

# Shattered Hopes amid Violent Repression

## The Hungarian Revolution and the United Nations (Part I)

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### Introduction

The Hungarian revolution of 1956 was one of the seminal moments in Cold War history when an attempt by a small country to determine its own destiny provoked vigorous responses from large external powers.<sup>1</sup> A domestic matter was transformed into an international crisis as one superpower of the “international community”—the Soviet Union—intervened swiftly and brutally to crush the revolution. The USSR’s allies demonstrated either tacit consent or overt support.<sup>2</sup> Elsewhere, particularly in the Western democracies, forceful condemnation of this violation of the United Nations (UN) Charter and the right of nations to self-determination spread widely.

The Allied powers in World War II founded the UN in 1945 and included within it other countries that had supported them.<sup>3</sup> Their hope was that even if the internal politics of the member-states differed greatly, the principles underlying their external relations would be commonly based on those expressed in the UN Charter. Meanwhile, a major segment of the international community continued to fight against several of the UN founders in

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1. The events of the Hungarian revolution, particularly the events of October and November 1956, have been well researched, documented, and analyzed by others. Here I focus on the aftermath of the revolution, particularly the response of the UN.

2. The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) delegation conducted negotiations in Moscow as the Hungarian Revolution unfolded. On 31 October, Nikita Khrushchev informed the CCP delegation that the Soviet Union would be sending in troops to crush the revolution, and he was pleased when the Chinese expressed approval. Over the next two days, Khrushchev personally met with leaders of Soviet-bloc countries for the same reason. In a dramatic meeting with Josip Broz Tito at Brioni on 2 November, as described in Veljko Mićunović, *Moscow Diary* (New York: Doubleday Books, 1980), pp. 146–150, Khrushchev easily secured the Yugoslav leader’s approval.

3. The United Nations was established on 24 October 1945 by 51 member-states. However, negotiations had commenced long before then, and the expression “United Nations” was also used for the Allied powers in WWII. The UN Charter was signed on 26 June 1945.

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order to reclaim their precolonial independence. The practical and theoretical consequences of those events deeply influenced the UN's ability to act during the critical days of the Hungarian revolution as well as in the years that followed.

Over the last 25 years, the history of the Hungarian revolution has been the subject of much research and discussion.<sup>4</sup> However, this research has placed considerable emphasis on international responses to the events.<sup>5</sup> Declassified archival evidence has immensely enriched knowledge of the details and logic of decision-making both inside and outside Hungary during the revolution and has the potential to influence future perceptions of the events.<sup>6</sup> This study, based on recently released archival evidence, offers new insights concerning the aftermath of the revolution, while supporting previous conclusions.<sup>7</sup>

For the benefit of readers who are not familiar with the events of the revolution itself, a one-paragraph summary will help set the context for the rest of this article. From 22 to 23 October 1956, demonstrations were held in Hungary in support of events in Poland, which led to demands for political change in Hungary itself and confrontations between demonstrators and government forces. On 24 October, Soviet armed forces entered Budapest. Imre Nagy was named as prime minister and János Kádár as First Secretary of the Hungarian Communist party one day later. On 25 October, Soviet and Hungarian forces guarding the parliament building opened fire, killing many demonstrators and injuring more than 100. On 27 October, the United States, United

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4. The most important books are far too numerous to list. Among the many important works available in English, see Charles Gati, *Failed Illusions: Moscow, Washington, Budapest, and the 1956 Revolt* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2006); Csaba Békés, Malcolm Byrne, and János Rainer, eds., *The 1956 Hungarian Revolution: A History in Documents* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2003); and György Litván and János Bak, *The Hungarian Revolution of 1956: Reform, Revolt and Repression 1953–1963* (London: Longman, 1996).

5. The relevant studies authored by Csaba Békés, László Borhi, Gusztáv Kecskés, Béla Király, Mark Kramer, György Litván, and János Rainer are of great importance.

6. Crucial documentation remains unavailable in Moscow and in some other former Communist countries. The UN Archive also contains some documents that are still classified.

7. The Historical Archives of the Hungarian State Security (*Állambiztonsági Szolgálatok Történeti Levéltára*, or ABTL) provided important recently declassified documents on the topic of this article. The National Archives of Hungary (*Magyar Nemzeti Levéltár-Országos Levéltár*, or MOL) also released new files on the topic. In addition, several important UN documents have become available in the National Széchenyi Library's Manuscript Collection (Országos Széchenyi Könyvtár Kézirattár, NSL MC). The digitized version is available on the website of the Open Society Archive (OSA), Budapest, titled "1956 Digital Archive, Héderváry Collection." The author thanks Éva Szokolczainé Kovács for her assistance at ÁBTL and András Kiss for his help at NAH. References to important files at the NSL MC were generously provided by Mihály Zichy. The assistance of the OSA, along with a research grant from the Visegrad Fund, greatly contributed to the completion of the research.

Kingdom, and France proposed that the Hungarian issue be placed on the agenda of the UN Security Council. That same day, Nagy formed a new government including both non-Communists and Communists. On 28 October, the UN Security Council placed the Hungarian issue on its agenda. On 29 October, despite the intensity of the ongoing fighting, there were indications that Soviet troops were slowly withdrawing; the same day, Israel invaded Egypt's Sinai Peninsula (French and British forces entered the Suez conflict two days later). On 3 November, Soviet troops moved back toward Budapest. In the early morning of 4 November, Soviet troops launched a massive assault on Budapest. On 7 November, having returned from a secret trip to the USSR, Kádár was sworn in as the new prime minister as well as party leader.

The Hungarian revolution emerged on the UN agenda soon after the first Soviet invasion on 24 October 1956. Unsurprisingly, the Soviet UN delegate protested its inclusion on the agenda.<sup>8</sup> What was surprising was that Péter Kós, the Hungarian diplomat representing the revolutionary government with observer status, also objected to its inclusion. Uproar and subsequent protest inside Hungary and beyond sparked angry demands for Kós's removal. However, recent archival evidence reveals that in fact Kós was simply obeying the instructions he had received from Budapest. At that time, negotiations with the Soviet Union remained promising. Withdrawing the Hungarian issue from the UN agenda was thus a condition for agreement.<sup>9</sup> Fueled by the ambiguity of Soviet decision-making and Nikita Khrushchev's commitment to introducing new norms between "fraternal countries," the hope of freedom had given rise to general rejoicing in Budapest.<sup>10</sup> However, such hopes came

8. On 28 October 1956, shortly before the Security Council was scheduled to discuss the Hungarian question, Péter Kós, Hungary's permanent representative to the UN, submitted an official letter declaring that all events in Hungary that had transpired since 22 October 1956 were purely internal affairs of the country.

9. Kós, who had established a career in Hungary within the Foreign Ministry (FM) and Hungarian diplomacy, was recalled on 29 October 1956 and served as a scapegoat for decades to come. He was later accused of being a Soviet citizen named "Leo Konduktorov," which was partly true ("Konduktorov" was the last name of his Soviet-born mother). However, it is clear that, regardless of his personal convictions, he complied with FM instructions at the UN. See Gábor Murányi, "A Konduktorov-ügy," *Magyar nemzet* (Budapest), 21 August 1991. See also Csaba Békés, *Az 1956-os magyar forradalom a világpolitikában* (Budapest: 1956-os Intézet, 1996), p. 210.

10. See the so-called Malin notes in János Rainer, "The Road to Budapest, 1956," *Hungarian Quarterly*, Vol. 37, No. 142 (Summer 1996), pp. 112–148. The declaration of the Soviet government was published in *Pravda* on 31 October 1956, suggesting also a change in Soviet policy. See Mark Kramer, "New Evidence on Soviet Decision-Making and the 1956 Polish and Hungarian Crises," *Cold War International History Project Bulletin*, No. 8–9 (Winter–Spring 1996–1997), pp. 358–385.

to an abrupt end once Soviet policy changed, with the outbreak of the Suez crisis and the lynching of secret policemen in Budapest, and then disappeared with the Soviet military invasion of Hungary on 4 November.<sup>11</sup>

Hungary's historic plea to the UN on 1 November resulted from fear of Soviet military operations. Prime Minister Nagy had attempted to avoid such a dramatic situation by mobilizing the international community. Nonetheless, Nagy realized he had few military or political options remaining. The declaration of Hungary's neutrality, the renunciation of Warsaw Pact membership, and the request to include Hungary on the UN agenda were the prime minister's last-ditch attempts to counter what was happening.<sup>12</sup> When the UN did not respond to his telegram, Nagy sent a modified version the following day, requesting that the UN "instruct" the Hungarian and Soviet governments to start "negotiations immediately" for the withdrawal of Soviet forces.<sup>13</sup> By then, the UN agenda had been overwhelmed by the Suez crisis—an event that further ruptured the usual accord among the Western powers.

Given the contemporaneous development of the Suez crisis, as well as U.S. misgivings about supporting Nagy, the UN chose not to take an active role vis-à-vis the events in Hungary.<sup>14</sup> Kós was replaced by János Szabó, who did not follow his predecessor's lead in obeying instructions from revolutionary Budapest. Szabó, whom Soviet officials had told that a new government was being formed, was eager to represent Kádár's new regime.<sup>15</sup> In the eyes of such pragmatic politicians, Nagy's plea to the UN for help was an act of

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11. The lynching at the Budapest party headquarters contributed to the decision, as photographs of the events were presented the next day in Moscow to the Soviet Presidium.

12. On 1 November 1956, Nagy sent a dramatic telegram to the United Nations. For more on its background, see Csaba Békés, "A magyar kérdés az ENSZ-ben és a nyugati nagyhatalmak titkos tárgyalásai," in János Bak, ed., *Évkönyv II* (Budapest: 1956-os Intézet, 1994), pp. 165–178.

13. The first telegram erroneously asked for the "guaranteed" neutrality of Hungary—an assurance that could not be granted. This was corrected in the second telegram sent on 2 November 1956.

14. Radio Free Europe (RFE) broadcasts fostered public distrust of Nagy. When Béla Varga, one of the senior leaders of the Hungarian refugees in the United States, was questioned by the State Department, he condemned Nagy as the "darkest traitor in Hungarian history." See James G. McCargar, "A Szabad Európa Bizottság és a magyar emigránsok 1956-ban Az 1956-os Intézet évkönyve, 1996–97," in András B. Hegedüs et al., eds., *Évkönyv V* (Budapest: 1956-os Intézet, 1997), pp. 272–281.

15. At a meeting with the members of the UN department at the Budapest FM on 6 March 1957, Imre Hollai, Hungary's deputy representative to the UN, made clear that "the Hungarian delegation willfully disobeyed Budapest because it could have ended in sending UN troops to Hungary against the USSR." See "Beszámoló: Hollai Imre és Mód Péter beszámolója az ENSZ-osztály tagjainak 1957," 6 March 1957, in NAH, XIX-J-24-a, Box 1, "A New York-i főkonzulátus iaraatái" Folder. Furthermore, Hollai also did not disobey instructions when he, alongside Ambassador Kós, remained in New York after being recalled. See *ibid.*, Box 2. Documents stored in the ÁBTL show that both Imre Hollai and János Szabó were members of the Communist regime's State Security Authority (ÁVH) and obeyed their superiors in that organization.

ultimate desperation. However, participants in the events in Budapest hoped that the crisis would be resolved not by brutal force but by the principles of the UN Charter, officially shared by the USSR and Hungary. The commander of Hungarian ground forces, General Béla Király, in a speech on 3 November, made reference to previous Soviet-Hungarian negotiations as well as to the peaceful settlement role of the UN.<sup>16</sup> As he left the war-torn capital, Király stopped in the outskirts of Buda at the U.S. ambassador's residence to inquire about chances of deploying an international police force to Hungary. Unfortunately, the only person Király managed to speak with was the gardener of the residence.<sup>17</sup>

Revolutionaries continued to fight in the hope that the UN would intervene.<sup>18</sup> Some even counted down the hours in anticipation of the troops' arrival.<sup>19</sup> István Bibó, minister of state for the national government, asserted that UN troops were needed only if the Soviet Army did not withdraw as agreed.<sup>20</sup> Meanwhile, Anna Kéthly—the veteran leader of the Social Democrats and a minister of state in the revolutionary government, who was the only minister outside Hungary on free soil at the time of the Soviet invasion—arrived at UN headquarters in New York the day after the Soviet invasion, accompanied by a university forestry student who had participated in the revolution.<sup>21</sup> Some years later, Kéthly recalled that she and the student, naively assuming the UN had a standing army, expected to see peacekeepers in the New York barracks awaiting deployment.<sup>22</sup>

16. During his interrogation about Nagy, István Marián recalled Király's speech at the meeting of the "Temporary Operative Committee" on 3 November 1956. See "Marián István kihallgatása," 15 July 1957, in NAH, XX-5-h Vizsgáló iratok XXVII, Kötet V-150/000.60, "Nagy Imre és társai: Vizsgáló iratok Király Bélára vonatkozó nyomozás" Folder.

