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ENDING THE NAGY AFFAIR: YUGOSLAVIA, SOVIET UNION AND THE TERMINATION OF HUNGARIAN REVOLUTION REVISITED

ABSTRACT: This paper analyzes the diplomatic relations between Hungary, Yugoslavia, and the Soviet Union during the Soviet intervention in Hungary in 1956, with a primary focus on the case of Imre Nagy's capture. The crisis that arose during Nagy's hiding in the Yugoslav embassy reveals the background of these countries' relations, in which Yugoslavs showed ambiguity to maintain the achieved status of a free socialist country on the one hand, and on the other, to keep good relations with the Soviet Union. Furthermore, the author attempts to provide answers on Yugoslav role in Nagy's arrest after he left his hideout within the Yugoslav embassy. The author argues that Yugoslavs were not aware of any Soviet plans to capture Nagy after he left the embassy, even though there are other claims present in this paper that suggests the opposite.

KEYWORDS: Imre Nagy, Soviet Intervention 1956, Yugoslavia, Hungary, Soviet Union, Eastern Bloc, Socialism

The period from 1945 to 1956 was filled with numerous contradictions and risks in Yugoslav and Hungarian foreign policy. The climaxes in 1948 and 1956 determined and shaped their relations as well as the outlook of the entire Eastern Bloc. Many questions arose from these years, and some of them are still without complete answers among contemporary historians. On the one hand, the Yugoslav role in the Hungarian revolution was supportive of the Soviets, in alignment with the reconciliation policy that had occurred since 1953. On the other hand, Imre Nagy's escape from the Yugoslav Embassy and his potential escape from the Soviets endangered the legitimacy of the newly installed pro-Soviet regime in Budapest. His later arrest rightfully arises questions about whether Yugoslavs knew about the Soviets' plan to arrest Imre Nagy or did Yugoslavia let him go intentionally to be captured by the Soviets, as some authors suggest, in the name of maintaining détente policy with the USSR.

The reconciliation between USSR and Yugoslavia was a process initiated after Stalin's death, when collective leadership took the power in the USSR. Besides the fact that Yugoslavia and the West built relatively strong and fruitful ties after 1948, Soviet leaders, including Georgy Malenkov, Nikita Khrushchev and Anastas Mikoyan, insisted on full reconciliation with Yugoslavia. They sought a secret correspondence with the Yugoslav officials, in which they requested an official meeting in the upcoming years.¹ That was not only a signal for Yugoslav and Soviet leaders that normalization is approaching but, also, that was a sign for other Eastern European regimes to cease with the anti-Yugoslav propaganda and to reduce the tensions with official Belgrade. Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union negotiated for several months for calming the situation on the borders between Yugoslavia and its Eastern neighbors,² suspension of discrimination in Danube Commission, stopping the propaganda against Yugoslavia in Eastern Europe,³ etc.

Prior to full reconciliation, the Soviet Union established a new military and political organization the Warsaw Pact (WTO), or, formally, the Treaty of Friendship, Co-operation, and Mutual Assistance, on 14th May 1955. Warsaw Pact was a bit different from Stalin's Cominform, "which was an organization 'created by Stalin to secure the unquestioning obedience of European Communists'".⁴ Khrushchev policy was pragmatic, and his main goal was to reduce tensions inside the Eastern Bloc. In continuation with this policy, the USSR carried on talks with Yugoslavia, and the outcome was the Moscow and later Belgrade Declaration in 1955. A principle of no interference in the domestic policy of other countries, among other things, was indicated in the latter, which was seen as a path for other Eastern European countries to develop more independent policy in comparison to previous Soviet dominance in the Eastern Bloc. Both outcomes encouraged communist leaders to eventually follow Yugoslav example in building the unique road to socialism.

¹ Ljubodrag Dimić, *Jugoslavija i Hladni rat* (Beograd: Arhipelag, 2014), 11.

² After Tito-Stalin split, Hungarian government was pressured to back up Stalin's aggressive stance towards Yugoslavia. Furthermore, Hungary canceled the agreement on war reparations with Yugoslavia. Alfred Ofner, who was the President of the Hungarian Reparations Bureau, tried to convince Yugoslavs after the cancelation that "payment in this situation does not depend on you or me, and neither on Rákosi. Hungarian further payments depend on the further development of relations between Yugoslavia and Hungary. Also, it is not just about the relationship between our countries...". See more: Arhiv Jugoslavije (AJ), fond 507, Savez komunista Jugoslavije (SKJ), Komisija za međunarodne odnose i veze, IX, 75, III-32, CK SKJ, Obustava isporuka mađarskih reparacija, 20. septembar 1948.

³ This was a particularly important element in Yugo-Hungarian reconciliation. Both countries signed the Agreement on the methods of rebuilding and reviewing the incidents on the Yugoslav-Hungarian border in 1953, and Hungarian authorities canceled anti-Yugoslav propaganda that came in huge numbers from Hungarian newspapers and Radio Budapest. See more in: AJ, fond 837, Kabinet predsednika Republike (KPR), 837-I-5-b-70-1, Sporazum između Vlade FNRJ i Vlade NR Mađarske o načinu preduređenja i ispitivanja incidenata na jugoslovensko-mađarskoj granici, 28. avgust 1953. and *Bela knjiga o agresivnim postupcima vlada SSSR, Poljske, Čehoslovačke, Mađarske, Rumunije, Bugarske i Albanije prema Jugoslaviji* (Beograd: Ministarstvo inostranih poslova FNRJ, 1951), 436.

⁴ Lj. Dimić, *op. cit.*, 24.

