Communists' two major coalition partners were more numerous but even less well organized.

The major party at the opposite end of the political spectrum was the Smallholders. Like the Social Democratic Party the Smallholders had been part of the legal opposition to the Horthy regime. At liberation the party enjoyed an explosive growth despite the attempt of the ACC and the Soviet military command to slow its expansion. By the spring of 1945, it had enrolled 130-140,000 members, twice the size of the Communist Party. By September there were 700,000 members and eighty percent of them were peasants. It did not develop a new program but reaffirmed its prewar platform of liberal-democratic reform and opposition to dictatorship of any kind. The party had trouble defining itself. Its ideology was an amalgam of liberalism, Christian socialism and populism. Consequently, its rhetoric was often interpreted by friend and foe as anti-communist and anti-Soviet. The code words were easy to distinguish: there was "no need for a protectorate of other powers"; the party would struggle against the reaction but "it would conduct the sharpest struggle against those parties which used methods of terror;" it opened its ranks to all classes and to those who had entered other parties because "of fear or caution."[80]

Aside from its traditional appeal to the Christian middle classes and the peasants, the Smallholders benefitted initially from the powerful support of the Catholic hierarchy led by the Primate of Hungary, Cardinal József Mindszenty. Outside of Poland there was no other country in Eastern Europe where the Catholic Church was so dominant or politically active. It controlled well over half the elementary schools, a third of the middle schools and three quarters of the normal schools. Unfortunately for the Smallholders, Mindszenty proved to be more of an albatross than an eagle. They vainly attempted to persuade him to moderate his fierce anti-communism that had become a great embarrassment to them. In March 1946 the Smallholder undersecretary of state, István Balogh, confessed to the

American minister that the "Primate is stubborn, has a small intellect, is basically uncultured and surrounds himself with narrow provincial priests and a few former aristocrat landowners who are offering him bad advice." Mindszenty was convinced "that the Americans will soon use the atom bomb to drive the Soviets out of Hungary."[81] No one could deny, however, that the church's work among Catholic youth and especially among women through the Women's Christian League had made a major contribution to the Smallholders' victory in the first national postwar elections. The Soviet ambassador paid a backhanded tribute to its power when he admitted that it would be possible to destroy one or another opposition party in Hungary but "until the influence of the Catholic Church on the political life of the country is destroyed, such parties will reappear again....".[82] That Pushkin's analysis was correct becomes clear from examining the subsequent break-up of the Smallholders into a congeries of parties.

The size of the Smallholder Party was not an indication of its real strength. In the first place its organization in the countryside proceeded slowly because of the traditional peasant suspicion of politics. But the party workers were far more active than the National Peasants in Rumania. They were markedly successful in the southern and western Transdanubia and North Hungary. Before the war they were virtually non-existent in Budapest, but in 1945 they picked up support from substantial elements of the lower middle class, white collar workers and the Hungarian urban intelligentsia though not from the working class.[83] Much of this support proved to be ephemeral, based as it was on the absence of a viable alternative bourgeois democratic party on the right.

More than any other major peasant party in Eastern Europe the Smallholders represented a great variety of social groups and interests who began to reassert their identities in the early post-war period. A comparison of the national election results in 1945 and 1947 reveals that the Communists, Social Democrats and national peasants retained

the core of their adherents. The Communist increased their vote from under 800,000 to over 1,200,000 million; the Social Democrats declined slightly from 820,000 to 743,000; and the national peasants increased slightly from 324,000 to 414,000. But the Smallholders lost almost two million voters dropping from 2.7 million to 770,000. Their decline, to be sure, was a result of an alliance between the left wing and the Communists which forced out of the party most of the center and right. But it was also caused by internal fissures that could not be repaired when the moderates went into opposition.

In the 1947 elections the Communists engaged in massive electoral fraud. But the opposition did not help its cause by breaking up into smaller parties. By the this time, four new parties that had not been on the ballot two years earlier emerged contest and split the anti-communist vote. The Democratic Populists with 820,000 votes was led by a former Smallholder, István Barankovics, who had founded the party illegally in December 1944 but did not run a separate slate of candidates in the 1945 election in order to avoid challenging the National Front. Initially he enjoyed the support of the Catholic hierarchy led by Mindszenty. But the extreme right under the Cardinal rapidly broke away after an intra-party struggle to become a center of anti-communist and anti-Soviet attitudes.[84] The Party of Hungarian Independence with 651,000 votes, led by another former Smallholder, appealed to the conservative nationalists. The Independent Democratic Party with 260,000 votes was a motley collection of ex-smallholders and right wing National Peasants, including Imre Kovács, led by a priest with reputed financial ties to the Communists. A small democratic Women's Christian Party only attracted 70,000 votes. In addition the Radical Party representing the urban, professional and traditionally Jewish electorate jumped from 5700 to 89,000.[85]

Despite the anti-communist reputation of their party, some of the Smallholders leaders went to great lengths at liberation to reassure the Communists and the Soviet

representatives that they intended to cooperate fully with their partners in the coalition. Their assurances and their behavior contrasted sharply with that of the Polish, Rumanian and Bulgarian peasant parties, a fact recognized by Rákosi when he compared the Smallholder leader, Zoltán Tildy, who became president of Hungary in February 1946, with Maniu, the Rumanian peasant leader. Tildy was "a true democrat," Rákosi reported to Moscow, and the Hungarian peasants had suffered much more under fascism than the Rumanian peasants in the party of Maniu.[86] Nagy and Tildy were eager to reassure the Soviet representatives that their party was not a refuge for anti-democrats and open monarchists. It had attracted "accidental elements" but they were determined to introduce order into the rank and file.[87] Within a year their policy lay in ruins.

The key to the future of Hungarian politics lay with the Social Democratic Party. It had a strong tradition dating back to the last decades of the Dual Monarchy, but its tepid opposition to Horthy had diminished its luster in the inter war period. Still, it had deep roots in the trade union movement which continued to operate until the German occupation when both the party and the unions were prohibited. The party sprang to life rapidly after the liberation growing from over 60,000 members in March to 300,000 in April 1945. Unlike some other social democratic parties in southeastern Europe it was a workers' party par excellence. Seventy percent of the membership was made up of factory workers employed mainly in the traditional bastions of the proletariat, the metallurgical industry, printing and railroads. But as the party gained adherents a steady flow of intellectuals and white collar workers reduced the workers' share to just over half. It had little understanding of or appeal for the peasantry. The right and center of the party retained their allegiance to the reformist tradition linked to the Austrian and German movements. The Social Democrats had accepted unity of action with the Communists in the fall of 1944; this was mainly the work of leftists like Árpád Szakasits and György Marosán. The right wing of the party

represented by Károly Peyer, who had been arrested by the Germans, and the centrist Anna Kéthly subsequently criticized their decision and worked to reverse it. Like the socialists in Poland and Czechoslovakia the Hungarian Social Democrats were divided and disoriented by the ambiguities of the postwar world. Their worker constituency demanded radical socio-economic change. At times the leaders responded by playing the role of opposition within the coalition, a posture that earned them the anger of the Soviet representatives. Pushkin told Szakasits "It is time to cut short this business of attacking the government and it is necessary to help the government put the country back on its feet."[88] On the other hand the Social Democrats were aware of the need to keep the social peace. As one of them wrote to the Soviet Foreign Ministry in the fall of 1944, "the socialist revolution in Hungary cannot skip the democratic stage." One of the main reasons for accepting the communist appeal for joint action, he insisted, was to avoid falling prey to "imperialism" again. "Our people will fulfill this promise under the condition that the world war does not pass over into a civil war."[89] The Communists and their Soviet sponsors were equally determined to avoid that outcome.

In the short run the survival of the coalition in Hungary depended on the government's ability to resolve the outstanding economic problems of reconstruction and to carry out an agrarian reform. In the long run factors outside Hungary's control would determine its fate. In the early months after liberation, the Soviet representatives in the ACC and the military command made every effort to prevent Hungarian politics from splitting down the middle. Above all they were determined to avoid a repetition of the wild politics that had created difficulties for them in Rumania and Bulgaria and poisoned relations with the U.S. and Great Britain. Voroshilov gave strict orders to the commands of the Soviet armies of occupation to impose discipline on their actions and agitational work which translated into warnings against excesses of political zeal on the part of local

commanders. He responded with courtesy and decisiveness to complaints by the premier, General Miklós, concerning irregularities of the Soviet command in arresting local Hungarian officials and preventing public meetings of legal parties. On occasion the Soviet authorities went to the extraordinary lengths of apologizing in writing to Miklós for incidents involving Soviet officers who arbitrarily forbade public meetings.[90] Voroshilov and his political advisor, Georgii Pushkin, were equally insistent that Soviet policies would not be subverted by local political forces, especially left wing extremists. In March 1945, according to General Miklós, "Pushkin has forbidden the Communist Party to agitate against the government and that Voroshilov himself has stressed that civil strife will not (repeat not) be tolerated."[91] As if to banish all ambiguity, Pushkin also told the Communists that Moscow would not tolerate a radical approach to the land reform question "since it might result in civil strife and would undoubtedly cut down Hungarian food production which the Red Army needs urgently."[92]

At the same time, the Soviet representatives treated their American counterparts with a courtesy that could not be imagined by the bitter and embattled Americans in Bucharest and Sofia. One striking example was Soviet assurances that they had no objection to the Americans travelling freely without permission anywhere in Hungary outside the front lines. This did not mean that Voroshilov was willing to give the American and British representatives an equal share in the ACC or even to consult them on many matters. But the main points of contention between the Soviet and American side had to do with the removal of American assets as Soviet war booty. Even on this issue, as it turned out, both sides ended up embarrassed by their lack of accurate information concerning competing claims.[93] As a result, throughout most of 1945 the American representatives in Budapest displayed none of the frustration, anger and hostility that by contrast characterized the attitudes of its missions in Rumania and Bulgaria toward the Soviet

Union.[94] Their main interest was in obtaining the restoration of American property, mainly in the oil industry. In general, the Roosevelt administration showed little interest in the fate of Hungary.

The Hungarian communist leadership adhered closely to Moscow's moderate line. They faced some of the same pent up demands for immediate and radical reform that welled up elsewhere in the liberated East European borderlands. Despite the absence of any significant resistance movement in Hungary, a spontaneous surge of the impoverished and downtrodden elements of the population led for the most part by local Communists but with the participation of social-democrats and populists took control of local governments, factories and large estates in the early days of the liberation. It became the party's task to harness these outbursts of "direct democracy." At the same time the Soviet command moved rapidly to restore public administration by appointing local people to positions of authority in the liberated villages and towns. As in eastern Germany the Red Army Political Administration insisted on a political mix of the new officials in order to avoid the impression that it was installing a communist regime. Officially it took the position that the Hungarians would run their own local affairs, although, as we have seen, some unit commanders intervened more actively than others in promoting the interests of the Communists.[95]

Leftist and even revolutionary sentiments were widespread among the political activists in the counties east of the Tisza River. The area nurtured a tradition of social radicalism that dated from its Calvinist conversion and gained renewed strength during the revolution of 1848. In a few remote villages outside the direct control of either the Red Army or communist organizers, local "directories" sprang up on the model of 1919. The arrival of Soviet officers or responsible comrades put a quick end to calls for an immediate dictatorship of the proletariat. But throughout the region the idea of direct democracy promoted by grass roots organizations had broad appeal.

Of the three organs of popular democracy the national committees were the focal point for the communist party's drive to give real substance to the fragile coalition of parties that constituted the untested provisional government. The Communists claimed to have been inspired by the example of the Polish anti-fascist liberation movement, but it did not have to contend with the hostility of a powerful peasant party or armed bands in the forests. Consequently, the task of clearing the debris of war, restoring local services, organizing the autumn harvest and reviving production went more smoothly and rapidly than in Poland or Rumania for that matter.

The national committees shouldered responsibility for maintaining order and setting up popular tribunals to bring fascists to justice. These were volatile issues. Elsewhere in Eastern Europe and in France and Italy as well summary justice for collaborationists created an atmosphere of fear. In Hungary, in the early stages of liberation the party proceeded cautiously. Under the supervision of the national committees people's guard or civic guards were organized. But they received no uniforms, few arms and meager wages or none at all. They carried out useful work, maintaining order and performing menial duties for the Red Army. They did not terrorize the local population as their counterparts in the Balkans. Several months elapsed until in early January 1945 the party and trade unions persuaded the national committees in Szeged and Gyula to establish a people's tribunal.

In the fall of 1944 as the military front moved to the west, a variety of local workers' organizations sprang up in the factories of Szeged, Debrecen, Miskolc, Baja and Pécs. In some cases when the owners and managers had fled, they took full control of the factories. Elsewhere they only insisted on rights of supervision. The idea of nationalizing industry was very popular among the factory committees. The party, concerned about the effect of workers' control on the stability of the coalition and on its own influence over the working class, took steps to check the seizure of factories and restore production. But it was not

immediately successful in taming the more radical committees. In the first two years of the coalition, the sharp decline in living standards and the desperate economic situation had a demoralizing effect on the working class. The activities of the factory committees were clear proofs that the working class was not united. The Communists had to compete with the Social Democrats who had represented the workers' interests in the interwar period and could draw on even older traditions in the labor movement going back to the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. In certain industrial enterprises the Communists found themselves outflanked on the left.[96]

The Peasantry and Land Reform

The land claims committees appeared in the spring of 1945, and were rapidly integrated into the state organization of the land reform. But the agitation in the countryside for redistribution was mounting in the fall of 1944. The national committees responded in February and March of 1945 by forming the first land claim committees and in certain northern and eastern regions they began to redistribute land before the legal enactment of a land reform bill. As it turned out the land reform, radical as it was, did not have the anticipated result anticipated by the Communists and feared by others of radicalizing peasant politics. Nevertheless, the existence of the land claims committees enabled the Communists and the National Peasant Party to penetrate the countryside as they had never been able to do before and to challenge the Smallholders' virtually monopoly of influence over the peasantry.

The Hungarian land reform, carried out by a series of decrees from March 1945 to September 1946 was the most extensive in Eastern Europe following the end of World War II.[97] In his meetings with the Hungarian Communists in December 1944, Stalin insisted on

a broad based land reform to create a mass of smallholders. The provisional assembly in Debrecen had accepted the principle, and the National Peasants were given the courtesy of introducing the first draft. But the real work was done in the Ministry of Agriculture by the long-time agrarian expert, Imre Nagy.

Nagy was a former social democrat who had gone over to the Communists in the 1920's without abandoning his moderate views on land reform. At the Party's Second Congress in 1930 held near Moscow, he proposed an agrarian program that differed from the prevailing Comintern line by advocating the distribution of land to the peasantry in the form of private holdings. At the height of the Soviet collectivization drive, it was a courageous stand, but he was forced to recant. He joined the International Agrarian Institute where he worked under Bukharin's supervision. Mild mannered and studious he wrote articles for Soviet agricultural journals and steered clear of factional fights among exiles and within the CPSU. In 1945 during the debate over agrarian reform in Hungary, his earlier views appeared to have been vindicated. His published work in postwar Hungary revealed his debt to Bukharin, particularly with respect to the gradual transition to socialist agriculture and the avoidance of administrative methods in the countryside. After the introduction of the land reform, the party promoted his candidacy for Minister of Interior counting on his moderate reputation to reassure its coalition partners. But he never felt easy in a position where administrative measures were everything, and he stepped down after a few months in office. Although he reluctantly approved the first illegal political repressions of the democratic parties in 1947, he vigorously opposed collectivization. In 1956 he emerged as the anti-Stalinist moderate leader he had always been at heart.[98]

In 1945 the four ruling parties agreed on the necessity of land reform but offered widely different plans. The Smallholders favored employing committees of experts to establish norms that would create farms of middle size which they claimed would be

economically viable. The Communists and National Peasants favored redistribution that would affect the dwarf holders and landless peasants. They also insisted that the reform be carried out by locally elected land committees instead of the old bureaucracy. By early spring 1945 the peasants in the poor regions beyond the Tisza River, learning that the reform was under discussion began to seize the land and divide it. The role of communist agitation in the campaign is a matter of dispute. Nagy claimed that the government was under pressure to produce results or else lose control of the situation. In any case over the protests of the Smallholders, Nagy got approval from Voroshilov of a reform that redistributed thirty-five percent of the country's territory, over eight million acres mainly to landless peasants and dwarf holders. More than 642,000 families received parcels. The property of the Volksbund organization of the German minority was confiscated outright and big estates over 100 *hold* (a *hold* equals 1.4 acres) were expropriated with compensation that in the end was never paid. Well-to-do peasants were allowed to retain their private holdings up to 200 *hold*. The bulk of the redistributed land went to peasants owning from five to twenty *hold*. Nagy claimed that this was a "wager on the middle peasant."[99] The implementation of the reform was carried out by 3200 local land committees. Elections of their 30,000 members were dominated by a majority of village poor, agricultural laborers and poor peasants who returned a plurality of Communists. In areas like Transdanubia, the redistribution went smoothly, but in the Great Plains where the big estates predominated the redistribution assumed a more radical form. Committees under the direction of the poor peasants frequently disregarded provisions of the reform legislation. Spurred by a desire to give some land to every claimant and to exact revenge from pro-fascist or just unpopular landlords, they seized properties of smaller estates that were exempted from expropriation and even declared some wealthy peasants to be enemies of the people.[100]

If the Communists expected to win over the peasantry, they were disappointed. What the land reform did accomplish for them in its initial stage was to split the peasantry politically and neutralize it as an active, unified anti-communist force. The first free postwar election showed that the Communists had for the first time won adherents in the countryside, and their allies in the National Peasant Party polled 324,000 votes. Many peasants took the land and then voted for the Smallholders, but as time would tell they were not prepared to act collectively in opposing Communist political pressures against their leaders. The reason for this lay, in part, with the on-going struggle in the countryside following the process of redistribution that involved registering, surveying and delimiting boundaries of the new plots.

The Working Class

The restoration of industrial production and transportation confronted the Communists with a more serious challenge to their claim to represent the interests of the toiling masses. Their main problem was to persuade the working class to accept great short term sacrifices, i.e. a marginal standard of living, strict factory discipline, no strikes and a wage freeze. The working class was structurally divided and politically disoriented. A distortion in the economic growth of the country led to the concentration of half the working class population in the Greater Budapest area but small shops and craftsmen accounted for about a quarter of production. In the country as a whole workers associated with factory production outnumbered those in crafts by only a small majority (56% to 44%) The craftsmen normally adopted a more conservative outlook. The political loyalties of the working class oscillated wildly in the decade from 1938-48. In the absence of an active left between the wars, unskilled and semi-skilled workers fell prey to the blandishment of

fascist organizations. As a result of the great surge in membership of the Arrow Cross on the eve of the Second World War a majority of the party came from enterprises in the industrial sector of Budapest as well as the depressed rural regions. At the height of its popularity it enrolled from 250-300,000 members. In the elections of 1940 the Arrow Cross outpolled the Social Democrats in Budapest by two to one and emerged as the strongest party in the working class districts of the city and the coal mining areas. The party organized one of the largest miners' strikes in Hungarian history.[101] Five years later the mass of unorganized workers were impelled by the same miserable conditions to flood the ranks of the Communists. Like the bulk of agricultural laborers in the countryside, the unorganized workers had been excluded from the traditional political organizations of the center and right. They were willing to trade their allegiance to any party that was prepared to defend their interests. For them the shift from Arrow Cross to Communist Party was not a great psychological leap. Before and after the war there was no other place to go. The Social Democrats by clinging to its traditional policy of representing the interests of the skilled workers let slip the opportunity to make itself the dominant party of the left.