17. See "Oláh Vilmos kihallgatása," 27 March 1957, in NAH, XX-5-h Vizsgáló iratok XXVII, Kötet V-150/000.61, "Nagy Imre és társai: Vizsgáló iratok Király Bélára vonatkozó nyomozás" Folder. See also the interview with Király quoted in Martin B. Swartz, "A New Look at the 1956 Revolution: Soviet Opportunism, American Acquiescence," Ph.D. Diss., Tufts University, 1988, p. 547.

18. As reported by agent "Szeles" (codename for György Szennik). The report of 13 November 1957 is located in ÁBTLL, BT-602/1.

19. Gábor Mikulás, head of the Mezőkövesd resistance group, suggested that if they resisted for two more hours they would be saved by UN troops. See "Vázlat-az ENSZ Különbizottság eljárásáról," 5 August 1957, in NAH, IM 1959 00/4/1959.

20. See the manifesto of István Bibó in Tamás Korányi, ed., *Egy népfelkelés dokumentumai* (Budapest: Tudósítások Kiadó, 1989), p. 127.

21. Kéthly (1889–1976) had left Hungary on 3 November 1956 to attend a Socialist International meeting in Vienna.

22. Alpár Bujdosó, interview, Vienna, 17 March 2002. See also Alpár Bujdosó, *299 nap* (Budapest: Magyar Műhely Kiadó and 1956-os Intézet, 2003.)

Their hope had not been entirely unfounded. A UN force had fought in Korea six years earlier. Furthermore, on 5 November, the UN voted to establish an Emergency International Force for Suez. Armed UN peacekeepers (supplied by member-states) were mobilized and deployed to Suez to resolve a major international conflict. However, the UN success in the Middle East overlapped with the outbreak of the Hungarian revolution. The Soviet Presidium was concerned that a new war would erupt once Israel, Britain, and France commenced their military operations in Egypt. The outbreak of the Suez crisis had also transformed the focus and efforts of the UN and its Secretary General, Dag Hammarskjöld. Recent research and recollections from Hammarskjöld's contemporaries suggest that the Secretary General interpreted the twin crises as an either-or situation.<sup>23</sup> Opting to resolve the crisis in the "explosive" Middle East where both superpowers opposed the incursions into Egypt. Hammarskjöld avoided taking crucial steps in Hungary once the Soviet Union had effectively preempted any significant role for the UN. Furthermore, in Hammarskjöld's estimation, the prospect of working on behalf of the Hungarian people would jeopardize Soviet cooperation on the Suez crisis as well as other key issues such as nuclear disarmament. Finally, with an eye to preserving the role and influence of the UN, the Secretary General believed the West had tarnished its own image as champion of self-determination now that French and British troops had parachuted into Port Said. Western unity had also been publicly fractured when the United States sided with the Soviet Union instead of with two leading U.S. allies.<sup>24</sup>

Thus, the prospect of UN soldiers fighting the Soviet Army in Budapest was a non-starter, and the prospect that the international community would defeat the largest army in Europe was even more impractical. Help from the UN had to mean something different, and it had to be understood by a population that felt abandoned and even betrayed.<sup>25</sup> The UN *was* instrumental in humanitarian assistance for Hungarian refugees abroad. More than 200,000

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23. Roger Lipsey, *Hammarskjöld: A Life* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2013).

24. This notion is further discussed in Gusztáv Kecskés, "Franciaország politikája az ENSZ-ben a 'magyar ügy' kapcsán 1956–1963," *Századok*, No. 5 (2000), p. 5. See also Csaba Békés, "A brit kormány és az 1956-os magyar forradalom," in János Bak et al., eds., *Évkönyv 1992* (Budapest: 1956-os Intézet), pp. 19–38.

25. Several U.S. politicians also promised that Hungary would not be abandoned if it stood up against Communism. See László Borhi, "Rollback, Liberation, Containment or Inaction," *Journal of Cold War Studies*, Vol. 3, No. 1 (Fall 1999), pp. 67–110. RFE even provided military instructions and encouragement on how to resist the Soviet Army until Western help arrived: "The Soviet forces mobilized against Hungary are not invincible!" See Borhi, "Rollback, Liberation, Containment or Inaction," pp. 177–178. See also the RFE Collection at the Budapest OSA. The role of RFE was later investigated by both the West German authorities and the relevant U.S. agencies.

refugees, or 2 percent of the total population, left Hungary during and after the revolution.<sup>26</sup> Furthermore, UN relief agencies assisted in shipping food and other supplies to war-torn Hungary.<sup>27</sup> However, the relief provided by the UN was only temporary. In clear contradiction of the UN Charter, no meaningful action concerning the military and political developments was taken. The limitations of the UN were starkly evident for all to see.

While officials at UN headquarters attempted to remedy the lasting consequences of inaction, the violation of UN principles had to be addressed as well. This complex and long-lasting process was productive albeit controversial. Direct political interference proved unsuccessful and even undesired by Western powers: Although some were involved in Suez military operations and faced similar political situations in their colonies (e.g., France in Algeria and Britain in Cyprus), others who considered nonalignment “immoral” were more reluctant to help a neutral country.<sup>28</sup> U.S. President Dwight D. Eisenhower also considered UN military options in Hungary to be problematic.<sup>29</sup>

Despite the arguments raised at the UN in favor of substantive action, the “Hungarian question,” sometimes called the “Problem of Hungary,” remained on the UN agenda for six years. The eventual answer arrived in the form of a special committee and the written reports and data it produced. The choice of the phrases used in referring to the Hungarian issue—“Hungarian question” and “Problem of Hungary”—evinces the ambiguous nature of the UN’s

26. See selected documents concerning the activity of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees in Csaba Békés and Gusztáv Kecskés, eds., *A forradalom és a magyar kérdés az ENSZ-ben, 1956–1963* (Budapest: Magyar ENSZ Társaság, 2006), pp. 51–117.

27. Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs Philippe de Seynes (1910–2003) arrived in Budapest on 4 January 1957 for a three-day visit, along with Arthur Ewing (European Economic Committee), Pierre Sinaré (UN Food and Agriculture Organization), and Willi Meyer (International Committee for the Red Cross). De Seynes also met with Kádár and other senior Hungarian politicians. However, FM reports emphasized that “he wanted to obtain detailed information about our economic situation” (clearly implying espionage). See “Sebes István külügyminiszter-helyettes feljegyzése,” 7 October 1957, in NAH, Papers of the Hungarian Socialist Workers Party (HSWP) Foreign Department (MSZMP KB Külügyi Osztály), 288 f. 32-1957-7. ő.e.

28. This view was shared by U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Henry Cabot Lodge (1902–1985): “nonalignment was somehow immoral, a kind of neutrality between good (‘The Free World’) and evil (Communism).” See S. H. Finger, *Your Man at the UN* (New York: New York University Press, 1980), p. 79.

29. Military analysts soon understood that the United States was unable to help Hungary, and U.S. politicians backed away from any suggestion that they would. President Eisenhower’s declaration that the United States would take no part in the conflict soon reached Moscow, as recalled by U.S. Ambassador Charles E. Bohlen in his memoirs, *Witness to History* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1973). See also Csaba Békés, “Az Egyesült Államok és a magyar semlegesség 1956-ban,” in János Bak et al., *Évkönyve* (Budapest: 1956-os Intézet, 1994), pp. 165–178. The leadership of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) was even more careful not to exhibit any preparations for military actions. See Gusztáv Kecskés, “A NATO és az 1956-os magyar forradalom,” in Béla Király and Lee W. Congdon, eds., *A magyar forradalom eszméi* (Budapest: Atlanti Kutató és Kiadó Társulat-Alapítvány, 2001).

approach. As my perusal of recently declassified archival documents suggests, UN efforts to aid Hungary sometimes caused more harm than good.<sup>30</sup>

Following the defeat of the revolution, Kádár's government initiated what was called the "Consolidation."<sup>31</sup> This phase included what many Hungarians later referred to as the "Reprisal"—a period when the government focused on punishing and making examples of participants in the revolution as well as those who continued to resist the government's efforts afterward. Just as the United Nations in New York had based its discourse on documents and recollections from the revolution, the Kádarian "Reprisal" in Budapest drew from the same body of materials. Given the ineffectual bureaucratic proceedings and hollow pledges to keep the Hungarian issue on the UN agenda, such fundamental indifference appears to have resulted in the establishment of indirect "cooperation" between the international organization and Kádár's government. The path was subsequently cleared for Kádár to impose forceful internal pacification upon the population. Presumably, this outcome was unintentional. At first disappointed by the UN, Hungarians who supported the revolution soon felt abandoned and later neglected amid mass arrests, lengthy prison sentences for many, and some 230 executions.<sup>32</sup>

## Hopes in the UN

After the League of Nations failed to prevent World War II and catastrophic suffering ensued, the UN was founded on a basic principle of hope. Hungary

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30. Recently declassified documents reveal the work of Hungarian intelligence operatives in the United States, particularly their efforts at the United Nations. See the "Operatív levelezés," in ÁBTL, 3.2.6. OL-8-011/VIII; and "Levelezési dosszié," in ÁBTL, 3.2.6. OL-8-011/XII. Many relevant UN documents have become available in the Héderváry Collection at the OSA. Originally deposited at the Hoover Institution, they were later moved to the Hungarian NSL MC, Héderváry Klára iratanyaga, Fond 523. Several documents from the HSWP and the Hungarian FM were also declassified at the NAH in Budapest.

31. Kádár (1912–1989), a Communist politician and party member since 1931, was arrested and imprisoned both before World War II and during the Stalin era. He had also held high party positions and was minister of interior from August 1948 to June 1950. Kádár first joined the 1956 revolution and became a member of the Nagy government. Then, on 1 November 1956, he left the Parliament for the Soviet embassy and was transported to Moscow. After returning on 4 November 1956, he suppressed the same revolution in which he had participated.

32. Four are known to have been specifically executed for charges including "espionage" and "intelligence activity for Western powers." They are László Lukács, Alajos Czermann, Ákos Tumbász, and—in an independent instance—Valéria Friedl (also known as Mrs. József Angyal). However, the exact number is difficult to determine because of the types of charges the authorities brought against citizens. Establishing the number of those sentenced to prison terms is also difficult because the "evidence" was often manipulated and concealed. Broad, "catch-all" charges were used instead. On the "Reprisal," see András B. Hegedűs, ed., *1956 Kézikönyve*, Vol. III, *Megtörtölt és emlékezés* (Budapest: 1956-os Intézet, 1996).

and other countries that had fought on the “wrong side” of World War II were rejected as founding members, and subsequent requests to join were frozen as a result of the Cold War conflict.<sup>33</sup> Nonetheless, after Iosif Stalin’s death and the détente of the mid-1950s, the reduction of international tensions resulted in the approval of Hungary’s membership as part of a Cold War trade-off. Sixteen new members were approved on 14 December 1955, including those promoted by the West (Austria, Ireland, Italy, Portugal, and Spain) as well as the East (Albania, Bulgaria, Hungary, and Romania).

