
Hungary's Part in the Soviet–Yugoslav Conflict, 1956–58

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Hungary, after the 1956 revolution, played a special part in the dispute that broke out between the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia and continued with varying intensity for several years.¹ This eventful story was an important part of the process that decided the fate of the East-Central European region. The *immediate* cause of political contention between Belgrade and Moscow was their differences over the Hungarian question, especially the fate of Imre Nagy, who had been prime minister during the revolution. The intrinsic conflicts lay deeper, however. Although the Nagy affair remained an important factor in the disagreements throughout – from his kidnapping to the ‘war of the protest notes’ that followed his execution – it acted mainly as a catalyst. The Nagy affair was an insurmountable problem for all the players concerned. It provided ample fuel for the debates, and each side found that it could be used to put pressure on the other. Due to the system of relations between the three communist countries, the Hungarian side played the least active part. János Kádár, having come to power through the crushing of the uprising of October 1956, was left in no doubt that Hungary had to follow faithfully the Kremlin’s foreign-policy line and accommodate itself to Soviet regional policy requirements. Nonetheless, the story remains interesting from Hungary’s point of view as well, because it reveals more than the constraints on a small, exposed country. It also shows how Kádár, as he zigzagged between the conflicting demands of Tito and Khrushchev, trying to keep on good terms with both, was gathering experience that would be useful in his later foreign policy.

¹ For a fuller account, see Zoltán Ripp, *Belgrád és Moszkva között. A jugoszláv kapcsolat és a Nagy Imre-kérdés 1956. november–1959 február* (Between Belgrade and Moscow. Yugoslav Relations and the Imre Nagy Question, November 1956–February 1959) (Budapest: Politikatörténeti Alapítvány (Political History Foundation), 1994). The main documents of Hungarian–Yugoslav relations have appeared in two volumes: József Kiss, Zoltán Ripp and István Vida, eds., *Magyar–jugoszláv kapcsolatok 1956. Dokumentumok* (Hungarian–Yugoslav Relations in 1956. Documents) (Budapest: MTA (Hungarian Academy of Sciences), 1995) (hereafter *Documents I*), and *Magyar–jugoszláv kapcsolatok 1956. december–1959. február. Dokumentumok* (Hungarian–Yugoslav Relations December 1956–February 1959. Documents) (Budapest: MTA, 1997) (hereafter *Documents II*).

I. Soviet–Yugoslav reconciliation and its effect on Hungary

After Stalin's death, the new Soviet leadership under Khrushchev quickly set about repairing what the dictator had destroyed of the Yugoslav relationship. A low point had been reached in Soviet–Yugoslav (and so Hungarian–Yugoslav) relations, after the notorious Cominform resolutions of 1948 and 1949. When the Yugoslav communist leaders refused to sacrifice their independence and join the Soviet bloc, Stalin and the heads of the other countries branded them as traitors to the socialist cause and lackeys of imperialism. Thereafter Yugoslavia was subjected to the strongest of ideological and political onslaughts for several years.

The successive show trials in the Eastern European countries, especially Hungary's Rajk trial, clearly served as a vehicle for denouncing Tito and the Yugoslav communist leadership.² After the 'Titoite band of spies' had been condemned, Hungary's Mátyás Rákosi, who aspired to be Stalin's prize pupil, managed with his associates to foment positively warlike tensions against the country's southern neighbour. The Yugoslavs had hitherto followed an orthodox communist line, but firm measures began to be taken against the pro-Soviet internal opposition.³ Radical changes in the country's economic and political structure ensued in the early 1950s. Tito's Yugoslavia, having preferred a breach to subordinating itself to Kremlin policy, was obliged after a time to draw closer to the West. The Western countries, especially the USA and Britain, had strong reasons of power politics to wish that Belgrade would maintain its independence, and they extended economic and military aid for the purpose. Although Yugoslavia retained a strong proletarian dictatorship in the first half of the 1950s, it began to develop an internal system of its own, based on producer self-management.⁴ This system, different from the Soviet forms, aroused strong interest and attraction among reformers in Eastern Central Europe, and fostered some illusions among them.

Soviet–Yugoslav reconciliation (faithfully followed in the economic, commercial and several other fields by measures towards Hungarian–Yugoslav reconciliation) was not a smooth process. One reason was the existence of conflicts within the Soviet and the Hungarian leaderships. The main opponent of rapprochement with the Yugoslavs was V. M. Molotov, who remained a serious rival to Khrushchev in the Kremlin struggle for succession, which continued for several years.⁵ The prime minister of Hungary from June 1953 to the beginning of 1955 was Imre Nagy, who followed a policy of radical reform. However, just as the Soviet–Yugoslav

² László Rajk, a leading Hungarian communist, was sentenced to death and executed on fabricated charges in 1949. The trial ushered in the hysterical campaign against the Yugoslavs.

³ Andrija Hebrang and Sreten Žujović, known as the 'Cominformists', were arrested in 1948 after opposing the dismissive reply sent to the Soviet leadership. There were extensive purges carried out in the Yugoslav Communist Party at the time.

⁴ See Harold Lydall, *Yugoslav Socialism. Theory and Practice* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984), and Duncan Wilson, *Tito's Yugoslavia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979).

⁵ When the 'anti-party' group was eventually removed in June 1957, one of Khrushchev's accusations was that Molotov, as foreign minister, had acted expressly against an improvement in Soviet–Yugoslav relations. See *Pravda*, 4 Jul. 1957.

reconciliation process reached the stage where high-level relations could be restored, the hard-line Rákosi group regained power in Budapest, with Kremlin support. This soon began to impede Moscow's efforts with Yugoslavia, which were aimed at restoring what it perceived as the normal order in the region seen as the Soviet sphere of influence.

Even after Stalin's death, the Soviet Union continued to perceive the communist-ruled countries in terms of regional power politics, and to treat the socialist camp as a tight, centrally controlled, bloc. Yugoslavia, with its policy of a separate road, was an irritant. It was a foreign body in the system. It stood as a living disproof of the ideological tenet that world socialism, having reached the stage of implementation, could only exist and triumph as a world system by remaining a single bloc based on identical principles. Khrushchev, the exponent of reconciliation, saw Tito's separate road as the harmful outcome of Stalin's erroneous policy, but thought clever policy-making might repair the damage his predecessor had done.

Khrushchev did not find it easy to hit the right note with the Yugoslav communists, who were fearful for their national interests and their ideology. The trouble was not confined to the conflict of interests in regional policy. The ideological and conceptual problems were tied up with the power question. Either side risked a great deal by making ideological concessions, because there were also blunt considerations of power behind the way in which the basic principles seen as binding on the whole communist world were interpreted. So the reconciliation process was constantly subject to a tactical search for ideological, diplomatic and economic equilibrium.

The first major step in the process of Soviet–Yugoslav reconciliation was a pilgrimage of penance to Belgrade, made by Khrushchev and Bulganin in May 1955. This ended the open antagonism and improved the situation for Yugoslavia.⁶ It was vital for Yugoslavia to settle relations with the Soviet Union because it faced grave economic problems, despite Western assistance, and it was surrounded by hostile countries. However, Yugoslavia did not wish to trade concessions in its international position for normalization. It was intent on retaining its independence and its good relations with the West. The Soviet Union was called upon to recognize Yugoslavia's independence and international freedom of movement, and its sovereign right to its own internal system. The two sides put far from identical constructions on what was achieved at the Belgrade meeting, which already signalled a difference of underlying approach.⁷ That difference remained throughout the successive crises of 1956.

Rapprochement gained a further impetus when the policy of de-Stalinization was proclaimed at the twentieth congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet

⁶ For the Belgrade declaration, see Stephen Clissold, ed., *Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union, 1939–1973. A Documentary Survey* (London, New York and Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1975), 254–7.

⁷ Tito reiterated his position in a letter of 29 Jun. 1955, to the CPSU central committee. This was a response to a letter from Khrushchev, to the communist parties of the socialist countries, on 25 June. He represented the meeting as something that had brought Yugoslavia closer to the Soviet fold and distanced it from the West. Both letters can be found in the *Magyar Országos Levéltár* (Hungarian National Archives, hereafter *MOL*) 276. f. 65/117.

Union (CPSU), in February 1956. A few months later, the joint declaration agreed at a Moscow summit meeting between Tito and Khrushchev in June was justifiably marked as a success by the Belgrade leadership. They made no concessions regarding their independence or principles, which greatly enhanced Yugoslavia's reputation.⁸ The success also gave support to Tito's exaggerated foreign-policy ambitions, for apart from aspiring to lead the infant movement of non-aligned countries, he aimed to raise his country's regional standing by influencing the de-Stalinization process in Eastern Europe. There the Yugoslav president needed allies, or at least partners, against the compromised Stalinist leaders in the socialist countries. Yugoslavia, on its separate road, was not just a thorn in their side because of its internal policies. It was a personal threat to them, since it was making changes that called their earlier policies into question. Tito naturally saw Khrushchev as his main partner, but he tended to overestimate the Soviet leader's commitment to reform. The strident demand for changes in Poland and Hungary and the struggles between reformers and the orthodox camp led the Yugoslav leaders to hope that their concept of socialism could be vindicated and Yugoslavian regional foreign policy ambitions realized.

The Moscow declaration did not end the tensions caused by the two sides' conflicting aims. Khrushchev reverted to a pendulum policy. On the one hand he sought to reassure the Stalinist leaders of the countries under his influence that there had been no changes of principle. For the sake of regional stability, he tried to curb the efforts at reform, especially the demands for increased national independence. On the other hand he encouraged neighbouring countries, especially Hungary, to pursue further rapprochement with Yugoslavia.

One important factor behind Rákosi's dismissal was that Tito refused to raise the process of Hungarian–Yugoslav reconciliation to the top political level while leaders compromised by the anti-Yugoslav policy remained in power.⁹ However, Belgrade put no trust either in Rákosi's successor as first secretary, Ernő Gerő, as he was the most influential member of the Rákosi group. It took a series of gestures, including the rehabilitation and reburial of László Rajk and his associates, coupled with persuasion by the Soviet leaders, before agreement was reached for a Hungarian party and government delegation to visit Yugoslavia on 15–22 October 1956.¹⁰

It was clear that the Yugoslavs only accepted the Gerő leadership out of necessity,

⁸ See Clissold, *Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union*.

⁹ Rákosi, first secretary of the Hungarian Workers' Party, was dismissed at a meeting of the central leadership on 18 Jul. 1956. Later he was taken to Moscow, from where he never returned.