At liberation the Hungarian Communist Party was determined to legitimize its claim as a ruling party by disciplining the workers and leading them to reconstruct the country without substantial economic aid from the west. They were generally successful in reducing the influence of the factory committees, holding the line on wages and preventing strikes. At the same time, they made good promises to introduce structural reforms that would increase the role of the state in certain areas of the economy without advocating nationalization. In the summer of 1945 supported by economic specialists in the Hungarian General Credit Bank, they secured government's support for some sort of central economic planning, though the real increase in state control over the market did not come until 1946. Despite the drop in real wages by over fifty percent and the terrible food shortages the

pace of reconstruction was nothing short of spectacular. By early 1946 eighty percent of the railroads had been repaired and coal mining had returned to ninety percent of its prewar level.[102] The achievement was due to a national effort. But the Communists claimed credit for its leadership of the working class which had fulfilled its duties and demonstrated its patriotism through self-sacrifice. The time had come to reward it by nationalizing the commanding heights of the economy. But the Communists did not take this step until the political breakdown of tripartism in the summer and fall of 1945.

The Nationalities

The Communists also took the lead in agitating for a deportation of the Swabian population. These were Catholic Germans who had been settled in Transdanubia by Leopold I in the late seventeenth century as part of his colonization plan. They were partially integrated into society, enjoyed a reputation for being industrious and in the twentieth century were strongly represented in the Officer Corps. But many responded to the appeal of Hitler's racist policy. Out of a population of 477,000 whose mother tongue was German, well over 300,000 identified themselves as German by nationality and 150,000 joined the Volksbund; many of these served in the SS. Here the main problem for the Communists was similar to that in the red belt around Budapest. In both cases the proletarian elements had flocked to join fascist organizations. But the Soviet Union followed by the communist parties of Eastern Europe had opted for ethnic cleansing over class solidarity with respect to the Germans no matter what their class origins or how deep their roots in the soil of the borderlands. Besides, in Hungary land confiscated from the Swabians could be redistributed to the landless Hungarian peasantry. All the parties supported the deportation with varying degrees of enthusiasm, the Communists leading the

charge.[103] While contributing to the trend throughout the borderlands of ethnic homogenization, the deportation of the Swabians, like the more murderous elimination of the Jews deprived Hungary of valuable human resources which it could ill afford to lose.

The counter flow of Hungarian speaking citizens of Slovakia was hardly an adequate compensation. The Hungarian government with the support of the Communists strongly opposed the population exchange proposed by the Czech government. Pleading their case with Molotov on the eve of the signing of the Paris Peace Treaty in February 1947, the Hungarian foreign minister argued his country could not absorb the over 200,000 Hungarians that the Czechs considered dangerous and wished to expel. The land confiscated from the Swabians had already been redistributed to landless Hungarian peasants and there were still 300,000 Hungarian agricultural workers peasants without land. Moreover, there were only 103,000 Slovaks in Hungary and half of those wished to remain there. Among the 84,000 who had signed up to move to Slovakia 10,000 were German and Hungarian speakers not knowing a word of Slovak but interested only in finding better living conditions. The solution for Hungarians living in Slovakia, he insisted was the extension of civil rights; but the Czech government refused to discuss the issue. Molotov fobbed off the Hungarians with the assurance that sometime in the future the two governments would resolve the question. For the present, Molotov declared, the Soviet delegation "had agreed to support the Czechoslovakia on this question." He reminded the Hungarian minister that 1.4 million Poles had been transferred from the *kresy* to Poland and several hundred thousand Belorussian, Ukrainians and Lithuanians had been resettled in the USSR "without a fuss or any misunderstandings."[104] The message was clear: follow their example.

Political Justice and Local Administration

By early January 1945 with most of the country freed of German forces, the Provisional Government began to reconstitute the central organs of the state and the political parties intensified their efforts to reorganize on the local level in preparation for the first postwar elections. Outside the two economics ministries run by the Communists and Interior under Erdei, the state bureaucracy retained many holdovers from the Horthy regime. The quadripartite verification commissions set up on the communist party's initiative to screen office holders functioned indifferently. The coalition partners could not agree on standards; too many bureaucrats were tainted with collaboration; and the communist party was unwilling to force the issue at the possible cost of rupturing the coalition and disrupting government operations.[105]

The question of trying war criminals caused the coalition and especially the Communists a great deal of trouble. Later in 1945 Rákosi was obliged to defend the party's record against Dimitrov's criticism that there had not been any major political trials in Hungary with the rather lame excuse that all the leading fascists had fled. More to the point he also admitted that it was politically impossible to move against the fascist rank and file. Over seventy-eight per cent of the 8000 fascists who had been interned in Budapest after the liberation were industrial workers.[106]

After Budapest was liberated the People's Court and Procuracy stepped up the process of screening and trying accused fascists. The composition of the court and its procedures were in strict accord with established legal practices. Almost all members of the court were non-party and had legal training acquired by some in the Hungarian Army. Almost all were doctors of law. The Procuracy was more inclined to the left but it too was legally well qualified. But the People's Court judges were under considerable political pressure and many of the trials were hastily prepared with the result that many obvious war

criminals especially those involved in killing Jews escaped justice. Over 27,000 cases were examined; up to March 1948 322 death sentences were pronounced of which 146 were carried out. Among the executed were fourteen leading members of the previous governments. The most high profile and controversial trial was that of László Bárdossy, prime minister from 1941-1942, ending in his conviction and execution. Although Soviet observers thought the process too slow, they did not attack the integrity of the court or the results of its work.[107] The contrast with Rumania and Bulgaria was striking.

Shrewdly, the government not only recognized the authority of the national committees to organize local government but made them obligatory. In areas where they did not exist the government created them "from above." This did not prevent tensions from developing between the two. Under conditions of near anarchy with a breakdown in communications and transportation, the national committees often usurped the functions of the public administration. The national committees that appeared late and west of the Tisza and south of the Danube were controlled by the traditionally conservative social elements, the Catholic Church, the big landowners, the village notaries and judges. In a few minority counties there were even committees in the hands of the Volksbund, the fascist organization of German speakers in Hungary.[108] It was only in the summer of 1945 that the government was able to reassert its control over all the national committees. Although the Communists were the main beneficiaries of the grass roots movement which brought poor peasants, artisans and workers into local politics for the first time, they acceded to the decline of the committees.

Meanwhile, the government introduced legislation in February to strip the factory committees of much of their authority and then in June to assign them new tasks which essentially amounted to boosting production. They naturally came into conflict with the trade union organizations and their members were extremely dissatisfied with their new

role as agents of the state.[109] Both the national and factory committees subsequently became useful to the Communists as organs of mobilizing the masses in the countryside and towns. But in 1945 that lay two to three years in the future. At the time it appeared to many in the party and among their sympathizers that the Communists had surrendered positions already gained. It was an unlikely formula for political success.

Party Politics

The reemergence of party politics in Hungary brought to the surface the old social tensions, but the leaders of both the left, that is the Communists, and the right, the Smallholders Party, took pains to avoid an open confrontation and reach an accommodation. The communist party struggled throughout the first half of 1945 to put its own house in order. Despite a twenty-five year ban on its activities — longer than that endured by any other European communist party — the party had, by May, enrolled about 150,000 members. This was a dramatic increase from the modest total of 2500 members at the end of 1944. But the social composition of the party left much to be desired in the eyes of the leadership and the more critical Soviet observers. Not only was there no mass anti-fascist movement in Hungary during the war, but the working class and poor peasants had not been radicalized by a national-liberation movement at the moment of the break with Nazi Germany, as for example in the case of Rumania. To add to the party's difficulties in recruiting reliable cadres, the structure of the Hungarian working class was still archaic. The majority of the workers were concentrated in one urban center — Budapest — surrounded by counties with a dominant peasant population. Only slightly more than half the workers were employed in factories; the rest were still engaged in handicrafts. Initially the party recruiters found it easier to attract workers who had never been organized or

workers who had belonged to other parties. These were often unskilled, recent emigrants from the countryside who worked in small shops and had supported the Arrow Cross fascist organization. The Soviet authorities were particularly critical of the mottled social origins and undisciplined leftist inclinations of the younger generation who poured into the party. Their impatience with building a bourgeois democracy and haste to press on to Soviet power ended up alienating the peasants and small property owners. "Unfortunately," Soviet diplomats concluded, "the communist party has not organized a timely struggle against leftist inclinations; moreover such a mood appears among leading Communists as well."[110] Reports by Soviet representatives of the ACC in the spring of 1945 lamented that the Communists in the provinces lagged behind both the Smallholders and the Social Democrats because the local leadership was incompetent or lacked experience.[111]

The relatively benign policy of the Soviet Union in Hungary, which fell somewhere between its activities in Finland and Rumania, was a matter of grave concern to the Hungarian communist leaders. They were worried that unless they could rapidly restore order and the economy they might have to retreat from the position that had fallen into their hands as a by-product of the Red Army's victory. At times Rákosi sounded despairing, although some of his complaints may have been self-serving, calculated to gain greater direct Soviet support for the party. In briefing the International section of the Soviet Central Committee, he admitted that the party was "politically unschooled" and recent recruits knew nothing about Leninism. Their attitude toward women resembled that of a Balkan nation (a comment that did not please Dimitrov). It was better at first to concentrate political work at the center in Budapest while gradually winning over the masses. In Rákosi's eyes, the main difficulty came from the sectarian left. In factories where the owners had fled the workers organized in factory committees simply took charge and proclaimed that the capitalists were no longer necessary. They were convinced that "Moscow" could only

agree with them. In the provinces, he continued, "village dictators and people who work in the police do stupid things in the name of the communist party." The other side of the coin was the suspicion of businessmen and intellectuals. The former, Rákosi drily remarked, had "absolute confidence in the Communists," meaning that they believed the party would relentlessly pursue its maximum aims. "Unfortunately," he stated, "we have not succeeded in convincing them that we do not wish a Communist Hungary." The latter were, according to Rákosi, wedded to reaction. In an unofficial meeting with thirty of the most distinguished intellectuals, they had frankly revealed to him their strong admiration for England and their fears of the Red Army and communist party. The party enjoyed mixed success in its drive to disarm the right. Rákosi admitted to great difficulties in penetrating the regular police due to the resistance of other parties and a lack of professionally competent Communists. It was "a very weak side of the party," he lamented. "If we do not succeed in a month or two in establishing order, we will have to retreat, abandon the secondary positions and concentrate attention on the important areas." But the party scored notable successes in the army where it controlled several key posts including chief of intelligence. The struggle for a new army was just beginning.[112]

Committed to a "parliamentary road to socialism", the Hungarian Communist Party set its sights on three primary targets: a reconstitution of the government from above rather than from below; economic reconstruction and land reform. The first important political victory of the Communists was to engineer a reorganization of the coalition government in the spring of 1945. They initiated the process by criticizing the work of one of their own men, the Minister of Transportation, József Gábor, a long time resident in the USSR, for his poor performance in office. They suggested replacing him with the more hard-driving Ernő Gerő. The cabinet could not then easily resist their demand to dump the right wing Social Democratic Minister of Industry, Ferenc Takács, for the similar failings and replace him with

a member of the left wing of the same party, Antal Bán. The moderate members of the government staged a counter attack. In July they rallied behind the proposal of the right wing Social Democratic Minister of Justice, Ágoston Valentiny, to shift the investigation of war criminals from the Ministry of Interior to the Ministry of Justice, a move obviously intended to prevent further arbitrary acts by the Communist-dominated political police and circumvent the authority of the pro-Communist Minister of the Interior, Ferenc Erdei. This triggered the first in a series of direct intervention in the appointment of ministers in Hungarian government by the Soviet representative on the ACC, Minister Pushkin. He remonstrated with Foreign Minister Gyöngyösi on the grounds that this "would not help strengthen the struggle against war criminals and fascist elements." The government had acted without consulting the ACC and that the proposal had been jammed through the cabinet without the opportunity of members of the government — clearly the Communists are meant here — to examine it beforehand. Gyöngyösi justified the proposal as a response to the indignation in the country about the work of the police and explained that the leaders of the Smallholders were responding to pressure from the right wing led by Béla Varga to make some concessions in order to avoid splitting the party. Writing to Moscow, Pushkin attributed Gyöngyösi's apparent confusion to the fact that he had accepted his post under American and British pressure and now was reacting to pressure from the right. The next day Pushkin had a similar conversation with the premier, Miklós, reassuring him that "we do not regard you as a transitional figure" but it would be easier to support him if he did not support such decrees. Relying on the terms of the armistice, Pushkin reminded Miklós that Voroshilov had repeatedly discussed with him Soviet concerns about the delays introduced by the Ministry of Justice in the punishment of the fascists. Pushkin agreed that order had to be introduced into the police but insisted that they were "the only state organ which was doing something to isolate the war criminals and

fascists." Miklós agreed to work to regularize the police through the appropriate ministry and not to sign the decree.[113] Valentiny resigned and another left wing social democrat, István Ries replaced him.

The next to go was the Minister of Finance, István Vásáry, who as a large landowner was vulnerable to attack during the government's preparations of the land reform. Pushkin insisted on the appointment of an experienced financial specialist and convinced the head of the State Bank to take the job. Another easy target for the communist campaign was Lieut. General Gábor Faraghó, the inspector of the dreaded Gendarmerie under Horthy, whose conduct as Minister of Food the Communists described as reactionary. It should be remembered that the fallen ministers had all been originally proposed by Ernő Gerő. The Communists could maintain that it was not their politics but their performance that had undone them. Once again Ambassador Pushkin intervened pressing for his replacement by Sándor Rónai, another left wing Social Democrat. As a sop to the moderates a new post for Minister of Reconstruction was created for the secretary general of the Smallholders Party, Ferenc Nagy.[114] The skirmish revealed an element of instability in the coalition and, what was more important, the swing position of the Social Democrats.

Throughout 1945 Hungarian politics remained in a state of flux. There was fierce competition among the three main parties of the coalition to colonize the ministries under their control. The Communists and socialists battled over appointments to the administrative apparatus of the trade unions. The non-Communists attributed their difficulties to the subversive tactics of their rivals and to the enormous assistance allegedly given by the Red Army and the ACC to the Hungarian Communists. There was no denying the fact that the material support given by the Red Army to the Communists in the form of cars, trucks, special rations and other resources in shattered Budapest bolstered the

appeal of the party to the dispirited and opportunists. But privately the Communists saw things differently. In the April 1945 Rákosi complained to Dimitrov that the Soviet authorities were indifferent to the needs of the Communists. He reported that worker delegations appeared at communist headquarters "every day" to deplore that fact that the work of economic reconstruction was seriously hampered by the Soviet policy of dismantling factories. He attributed the closing of two Budapest party organs to a shortage of paper caused by Red Army confiscations. There were also serious problems in transportation that stemmed in part from the Red Army's policy of treating all railroad equipment as war booty. He begged for Dimitrov's help since "the quartermaster corps and other organizations of the Red Army does not always display a correct understanding of our position."[115]

Rákosi was no more successful in getting Soviet support to protect the Hungarian minority in Slovakia from brutal expulsion at the hands of a Czechoslovak government headed by Zdenek Fierlinger, a left wing Social Democrat strongly supported by the Communists. On the spot reports by the political administration of the Red Army acknowledged that the local Hungarian Communists were helpless to prevent the outrages and the Czech authorities simply ignored the orders of the Soviet kommandatura. But Rákosi could get no satisfaction from either the Czech Communists or Stalin. In a letter of July 1945 he complained bitterly to Dimitrov that his personal intervention with the Czech comrades had ended in disaster. While the Czechs admitted that Molotov and Vyshinskii had recommended their softening their policy toward the Hungarians, Stalin had told them to deal with the Hungarians like the Germans: "Give it to them in the teeth," he was quoted as having said.[116]

Rákosi also had his problems in restraining radical elements in the mass of the Hungarian population whom the communist counted on for electoral support. Workers

bitterly complained of terrible working conditions and demanded minimal standards of living that the party found it difficult to resist while factory committees continued to "live almost a life of their own." The Congress of Agricultural Workers meeting in April was extremely radical demanding "there should not be a single day laborer" left in the country. The National Peasant Party was inexperienced and ineffectual in helping the Communists restrain the radicals in the local peasant committees. Rákosi denounced the dominant right wing of the Social Democrats, "filled with Jews (sic!) and careerists," which "uses the food crisis against us" and wins over discontented industrial workers. [117]

Nor was the party, in Rákosi's eyes, a reliable instrument in the political struggle. At the first party congress in May he stressed that the party's "main aim" was to reconstruct the country's economy but that there were dangerous sectarian tendencies that favored the use of "administrative measures" to impose their will on others rather than resorting to the policy of the united front. To be sure, there was always the danger of right deviation, and he urged greater ideological indoctrination because "a significant part of the membership of the party do not understand the policy advanced by the party of consolidating the democratic forces and interpret this policy opportunistically, regarding it as inconsistent with an independent political line." However, Soviet observers were pleased to note, the congresse followed Rákosi in identifying sectarianism as the main enemy; it slowed work in the trade unions, led to unwarranted interference of factory committees on the shop floor, and discouraged intellectuals from supporting the new democracy.[118]

Electoral Politics

The party kept oscillating from right to left, buffeted by external pressures and internal disagreements. Throughout the summer of 1945 the communist press issued

contradictory signals on the party's attitude toward the Smallholders, varying from accusations of reaction to assurances of loyal cooperation.[119] On the eve of the municipal elections in Budapest in October 1945 the Communists succumbed to the agitation from below to conclude an electoral pact with the Social Democrats in order to field a unified working class list of candidates. They would pay heavily for having broken with their own stated policy of tripartite cooperation. The left also sought to introduce voting restrictions that would have disqualified a large number of potential supporters of the Smallholders. When in late August Erdei's proposals were rejected by the cabinet, the local Soviet authorities washed their hands of the elections; they had no desire to be implicated in the setback. The Red Army assumed a neutral stance, as reported by State Department sources.[120] It was one of the few truly free elections held in Eastern Europe after the war. The Smallholders won a narrow but absolute majority over the United Workers Front in Budapest, and polled almost 45% of the vote in the heavily industrialized suburb of Újpest.[121] Voroshilov was reportedly furious. His political adviser and subsequently ambassador to Hungary, Georgii Pushkin was sharply critical of the Hungarian communist tactics. His postmortem on the elections represented the most comprehensive contemporary analysis of Soviet policy in Hungary and deserves to be cited *in extenso*.