Hungarian Prime minister Imre Nagy was one of the communist leaders who exploited the opportunity to gain more political freedom. Although he was an editor and speaker of the Kossuth radio, a Soviet-sponsored Hungarian radio station in Moscow during the Stalin's reign,⁵ Nagy was well known as agricultural reformist, who strived toward the liberalization of the country, and denunciation of the cult of personality.⁶ Nagy proposed the reduction of the heavy industry development and resource allocation to the light industry and food production. Nagy claimed that "our primary task is to support individual working peasant, to help them by any means in production, agricultural implements, fertilizers, high-quality seeds, and so on."⁷ Although Nagy's plan was initially supported, the Soviets did not truly welcome it. He was silently criticized by most Soviet and Hungarian old-guard prominent members of the Communist Party. Khrushchev was afraid that Nagy would be able to establish another type of socialism like Tito did in Yugoslavia.⁸ Nagy, on the other hand, courageously desired to create an independent Hungarian foreign policy by implementing the Yugoslav example. In his writings, Nagy mentioned that "we are members not only of the socialist camp but the great community of nations... and the ties that bind them together must be developed."⁹ Since there was no political readiness within the Kremlin to build further liberalization, Nagy was forced to step down in 1955 Hungarian Central Committee and Politburo expelled him from the Party because of his "anti-Marxist, anti-Leninist and anti-Party views"¹⁰ and replaced him with Mátyás Rákosi.

The Hungarian Revolution in 1956: International context and the First Soviet Intervention

In his secret speech on the 20th plenum of Communist Party in February 1956, Nikita Khrushchev clearly distanced himself from the cult of Stalin, which was welcomed by almost all political leaders in the Eastern Bloc and especially by Josip Broz Tito.¹¹ This speech provoked new changes in Hungary since Rákosi was considered as "the Last Mohican of the Stalinist Era" and "Stalin's Best Disciple".¹² Nikita Khrushchev additionally accused Rákosi of his incapability to work collectively.¹³ As expected, Rákosi was replaced by Ernő

⁵ Open Society Archives (OSA), Section 300, Biographical Files (BF), Unit 40, File 5, BF - Speaker of Hungarian Parliament on Imre Nagy.

⁶ Imre Nagy, *On Communism* (New York: Frederick, A. Praeger, 1957), xxi.

⁷ OSA, 300-40-5, BF - Imre Nagy, Raising the Living Standard, in *For a Lasting Peace, For a People's Democracy*, 17 July 1953.

⁸ Karl P. Benzinger, *Imre Nagy, Martyr of the Nation* (New York: Lexington Books, 2008), 44.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 41.

¹⁰ OSA, 300-40-5, Radio Free Europe Research Institute (RFE/RL) - SIN 55 IV/18, 1955.

¹¹ Johanna Granville, "The Soviet-Yugoslav Detente, Belgrade-Budapest Relations, and the Hungarian Revolution (1955-56)", *Hungarian Studies Review*, XXIV, no. 1-2, (1997), 16.

¹² *Ibid.*, 17.

¹³ OSA 300-40-5, BF - Imre Nagy, My Beliefs, July 1957.

Gerő, who is promoted to a new Party leader. However, even with this maneuver, Hungary remained a main topic for both Moscow and Belgrade in the last quarter of 1956. The Hungarian political and economic crisis was one of the affairs of mutual talks between Tito and Khrushchev in September and October 1956 on Crimea. After the talks, the USSR tried to foster strong connections between Yugoslavia and the newly established government in Budapest. Therefore, Gerő visited Crimea, without the knowledge of Tito, his Party members, and Yugoslav diplomats. As a result, Yugoslav and Hungarian leadership proposed a meeting in October that pleased the Soviets.¹⁴

Khrushchev's Secret Speech inspired Polish leadership and its people to demand more political freedom. These led to a riot in Poznan on 23 June 1956, after which many of the workers were killed by the army.¹⁵ These events in Poland and Hungary provoked fear in the Soviet leadership about the future of the Socialist camp, since the situation would spin out of control. These intra-Bloc problems arose simultaneously with Suez crisis in October 1956. The Soviets sought quick and efficient solution in their backyard, before they could move their attention to Middle East. Although the Suez crisis enabled Yugoslav officials to practice its diplomatic position between the superpowers for the first time,¹⁶ Hungarian tensions prevent both countries to fully participate in an event that mobilized both East and the West. Therefore, escalation in Poland and Hungary required fast and permanent solution.

In the meantime, Hungarian opposition forces began to gain strength. A new Five Year Plan that was proposed by the post-Nagy government lacked the people's support.¹⁷ The funeral of László Rajk, who served as a Minister of Interior and Minister of Foreign Affairs and was one of the victims to Mátyás Rákosi's trials, presents a turning point in the chain of events that happened later. Speeches that were held in front of more than 200.000 people fired up the masses. Antal Apró, the Vice President of the Hungarian Government, spoke about the responsibility of those who committed murders during Stalin and Rákosi's rule.¹⁸ Furthermore, Béla Szász, a former co-defendant of Rajk's, declared: "as hundreds of thousands pass by the coffins, they are not simply paying their last respects to the victims; they have an ardent desire and an unswerving resolve to bury an era".¹⁹ These speeches provoked mass demonstrations against the government. Soviet ambassador Yuri Andropov noticed in his records of conversation between him and Gerő that reactionaries had come forward again, by joining forces with the opposition within the Party.²⁰ Meanwhile, Gerő

¹⁴ Veljko Mićunović, *Moskovske godine 1956–1958* (Zagreb: SN Liber, 1977), 141.

¹⁵ Laurien Crump, *The Warsaw Pact Reconsidered* (Oxon: Routledge, 2015), 32.

¹⁶ Biran McCauley, "Hungary and Suez 1956: The Limits of Soviet and American Power", *Journal of Contemporary History*, XVI, no. 4, (1981), 784.

¹⁷ Csaba Békés, et.al., *The 1956 Hungarian Revolution: A History in Documents* (Budapest, New York: Central University Press, 2002), 12.

¹⁸ Vladimir Dedijer, *Izgubljena bitka Josifa Visarionoviča Staljina* (Beograd: Rad, 1978), 284.

¹⁹ C. Békés, *op. cit.*, 12.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 178.

visited Yugoslavia on 15 October and did not return until 23 October. His goals were true détente with Yugoslavia and much needed support for his government. After several meetings, both sides were pleased with the outcome of the talks.²¹ After success in Yugoslavia, Hungarian communist authorities were caught unprepared for the upcoming events.