¹⁰ The first move came in a letter from Gerő to Tito on 19 Jul. 1956 (*Documents I*, item 19).

On 5 Oct., while Tito and Ranković were staying in the Crimea, Khrushchev arranged without their knowledge for a meeting with Gerő. It was there that agreement was reached over the reburial of Rajk and his executed associates, and on the visit to Yugoslavia by a top-level Hungarian delegation.

The reburial of Rajk on 6 Oct. 1956, assumed the character of a mass demonstration. Y. V. Andropov, the Soviet ambassador in Budapest, in a report on 12 Oct. of his discussion with Gerő, already referred to a worsening Hungarian domestic political situation and mounting Yugoslav influence. See Vjacseszlav Szereda and Alekszandr Sztikalin, eds., *Hiányzó lapok 1956 történetéből. Dokumentok a volt SZKP KB levéltárából* (Missing Pages from the History of 1956. Documents from the Archives of the former CPSU CC), (Budapest: Móra, 1993), 83–90.

and did not expect any serious reforms from them. On the other hand there was a discernible common interest, based on agreement in principle, between Tito and the opposition reform group round Imre Nagy. Nagy's foreign-policy views and intentions were in line with the independent Yugoslav policy, based on equal rights and the principle of non-intervention.¹¹ These aroused hopes in Belgrade that if events were favourable, Nagy might prove a direct ally in Yugoslavia's northern neighbour, and a partner in the de-Stalinization process in line with Yugoslav ideas. After all, their common goal was a communist, if not a 'Muscovite', solution to the crisis. To Hungary's reformers, the Yugoslav example (along with the efforts in Poland) was the main encouragement and stimulus to move towards independence and democratization.

One idea that appeared prominently in US foreign policy at this time was that 'national communism' of the Yugoslav type might be a *first step* towards weakening the Soviet camp and communism.¹² However, this was only identified later with Yugoslav intentions, by those fabricating a conspiracy theory to justify the reprisals in Hungary. More important to the loose relationship that arose between Yugoslav diplomats accredited to Budapest and some members of Nagy's opposition group were shared political intentions. These provided a firm basis for the widespread sympathy for Yugoslavia found in Hungarian society.

II. Yugoslavia and the Hungarian revolution

The outbreak of the armed uprising in Budapest on 23 October and the force behind it caught the Yugoslav leaders by surprise, although they had sensed that the crisis was deepening. The Yugoslav stance was ambivalent from the outset. They saw in the uprising proof that the Stalinist leadership of Rákosi and Gerő was bankrupt,¹³ and that radical changes were needed in the practice of socialism. They hoped for a Yugoslav-style change, but they certainly did not want to see an upheaval that wrested control over events from the communist leadership.

The positive example in Belgrade's eyes was Poland and the type of solution to a crisis that had brought Władysław Gomułka to power. However, a Polish type of consolidation ceased to be feasible once the Hungarian and Soviet leaders had branded the uprising as counter-revolutionary from the outset and decided to deploy Soviet troops to end it by force.¹⁴ After all, it had rested primarily on Gomułka, as a communist leader, following a policy that aroused national feelings, in spite of the Soviet Union. Also important was the fact that the workers' uprising

¹¹ See Imre Nagy: *Imre Nagy on Communism: In Defense of the New Course* (New York: Praeger, 1957).

¹² For Resolution 5608 of the National Security Council, on United States policy towards the satellite countries, see *Foreign Relations of the United States 1955–1957*, Vol. xxv, 198–209.

¹³ As late as 22 Oct., the Yugoslavs signed a joint declaration with Gerő, but after the uprising, this assistance in legitimizing the old leadership was treated as if it had never happened.

¹⁴ Gomułka himself put the example of the Polish consolidation before the Hungarian leaders. But its real significance came only after the second Soviet intervention on 4 November, when it served more as self-justification than a real pattern for the Hungarians.

at Poznań in the summer was dismissed as 'counter-revolutionary'. The situation in Hungary developed in a radically different way after 23 October. It steadily emerged that any basis for peaceful consolidation after the uprising would have to go far beyond what either Tito or Gomulka thought desirable, or what Nagy himself had envisaged. The Yugoslav's view of Nagy as an indecisive 'blunderer' really reflected their own dilemma. On the one hand they condemned Gerő's Stalinist leadership for having fomented the uprising with their policies, and saw replacing it by a Nagy-Kádár team as a way to attain a regime close to the Yugoslav model. On the other they realized that there could hardly be a 'Titoist' consolidation of that kind if power slipped out of the communists' hands. Although the Yugoslav ambassador reported the demonstrators' acclaim for Tito and wide sympathy for the Yugoslavs,¹⁵ and the formation of workers' councils implied an approach to the Yugoslav model, the course of events caused concern in Belgrade.

This ambivalent assessment meant that the first official Yugoslav reactions were restrained. The gratification at the collapse of the Stalinist leadership did not go to extremes. Although the Soviet intervention was faulted, the Yugoslavs avoided condemning it outright by blaming the events that had precipitated it. At the same time they expressed sympathy with the policy of satisfying rightful popular demands, which they expected the new communist leaders to pursue. Belgrade saw 28 October as the watershed, when the party central committee had recognized the events as a national democratic uprising and met some popular demands, but had maintained the bases of the economic and political system. That was a platform on which an independent, but still patently communist, system could rest. On 29 October Tito complied with a request to support the Hungarian party leadership's efforts in an open letter, but also set limits to what the anti-Stalinist and national communist platform should attempt.¹⁶ The position taken by the Yugoslav communists encompassed the anxiety that imbued Tito's letter, with its warning of 'unforeseen consequences', and solidarity with the line taken on 28 October.

Belgrade received favourably the idea of placing Soviet relations with the socialist countries on a new basis. This was raised by the Moscow government declaration of 30 October, along with the prospect of talks on withdrawing Soviet troops from Hungary.¹⁷ The Yugoslavs supported the democratization of public life, the establishment of workers' councils, and the radical reorganization of the communist party. However, they feared that attempts might be made to restore the kind of strongly right-wing, autocratic regime of Horthy's Hungary before 1945. That could give power to nationalist groups that might go on to raise the question of

¹⁵ Telegrams 503 and 516 from Ambassador Dalibor Soldatić to Belgrade, 13 and 25 Oct. 1956, *Documents I*, items 38, 39 and 41.

¹⁶ Tito's open letter appeared in the Hungarian press on 29 October. See *Documents I*, item 48.

¹⁷ *Pravda*, 30 Oct. 1956. Mićunović, the Yugoslav ambassador in Moscow, made a characteristic comment when he noted in his diary that the declaration was belated, and at odds with Soviet political practice. See Veljko Mićunović, *Tito követe voltam. Moszkva 1956–1958 (I Was Tito's Envoy. Moscow 1956–8; original title: Moszkovske godine 1956–1958)*, (Budapest: Interart, 1990), 128–35.

Yugoslavia's sizeable Hungarian minority.¹⁸ They were alarmed by the anti-communist atrocities and by the general vehemence of the armed uprising. They expressly rejected the unlimited introduction of a multi-party system, the establishment of a bourgeois democratic political structure, and the organization of right-wing parties, in other words, all the developments in the early days of November. As for the Nagy government's decision to withdraw from the Warsaw Pact and declare neutrality, comment in the Yugoslav press was non-committal, although the wide public approval for the moves was made plain.¹⁹

The Nagy government's attempt at consolidation increasingly bore the character of a four-party coalition. Within a few days after 30 October, the Yugoslavs had to realize that it rested on things that their principles would not let them support. Events passed the point where it was still possible to imagine a 'Titoist' solution being reached in a peaceful, integral way. Tito and his associates soon came to see it as the lesser of two evils to accept the second Soviet military intervention, in the light of the 30 October declaration and Khrushchev's commitment to reform. Of course they attached some strong conditions as to the persons involved, expecting the group associated with the names of János Kádár and of Imre Nagy to oust the Stalinists permanently from the country's leadership.

While the Soviet Union viewed military intervention as a way to prevent the arrangements in Eastern Europe from breaking down, the Yugoslavs saw it as a prerequisite for an acceptable political solution, even if it put the character of future development at risk. According to Soviet sources, both President Tito and defence minister Ivan Gošnjak clearly stated in mid-November that the Yugoslav army would have been prepared, ultimately, to intervene.²⁰ Although there was hardly any likelihood of this happening, despite some troop movements on the Yugoslav side of the border, the mention of the possibility sheds light on the way the Yugoslavs were thinking.

The meeting on the island of Brioni, at three in the morning on 2 November, far exceeded Khrushchev's and Malenkov's expectations.²¹ The top Yugoslav leaders – Edvard Kardelj and Aleksandar Ranković were there as well as Tito – immediately conceded that military intervention was essential, to safeguard the achievements of socialism. This followed directly from the Yugoslav considerations mentioned already. However, although the two sides agreed on the decisive issue, their difference of approach led to serious tensions later. Khrushchev, during the talks, ignored the Yugoslav arguments about basing socialism on the workers' councils, reforms or de-Stalinization. Furthermore, the reaffirmation of the contents of the

¹⁸ Khrushchev, sensing this fear, later used the tactic of exaggerating the size of the Hungarian ethnic minority in Yugoslavia and citing it before the Yugoslavs as a potential threat.

¹⁹ Miklós Molnár, *Budapest, 1956. The History of the Hungarian Revolution* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1971).

²⁰ Khrushchev referred to this in a letter to Tito, on 10 Jan. 1957. It occurred in Belgrade on 18 Nov. 1956, when Tito and Gošnjak received a Soviet military delegation led by General V. N. Komarov (*Documents II*, item 28).

²¹ Mićunović, *Tito követe voltam*, 128–35; N. S. Khrushchev, *Khrushchev Remembers*, with an introduction, commentary and notes by Edward Crankshaw (London: André Deutsch, 1971), 420–22.

30 October government declaration was designed mainly to win Yugoslav support, not to confirm that relations with the socialist countries would be placed on a new footing. On the contrary, the Soviet leaders were increasingly concerned to restore the old unity in the socialist camp, after the loosening effects of the twentieth congress.