> The Communist Party of Hungary has departed from the general line adopted in Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, Rumania and Finland where an electoral bloc of candidates was created. Such a bloc, fully corresponding to our policy, existed until the municipal elections in Hungary. However, during the period of the electoral campaign the Hungarian Communists preferred an electoral bloc exclusively with the Social Democrats to a broad bloc of the democratic forces ... The Communist Party can only strengthen its position in the government and in the political life of the country by means of a bloc with the mass democratic parties. The extremely serious tasks facing Hungary with regard to the democratization of the country, the restoration of the economy, and the restructuring of finances imposed an obligation (on the party) to follow this course. Only a bloc of democratic parties can come to grips with these tasks, a

bloc organized not only with the Social Democrats but also with the National Peasant Party and unquestionably with the Smallholders as the most influential party in the country.[122]

The Hungarian Communists and their Soviet mentors in Hungary faced a dilemma. A repetition at the national level of the communist defeat in the municipal elections might lead to the exclusion of the Communists from the government, a political disaster of the first magnitude that had to be prevented at all costs. The Social Democrats, sobered by the effect of their alliance with the Communists, proposed postponing the elections to parliament until May 1946, an idea strongly endorsed by the Smallholders and the British and American representatives on the ACC. Voroshilov was immediately suspicious. Any delay over the harsh winter months would expose the coalition government's economic program and the communist party which drafted it to attack for having failed to improve the deteriorating living conditions. He insisted on immediate elections.[123] But an unexpected show of independence by the Smallholders threatened to unravel the appearance of a unified coalition.

Voroshilov and Rákosi sought unsuccessfully to persuade Tildy to enter into a four party bloc for the national elections. However, in reporting to Moscow Voroshilov strongly denied he had applied pressure on either the Smallholders or the Social Democrats and accused the American and British journalists of lying. Tildy shrewdly argued that a four party bloc would allow the small bourgeois parties outside the bloc to garner the votes of all the malcontents including those in his own party. Holding out for separate lists, he proposed that the four parties broadcast a joint manifesto stating their intention to cooperate after the elections and reconstitute a coalition government with a common program. Rákosi made no objection. Voroshilov approved the joint declaration.[124] But members of the Soviet Politburo informed Stalin that this was a serious mistake; Voroshilov "had acted incorrectly." They interpreted the manifesto as

an attempt by the Smallholders to conceal their refusal to enter an electoral bloc of the four parties.[125] But it was too late to reverse the decision as the manifesto had been broadcast.

The August 1945 elections came as another shock to the Communists. In another fair and free election the Smallholders won fifty-seven percent of the votes; the Social Democrats received 17.4 per cent; the Communists finished a close third with 16.9 per cent and the National Peasant Party a distant fourth with 6.8 per cent. The Social Democrats outpolled the Communists in the provincial industrial communities as well as the industrial towns around Budapest.[126] In retrospect it is clear that the country was deeply split on basic issues of socio-economic change and constitutional forms. According to a perceptive study by Charles Gati, the voting revealed more or less equal support within the population for a moderate and a radical or revolutionary transformation of the economy. There were, in fact, three different models of development: bourgeois democracy, populism and popular democracy supported respectively by the right and center of the Smallholders plus the small middle class parties, the left wing of the Smallholders and the National Peasants and the parties of the working class and poor peasants, the Social Democrats and Communists. That the party alignment did not always correspond to the social and economic program of the voters can be explained by the widespread hostility to the Soviet occupation.[127] A trio of post-Soviet Russian historians take a slightly different view by arguing that there was a potential majority for the creation of a genuine popular democracy built upon the Communists, left wing Social Democrats, National Peasant Party and left wing of the Smallholders, a combination which actually came into existence by 1947 only to disintegrate under external pressure of the Cold War.[128] In the wake of the elections themselves, the two extremes in Hungarian politics in the right wing of the Smallholders and the left wing of the Communist Party drew radically

different conclusions that threatened further to polarize the country.

The renewed political struggle revolved around three issues, the reconstruction of the government, the counter-reform in the countryside and control of the national economy. In the period of intense political bargaining following the election, the Smallholders, flushed with victory, claimed seven out of the fourteen portfolios including the Ministry of Interior. The Communists and Social Democrats were to have three each. The Soviet leaders reacted strongly. They insisted on retaining of the Ministry of Interior for the Communists instead of the Ministry of Finance, on naming of two vice premiers for the Communists and Social Democrats and on appointing individuals to other ministerial posts who were "personally acceptable to the Soviet Government." The Hungarian Communists, they further insisted, should agree with the other parties on a program that "would guarantee an unconditional friendly attitude toward the Soviet Union, support for the implementation of the agrarian reform, support for the anti-fascist democratic forces and the extirpation of the remnants of fascism in Hungary." Stalin gave his approval.[129]

The struggle over the Ministry of Interior was not, however, easily resolved. The Social Democrats raised objections to a communist and demanded the portfolio for one of their own. Tildy and Ferenc Nagy equally opposed a communist minister. The bargaining became more complicated as Voroshilov attempted to find a solution acceptable to all parties. The Ministry of Interior became the center of a struggle among the three governing parties. Voroshilov proposed various combinations but insisted on assigning the Ministry of Interior to the Communists. The Smallholders vigorously opposed a communist for Finance pointing out the difficulties this would create with the banking sector. They also resisted the appointment of a communist and socialist deputy premier, rather than two ministers without portfolio. Rákosi refused to concede on the Ministry of Interior but gave up the Ministry of Finance. The Soviet representatives then acted to break the deadlock. The key was to end

the joint opposition of the Social Democrats and Smallholders to a communist Minister of Interior and to pressure the Smallholders to accept the two deputy premiers. As their price for conceding the Smallholder leaders insisted on maintaining half the portfolios in the cabinet which meant the appointment of two of their members as ministers without portfolio.[130] Under Soviet pressure representatives of the three parties met to hammer out a compromise.

The Ministry of Interior was delivered to the Communists, but Imre Nagy was named minister. The Smallholders regarded this as a minor success. They had managed to exclude Ferenc Erdei from the government. He had long been a thorn in the side of the Smallholders who considered him "irresponsible." According to the right wing Smallholder, István Balogh, Erdei had introduced "the worst gangster elements" in to the police and that "it would be better to have a communist minister of the interior."[131] Imre Nagy was more acceptable "as not being a vigorous personality."[132] The Smallholders and the Socialists asserted their claims to the main economics ministries. They thought this would enable them to minimize communist influence over industry, reassure foreign investors and attract credits from the West without which, they were convinced, Hungary would become an impoverished dependency of the Soviet Union. For the same reason it was important for them to hold on to the Foreign Ministry. Rákosi, reportedly "most depressed" and fearful of having lost the confidence of Moscow, successfully resisted the attempt to humiliate him further by appointing him minister without portfolio and held out for deputy prime minister.[133] At the governmental level there remained the constitutional issue of declaring a republic and electing a president. The Soviet representatives agreed to accept a member of the Smallholders Party as president of the republic but Rákosi insisted on Tildy and not Ferenc Nagy being the candidate. He told Nagy he had nothing against him personally but that the reaction, namely Cardinal Mindszenty, openly opposed Tildy and endorsing any

other candidate would appear to be a defeat for democracy.[134]

On the surface the communist position in the cabinet did not appear to be strong. They only held three ministries with portfolios, Interior (Nagy), Transport (Gerő) and Social Insurance (Molnár) plus Rákosi as deputy premier. But they still controlled the police and were over represented in the bureaucracy and among mayors of the main Hungarian cities.[135] They could rely on the intervention of the Soviet authorities if their position was seriously challenged. The key to maintaining a tripartite government was cooperation between the Smallholders and the Social Democrats to prevent a communist monopoly of power. But these two parties were not internally unified and the left wings were predisposed to support rather than challenge the Communists at crucial moments.

In the countryside the right gathered courage from the election results and began a campaign to slow up or in some cases even reverse the land reform. By late 1945 or early 1946 the reform had been carried out in only about half of the country's 3200 villages. The delays were due in part to the foot dragging of the bureaucracy and in part to the legal disputes that arose between former owners and peasant claimants. Some of the well-to-do peasants whose land had been illegally seized by the local committees demanded a review of the reform and restoration of their properties. Representatives of the right wing of the Smallholders Party fanned out into the countryside demanding that the land committees be dismantled or substantially reorganized. Submitting to these pressures the Smallholders prepared legislation to modify the land reform.[136] In an interview with a British correspondent Balogh declared that the Smallholders continued "to play poker" with the Communists, even though they cheated, only because there was a man with a revolver standing at the door.[137] The implication was clear. Like Mikolajczek in Poland there were those in Hungary who were simply waiting for the Peace Conference to rid the country of Soviet forces so that they could deal directly with the Communists.

For their part the Communists, with some Soviet prodding, sought to check their losses and mount an offensive on the economic front. Determined to neutralize the tactics of the Smallholders, the Soviet representatives on the ACC advised the Communists to press for the creation of a Supreme Economic Council that would have the authority to decide immediate economic questions. The premier, Zoltán Tildy, assumed the chairmanship but the Communists and their social democratic allies dominated the board. The contest over control of the economy developed on two lines. In the Economic Council the veteran communist Zoltán Vas ran things out of the secretariat and used the agency's broad authority over taxes, wages and allocation of materials to increase the dependence of enterprises on the state. Even the appointment of the Smallholder ministers of Finance and Supply failed to slow down their *dirigiste* policy. The Council adopted the party's financial stabilization scheme which together with a Soviet loan and extension of the schedule of reparations payments from six to eight years succeeded by August in bringing inflation under control. But the cost of the currency reform for the Communists was the transfer of 70-75 million of the new forints to the hands of the bourgeoisie.[138] At the enterprise level the workers, with or without communist inspiration, agitated for nationalization. On January 1, 1946 the coal mines were the first to come under state control. But the workers expressed growing impatience. Supported by the party's left wing demanded a workers' government and an end to cooperation within the National Front.[139] The Communists were not yet prepared to go that far, but they were emboldened to launch a new political initiative.

The Communists took advantage of worker agitation and growing tension in the countryside over the fate of the land reform to convince the Social Democrats and the National Peasants to join in forming a left bloc of the three parties and the trade unions. They demanded the completion of nationalization of heavy industry, state control over large

banks, a defense of the land reform, a purge of the state bureaucracy and, most important, the removal of the right wing leaders from the Smallholders Party. After a brief show of resistance, the Smallholder leaders Tildy and Ferenc Nagy agreed to exclude twenty-one members from the party. Some of them subsequently founded the conservative anti-communist Freedom Party which began as early as September to agitate for the protection of religious and civil liberties and the defense of private property. After a new wave of land seizures hit the countryside in the second half of March 1946, the coalition parties, shaken by the prospect of open conflict among them, diffused the movement; they voted to forbid the return of redistributed lands but to set limits on further confiscation.[140]

Throughout the summer and fall of 1946 the coalition parties engaged in fierce political warfare behind the scenes to improve their own position at the expense of the others while stoutly maintaining in public the need to preserve the coalition. The Communists resorted more and more to the very administrative measures that they had earlier deplored. Rajk, the younger, tough survivor of the underground and German camps, replaced Imre Nagy at Interior and pursued the purge of the civil service with a vengeance. Mass dismissals angered the Social Democrats who had already placed some of their people in the reformed bureaucracy and forced on the defensive the Smallholders who had defended many of the old Horthy regime holdovers on grounds of technical competence. By mid-year the leadership of the Smallholders also responded to pressures from the younger, more militant cadres who had been agitating for some time to differentiate the party from the left program of the coalition, define more sharply their vision of Hungary as an agrarian democracy, and move toward a one party government based on their parliamentary majority.[141]

Soviet Limited Intervention

American and to an even greater degree British diplomats were convinced that Hungary was already lost to the west despite the Smallholders victory in the November 1945 elections. The United States proved unwilling to extend more than token economic aid while the British could offer none. The Americans were more vigorous than the British in contesting Soviet economic demands but neither western power was willing to offer more than cautious encouragement to the Smallholders in their resistance to Soviet pressure.[142] The Soviet Union, following an uneven course of limited intervention, took a much more active role in Hungarian politics. But throughout 1945 and 1946 it uncharacteristically backed down when the Smallholders firmly resisted its demands. It was unwilling on several occasions to give unequivocal support to the Hungarian Communists in their internal struggles with the Smallholders and even avoided pressing the government to follow up on such demands as the dissolution of the Boy Scouts and Catholic Youth organizations or "strong measures" to be taken against the Catholic clergy.[143] None of the great powers was prepared to make a test case of Hungary.

Stalin took pains to maintain the coalition and reassure the Hungarians of Soviet good will. To be sure, he was not above deceiving the Hungarians including the Communists about his intentions to recognize their territorial claims on those parts of Northern Transylvania inhabited by Hungarian majorities. In conversations with Rákosi in March 1946 in Moscow, the Soviet leaders gave him to understand that they would entertain changes favoring Hungary in the 1937 frontiers of Northern Transylvania, and that he could use such an assurance in the political fight against the Smallholders. Up to this time, the Hungarian Communists publicly took the position that Hungary, having lost the war, had no right to claim any territory from a neighboring state. In the wake of the elections, they came to realize that this position was not popular in Hungary and was probably costing them

support. Rákosi may have used this Soviet lure to bargain with Ferenc Nagy, persuading the Smallholders' leader to accept a purge of twenty-one members of his party's parliamentary deputies as reactionaries in return for an invitation to Moscow to discuss territorial issue.[144] If so, he was pushing an open door. The Smallholders leaders, Tildy and Nagy, had already on January 6, 1946 assured the Soviet representative in Budapest that they intended to remove deputies of the National Assembly who were going to vote against the establishment of a republic in Hungary. These "monarchists" numbered, they stated, "only some tens" (*kakoi-nibud' desiatok*) which comes close to the twenty-one finally excluded. The Smallholders themselves had begun to slice the salami without Rákosi's assistance.[145]

In April Stalin arranged what was by Soviet standards a magnificent reception in Moscow for the top leaders of the Hungarian government. He made a few real and more symbolic gestures to satisfy their requests for aid. He agreed on the spot to extend the reparations schedule from six to eight years, to begin repatriation of prisoners of war, to cancel the fifteen million dollar charge for the restoration of railroad lines and even to support equal citizenship rights for Hungarians in Slovakia. He also admitted in his coarsely jocose fashion that the Red Army had done its share of looting in Hungary. His manner was cordial and reassuring. But his promises were vague. On a matter of great importance to the Hungarians, frontier rectification along ethnic lines in Transylvania, he was more cautious urging them to negotiate directly with the left wing Groza government in Bucharest. He held out the possibility of some changes but repeated what Molotov had already told the Hungarians: all or most of Transylvania would be returned to the Romanians.[146] In fact, the Politburo had already in January 1946 approved and sent directives to the Soviet delegation at the Foreign Ministers Conference in London on the peace agreement with Romania defending the previous position of the Soviet government

"on the transfer to Romania of *all of Transylvania*. "[147] The immovable Soviet position in public and Stalin's vague promises in private reflect his efforts to avoid being compromised politically by the Transylvanian question. On the one hand, he was concerned over the outcome of the political crisis in Romania where the news of any concession to the Hungarians would weaken the Romanian communist position. Stalin made this clear in his response to the Hungarian proposals for a new partition of Transylvania which would leave about eighty percent of the territory to Romania and include as many Hungarians as Romanians within the boundaries of Romania and Hungary respectively. The Soviet leader stated that the Romanians would never accept such a settlement and "no government could remain in power having made such concessions, and the Romanian king would have to abdicate (*podat' v otstavku*)." Instead he suggested a population transfer on the model of the Soviet-Polish exchange.[148] On the other hand, it was necessary to offset the Anglo-American proposals, going back to the fall of 1945, for a frontier rectification in Northern Transylvania that would support some of the Hungarian claims.[149]

The point is often made that Stalin played off the East European states against one another by manipulating the nationality question. While there is some truth to this, it must also be kept in mind that Stalin had no desire to act as an honest broker in a situation where Soviet mediation would never satisfy any of the parties involved and possibly antagonize all of them. In such situations he preferred to let the two parties work out their own solution, which is what he advised the Hungarians, although he surely knew that the Groza government could no more afford to make concessions to Hungary than the Czech and Slovak Communists. It was at this time that Stalin began to explore with Tito and Rákosi, during their visits to Moscow in March 1946, the possibility of creating a new international communist organization in the form of an informational bureau.[150] The purpose of these feelers have been variously interpreted. An alternative explanation to

those proposed, is that one of the main reasons for Stalin's soundings was his concern over the conflicts among the parties over such issues as the rights of national minorities and the practical necessity of providing a forum for the exchange of views under Soviet supervision. In any case the old Comintern, although formally abolished, had not vanished. Its cadres were reduced but its most important function had been transferred to a special section headed by Dimitrov and attached to the Central Committee. Its name was changed several times, becoming the Section for Foreign Policy (OVP) in December 1945. In April 1946 it was assigned the task of improving contacts between the CPSU and other communist parties and vetting all appointments to Soviet foreign policy posts including diplomats and security personnel.[151] The Cominform was gradually taking shape. Even then, however, Stalin made it clear that he was opposed to a recreation of the "old type of Comintern" which he regarded in a negative light.[152]

Stalin's conciliatory efforts had little effect on the domestic situation in Hungary. Encouraged by their reception in Moscow, the Smallholders moved to recover control over the police leading to the first major crisis in the coalition.[153] At the end of May, the Smallholders demanded a fifty percent share of the police forces under the Minister of Interior and a redistribution of posts in local government to reflect their electoral victory. Even the mild mannered Zoltán Tildy insisted they would not give in "even to the point of a major internal conflict subject always to actual imposition by the USSR of enforced sovietization of this country."[154] The Soviet authorities in Budapest were convinced that the British were behind the ultimatum, urging the Smallholders to form a one party government. When the tug of war threatened to break up the coalition, the Soviet representatives intervened advising Rákosi to make some concessions. The Smallholders did not get everything they wanted. But they were heartened by the results even though their secretary general, Béla Kovács blamed the ACC for having forced on them a less

than satisfactory compromise.[155] They got another boost from the reception the government delegation received in the U.S. The prime minister, Ferenc Nagy, was deeply impressed by his visit.[156] Rákosi, who accompanied him, raised a note of alarm in his report to Moscow. What worried him most was the profound impression that the evident power of the American economy had made on the Smallholders.[157]

A month after their return to Budapest in July, Rákosi mounted a counterattack. Apparently he convinced the Soviet representatives to exploit the assassination of several Red Army officers in order to present a list of demands that the Hungarian Communists had been advocating in their press: the dissolution of the Boy Scouts and Catholic Youth organization, the dismissal of the editor in chief of the Smallholders' daily organ, removal of several conservative Smallholders from office. Despite his brave words Nagy proved conciliatory even though the American representative submitted a written note to the ACC protesting the Soviet violation of procedures. But the Soviet move had not been cleared by higher authorities, and the instigator was recalled to Moscow where the incident was considered to be "a blunder."[158]

By now the Soviet representatives in Budapest found themselves increasingly caught up in the political in-fighting and their actions began to take on the defensive cast that characterized the behavior of their colleagues under similar circumstances in Rumania and Bulgaria. Taking their cue from the rising levels of "iron curtain" rhetoric and determined to avoid the blame for a collapse of the coalition, they informed the center that the British were behind the attempt to exclude the Communists from the government.[159] They also reported in June that the negative impressions of the Soviet Union spread by returning prisoners of war were "being powerfully exploited by the reaction for anti-Soviet and anti-communist ends."[160] They chose to interpret the political struggle in increasingly polarized terms.