Students in Szeged were leading the way: On 16 October, they formed a new organization MEFESZ that was not supervised by the Communist Party.²² Their demands were later known as the “Sixteen Points” on 22 October. They demanded withdrawal of the Soviet troops, the government reshuffling under the leadership of Nagy and more political, economic and cultural freedom.²³ In solidarity with the reform movement in Poland, the demonstrations were held in Budapest, where tens of thousands Hungarians requested the end of Soviet presence and return of Nagy in power.²⁴ Some of the slogans were the following: “Imre Nagy as the new leader”, “Long live our Polish brothers”, “Down with the Stalinists”, etc.²⁵ Since the government refused their basic demands, the crisis went deeper, and the Soviet involvement was deemed necessary.

The Hungarian government reacted quickly after Gerő had returned from Belgrade. Since protests continued, authorities had to choose between two options: to cancel demonstration and use the force on those who tried to defy the ban or to accept some of the demands including Nagy’s return.²⁶ Similarly to the Poland case in Poznan, authorities decided to use force in order to bring peace. Shortly after, the government lost the legitimacy among the citizens and party members who lost the confidence in Hungarian leadership. Furthermore, military cadets, officers and even police refused to use force against protesters. Therefore, the government asked Nagy to speak in front of the masses. Nagy promised that the 1953 reform would continue, and he urged them to go home. These words were a disappointment and most of protesters continued the riot, and some of them even took guns. On the evening on 23 October, the demonstration escalated into an armed uprising. The military conflict started near Radio Station, which was an important place for both the government and protesters, because of its propaganda purpose.²⁷ The government was losing time and felt compelled to ask for help. Hence, they asked the Soviets to intervene.

Soviet media spread the news that events in Hungary were orchestrated from outside of the Eastern Bloc.²⁸ Khrushchev slowly lost his patience, even though he sought a political solution to the crisis. Other prominent party members, such as Vyacheslav Molotov or Lazar Kaganovich put a pressure on him for a harsher response. Khrushchev summoned a gathering in the evening. Mar-

²¹ V. Mićunović, *op. cit.*, 151.

²² C. Békés, *op. cit.*, 13.

²³ *Ibid.*, 188–189.

²⁴ K. Benzinger, *op. cit.*, 62.

²⁵ Dobrica Ćosić, *7 dana u Budimpešti* (Beograd: Nolit, 1957), 10.

²⁶ C. Békés, *op. cit.*, 191.

²⁷ L. Crump, *op. cit.*, 34.

²⁸ V. Mićunović, *op. cit.*, 152.

shal Zhukov compared the differences between Poland and Hungary indicating how in Hungary firing and clashes already occurred at the Radio Station in Budapest.²⁹ He succeeded in convincing Khrushchev on the necessity of military intervention. On the other hand, Anastas Mikoyan, First Deputy Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the Soviet Union, was strictly against military involvement. The compromise was made. He decided to send troops but only to maintain order and agreed that Nagy should be brought back.³⁰ Moments before the Soviet arrival in Budapest, Nagy was elected as a new-old Prime Minister of Hungary on 24 October,³¹ and Gerő was confirmed as the First Secretary of the Party.³² The first speech after his re-appointment Nagy gave against those who violate peace and order, in which he indicated the importance of democratization processes of Hungarian society and Hungarian unique road to socialism. Furthermore, the government urged citizens to help the authorities and the Soviet troops in their attempts in imposing order and stability.³³ However, these appeals did not halt further escalation of the conflicts. People on the street formed militia units, and some of them even tried to stop the Soviet advance to Budapest.³⁴ The rebels already seized some of the buildings and important locations in the city. Local military leaders outside of Budapest were still under the control of the Party, and most citizens in other towns were temporarily silent since the propaganda machinery was under the Party's control.

Since fighting continued, Gerő was replaced as the First Secretary of the Party by Janos Kádár on 25 October.³⁵ In the meantime, the rebels succeeded to enlist more fighters, which gave them an opportunity to lead the offensive.³⁶ The mutual killings continued next day in Budapest, as well as in other cities, where protesters seized the building of local police.³⁷ In order to prevent further killings, Nagy proposed a national unity government on 27 October.³⁸ From this point, Hungary started negotiations with the Soviet regime, particularly about the Soviet military involvement in the country. Nagy and Kádár, in the name of national unity,³⁹ desperately tried to find a solution with the Soviets on the evening of 27 October. Mikoyan, as one of the Soviet

²⁹ Victor Sebestyen, *Twelve days* (New York: Vintage Books, 2006), 120.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 121.

³¹ V. Mićunović, *op. cit.*, 154.

³² AJ, fond 112, TANJUG, 112-215, TA CB, Radio Budimpešta o pozivu sovjetskim trupama, 24. oktobar 1956.

³³ „Imre Nad novi predsednik mađarske Vlade“, *Politika*, 25. 10. 1956, 1.

³⁴ C. Békés, *op. cit.*, 195.

³⁵ V. Mićunović, *op. cit.*, 154.

³⁶ V. Sebestyen, *op. cit.*, 147.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 199.

³⁸ Đuka Julius, „U Budimpešti se stanje normalizuje“, *Politika*, 28. 10. 1956, 1–2.

³⁹ However, how weak the national unity was, became apparent when Kádár, shortly after he was introduced in the Hungarian Socialist Worker's Party, left Budapest with Interior Minister in Nagy's government Ferenc Münnich, and Soviet ambassador at the beginning of November. See more: OSA, 300-8-3, RFE/RL - A Chronology of the Hungarian Revolution, 23 October – 04 November 1956.

emissaries during the Revolution, carefully listened to Kádár. He made a good impression not only to Mikoyan but to Nagy as well.⁴⁰ What Kádár proposed was the continuation of talks about the future of Soviet presence in Hungary, as well as the amnesty for the rebels. Mikoyan promised that the answer would get to them early in the morning. The Soviet response on 28 October included military maneuvers and determination to defeat the rebels. Nagy and Kádár were shocked when they heard of the Soviet decision and once again sought the negotiations with Mikoyan and the Soviet Ambassador Yuri Andropov. Luckily, the tanks and the Soviet guns were silent during the negotiations.⁴¹ Nagy was threatening that he would resign if bloodshed continues. Since the Soviets did not want to lose Nagy at the moment they decided to withdraw outside of Budapest and to return to the bases in the countryside. Nagy formed a new national unity government on 28 October. He tried to convince the Kremlin to agree to a new regime program, “which entailed the dissolution of the security forces and the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Hungary altogether”.⁴² The Soviet leaders approved the program presented by Nagy, which was announced the same day.⁴³