The difference of approach becomes clearest in personality terms. Yugoslavia insisted that Kádár should be made leader, rather than Ferenc Münnich, the first Soviet choice, in the hope that Hungary would then follow a line closer to Belgrade's and more independent of Moscow's. The real issue was the fate of Imre Nagy and his immediate circle. To the Soviets it was self-evident that Nagy would have to go, since he was guilty of 'counter-revolution'. The Yugoslavs wanted the consolidation to bring a return to a Nagy-style policy of reform within the system, or at least the inclusion of Nagy's immediate associates in the leadership.

So the difference of approach failed to emerge at Brioni. This was not the only circumstance that was to have grave consequences. The two sides also put different constructions on an agreement between them. Based on a discussion that Ambassador Soldatić had held at the Hungarian prime minister's office on 1 November,²² the Yugoslavs suggested giving temporary asylum to Nagy and his associates at the Yugoslav embassy. They offered to invite Nagy and a few colleagues to the embassy, and there bring them to resign and support the new government led by Kádár. Khrushchev and his party saw the proposal as a smooth and satisfactory way of sidelining Nagy, and took the reference to bringing the prime minister to resign at face value. The Yugoslavs, on the other hand, were seeking ways to salvage the situation by forging a Kádár-Nagy alliance and ensuring a continued pro-Yugoslav policy of reform. They obviously hoped the Nagy group would realize that intervention was inescapable, but that there was still a chance for partial, 'Polish-type' independence.

III. A double trap

While Khrushchev and Malenkov were negotiating in Yugoslavia, János Kádár, minister of state in the Nagy government, and Ferenc Münnich, the interior minister, were summoned by the Soviet ambassador in Budapest, Yuri Andropov. They were taken covertly to Moscow with the cooperation of the Soviet army. On 2 November 1956, the presidium of the CPSU gave a hearing to Kádár. Shortly before his arrival, Kádár had still voted at the meeting of the Hungarian government for declaring Hungary's neutrality and withdrawing from the Warsaw Pact. He had then announced in a radio address the dissolution of the old communist party and foundation of a new party, on a platform of parliamentary democracy based on free elections, independence, and acceptance of human rights. Two days later, Kádár came forward as head of the new Kremlin-appointed Hungarian government.

²² During the Ambassador's conversation with Nagy's colleagues. Géza Losonczy and Zoltán Szántó, Szántó proposed that if need be, the Yugoslavs should give asylum to the families of some politicians.

Soviet documents published recently provide the clearest picture so far of what happened in the few days leading up to Kádár's volte-face, which was tantamount to treachery.²³ Initially Kádár emphasized the drawbacks of military intervention. In spite of the tough political battles it was likely to cause, he continued to argue in favour of the course the Nagy government had chosen. He carried on doing so until it was made clear to him that the intervention had already been decided and the only questions still to clarify concerned the process of implementing it. Once the situation was plain, Kádár immediately accepted the role assigned him, although he could hardly have doubted that this would brand him as a national traitor. He did not do so unconditionally, but the conditions, aimed at securing a minimum of independence, were vague and without real foundation, let alone any guarantee that they would be observed, apart from Khrushchev's promises. Apart from the undertaking to neutralize the Rákosi group, who had fled to Moscow, there was an important promise that Nagy would not cause problems of legitimacy too great to overcome. The basis on which the Soviets made this promise was the solution they had devised jointly with the Yugoslavs. By agreeing to the intervention, Kádár had adapted himself to the realistic power relations. However, by committing an act that was morally reprehensible, he had set out on a course that would lead to the execution of Imre Nagy and his associates.

The Soviet military intervention to crush the Hungarian revolution began at dawn on 4 November. However, the agreement reached at Brioni could not be implemented, which at once caused serious tension between Belgrade and Moscow. Nagy gave news of the Soviet attack in a dramatic speech on the radio, stating that the Hungarian forces were doing battle and the government was in place. Then he took up the invitation of the Yugoslav diplomats, and went with several colleagues to the Yugoslav embassy, where he received asylum.

Nagy's radio speech alone was enough to infuriate the Soviet leaders, who had always inclined towards treating him as a traitor. The situation was worsened when the plan to make the Prime Minister resign came unstuck, despite the promises made by Yugoslav diplomats and politicians. The Nagy group were not the only ones caught in a trap. The Yugoslavs found themselves in an irrevocably paradoxical situation in which several factors were at work. While the Belgrade leaders were assuring the Kádár government of their support, they were also directly responsible for what happened to the Nagy group, which dissociated itself utterly from Kádár. Meanwhile they tried to keep on good terms with Khrushchev, who was becoming increasingly incensed. They also had to look to their international reputation, which was already strained by their acceptance of Soviet intervention. Nor was the way in which the situation was taken at home irrelevant. The domestic political difficulties were exemplified by the renewed arrest of the enfant terrible of Yugoslav politics, Milovan Djilas, for what he had written about the Hungarian revolution.

²³ V. N. Malin's notes of meetings of the Presidium of the CPSU central committee, in Vjacseszlav Szereda and János M. Rainer, eds., *Döntés a Kremlben. A szovjet pártelnökség vitái Magyarországról* (Decision in the Kremlin. The Soviet Party Presidium's Debates on Hungary) (Budapest: '56-os Intézet (1956 Institute), 1996).

Tito's biggest problem was the rapid freeze in Soviet-Yugoslav relations, whose consequences soon appeared in differing interpretations of the former Hungarian uprising. Khrushchev, in a letter of 7 November, was already expressing dismay that the Yugoslavs had failed to keep their promise to neutralize the former Hungarian prime minister. Nagy was being seen increasingly not just as a factor to be overcome, but as the main culprit for the Hungarian 'counter-revolution'. So Moscow found it unacceptable that the Nagy group should be taken to Yugoslavia, as Tito proposed. Instead the Soviets demanded that they be handed over to the new Kádár government. Otherwise, Khrushchev openly threatened the Yugoslavs, Nagy would be presented as a Yugoslav spy, and Belgrade given some of the blame for the events in Hungary.²⁴ A strong caution went out when the columns of *Pravda* were opened to the Albanian leader, Enver Hoxha, Yugoslavia's bitterest enemy, to air his familiar accusations, which found a ready response among Stalinist leaders of other communist parties.²⁵

The famous speech by Tito in Pula on 11 November reflected the ambivalent situation in which the Yugoslavs found themselves, while accelerating and aggravating the course of events.²⁶ First, the Yugoslav president assured Kádár of his support. Tito knew that Moscow's mounting impatience could easily cause a swing back to a hard line. So he argued that the outbreak of the Hungarian uprising should be attributed to justified indignation against the Rákosi regime, since 'the majority of the working class and progressive people' had also taken up arms. Tito felt it was essential to Yugoslavia's interests for a reformist line to consolidate in the international communist movement. The assessment of the Hungarian uprising must offer no pretext for a reversal. So he emphasized that his support for Kádár was support for an anti-Stalinist solution. He pressed for relations among the socialist countries to be subject to the principles governing the Soviet-Yugoslav reconciliation of 1955-56. It was also important that Tito chose this occasion to state that the twentieth congress had simplified the problem of Stalinism, by targeting the criticism on the cult of personality, instead of the system as a whole. The function of the 'system debate' started by this assertion was to ensure that the lessons drawn from the Hungarian uprising should fit in with Yugoslav-Polish-Hungarian reformism, not the arguments of the hardliners.

The Soviets were disgusted, because Tito had chosen to defend his own reputation and to try to dissociate himself from the military intervention, and because the problem of Stalinism was an especially sensitive one for Khrushchev. This was a most inappropriate time for a debate on the Soviet and Yugoslav models. To retain a safe political base in the Kremlin, he had to prove above all his ability to keep order on the edges of the empire and apply the steadfast principles of Soviet regional policy. Tito's support was opportune for Kádár, but the heightening

²⁴ Khrushchev's letter to Tito, 7 Nov. 1956, *Documents I*, item 77.

²⁵ 'Enver Hoxha, 15 Years of the Albanian Party of Labour', *Pravda*, 8 Nov. 1956.

²⁶ Josip Broz Tito, *Borba za mir i međunarodnu saradnju* (Struggle for Peace and International Cooperation), Vol. X (Belgrade: Kultura, 1959), 210-32. For detail, see Clissold, *Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union*, 263-8.

Soviet–Yugoslav tensions were an embarrassment, especially while Moscow kept a sharp eye out for signs of ‘Titoism’ in the Hungarian leadership or press.²⁷

The Pula speech gravely affected the Nagy group, trapped in the Yugoslav embassy. For Tito had spoken of ‘flight’, which pointed to a breakdown of solidarity. Although the Yugoslavs were careful to retain an appearance of sympathy, the Nagy group were increasingly becoming a burden to them. Concern to defend Yugoslavia’s reputation and escape from the predicament became almost the sole criteria during the negotiations about the group’s future.

After long and hard negotiations, the Yugoslavs managed to obtain Kádár’s signature to a letter guaranteeing impunity and freedom to return home for the Nagy group, in exchange for their loss of asylum. But the Yugoslavs must have known that this was just a safeguard against charges likely to be levelled against them, rather than a way of rescuing Nagy and his associates. The Yugoslavs did not hesitate to make this sacrifice in order to escape from the trap in which they were caught. Nonetheless, they had managed, with the letter of guarantee, to place a time-bomb under the Hungarians, which Kádár had to try to defuse every time the question of prosecuting the Nagy group was raised.

However, the existence of the guarantee letter, as evidence of a breach of faith, was not the only factor that cooled the ardour of the Hungarian leadership’s conduct against Yugoslavia. Kádár sought to appear as a politician of the centre. Irrespective of the letter, his power interests dictated that he should minimize the level of conflict, while carrying out mercilessly consistent reprisals to which the Yugoslavs objected, above all the sentence on Imre Nagy. To this end he did not hesitate to break his word on later occasions either.

IV. The ideological battle and the Nagy affair

The main concern of the Yugoslav leaders, in their diplomatic actions and protest notes after the Nagy group had been kidnapped and taken to Romania, was to restore their international reputation.²⁸ At the same time, they stepped up their efforts to influence the nature of the consolidation in Hungary by every available means. The polemics in the columns of *Pravda* and *Borba* now appeared openly as a debate about the Soviet and Yugoslav models of socialism and the alternatives of Soviet hegemony or equal relations. Gomulka in Poland, who had strong reservations about the Soviet position on the Hungarian questions, was an ally on whom the Yugoslavs could still rely.²⁹ The Hungarian question gave the Yugoslavs an

²⁷ The debate caused sharp tensions in the Hungarian party leadership. The editor-in-chief of the central party newspaper was dismissed after a strike at the offices sparked by withdrawal of an article intervening in the Soviet–Yugoslav debate. The ‘Titoism’ apparent in the Hungarian leadership was mentioned in the report addressed by G. M. Malenkov, M. A. Suslov and A. B. Aristov to the CPSU central committee on 24 Nov. 1956. Szereda and Sztikalin, *Hiányzó lapok 1956*, 175–7.