By September the leaders of the Smallholder Party mounted a new offensive by creating a Peasant Federation that would transform their own party into a predominantly peasant party and then absorb the National Peasant Party. The brain behind the proposal was Béla Kovács. He reasoned that an exclusively peasant constituency would refute Communists attacks on the party as reactionary; it would disrupt the Left Bloc reducing it to its labor constituency. Representatives of the peasants from other parties would join and the new party would gain a majority in the national committees. It might be necessary to sacrifice some of our "gentlemen opposing the coalition" but the benefits would outweigh the losses.[161] The dangers of a pro-Western, one party Smallholders' government compelled the Soviet representatives in Hungary to intervene. They exerted pressure on the coalition parties to meet to resolve their differences. A joint party conference under Tildy's chairmanship agreed that the Smallholders would withdraw their demands for a one party government in exchange for a greater representation in local organs of power. The crisis was resolved but it left a bitter taste in the mouth of the Soviet representatives who interpreted the Smallholders' tactics of flaunting their agrarianism as a means of "unifying the peasantry under their leadership, (and) liquidating the National Peasant Party by creating a united powerful peasant organization which could be subsequently pitted against the city and the workers' parties."[162]

In a counterpoint to rising political tensions, economic problems threatened to undermine the Communists' appeal to the working class. By late summer 1946 inflation had reared its ugly head again. The Communists and socialists appealed for help to their old associate in Moscow, Jenő Varga. He quietly slipped into Budapest, met with leaders of the left parties and submitted a report to them which became the basis for an anti-inflationary currency reform. Varga was then forced to defend his mission to a formidable critic in the Soviet hierarchy, Andrei Zhdanov.[163] He justified his intervention in a lengthy

explanatory and exculpatory letter. He argued that by virtue of the authority he enjoyed among communist and social-democratic workers he could "better than anyone else" undertake the unpopular task of explaining to the trade union workers the grave danger that inflation as a weapon of the reaction posed for the stability of the country. He reassured Zhdanov that the meeting of the left party leaders was closed, admission by ticket only. The political situation in Hungary was complex; the currency reform was introduced in line with his proposals in spite of the efforts of the bourgeoisie to oppose it as a measure designed to strengthen the democratic elements in the government. "*The secret program of the reaction,*" he wrote, "*consists in undermining the stability of the currency in order to start a new wave of inflation, discredit the democratic regime and the coalition government in the eyes of the masses, demonstrate that the country cannot afford to pay us reparations, force left wing parties out of the government and then with the help of an American loan re-establish a stable currency under the rule of a bourgeois dictatorship with an anti-Soviet policy.*" Fearing to act openly, the reaction was trying to work through the trade unions, he concluded.

Varga pointed out that the level of productivity in Hungary had fallen to sixty per cent of the prewar figure without taking into consideration reparations payments and the cost of reconstruction. Consequently, the real wages of the workers should not exceed fifty to sixty per cent of prewar levels. The trade union workers have received instructions that new contracts based on hard currency would set wages at fifty to sixty per cent of the pre-war level and to shift to piece work which would increase their pay without undermining the stability of the currency.

The capitalists have not only accepted all the demands of the trade unions which frequently amount to not fifty to sixty per cent but more than one hundred per cent of pre-war wage levels and to raise their qualifications to higher levels and so increase their

wages further. They have also opposed piece work. "The agents of reaction, former fascists are conducting agitation in the factories for greater wage increases and calling for strikes." The workers have not understood how harmful these actions can be, according to Varga. His report aimed at convincing the workers not to become an instrument of the reaction in its efforts to undermine the stability of the currency.

In defending his recommendations he pointed out to Zhdanov that the press reports by TASS were misleading and erroneous. In refuting the implicit charge that he had failed to distinguish between the economic laws of capitalism and socialism, Varga explained that he was trying to point out that the population cannot demand greater compensation than the amount of goods it produces; "…general economic facts are independent of the political system of a given country." (Whether this was a position shared by Stalin is open to question.) In clarifying his views on nationalization of industry, Varga took note of left wing comrades in the Hungarian Communist Party — "the so-called Communists of 1919" (sic!) — who were agitating for the direct and wholesale nationalization of industry "that is, for the dictatorship of the proletariat." But Varga reiterated his position that "domestic political and international conditions do not permit at this moment the implementation of a general nationalization of the means of production…", adding that "under nationalization the increase of real wages is a consequence of the increase in the productivity of labor."[164] Was Zhdanov convinced that this too was an established economic fact? Clearly there were Hungarian Communists who were not.

The Hungarian communist response to the political and economic crises revealed, once again, divided counsels within the party. At the party's third congress in September-October 1946, two tendencies emerged. One, enunciated by Imre Nagy, placed major emphasis on the alliance between the worker and the peasant and on the need, first articulated by Lenin in the 1890's, to win over the peasantry by siding with the small

producer.[165] The party should dedicate itself, he insisted, to doing everything to lighten the burden on the peasant and promote the transition to cooperation in the countryside in anticipation of "a prolonged period of social development." He appeared to direct a warning to the left wing of the party when he declared that "he who in the mutual struggle of the two toiling classes leaves the peasant to arbitrary fate and does not encourage his democratic aspirations, would betray the teachings of the spiritual leader of socialism." Yet, Nagy denied that the real issue was the transition to socialism. It was a question of eliminating the feudal customs, not of inciting a struggle between capitalism and socialism as antagonistic social structures. He reproached the party for having failed to pay attention to the economic needs of the peasantry once the land redistribution had been set in motion. In language strongly reminiscent of his old mentor, Bukharin, Nagy argued for a series of economic measures to improve the peasants' lot: reducing land rents, cutting prices on manufactured goods for agricultural needs, breaking the power of the village usurer and nationalizing the flour mills in order to isolate the kulak and win over the middle peasantry.[166] Other voices at the congress pressed for speeding up the economic program of the left bloc which meant nationalization of industry. The Communists had won points for having campaigned for a rapid reconstruction. As Minister of Transportation, Gerő had led the charge to rebuild the Danube bridges, repair the rail lines and some roads. At the congress a compromise was reached on the future allocation of resources. In December the party presented a draft for a three year plan. It became the subject for heated four month debate with the Social Democrats.

The Communists again enlisted the help of Varga. But this time the Social Democrats turned to Nicholas (Miklós) Káldor, a Hungarian born Cambridge economist, and advisor to the British Labor Government. A supporter of planning, his advice to the Social Democrats was to emphasize light industry. The process of nationalization was

already proceeding along lines similar to those in Western Europe; first coal, then heavy industry at the end of 1946, electricity and power lines in the winter of 1946-47 and virtual state control of big banks. In this early stage the Communists were proving to be cooperative, although they favored more investment in heavy industry. The Three Year Plan of August 1947 was aimed at repairing war damage, raising the standard of living and beginning the intensification of agricultural production. But after the full implications of the Marshall Plan became clearer in early 1948, the Communists under Soviet pressure pushed for speeding up the plan and the schedule for nationalization. The Soviet Union facilitated this strategy by reducing reparation payments by one half.[167]

Rákosi, Gerő and Révai, the Muscovites, still attempted to steer a centrist course by conceding the creation of a popular democracy in Hungary was a step toward the establishment of socialism but that movement along the road would be slow and painstaking but "without a civil war", and the goal would be a homegrown socialism tailored to fit Hungarian conditions. The programmatic statement of the congress, the "Manifesto to the Hungarian People" was filled with ambiguities that sought to balance the rising demands among party militants and factory workers for radical economic change with the necessity of keeping the coalition intact and guiding Hungary out of its economic difficulties.[168] The Smallholders had resisted the communist demands for nationalization of heavy industry and state control over banks. Yet it had taken no new initiatives. Its leadership decided that the party was strong enough to wait out the Left bloc. Negotiations on the peace treaty were approaching a conclusion. Once the treaty was ratified Soviet troops would withdraw, the ACC would be disbanded and the Communists would no longer be able to count on the support of Soviet representatives or threat of intervention.

The Conspiracy

The Communists had exploited this go-slow policy of reconstruction, condemning it as playing into the hands of Western capitalist interests. But they were also aware that their political position was vulnerable on other grounds. This appears to be the motivation behind their clumsy but effective tactic to uncover a conspiracy involving a group of young Smallholder deputies with impeccable anti-fascist records who were also among the most outspoken anti-Communists in the party.

In January 1947 the Minister of Interior, Rajk, surprised the government with accusations that a small number of Smallholder deputies were engaged in plotting against the government. He also implicated the secretary general of the party and the prime minister's closest friend and collaborator, Béla Kovács. Shaken by the accusations, the Smallholders agreed to suspend the immunity of fourteen accused deputies and then expel another group on its right wing. Pushkin reacted sympathetically to the explanations of Ferenc Nagy but reminded him that "we repeatedly advised him to purge the party of reactionary elements, but unfortunately, this advice was not always taken into consideration…"[169] Hungarian communist historians have since admitted that the "conspiracy" was blown out of all proportion.[170] But the internal history of the maneuver remains obscure. What scanty evidence exists suggests that the Soviet authorities may not at first have been in on the plot, but quickly intervened to prevent the Communists in the Hungarian police from botching the job. The Hungarian Communists were, it appears, also taken unawares by the precipitate Soviet action. The NKVD, by arresting Kovács, touched off an international incident. Although both Britain and the U.S. sent strong notes protesting the incident, there is evidence that there was hesitation on both the Western and Soviet sides to be drawn into a confrontation over the conspiracy.

Initially, American diplomats disagreed over how to evaluate and respond to the

accusations of conspiracy. Acheson in Washington supported a strong démarche. Bedell Smith in Moscow urged caution, warning that from his sources "it is clear that some Smallholders deputies actually were directly implicated in the plot."[171] Even the American legation in Budapest, which had urged a firmer and more active U.S. policy in Hungary, was concerned over the polarization of Hungarian politics on the left and right. In January 1947 Cardinal Mindszenty sent letters to the U.S. and British embassies calling upon their countries to defend freedom and justice. The U.S. ambassador was convinced that the Primate "has predicated his policy on assumption of outbreak of hostilities between the Soviet Union and the Western powers in foreseeable future and desires to conduct self in way that will leave no doubt about the role of the Catholic Church even if it leads to martyrdom for him."[172] Subsequently, the Soviet embassy in Budapest indirectly acknowledged that its hand had been forced: "the question of Kovács went beyond the framework of Hungary. A retreat on this question would have jeopardized Soviet prestige in Hungary to say nothing of the fact that it would have signified a significant defeat for the Hungarian Communist Party and the beginning of a counterattack by the reaction."[173]

At the same time, the Social Democrats were falling into confusion and disarray all by themselves. The anti-communist right wing led by Peyer was gaining strength. The center clung to the idea of cooperation with the Smallholders but was unwilling to give up the party's special relationship with the Communists even though the two workers' parties were constantly engaged in a struggle for offices and control of the trade unions. The party maintained close ties with the British Labor Party, which for most of them remained a model, but held the Americans at arms' length.[174] The left wing flirted with the Communists. At the same time, they sought to persuade the Soviet representatives that they were "more Marxist than the Communists" and criticized the Communists for making concessions to clericalism. In February 1947 they cynically boasted to Pushkin of their deal with the

Communists to fix the next parliamentary elections by depriving 300,000 people of the right to vote.[175]

Despite its political successes, the communist leadership remained concerned over its ability to stay in power. President Truman's announcement of the Truman doctrine in March 1947 signaled a new stage in the Cold War. In April Rákosi felt compelled to consult Stalin and Molotov directly. He acknowledged that although the Smallholders had been weakened by the conspiracy charges, nothing significant had changed in organizational terms. The anti-communist elements had simply redistributed themselves. Most of the Smallholders from the left wing had deserted to the National Peasants or the Social Democrats but few had joined the Communists. As a result the rightist elements within the rump Smallholder Party had grown stronger. At the same time the unreconstructed conservatives in among the Smallholders had been pouring into the newly established Freedom Party of Dezső Sulyok, a former Smallholder who was very conservative and very pro-Western. According to Rákosi the Americans had advised Sulyok to minimize his disagreements with the Smallholders in order "to facilitate their reorganization" and he "had fulfilled their instructions to the letter (*tochno*)." The leaders of the rump Smallholders Party had also taken American advice to request admission into the United Nations with the aim of delaying all important decisions "until the ratification of the peace treaty and the departure of the Soviet troops." They were already engaged in a whispering campaign to prove that only western economic aid could bail out Hungary, burdened by reparation payments to the Soviet Union, and that the Americans were prepared to grant a modest 300,000 dollar loan on condition that "the communist dictatorship be terminated." Rákosi claimed to have information that the Smallholders intended to use the lever of western economic aid to force the Communists to yield the Ministry of Interior and accept a reorganization of the army which was under strong communist influence. By offering

Interior to the Social Democrats, the Smallholders would weaken the unity of the workers' party: "it is perfectly clear that this will inevitably involve the question of who has power (*vopros o vlasti*)."[176]

These dire predictions were merely the prelude to Rákosi's appeal for Soviet aid. By dragging the Americans into the picture he hoped, no doubt, to extract concessions from the Soviet Union that he could then use in his internal struggle with the anti-Communists. He had five requests: first to turn over Béla Kovács to the Hungarian courts in order to facilitate prosecution of a broader conspiracy; second, to speed up the return of Hungarian prisoners of war; third to get support for the expulsion of the Germans (Swabians) to Germany; fourth to obtain arms and fifth to obtain Soviet support for Hungarian rights in Slovakia in order to check an American plan supported by "our Czechoslovak comrades" (sic!) to have the question raised by the Hungarian foreign minister at the UN.[177]

Even at this late date, however, the Soviet leaders remained unwilling to commit themselves wholeheartedly to the Hungarian Communists. The Soviet leadership was receiving mixed reports from their representatives in Budapest who were unwilling to predict a communist takeover. The Communists were growing stronger. They had succeeded in stabilizing the currency thanks to Jenő Varga's advice and Gerő's work. They had defended the Supreme Economic Council against attempts of the Smallholders to abolish it. The nationalization of industry was progressing satisfactorily. The Communists had blocked Smallholders' "fascist type agricultural organizations" and proposed amnesty of fascists. The political police remained under their control and their agents had penetrated all the other parties and were tapping the phone lines of the government leaders. But there were problems. The alleged alliance with the Social Democrats was shaky. The Smallholders were willing to cooperate on some issues but the tactic of splitting off their right wing had created a new problem in the form of the Freedom Party led by

Sulyok whom the Communists denounced as a fascist. To the Soviet representatives this demonstrated that the reaction was still strong in Hungary. Even more troublesome was the opposition of the Catholic Church "the best organized Church in Europe", with which the Communists had not found a way to begin a struggle. The Communists repeatedly appealed to the Soviet representatives for arms but only Moscow could take that decision. Most of the careerists and corrupt elements had been weeded out of the party. The main remaining weakness in the party, according to these reports, was the lack of trained cadres especially economic specialists at the middle level of administration.[178] The Hungarian Communists acknowledged the enormous aid of the Soviet Union but they wanted more.

Arriving in Moscow at the end of April 1947, Rákosi pressed his case so vigorously that he came dangerously close to exceeding the bounds of comradely restraint. Molotov gave Rákosi a less than sympathetic hearing. At times he felt obliged simply to rebuff him. Molotov brushed aside the request to return the prisoners of war; they would merely strengthen the reaction. As for allowing Kovács to testify in a conspiracy trial in Budapest, this belonged to the same category of "particularized and petty details." Besides, he countered, "it is not clear what he will say to a Hungarian court."[179] On the Hungarian minority in Slovakia, Molotov admitted that the Czechs were proving difficult in negotiating with their neighbors, like Poland. Perhaps this is only a temporary phenomenon, Molotov added; "meanwhile, the Czechs are very inflexible." Rákosi complained that the Americans would not accept any more Swabian refugees in their zone of Germany, but Molotov blamed the Hungarians for having "let slip the favorable moment" to expel them. He was unmoved by Rákosi's insistence that most of the Swabians were joining the Social Democrats among whom German names were already prominent. When Rákosi proposed sending them through Czechoslovakia into the Soviet zone, Molotov dismissed the idea; it would turn the Soviet zone into "a dumping ground (*chulan*)."[180] Rákosi insisted that the

Swabians were a great obstacle to land reform but admitted that everyone else in the government was against expelling them. Molotov's concern was touching. "In that case the chances are slim. What can you do? Once you share power you have to share the difficulties. We say 'heavy is the cap of Monomakh.' Your situation is truly complicated."[181]

CHAPTER 5

THE COMMUNIST DRIVE FOR POWER

Rákosi was convinced that for the Communists the critical moment had arrived. Up to this point the reaction had steadily retreated. But, according to Rákosi, "there will come a time when without question the reaction will not retreat. I think that on the question of [who controls] the Ministry of Interior they will not retreat." He anticipated the worst. "If the reactionary launch an attack on us, there will be a struggle for power." For the Hungarian communist leader the crucial question in that case was the attitude of the Soviet Union. In the struggle for power, he reminded Molotov the party enjoyed certain advantages. They appeared formidable. The Communists "had succeeded in creating a kind of economic dictatorship." In any future election he calculated that the left bloc could probably count on a slim majority, fifty or fifty-two percent of the votes. The party held all the key positions in the army including the head of the political section and many divisional commanders. Although the minister of defense, Lajos Dinnyés, was a Smallholder he was pliable, and even his party colleagues did not consider him a reliable or strong figure. Still, Rákosi was clearly worried.