Recent archival revelations suggest that Hungary’s accession to the UN was not based solely on foreign policy considerations. The strategies developed by the Hungarian intelligence services were also a critical factor.<sup>34</sup> Correspondence between the Hungarian intelligence agency in Budapest and the Hungarian embassy’s *rezidentura* in Washington, DC, reveal the process of Hungary’s preparations to become a UN member. These documents detail all stages of the intelligence services’ participation, from the first trips to New York and the contacting of “fraternal countries” for advice about the plans made to obtain advantageous positions inside the international organization. Hidden or covert contacts had already been established with expatriate Hungarians working for the UN.<sup>35</sup> Several other people had been identified as potential “targets” for the intelligence agents to recruit or coerce into providing useful or sensitive information. Possible sources included a young Hungarian-speaking woman employed at the UN gift center; a refugee Hungarian barrister who had already worked for several years in the UN Secretariat; and Claire

33. Hungary first applied for UN membership on 26 April 1947 and then again in 1948. On 2 September 1952, the USSR proposed Hungary’s admission to the UN but was rejected by the Security Council. Hungary’s first UN observer, Károly Szarka (1923–2005), attended the 11th General Assembly in September 1954 and was also present in 1955.

34. See the secret correspondence between Budapest and the Washington *rezidentura* (intelligence center), 14 April 1954 to 20 August 1956, in ÁBTL, 3.2.6. OL-8-011/VIII and 3.2.6. OL-8-011/XII. The documents suggest that intelligence officers often ranked above diplomats in the bureaucratic hierarchy. A letter from 2 February 1956 refers to the recalling of ambassador because “our center had its share in the ordering home of the ambassador.” Regarding the Foreign Ministry’s preparations for UN membership, see the correspondence between Kós (ambassador of Hungary to Washington) and Endre Sik (deputy minister of foreign affairs), in NAH, XIX-J-1-u, Box 66, “Külgymisztériumi vezetők iratai” Folder.

35. See Letter “A” 1, 20 January 1956, in ÁBTL, 3.2.6. OL-8-011/VIII, which refers to a conversation involving agent “Arany” and Hungarian-born UN employee “Bertalan” (codename). Imre Kelen (1896–1978), a Hungarian-born cartoonist and later head of the UN Television Service, was also a target for the intelligence operations (under the codename “Környei”). He was regularly contacted in later efforts to recruit him (codename “Zordid”). See relevant documents in ÁBTL, KT-451-62 and K-770/T. A letter dated 20 June 1956 refers to Israeli journalist “Weisel” (misspelling of Elie Wiesel, the 1986 Nobel Peace Prize winner and a writer of Hungarian origin). Wiesel was identified as a possible source for obtaining information in a “dark manner” (without the knowledge of the informer).

de Héderváry, a Hungarian-born junior employee in the Secretariat with Belgian citizenship and a Harvard University degree (she was described by the agent as “attractive and smart”).<sup>36</sup> In most cases, the potential source would have had little reason to imagine that the curious stranger who approached them was a Hungarian intelligence agent.

Detailed plans were developed, discussed, modified, approved, and finally forwarded to and accepted by Hungary’s foreign intelligence center. The plans included contact information and contact methods, focusing on potentially persuading the sources to collaborate. In some cases, benefits were offered; in others, blackmail was used. Throughout this process, the agents gained an internal familiarity with the international organization as they carefully registered escape routes, the distribution and movements of official documents, profiles of individual diplomats, and other potentially useful information.

The prospective advantages for the intelligence services afforded by Hungary’s UN membership were analyzed in several classified documents.<sup>37</sup> For instance, whereas the United States typically applied travel restrictions on diplomats from Communist states (limiting their movements outside

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36. For the gift center employee, see letter from 24 January 1956 in ÁBTL, 3.2.6. OL-8-011/VIII. She was given the codename “Csikós.” She could speak six languages, and the Hungarians planned to involve her as a “contacting agent.” They believed she could serve as a source for “security measures” in the building and for information about the “internal UN police.” She was approached several times until she apparently became worried. Unable to get rid of the Hungarian “diplomats,” she left her workplace at the UN, leaving no contact address. The barrister was most likely László Hátori (1911–1984), who had begun working for the UN on 1 October 1947. Because Hátori had retained his Hungarian citizenship, the Hungarian authorities had some power over him; he was part of the Hungarian “quota.” He later played a critical role in the UN special committee looking into the Hungarian Revolution. Klára Héderváry (b. 1921) left Hungary in the 1930s, first heading for Belgium (as Claire de Héderváry), then to the United States (as Claire Héderváry). See the report on Héderváry, 18 June 1955, in ÁBTL, 3.2.6. OL-8-011/XII. For several years she was monitored, and her actions were reported in an “operative” manner. The information obtained by agent “Roger” revealed her role in the post-1956 UN activity. “Actions” were taken to recruit her, first under the codename “Titkár” (Secretary), then “Alary.” See “Kutató dosszié” in ÁBTL, 3.2.6. K-482. According to the archives in Budapest, these attempts did not succeed.

37. See the correspondence folders in ÁBTL, 3.2.6. OL-8-011/VIII and XII, especially the letters of 16 December 1956, which discuss the establishment of the New York *rezidentúra*. In an earlier letter (20 September 1954), the FM was harshly criticized by the intelligence service for its “mistake” of failing to initiate intelligence activity in New York when the opportunity presented itself. The correspondence folders are presumably only the tip of the iceberg. These exchanges were usually filed into the operational folders and object folders, depending on the character and the qualities of the plan shaped or executed. However, letters and documents are not yet available for the period after September 1956. (It is worth noting that FM officers were aware that they were controlled by the secret service. For example, János Péter, deputy foreign minister, sent a handwritten letter to his boss, Andre Sik, on 23 November 1958, avoiding the private channel by producing the letter with no dictation. See NAH, XIX-J-1-u, Box 66, “Külgyminisztériumi vezetők iratai” Folder. Even Frigyes Pujá, the Hungarian ambassador in Vienna, typed his own letters when he wished to forward sensitive messages to the FM. See, for example, “Pujá Frigyes levele Szarka Károlyhoz és Sik Endréhez,” 24 August 1958, in NAH, XIX-J-1-j, Box 82.

Washington, DC), the agents were free to move in New York and beyond. Furthermore, a New York base for the intelligence services offered critical proximity to the UN and its policymaking, cultural, and economic activities. Such advantages—in addition to the prospect of obtaining prominent positions in various UN committees and offices and also on the UN Secretariat—were among the benefits of “build[ing] a *rezidentura* within Hungary’s permanent delegation to the UN.”<sup>38</sup> Disadvantages reported by the agents included a lack of diplomatic immunity (unlike those with diplomatic passports, Secretariat employees could be arrested), as well as issues related to intelligence personnel. For instance, few had skills to offer to the UN as international civil servants, and most lacked English-language fluency. Moreover, the costs were considered significant, and even relatively minor expenses in the budget were subject to review in Budapest.<sup>39</sup>

Nonetheless, archival documents suggest that in addition to the foreign policy arguments, Hungarian leaders found the case for the intelligence services convincing. The task of creating the Hungarian UN mission was assigned to the intelligence agents who had temporarily transferred from Washington. They were to manage the nascent enterprise until the arrival of their colleagues from Budapest.<sup>40</sup> The agents were responsible for finding offices and apartments for the employees, organizing the logistics of future work, administering all relevant necessities, and providing security guidelines for all activity. The documents reveal that the motivations of Hungary’s UN mission deviated significantly from the ideals on which the UN was based. They would stray even further from the new role the UN came to serve under the direction of Hammarskjöld.

When Hungary was finally admitted to the “family of nations” in 1955, the formal vote of acceptance was preceded by a long, turbulent quarrel

38. See the letter of 24 January 1956 in ÁBTL, 3.2.6. OL-8-011/VIII, regarding the assignment of an agent to the Hungarian permanent mission. On 22 July 1956, “filling in the apparatus by the UN” (Secretariat, different commissions, etc.) was also proposed. See *ibid.* Edit Gömöri was dispatched to New York as an international employee of the Secretariat while working for the intelligence services under the codename “Sásdi.” See ÁBTL, 3.1.9. V-146247 MT-14/1, “Vizsgálati dosszié” Folder. Another Hungarian woman worked for the UN library under the codename “Petit” and allegedly had great potential for the intelligence service as a “contact agent.” Gömöri was assigned the task of enlisting her.

39. The budgeting of the *rezidentura* was an important part of the correspondence. See the report from 11 April 1956 in ÁBTL, 3.2.6. OL-8-011/VIII, spanning 16 December to 31 March, with reference to the spending of \$3,223.

40. See “Javaslat, Tatár Istvántól,” 16 February 1955, in ÁBTL, 3.2.6. OL-8-011/XII. Names and identities of agents are uncertain, but in the summer of 1957 Pál Rácz was declared *persona non grata* by the U.S. authorities. See the documentation of 25 June 1957, in NAH, XIV-J-1-j, Box 209. Documents in the ÁBTL reveal that Pál Rácz was also a high ranking ÁVH officer.

between the superpowers. The antagonistic bargaining nearly terminated the admission process for Hungary and even threatened to delay the UN's much-anticipated decision for several other candidates. When political paralysis seemed to have overtaken the assembly hall, the Hungarian intelligence agent in charge of the UN preparations (codename "Comrade János Arany") grew tired and exited the building. When a compromise was suddenly struck some hours later, no Hungarians remained to witness the historic moment.<sup>41</sup>

In Hungary, the long-anticipated attainment of UN membership was of such great importance that it further contributed to the ferment of social and political life that sparked the revolution. Membership symbolized Hungary's recovery of autonomy—albeit limited—in international matters. Moreover, it occurred not long after neighboring Austria had won a guarantee of neutrality and independence after the Soviet Union withdrew its troops in October 1955. Hungarians thus hoped the Soviet Army might leave their country, too. All of this is crucial to understanding that for the revolutionary participants the demands of the 1956 revolution, no matter how dubious they may seem to later observers, could have appeared within reach.

Hopeful illusions about the UN had only partly diminished during the critical days of the 1956 revolution. The Soviet veto in the Security Council prevented any kind of urgent action by the Council, and the tactics pursued in response by the Western powers were not always productive.<sup>42</sup> When the Soviet Army seized strategic posts in Budapest and elsewhere in Hungary on 4 November, the UN General Assembly had been holding an emergency session and thus was in no position to deter the Soviet crackdown. On the same day, the UN voted to create an Emergency Force to intervene in the Suez conflict. The task was enormous. Because Hammarskjöld and his colleagues were worried about the effect his absence from Security Council meetings on 3 and 4 November might have, he was represented by one of his key deputies, the Yugoslav exile Dragoslav Protitch.<sup>43</sup> Protitch, then the UN Under

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41. He had to write a so-called justification report to explain his absence. See the letter of 16 December 1955, in *ÁBTL*, 3.2.6. OL-8-011/VIII.

42. Because the Soviet Union exercised its veto in the UN Security Council, "uniting for peace" was used as a procedural solution to move the issue to the General Assembly agenda, where no veto was possible. The relevant documents of the time suggest the Western powers had not decided on a course of action in Hungary during the critical days. The British and French were afraid to set any "precedent" in interfering within the internal matters of a country. Meanwhile, the United States was worried both about the personality of Nagy and about the oft-contradictory information being received from Hungary. Thus, even though the Hungarian question was raised several times during the October events and in early November (before the second Soviet invasion of 4 November 1956), resolutions were not proposed during the most crucial days.

43. Protitch (1902–1974) was a Yugoslav diplomat with a somewhat murky past, as explained by one of his ex-colleagues in a documentary movie. See the interview of Claire de Héderváry, NSL Collection

Secretary-General of Political and Security Councils Affairs, stayed silent throughout both meetings.