²⁸ Yugoslavia protested in notes to the Hungarian government on 23 Nov. 1956 and to the Soviet government on 24 Nov. against the blatant infringement of the agreement. For the exchanges, see *Documents I* (items 123, 124, 129, 130 and 134) and *Documents II* (item 6).

²⁹ Gomulka disagreed with the use of force and avoided the expression ‘counter-revolution’ until

excellent chance to set out their position. Indeed they tried to use the events as a form of self-justification. They were remarkably active in associating the aspirations apparent in the Hungarian revolution with propaganda for the Yugoslav model.

Budapest, on the other hand, suffered mounting discomfiture as the need to retain Yugoslav support began to clash with the change in the approach to consolidation. By early December, the administration's measures to prop up its authority were becoming increasingly violent and vindictive, and aimed above all at restoration. The central committee of the HSWP (Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party – the renamed HWP) passed a resolution early in December so defining 'the causes of the counter-revolution' that it was easy to deduce from them the idea of an international imperialist plot assisted by domestic betrayal. Whether Yugoslavia would be classed as a culprit depended simply on how relations between Belgrade and the Kremlin developed.

The Yugoslavs reacted to the situation with an ideological offensive. The assessment of Hungarian events acquired a new dimension in the ensuing debate. On 7 December, Edvard Kardelj made a speech in Skupština, Yugoslavia, that long remained a stumbling block for the leaders of the socialist countries.³⁰ He raised again the question of the system, by stating that the working class in Hungary had risen up 'against its own historical interests'. Clearly the Yugoslavs did not want to diagnose either a 'deliberately organized counter-revolution' or a 'struggle fought for freedom and independence'. So they tried, in describing the uprising, to stress the consolidation aspect, concentrating on the prospects for the workers' councils. Kardelj argued that the truly communist approach was not to restore the bureaucratic system or reconstruct the political system centred on the party. It was to develop the kind of system, based on workers' self-management, that the workers' councils were demanding from an instinctively socialist position. Here he disregarded the workers' councils' insistence on a multi-party system and other 'vestiges of bourgeois liberalism' that the Yugoslav communists likewise rejected. What was essential was to present the Yugoslav model as an alternative to restoring Stalinism. Hungary, however, had no choice in the matter. The attempt to apply pressure was fruitless. The argument became increasingly concerned with vindication, as the debate became steadily more acrimonious.

The Yugoslav challenge was extremely unpleasant for the Kádár government. It cast aspersions on the legitimacy of a forcible consolidation of power, in the area of greatest topical concern: the struggle against the workers' councils.³¹ Furthermore,

the spring of 1957. Another sign of closeness between the two countries was the visit paid to Poland by a Yugoslav party delegation on 19–29 Dec. 1956.

³⁰ Typically, Frank Roberts, the British ambassador in Belgrade, described Kardelj's speech as a cautious variant of Milovan Djilas's views phrased in Marxist jargon. He also said that the speech, which went beyond Tito's at Pula, could be expected to provoke a strong reaction in the countries of the Soviet bloc. Telegram No. 847, 8 Dec. 1956, 371/124285. NH 10110/835, Foreign Office Records, Public Records Office, London.

³¹ The Soviet intervention was followed in Budapest and across the country by a general political strike led by the workers' councils. The Kádár government responded by banning the local workers' councils and arresting their leaders.

it added to the pressure on Hungary to distance itself from the more popular Yugoslav model and fall into line with the Soviet leadership, which further reduced its chances of gaining legitimacy. The contradiction was contained in the Yugoslav action itself. The Yugoslavs could not do otherwise than oppose a trend unfavourable to them, but in doing so they weakened Kádár's position against the Soviets, even though they saw in him the chance of a leadership that would be Muscovite in a less orthodox way. The Yugoslavs had nothing to gain from a return by the Rákosi leadership. From the safety of Moscow, the Rákosi group were intriguing to return home and presume power. They had sensed that the crisis was deepening and emphasized the 'Titoist' nature of the Kádár leadership.³² So for the Yugoslavs, Kádár was relatively the best answer. As far as he could, Kádár tried to prevent relations with Yugoslavia from deteriorating. Although he subscribed ideologically to the tenets expected of him in the Soviet camp, he usually followed a tactic of doing the minimum to satisfy Soviet demands. Not for a moment would he have wanted his image of fidelity to Moscow to fade, but he would not meet Kremlin requirements if they conflicted with the interests of the Hungarian leadership. Khrushchev was satisfied if the Hungarians faithfully followed his instructions on the political line and did not cause trouble within the camp. Kádár throughout did all he could to save the state and economic relations between Hungary and Yugoslavia from the consequences of the political strife, and in doing so he was not going against Khrushchev's wishes.

The great international campaign against revisionism and national communism showed that it would be unfounded to assume that the historical situation presented alternatives, even in a restricted sense. Belgrade's position in the ideological battle simply became a defensive one, especially with the active intervention in the region of the Chinese Communist Party, which had previously been unusual.³³ The express wish of the leaders of the Soviet Union and the other countries in the camp was to see power consolidated in Hungary by consistently restoring a Soviet-type system. This tendency towards restoration self-evidently meant that revisionism, declared to be the main threat at the beginning of 1957, had gained a qualitatively different meaning from its counterpart, 'leftist leanings'. Revisionism was placed outside the socialist system. The denunciation of it was accompanied by charges of treason and of service to international imperialism. Parallel with this began the process of criminalizing the Nagy affair. The risk entailed in all this was that relations with Yugoslavia, the embodiment of the 'main ideological danger', would revert to

³² Letter from Rákosi to Khrushchev, 9 Jan. 1956, in Éva Gál, András B. Hegedás, György Litván and János M. Rainer, eds., *A 'Jelán dosszié'. Szovjet dokumentumok 1956-ról* (The 'Yeltsin File'. Soviet Documents on 1956) (Budapest: Századvég Kiadó/56-os Intézet, 1993), 147–8.

³³ Great significance was attached to an article in the Chinese party daily ('Once Again on the Subject of the Historical Experiences of Proletarian Dictatorship', *Renmin Ribao*, 30 Dec. 1956, and to Prime Minister Zhou Enlai's talks in the Soviet Union, Poland and Hungary. Relations deteriorated further when the Yugoslavs refused to take part in an international communist conference, proposed through the Chinese. This was obviously intended as an attempt to bring Yugoslavia closer to the Soviet bloc. The incident ended the Chinese support for his attempts at independence, on which Tito had hitherto been able to count.

the situation before 1953. Tito himself warned Khrushchev in a letter early in February that occurrences reminiscent of the period before the twentieth congress were increasing. Moves being made by the countries in the Soviet camp suggested that they intended to restore the situation of 1948. Instead, he proposed, attempts should be made to include the 'progressive communist forces' in the Hungarian leadership, not brand them as revisionist traitors.³⁴

There was nothing Kádár wanted less than for Hungary to become a front-line country against Yugoslavia again, but the decision was not his. The Hungarian issue gave the opposing sides their main ideological weapons. Apart from the pressure of the Soviet-bloc countries, there was another bar to stopping the deterioration of Hungarian–Yugoslav relations, which became irrevocable in the spring of 1957. The system's sole possible basis for legitimacy was to label October 1956 a counter-revolution and Imre Nagy a traitor. That, irrespective of other factors, meant that internal policies designed to restore and fortify the system were bound to have adverse effects on relations with Yugoslavia.

Attempts were made in Budapest to try to stop the relations from worsening, but the Hungarians had to yield to the stronger tendency as well. The balance was affected most of all by two connected factors. One was the process of criminalizing the Imre Nagy case. This was not simply apparent in the way the charges against the Nagy group coincided with the criticisms of the Yugoslavs. Apart from that, the first steps were taken to investigate the relations between the two. The other decisive factor was the Soviet–Hungarian summit meeting of March 1957, which finalized the decisions that were being weighed. On the one hand, Rákosi was declared once and for all to be politically 'dead'. On the other, it was agreed to take criminal proceedings against Imre Nagy. This coincided with a further hardening of policy towards Yugoslavia. As a sign of this, the Hungarians and the Soviet Union, at the topmost level and in public, made statements condemning the 'counter-revolutionary' Nagy group and the Yugoslav leaders who had 'nourished and encouraged' them.³⁵

This aroused strong displeasure in Belgrade, especially when the Nagy group were arrested in Romania and brought back to Budapest. Anxiety was immediately expressed that the trial of Imre Nagy, designed to compromise a recalcitrant Yugoslavia, was being prepared as a repetition of the Rajk trial of 1949.³⁶ This assumption was all the more justified because the Hungarian party leaders, on their return from Moscow, made the instructions they had received from the CPSU clear when reporting on the results of the negotiations.³⁷

³⁴ *Documents II*, item 31.

³⁵ The speeches by Kádár and N. A. Bulganin on 23 and 27 Mar. 1957 were published at the time in the Soviet and Hungarian press.

³⁶ Begović, Vlajko, 'Accusations and Facts', *Borba*, 5 Apr. 1957; Mićunović, *Tito követe voltam*, 218; report by Lajos Cséby, Hungarian ambassador in Belgrade, on 13 Apr. 1957, *Documents II*, item 52.

³⁷ Khrushchev's letter to Tito on 10 Jan. 1957, quoted earlier, still contained a denial that a campaign would be initiated against Yugoslavia like that in 1948. Kádár's reports to the leadership of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party (HSWP) in the early days of April gave evidence of the change in the situation. This appeared in the reference to the validity of the 1948 Cominform resolution, in the

The parallel with the Rajk trial was also a warning by the Yugoslavs. They had other weapons to hand besides the November letter of guarantee, if anyone tried to use the Nagy trial against them. This was one obvious reason why Kádár did not want to aggravate matters. He hastened to assure the ambassador, Jovo Kapičić that they wanted to settle relations on a friendly footing. If there were a trial, they would not use it to compromise Yugoslavia.³⁸ From then onwards, Budapest's handling of Hungarian–Yugoslav relations was curiously ambiguous. Kádár wanted to moderate the conflict with the Yugoslavs, but not to make any concessions on the Nagy case, which was generating the conflict. To resolve the conundrum, he tried, even by deception, to minimize the Yugoslav involvement in the Nagy affair, which was causing them great concern. Kádár had the political committee of the HSWP drop from its agenda the sending of a provocative letter that explored the Yugoslav responsibility for the Hungarian events and called upon the Yugoslavs to condemn the counter-revolution and distance themselves from Nagy.³⁹ The demand would have put Belgrade in an impossible situation. If they had distanced themselves as requested, they would have lost their moral ground for protesting over any future trial. If they had not, they would have virtually admitted their complicity.