György Lukács, who was a Minister for Education in Nagy’s regime, noted that “the Hungarian youth should be praised for their fight and struggle against Stalinism and for recognizing the need of the Hungarian people to find their own way of socialism”.⁴⁴ The ceasefire was respected, and the Soviets slowly and safely started their withdrawal. The people and most of the institutions supported the new plan of the government.⁴⁵ Some of the opposition leaders were released from prison, such as Béla Kovács, who spent nine years in custody.⁴⁶ Also, one of the most prominent figures of Catholic Church in Hungary, József Mindszenty, was freed after seven years in prison. However, the most radical measure was the proclamation of a multi-Party system and return of the former political parties that had been banned.⁴⁷

In the meantime, Kádár introduced a new party, the Hungarian Socialist Worker’s Party. He left Budapest with Interior Minister in Nagy’s government Ferenc Münnich, and Soviet ambassador at the beginning of November.⁴⁸ Nikita Khrushchev held a meeting in Moscow about the future of the Warsaw Pact. He prepared a declaration “in which he unprecedentedly claimed to be ‘prepared to review with the other socialist countries which are members of the Warsaw Treaty, the question of Soviet troops stationed on the territory of the Hungarian,

⁴⁰ V. Sebestyen, *op.cit.*, 171–172.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 174.

⁴² L. Crump, *op. cit.*, 34.

⁴³ C. Békés, *op. cit.*, 204.

⁴⁴ D. Čosić, *op. cit.*, 51.

⁴⁵ „Deklaracija nove mađarske vlade nailazi na podršku“, *Borba*, 30. 10. 1956, 3.

⁴⁶ AJ, 112-216, TA CB, AFP o novoj mađarskoj vladi, 28. oktobar 1956.

⁴⁷ C. Békés, *op. cit.*, 290–291.

⁴⁸ OSA, 300-8-3, RFE-RL - A Chronology of the Hungarian Revolution, 23 October – 04 November 1956.

Romanian, and Polish Republics”⁴⁹ However, the Kremlin was aware that creation of another neutral country in the Eastern Europe would only lead towards the end of the Soviet influence in Eastern Europe. It was also a domestic issue for Khrushchev. If he would lose Hungary in a similar way as Stalin lost Yugoslavia, it could lead to a possible end of his power and his reign, since Stalinist elements in the USSR were still strong and present in Soviet leadership.⁵⁰ Therefore, the question of intervention was still opened.

The Second Intervention and Yugoslav role

Khrushchev stated in his memoirs that Hungary represented “a historic moment... if the counterrevolution did succeed and NATO took root in the midst of Socialist countries, it would pose a threat to Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, and Romania, not to mention the Soviet Union itself”.⁵¹ However, the Soviets decided to intervene only after the negotiations were held with other communist states. The Chinese delegation, led by Chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People’s Congress Liu Shao-Chi supported the intervention, particularly after Nagy’s decision to reestablish the multi-Party system on 31 October. Thereafter, they believed that “the Kremlin should ‘prevent the imperialist attack on the big socialist family’”.⁵² In a very short period of time, all other countries agreed that the USSR should proceed with the intervention. Final talks were held on Brioni in Yugoslavia moments before the second intervention. Official Belgrade was afraid that counterrevolution could weaken Tito’s regime. Tito realized that unique socialist ideas in Hungary could let reactionary forces to take the initiative. Hence, his decision was to save one-party system in Hungary at all costs.⁵³ Khrushchev and Malenkov visited Tito on 02 November and sought final consultations. These discussions were secret, without recording secretaries, translators, and technicians. Therefore, one of the rare testimonies from this meeting is the memoirs of Yugoslav ambassador in Moscow Veljko Mićunović. On one side of the table were Khrushchev and Malenkov, on the other Mićunović, Aleksandar Ranković, Edvard Kardelj, and Tito. The Soviet leaders informed the Yugoslavs about the outcome of negotiations within the Eastern Bloc. Basically, they only informed the Yugoslavs that the intervention was already prepared. Malenkov was trying to show how Nagy’s government had no right to rule Hungary according to the Hungarian constitution, and that the Soviet intervention was in accordance with Warsaw Pact treaties. Khrushchev was interested to hear the Yugoslav opinion and to discuss the fate of Nagy. The most important outcome of these talks, which

⁴⁹ L. Crump, *op. cit.*, 35.

⁵⁰ C. Békés, *op. cit.*, 211.

⁵¹ Nikita Sergeevich Khrushchev, *Khrushchev Remembers* (Boston, Toronto: Little Brown Company, 1974), 417.

⁵² L. Crump, *op. cit.*, 35.

⁵³ OSA, 300-10-4, RFE-RL - Djilas Break with Communism, March 1957.

lasted for almost 10 hours, were Tito's support for intervention and future Hungarian government led by Kádár. Finally, Yugoslavs succeeded to twist Khrushchev's opinion about Nagy, as Yugoslav side hoped that Nagy could be persuaded to support the future government. If compelled to admit his mistakes, he could help the new government against the counterrevolutionaries.⁵⁴ Khrushchev anticipated that Nagy would be able to help Kádár and the Soviets in restoring order and "to prove his name as a communist".⁵⁵