Hammarskjöld's absence might be explained by the apparent bias of some of the information he received from the Secretariat staff. Although the international press provided extensive coverage of the events in Hungary, the analysis Protitch sent to Hammarskjöld on 2 November 1956 appeared to echo and sympathize with some of the Soviet positions.<sup>44</sup> This report referred to the weakness of Nagy and his inability to handle the situation in light of the "presence of seemingly irreconcilable elements in the emerging political groupings." The text also described the central government as unstable and events as chaotic. Furthermore, the short summary underscored the notion that the revolt had eliminated Mátyás Rákosi's efforts to provide the necessary conditions for dynamic progress.<sup>45</sup> The text criticized Nagy for symbolizing the "inability of present political leadership to formulate a realistic policy," depicting his renunciation of the Warsaw Pact as proof of his failure to understand the Soviet Union's renewed policies. According to the analysis, where the "state of emotional nationalism" overwhelmed the streets of Hungary, the "state police reinforced by . . . loyal elements of the party" served as the defenders of legal order, preventing the situation from getting "out of hand." Finally, the report mentioned the involvement of "fascistic elements." This last point helps to identify the source of the report, insofar as only Soviet propaganda described the revolutionaries (many of them Communists, including Nagy) as fascists.<sup>46</sup>

of Historical Interviews, unedited footage of the Bang-Jensen documentary, discs 14–15. Protitch was involved in political activities during World War II (when Croatia was a Nazi ally). He later served in London, then at the United Nations. In Communist Yugoslavia, he was offered a position at the Foreign Ministry while visiting Belgrade, meeting with Tito in 1955. Protitch declined the offer. When I contacted Protitch's widow for access to relevant research documents, she replied that—in accordance with his instructions—all documents had been burned following his death. See the private letter sent to the author, n.d. in NSL Manuscript Collection (MC), Bang-Jensen Archive (BJA), Fond 413, Box 3. The Senate report dealing with the "Bang-Jensen case" refers to him as a "Total opportunist." See U.S. Congress, Senate, Committee on the Judiciary, *The Bang-Jensen Case*, 87th Cong., 1st Sess., 1961, p. 8. See also Cable from Belgrade, n.d., in National Archive and Records Administration (NARA), 315/7-1856.

44. "Note on Recent Political Developments," 2 November 1956, in United Nations Archive (UNA), S-0188.

45. Rákosi (1892–1971) was the Communist dictator of Hungary until mid-1956.

46. Some months later, Australian Ambassador Keith Charles Owen Shann complained about the "Moscow agents crawling all over the Secretariat," creating various kinds of controversies for their benefit. In this case, their interference concerned the Report of the UN Special Committee on the Problem of Hungary. See "Tájékoztató jelentés Hammarskjöld magyarországi utazása és az ENSZ Ötös Bizottságával kapcsolatban a budapesti francia követség 1957: Január 1 és szeptember 15 közötti levelezése alapján," 4 January 1958, in ÁBTL, BM II/2.

Several weeks later, in a manner that echoed Soviet descriptions of those trying to overturn the “gains” from the Communist revolution, another summary submitted to the Secretary General by the UN Secretariat on 10 December 1956 referred to the events in Hungary as being conducted by “counter-revolutionary forces.” The text quoted Kádár’s speech at length, justifying his rationale for requesting Soviet “help” when the Soviet Army “had been called in by [Kádár’s] government” and criticizing the Hungarian workers’ councils for pressing the “unhappy Prime Minister [Nagy] with demands of the most varied and contradictory character.” Furthermore, the document described the country’s condition prior to the Soviet invasion as being out of control. In assessing the establishment of the Kádár government, the report claimed, “the situation seem[ed] hardly to have permitted adherence to the niceties of constitutional procedures.” Nonetheless, the Presidential Council acknowledged the Kádár government on 9 November 1956, stating that the “defect . . . has been remedied.”<sup>47</sup>

Declassified records further reveal a thin file entitled “Message from Rebel Forces.” Addressed to the Secretary General, the top of the archived file bears a small, clearly written note bearing the words: “H [Hammarskjöld] does not seem to have been interested in this either.”<sup>48</sup> Hammarskjöld did not meet with Kéthly or acknowledge her as the representative of Nagy’s government straight away. However, when Imre Horváth, foreign minister of the Soviet-installed Kádár government, arrived in New York on 10 November, the UN recognized and effectively legitimized his government by allowing him to address the General Assembly.<sup>49</sup> Meanwhile, the representative of the Revolutionary Government found a seat only in the gallery. Events took an even stranger turn on 10 December 1956 when the Hungarian delegation “walked out” of the General Assembly Hall in protest at UN interference in the

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47. “Note on the Course of the Insurrection,” 10 December 1956, in Nicholas Murray Butler Library, Columbia University (BLCU) Cordier Papers, UN Archive (UNA), DAG 1.1.1.3 Protitch Files.

48. “Message from Rebel Forces,” 4–15 November 1956, in BLCU Cordier Papers, UNA, DAG 1.1.1.3.

49. The importance of the UN to Kádár’s government was made obvious by its representative’s quick arrival in New York just six days after the Soviet invasion (4 November 1956). Flights to New York were available from Prague. Soviet officials met the Hungarian delegation at the New York airport. See the report from 10 November 1956, in NAH, XIX-J-1-k 69, 4j. Because Imre Nagy’s government did not resign, the question of legitimization was of crucial importance. See “Feljegyzés az ENSZ-tagság jogi kérdéseivel kapcsolatban,” n.d., in NAH, XIX J-1-J-j, Box 81. Several countries were reluctant to recognize the new Kádár government, but none broke off diplomatic relations with Hungary. At the UN, however, Hungarian government documents were soon circulated under UN headings. Péter Mód, Hungarian representative to the UN, proudly relayed this detail to Budapest on 24 January 1957. See Mód’s report in “A New York-i főkonzulátus iartai” Folder, in NAH, XIX-J-24-a, Box 1.

internal affairs of the country.<sup>50</sup> After Péter Mód, the Kádár government's official UN representative, met with Andrew Cordier on 15 January 1957, Mód reported to Budapest that the Under-Secretary-General had been "very polite." Mód also mentioned Protitch's recommendation that the Hungarian government resume its attendance at General Assembly meetings.<sup>51</sup>

Popular expectations that the UN Secretary General would promptly travel to Hungary and confront those in power with the principles of the UN hardly proved realistic. Yet the anticipation that Hammarskjöld would fly to Budapest on a white plane—or, if arrival by air were blocked, arrive by boat via the Danube—survived as folklore in Hungarian minds.<sup>52</sup> When Hammarskjöld finally indicated a desire to visit Budapest, the Kádár government responded that it would be unable to "guarantee his safety," as his presence could encourage "counterrevolutionaries" to rise again.<sup>53</sup> Hammarskjöld, too,

50. The decision to leave the session was controversial even among Hungarian political leaders. Departing was deemed partly "beneficial" because the issue of the Hungarian mandate was still pending. However, the official representatives could not participate in the debates either. Weekly meetings were thus scheduled with "fraternal countries" representing Hungary, and press conferences were often held. The matter was further debated when the SpecCom hearings began and representatives of the revolution (Kéthly, Király, and József Kővágó) arrived at the UN, although they had not yet appeared in the General Assembly Hall. See NAH, XIX-J-1-n, Box 26, "Külgügyminisztériumi vezetők iratai" Folder.

51. See Mód's report of 28 January 1957, in NAH, XIX-J-1-J-j, Box 209. Mód (1911–1996) was president of the revolutionary council of the FM during the revolution. His sudden turn to the Kádár government is still a mystery. Mód, the victim of a show trial, had spent years in prison in the early 1950s and worked for Hungarian intelligence at the Hungarian embassy in Paris. There, he reported about his boss, Count Mihály Károlyi, formerly the first president of the Hungarian Republic (1918–1919).

52. Endre Marton, *The Forbidden Sky* (Boston: Little Brown, 1971), p. 293. The Danube suggestion was raised in a letter to Cordier from London, in UNA, DAG 1.1.1.3, Box 184. The Communists were also concerned about the visit in November. A report from a meeting of the deputy minister of interior shows that they believed it might happen "even without prior notice." They feared that this "provocation" could even lead to UN military involvement. See the documents of 10 April 1957, in NAH, XIX-B-1-y, Box 1, "Miniszterhelyettesi értekezlet" Folder.

53. The letter from Foreign Minister Imre Horváth to Hammarskjöld, 27 November 1956, in UNA S/0442-0138, states, "The Hungarian delegation is under the impression that its Government is seriously considering the question of your visit." Budapest Radio even announced the date of the visit as 8 December 1956 but soon corrected it to be for an "undecided date." The background negotiations were also documented by the Indian chargé d'affaires, A. Rahman, in his book *Magyarország 1956–1959* (Budapest: Hamvas Intézet, 2006). See, however, the cable of Leslie Fry, British Ambassador in Budapest, to the London Foreign Office (FO), 8 January 1957, in The National Archives of the United Kingdom (TNAUK), FO 371/128666. Fry writes: "The Indian first secretary has disclosed that de Seynes told him that the United Nations' Secretary-General never wished to come here in December and readily accepted the Hungarian Foreign Minister's reasons why the visit should be deferred." The Hungarian intelligence service's work also revealed that the French UN mission had a similar impression: "The Secretary General does not profit from the possibility to visit Hungary . . . seems to forget about the resolutions concerning Hungary . . . when the regime uses legal means and police action for retaliation, contravening human rights." See the report of 4 January 1958, in ÁBTTL, BM II/2. The documents concerning the Hungarian tactics are in NAH, MSZMP-iratok, 228.f 5/2. Kádár said, "The Secretary-General announced his visit and we just ignored it."

was concerned about the possible trip. For instance, in a letter to Cordier, he wrote, “I fail to see how it could help the Hungarians, but it will harm the office of the Secretary-General, me personally.”<sup>54</sup>

## The Risks of a Historical Narrative

Reminiscences in a recently published biography describe the Secretary General as a talented pragmatist who generally succeeded in fields where success was possible.<sup>55</sup> In that regard, the Hungarian crisis was not promising. Nonetheless, at the UN Secretariat, Hammarskjöld bore responsibility for dealing with a situation that was deteriorating from day to day. Rather than directly address the crisis, Hammarskjöld decided to engage in an administrative manner. When the Kádár government refused him access to Hungary, the Secretary General appointed a committee to observe and report on events taking place inside Hungary. Formed on 16 November 1956, the committee consisted of three internationally renowned experts from countries not directly involved in the conflict.<sup>56</sup> The Hungarian authorities declared the presence of the experts in Hungary undesirable, arguing that the committee’s presence contradicted the UN Charter.<sup>57</sup> Diplomats from India could and did enter Hungary at that time, however, bearing witness to the general strike in factories, hearing of pockets of resistance in Budapest and the countryside, observing the brutality of the Soviet enforcement of order, and witnessing the mass exodus of refugees to the West. Nonetheless, they failed to persuade Kádár to admit the three UN observers.<sup>58</sup>

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54. “Message from rebel forces,” n.d., in BLCU Cordier Papers, UNA, DAG 1.1.1.3; and Hammarskjöld’s cable from Cairo, in BLCU Cordier Papers, UNA DAG 1.1.1.3. Box 15.

55. Roger Lipsey, *Hammarskjöld: A Life* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2013).

56. The members were Alberto Lleras Camargo (Columbia), Oscar Gundersen (Norway), and Arthur Lall (India).

57. Despite being refused entry to Hungary, Gundersen was issued a visa. Lleras left for Vienna with intended onward travel to Budapest. See United States Mission to the United Nations (USUN), cable, 11 November 1956, in NARA, 764.00/11-1156; and USUN, cable, 16 November 1956, in NARA, 310.5/11-1156.