Of course the main source of conflict remained the difference between the Yugoslav and Soviet positions on the question of the socialist camp.⁴⁰ The Yugoslavs persisted in seeing it primarily as a military bloc and a weapon of Soviet hegemony which they did not wish to join, not as a voluntary association of 'fraternal solidarity' or a pledge of the worldwide victory of socialism. They left no doubt about their adherence to the basic principles of their foreign policy.⁴¹

V. Détente and disillusion

Moscow reacted sharply to the reiteration of the Titoist foreign-policy principles. It seemed as if nothing could stop the deterioration process.⁴² Yet the two sides succeeded in halting its intensification in the spring of 1957. This was not simply because each side had ways of making life unpleasant for the other. During May and June, there were clear signs of détente in Moscow and Belgrade as well.⁴³ So the

way the Yugoslav position was presented as the main support for the hostile imperialist attack, and in the linkage of the Nagy group's activity as the 'main ideological weapon' for counter-revolution, with the policy of the Yugoslavs. *Documents II*, items 48 and 49.

³⁸ Memorandum by Deputy Foreign Minister Endre Sik, *MOL*, XIX-A-2s 14. d.; Ambassador J. Kapičić's report of 10 Jun. 1957, *Documents II*, item 61; János Kádár's contribution at the 22 Jun. 1957 meeting of the HSWP central committee, *Documents II*, item 53.

³⁹ Meeting of the HSWP political committee, 16 Apr. 1957, *Documents II*, item 53.

⁴⁰ This was a matter on which Kádár and Foreign Minister Imre Horváth had to express themselves explicitly, though they did so in a restrained way, in an attempt to mend relations.

⁴¹ Foreign Minister Koča Popović's report in the Federal House of Representatives, 26 Feb. 1957, *Borba*, 27 Feb. 1957.

⁴² The Soviet leadership's reply: *Pravda*, 11 Mar. 1957.

⁴³ Tito signified on several occasions his desire to normalize relations. He stated this in the paper *Mladost* on 22 May 1957 and in *Politika* on 24 May. See Tito, *Borba za mir*, 284–310. Normalization of inter-state relations was apparent in the conclusion of several agreements. A sign of rapprochement on

improvement could be seen before the attempt to oust Khrushchev, although it was obviously connected with the political strife and power struggle taking place in the Soviet leadership. It was clearly not a coincidence that Khrushchev told ambassador Mićunović he was planning major changes in CPSU policy.⁴⁴ Khrushchev's plans for reform and his desire to return to a policy of détente with the West were linked with improving the Yugoslav relationship. They would have fitted into an approach of retaining Soviet hegemony in the region but refining the methods employed to support it. The basis would have been laid at an informal, trilateral meeting with Tito and Gomulka, which Khrushchev tried fruitlessly to arrange. It was all the more important to settle matters in the region because Soviet attention was turning increasingly towards the Third World. Tito was held in great respect in the non-aligned countries. A rapprochement with Yugoslavia, or rather as Moscow planned it, a closer approach by Yugoslavia to the fold, would have fitted in well with a foreign policy shift towards the Third World.

Hopes for a longer-term improvement came in the summer of 1957, when an attempted coup by Molotov, Kaganovich and Malenkov failed to topple Khrushchev.⁴⁵ The Yugoslav leaders were gratified by the events, which they saw as a vindication of their position.⁴⁶ The occurrences within the CPSU and the resolution of the central committee seemed to corroborate Tito's view of the struggle between Stalinists and non-Stalinists. It augured a firm continuation of the de-Stalinization line of the twentieth congress and the policy of détente and reforms. Although the Yugoslav leaders were anxious about some negative comments of Khrushchev's, they took them, for want of a better explanation, to be gestures designed to outflank the Stalinists. More importantly, the Soviet leaders accepted their request to renegotiate their earlier stand of suspending the credit agreements, and inclined towards granting milder conditions.

In the early days of August 1957 it seemed as if the Khrushchev-Tito summit meeting in Romania would produce chances of settling the Soviet-Yugoslav and the Hungarian-Yugoslav relationships.⁴⁷ Khrushchev took advantage of the Yugoslavs' notably peaceable attitude, which was motivated by hopes that the process of détente would strengthen and the rigid regional policy become more pliable, for which Belgrade was willing to pay a price. In the event they paid too highly. In exchange for a declaration in principle – reiteration of the principles of the 1955 Belgrade and 1956 Moscow declarations – Khrushchev gained something concrete – agreement from the Yugoslavs that they would attend the international conference

the Soviet side was that Marshal G. K. Zhukov received a high-ranking Yugoslav military delegation for a lengthy visit in early June. It was also agreed that A. Ranković and E. Kardelj would spend summer vacations in the Soviet Union.

⁴⁴ Mićunović (1990), *Tito kõvete voltam*, 232–3.

⁴⁵ Minutes of the June 1957 plenary meeting of the CPSU central committee, *Istorichesky Arkhiv*, No. 4–6, 1993.

⁴⁶ Mićunović, *Tito kõvete voltam*, 267–74.

⁴⁷ For detail of the joint communiqué, see Clissold (1975), p. 274. The unpublished memorandum was sent to Budapest by the Yugoslavs on 17 Jun. 1958, for information purposes, *Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union, Documents II*, item 128.

of communist parties, a promise from Tito of diplomatic recognition for the German Democratic Republic and assurances of support for the Kádár government. However, this immediate community of interests disguised disparate aims. Khrushchev was still trying to edge Yugoslavia closer to the Soviet camp. Tito, by giving Khrushchev some foreign-policy success, was seeking to strengthen the Khrushchevite line, to ensure that the policy of de-Stalinization continued and antagonism towards Yugoslavia ceased.⁴⁸

The Hungarian leaders in the summer of 1957 certainly had no separate policy on Yugoslavia, which the situation could not have allowed. The problem was more with adjustment. The criminal investigation of the Nagy group was completed in August 1957, which raised the question of arranging the trial. The decisive factor behind the postponement of the trial was that the Kremlin's relations with Yugoslavia were improving. Hungary's Interior Minister, briefing CPSU delegates on the results of the investigation and the grave sentences decided in advance, said the prosecution had no desire to make use of facts that would compromise the Yugoslav government. He also described plans for warding off or blunting the sharp attacks to be expected, but on the whole it seemed better to postpone the trial.⁴⁹ During the talks in Romania, the Yugoslavs made it plain that they were against bringing Imre Nagy and his associates to trial, and if this happened nonetheless, it was bound to strain Yugoslav–Hungarian relations. The big conference of communist parties planned for November could not be encumbered with a conflict like the one the Nagy trial would engender. There were also fears that a gross move of this kind would have adverse effects on the course of the Yugoslav party congress, which was originally planned for the autumn of 1957. Furthermore, the United Nations was preparing to debate the Hungarian question at its General Assembly in September.

Irrespective of the postponement of the Nagy trial, the improvement in Yugoslav–Soviet relations soon ceased. When the preparations for the conference of international communist parties revealed what documents the conference was supposed to adopt, there was clearly no trace of the desired international shift towards de-Stalinization. On the contrary, the draft document showed marked Chinese influence, and foreshadowed a renewal of the campaign against revisionism and a revival of the ill-framed Cominform in some form. There was nothing the leaders of the League of Yugoslav Communists (LYC) wanted less than to admit anyone's right to lay down for them a common ideology or political line. Yugoslavia's whole foreign-policy doctrine would be questioned by such an admission, which would amount to 'applying' to join the Soviet camp.

As the strains built up again, the curious feature of the Hungarian–Yugoslav relationship was the effort both sides put into lessening the tension and preventing its spreading. Although Kádár continued to comply strictly with the Soviet position,

⁴⁸ Mićunović, *Tito követe voltam*, 285–8.

⁴⁹ Notes by Y. V. Andropov, R. A. Rudenko and P. I. Ivashutin on their meeting with Interior Minister Béla Biszku, 26 Aug. 1957, in Gál *et al.*, *Jelcin dosszié*, 199–203.

he set about seeking a compromise solution on the conference document.⁵⁰ Yugoslavia's behaviour was exemplified by its stance in the United Nations on the Hungarian question where it tried to improve Budapest's position.⁵¹ Although relations between Belgrade and Moscow became decidedly frosty just before the Moscow conference, the Hungarian delegation led by Kádár had a successful meeting with Kardelj and Ranković in the Soviet capital. There still seemed to be prospects after the talks of improving relations. It was agreed in principle to hold a confidential inter-party meeting to clear up outstanding differences.⁵²

VI. Yugoslavia in the dock

The Moscow meeting of communist parties in November 1957 and the declaration adopted by the twelve parties in power reflected orthodox Chinese adherence to Stalinist dogma, which most signatories gladly accepted. The Yugoslav delegation refused to sign. That meant they did not take part in the twelve-party meeting either,⁵³ which simply increased the ardour of the Eastern European hardliners in condemning Titoist revisionism. Only Poland's Gomułka tried to resist the pressure, but it was hopeless. He did not even gain the support of Kádár, who on the Hungarian question foreshadowed the main ideological message of the Nagy trial by defending the condemnation of traitors who fraternize with the imperialist conspiracy. To vigorous applause from the communist leaders, Kádár left no doubt about what sentence he wanted.⁵⁴

The main question is what factors induced Khrushchev to accept the shift to the harder line that the Chinese promoted. For, contrary to the original intention, this revived the tensions with Yugoslavia instead of bringing it closer to the socialist camp. Khrushchev had to choose between Beijing and Belgrade. He decided to yield to the pressure to take a more pugnacious position to satisfy China, which was adopting an increasingly decisive stance and seeking an increasingly prominent role for itself. The wisdom of this choice was not vindicated by subsequent history. Only a few years later there came a complete break with China, while the tough attitude towards Yugoslavia became a hindrance to détente with the West and the policy of opening up to the Third World. In principle Khrushchev could have chosen the other course. He could have tried to beat back the efforts at re-Stalinization by following more consistently the policy of the twentieth congress, especially after the failed coup allowed him to rid the leadership of his most dangerous rivals. On the other hand, it is worth considering what Khrushchev was likely to do in such

⁵⁰ Kádár's letter to Khrushchev, 29 Oct. 1957, *Documents II*, item 81.