During the talks between the Soviet leaders and the rest of the Eastern Bloc, Nagy pleaded for help. He declared neutrality on November 1st and Hungarian withdrawal from the Warsaw Pact Treaty.⁵⁶ Nagy was determined to keep the status of the neutral country and even appealed to the UN. He proposed to the General Secretary of UN Dag Hammarskjöld that the next regular meeting of the General Assembly should be about the Hungarian issue. Also, Nagy asked him to help Hungary in persuading the four great powers to assist Hungary in their struggle for neutrality and independence.⁵⁷ After Nagy received the information about the upcoming intervention, he read a proclamation at 5:20 am on November 4th on Radio Free Kosuth. He refused the advice of General Béla Király, who proposed the announcement of the state of war.⁵⁸ Nagy told the people that the Soviets were not invited to come, without giving orders about resistance, but also without the forbiddance to resist against the invaders. The attack was ordered on November 4th in the morning, and it was expected that the rebels would be defeated in three days.⁵⁹ The Soviets would encounter stubborn defense only in Budapest.⁶⁰ The intervention was mostly successful, with some of the resistance pockets that would last only a couple of days. Kádár announced the proclamation of the new Hungarian Revolutionary and Worker's and Peasants' Government.⁶¹ Meanwhile, Nagy came to the Yugoslav embassy as an asylum seeker.

Intervention Aftermath: Growing Tensions between Yugoslavia, Hungary and the Soviet Union

Yugoslavia indicated in several meetings with Khrushchev how important the role of Nagy and his ideas that were presented in New Course were. Tito believed that many opponents of Rákosi had a similar concept of socialism

⁵⁴ V. Mićunović, *op. cit.*, 156–165.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 163.

⁵⁶ C. Békés, *op. cit.*, 332.

⁵⁷ The National Security Archive (NSA), George Washington University Section, Document no. 7 - Minutes of the Nagy Government's Fourth Cabinet Meeting, 01 November 1956, <https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB76/doc7.pdf>, (accessed 20. 4. 2022)

⁵⁸ OSA, 336-0-4, Personal Papers of General Béla Király - Encounter of Yuri V. Andropov in Budapest, 02 November 1956.

⁵⁹ V. Sebestyen, *op. cit.*, 264.

⁶⁰ N. Khrushchev, *op. cit.*, 422.

⁶¹ C. Békés, *op. cit.*, 216.

as he did in Yugoslavia.⁶² However, Tito realized that events in Hungary could go too far, which could endanger the socialist system itself.⁶³ The talks in Brioni showed that Yugoslavia still valued Nagy, at least as a person who was able to help the future government in Hungary. Therefore, the Yugoslav move to grant asylum to him and his colleagues was not unexpected. Moreover, Yugoslav delegation mentioned in Brioni meeting that some communists already sought asylum such as Zoltan Santo, a member of the Hungarian Politburo.⁶⁴ He did that moment before the intervention because of possible political persecution from reactionary forces. However, Santo sought asylum for Nagy too. Yugoslavs received that appeal a day before the Brioni meeting, and the Soviets were given notice about Santo's request. Yugoslavs proposed Nagy to support Kádár's government, which would delegitimize his reign. However, that was not a condition for his asylum, which suited Nagy since he refused to give such statement for moral and political reasons.⁶⁵ In any case, Yugoslavs issued the asylum for 48 persons, including their family members.⁶⁶ Likewise, in his letter to Khrushchev Tito "had promised that he would try to 'work on Nagy'".⁶⁷ Kardelj informed the Soviet ambassador in Belgrade about the Yugoslav talks with Nagy on 4th of November when the invasion started, but it was unclear for the Soviets if that happened before Nagy's last speech on Kosuth Radio or after it.⁶⁸

Soon after the asylum was granted to the Hungarians, Soviet vehicles including tanks surrounded the Yugoslav embassy. Furthermore, the Soviets imposed a blockade, and only Yugoslav citizens could enter the building. That was a huge problem for Hungarian refugees who got the asylum since some of them were sick and Hungarian doctors could not get in. Mićunović was surprised how the Soviets changed their attitude towards Yugoslavia in just twenty-four hours. Mićunović was afraid that the Kremlin was going to use the situation to blame Yugoslavia for Nagy's hiding. The Soviet Union demanded surrender of Nagy and his colleagues to the Soviet or Hungarian authorities since he was an enemy of the communist world. Yugoslavia was now in danger to ruin its relations with the Soviet Union as well as to damage its prestige in the international community.⁶⁹

There are several assumptions why Soviets surrounded the Yugoslav embassy. Firstly, Khrushchev did not complain at the Brioni meeting when Tito mentioned a possibility that Santo would receive an asylum at the Yugoslav embassy. Nagy was mentioned several times during the talks, but the Yugoslavs

⁶² Đoko Tripković, „Jugoslavija i pitanje azila Imre Nađa“, *Istorija 20. veka*, XV, br. 1, (1997), 61.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 62.

⁶⁴ V. Mićunović, *op. cit.*, 160–161.

⁶⁵ Đ. Tripković, *op. cit.*, 64.

⁶⁶ V. Mićunović, *op. cit.*, 167.

⁶⁷ Johanna Granville, "Tito and the Nagy Affair", *Eastern European Quarterly*, XXXII, no. 1, (1998), 29.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 33–34.

⁶⁹ V. Mićunović, *op. cit.*, 168–169.

did not bring up directly that Nagy, among others, also asked for the asylum with Santo.⁷⁰ Secondly, Yugoslavs failed in influencing Nagy to support Kádár, which caused Soviet and Hungarian discontent. Khrushchev was surprised, as well as Yugoslavs, with the content of Nagy's speech moments before the intervention, which was an appeal for help and message for the West. Finally, the Soviet leadership was afraid that Nagy could escape to Yugoslavia or further to the West and from there he could be much more dangerous and without direct Soviet control.