58. As A. Rahman, the first secretary of the Indian embassy in Budapest, reveals in his memoirs, the Indian ambassador to Prague, Khosla, arrived and met with Kádár to convince him to allow UN observers. Then Soedarsono, the Indonesian ambassador to Belgrade, came for the same reason. The next visitor was K. P. S. Menon, the Indian ambassador to Moscow—famed for possessing Soviet sympathies. Although Kádár argued that his government’s position would be undermined by such a visit, the ambassadors’ arguments stated that acceptance of the observers would imply UN acknowledgment of the Kádár government. Menon met with the head of the workers’ councils, Sándor Rácz, and attended the women’s demonstration in Budapest. See Rahman, *Magyarország 1956–1959*, pp. 51–57. India’s

The most sensitive ongoing issue was the mass deportation of Hungarians to the USSR—a clear infringement of international law and a violation of the UN Charter. When the head of the U.S. mission to the UN, Henry Cabot Lodge, raised the matter with Under-Secretary-General Cordier, the latter replied that Lodge should contact the Hungarian government.<sup>59</sup> By the time the Hungarian authorities vehemently and repeatedly rejected the “unfounded propaganda accusations,” trainloads of Hungarians of various ages (including minors) had already been shipped to the USSR.<sup>60</sup>

As the Indian diplomat Arthur Lall revealed to concerned U.S. diplomats, the committee did little over the next several days aside from make preparations for visa applications and attempt to obtain information about the situation in Hungary.<sup>61</sup> Observers were not admitted to any of the countries bordering Hungary with the exception of Austria. About two weeks later, the committee resigned and returned its mandate, indicating that it was impossible for them to complete their mission. On 5 January 1957, Hammarskjöld concluded that the creation of a larger and more formalized group was necessary.

General Assembly Resolution 1132 (XI) of 10 January 1957 established a Special Committee composed of senior diplomats from five UN member-states “to investigate and to establish and maintain direct observation in Hungary and elsewhere, taking testimony, collecting evidence and receiving information, as appropriate, in order to report its findings to the General Assembly at the eleventh session, and thereafter from time to time prepare additional reports for the information of the Member States and the General

role was crucial. As Hollai stated during his 1957 meeting with the UN department of the Hungarian FM in Budapest, “[India] is followed by the whole Third World.” See the documents in NAH, XIX-J-24-a, Box 1, “A New York-i főkonzulátus iratai” Folder. On India’s policy, see also the selected documents from the archive of the FM of India in Géza Bethlenfalvy, ed., *India és a magyar forradalom: Dokumentumok az Indiai Köztársaság Külügyminisztériumának archívumából* (Budapest: Argumentum, 2006).

59. Cable, Lodge to Washington, n.d., in NARA 764.00/11-1456.

60. Party leaders knew about the deportations, as revealed in the documents of the party in NAH, MSZMP-iratok, 288.f. 5/2. Soviet State Security General Ivan Serov also later admitted that 4,000–5,000 Hungarian revolutionaries had been deported. See Csaba Békés and Gusztáv Kecskés, “A forradalom és a magyar kérdés az ENSZ-ben, 1956–1963,” in János Rainer and Vyacheslav Sereida, eds., *Hiányzó lapok 1956 történetéből* (Budapest: Móra, 1993), p. 145. See also Éva Gál et al., eds., *Jelcin dosszié* (Budapest: Századvég-1956-os Intézet, 1993), p. 132. Even when U.S. Senator Allen J. Ellender visited Kádár and specifically asked about the matter, Kádár denied the deportations. The report of this meeting on 30 October 1957 is located in NAH, XIX-J-29-o.

61. “Lall also revealed that the Secretary-General’s Committee of Investigation had not done anything yet.” See Cable, US UN Mission to the State Department, 26 November 1956, in NARA 310.5/11-2656.

Assembly.”<sup>62</sup> This change was of major significance. No longer a crisis for immediate resolution, the situation became a subject to investigate and describe. The formation of the Special Committee (SpecCom) afforded the Soviet Union and the Kádár government valuable time to continue their “Consolidation” and “Reprisal.” The preparations for SpecCom’s work, the process of the investigation, and the ensuing production of a comprehensive report were all very time-consuming, giving ample opportunity for facts to be created on the ground. As hopes in Hungary were quickly evaporating, time was indeed a crucial factor. Hungarians awaiting action from the UN were faced with the choice either to attempt escape from Hungary (which became increasingly difficult over time) or to accept the increasingly hopeless and desperate internal situation. Archival evidence shows that the 11th General Assembly, still in session in early 1957, expected to receive the report.<sup>63</sup> Nonetheless, it was not published until June 1957 and not formally presented to the 12th General Assembly until September 1957. The Soviet and Hungarian authorities thus gained nine months to consolidate their rule in Hungary without fear of reaction from the UN General Assembly.<sup>64</sup> Even if the General Assembly had received the report earlier, a General Assembly resolution without teeth would have exerted little pressure on the Hungarian and Soviet repressive forces. The Kádár government allowed UN relief efforts to move ahead unimpeded because these benefited not only ordinary people but the government. Thus, although Hungarian UN membership remained intact, the UN accreditation committee’s suspension of Hungary’s credentials remained in effect for six years.<sup>65</sup> During that time, however, Communist Hungarian diplomats could and did use all UN facilities—including the podium of the

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62. UN Resolution 1132 (XI), 10 January 1957, A/3485. The members of the Special Committee on the Problem of Hungary were Alsing Andersen (Danish member of Parliament, elected as chair of the SpecCom), Shann (Australian ambassador to the Philippines, elected as rapporteur of the SpecCom), and three ambassadors to the United Nations: R. S. S. Gunewardene (Ceylon), Mongi Slim (Tunisia), and Enrique Rodríguez Fabregat (Uruguay).

63. See Sanford Schwartz to William Jordan, 16 January 1957, in Héderváry Collection, OSA, 1-1-1. This timing was also known to the Hungarian UN mission. See the report of 26 January 1957 in NAH, XIX-J-24-a, Box 1, “A New York-i főkonzulátus iاراتai” Folder.

64. “The delay is beneficial for us for the Consolidation,” M6d reported from New York. First, it seemed that in April the UN General Assembly might discuss the Hungarian question. However, on 4 April 1957, the Secretary General argued at a press conference that the issue did not need to be raised at that time. See the transcript in NAH, XIX-J-24-a, Box 1, “A New York-i főkonzulátus iاراتai” Folder.

65. Hungary was not expelled. However, when Zhou Enlai visited Hungary on 16 January 1957, he mused, “how well we shall be outside together.” Zhou’s report is preserved in NAH, XIX-J-1-j, Box 1. On 12 February 1957, the UN Credentials Committee suspended the credentials of the Hungarian UN delegation. Several documents from the Hungarian FM address the “unlawfulness” of this action. The issue was complicated and was thoroughly analyzed by a legal team in Hungary. The

UN Assembly Hall—to promote their legitimacy. Even receptions given by the Hungarian UN mission, boycotted by most democratic countries, were regularly attended by top UN officials.<sup>66</sup>

Other highly controversial issues were related to the political make-up of the SpecCom. For instance, the chair of the five-member committee was Alsing Andersen, a veteran Danish Social Democrat. Andersen had demonstrated great sympathy for the Hungarian revolution and the plight of the Hungarian people, but his nomination offered the Hungarian and Soviet authorities an easy (if unfair) reason to attack the SpecCom. Andersen, who had been Denmark's defense minister during Germany's invasion, ostensibly bore some responsibility for the government's initial decision to cooperate with the German forces in return for peaceful occupation. Furthermore, during the occupation, Andersen had been openly critical of the Danish resistance movement and was investigated after the liberation of Denmark. Although he was cleared by a Danish parliamentary committee, he was temporarily moved out of Copenhagen to work with the UN in New York. It was therefore both unfair to Andersen and highly questionable whether he should have been chosen to head a UN entity investigating the Soviet repression of what the SpecCom later described as "a spontaneous uprising" suppressed by the Soviet Army. Andersen's selection as a member of the SpecCom is even more intriguing insofar as Hammarskjöld had, in Copenhagen, "complained privately of Andersen's

experts argued that the accreditation depended exclusively on the validity of the letter signed by the Presidential Council of Hungary, which had been in effect since 1953. See in NAH, XIX-J-1-n, Box 53d, "Külgügyi miniszterirumi vezetők iratai" Folder. The fear of being kept out of the UN again arose in 1958 (after the execution of Nagy), as evinced by the documents of the HSWP, in NAH, 288f. 32/1958/11 ö.e, "MSZMP KB Külgügyi Osztály iratai" Folder. The Emergency Committee for UN Action on Hungary demanded rejection of the mandate, as did some UN member-states. Relevant documents are preserved in the Bang-Jensen Archive, NSL MC BJA, Fond 413 2.1, Box 36. See also NAH, XIX-J-1-k, Box 55, "Dokumentumok Magyarország ENSZ-mandátumával kapcsolatosan" Folder, for background and interpretation by the Hungarian FM. The UN Secretariat collected membership dues from the Hungarian UN mission as early as February 1957. (A letter to the Budapest FM on 26 February 1957 refers to the collection of dues.) Additionally, the Hungarian UN mission on 11 March 1957 recommended to the UN head of personnel a Hungarian candidate (László Kerényi) for consideration as a member of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs. The proposal is located in NAH, XIX-J-24-b, Box 4, "New York 1936–1959" Folder. The issue of the mandate was not closed until 24 June 1963. The report is located in NAH, XIX-J-1-j. The decision was also debated by members of the Hungarian refugee community. See the arguments of László Varga (1910–2003), a lawyer and politician who left Hungary in 1948 and became instrumental in the refugee movement. His summary about the rejection of the Hungarian mandate on 22 March 1962 was kept in the files of the Hungarian secret services, which gave him the codename "Mickey B." See the materials in ÁBTL, K-1799/1.

66. As the Hungarian UN mission proudly reported to Budapest, its reception on 14 October 1957 (close to the first anniversary of the revolution) was attended by Hammarskjöld himself. See the report of 14 October 1957, in NAH, XIX-J-1-j, Box 209.

lack of political judgment and backbone.”<sup>67</sup> Later, the British ambassador to the UN, Pierson Dixon, reported confidentially to London that the Secretary General had admitted that Andersen was “never a strong character.”<sup>68</sup>

An article published in the Hungarian Communist Party organ *Népszabadság* accused “Fascist Andersen” of attempting to whitewash the crimes of the “counterrevolution.”<sup>69</sup> Although the label was used for propaganda purposes, it was also employed to justify and legitimize the Soviet intervention. Soviet Marshal Ivan Konev, who commanded military operations in Hungary, explained in his dispatch to the Soviet divisions that their action was a response to the “rebirth of fascism” in Hungary.<sup>70</sup> Konev reminded his fellow soldiers that fascist Hungary had attacked the USSR just fifteen years earlier. The Soviet legal basis for the invasion was thus predicated upon the Paris Peace Treaty’s prohibition of fascist activity in Europe. The desire for an idealistic and pure 1956 Revolution, in addition to the generally socialistic persuasions of many leaders and participants, did not permit any kind of Nazi reminiscences or references. However, Communist logic made it easy to identify many of those participating in the revolution as “fascists.” The World War II soldiers who had fought against the Soviet Union (at a time when military service in Hungary had been compulsory), as well those who had been unjustly accused of Nazism in show trials after World War II, could be included in the category.<sup>71</sup> Furthermore, many of those who had served prison terms for committing real crimes against humanity had been released from prison when

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67. Cable, British Ambassador in Copenhagen to London, 30 December 1957, in TNAUK, FO 371/128689.

68. Cable, British UN Ambassador Dixon to London, 17 December 1957, in TNAUK, FO 371/128689.

69. On 4 August 1957, the Hungarian daily *Népszabadság* followed the line of the *Pravda* article published on 30 June 1957. The Soviet reaction on 25 June 1957 to the report (in an article title “Fascist Andersen Forged Hungarian Report”) was documented in detail by the SpecCom Secretariat (as preserved in the Héderváry Collection). The Communists declared Andersen “politically dead following the war.” On 26 August 1957, the Hungarian FM forwarded materials to the party organ (and its editor-in-chief Dezső Nemes), resulting in an “open letter” to the Secretary General of the UN from journalist István Kende concerning Andersen’s past as a “collaborat[or] with the Nazis and . . . a traitor to his homeland.” See “Választervezet az ENSZ-akciókkal kapcsolatban,” n.d., in NAH, XIX-J-1-n. In February 1957, the Budapest FM started a folder about Andersen and his “activity,” which—according to Communist logic—resulted in the imprisonment of many, the ban of the Communist Party in Denmark, and the lack of mobilization prior to and during the German invasion of Denmark in April 1940. See NAH, XIX-J-1-j.