⁵¹ The Yugoslav delegate did not vote for the critical report by the so-called Committee of Five. He argued that it was not objective enough and did nothing to encourage an atmosphere in which Hungary could resolve its problems. Statement by Delegate Jože Brilej, *Borba*, 4 Sep. 1957.

⁵² Hungarian memorandum on the talks, *Documents II*, item 84.

⁵³ The Yugoslavs signed only the peace manifesto accepted by the delegates of all the 68 parties present in Moscow.

⁵⁴ Kádár's contributions at the two conferences, and his speech to the HSWP central committee, 29 Nov. 1957, *Documents II*, items 85, 87 and 88.

circumstances, and what could be expected of him, with his long Stalinist past and consequent political approach and set of tactical weapons. Despite appearances, he had not got over the aftermath of the Hungarian and Polish events of 1956 and the attempted coup of 1957. There had to be a period of consolidation if he was to keep his tight hold over events in the long term. Moreover, this was the time of the Zhukov affair – the defence minister's dismissal from the leadership showed plainly that the power struggles had not ended. Khrushchev wanted to secure himself on all sides. It may have seemed more hopeful under the circumstances to attain unity through the Stalinist doctrines prevalent in the communist parties than to take an uncharted course. It would have been especially hard to undertake open conflict with the ever more influential Chinese. They used clever tactics to avoid heightening differences with Moscow, hiding their true intentions and offering voluntary subordination so long as the requisite political line was proclaimed.

A decisive factor behind Khrushchev's choice was the priority given to consolidating unity in the socialist camp. That could be done with a rigid declaration reminiscent of the Stalin period, which the party leaders would gladly support because it helped to keep them in power. Mao, in exchange for the proclaimed hard-line policy, recognized the Soviet Union's leading role and himself pressed for it to be underlined. So Khrushchev could hardly have chosen a different course, because otherwise he would have brought on himself the odium of precipitating the conflicts. That was too high a price to pay for gestures to a 'suspect' country that wished anyway to stay outside the fold. Reversing the rapprochement with Yugoslavia was one, albeit major, element in a game that had just begun, for the basic Sino-Soviet difference of foreign policy remained. Mao was taking aggressive, confrontational steps designed to provoke utilization of the temporary military superiority gained in the missile arms race. Khrushchev wanted to exploit this superiority in a different way, but due to other power factors, he was willing to make ideological concessions – even to revive the revisionism debate. This, under Chinese pressure, soon took an exceptionally crude form, with the Hungarian question playing a prominent part.

Considering the roles in which the various players were cast, there is a greater need to explain why the Moscow conference was followed by a short period of relative calm. The conference had not managed to fulfil its intended function of bringing Belgrade closer to the Soviet bloc, because the return to orthodox Stalinist ideology and the foreign-policy doctrine of strengthening the bloc were the opposite of what Yugoslavia wanted. The circumstances that developed in the autumn of 1957 raised the chances of another solution. The basis of principle contained in the document unacceptable to the Yugoslavs might complete the isolation of Yugoslavia, with its distinct concept of socialism and insistence on non-aligned status. That would conclusively resolve the problems arising if anyone should ever feel inclined to follow the example of Hungary, or even Poland in 1956.

So the measures of November 1957 set relations with Yugoslavia on an irreversible course. All that was lacking was an occasion for turning the tension into open political battle. Meanwhile important events occurred in Hungarian–Yugoslav

relations, during the calm before the storm. Since after the Moscow conference there seemed to be no barrier to holding the Nagy trial, Kádár put the final decision before the central committee. In line with his proposal, the central committee adopted a motion in closed session on 21 December opening the way for the Nagy trial to begin. No doubt was even left about what the sentence would be.⁵⁵ The decision naturally reactivated the sensitive Yugoslav aspect of the Nagy affair. Kádár, in a situation that was far from clear, tried to leave the options open on both sides, in international relations and in links with the Yugoslavs. So at the decisive moment, it was still unclear whether Yugoslavia was acquitted of taking part in the imperialist conspiracy and intervening directly in the Hungarian events, or whether the Yugoslav leaders would be symbolically in the dock, alongside Imre Nagy. Kádár would certainly have preferred the former version, but he could not be sure of its chances. So in the ambivalent situation, neither a declaration of inherent 'good intentions' nor any indication of a threat was included.

Attention had to be paid, during the political preparations for the Nagy trial, to the written guarantee of impunity that Kádár had given the Yugoslavs in November 1956. The time had come to find a way to make it ineffective. The attempt to do so and the failure of that attempt tie in closely with the protraction of the Nagy trial, or rather with the Soviet–Yugoslav dispute that broke out and deepened in the meantime.

It still seemed at the end of December as if nothing would prevent the trial from going ahead, as the Soviet leadership had also agreed to it.⁵⁶ In the event it had to be interrupted early in 1958, at the Soviet Union's request, for reasons of Soviet foreign policy. Moscow, in late 1957 and early 1958, launched a large-scale peace offensive, including strong elements of propaganda. With initiatives to halt the arms race and hold Soviet–US summit meetings in the air, it seemed anything but opportune for Hungary to conduct a trial that was sure to poison the international political atmosphere. The idea of blunting the negative reactions with a light sentence had never been seriously entertained, so that the only option was to suspend the trial just after it had begun in secret.⁵⁷

The decision to suspend the trial later had serious consequences for relations with Yugoslavia. Although it aroused ideas about how to avert, or at least ease, the conflict that the trial was expected to provoke, developments in the spring of 1958 led to a reversal of this favourable shift in events.

Essentially, the Hungarian tactic was to tie the annulment of the letter guaranteeing impunity to the Nagy group to an improvement in Hungarian–Yugoslav relations. This would underline the seriousness of the offer to avoid raising during the trial the question of Yugoslavia's role and responsibility. As a first step,

⁵⁵ *Documents II*, item 91.

⁵⁶ János Kádár's report on talks with Y. I. Gromov, Soviet Ambassador in Budapest, to the meeting of the HSWP political committee, 28 Dec. 1957, *MOL* 288. f. 5/59.

⁵⁷ The trial began on 5 Feb. 1958. The suspension features in the minutes of the political committee meeting on 5 Feb. and the central committee meeting of 14 Feb., *Documents II*, items 95 and 97.

the Hungarian leaders sent Tito a letter whose main message was to affirm their intention of establishing good relations between the two parties. They called for top-level inter-party talks, as had been agreed in principle at the Moscow meeting in November. Unilateral annulment of the impunity guarantee was to be accompanied by a declaration that Hungary would not use the Nagy trial to compromise Yugoslavia.⁵⁸

The Yugoslav response was characteristic. They reacted favourably to the proposal for talks, but left open their position on the trial, deferring an exchange of opinions on it to the talks themselves, to be held in a friendly atmosphere. Belgrade was hard at work preparing for the congress of the LYC, which was to adopt a new programme. It seemed initially as if a CPSU delegation would attend the congress, to be held in Ljubljana in April, despite the tension after the Yugoslav refusal to sign the Moscow declaration. The Hungarian party leaders accordingly decided to attend as well.

The confidential party talks took place in Karadjordjevo at the end of March between delegations headed by Kádár and Tito. At this point there was still hope that inter-party relations at the highest political level could be brought to match the good inter-state relations. No agreement could be reached on the issues that weighed heaviest on the relationship – the causes of the 1956 uprising and the question of Imre Nagy – but the Hungarian tactic still succeeded. Kádár did not mislead Tito about the imminence of the trial. Although the Yugoslavs, to retain tactical freedom, preferred not to hear much specific detail about the trial, especially its likely outcome, they learned even from the few documents shown to them that it was being held. This announcement, as Kádár had expected, did not upset relations, which seemed to be mending, because the prime consideration for Tito and his colleagues was Hungary's promise not to turn the trial against Yugoslavia.⁵⁹ The atmosphere at the talks gave grounds for confidence, and the Hungarian leaders made rapid attempts to deepen trust. However, for reasons beyond their control, events took another turn that dealt Kádár's credibility a further serious blow.

The Soviet Union had meanwhile decided to launch another political and ideological offensive against the Yugoslavs.⁶⁰ It was already a bad sign when Khrushchev resumed criticism of Tito's Pula speech, reviving the charge that it was simply an attempt to divert some of the socialist countries 'on to the well-known Yugoslav road'. The Soviet leaders saw the Yugoslav conduct at the Moscow meeting, and still more the draft programme due to be put to the seventh congress of the LYC, as a provocation to which the socialist camp had to make a decisive response. The draft did not contain really new policies, but to incorporate the 'Yugoslav road' into a system and present it as a programme was a challenge to firm

⁵⁸ *Documents II*, item 96.

⁵⁹ This appears, for instance, from the Yugoslav note of 8 Oct. 1958, one of the important documents in the Yugoslav–Hungarian exchange of notes after the Nagy trial. *Documents II*, item 150.

⁶⁰ Hungarian politicians were able to gain information about the direct consequences from the most authentic source when Khrushchev visited Hungary at the beginning of April. *Documents II*, item 108.

believers in the Soviet model. So the CPSU cancelled its plans to send a delegation to the conference. The Hungarian party and the other parties under Moscow's influence were obliged to do likewise.

The main force behind the renewed campaign came from Beijing again. The Chinese showed conspicuous activity and initiative in the struggle against Titoism. Again, Moscow yielded to the pressure, and especially after its foreign-policy successes had failed to materialize,⁶¹ the Chinese aim of irrevocably destroying Soviet–Yugoslav relations seemed to have been attained. There began a series of attacks on the Yugoslav communists that went beyond the ideological campaign of a year earlier. The most sensitive point for the Soviet leaders was Belgrade's rejection of its bloc policy and strong related objections to Soviet efforts to gain hegemony.⁶² These differed in no way from the principles expressed a year before. However, confirming them in a long-term party programme showed that Yugoslavia would not abandon its independent position, adapt to the bipolar world system, or cease by its existence and example to obstruct expansion of the Soviet camp and ideological support for its unity. Credit and aid were vital to the Yugoslav economy, so that both the West and the Soviet Union could pressurize Belgrade to repay their economic support with political rapprochement. Of course the great powers realized that vacillation between the two sides was part of Tito's foreign policy.⁶³

The renewed international campaign against Yugoslavia and the obligation to join in were especially awkward for the Hungarian leaders. This was not just because they had to cancel their attendance at the LYC Congress, only days after the Karadjordjevo meeting, where they had clearly confirmed their intention of participating. It also became apparent that the Nagy trial would have a decisively anti-Yugoslav message after all, despite the earlier promise. Hungary was being forced by the conflict into the position of a front-line country again.