In the beginning, Soviets believed that Yugoslavs would very soon deliver Nagy to the Soviet command since Tito supported the invasion. However, when Soviets realized that Nagy was going to stay in the embassy for an indefinite period, they pressed Yugoslavs by all means necessary. Since the Yugoslavs were unwilling to give up on Nagy, the Soviets alongside with Hungarians started to provoke Tito. The latter, on the other hand, did not want to yield to the Soviets since he considered that Yugoslav support for intervention and the Yugoslav role in influencing Nagy was enough.⁷¹ Every further step towards Yugoslavs concurring to the Soviet demands would be considered negatively in the West. Hence, Yugoslav officials wrote a letter on November 5th in which they requested the protection for Nagy's group and eventual transport to Yugoslavia. Instructions were delivered to Yugoslav ambassador in Budapest Dalibor Soldatić to protest any Soviet attempt that could compromise Nagy's freedom and asylum in the embassy.⁷²

Despite sending this message, the Soviets were determined to capture Nagy. On 5 November at 3:30 pm a Soviet tank opened fire at the Yugoslav embassy. Milenko Milanov, a cultural attaché, died in the gunfire, and several windows were damaged. The Soviet authorities claimed that the tank fire was an accident, but the Yugoslavs claimed the opposite by accusing the Soviet side of intentional fire since they knew the location of Nagy and his group within the Yugoslav embassy.⁷³ The tensions started to grow, and Khrushchev decided to send a letter to Tito, which was, in fact, a response to Tito's proposal to move Nagy to Yugoslavia.⁷⁴ The Soviet leadership rejected his proposal by stating that Nagy should not move to Yugoslavia since they believed that he openly opposed the Soviet intervention. However, the Soviets were silent about the fact that Nagy did not give orders about the resistance. Besides, it was dangerous for mutual relations to move Nagy to Yugoslavia since this could lead to assumptions that Yugoslavia was involved in a counterrevolution.⁷⁵ Finally, it was stated that Nagy could pose a dangerous threat if he would be outside of the country. He did not resign from his position as the Prime Minister and could be

⁷⁰ J. Granville, "Tito and the Nagy Affair", 32.

⁷¹ Đ. Tripković, *op. cit.*, 64.

⁷² AJ, 507, IX, 75/I-37, CK SKJ, Instrukcija Soldatiću, 5. novembar 1956.

⁷³ J. Granville, "Tito and the Nagy Affair", 35.

⁷⁴ C. Békés, *op. cit.*, 395–397.

⁷⁵ Vladimir Petrović, *Titova lična diplomatija*, (Beograd: Institut za savremenu istoriju, 2010), 152.

in front of the opposition in the upcoming events, which would make the situation even more complicated. His presence outside of Hungary would become a force for pulling together counterrevolutionary elements.⁷⁶ Therefore, the Soviet Presidium implied that his transfer to Hungarian authorities was the only right option in this matter.

Tito immediately sent his response on November 8th. In this letter, Tito was trying to explain how Nagy and other communists were under pressure of the old regime forces and that those forces tried to turn true communists including Nagy himself. These forces were capable of taking power and driving away Nagy and his colleagues.⁷⁷ Tito reminded the Soviet leadership of the Brioni talks and the Yugoslav role in resolving the Hungarian issue. He indicated that both the Soviets and Yugoslavs could not know if Nagy really spoke those words about the resistance on the Radio when the intervention began. Tito wrote Khrushchev to settle this matter in a peaceful manner in a friendly tone and to understand the Yugoslav international prestige and position within international system. He did not propose anything new in this letter and in the end, he sent an appeal for stopping all false assumptions that Yugoslavia had anything to do with the counterrevolution since Yugoslavia was supporting Kádár's regime.

Khrushchev ordered Kádár to be more involved in this matter, which happened very soon after Tito's response. Yugoslav ambassador Soldatić received new instructions that meant negotiations with Kádár about this issue. The Yugoslav proposal suggested two options: guarantees for freedom of all persons who received an asylum and their safe return home, or alternatively, their safe transport to Yugoslavia. Official Belgrade even proposed material help for Kádár and Hungary in the sum of 150 million dinars.⁷⁸ Unfortunately, the Soviets were faster with a new proposal – the transport of Nagy and Géza Losonczy to Romania, while the rest of the group should be free. It was unacceptable not only for Yugoslavia but also for Nagy himself to leave Hungary to a country that was a Soviet ally. Furthermore, Yugoslavia realized that the plan for transporting Nagy and his group to Yugoslavia was unrealistic. Also, the Soviets, as well as Hungarian government, did not want to let that happen. That could be seen from a letter of Andrei Gromyko, the member of CPSU Presidium, to Kádár on 9 November in which he indicated that Nagy should stay in Hungary at all cost and that Yugoslavia should be convinced very soon to deliver Nagy to Hungarian authorities. He emphasized the importance of Hungarian internal affairs and law that was violated by official Belgrade and that Kádár should insist on that.⁷⁹

Ambassador Soldatić and Kádár met two times on November 15th and 18th. The first talks pleased both sides since Kádár accepted the proposal to free Nagy and his group of all charges and to safely transport them to their homes.⁸⁰

⁷⁶ C. Békés, *op. cit.*, 396.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 397–400.

⁷⁸ Đ. Tripković, *op. cit.*, 66.

⁷⁹ C. Békés, *op. cit.*, 405.

⁸⁰ Đ. Tripković, *op. cit.*, 67.

Kádár promised guarantees on the next morning, and official Belgrade thought that the crisis was over. However, the Soviets were not pleased with the agreement, because Nagy would still pose a threat to the newly established government in Budapest. The day after, Kádár had a secret meeting with Georgii Malenkov, Deputy Chairman of the Council of Ministers, Mikhail Suslov, member of Soviet Presidium and Soviet envoy in Hungary, Soviet diplomat Averki Aristov and Ivan Serov, head of KGB, after which they decided to capture and deport Nagy and his group to Romania. Kádár agreed, without informing his Party members. The plan for Nagy's capture was top secret, and no one had ever found out what was planned, including Kádár's men. Soviets and Kádár were afraid that the Yugoslavs would eventually find out or that Hungarian people would be enraged and rise against the newly installed government if the plan was not treated as top secret. The new talks were held between Soldatić and Kádár on November 17. In the report of Malenkov, Suslov and Aristov, Kádár announced to the Yugoslav representative that Nagy should be handed to Hungarian authorities; that other members could leave Hungary; previously they had to make a statement of support to Kádár's government; that there would be no hostility towards the new communist regime; finally, that no impediments would be raised if Nagy and his group wanted to go to Yugoslavia.⁸¹ The last point was a surprise since it contradicted Kádár-Soviet proposal. In other words, the Hungarians sent misinformation to Yugoslavs that they would allow Nagy's departure to Yugoslavia in order to drag him out of the embassy. Kádár proposed during this meeting that Nagy's groups should leave Hungary to a socialist country because of their own safety.