To Rákosi the apparently strong communist position rested on uncertain foundations. The two unresolved questions were the role of the Social Democrats and the nature of Soviet aid. The ghosts of 1919 hovered over his discussions with Molotov. The Social Democrats were unpredictable, perhaps even untrustworthy. Szakasits was still the leader of the party but "he wavers a great deal" and he had a serious rival in the centrist Antal Bán. The Social Democrats were the ones most directly benefitting from the break-up of the Smallholders Party. "People are running left and right," he declared; seventy percent are moving to the right and the rest are joining the Social Democrats and not the

Communists.[182]

For Rákosi the main problem with the Social Democrats was their tendency to outbid the Communists on the left and to exploit the groundswell of anti-Russian feeling. In this case Soviet policy was not doing any favors for the Hungarian Communists. On the issue of exchange of populations with Czechoslovakia, the Soviet Union had sided with the Czechs, while Tito had tried to help the Hungarians. Rákosi admitted to Molotov that Yugoslavia was popular in Hungary: "I must say that it is even more popular than the Soviet Union. The thing is that the Hungarian people do not fear Yugoslavia, but there is the traditional fear of the Russians which they haven't gotten over."[183] Reparation payments were also deeply resented. Even more damaging was the Soviet decision to make fresh demands by insisting that it was entitled not only to German assets but also to German claims against the Hungarian government and its citizens. Szakasits claimed that he could not defend these demands in the face of the Hungarian workers. Rákosi did not hesitate to criticize Soviet economic policy in Hungary for being uncoordinated and often contradictory: "this disorganizes our economic life." As a result Rákosi feared the Communists, precisely because they had shouldered responsibility for the economy, were in danger of being isolated. Every other party was counting on economic chaos, he complained. The Social Democrats "willingly agree to all the demands made by the Soviet comrades on purpose because they know they are unrealizable and they set their own traps." Unfortunately, Rákosi concluded, "the Soviet comrades do not completely understand this." In a language that perhaps few foreign Communists would dare to use to a Soviet leader, Rákosi put the blame on the Soviet officials for promoting "a united front of capitalists" By exploiting this issue the reaction, which Rákosi did not define, sought to destabilize the coalition and take over the Ministry of Interior. In order to split the left bloc the Smallholders were prepared to turn the Ministry over to the Social Democrats. In the

meantime, he added, the Social Democrats were insisting on parity in the Ministry of Interior where their people were already leaking "all the secrets" to the Smallholders.[184]

Aside from political and economic concessions, Rákosi requested arms from the Soviet Union in anticipation of a clash. Once the peace treaty was signed and the ACC withdrawn he feared that "our democracy will then hang in thin air."[185] He was not convinced by Molotov's reassurances that in the absence of a peace treaty with Austria Soviet troops would remain in Hungary in order to guard communications. The Hungarian army was small, 11,000 men, and underequipped. It had no automatic weapons which were no longer produced in Hungarian factories. The police had no arms either and the workers were unarmed. But "various criminal elements" had somehow gotten a hold of Soviet automatic weapons and the police had uncovered small arms catches in the possession of fascist organizations. "We want you to arm us as you did the Polish Army", he told Molotov. The Soviet leader demurred. Poland, he declared "was a different matter." He reminded Rákosi that the Council of Foreign Ministers opposed to arming the Austrian army with foreign weapons. Molotov had different advice. The Hungarian Communists should rely on the three year economic plan and their control of the Ministry of Interior which they should not surrender. His final words to Rákosi could not have been very reassuring: "I think you made a big mistake in 1945 when at the time of the parliamentary elections, you did not enter into a united bloc with other parties." Rákosi blamed the Social Democrats for having stood in the way. Molotov brushed the objection aside. "One has to overcome obstacles, he concluded: "If you had entered as a bloc, then you would not have the situation where one party received a majority. I think this was your error." The old Comintern discipline finally reasserted itself. "Yes," replied a chastened Rákosi, "perhaps it was."[186]

The Communist Shift to the Left

Rákosi decided to force the issue of exposing Ferenc Nagy. He informed the Soviet leadership that in early May, shortly after his visit to Molotov, the Communists had shifted to a more vigorous class position. Within two weeks he announced a plan to accelerate the government crisis. Using a note that he had received from the Soviet authorities on the interrogation of Béla Kovács, he persuaded the cabinet to order Ferenc Nagy to return from his Swiss vacation to face charges. He then conspired to block Nagy's return and blackmailed him into resigning.[187] The cabinet caved in and Rákosi stage managed the appointment of a new premier, Lajos Dinnyés, a member of the Smallholders Party with a tarnished reputation. Rákosi later claimed in his unreliable memoirs that he had been instructed by an unsigned note handed to him by the Soviet chairman of the ACC in Bucharest, Susaikov, at a border crossing with Romania that the Communists should take advantage of Nagy's absence to launch an attack on him. The hand written letter was supposed to have come from Stalin.[188]

A more likely scenario for this communist shift to the left is the internal party rivalry of Rákosi and Rajk. As Minister of Interior Rajk was a fierce opponent of coalition politics and especially of cooperating with the Social Democrats. He considered them the primary enemy of the Communists in Hungary. In April 1947 he accused them of beginning a powerful campaign against the Communists, of lining up with reactionary elements within the bureaucracy, of being British agents. They had prevented thorough going purges of officials engaged in anti-democratic practices and anti-Soviet propaganda. "The new anti-Communist campaign conducted by the Social Democrats is a serious and threatening symptom." He denied that there was a strong left wing in the Social Democratic Party; the right wing dominated and through them links had been established with the reactionary party of Sulyok. The reaction was still a powerful force in Hungary, he maintained, counting

up all its reserves — former army officers, police, discredited Gendarmerie, former landowners, and adding to them the Catholic Church and financial elites. The Smallholder leaders, Nagy and Balogh, frequently consulted with the American and British agents in Hungary and were closely tied to them. Hungarian politics is now "strongly polarized," he told a Soviet representative: "I regard a bit skeptically the possibility of a peaceful development of Hungarian democracy."[189]

Rajk's views represented a challenge to Rákosi in the Politburo. It seems likely then, that Rákosi's decision to shift to the left and denounce Ferenc Nagy was a tactical move designed to placate the radicals in his party while maintaining a coalition government that he believed was necessary in order to pursue the "parliamentary path" to socialism. In late July or early August 1948, Rákosi and his associates moved against Rajk. According to Gerő the inner core of the party leaders distrusted Rajk and in a showdown meeting with him in Rákosi's apartment they denounced him for his "Bonapartist tendencies" in attempting to liquidate the party organization within the Ministry of Interior and "for his unfriendly attitude toward the Soviet Union."[190] In August 1948 the Politburo succeeded in removing him as Minister of Interior and assigning him the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Pushkin objected. This would leave Rajk with the impression that he had been removed "at our request which was not the case." This would also make it difficult for Moscow to work with him. Rákosi reassured him that Rajk would now do everything to prove he was a good friend of the USSR. He continued to pursue his coalition politics by easing Tildy out of the presidency and replacing him with the left wing Social Democrat, Szakasits, a man whom Pushkin had long distrusted.[191]

While Rajk sought to destroy the Smallholders and Social Democrats, Rákosi was determined to tame them. But this proved to be more easily done with the Smallholders than the Social Democrats. The leadership of the Smallholders broke up leaving the party

in the hands of the left wing. The Communists, supported by the Social Democrats and National Peasants, passed legislation nationalizing the banks and establishing a National Planning Office. The Smallholders did not object to the principle of a plan but favored the development of agriculture and processing plants over heavy industry and opposed nationalization of banks on the grounds that this would doom any prospect of American credits, the last hope in their eyes of maintaining western influence in Hungary. The point became moot when the Soviet Union exerted pressure on Hungary as well as on other Eastern European states not to accept an invitation to participate in the Marshall Plan talks in Paris.[192]

Despite the Communist show of strength, or perhaps because of it, resistance to their outright domination did not diminish but merely took new forms. The Social Democrats finally decided to challenge the Communists at the same time that a legal opposition outside the coalition took shape, ironically, with Communist approval. The Social Democrats were the main beneficiaries of the disintegration of the Smallholders under the pressure of police harassment. In the spring of 1947 one of their leaders admitted that ninety per cent of the new members of the party had come over from the Smallholders. The Social Democrats still held the allegiance of the majority of the Budapest industrial workers. In fact, during the post liberation period the left wing of the party had engaged from time to time in leftist demagogy in order to legitimize their credentials as the leading workers' party. In early 1947 they had even represented themselves to Pushkin, as pretty tough customers in dealing with the right, boasting that the two workers parties knew how to make the elections planned for the fall turn out just the way they wanted.[193] But the influx of new recruits strengthened the right and center of the Social Democratic Party which resisted efforts of the left to expel Peyer at its Thirty-fifth Party Congress in February 1947. The Social Democratic leadership remained moderate, strongly endorsing a "parliamentary

road to socialism" and taking the British Labor Party as its model. On the other hand, it was not eager to establish close ties with the Americans like the Smallholders had done. They were also uneasy about the tendency of the Communists to take over leadership of the left bloc. In planning for the elections in the fall of 1947, the majority of Social Democrats initially opposed the so-called Bulgarian model of creating a four party electoral bloc together with the Communists, National Peasants and Smallholders then under the control of its left wing. Their agitation campaign among the Budapest workers was neatly summed up by the secretary of the factory organization in the capital: "Legally we work together with the Communists, but in reality we move forward to our own ends and illegally act separately."[194] On the advice of Pushkin, the leader of the Social Democratic left was able to persuade the majority of his party's political bureau to reverse their decision and to enter the elections in a bloc.[195] The incident foreshadowed the final showdown between the two workers parties in the post-election period.

In the meantime, the breakup of the Smallholders encouraged the Communists to believe that they could finally drive the Right in Hungary into the open, isolate and crush it. They agreed to allow the formation of new parties outside the coalition who could field candidates in the fall elections. Once they had Soviet support for a left bloc they thought they could then force a choice between the supporters of social and economic change and the defenders of the old order. The tactic almost backfired disastrously. Rákosi's optimistic forecast was far off the mark. Despite their late entry into the political arena, the parties of the Right mainly formed out of the remnants of the Smallholders officially received forty per cent of the vote in an election in August 1947 marred by massive vote fraud. Although the left bloc got sixty percent of the vote, the Communist share was only 22.3 of the total vote, an inflated figure given the widespread electoral cheating.[196] But the Communists succeeded by tough bargaining to get a majority of cabinet posts assigned to themselves

and their supporters in the Smallholder and Social Democratic Parties.[197]

In the wake of the elections the Social Democrats made one last attempt to maintain some sort of equality with the Communists. The left wing was discouraged by the results. Marosán considered resigning his post as deputy general secretary until Pushkin advised him to reconsider.[198] In the tumultuous discussions over the formation of a new government, the Communists beat back the attempts of the socialists to obtain important concessions. The socialists demanded the post of administrative secretary of the Ministry of Interior (previously a communist), which headed the department of the entire state police, the head of the political police, the deputy head of the frontier troops, the head of army intelligence the command of one or two divisions and the head of the Budapest garrison. "When we received this list," József Révai told the first meeting of the Cominform in September 1947, "we had the impression that it had been drawn up by English or American intelligence agents." At the same time according to Révai, the right wing of the Smallholders rump was pressing its reactionary program. Alert to the dangers of "isolation" the communists organized mass demonstrations and refused to accept any right wing appointees in the government.[199] The Social Democratic Party managed to stem the flow of its members to the Communists, but the leadership was too divided to resist communist pressure. Peyer had left the party before the elections, and there was no one among the top leaders who commanded widespread popularity or respect. Even the Communists were contemptuous of their erstwhile allies on the left wing of the party. After the elections Rákosi considered the Social Democrats less reliable than before and less inclined than the remnants of the Smallholders to cooperate with the Communists.[200]

There was some evidence to support Rákosi's views. In November 1947 Marosán returned from a conference of the Czech Social Democratic Party in Brno with plenty of juicy stories to entertain Pushkin. He denounced the Czech Social Democrats as

opportunists: there were no portraits of Marx or Engels in the hall; the delegates sang the Czech national hymn and not the Internationale. Fierlinger and Laušman were centrists leaning to the right. The Polish Social Democrats were proposing an international left wing social democratic paper. Szakasits lent his approval, and István Ries was willing to serve on the editorial board. The left wing British Laborite and former communist, Denis Healy, had warned Marosán that in a year or two Moscow intended to liquidate all the Social Democratic parties in Eastern Europe. Having rebuffed him, Marosán promised Pushkin to attack the right in his own party to prevent their victory similar to that of the right wing in the Czech party.[201] As an opportunist Marosán had no peers, but his willingness to implicate his own left wing colleagues in plans to form international ties that were implicitly anti-communist was symptomatic of the moral collapse of social democracy in Hungary.

The breakup of the Smallholders Party signaled the splintering of the conservative elements into six parties divided less by ideology – they were all anti-communist – than by the personalities of their leaders who had all been members of the Smallholders or Social Democratic Parties. The combined votes of the new Democratic People's Party and the Hungarian Independence Party alone amounted to thirty percent. But they did not unite. Separately, they were subjected to communist pressure which the other members of the coalition did not resist. Shortly after the elections, the Hungarian People's Party was dissolved on Rajk's orders.[202]

Yet even after these victories over their enemies the Communists did not appear to be secure in their political domination of Hungary. After the elections the Communists posed for the first time the question of fusing their party with the Social Democrats. According to József Révai reporting at the first meeting of the Cominform in September 1947, this measure was the only way to prevent the Social Democrats from demanding the Ministry of Interior and claiming leading positions in the police, army and unions. The

Communists had won the battle over the new government, but "the basic question for Hungarian democracy over whether in the final analysis this would be a people's democracy or a bourgeois democracy has still not been decided." A second related question was whether Hungary would enter the ranks of its neighboring popular democracies or "become in one or another form a bulwark of Anglo-American imperialism." The major problems to be overcome were the economic and financial strength of the capitalists and the political splits in the coalition government.[203] It may be that the Communists were reacting to previous criticism by the Soviet representatives that they had underestimated the reactionary forces in Hungary by exaggerating the difficulties facing them. In any case they were now determined to eliminate the last vestiges of opposition within the coalition.

By February 1948 the Hungarian Communists were in a more expansive mood, confident of their campaign to absorb the Social Democrats. The Communists benefitted from a growing flight of the workers from the Social Democrats into their party. Following careful preparations at the grass roots, and the expulsion by the left socialists of their right wing colleagues, the Communists and Socialists formed a unified party. The fusion of the two parties into a Hungarian Workers Party in June 1948 virtually completed the Communist march to power. The Communists would still not move against the Church but, Rákosi declared, "if it declares war against us we will find good psychiatrists who will declare Mindszenty insane."

The Soviet mentors still found plenty to criticize in the communist program for the unified party. First of all, they had not received a draft in time to discuss it before Rákosi arrived in Moscow to meet with Suslov. When they had a chance to examine it, they responded with eleven substantive criticisms. Their main thrust was aimed at the implicit nationalist deviation that ran through the document. It was a mistake to amend the new

party allegiance to Marxism-Leninism as developed by Stalin by tacking on the phrase "in accordance with Hungarian conditions." The program neglected the class base of the party and failed to expose the traitorous role of social-democratic leaders in the face of fascism. It equally erred in declaring an end to the exploitation of the proletariat in Hungary when the nationalization of industry was far from complete. In a similar vein, no class distinction was drawn between the poor and toiling peasantry, the middle peasantry and the kulaks. No mention was made of the struggle against the kulak. The necessary transformation of the countryside was limited to making technological improvements rather than introducing fundamental changes in the social structure. In discussing ties with foreign communist parties, good relations with the Czechoslovak party were made dependent on a resolution of the question of Hungarians in Slovakia. Insufficient attention was paid to the threat of the Marshall Plan as an instrument for the capitalist enslavement of Europe. Even such an apparently minor issue as the name for the new unified party hinged on the symbolic importance of emphasizing its class over its national character.[204]

Titoism and the Cominform

As far as the mounting crisis with Tito and relations with other communist parties were concerned, Rákosi took an aggressive line. He felt sufficiently confident in late May to suggest to Suslov a tentative agenda for the forthcoming second meeting of the Cominform. He thought it was time to recognize the democratic Greek government of General Markos. The Hungarians had met with the Greek representatives and the Yugoslavs and agreed to shift part of the financial support for the insurgency to Budapest. He was quick to denounce the Yugoslavs as Trotskyites, going beyond the initial Soviet accusations and to declare without a shred of evidence, that the Yugoslavs were hostile to

the Hungarian Communists.[205] It was time too to regulate Czech-Hungarian relations over the Slovak question, he declared. The Czech and Slovak Communist Parties were conducting "an incorrect and harmful policy." Moreover, Rákosi expressed his view that on the eve of the elections the Czech party was on the defensive and the recent declarations of the executive committee of the Party testified to its isolation.[206] Clearly, Rákosi was unaware of the storm about to descend on the communist parties.