After the LYC Congress, the international campaign became stronger than ever, with the Hungarian question once more playing an important role. The first direct linkage of Yugoslav revisionism with the 'treacherous Imre Nagy clique' came in a leading article in the Chinese party daily, which launched the sharp attack.⁶⁴ The Soviet–Yugoslav relationship also worsened rapidly, and Moscow too renewed the charges relating to the Hungarian question. The Yugoslavs were again rebuked because they had greeted the Hungarian uprising as a national revolution, called the 'unselfish Soviet assistance' an intervention, and openly supported the treacherous Nagy group in the press. It seemed as though the Soviets would take the extreme Chinese position in every respect, even presenting Yugoslav revisionism as a direct ally of 'American imperialism'. This all provided the required ideological back-

⁶¹ Western rejection of the Rapacki Plan, named after the Polish foreign minister, left diminishing hope that the proffered summit meeting would be held.

⁶² Information from the Soviet leadership to János Kádár, *Documents II*, item 111.

⁶³ Wilson, *Tito's Yugoslavia*, 122. The British Embassy's report of 10 May 1958 also concluded that the Soviet charge was essentially one of Yugoslav duplicity, FO 371/596/N1011/27. A. Ranković refuted this in a strongly worded speech at the Yugoslav party congress.

⁶⁴ *Renmin Ribao*, 5 May 1958.

ground for the Nagy trial, within a conspiracy theory. Conversely, the concept behind the trial provided vantage-points from which to launch attacks on Yugoslavia.

There seemed to be no way to stop the escalating deterioration of relations, which spread to economic affairs, causing Yugoslavia some serious problems.⁶⁵ Belgrade soon concluded that there was a revival of the earlier policies and methods of Cominform. The Yugoslavs' most effective rejoinder was to confront the CPSU leaders in the press with their earlier statements on the de-Stalinization process. The aim was to return the debate to the original problem posed at the end of 1956, by the differences in assessing the Hungarian uprising. What model of socialism was to be followed after the twentieth congress? The Soviet leaders solved the matter in the short term by pronouncing the Yugoslav views anti-Marxist and analysing the conflict through the logic of the bipolar world system.⁶⁶ However, this threatened to lead quickly to the extreme situation of 1949 and a total break (which was what China wanted).

It was an especially sensitive problem for Hungary, on the eve of the Nagy trial, to decide how to behave towards Yugoslavia. Although the ideological basis for the trial suggested a clear political and ideological link between Yugoslav revisionism and the 'traitors', the Hungarians strove to prevent the new international campaign from appearing to be a repetition of the anti-Yugoslav crusade of 1949. If for no other reason, it was important to avoid such charges for fear of parallels being drawn with the Rajk trial. So they tried to blame the conflict with Yugoslavia on the LYC, for having launched an 'open attack of political principle' on the socialist camp. Apart from references to the similarity between Yugoslav revisionism and Nagy's views, there were accusations that Yugoslav pride at being outside both camps was furthering a break with the socialist camp and preparing for a bourgeois restoration.⁶⁷

Up to the last minute, Tito tried to stop Yugoslavia being blamed for the events in Hungary of 1956. One day before the trial ended, he sent a long letter to the CPSU leaders. In it he appended to his arguments the hope that the promises about the Nagy trial made by the Soviet Union at the August 1957 talks in Romania and by the Hungarians at Karadjordjevo would be kept. He added that if the campaign

⁶⁵ On 27 May 1958, the Soviet Foreign Ministry presented a note to the Yugoslav embassy in Moscow announcing a five-year suspension of the credit facilities under the Soviet–Yugoslav economic agreement of 12 Jan. 1956 and the Soviet–GDR–Yugoslav agreement of 1 Aug. 1956. See Clissold, *Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union*, 278–80. It emerged from an article in *Izvestiya* on 5 Jul. 1958 that the occasion or excuse for suspending the credit was a passage in Tito's congress address, where he stressed the 'mutually advantageous' nature of these economic ties, as opposed to the 'unselfishness' of Western assistance. It was important at the time for the Yugoslav leadership to settle the country's impaired economic relations with the West. See Wilson, *Tito's Yugoslavia*, 118–23.

⁶⁶ Khrushchev referred to the 'Trojan horse' of imperialism, in his speech to the seventh congress of the Bulgarian Communist Party. *Pravda*, 4 Jun. 1958 (Clissold, *Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union*, 280–81).

⁶⁷ The HSWP daily *Népszabadság*, 21 May 1958. On the 13 May debate on the draft in the HSWP political committee, see *Documents II*, item 122.

reminiscent of 1948 continued, the Yugoslavs would have no choice but to take up the struggle being forced upon them.⁶⁸

In the event, the promises Tito referred to were dispelled by the acrimonious international conflict. The Kádár regime had to choose the worse option from their own point of view as well, so that the Yugoslav aspect received strong emphasis in the Nagy trial. The materials prepared during the investigation to compromise Yugoslavia were brought forward for propaganda purposes during and after the Nagy trial, which aroused enormous international dissension. Symbolically therefore, the trial also placed the Yugoslav leaders in the dock.

VII. The Nagy trial and the war of the protest notes

The Hungarian government issued an official statement on 17 June 1958 about the Imre Nagy trial, announcing the execution or imprisonment of the former prime minister and his associates. The communiqué castigated the Yugoslav leaders. They were charged with active support, during 'the counter-revolutionary uprising' and subsequent 'organization of resistance', for the Nagy group, which had 'followed the pirate flag of national communism', as accomplices in the conspiracy by international imperialism and domestic reaction.⁶⁹

Naturally, the charges against Yugoslavia aroused immediate strong protests from Belgrade. The long diplomatic skirmishing that ensued was accompanied by initially sharp polemics in the press.⁷⁰ The Yugoslavs totally denied the charges and drew comparisons with the notorious Rajk trial. The strongest diplomatic card, of course, was to cite the fact that the guarantee of impunity contained in the agreement of November 1956 had been openly breached. Belgrade considered it self-evident that the smears served the purposes of the international campaign against Yugoslavia that was taking place. The sharp tone of the statement indicated that the conflict had reached a climax.

The task of formulating a reply to the Yugoslav protest note caused much racking of brains in Budapest. It was a great benefit to Kádár that all the communist parties in the bloc aligned themselves clearly behind the Hungarian move, including Gomulka, who had earlier had strong misgivings about the planned prosecution of Imre Nagy.⁷¹ However, although the communist parties sought to identify in the Yugoslav protests signs of collaboration with the Western powers' 'international reaction', there also appeared a desire within the Soviet leadership to contain the confrontation. The Soviet Union certainly wanted Hungary's note of reply to allude to the conformity between the reactions of the Yugoslavs and the Western powers

⁶⁸ Tito's letter of 14 Jun. 1958 to Khrushchev, *Documents II*, item 127.

⁶⁹ *Népszabadság*, 17 Jun. 1958. The government devoted a whole chapter to the Yugoslav dimension, in the fifth volume of the *Fehér Könyv* (White Book) published by the Information Office.

⁷⁰ The exchange of notes between Yugoslavia and Hungary: *Documents II*, items 134, 140, 150, 153, 155 and 158.

⁷¹ Gomulka's speech in Gdańsk on 28 Jun. 1958. During a visit to Hungary early in May 1958, Gomulka had expressed deep anxiety about the campaign against Yugoslavia. *Documents II*, item 122.

and to include a threat of further incriminating information.⁷² On the other hand, Khrushchev resisted the temptation to follow the policy urged by the Chinese, which cast doubt on Yugoslavia's socialist nature and aimed at breaking off relations.⁷³ He was content to show his ability to take firm measures, including the application of economic pressure, and to demonstrate to countries in the socialist camp what narrow constraints he placed on their independent political and ideological endeavours. He did not want to become a prisoner of the hardline policy promoted by Mao.⁷⁴ Order had been restored in the region. After the Nagy trial, not only Kádár, but Gomułka of Poland, who had shown solidarity with Kádár, became a firm Soviet ally as well.

However, this was unclear directly after the Nagy trial, at the symbolic climax of the hostility, least of all to the Hungarian leaders. The problems with formulating the Hungarian stance in the diplomatic conflict that followed the trial were not confined to gauging the right degree of action against Yugoslavia. The Hungarians had to satisfy two conflicting demands at once. On the one hand they had to contribute to the campaign against Belgrade, integral to which was the question of Yugoslav responsibility in the Nagy affair. On the other hand they had to deny that placing Yugoslavia in the dock was among the aims of this campaign, because that would have justified the parallel the Yugoslavs were drawing with the Rajk trial. Eventually the protracted process of drafting the note led to more sober, moderate policies prevailing over solutions that ran the risk of exacerbating the confrontation. That did not immediately end the differences, of course, but at least it did leave open the prospect of preventing a further deterioration in relations, which was not in the interest of the Yugoslavs either.⁷⁵

After the sharp exchanges of the summer, the Hungarian–Yugoslav war of the protest notes continued behind the scenes. During the autumn of 1958, each side tried to extricate itself from the conflict without losing face, while hindering the process with statements dictated by factors of prestige. Both the Yugoslavs and the Hungarians insisted on their positions, although they made any further steps contingent on each other's behaviour. Each tried to curb the other – by threatening to publish documented facts – but the signals each sent to the other revealed a common interest in ending a sterile debate.

The conflict came to a relatively rapid end largely because the Soviet and the Yugoslav leadership saw that there was nothing more to gain from deepening the dispute. The Soviet leaders had still contributed directly to deciding the measures the Hungarians took during the summer of 1958, but after that they withdrew from

⁷² Gál *et al.*, *Jelcin dosszié*, 208–18.

⁷³ János Kádár's report to the HSWP political committee, 1 Jul. 1958, *Documents II*, item 136.

⁷⁴ The policy of the 'great leap forward' was announced at the second session of the eighth congress of the Chinese Communist Party, in May 1958. Its consequences became increasingly apparent.