70. The military operation called “Whirlwind” (*Vikhr* in Russian) was led by Ivan Konev, a Soviet military commander in World War II who was involved in the capture of Berlin. The Hungarian FM recycled the argument that the Soviet Union’s actions in Hungary were necessitated by the Paris Peace Treaty. See “Notes about the UN,” n.d., in NAH, XIX-J-1-k, Box 56.

71. Béla Király (1912–2009), the military commander of Budapest in 1956 and a symbol of the revolution, was an “open” witness for the SpecCom investigation. He held high positions in the

the revolutionaries set free political prisoners in 1956.<sup>72</sup> In this complicated and delicate situation, the appointment of a SpecCom member whose past could be attacked by the Soviet and Hungarian propaganda machinery—even if unjustly—provided ample opportunity in the USSR, Hungary, and the nonaligned countries to negate the legitimacy of the SpecCom’s work, while causing little disturbance in the West.

The group of diplomats forming the UN Special Committee on the Problem of Hungary were politically influential and highly experienced. However, they were representing their own countries. Three headed their country’s UN missions while also serving as their country’s ambassador in Washington, DC. Some were simultaneously assigned to other UN committees. In addition to commuting between Washington and New York, their multiple hats resulted in scheduling conflicts. Consequently, appointed SpecCom members often had to be replaced at meetings or hearings by a more junior diplomat from the same country. Not only did this practice break continuity, but the deputies lacked the experience, background knowledge, and authority of the senior diplomats who had been involved from the investigation’s inception.

The SpecCom documents, however, remain among the best sources for reconstructing the events in Budapest during and after the revolution. In a relatively short time and with limited resources, the SpecCom’s members and supporting Secretariat staff created a masterful account of the 1956 Hungarian revolution. The work was also both methodologically and practically unprecedented, requiring logistical virtuosity and political talent to reconstruct, understand, and interpret the upheavals. To the immense good fortune of historians, researchers, and custodians of past memories, a great part of the documents and transcripts on which the SpecCom report was based have survived and are now available to scholars.<sup>73</sup>

pre-1945 Hungarian army, fighting then against the USSR on the side of Germany. He was repeatedly accused of being an “out-and-out fascist,” even though he later defected to the Soviet forces and also held high positions in the Communist Hungarian army. When Király was arrested and sentenced based on fabricated accusations in 1951, he was again declared a Nazi. He was condemned to death but not executed. After he left the country in 1956, he was again branded a “war criminal.” See the speech to be given by Péter Mód at the UN General Assembly, 23 June 1957, in NAH, XIX-J-20-a.

72. Based on the data provided by the Ministry of Interior to the FM, 3,524 political prisoners were freed during the revolution, many of whom had been sentenced to prison as war criminals. See “Feljegyzés,” n.d., in NAH, XIX-J-1-j, Box 82, “A Belügyminisztérium átírata a Külügyminisztériumnak az Ötösbizottság Jelentésének cáfolatához” Folder.

73. The Héderváry Collection contains the most extensive collection of relevant SpecCom documents, comprising those created for SpecCom’s preparation as well as those documenting the activities carried out by special representatives on the problem of Hungary. Background correspondence, draft papers, press reports, and clippings were collated, in addition to various types of official documents, memoranda, circular notes, and similar items dealing with the Hungarian issue from late 1956 to 1963.

After the SpecCom was denied entry to Hungary, the committee members decided to glean all available documents concerning the 1956 Hungarian revolution through media reports, official statements, administrative regulations, leaflets, manifestos, and secondary sources. Most importantly, the SpecCom set out to gather testimony from a diverse group of witnesses who had participated in the 1956 events. Because only those who had left Hungary could be interviewed, the SpecCom gathered testimonies first in New York, then in Geneva, Rome, Vienna, and London. Several participants also submitted their contribution in writing to the SpecCom's Secretariat staff, headed by secretary William Jordan and deputy secretary Povl Bang-Jensen. The Secretariat staff collected and provided information for the members of the SpecCom, organized the hearings, preselected the witnesses, and obtained relevant background information, including books, statistical data, and official documents such as the Hungarian constitution and the Warsaw Pact Treaty. The oral interviews were taped then transcribed and translated into English. The testimony was also translated into Spanish and French.<sup>74</sup> Complex administrative support thus had to be arranged, with the need for interpreters, typists, and assistants. The Hungarian intelligence service kept a close eye on the group, reporting from Vienna that "28 persons of technical staff accompany the Committee."<sup>75</sup>

As newly declassified documents show, Communist intelligence agencies fixated on the SpecCom's activities from the outset.<sup>76</sup> They were particularly

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74. As recordings (also preserved by Héderváry) indicate, Slim spoke French, and Fabregat spoke Spanish during the sessions. Thus, translations were constantly needed. Only a few French and Spanish transcripts are included in the Héderváry Collection, but all SpecCom sessions were likely also translated into French and Spanish and then corrected, typed, printed, and distributed.

75. See the report of the Political Investigation Department II, 12 March 1957 and 6 April 1957, in NSL MC, Bang-Jensen Archive, Fond 413, Box 35. Further reports are kept in the ÁBTL, 3.2.3, Mt 499/1-3. (See, for instance, the 9 April 1957 report of Agent "Roger.") The Hungarian embassy also possessed detailed information about their location "in the same building (Wallnerstrasse, in the Staatsarchiv) in which the repatriation joint committee is in session." From the hearing, Hungarian Ambassador Puja also knew about the 47 persons selected out of 150. See the report of Ambassador Puja, 8 April 1957, in NAH, XIX-J-36, Box 13, "A bécsi magyar követség iratanyaga," Folder. The translations of some of the verbatim records from Vienna were obtained by the intelligence services. See NSL MC, Bang-Jensen Archive, Fond 413, Box 35.

76. The most substantial and complete document summarizing the intelligence activity of the Hungarian secret services is titled "Ellenforradalom az állambiztonsági munka tükrében." Volume 3 deals with the internal and external relations of "reactionary forces" after 4 November 1956. See "A belső és külső reakciós erők november 4 utáni tevékenysége a magyarországi ellenforradalmi viszonyok átmentésére," in ÁBTL, 3.1.9. V-150352/2, p. 1288. "Active intelligence activity" (spying) was the accusation raised against individuals such as the political scientist Bibó and writer Árpád Göncz (later president of Hungary, 1990–2000), both of whom submitted information to members of the SpecCom (Gunewardene and Shann). See *ibid.*, p. 1160. Witnesses were accused of being intelligence agents. Several names were obtained by the secret services and mentioned as giving testimony to the UN. See *ibid.*, p. 1339.

interested in obtaining documents—even draft documents—that would help them identify witnesses. This information would be vital in undermining the witnesses' credibility or putting pressure on those who testified. Most witnesses asked to testify anonymously in order to avoid risking their lives or retribution against their families, friends, and fellow revolutionaries still in Hungary. Of the 111 Hungarian witnesses, three were “open” witnesses (testifying with media present), 27 were “secret” witnesses (i.e., SpecCom knew their names but agreed to keep them secret), and 81 asked to testify anonymously. For many, anonymity was a precondition, and the surviving tape recordings and transcripts of the testimonies confirm that this condition was accepted and officially emphasized by the chair of the SpecCom.<sup>77</sup>

A somewhat similar method was applied in Australia, where testimonies from Hungarian refugees about their experiences of the revolution were collected and sent to the SpecCom.<sup>78</sup> The U.S. Senate committee dealing with the Hungarian revolution also permitted witnesses to testify incognito. Only one individual, the Danish diplomat Bang-Jensen, kept a list of the identities of those testifying to the UN. Bang-Jensen was also responsible for the preselection of witnesses, the documentation of the nature of information to be provided by the witnesses, travel arrangements, and the per diem offered to the witnesses to cover their expenses. He was unconditionally trusted by the Hungarians, including those who had been disappointed by the UN.<sup>79</sup> Because of his connection to hundreds of potential witnesses during the preselection

The “spying” against Hungary was orchestrated by “imperialist intelligence agencies,” building up a “network of spies in the neighboring countries.” See, for example, Deputy FM János Péter's speech on 2 November 1957: “Volt Külügyminisztérium vezetők iratanyaga: János Péter, 2 November 1957,” in NAH, XIX-J-1-n, Box 81.

77. This was also the reason that, after the arrival of the first three “open witnesses” (Kéthly, Király, and Kővágó), hearings were held behind closed doors. This was noted by the Hungarian diplomats. See a draft addition to the planned speech on 24 June 1957, in NAH, XIX-J-24-a, Box 1, “A New York-i főkonzulátus iaratai” Folder. The issue was also raised by members of the SpecCom at the very beginning. As they sought to work “without endangering either witnesses or other people, private meetings should be the Committee's general rule.” See “Future Work of the Committee outlined by the Rapporteur,” 30 January 1957, in Héderváry Collection, OSA, 1-1-1.

78. The SpecCom decided that, as a result of the geographic distance, it would not be able to travel to Australia in spite of the relatively large number of refugees there. See the report of Eugene Gorman (Australia) on the Problem of Hungary in Héderváry Collection, OSA, pp.191–204: “So many witnesses required an assurance that their identity would not be disclosed” that they were referred to numerically. Even in Italy, assurance of anonymity was a basic condition, as expressed in the title of Giorgio Chiesura's *Non scrivete il mio nome* (Turin: Einaudi, 1957).

79. See the interview with Sándor Taraszovics and Béla Király concerning the witnesses who consented to testify under the belief that “you can trust the Dane.” The interview is located in NSL Collection of Historical Interviews, unedited footage of the Bang-Jensen documentary, disc 5. Professional diplomats with significant experience understood this as well. Leslie Fry, minister of the British legation to Budapest, was hesitant to inform the SpecCom when he was in London; he “wanted to be sure about

process, Bang-Jensen was acutely aware of and concerned about the enormous risk to those testifying before the SpecCom.<sup>80</sup> In the eyes of the Communist authorities, providing testimony to the UN was synonymous with “spying for a foreign power” and engaging in “intelligence activity against Hungary.” Such acts of high treason were to be met with commensurate consequences.<sup>81</sup>

SpecCom’s work generated an immense number of documents that constitute a unique source for reconstructing the events of the revolution and the working of the UN. However, UN policy required that the documents be kept in the department for a set period (e.g., three years), after which the more important ones were archived and the rest destroyed.<sup>82</sup> Even after more than 58 years, access to documents concerning the SpecCom’s work is only partly available at the UN Archive. Some files remain under restricted access.<sup>83</sup> Fortunately, the most complete collection of SpecCom documents was

the discretion of the Committee.” See the report from the French FM, 10 April 1957, in ÁBTL, BM II/2, which was intercepted by Hungarian secret services.

80. Bang-Jensen’s concerns originated from an allegation put forth by three East-bloc members during the autumn of 1956 that the 38th floor (i.e., the offices of the UN Secretary General and his deputies) was under Soviet control. On the role of Bang-Jensen, his convictions, and his later conflicts with the UN, see DeWitt Copp and Marshall Peck, *Betrayal at the UN* (New York: Devin-Adair, 1961); U.S. Congress, Senate, Committee on the Judiciary, *The Bang-Jensen Case*, 87th Cong., 1st Sess., 1961; Bo Lidegaard, *Den højeste pris: Poul Bang-Jensen og FM 1955–1959* (Copenhagen: Linhardt og Ringhof, 1998); and András Nagy, *A Bang-Jensen ügy, '56 nyugati ellENSZélben* (Budapest: Magvető, 2005).