Rákosi's position was delicate given his rapturous praise for Tito as more popular in Hungary than Stalin and his support for the Greek insurgency, a Yugoslav cause. A veteran of many political wars and keenly attuned to shifts in Soviet policy, he tried to put himself forward as the most stalwart bulwark in the popular democracies of the anti-Tito, anti-nationalist deviation. He was under pressure to avoid sharing the fate of Gomulka. In early September, Pushkin warned him that some of the Hungarians were complaining about the activities of Soviet representatives on various economic missions, evidence, he said, of the influence of hostile elements seeking to spoil relations between Hungary and the Soviet Union. Pushkin pointedly reminded him of similar complaints that had been made by the Yugoslavs. He blamed individual Hungarian Communists who had spent some time in the West. Gerő backed him up, claiming that every second communist who spent time in the West was a spy. Rákosi appeared to be on the defensive, but asserted that it would be necessary to deal with "our westerners."[207]

Later that month in Moscow for a rest, Rákosi was told on the basis of information provided by the political police in Hungary that the Hungarian Workers Party did not pay sufficient attention to the presence of Trotskyites in its ranks including former members of the Communist Party. Rákosi was furious. Returning to Hungary he demanded to know who had given this material to the Russians. After having read the evidence, he complained that the police were trying to compromise him in the eyes of Moscow. To

Pushkin Rákosi denied there were any Trotskyites in Hungary but "there was a *Zubatovshchina*" as there had been in Russia. That is, alluding to a conspiracy by the tsarist secret police in 1905 to discredit the revolutionary movement, Rákosi argued that uncovering Trotskyites was the business of the party and not the police. He was angry about the filtering of other kinds of information to the Soviet representatives by the police. Rákosi also resisted pressure from Pushkin to expose suspected spies among the political émigrés returning from Hungary from the West.[208]

As the storm clouds gathered, Rákosi moved to bolster his position, first by taking on the Catholic Church, second by finding a scapegoat within the leadership of the Hungarian Communists in order to deflect the mounting charges of Moscow against its nationalist deviation, and third by internationalizing or "cominformizing" the campaign against Tito. In the late spring 1948 the Central Committee of the CPSU had deplored the weakness of the Hungarian Communists' attitude toward the Catholic Church in its litany of lessons to be learned from the errors of the Yugoslav Party.[209] In November the decision was taken to put Cardinal Mindszenty on trial for a variety of criminal acts of which espionage took pride of place. In February 1949 he was condemned to life imprisonment.[210]

At the same time, Rákosi was moving against Rajk; he was beginning to slice the communist salami. As we have seen, he had already cut off Rajk from his power base by shifting him from the Ministry of Interior to Foreign Affairs, without consulting the Soviet authorities. He had also learned that a former subordinate of Rajk in the political police had been responsible for the compromising leaks to Moscow. "Rákosi is a vengeful man who is just waiting to for a chance to make short work of the political police…," Pushkin reported.[211]

On May 30 1949 Rajk was arrested by the Hungarian police. Questions have been

raised on whose initiative.[212] The evidence suggests it was Rákosi and Mihály Farkas, the deputy general secretary of the party and Minister of War. In July Rákosi boasted to Baranov "we knew for a long time about the criminal activities of Rajk but we waited for the chance to expose him fully. When it was clear to us that Rajk was a traitor we decided to arrest him and towards that end we conducted elections to the National Assembly, earlier scheduled for the fall, in the spring." Rákosi accused Rajk of being an agent of Tito and the United States. In conversations with the Soviet representatives both he and Farkas unveiled a "single network of espionage in the peoples' democracies, especially Czechoslovakia," but also Poland, Bulgaria, Romania, Italy and France. Within Hungary the leaders struck out in all directions, arresting Péter Veres, the former Minister of War, and all members of the General Staff as American spies, sowing panic in the Social Democratic members of the Hungarian Workers Party, and denouncing Imre Nagy as a "bukharinite." Rákosi even had his revenge on Pushkin who was recalled to Moscow for insufficient vigilance.[213]

Over the following months Rákosi seemed uncontrollable. Years later Gerő told the Soviet ambassador that "Rákosi became a maniac, for whom everybody was a spy and a provocateur."[214] He put heavy pressure on the Czech Communists, descending on Prague with a list of 65 Anglo-American spies in the Czech party including two ministers and urging Gottwald to ask Moscow for MGB agents to investigate. Stalin was happy to comply.[215] Shock waves from the Rajk affair hit Romania and Poland. Documents from the Soviet archives make it clear that Rákosi was feeding the Soviet security organs the information to compromise his comrades in the people's democracies.[216] Other evidence reinforces the impression that Rákosi saw himself as the successor to Tito as the leading figure in the peoples' democracies. In May 1949 he was criticizing the editorial policy of the Cominform journal, *For a Lasting Peace, for a Peoples' Democracy*. He took to task comrades in the

international movement for various ideological shortcomings. He was eager to have representatives of the Yugoslav emigration in Moscow sent to Budapest and agitated for a unified center of Yugoslav emigrants to organize underground activities in Yugoslavia although he left unstated where that might be.[217] He was quick to respond to any implication that Hungary was lagging behind in eliminating enemies of the people. Even in his correspondence with Stalin he was never defensive, merely assertive.

As tensions over the Korean conflict mounted, Stalin informed Rákosi of the need to strengthen Hungary's defenses. As a result Rákosi, Gerő and Farkas formed a three man committee to coordinate all aspects of defense, appointed a new set of military leaders and set up mechanisms for rapid mobilization.[218] Once again taking their clues from Stalin and anticipating his wishes, this inner core proceeded to eliminate the last potential elements that could challenge their leadership, culminating in the arrest in May 1951 of a large number of party and government officials. Most of them belonged to the group who had remained in Hungary during the war, including János Kádár.[219] Even during the anti-cosmopolitan campaign Rákosi managed most of the time to stay ahead of the witch hunt although the Soviet representatives always found some evidence of nationalist tendencies in the Hungarian Workers Party. Perhaps this explains how he was able to protect Farkas and Révai — not to speak of himself — from accusations as Zionist agents.[220]

CONCLUSION

Rákosi's salami tactics were an ex post facto invention. In 1944 and 1945 Stalin had no plan, to say nothing of a blueprint for the future of the countries which were falling into the Soviet sphere of influence.[221] His immediate aim was to facilitate the advance of the Red Army by detaching Hitler's satellites, Finland, Hungary and Romania, negotiating them out of the war or forcing them to switch sides. To achieve this goal he was willing to deal with the reactionary military leadership which had led those countries into war against the Soviet Union – Marshal Mannerheim, Admiral Horthy, and General Antonescu. He was also eager to avoid civil wars from breaking out in these countries in the rear of the Red Army similar to those in Poland, Latvia, Lithuania and West Ukraine.[222] Nor did he show any desire to give his Western allies an excuse to break their promise of imposing an unconditional peace on Germany or to extract heavy reparations for the reconstruction of the war torn Soviet Union. The European Communists from Maurice Thorez to Mátyás Rákosi had clear instructions to enter coalition governments with all anti-fascist parties in order to punish war criminals and speed reconstruction of their countries without falling into economic dependence of the United States. As for the future "advance", much would depend first on building the strength of the local communist parties, which was in most of the East European countries except for Czechoslovakia and Finland, extremely weak at the liberation, and second on the ability to outmaneuver their coalition partners. Much was left in the realm of improvisation.

As Stalin made clear during the war and early postwar years, the communist parties could follow different paths to socialism, albeit under the gaze and supervision of the Soviet Union. This had been the central message of the abolition of the Comintern in 1943. Stalin

repeatedly told the Communists of Eastern Europe that they would not have to pass through the dictatorship of the proletarian; they would not have to follow the Bolshevik path through civil war and intervention because the Soviet Union stood behind them. The economic implications were spelled out by Varga in the first volume of *Izmeneniia v ekonomike kapitalizma v itoge vtoroi mirovoi voiny* published in Moscow in 1946.[223] Individual Hungarian Communists had been considering the idea of a separate path since Lukács in the nineteen twenties. In the absence of clear instructions from Stalin in the postwar years, differences emerged within the party over the pace and direction of a march to power and the building of socialism. According to my informal conversations with former Communists in Budapest, it was these hopes for a different path to socialism that inspired them in their youthful years. These hopes surfaced again in 1956 under Imre Nagy and, much diminished, even under Kádár in the nineteen sixties. But Soviet fears of where that might lead repeatedly extinguished them.

At the end of the war, the leadership of the local communist parties had yet to be tested. Stalin had been responsible for severely weakening the cadres of most of them during the purges of the Comintern in the thirties; he never had much confidence in the remaining leadership. However, for Stalin Rákosi was in many ways an ideal collaborator. Stalin often suspected Communists who had been imprisoned by “the fascists” of having been “turned.” But Rákosi had been cleared by Dimitrov, although his record made him vulnerable to accusations in the future. This too suited Stalin’s *modus operandi.* Rákosi was able to ingratiate himself with the "conqueror", assimilate his cultural-ideological perspectives, anticipate his policy shifts and yet protect his own closest associates and gain some wiggle room within the black box of Stalin's "imperial rule." He steadfastly pressed his case for the protection of Hungarian minorities in Slovakia until he forced the Czech Communists, under pressure for their ideological sins, to make concessions. He

managed to steer a middle course between the national line and nationalist deviation. His vicious attacks on Tito were calculated to cover up his earlier excessive enthusiasm for the Yugoslav Communists. He not only carefully followed the zig-zags of Stalinist policies but occasionally anticipated them; in the Rajk case he may well have shown the way. To be sure, he was never a free agent. But he was shrewd and stubborn enough to keep a direct line open to Stalin, prompting exasperation on the part of Soviet officials who were frustrated by his appeals over their heads.

To be sure the Communists could not have succeeded in their drive for power without the assistance of Soviet officials. But this assistance was exercised more indirectly than in Poland, Romania and Bulgaria. The Hungarian version of "limited intervention" was most effective in the Soviet insistence on the Communists' controlling the Ministry of Interior. But at several crucial points the Smallholders and the Social Democrats might have successfully challenged the control of the political police if they had acted together. But the internal divisions within these parties should not be underestimated as an explanation of the Communist advance. The Communists were able to exploit the deep split in the Social Democratic Party and infiltrate its leadership with crypto-Communists. The leaders of the inter war Social Democratic and Smallholder Parties paid a heavy price for their participation in Horthy's hybrid regime. It was a simple if unscrupulous tactic to implicate them in the conservative socio-economic policies of the Horthy governments. If the Communists were heavily dependent on the Soviet presence, the transformation of Hungary from a "friendly" country to a peoples' democracy could not have been carried out without the growth of a small group of Hungarian Communists into a mass party with sympathizers among the other coalition partners. Although the Communists commanded less than a fifth of the active population, a large proportion of the population, perhaps as Charles Gati has suggested close to fifty per cent, favored a radical social and economic

transformation and a destruction of the old elites, and was prepared to accept communist leadership in attaining these ends.[224]

During the postwar struggle for power, the Americans and British played a small role in the evolution of Hungarian politics. Hungary had fought two wars within a generation on the opposite side from the western democracies, while, paradoxically, the elite claimed affiliation with their values. Hungarians never came to terms fully with this contradiction or the impact it had on Western policies. Sympathy in the West for the plight of Hungary came only after it had fallen under communist rule, and even then it remained little more than sympathy even during the uprising of 1956. The struggle for power in Hungary was a minor skirmish in the Cold War. The outcome had its deeper historical roots, too. Hungary had long been contested ground in the struggle for hegemony in Eastern Europe. For centuries it had been caught in the rivalry between the Ottoman and Habsburg Empires. In the twentieth century the contest became one between German and Russian domination over the region. Throughout the centuries Hungarians were themselves divided between those who resisted and those who collaborated with the hegemonic powers. It was only after a defeated Germany became integrated in the West and the Russians retreated after the collapse of the Soviet Union that Hungary could stand on its own. By this time, however, it was much diminished in size and embittered in spirit.

NOTES

[1]The results of this research have been published under the following titles: *Zhdanov in Finland* The Carl Beck Papers in Russian and East European Studies, No. 1107 Pittsburgh: Center for Russian and East European Studies, 1995); "Stalin, Man of the Borderlands," *American Historical Review* 106:5 (December 2001); "Civil Wars in the Soviet Union, 1939-1947," *Kritika* (Winter 2003); "The Crack in the Plaster: Crisis in Romania and the Origins of the Cold War," *Journal of Modern History* (2003); "Stalin as Foreign Policy Maker: Avoiding War," in Sarah Davies and James Harris (eds.) *Stalin. A New History* ((Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); "The Origins of the Cold War in Eurasia: A Borderland Perspective," in Konrad H. Jarausch and Thomas Lindenberger, *Conflicted Memories. Europeanizing Contemporary Histories* (New York/Oxford: Berghan Books, 2007) and "Popular Democracy: An Illusion?" in Vladimir Tismaneanu (ed.) *Stalinism Revisited. The Establishment of Communist Regimes in East-Central Europe* (Budapest: CEU Press, 2009).

[2] Mátyás Rákosi, *Válogatott beszédek és cikkek* (Budapest: Szikra, 1952), p.120. This passage was, omitted from the 1955 Hungarian edition.

[3] Ignác Romsics, *Hungary in the Twentieth Century* (Budapest: Corvina, 1999), pp. 113-14, 131. In 1934 the Hungarian wrtier and literary critic Antal Szerb described the shift in popular sentiment in 1919 as one in which from one day to the next, Hungary was transformed from a country of revolution and proletariats into one of Christians and Nationalists." Cited in *ibid*. p.111. Similarly, opinion lurched to the extreme right in 1939 and to the radical left in the postwar period often encompassing the same people.

[4] Miklós Zeidler, *Ideas on Territorial Revision in Hungary, 1920-1945* (Wayne, NJ: Social Science Monographs, 2007), pp. 117-33 for its activities. Chapter six gives a fascinating picture of the penetration of irredentism into everyday life. The author concludes that the cult of irredentism bore no relationship to possibilities in the real world; it was "ego therapy based on illusions." *Ibid*. p. 254.

[5]István Mócsy, *The Effects of World War I. The Uprooted : Hungarian Refugees and Their Impact on Hungary's Domestic Politics, 1918-1921* (Boulder, Colo: Social Science Monographs, 1983), pp. 153-75.

[6] Ignác Romsics, *István Bethlen: A Great Conservative Statesman of Hungary, 1874-1946* (Highland Lakes, NJ: Social Science Monographs, 1995), p. 63 citing a speech in 1914.

[7] Zeidler, *Ideas*. p. 169. Italics in original.

[8] György Péteri, *Global Monetary Regime and National Central Banking: the Case of Hungary, 1921-1929* (Wayne, NJ: Center for Hungarian Studies and Publications, 2002).

[9] Zeidler, *Ideas*, pp. 255-70; A.I. Pushkash, *Vneshniaia politika Vengrii. Fevral' 1934-ianvar' 1937* (Moscow, 1996); András Bán, *Hungarian-British Diplomacy, 1938-41. The Attempt to Maintain Relations* (London: Frank Cass, 2004).

[10] T.M. Islamov et al, *Transil'vanskii vopros. Vengero-Rumynskii territorial'nyi spor i SSSR. 1940-1946. Dokumenty* (Moscow: ROSSPEN, 2000) contains a large number of detailed analyses by Soviet specialists and Hungarian Communists on the demographic, economic and ethnographical profile of the province. See especially the lengthy report of Béla Geiger, Doc. 48, pp. 174-92. There was never any doubt in the minds of the Soviet leadership that the province should be returned to Romania.

[11] The right was itself split between radicals led by Gyula Gömbös, who was half Swabian, made up mainly of middle class groups, reserve army officers and white collar personnel who had fled from the occupied borderlands and the traditional politicians, magnate landowners and big capitalists led by Count István Bethlen. Bethlen was chair of the National Refugees Affairs Council and head of the National Office for Refugee Affairs. For his activities see Romsics, *István Bethlen*, pp. 126 ff.

[12] Cf. György Péteri, *Effects of World War I: War Communism in Hungary* ("War and Society in East Central Europe", Vol. XVI [New York Brooklyn College Press, 1984]) for a comparison of the industrial policies of the Hungarian Soviet Republic with War Communism in Soviet Russia.

[13] Nicholas Nagy-Talavera, *The Green Shirts and Others. A History of Fascism in Hungary and Rumania* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1970), pp. 25, 54. For a balanced picture of Horthy's life and career Thomas Sakmyster, *Hungary's Admiral on Horseback. Miklós Horthy, 1918-1944* (Boulder, Colo: East European Monographs, 1994).

[14] The formulation was that of Gyula Szekfű in his much admired *Három nemzedék és ami utána következik* (*Three Generations and What Comes Thereafter*) (Budapest: AKV Maecenas, 1989 [1934]) which unfortunately has never been translated.

[15] Romsics, *Hungary*, p. 190. The author goes on to state that the liberal institutional structure was inherited from the Habsburg era but it operated in an anti-democratic manner. Bethlen called "true democracy the leadership of the intelligent classes and not

the rule of the masses, the blind rule of the raw masses." Romsics, *István Bethlen*, p.175. Recently, social scientists have employed the term “hybrid regime” to characterize forms of authoritarian rule based on limited parliamentary and weak legal institutions which have emerged in post-Soviet and developing countries. Little work has been done to reveal historical precedents such as Hungary between the wars. Cf. Joakim Ekman, "Political Participation and Regime Stability: A Framework for Analyzing Hybrid Regimes," *International Political Science Review* 30:1 (2009), 7-31 and Jason Brownlee, "Portents of Pluralism: How Hybrid Regimes Affect Democratic Transitions," *American Journal of Political Science* 53:3 (July 2009) 515-32.

[16] For a more favorable view of Bethlen's political system see Tom Lorman, "István Bethlen and the 1922 Elections in Hungary," *The Slavonic and East European Review*, 80:4 (October 2002), 624-55, stressing the genuine popularity of his party and the divisions that weakened the opposition.

[17] Gyula Borbándi, *Der Ungarische Populismus* (Munich: Aurora, 1976), p. 13.

[18] Lászlo Kontler, *Millenium in Central Europe. A History of Hungary* (Budapest: Atlantisz Publishing House, 1999), p. 347.

[19] Randolph L. Braham, *The Politics of Genocide. The Holocaust in Hungary* (revised and enlarged edition) (New York: Columbia University Press,1994), vol. II, chapter 30, especially pp. 1170-72, 1190 The most brutal aspect of this legislation was the creation in 1942 of labor battalions for Jews, dispatched to the front lines without arms and suffering enormously high losses. For the role of the church in promoting anti-Semitism Jason Wittenberg, *Crucibles of Political Loyalty. Church Institutions and Electoral Continuity in Hungary* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), especially pp. 78-80 and Paul A. Hanebrink, *In Defense of Christian Hungary. Religion, Nationalism and Anti-Semitism, 1890-19* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006) who argues that the church in Hungary stood for more than anti-Semitism, but was an integral part of the nationalist ideology.

[20] Bennett Kovrig, *Communism in Hungary from Kun to Kadar* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1979) documents this dismal history in great detail.

[21] The Moscow years are covered most fully in the Hungarian edition of János M. Rainer, *Nagy Imre. Politikai életrajz* 2 vols. (Budapest: 1956-os Intézet, 1996) See especially pp. 11-12, 172, 182,197-98, 213-14,and 222.

[22] *Georg Lukács, Record of a Life. An Autobiographical Sketch,* edited by István Eörsi (London,Verso,1983), p. 81. Kun opposed it; Dmitrii Manuilskii first approved then "overnight" rejected it presumably at Zinoviev's insistence. At the time, Lukács

supported Stalin against Zinoviev in the intra-party struggle. According to Révai, the Blum thesis was an endorsement of a factional line within the Hungarian party that had led to the formation in Budapest in1925 of a Hungarian Socialist Workers Party (HSWP) as a legal counterpart of the illegal organization operating from Vienna. A few years later Révai joined Kun who favored a centralized movement from above, directed from Moscow instead of the HSWP.*Ibid*. pp. 78-80.

[23] For a full acount see György Péteri, "Before the Schism. Revisiting György Lukács's 'Plebian Democracy' in a Global Perspective," in Ragnar Björk and Alf W. Johansson (eds.) *Samtidshistoria och politik. Väbok till Karl Molin* (Stockholm: Hjalmarson and Högberg, 2004), especially pp.360-369.I am grateful to the author for bringing this article to my attention.