Soldatić responded that Yugoslavia could probably do the following: produce an open declaration on this question; eventually terminate asylum to Nagy and his colleagues and bear no responsibility for any further consequences; Yugoslav ambassador would leave Hungary due to a lack of normal working conditions. After this, the Soviets realized that Yugoslavia desperately sought a solution since Nagy became a heavy burden. They believed that Yugoslavia would probably try to save its international reputation and that the Yugoslav declaration was expected to be tendentious. Finally, the Soviets proposed the following: preparation for the arrest of Nagy after he exits the building; demanding the statement of support and that there would be no hostility against Kádár; transfer to Romania; preparing the text of declaration by the Hungarian government for the purpose of Nagy's capture and transport.⁸²

Yugoslavia rejected the proposal of Kádár in a letter sent to him on November 18th. Kádár's demands were unacceptable, not until Yugoslavia receives

⁸¹ Arhiv Aleksandra N. Jakovleva (ANJa), Fond Almanah Rossija XX vek, dokument no. 20 - Telefonogramma G.M. Malenkova, M.A. Suslova, A.B. Aristova iz Budapešta v CK KPSS o peregovorah Ja. Kadara s jugoslavskim poslom v Vengrii po voprosu o gruppe I. Nadja i svoih predložjenijah ob organizaciji ego aresta, 17 November 1956, <http://www.alexanderyakovlev.org/almanah/inside/almanah-doc/108>, (accessed 19. 4. 2022)

⁸² *Ibid.*

Kádár's guarantees for Nagy and his group. On the other hand, Yugoslavia was eager to find a solution. Hence, Tito sent the Yugoslav Deputy for Foreign Affairs Dobrivoje Vidić to negotiate with Kádár. He did not only speak to him, but also to Nagy to inform him that he could leave the embassy after receiving guarantees from Kádár and that he should decide if he wanted to resign or not. However, resignation was unacceptable for Nagy. Therefore, Vidić continued negotiations with Kádár in order to find the solution that would please both sides. They had three meetings: one on November 19th and two on November 21st.⁸³ Vidić claimed that Nagy still suppose that the people would follow him. Nagy genuinely believed that Hungarians still believed in socialist progress. These were the reasons why he did not want to leave Hungary at all. Kádár, on the other hand, insisted on Nagy's transfer to Hungarian authorities. He mentioned how Yugoslavia showed disrespect to Hungarian sovereignty when they decided to grant the asylum. Kádár pointed out that asylum was given on the day when the intervention started, when there was no danger from counterrevolutionaries anymore. Furthermore, Kádár stated how Nagy presented a threat to his legitimacy since he did not resign and that the West could question his legitimacy. Vidić calmly replied that the only important thing in this matter was the recognition of Kádár's regime by all friendly nations.⁸⁴

After long talks the agreement was reached on November 21st. Hungarian government accepted demands from Belgrade in which guarantees were given to Nagy and his group, which meant that Hungarians in the Yugoslav embassy should freely go home. After negotiations, Nagy thanked the Yugoslavs, and decided to leave the embassy. However, Soldatić mentioned in an interview in 1977 that he was displeased with the atmosphere after the agreement, and that he felt, with other Yugoslav diplomats, that something was wrong. The reason for that was the presence of Soviet vehicles and soldiers around the embassy. But, he added: "When the agreement was made, I believed that Kádár was acting fairly. I had no feeling that there was any plot".⁸⁵ The Soviets were also informed about the agreement and that the Hungarian government had sent the guarantees to Yugoslav officials.⁸⁶

Since Soviets continued with initial plan, the deal that was seen as the final compromise between Yugoslavia and Hungary fell apart. The reconstruction of the event was the following. The group was ready to enter the bus that was in front of the embassy for them at 6:30 pm on 22 November.⁸⁷ The bus was prepared by Hungarian authorities. Nagy did realize that something was wrong since the Soviet officer was nearby, eager to enter the bus with the Hungarians and Yugoslav representatives. When Nagy firstly entered the bus, the driver warned him: "Be careful, comrade Nagy, you will not be taken to the

⁸³ Đ. Tripković, *op. cit.*, 67.

⁸⁴ C. Békés, *op. cit.*, 444–446.

⁸⁵ Dalibor Soldatić, „Čim je gužva, Čif je tu“, *Vjesnik*, 28, 29, 30. 11. 1977, 7.

⁸⁶ C. Békés, *op. cit.*, 449.

⁸⁷ Albert Camus, *The Truth about Nagy Affair* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1959), 13.

place they have promised".⁸⁸ Nagy was confused, stepped out of the vehicle, and quickly returned to Yugoslav diplomats. He refused to enter the bus as long as the Soviet officer was in there. Yugoslav diplomats insisted that the Soviet officer should leave the bus, which was done, but temporarily. In the meantime, the ambassador ordered two of his diplomats, first secretary of the Yugoslav embassy Milan Georgijević and military attaché Milan Dropc, to monitor the fulfillment of agreement with the Hungarian government and to be in the vehicle with Nagy and his group.⁸⁹ The ambassador personally talked with the KGB officer, who assured him that he was there only to ensure the safety of all passengers. Nagy finally sat in the vehicle. However, while the driver started his engine, the Soviet officer jumped back in the vehicle.