81. In summary trials after the 1956 revolution—and under the laws applied by judges of the “Reprisal” (lasting until 1963)—capital punishment was applicable and often imposed for high treason. “Treason” carried a broad meaning for the Communist legal system, even the sociological survey conducted by Columbia University among Hungarian refugees (led by Paul Zinner and later published) was considered by the Hungarian authorities to be “military intelligence activity.” See “Feljegyzések az ENSZ-vizsgálattal kapcsolatosan,” n.d., in NAH, XIX-J-j, Box 82. See also the Hungarian Refugee Project Records 1957–1959 in the Columbia University Rare Books and Manuscripts Library. The UN witnesses also discussed troop movements, military resistance, and information about the railroad system—all of which was considered classified. See their testimonies in “Vizsgálati dosszié,” in ÁBTL, 3.1.9. V-150352/2, p. 1283. The official Hungarian Federation of Jurists argued in a statement submitted to Minister of Justice Ferenc Neuzál in 1959 that “the [UN] witnesses are common criminals, as having committed the crime of illegal border crossing . . . [and] by their testimony they committed also the criminal deeds of spying, providing intelligence data to foreign power, etc.” See in NAH, IM 1959 00/4/1959, “Az Igazságügyminiszter iratai” Folder.

82. Archival regulations were explained by Héderváry in her interview (see NSL Collection of Historical Interviews, Bang-Jensen documentary, discs 14–15) and by Ita Pasztor in a personal interview in New York on 22 September 1993. Pasztor called the president of the Hungarian-American Foundation, Ágoston Molnár, to “rescue” documents the United Nations was planning to ship to the New York City landfill. At a predetermined time, Molnár arrived at the UN garbage loading dock in a station wagon to collect the invaluable documents. The materials were then shipped to the federation’s office in New Brunswick and deposited in its archive. Molnár was interviewed in New Brunswick on 26 September 1993. The Hungarian FM believed that “the verbatim records and the list of names of witnesses were destroyed.” See report, 6 August 1958, in NAH, XIX-J-1-j, Box 55.

83. From 1992 on, the restricted documents have been unsuccessfully requested numerous times by researchers, archivists, and even by the Hungarian mission to the UN. Crucial documents are

saved by the efforts of Héderváry. Initially a translator and assistant for the SpecCom, Héderváry became an expert on a more senior level at the UN. Keenly aware of the historical importance of these papers, she systematically collected documents pertaining to SpecCom's research and investigation of the Hungarian revolution. Over the years, more than 8,633 items, representing a significant portion of SpecCom's work, were aggregated.<sup>84</sup> The collection includes sound recordings of the SpecCom meetings and witness testimonies (amounting to more than 70 hours of material), "verbatim records" of witness testimony transcripts and some SpecCom meetings, SpecCom internal instructions and background correspondence, press articles from the Eastern bloc (with English translations), press clippings from major Western newspapers concerning Hungary, and other important documents. In safeguarding extra copies of documents and resisting instructions to "destroy after reading," Héderváry was so vigilant that she even removed some files from trolleys that contained documents from reassigned colleagues, requesting permission from her bosses to save the files.<sup>85</sup> Héderváry kept those documents in her office and stored other SpecCom materials in filing cabinets in the office corridor.

In the years after the SpecCom report's publication, the head of the department—the under-secretary-general of political and Security Council affairs—was a Soviet citizen. Furthermore, many of Héderváry's colleagues in the department came from the Eastern bloc. In a well-chosen moment, Héderváry asked the acting head of the department—a U.S. diplomat—for permission to take the documents from the UN building to her nearby apartment, where she preserved them in cardboard whiskey boxes for decades.<sup>86</sup>

## Editing History

The complexity and formidable scope of the SpecCom's preparations for producing its report can be reconstructed from the documents of the Héderváry collection. Members of the Secretariat, some of them of Hungarian origin,

located at Columbia University, which is where UN Under-Secretary-General Cordier went after leaving the UN. Initially a dean and then president of the university, he deposited the UN documents in Columbia's Rare Book and Manuscript Library instead of leaving them under the full control of the UN Archives.

84. Several were 30–40 pages long.

85. Héderváry gave oral history interviews to the Hoover Institution, where she first deposited her documents, and later to the Hungarian 1956 Institute (interviewed by András Nagy).

86. The documents were first deposited at the Hoover Institution. The NSL then obtained the papers and, with the assistance of the OSA, shipped them to Hungary.

first compiled bibliographies that would allow for comparisons of pre-1939 Hungary with the Hungary of the 1950s through statistical analysis.<sup>87</sup> In addition to historical data, the UN worked from a vast body of documents. Various governments were asked to forward copies of reports from their respective legations in Budapest about the events of October–November 1956. Important reports and analyses were additionally provided by the U.S., British, French, Italian, and Dutch embassies in Budapest.<sup>88</sup> Journalists' and eyewitness reports were also received, as were official Hungarian and Soviet documents pertaining to the events.<sup>89</sup>

However, the most important and dramatic source of material was the participants' and witnesses' recollections. Refugee group leaders and several governments (of countries with larger Hungarian refugee groups) were asked to nominate witnesses and briefly describe their involvement in the revolution. Throughout the project, the committee used special forms to describe and identify potential witnesses. The forms asked for name, age, education, employment, and even travel experience, religion, salary, social status, military rank, and so on.<sup>90</sup> Anonymous witnesses who felt somewhat safer with codenames (such as "AAA" or "BBB") were aware that their identities could be uncovered if their biographical information or testimony was unique. Submission of a potential witness form did not confirm that the individual had

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87. The bibliographies were jointly compiled by UN librarians and members of the Secretariat. See "List of materials" and "Reading list," 5 March 1957, in Héderváry Collection, OSA 1-3-5. In addition to László Hámori and Héderváry, a Hungarian named Grossmann was involved in the work of the SpecCom.

88. The method of investigation, titled "The Future Work of the Committee (by The Rapporteur)," was drafted on 30 January 1957. The Provisional Summary Record of 11 February 1957 suggested that diplomatic representatives should be contacted for information. The British "Report on the Hungarian Revolution by Her Majesty's Legation to Hungary" was sent on 22 March 1957. The Hungarian authorities knew about this diplomatic activity. See "Note," 14 February 1957, in NAH, XIX-J-1-j, Box 56. The FM's protest is also documented on 18 March 1957, in NAH, XIX-J-60-a. (These are preserved with the documents of the Hungarian UN mission in Geneva). The Dutch embassy submitted a "Statement of Events" on 27 March 1957. The French report was sent on the same day. The Italian embassy's report (containing a chronology and analysis of the events) was dated 5 April 1957.

89. For the so-called white book, see *Ellenforradalmi erők a magyar októberi eseményekben I-IV* (Budapest: Magyar Népköztársaság Kormányának Tájékoztatási Hivatala, 1957), published by the Hungarian government's Information Office. The book was obtained and referenced in the work of the SpecCom. The statements of the Hungarian government and its representatives were also included in the collection (some of the statements are 32 pages long). See the official Hungarian documents in the Héderváry Collection, OSA 2-5-2.

90. The Héderváry Collection preserves an undated "Fact Sheet and Rating" regarding Tamás Aczél (the poet awarded the 1952 Stalin Prize). Other witnesses were likely documented in the same way. (Entries 1–34 note characteristics such as "Jewish," "divorced," "middle class," "captain," "male," and "36 years.") See NSL MC, Fond 523 7. tk./102–106.

been selected to be a witness; it merely indicated that he or she was being considered.

The crucial part of the investigation was thus the SpecCom's hearing of witnesses. Upon being greeted by the chair and receiving assurance that they were testifying anonymously (if they had so requested), witnesses could provide an oral or written statement of any length. This statement would be supplemented with biographical details and a description of the events they had witnessed. SpecCom members would then cross-examine the witnesses to clarify important details, specifically seeking testimony concerning directly observed events rather than secondhand information. In responding to such questions, witnesses sometimes provided exact locations and details that—if known by others—would have enabled identification of the witnesses or fellow revolutionaries. Researchers today can easily identify witnesses in some cases, but in others it is a more difficult task.

During the UN investigation, the Budapest military prison was conducting its own investigation that also involved witness testimony with the lead of the Political Police, which inherited many ÁVH personnel.<sup>91</sup> To satisfy the demands of the Communist judicial system, numerous sources of information—statements of arrested revolutionaries, recollections of political police personnel, documents from the UN, and records obtained by the intelligence services—were used. Such a meticulous reconstruction of facts was of great importance for the “Reprisal,” and detailed narratives of the revolution were especially welcome. Although many witnesses for the SpecCom—especially those in Vienna—were concerned for their personal safety, those testifying outside Hungary were even more anxious about the potential consequences for their relatives and friends who remained inside the country.<sup>92</sup>

The witnesses believed that the more information they could relay to the SpecCom, the more help the UN could supply to ordinary Hungarians. However, when the Communist intelligence services obtained UN documents, these sources often served as the basis of investigation for later court cases. The post-1956 trials differed from the trials of early Stalinism in that the latter were

91. Most of the investigations were held at Fő utca (known for its entrance from Gyorskocsi utca). The building had been previously used by the Gestapo. The most accurate source on the “Reprisal” is Hegedűs, ed., *1956 Kézikönyve*, Vol. III. See also Attila Szakolczai, “Megtorlás és restauráció,” in Király and Congdon, eds., *A magyar forradalom eszméi*.

92. Witness recordings make evident that fear of identification grew. As Witness W (11 March 1957) explained, “I want to make my statement under the name of Korvin doctor as my family is naturally at home [in Hungary].” Some of them revealed that their relatives had already been visited by the secret police. The Ministry of Interior submitted a list to the FM on 6 September 1957. Item 59 referred to the intercepted transmission of the messages of the French embassy that had named witnesses in references to their testimony. The list is preserved in NAH, XIX-J-1-j, Box 80.

based on fabricated charges and forced confessions extracted to serve as proof. After the Hungarian revolution, accusations were based on well-documented facts. Perverse legal interpretations of such evidence threatened liability for sentences in disregard of the promised amnesty.<sup>93</sup> Despite Kádár's efforts to dissolve the feared *Államvédelmi Hatóság* (State Protection Authority, *ÁVH*), the same officers—whose training and experience originated during the Stalinist era—were often involved in the investigations.<sup>94</sup> The verbatim records of the UN SpecCom thus could and did support the “Reprisal” process. For instance, at a meeting of the Council of Ministers, Béla Biszku, minister of interior, proudly commented on how well the secret services and the political police were working together.<sup>95</sup>

The SpecCom nonetheless undertook a thorough investigation to discover facts and correlations. Testimony could last hours. Some key witnesses were invited back later to finish testifying or answer specific questions.<sup>96</sup> The

93. The contrast in the way trials were handled during the two periods was emphasized by Hungarian politicians as well. Stalinist trials had been based on “plans prepared,” whereas the post-1956 trials were “an attempt at a coup that had already taken place.” See “Intézkedési terv,” 20 June 1958, in NAH, (MOL) XIX-J-1-j, Box 55. A document of 9 May 1957 indicates that the UN was also informed that “Kádár had reintroduced administrative arrest and concentration camps.” Another document, of 16 June 1957, describes the legal system in detail, noting the composition of the “people’s courts” (one professional judge and four laymen), the “stiffening sentences of the Supreme Court,” and so on. The legal documents are located in the Héderváry Collection, OSA, NSL MC, Fond 523. 3. Tk /37. Kádár, in his speech of 22 November 1956, promised that no one would be persecuted for his or her deeds in October and early November. In addition, “The Presidential Council of the Hungarian People’s Republic later proclaimed a general amnesty for Hungarian citizens who returned home.” See the message of the Hungarian UN Mission to the Secretary-General, 15 January 1957, in NAH, XIX-J-1-j, Box 56. This promise was soon decisively broken. See “Az illegálisan külföldre távozott személyek névsora, akikre az amnesztia nem vonatkozik,” 31 January 1958, in NAH, IM 00/4/1959.