[24] Meanwhile in Moscow, Mátyás Rákosi had identified those elements among the Smallholders and Social Democrats in Hungary who were moving toward radicalization and might be expected to support a "much more radical policy" under pressure of the poor peasants and workers in the event of a Soviet victory. AVP/ RF, f. 0512, op. 4, par. 15, d. 69, ll. 1-12. Cited on ll. 12.

[25] C.A.Macartney, *October Fifteenth*. *A History of Modern Hungary, 1929-1945,* 2 vols. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1956), II, 46-47, 115, 158, 182; Kovrig, *Communism*, pp. 136-43.

[26] Ignác Romsics, "A bethleni koszolidáció," in Ferenc Pölöskei, Jenő Gergely and Lajos Izsák (eds.) *Magyaroszág története 1918-1990* (Budapest,1990), pp. 70-1.

[27] István Pintér, "A demokrácia és a szövetségi politika az MSZDP-ben 1919-1944 között," in István Feitl, György Földes and László Hubai (eds.), *Útkeresések. A magyar szociáldemokrácia tegnap és ma* (Budapest: Napvilág, 2004), pp. 381-83.

[28] Iván T. Berend and Győrgy Ránki, *Underdevelopment and Economic Growth. Studies in Hungarian Social and Economic History* (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó 1979), pp. 210-14.

[29] István Pintér, *A Szociáldemokrata Párt története, 1933-1944* (Budapest: 1980), pp. 121-23, 191-95. Szakasits also became editor in chief of the Party newspaper *Népszava* and hired a number of Communist and left wing journalists. But he was still isolated in the top leadership before the war. *Ibid*. 204-217, 230, 245.

[30] Róbert Gábor*, Az igazi szociáldemocrácia. Kűzdelem a fasizmus és a kommunizmus ellen, 1944-1948* (Budapest: Százavég, 1998), pp. 9-10, 65-7, 70-73.

[31] Borbándi, *Der ungarische Populismus*, especially chapter 5; Barany, "Hungary," 295-97.

[32] Kovrig, *Communism*, pp. 126-27.

[33] György Oláh, *Három millió koldus* (Miskolc: Magyar Jövő Nyomdaüzem és Lapkiadóvállalat, 1928), the work of a young populist journalist captured in its title the emotional power that "three million agricultural workers" could not match.

[34] Borbándi, *Der Ungarische Populismus*, pp. 56-8, 79-84.

[35] See for example, Gyula Illyés, *People of the Puszta* (Budapest: Corvina, 1967). Originally published in 1936 it is an extraordinary work best described as "a lyric sociography."

[36] L.N. Nezhinskii and A.I. Pushkash, *Bor'ba vengerskogo naroda za ustanovlenie i uprochenie narodno-demokraticheskogo stroia*, *1944-1948 (*Moscow: Akademiia nauk SSSR, 1961), pp. 31-33, 41.

[37] Eugen Weber, "Romania" in Hans Rogger and Eugen Weber, (eds.), *The European Right . A Historical Profile* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1965), pp. 501-74.

[38] Nagy-Talavera, *The Green Shirts*, pp. 49-51.

[39] *Ibid.* pp. 93-96. Eckhardt subsequently played a dubious role as an exile in the United States in seeking to take Hungary out of World War II without sacrificing the ruling elites. Marion D.Fenyő, *Hitler, Horthy and Hungary. German-Hungarian Relations 1941-1944* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972) pp. 111-14.

[40] Nagy-Talavera, *The Green Shirts*, pp. 126-27; Weber, "Varieties of Fascism," in Rogger and Weber, *The European Right*, p. 392.

[41] In the last prewar elections the Arrow Cross ran extremely well in the industrial belt around Budapest, the mining areas and the most depressed rural areas of the southeast. Nagy-Talavera, *The Green Shirts*, pp. 154-55.

[42] This was also the view of Voroshilov, T.V. Volokitina et al (eds), *Vostochnaia Evropa v dokumentakh rossiiskikh arkhivov*, vol. II, *1949-1953* (Moscow/Novosibirsk: Sibirskii khronograf,1998) (henceforth VE), Doc. 98, p. 271.

[43] Miklós Molnár, *From Béla Kun to János Kádár. Seventy Years of Hungarian Communism* (New York: Berg, 1990), p. 71. This was a highly confused period and the participants gave contradictory testimonies and changed their memories depending on political circumstances. *Ibid*. pp. 756.

[44] Cf. A.I. Pushkash, "Sovetskii soiuz i dvizhenie Soprotivleniia v Vengrii," in L. B. Valev and G.M. Slavin (eds.),*Sovetskii soiuz i bor'ba narodov tsentral'noi i iugovostochnoi Evropy za svobodu i nezavisimost', 1941-1945* (Moscow: Nauka, 1978), pp. 345-83 exaggerates the scope of the communist resistance but provides valuable detail based on the Hungarian and Soviet archives.

[45] According to the Soviet military archives 6440 soldiers and officers of the Hungarian Army who had gone over to the Soviet side were brigaded with the Second Ukrainian Front during the fighting for Budapest. Ibid. p. 377 .

[46] György Ránki, "The German Occupation of Hungary," *Acta Historica Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae*, XI: 1-4 (1965), 261-83.

[47] In the fall of 1944 Lázsló Rajk had adopted a more radical tone than his Moscow colleagues. He soon fell into line publicly but privately kept his counsel in competing with Rákosi, his main rival in intra-party conflicts. Marvin Mevius, *Agents of Moscow, the Hungarian Communist Party and the Origins of Socialist Patriotism, 1941-1953* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2005), pp.70-2, 168.

[48] AVP/ RF, f. 0512 op. 4, par. 15, d. 67, ll. 21-23, 31-34, 40 . It was not true, as Molotov charged, that the British had not kept Moscow fully informed about these feelers.

[49] VE, Doc. 14, pp. 72-3.

[50] *Ibid*. Doc. 17, pp. 75-6 . Although the difficulty of disengaging the Hungarians from the front was greater than the similar case in Romania, or Bulgaria, one can only imagine how different the fate of Hungary might have been had this operation been carried out.

[51] T.V. Volokitina et al (eds), *Sovetskii faktor v vostochnoi Evrope, 1944-1953*. Vol. 1 *1944-1948. Dokumenty* (Moscow: ROSSPEN,1999), Doc. 19, p. 103. It was no wonder then that in contrast to its policy of using Romanian and Bulgaria and Polish troops on the Eastern front, the Soviet Union decided not to command, organize or arm Hungarian soldiers to fight against the Germans as stipulated in the final terms of the armistice agreement. Cf. Peter Kenez, *Hungary from the Nazis to the Soviets. The Establishment of the Communist Regime in Hungary, 1944-1948* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 33-4.

[52] Macartney, *October Fifteenth*, II, 289, 313, 332-33. A balanced discussion of the confused events surrounding the coup is Fenyo, *Hitler, Horthy and Hungary,* chapter 11.

[53] George Barany, "Hungary," in Sugar and Lederer, *Nationalism,* p.299

[54] Ivan T. Berend and György Ránki, *The Hungarian Economy in the Twentieth Century* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1985), pp. 175-76, 189; Nezhinskii and Puskas, *Bor'ba*, pp. 124-26.

[55] Estimates vary but according to immediate postwar figures of the Hungarian Ministry of Reconstruction and Commercial Bank of Budapest almost 24,000 freight wagons, 10-12,000 vehicles, 120-150,000 horses were taken by the Germans. Ronald W. Zweig, *The Gold Train. The Destruction of the Jews and the Second World War's Most Terrible Robbery* (London: Penguin Books, 2002), p. 251, note12.

[56] Szálasi's anti-Semitism did not extend to killing Jews, but he did not prevent his followers from committing atrocities in Budapest. Margit Szöllösi-Janze, Die *Pfeilkreuzlerbewegung in Ungarn. Historische Kontext, Entwicklung and Herrschaft*. (Munich: R. Oldenbourg, 1989), pp. 426-32; Macartney, *October Fifteenth*,II, 165 and Braham, *The Politics of Genocide*,II, 945.

[57] The standard work remains Braham *The Politics of Genocide.* For balanced interpretations of questions of responsibility see István Deák, "Could the Hungarian Jews Have Survived?" in Michael R. Marrus (ed.), *The Nazi Holocaust* (Westport CT: Meckler, 1989), IV, 504-23 and Deák "A Fatal Compromise? The Debate over Collaboration and Resistance in Hungary" in István Deák, Jan T. Gross and Tody Judt (eds.) *The Politics of Retribution in Europe. World War II and Its Aftermath* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000). For an example of the on-going polemics, Karl P. Benziger, "The Trail of László Bárdossy. The Second World War and Factional Politics in Contemporary Hungary," *Journal of Contemporary History* 40:1 (2005), 465-81.

[58] For a vivid description of the atrocities and the difficulties these caused the Communists, see Mevius, *Agents of Moscow.* pp. 54-68 based on Hungarian archives. Cf. Kenez, *Hungary*, pp. 38-45 who considers some of the mitigating factors. While Stalin sought to explain away the atrocities to the Czechs and Yugoslavs, he never made the effort with the Hungarians. Geoffrey Roberts, *Stalin's Wars. From World War to Cold War, 1939-1953* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), p. 264.

[59] Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS) (Washington: Government Printing Office), 1944, III, 948-52.

[60] Kenez, *Hungary*, pp.70-80. The contrary position is taken by László Borhi, *Hungary in the Cold war, 1945-1956* (Budapest: CEU Press, 2004), pp. 7-9.

[61] VE, Doc. 25, pp.94-99 (Molotov quotation on p. 97) and Doc. 29, pp. 102-04. It is

clear from these discussions with the Hungarian delegation that the Soviet leaders were groping in the dark for a satisfactory formula to legitimize Hungarian authority and its representatives.

[62] For an English translation of Gerő's note in Russian on these discussions see William O. McCagg, *Stalin Embattled 1943-1948* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1978) pp. 314-16 who emphasizes the moderate tone of Stalin's advice Cf. Borhi,, *Hungary in the Cold War*, pp.33-6 who notes that McCagg omits Stalin's remark that "once you have gained strength you may press on…" as evidence of his plans to sovietize Hungary. *Ibid*. note 72, p. 44. But like Stalin's similar advice to other Communist parties, this left undefined the meaning and timing of the phrase "press on."

[63] Kovrig, *Communism in Hungary*, pp. 156-60 based mainly on Mihály Korom, "Az Ideiglenes Nemzetgyűlés és Kormány létrehozásának előkészítése," PK (*Párttörténeti Közlemények*), no. 4 (December 1974).

[64] This discussion is informed by the perceptive comments of István Vida, "Partino-politicheskaia struktura vengerskoi narodnoi demokratii, 1944-1948 gg," *Acta Historica*, XXVI, Nos. 3-4, (Budapest, 1980) especially, 319-320.

[65] *Ibid*.p. 325.

[66] Mark Pittaway, "The Politics of Legitimacy and Hungary's Postwar Transition," *Contemporary European History*, 13:4 (November 2004), 453-75 and more generally Pittaway, *The Workers' State. Industrial Labor and the Making of Socialist Hungary, 1944-1958* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2012).

[67] István Bibó, "The Crisis of Hungarian Democracy (1945)," in Bibó, *Selected Writings* (Social Science Monographs, Boulder Colo.1991), pp 89 ff. Pittaway embellishes this point, "The Politics of Legitimacy," p. 457.

[68] William O. McCagg, "Communism in Hungary, 1944-1946" (Columbia University Ph.D. Thesis, 1965), pp.56-7.

[69] See the suggestive comments in Tamas Aczel and Tibor Meray, *The Revolt of the Mind. A Case History of Intellectual Resistance Behind the Iron Curtain* (New York: Praeger, 1959), pp. 34-54. Both authors described themselves as having belonged to this group.

[70] Volokitina, *Narodnaia demokratiia*, p. 59.

[71] Mevius, *Agents of Moscow*, pp.77-86.

[72] RGASPI, f. 17, op. 128, d. 750, l. 197.

[73] Béla Rácz, "A Belügyminisztérium ujjászervezése", *Levéltári Kozlemenyek*, 40:1, (1970), 93-108.

[74] Imre Nagy, *On Communism* (New York: Praeger, 1952), pp. 33, 55-7 and passim.

[75] I rely on the account of Kenez,*Hungar*y, pp. 54-60.

[76] *Sovetskii faktor*, Doc. 45, p.168; Doc. 57, p. 201.

[77] Kenez, *Hungary*, pp. 145, 149.

[78] VE, Doc. 98, pp 271-72. Like other Soviet leaders Voroshilov also expressed concern over the fact that "at the top levels the party is not Hungarian in nationality." *Ibid*. p. 273.

[79] Vida, "Partino-politicheskaia struktura," p. 325.

[80] Volokitina, *Narodnaia demokratiia*, p. 31.

[81] FRUS, 1946, VI, 274. Even the Pope disapproved of the Primate's interference in Hungarian politics, but Mindszenty returned from Rome with "a substantial amount of American money." Ibid. 275.

[82] Volokitina, *Narodnaia demokratiia*, pp. 33, 59.

[83] Vida, "Partino-politicheskaia struktura," p. 315.

[84] István Vida, *Koalíció és pártharcok* (Budapest : Magvető Könyvkiadó, 1986), p. 280

[85] For the election results see Kovrig, *Communism in Hungary* p.218; on the relationship of the new parties to the Smallholders and National Peasants see Borbándi, *Der Ungarishche Populismus*, pp.270-72.

[86] RGASPI, f. 117, op. 128, l. 218.

[87] Volokitina, *Narodnaia demokratiia*, p. 32.

[88] *Ibid*. p. 63.

[89] *Ibid*. p. 64.

[90] AVP RF, f. 453, op. 1a, d. 1, p. 1a, ll. 60-3, 65-8. On occasion too the ACC investigating

authorities justified orders banning meetings but only because the proper procedures for requesting permission had not been followed. *Ibid*. d. 3, p. 1a. l. 26.

[91] National Archives (NA), State Department, 740.00119 Control (Hungary) Box 3796 folder 1, March 1, 1945, Kirk to Secretary of State. This did not prevent the Soviet security organs from arresting certain pro-Habsburg politicians.

[92] *Ibid*. February 28, 1945.

[93] *Ibid*. March 1, 1945. See also, FRUS, IV, 1945, 810-811, 828-29.

[94] It is only fair to note that in the summer of 1945 the Americans were more optimistic than the British about the prospects for free elections in Hungary, and in the event the Americans proved more nearly correct. NA, 740 00119 Control (Hungary) Box 3796, folder 2, July 6, 1945. The argument is sometimes made that Stalin treated Hungary with kid gloves in order to placate the west for his sovietization of Poland — the so-called Polish trade-off. It seems to me this is to mistake the cause for the excuse. For Stalin the difference lay in the strategic situation and the balance of forces operating in the different countries. Cf. McCagg, "Communism in Hungary," p. 158 and Charles Gati, *Hungary and the Soviet Bloc* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1986), pp. 5, 21, 37. Those attempting to explain Stalin's moderate Finnish policy find the same trade-off with Rumania.

[95] The following discussion relies mainly on I. Vida, "Direct Democracy and Its Forms During the Period of the People's Democratic Revolution in Hungary (1944-1948)," *Études historiques hongroises*, (1984), pp. 616-46 and Nezhinskii and Pushkash, *Bor'ba vengerskogo naroda* pp. 176-194.

[96] On the divisions within the working class, its volatility and rebellions against the Communists moderate policies see Pittaway, *The Workers State*, especially pp. 34-5, 38-40, 56-69 and 75.

[97] For an overview of the land reform see Berend and Ránki, *Hungary*, pp. 180-84 and Kenez, *Hungary*, pp.107-17.

[98] Miklos Molnar and Laszlo Nagy, *Imre Nagy. Reformateur ou revolutionnaire?* (Paris : Minard, 1959), pp. 18-20, 24-27, 38, 46-9.

[99] RGASPI, f. 17, op. 128, d. 119, ll. 37, 42. For statistical information and a chronology of the reform see Nezhinskii and Pushkash*, Bor'ba vengerskogo naroda*, pp. 208-28.

[100] Vida, "Forms of Direct Democracy," pp. 629-30.

[101] Miklós Lackó, *Arrow Cross Men. National Socialists, 1935-19*44 (Budapest: Akadémiai

Kiadó, 1969), p. 41 and Nagy-Talavera, *The Green Shirts*, pp. 153-54.

[102] Berend and Ránki, *The Hungarian Economy*, pp. 189-90.

[103] Kenez, *Hungary*, pp. 212-15; Mevius, *Agents of Moscow*, pp. 136-42.

[104] VE, Doc. 170, pp. 514-19, quotation on p. 519.

[105] Nezhinskii and Pushkash, *Bor'ba vengerskogo naroda*, p. 193.

[106] RGASPI, f. 17, op. 128, d. 750, ll. 224-25.

[107] AVP RF, f. 453, op. 1a, d. 7, pap. 1a, ll. 7-7b. The trials remain a subject of debate not only among historians but within the contemporary Hungarian body politic. László Karsai, "The People's Courts and Revolutionary Justice in Hungary 1945-1946," in Deák, *The Politics of Retribution*, pp. 233-51 criticizes the legal foundation of the trials and the role of "the Jew's thirst for revenge." His legal arguments are refuted by Karl P. Benziger, "The Trial of László Bárdossy. The Second World War and Factional Politics in Contemporary Hungary," *Journal of Contemporary History* 40:3 (2005), 471-72, who also documents the attempts to rehabilitate Bárdossy by the Hungarian right in 2000.

[108] Vida, "Direct Democracy," p. 622.

[109] Ibid. p. 627.

[110] Volokitina, *Narodnaia demokratiia*, pp, 58-61.

[111] AVP RF, f. 453, op. 1a,d. 2, p. 1a, l. 158; d. 4, p. 1a, ll. 5-5ob; d. 8, p. 1, l. 31.

[112] RGASPI, f. 17, op. 128, d. 70, ll. 200-19

[113] AVP RF, f. Referentura po Vengrii, op. 25, por. 10, p. 113, ll. 1-2, 7-8.

[114] *Ibid*. ll. 15-22; RGASPI, f. 17,op. 128, d. 48, l. 210 ob.

[115] RGASPI, f. 17, op. 128, d. 48, ll. 15-17, 23.

[116] *Ibid*. f. 17, op. 128, d. 48, l. 17. See also, Mevius, *Agents of Moscow*, pp.118-26 and 176.

[117] RGASPI, f. 17, op. 128, d. 48, ll. 17,18,21,22.

[118] *Ibid*, f. 17, op. 128, d. 44, ll. 211-11b.

[119] Yehuda Lahav, *Der Weg der Kommunistischen Partei Ungarns zur Macht* (Munich: Trőfenik, 1985), pp. 300-01.

[120] FRUS, 1945, III, 857, 883.

[121] Pittaway, *The Workers' State*, p. 26.

[122] AVP RF, f. 077, op. 27, d. 11, pap. 121, ll. 26, 28-9.