⁷⁵ The Yugoslavs conveyed this informally to Lajos Cséby, the Hungarian ambassador in Budapest, and through their Budapest chargé d'affaires *ad interim*, Božidar Dimitrijević. *Documents II*, items 144 and 145.

the business. Any further worsening of relations with Yugoslavia was at odds with their foreign-policy doctrines towards the West and towards the Third World. Furthermore, Khrushchev had a prime interest in ensuring that his own ideas, not the policy of re-Stalinization urged by the Chinese, should be the basis for restoring order in the camp. The Soviet Union was obliged to recognize Yugoslavia's separate road and its withdrawal from the influence of bloc policy. Moscow, amidst a progressive foreign-policy shift towards the Third World, could not afford to continue its extreme confrontation with Yugoslavia, which aspired, as a communist country outside the bloc, to a leading position in the movement of non-aligned countries. Nor did it suit Tito to take the conflict any further. On 22 December 1958, the United States and Yugoslavia concluded an economic agreement that included loans and aid, so that there was nothing more to be gained from continued strife with the Soviet Union. So Tito strove to contain and conclude the debate that had arisen over the Hungarian uprising of 1956, or with that as its pretext. From his point of view, the Khrushchev–Kádár line of policy remained relatively the best solution. Aggravating the relationship would only have compounded his existing problems with neighbouring countries in the Balkans.

The Yugoslav, Soviet and Hungarian leaders all had to recognize that it was senseless and counterproductive to prolong the battle. Several years had to pass before a new Soviet–Yugoslav rapprochement, but Khrushchev returned to the principle of working for normal economic and trade relations with states, irrespective of other disputes.⁷⁶ Moscow retained on its agenda the ideological struggle against revisionism, the 'main threat', but the Hungarian question had become an embarrassment to both sides. It was finally pushed into the background, after the superficial exchange of protest notes over the Nagy affair came to an end in early 1959.

List of persons involved in events

Andropov, Yuri V. (1914–84), Soviet politician. Soviet ambassador in Budapest from July 1954 to March 1957.

Aristov, Averki B. (1903–73), Soviet politician. Secretary of the CPSU Central Committee (CC) from 1955 to 1960; member of the Presidium (Politburo) of the CC from 1957 to 1961.

Begović, Vlajko (1905–?), Yugoslav politician. Director of *Borba*, the central Party daily, from 1955; in 1957, head of the Social Sciences Institute in Belgrade and member of the CC of the LYC.

Biszku, Béla (b. 1921), Hungarian politician. Member of the HSWP Central Committee from 4 November 1956; minister of the interior from February 1957 to 1961.

Brilej, Jože (1910–81), Yugoslav diplomat and permanent representative at the United Nations from 1954 to 1958.

⁷⁶ Khrushchev's speech at his meeting with the Polish leaders, *Pravda*, 11 Nov. 1958.

- Chou En-lai** (Zhou Enlai), (1898–1976), Chinese politician. Secretary of the central committee from 1928, vice-president of the CCP from 1954 to 1956, prime minister from 1949 to 1976, serving also as foreign minister from 1949 to 1958.
- Cséby, Lajos** (1899–1976), Hungarian diplomat. Ambassador in Belgrade from January 1957 to October 1961.
- Dmitrijević, Dožidar**, Yugoslav diplomat. Embassy counsellor, then chargé d'affaires *ad interim* in Budapest in 1958.
- Djilas, Milovan** (1911–95), Yugoslav politician and political writer. Dismissed from the LYC leadership for his opposition writings in January 1954, and then from the party and from official positions; arrested on 19 November 1956 and sentenced to imprisonment; freed early in 1961, but later imprisoned again.
- Gerő, Ernő** (1898–1980), Hungarian politician. Deputy general secretary of the Hungarian Workers' Party (HWP) from 1948, later secretary of the central committee; deputy prime minister from 1952 to July 1956, then HWP first secretary until 25 October 1956; left for exile in the Soviet Union on 28 October 1956, but allowed to return in 1960.
- Gomułka, Władisław** (1905–1985), Polish politician. General secretary of the Polish Workers' Party until 1948; imprisoned on fabricated charges from 1951 to 1954; elected first secretary of the Polish United Workers' Party central committee in October 1956 despite Soviet threats, serving until 1970.
- Gošnjak, Ivan** (1909–80), Yugoslav general. Defence minister from 1953 to 1967, member of the LYC political committee (PC) and presidium.
- Gromov, Yevgeni I.** (1909–?), Soviet politician and diplomat. Head of department at the CPSU CC from 1954 to 1957; Soviet ambassador in Budapest from March 1957 to 1959.
- Hebrang, Andrija** (1899–1951), Yugoslav politician. Industry minister until his arrest in 1948 for his stance in the Soviet–Yugoslav dispute; died in prison.
- Horváth, Imre** (1900–58), Hungarian politician and diplomat. Ambassador in Berlin, Washington, London and Prague between 1948 and 1956; foreign minister from July 1956 to the end of October and from 7 November 1956 until his death.
- Hoxha, Enver** (1908–85), Albanian politician. General secretary of the communist party from 1943 until his death.
- Ivashutin, Petr I.** (1909–?), Soviet general. Senior official at the Defence Ministry from 1954 onwards.
- Kádár, János** (1912–89), Hungarian politician. A communist leader, he was in prison on fabricated charges from 1951 to 1954; elected a PC member in July 1956, party first secretary on 25 October 1956, and then party chairman; taken to Moscow on 2 November and entrusted with the transfer of power; appointed prime minister and first secretary of the HSWP CC in November 1956.
- Kaganovich, Lazar M.** (1893–1991), Soviet politician. Member of the CPSU politburo from 1930; deputy prime minister from 1944 to 1957; dismissed and expelled from the CC in June 1957 for his part in the attempted coup against Khrushchev.

- Kapičić, Jovo** (1919–?), Yugoslav diplomat. Ambassador in Budapest from December 1956.
- Kardelj, Edvard** (1910–1979), Yugoslav politician. Deputy head of government from 1953 to 1963; member of the executive committee of the LYC from 1952, and the party's leading ideologist.
- Khrushchev, Nikita S.** (1894–1971).
- Komarov, Vladimir N.** (1904–76), Soviet general. Commander of the Volga-Ural military zone in 1957–60.
- Losonczy, Géza** (1917–57), Hungarian journalist and politician. Imprisoned on fabricated charges in 1951–4; from 1954 a leading figure in the HWP opposition around Imre Nagy; appointed minister of state in the Nagy government on 31 October 1956; member of the group receiving asylum in the Yugoslav embassy before being deported to Romania; arrested in April 1957; died in prison in December.
- Mao Tse-tung** (Mao Zedong), (1893–1976).
- Mićunović, Veljko** (1916–83), Yugoslav politician and diplomat. Ambassador in Moscow from March 1956 to October 1958.
- Mikoyan, Anastas I.** (1895–1978), Soviet politician. Deputy prime minister from 1937 to 1964; member of the CPSU Politburo from 1935 to 1966.
- Molotov, Vyacheslav M.** (1890–1986), Soviet politician. Member of the CPSU politburo from 1926 onwards; foreign minister from 1953 to 1956; expelled from the CC and dismissed from state office in June 1957 for his part in the attempted coup against Khrushchev.
- Münnich, Ferenc** (1886–1967), Hungarian politician. Ambassador in Belgrade in 1956 from August to 25 October; appointed minister of the interior in the Nagy government on 27 October; from 4 November, deputy prime minister in the Kádár government, overseeing the armed forces; member of the HSWP PC from November 1956; prime minister from 1958 to 1961.
- Nagy, Imre** (1896–1958), Hungarian politician. Prime minister from July 1953 to April 1955, an advocate of reform; expelled from the party for opposition activity in December 1955, but readmitted in October 1956; prime minister from 24 October to 4 November 1956, during the Hungarian uprising; received asylum on 4 November in the Yugoslav embassy, but deported with his associates to Romania on 23 November, then arrested and returned to Hungary in April 1957; condemned to death and executed on 16 June 1958.
- Popović, Koča** (1908–92), Yugoslav politician. Foreign minister from 1953 to 1965; member of the CC of the Yugoslav Communist Party, later the LYC, from 1948.
- Rajk, László** (1909–49), Hungarian politician. A secretary of the Hungarian Workers' Party after 1945; minister of the interior, then foreign minister in 1946–8; arrested in 1949, and condemned to death and executed after a show trial designed also to compromise Yugoslavia.
- Rákosi, Mátyás** (1892–1971), Hungarian politician. General secretary of the

communist party from 1945 to 18 July 1956; also prime minister in 1952–3; in exile in the Soviet Union from July 1956 until his death.

Ranković, Aleksandar (1909–83), Yugoslav politician. Member of the communist party PC from 1940; minister of the interior and chief of the secret service from 1948 to 1953; deputy prime minister from 1953 to 1963.

Rapacki, Adam (1909–70), Polish politician. Member of the communist party PC from 1948 to 1968; foreign minister from 1956 to 1968.

Roberts, Frank (b. 1907), British diplomat. Ambassador in Belgrade from 1954 to 1957.

Rudenko, R. A. (1907–80), Soviet lawyer. Chief prosecutor of the Soviet Union from 1953.

Šik, Endre (1891–1978), Hungarian diplomat. Deputy foreign minister from April 1954; foreign minister from February 1958.

Soldatić, Dalibor (1909–?), Yugoslav diplomat. Ambassador in Budapest from November 1953 to December 1956, then head of protocol at the State Secretariat for Foreign Affairs.

Stalin, Josef V. (1879–1953).

Suslov, Mikhail A. (1902–82), Soviet politician. Secretary of the CPSU central committee from 1949; politburo member in 1952–53 and from 1955.

Szántó, Zoltán (1893–1977), Hungarian politician. Served as ambassador in several countries in 1947–56; member of the HWP political committee and presidium during the October 1956 uprising; granted asylum in the Yugoslav embassy on 4 November; deported with the Nagy group to Romania, but not prosecuted; testified for the prosecution in the Nagy trial; allowed home permanently in 1958.

Tito, Josip Brod (1892–1980).

Zhukov, Georgi K. (1896–1974), Soviet marshal. Defence minister from February 1955 to October 1957, when he was dismissed and pensioned off while on a visit to Yugoslavia and Albania.

Žujović, Sreten (1899–1986), Yugoslav politician. Finance minister and Yugoslav communist party central committee member from 1945 to 1948; expelled from the party and dismissed from office when the Soviet–Yugoslav conflict flared up.