94. The *ÁVH* was officially dissolved but survived in another form, as shown by the several positive references to its role in statements by the government and in other official documents. These documents suggest that the organization was “self-cleaned” and that “the most assertive peasants and workers remained.” See the letter sent to the Hungarian embassy in Vienna, 26 April 1957, in NAH, XIX-J-36, Box 13. A draft speech sent to the Hungarian UN mission contains an entry “3/c. The real role of the *ÁVH*” from 11 April 1957, also concerning the rehabilitation of the feared political police. See NAH, XIX-J-24-a, Box 1, “A New York-i főkonzulátus iaratai” Folder. However, the French embassy reported the Western diplomats’ conviction that the *ÁVH* “is more flourishing than ever.” See the report from 27 March 1957, in Héderváry Collection, OSA, NSL MC Fond 523. 2. Tk / 20.

95. Biszku provided a list of witnesses at the HSWP Politburo meeting held on 30 July 1957. See NAH, HSWP Papers, M-KS 288f. 5/37 ö.e. The list, compiled by the Ministry of Internal Affairs, was handed over to the Foreign Ministry on 6 September 1957; it is preserved in NAH, XIX-J-1-j 80. On 2 September 1957, Puja, the Hungarian ambassador in Vienna, wrote to Foreign Minister Horváth, “The names of the witnesses were kept secret, but we know them.” Their correspondence is located in NAH (Austria), XIX-J-1-j, Box 4.

96. György Heltai (Witness X on 12, 14, and 15 March 1957), who had been an adviser to Nagy on foreign policy matters, made a statement spanning 118 typewritten pages. Heltai was invited back twice to continue his contribution. Gábor Magos (Witness XXX on 15 April 1957, with a 41-page statement)—an agricultural scientist and close ally of Nagy—also submitted a long letter to the

hearings included shocking horror stories from the ÁVH torture chambers, moving some SpecCom members to tears.<sup>97</sup> The committee members were especially eager to meet Communist intellectuals, many of whom were remarkably young.<sup>98</sup> The SpecCom sound recordings are a permanent record of the narrative and dynamics of the hearings—a unique oral history of the events.<sup>99</sup> The Héderváry collection also preserves taped “business meetings” of the SpecCom. In addition to discussions about technical details and travel arrangements, these meetings encompassed more important questions concerning the committee’s mandate, the political willingness of countries to receive the SpecCom, and the question of whether committee members represented the UN or their respective countries. Disagreements were typical for members of the committee, and differing approaches influenced the ensuing work.

Although the SpecCom chair was the “master of ceremonies,” the rapporteur—Australian Ambassador to the Philippines Keith Charles Owen Shann (known to his colleagues as “Mick”)—played a decisive role in directing the investigation. Shann possessed close ties to the UN Secretariat as well as the British Foreign Office. His main partner for sourcing information, background material, and other documentation needed for the creation of the committee’s report was William Jordan, the British secretary of the SpecCom. On 20 February, with the assistance of the Secretariat and the SpecCom’s consent, Shann was already drafting an interim report that summarized the events in Hungary and outlined the concept of the future investigation.<sup>100</sup> The step-by-step process of preparing the report, beginning with the witness testimony

SpecCom explaining important details and elaborating on his testimony. The letter is located in the Héderváry Collection, OSA, NSL MC, Fond 523. 7. Tk / 102–106.

97. Witness AAA, testifying on 27 March 1957 (Vienna), had been a stenographer and secretary for the ÁVH secret police.

98. Besides Heltaí and Magos, the London witnesses (such as Pál Ignóty, György Pálóczi-Horváth, Béla Szász, Pál Zádor, and István Zádor) were mainly Communists. Some of them spoke fluent English. The refugees’ average age was relatively low, as was that of the witnesses. More than half of those leaving the country were under the age of 25. See “Statistikai jelentés az illegálisan külföldre távozott magyar állampolgárokról,” 9 September 1957, in NAH, XIX-J-1-j 116d/20/f.

99. Vernon Duckworth-Barker, the press attaché of the SpecCom, emphasized on 10 April 1957 at a Palais de Nations press conference in Geneva “that it had never happened before that a historical event would be so profoundly examined, with the involvement of so many witnesses, so soon after it had happened.” See “Jelentés Duckworth-Barker sajtókonferenciájáról a Nemzetek Palotájából,” 10 April 1957, in NAH, XIX-J-24-a, Box 2, “A New York-i főkonzulátus iaratai” Folder.

100. “Future Work of the Committee outlined by the Rapporteur,” 30 January 1957, was followed by Jordan’s “Draft Working Paper on the Organization of the Work of the Committee” on 3 February 1957. On 20 February 1957, an “Interim Report” of the SpecCom was issued based on the hearings that had preceded thus far. A “Summary of the Testimonies” was composed on 1 February 1957, as was “Additional sources for the draft report” on 18 February 1957. The aforementioned documents are located in the Héderváry Collection, OSA, NSL MC, Fond 523. 1. Tk / 1. and 2. Tk / 14.

hearings, can be reconstructed from the documents in the Héderváry collection. First, the logic and structure of the report were agreed upon. Next, individual chapters were assigned and drafted by members of the Secretariat working with the SpecCom. Documents, transcripts of testimonies, official statements, and other items needed for each chapter were listed. All such evidence had to be carefully selected, arranged, referenced, registered, and kept for eventual future use. Once the first draft of a chapter was completed, another member of the Secretariat staff would review it—often correcting each chapter four or five times—before circulating it among the members of the SpecCom. The entire process—from the distribution of drafts and documents to the typing and retyping of the drafts, through to the completion of the final version—was supervised by Jordan.

Overseeing the process was UN Under-Secretary-General Protitch. According to Trygve Lie, the first UN Secretary General, the Big Five had settled on an “agreement” in London in 1946 that a Soviet national would be appointed as assistant secretary general for political and Security Council affairs.<sup>101</sup> (The title was later changed from “assistant secretary general” to “under-secretary-general.”) Lie criticized this move, writing that the five powers had “no right to arrive at any understanding” in this respect. According to the UN Charter, only the Secretary General had the right to make such appointments. Nonetheless, Lie accepted the decision and “welcomed the understanding as a sign of good will and confidence between East and West.”<sup>102</sup> When Arkady Sobolev resigned in 1949, Lie replaced him with Constantin Zinchenko but limited Zinchenko’s term to the period remaining in Lie’s own term. Although Lie viewed “the London understanding as applying only to my term,” he added that “these precedents have a way of perpetuating themselves.”<sup>103</sup> Protitch was the only non-Soviet to hold the position of under-secretary-general from 1946 to 1992, but his appointment could not have been reassuring for the Hungarian witnesses.<sup>104</sup>

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101. Trygve Lie, *In the Cause of Peace: Seven Years with the United Nations* (New York: Macmillan, 1954), p. 45.

102. *Ibid.*

103. *Ibid.*, p. 51.

104. The UN Under Secretary-Generals for Political and Security Council affairs included Sobolev (1946–1947), Zinchenko (1949–1953), Ilya Tchernychev (1953–1954), Protitch (1955–1957), Anatolii Dobrynin (1958–1959), Georgii Arkadev (1960–1961), and—until 1987—seven other Soviet citizens (E. D. Kiselev, Vladimir P. Suslov, Aleksei Nesterenko, Leonid Kutakov, Arkadii Shevchenko, Mikhail Sytenko, Vyacheslav Ustinov, and Vasilii Safronchuk). One of them, Shevchenko, defected to the United States in 1975 and went on to reveal the extent to which Soviet intelligence agents had penetrated the UN Secretariat and Soviet UN mission staff. See Arkady Shevchenko, *Breaking with Moscow* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1985).

The Hungarian UN mission attempted to maintain a vigilant eye on the whole process. The reports the mission sent back to Hungary prove that they were able to obtain surprisingly detailed information about the different phases of the work, including disagreements among the SpecCom members.<sup>105</sup> Rejecting all official UN requests for cooperation, they collected whatever information they could, immediately forwarding it to Budapest. Thus, copies of official UN documents, as well as working papers of the SpecCom, reached the Hungarian capital. Several verbatim records of witness testimony and private correspondence with witnesses were even mistakenly forwarded to the mission, and documents from the leaders of the refugee community arrived in Budapest. Because the intelligence services possessed a highly effective network in the Hungarian expatriate community, with several agents working undercover there well before 1956 (and many more arriving after the revolution), several agents, as leaders of various organizations, capitalized on their official access to certain documents.<sup>106</sup> Other agents stole sensitive material or took photographs of “borrowed” documents. Hungarian Minister of the Interior Biszku—who was in charge of the intelligence services and also orchestrated the post-1956 “Reprisal”—subsequently reported during a Politburo meeting that they had obtained a great amount of information and “kn[ew] the names of witnesses.”<sup>107</sup> Several lists in the archive of the intelligence services have recently become available. However, they indicate that only some of the names were known.

105. The summary of these reports formed the basis of the FM’s action planned for 9 September 1957. See “Summary of the Meeting of the FM Collegium,” September 1957, in NAH, XIX-J-1-o. The reports sent regularly by Mód are in NAH, XIX-J-1-j, Boxes 209–211. They include, for instance, a folder that focuses on Andersen. Referring to a book by John Galster (*I Accuse Bubl and Andersen of High Treason*), it documents his activity before and during World War II.

106. The best-known case was that of Miklós Szabó. However, others under the codenames “Roger,” “Kerekes,” “Blum,” and “Szeles” were of great use to the Hungarian authorities. See the documents in ÁBTLL, 3.2.3. Mt. 499–103, “Munkadosszié” Folder. The network of secret agents was partially dissolved during the revolution when confidential documents became available to the revolutionaries. After 4 November 1956, the recruitment of new agents became an absolute priority for the political police and intelligence agencies. Some of the earlier agents who had participated in the revolution were arrested and threatened with harsh punishments (including execution). Many who joined were willing to offer information to escape punishment. The report by the deputy minister of internal affairs proudly states that although the intelligence network was damaged by the October events, “in the last ten days we have recruited 74 agents.” He also added that these agents were first interrogated as part of their screening. After being conclusively “unmasked,” the agents agreed to report secretly to the police. The report of 27 March 1957 is located in NAH, XIX-B-1-y, Box 1. Many of Kéthly’s political and social contacts—in Brussels and elsewhere—were controlled and manipulated by the Hungarian intelligence. See “Összefoglaló jelentés Kéthly Annáról,” 21 November 1958, in BM II/3, ÁBTLL, K-1919.

107. Biszku provided a list and presented it during the Politburo meeting of 30 July 1957. The list is located in NAH, HSWP Papers, M-KS 288f. 5/37 6.e but remains unavailable to researchers.

At the same time, additional information was arriving at the UN. Based on the SpecCom's fact-finding work and contributions, many Hungarians both inside and outside the country believed that the country's last hope might be a powerful UN resolution. Various types of communications such as protest cables and manifestos, letters (smuggled with great risk out of Hungary), and official government documents reached New York. As proof of the Kádár regime's "Consolidation" and history of broken promises, these materials were cataloged, registered, and preserved by the SpecCom's Secretariat staff.<sup>108</sup> A summary list of the documents, titled "Communication Received by the Committee" and naming the communication source, date, and subject, was subsequently published at regular intervals for circulation among the SpecCom members. Although the list was a time saver as a selection and filtering device, its contents were often so concise that the members had difficulty determining the relevance or significance of its items.

All of these factors possessed fatal consequences, causing more harm than good to those in Hungary who had placed hope in the work of the UN. The second part of this article, to be published in a subsequent issue of the JCWS, will address this matter.

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108. The UN Secretary General may have been otherwise informed. When meeting with Hungary's UN head of mission on 23 April 1957, Hammarskjöld mentioned that "from other sources, he was informed that the order was restored in Hungary and the economic situation is constantly ameliorating." See the report of Péter Mőd, 23 April 1957, in NAH, XIX-J-24-a, Box 2, "A New York-i főkonzulátus iaratai" Folder. In a report of 31 May 1957, Mőd forwarded the news that the UN Secretariat "does not urge the Committee to submit the Report." He understood that the committee's report would be completed by June—the beginning of the diplomats' summer recess—so significant future delays could be expected. Report of Péter Mőd, 31 May 1957, in NAH, XIX-J-24-a, Box 2, "A New York-i főkonzulátus iaratai" Folder.