[123] Volokitina, *Narodnaia demokratiia*, p. 186.

[124] VE, Doc. 98, pp. 273-74. It may be that the Smallholders had taken courage from the American note of September 26 expressing readiness to exchange diplomatic representatives with Hungary if the elections were truly free and democratic. The Soviet Union countered with an assurance that it would recognize the government without conditions. *Ibid*. Doc. 95, pp. 264-65. Voroshilov sought to persuade Moscow to free the Hungarian officer prisoners of war in camps inside Hungary as a gesture of Soviet generosity. *Ibid*. Doc. 97, p. 270. A serious problem for the Communists was the continued presence of large numbers of pows in the Soviet Union. In the summer of 1945 177,348 pows were returned to Hungary. In April 1946, 232,879 Hungarian pows still remained in the Soviet Union despite Hungarian communist appeals to have them released. *Ibid*. Doc. 143, pp. 419-20.

[125] *Ibid*. Doc. 100, pp. 276-77. The communication was signed by Molotov, Beria, Malenkov and Mikoian. The endorsement by the full Politburo the same day included a reprimand to Voroshilov for granting permission without the approval of the Central Committee.

[126] Pittaway, *The Workers' State*, pp. 53-4.

[127] Gati, *Hungary*, pp. 67-71. Cf. Kovrig, *Communism* places greater emphasis on political explanations, in particular the hostility to the USSR as the major determinant in determining voter behavior and party allegiances.

[128] Volokitina , *Narodnaia demokratiia*, pp. 192-201.

[129] VE, Doc. 105, pp. 290-91, once again under the signatures of Molotov, Beria, Malenkov and Mikoian .

[130] *Ibid.* Doc. 111, pp. 299-301 .

[131] NA. Department of State, 740.00119 Control (Hungary) 3/45, no 767, Squires to Secretary of State.

[132] FRUS, 1945, III, 906.The Smallholders also got one of their own installed as undersecretary for the police.

[133] VE, Doc. 113, pp. 303-05.

[134] *Ibid*. Doc. 124 pp. 347-49.

[135] Borhi, *Hungary in the Cold War,* p. 82.

[136] Vida, "Forms of Direct Democracy," pp. 638-39.

[137] *Daily Telegraph* and *Morning Post*, no date quoted in Volokitina, *Narodnaia demokratiia,* p. 188.

[138] Kovrig, *Communism*, p. 198; Volokitina, *Narodnaia demokratiia*, p. 188; Nezhinskii and Pushkash, *Bor'ba vengerskogo naroda*, p. 313.

[139] Volokitina , *Narodnaia demokratiia*, p. 189; Pittaway, *The Workers' State*, p. 58-60.

[140] Vida, "Forms of Direct Democracy," p. 639.

[141] According to Ferenc Nagy the "young Smallholder deputies who were later charged with conspiracy by the Soviet" were "enthusiastic" when "they envisioned a future in which Hungary's relationship to the Soviet need not be based on the Communist Party." *The Struggle Behind the Iron Curtain* (New York: Macmillan, 1948), p. 217. More senior figures in the party including Kovács, Balogh and even Tildy expressed similar sentiments, albeit more obliquely, by stressing the hegemony of the propertied peasants in future governments. Volokitina, *Narodnaia demokratiia*, pp. 192-93.

[142] This is one of the major themes of Borhi, *Hungary in the Cold War*. But see also Kenez, *Hungary*, pp. 230-32.

[143] Stanley M. Max, *The United States, Great Britain, and the Sovietization of Hungary, 1945-1948* (Boulder, Colo: East European Monographs,1985), pp. 22-3, 34-5, chapter 4 and pp. 85-91.

[144] Csaba Békés, "The Communist Parties and the National Issue in Central and Eastern Europe (1945-1947). An Important Factor Facilitating Communist Takeover in the Region," *6. Martie 1945: Incepturile communizarii Romaniei* (Editure Enciclopedia, Bucuresti, 1995), pp. 245-53. I am grateful to the author for sharing this source.

[145] VE, Doc. 124, p. 347.

[146] *Ibid*, Doc. 142, pp. 407-19; Nagy, *The Struggle*, pp. 205-14; Borhi, *Hungary in the Cold War,* pp. 87-9 points out discrepancies between the Soviet and Hungarian records of the conversation. But the examples he gives do not suggest these were significant. More important, he points out that the inexperienced Hungarians were deceived by Stalin into taking his vague assurances at face value.

[147] *Ibid*. Doc. 125, p. 350. Italics added. The same wording was repeated in the instructions to the Soviet delegation of the deputy foreign ministers in London on the peace agreement with Hungary. *Ibid*. Doc. 138, p. 392.

[148] *Ibid*. Doc. 142, p. 418.

[149] Islamov,*Transyl'vanskii vopros ,* Doc. 105, pp. 376-78.

[150] L. Ia. Gibianskii, "Kak voznik Kominform. Po novym materialam." *Novaia i noveishaia istoriia* 4, (1993), 135-37; Csaba Békés, "Soviet Plans to Establish the COMINFORM in Early 1946: New Evidence from the Hungarian Archives," Cold War International History Project, *Bulletin*, 10 (March 1998), 135-37.

[151] G.M. Adibekov, *Kominform i poslevoennaia Evropa, 1947-1956 gg.* (Moscow: Rossiia molodaia, 1994), pp. 6-15.

[152] Gibianskii, "Kak voznik," p. 136.

[153] Ferenc Nagy returned from Moscow convinced that he "now had a free hand to manage his government." FRUS. 1946, VI, 275.

[154] FRUS, 1946, VI, 299-300.

[155] *Ibid*. pp. 305-06; VE. Doc. 153, p. 465.The Smallholders received twenty per cent of all the chiefs of police in the provinces.

[156] Nagy, *The Struggle*, pp. 222-34. According to the American envoy, Nagy had assured him upon his return that he was determined to carry out the will of the majority "even at the cost of the coalition." At the same time "he took a grave view (of the current situation), saying if the coalition broke down civil war will begin in Hungary. FRUS, VI, 317.

[157] RGASPI, f. 17, op. 128, d. 119, ll. 15-16.He also noted that British officials had "openly expressed their anti-Soviet tendency" while making it clear that Hungary could not expect any economic and political support from London.

[158] FRUS, 1946, VI, 329.

[159] VE, Doc. 153, note 2 citing AVP/ RF, f. 077, op. 27, d. 11, pap. 121, ll. 56-8.

[160] RGASPI, f. 17, op. 128, d. 119, l. 17.

[161] Nagy, *The Struggle*, p. 284.

[162] AVP RF, f. 077, op. 27, d.11, pap. 121, ll. 59-62.

[163] Zhdanov and his allies had been maneuvering since 1941 to remove Varga and his colleagues from the Institute and reorganize it. A scholar with access to the relevant Soviet archives has recently argued that this was a "cadre problem." Their attacks were based not so much on ideological differences over economic and foreign policy, but on the predominance in the higher posts of the Institute of older generation foreigners who were stigmatized as "politically unreliable people." It was only in August 1947 that the Zhdanovites criticized Varga for his economic reform plan in Hungary. By this time, of course, Soviet policy was moving away from ideas of a gradual transition to socialism in the people's democracies. Kyung Deok Roh, "Rethinking the Varga Controversy, 1941-1953," *Europe-Asia Studies* 63:5, (2011), 833-855.

[164] Letter of E. Varga to A.A. Zhdanov, September, 1946 in Politikatörténeti Intézet Levéltára (Archive of the Institute of Political History) f. 274, 10/122, pp. 61-4. Italics in original.

[165] Nagy had first made this argument in an unpublished draft brochure titled "Social Democracy and the Agrarian Question" written in Moscow in 1936. Rainer, *Nagy Imre*, p. 182.

[166] RGASPI, f. 17, op. 128, d. 119, ll. 31-33, 43-49, 53-56.

[167] George Kemény, *Economic Planning in Hungary, 1947-9* (London: Royal Institute, 1952), pp. 7, 23-7. The author was Under Secretary of Finances from 1945-48; Alexander Eckstein, “Postwar Planning in Hungary,” *Economic Development and Cultural Change*, 2 (1954), 380-96.

[168] Volokitina, *Narodnaia demokratiia*, p. 194; Nezhinskii and Pushkash, *Bor'ba vengerskogo naroda*, pp. 329-35.

[169] VE, Doc. 189, pp.561-62.

[170] I. Vida, "Partino-politicheskaia struktura," p. 328.

[171] FRUS, 1947, IV, 276, 279-80.,

[172] *Ibid*, 1946, VI, 360.

[173] AVP RF, f. 077, op. 28, d. 10, pap. 125, ll. 17-19. quoted in Volokitina, *Narodnaia demokratiia*, p. 197. For a detailed account see Kovrig, *Communism*, pp. 206-08. At the time it was rumored that Kovacs had perished in the Soviet Union. Nagy, *The Struggle*, p. 427. In fact he survived, was released from a Soviet prison in 1956 and allowed to return to Hungary, confirming indirectly that his arrest had been another "blunder."

[174] Borhi, *Hungary in the Cold War*,p. 113; Kenez, *Hungary,* p. 85; a leader of the left wing Szakasits was not trusted by Pushkin despite the Hungarian's protestations of his loyalty to the Soviet Union and his denial of special ties to the British Labor Party. *Sovetskii faktor*, Doc. 145, pp. 407-08.

[175] VE, Doc. 193, pp. 570-71. Pushkin affected to be shocked .

[176] RGASPI, f. 17, op. 128, d. 1019, letter Rákosi to Stalin, Molotov and Zhdanov (April, 1947, no later than the 25th), ll. 3-4.

[177] *Ibid.* l. 5.

[178] VE, Docs. 204, 205 and 206, pp.601-07.

[179] RGASPI, f. 17, op. 128, d. 1019, ll. 17-20.

[180] *Ibid*. ll. 21-23. Yet, in 1947-48 the Soviet Union permitted the deportation of 50,000 Germans into their zone.

[181] *Ibid*. l. 23. Molotov refers here to a medieval Russian crown of fur and precious stones, allegedly of imperial Byzantine origins but actually from Central Asia, that was worn by princes of Kievan Rus'.

[182] *Ibid*. l. 9.

[183] *Ibid*. l. 15.

[184] *Ibid*. ll. 11-12, 25.

[185] *Ibid*. l. 14.

[186] *Ibid*. l. 27.

[187] VE, Doc. 216, pp. 642-43. Rákosi used Nagy's four year old son as a hostage.

[188] Borhi, *Hungary in the Cold War*, p. 117 accepts this story at face value though there

is no other documentary evidence to support this highly improbable tale. Stalin did not communicate with foreign Communists, or anyone for that matter, by unsigned hand-written notes.

[189] *Sovetskii faktor,* Doc.. 155, pp. 427-32, quotation on p. 431.

[190] AVP RF, f. Referentura po Vengrii, op. 28, po. 6, nap. 125.Dnevniki posla SSSR v Vengrii 1948, No. 10. Rajk stoutly denied these accusations.

[191] VE, Doc. 298, pp. 912-13.

[192] Volokitina, *Narodnaia demokratiia*, p. 198.

[193] *Ibid*. p. 200. Pushkin refused to be drawn and suggested that this was "not an honorable way" and that it failed to take into account the opinion of the largest party in Hungary.

[194] *Ibid*. p. 256.

[195] Pushkin reported his advice to the leader of the Social Democratic left wing as follows: "I told Marosán that the Social Democratic Party was entering a dangerous path for Hungarian democracy, as well as the party. I noted that evidently the lessons of the past [that is the national elections of 1945] had taught the Social Democrats little." When Marosán asked for advice, "I answered that it was his personal decision but if he was convinced of the correctness of his position than he ought to insist on this position to the end." It can only be imagined how Marosán used these words to persuade his comrades to reverse their decision.

[196] VE, Doc. 235, pp. 691-95; Kovrig, *Communism*, pp.217-18.

[197] VE, Doc. 241, pp. 711-12.These included Lajos Dinnyés (SH) as premier, Gyula Ortutay (SH) as minister of education and subsequently the initiator of the campaign against church schools; Péter Veres (National Peasants Party), a crypto-communist, as minister of defense.

[198] VE, Docs. 238 and 241, pp. 702-03, 710-11.

[199] *Soveshchaniia Kominforma, 1947, 1948, 1949. Dokumenty i materialy* (Moscow: ROSSPEN,1998), pp.144-45, 285.

[200] Kenez, *Hungary*, pp.271-78.For detailed treatment of the factions within the Social Democratic Party see Robert, *Az igazi szociáldemokrácia,* especially pp. 192-201 for Peyer's struggle with the left.

[201] VE, Doc. 252, pp. 741-42.

[202] Kenez, *Hungary*, pp. 263-65.

[203] *Soveshchaniia kominforma*, p. 145.

[204] VE, Doc. 287, pp. 885-89. The Hungarian Communists did not accept all the corrections made by the Information Bureau, including those of an editorial character. See also the discussion in Mevius, *Agents*, pp.225-27.

[205] VE, Doc. 283, pp. 874.

[206] VE, Doc. 259, pp. 761-62.

[207] AVP RF, f. Referentura po Vengrii, op. 28, por. 6, nap. 125, Dnevniki posla SSSR v Vengrii, 1948, No. 12.

[208] VE, Doc. 30, pp. 95-8. Dated May 17, 1949 this document refers to incidents occuring over the previous six months.

[209] "The Communist Party had opened its doors to priests. Such methods cannot be considered correct. They can only achieve temporary and feeble results. At the same time by sacrificing important Marxist-Leninist principles the party loses its character (*teraet svoe litso*) as the advanced party of workers." VE, I, Doc. 209, p. 597.

[210] For a summary of the accusations and trial see Mevius, *Agents of Moscow*, pp. 237-40 who argues that the trial "was thoroughly national in content." But was it? The accusations of treason were linked to spying for the Americans which soon became the leitmotif of all the trials in Eastern Europe. For a highly critical view of Mindszenty cf. Kenez, *Hungary*, pp.167-76

[211] VE, II, Doc. 30, p. 96. Pushkin had his own complaints about Rajk's ambitions. AVP/RF, f. Referentura po Vengrii, op 28, por. 6, nap. 125, Dnevniki posla SSSR v Vengrii, 1948, No. 13.

[212] The most complete analysis of the Rajk case is T.V.Volokitina, G. P. Murashko, A.F. Noskova and T.A. Pokivailova, *Moskva i vostochnaia Evropa. Stanovlenie politicheskikh regimov sovetskogo tipa, 1949-1953. Ocherki istorii* (Moscow: ROSSPEN, 2002), pp. 519-41 based on extensive archival documents.

[213] VE, II, Docs. 54 and 55, pp. 179-83. Rákosi even urged the Soviet Union to organize an armed struggle by forming partisan detachments in Yugoslavia: "by

propaganda alone we will not overthrow the Tito clique." *Ibid*. p. 182.

[214] Volokitina, *Moskva,* note p. 525 citing AVP RF, f. 077*, op. 34, p. 175, d. 9, l. 47.*

[215] VE, II, Doc. 69, pp. 219-224 which includes the full text of Rákosi's long, detailed and altogether extraordinary letter to Gottwald denuncing spies in the Czechoslovak government.

[216] Volokitina, *Moskva*, pp.526-27. The Hungarian police were better at accusing than proving. Their excessive use of torture produced the most fantastic confessions. Finally, Rákosi called on Moscow to send its specialists who quickly sorted things out. Still the Soviet reports on the conduct of the trial revealed the poor preparation of the prosecutors. VE, II, Doc. 72, pp. 231-32. Rákosi insisted on the death sentence. Stalin disagreed, then changed his mind: "I renounce my opinion with respect to Rajk which I told you at the time of our conversation in Moscow. I consider that L. Rajk must be executed since any other sentence would not be understood by the people…." Volokitina, *Moskva*, p. 527.

[217] VE, II, Docs. 30, pp. 92-93 and 97, pp. 297-98.

[218] *Ibid.* Doc. 147, pp. 437-38.

[219] Responding to a letter from Stalin to Bierut in March 1951 Rákosi agreed that the trials in Hungary and elsewhere had not fully uncovered the enemy: "In recent months we have noticed that the enemy forces which have up to this point only dug in have now begun without a doubt to become active. We are on our guard and on the basis of the experience which we have had up to now and the received warnings we will do all on our territory to expose and eliminate the organizations of the enemy." pp. 497-98. The Communists had already arrested many of the left wing Social Democrats including Szakosits and Marosán as spies. They then removed and arrested eighteen generals in the Hungarian Army. *Ibid*. Doc. 171, pp. 497-98. In May 1951 a sweeping purge of high party and state officials removed and imprisoned most of the Hungarian Communists who had remained in Hungary during the war including János Kádár. *Ibid.* Docs. 191 and 192, pp. 542-43. For details on the purge of Kádár see Volokitina, *Moskva*, pp.537-38.

[220] See for example VE, II, Doc. 242, pp. 658-660 and especially Doc. 275, pp. 753-67 in which the Soviet embassy severely criticized the ideological shortcomings of the Hungarian Communists, targeting the Marxist philosopher, György Lukács, his former student Révai and the Hungarian populists. In reorganizing the government in August 1952 Rákosi omitted his two associates from a list of deputy prime ministers because their nominations could give rise to anti-Semitic agitation. The presence of Jews in the top positions of the party had long concerned Stalin, and in 1950 the State Security

agents reiterated these concerns. *Ibid*. Doc. 282, p. 788 and reference to RGASPI, f. 82, op. 2, d. 1154, l. 19 in note 3 p. 789.

[221] Alfred J. Rieber, *Zhdanov in Finland*. The Carl Beck Papers in Russian and East European Studies, No. 1107 (Pittsburgh, 1995), especially pp. 19-22 and Rieber, "The Crack in the Plaster: Crisis in Romania and the Origins of the Cold War," *Journal of Modern History* 76 (March 2004), 63-6; for similar views see Voytech Mastny, "Soviet Plans for Postwar Europe," in Antonio Varsori and Elena Calandri (eds.) *The Failure of Peace in Europe* (London: Palgrave, 2002), p. 69, and Roberts, *Stalin's Wars,* chapter 10 and with a slightly different emphasis Eduard Mark*, Revolution by Degrees. Stalin's National-Front Strategy for Europe, 1941-1947.* Working Paper No. 31 Cold War International History Project, especially pp.38-46.

[222] Alfred J. Rieber, "Civil Wars in the Soviet Union," *Kritika* 4:1 (Winter, 2003), 129-62.

[223] Alfred J. Rieber, "Popular Democracy: An Illusion? " in Vladimir Tismaneanu (ed.), *Stalinism Revisited. The Establishment of Communist Regimes in East-Central Europe* (Budapest, CEU Press, 2009), pp. 103-130.

[224] Gati, *Hungary,* p. 69.

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