Two Soviet police cars came from nowhere, with the instructions to follow the bus. In the beginning, the Yugoslav diplomats thought that the bus went in the right direction. However, that did not last for too long since the bus drove to the Soviet command post. Georgijević later told that that the bus "hardly travelled 200 meters when it stopped, and the Russians physically pulled us from the bus".⁹⁰ That happened in the Boulevard Maksim Gorky where the permanent Soviet headquarters was stationed. Yugoslav diplomats started to protest. The Soviet officer, who was with them on the bus, had no concerns about Yugoslav protests since he only followed the orders of the Soviet supreme command. The last desperate attempt was to protest to the Soviet officials in the headquarters that entered the bus when it stopped in front of them. The Soviet officers lost their patience. Firstly, they requested that both diplomats leave the bus. After the Yugoslavs rejected, the officer threatened with a gun, which forced the diplomats to leave. Two police cars were replaced by Soviet armored vehicles and the bus set off for "unrevealed destination".⁹¹ Later it was found out that the Soviets transported the group to the Rakoczi Military School on the outskirts of the city. Guards threatened that they would shoot if anyone tried to escape. Two soldiers entered the bus and hustled Nagy out of it since he refused to do so. Münnich met Nagy and the group at 7:40 pm, in order to see if Nagy was frightened enough to support Kádár and his regime. Münnich tried four days in a row to convince Nagy, but without success. Finally, after four days, Nagy was transferred to the airport, and the plane flew to Romania, where he was held in Snagov castle near Bucharest. Although it was a prison, he was treated decently until his transfer to Budapest in 1957 for the trial.⁹²

Hungarian government claimed that they transferred Nagy to Romania because of his own safety until Hungary become stable. In the meantime, the Soviets accused Yugoslavs of spreading false ideas of socialism that was later used by counterrevolutionaries. Yugoslavia was further seen as an instigator of

⁸⁸ V. Sebestyen, *op. cit.*, 284.

⁸⁹ AJ, 112-220, TA CB, Rojters o događajima u Budimpešti, 25. novembar 1956.

⁹⁰ V. Sebestyen, *op. cit.*, 285.

⁹¹ A. Camus, *op. cit.*, 13.

⁹² V. Sebestyen, *op. cit.*, 289–290.

counterrevolution, which was written in the verdict of Nagy and his close associates. Yugoslavia perceived that as a moral attack, which caused further implications to mutual relations. In any case, Nagy was hanged on 18 June 1958 alongside Pál Maléter, Miklós Gimes, and Jozsef Szilágy, while five others were sentenced to several years of hard labor in prison.⁹³

Controversies about Yugoslav role in Nagy's capture

Although Yugoslavs claimed that they were not familiar with the Soviet plans, some historians claim that Yugoslavia was deeply involved in Nagy's capture that led to his execution. The most voiceful is Hungarian historian Victor Sebestyen. He states that Yugoslav role was, at first, to neutralize Nagy, since Tito supported the Soviet invasion at Brioni. Tito consented to influence Nagy in order to pull out his support for the new regime. However, the author also emphasizes that Tito vetoed the asylum decision which was denied according to the testimonies after the Brioni talks. In his memoirs, Mićunović emphasized that Yugoslavs proposed asylum scenario, without directly mentioning Nagy. Nevertheless, Sebestyen insists that other evidence suggests that Yugoslavs played along with the Soviets. He underlined Kádár's claims in which he had a verbal understanding with the Yugoslavs that Nagy would never reach home.⁹⁴ However, in his writings, Sebestyen did not mention the written guarantees that were given to Yugoslavs. Mićunović mentioned a letter from Kádár in the name of his government on November 21st, which stated the following: "...in the interest of the end of the issue, the Hungarian government... in written form repeats the verbal statement, which was repeated several times, that Hungarian government will not take any measures against Nagy and his group for their previous deeds. We are acknowledging that from this moment granted asylum to this group is not valid anymore and that this group will leave the Yugoslav embassy free to go to their homes..."⁹⁵

Charles Gati, who is a political scientist who fled from Hungary during the 1956 revolt and is now a Senior Adjunct Professor of European Studies at Johns Hopkins University, presented a similar view. In his book, he indicates that Yugoslavia has a role to trap and neutralize Nagy.⁹⁶ Gati goes further by indicating Tito's role in it. He sees Tito as a man of *realpolitik*. On the one hand, Gati believes that Tito would have liked to witness the rise of Titoism in Hungary. On the other hand, Tito expected a good outcome from the Soviet intervention. According to Gati, Tito planned to remain the sole independent socialist leader in Europe. Therefore, Gati accuses Tito of luring Nagy inside the embassy just to be captured by the Soviets and finally neutralized in Romania.⁹⁷

⁹³ Đ. Tripković, *op. cit.*, 71.

⁹⁴ V. Sebestyen, *op. cit.*, 284.

⁹⁵ V. Mićunović, *op. cit.*, 193.

⁹⁶ Charles Gati, *Failed illusions* (Washington D.C., Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2006), 17.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 192.

On the other hand, different documents suggest that Yugoslav authorities were not familiar with the Soviet plans. One of them is a letter that Tito sent to Khrushchev. It was a secret one, unknown publicly until the end of the communist rule in Europe. In this letter, sent on December 3rd, Tito wrote that Nagy's capture was a mistake and that he should have been allowed to return home unharmed. Tito emphasized that Nagy and his group should choose in which country to go and not to transport them to Romania against their will. Tito also stated: "We believed that it would be most beneficial if Nagy were allowed to return to, and to continue to live, in Hungary".⁹⁸ Likewise, in his speech in Pula on November 11th, Tito indeed criticized Nagy's lack of firmness against the counterrevolution. However, his speech was also criticism of Stalinism, the current Soviet leadership, as well as Soviet decisions in the Eastern Bloc. Tito claimed that the first Soviet intervention was unnecessary and that the call for intervention came from Gerő, who was similar to Rákosi, a true enemy of Yugoslav socialism.⁹⁹ Yugoslav authorities believed that this speech provoked harsh reaction from the Soviets, who intentionally arrested Nagy in order to show the Yugoslavs who was in charge in the socialist world. The Soviets became concerned on many issues with Yugoslavia, and after the Pula speech, they did not want to speak about Nagy. Even though Yugoslavs considered Nagy's case as an international question and not as a Hungarian domestic issue,¹⁰⁰ both Soviets and Hungarians dismissed such claims. For example, whenever the Yugoslav ambassador started a talk about Nagy's capture, Khrushchev would get agitated about Tito and the Yugoslavs and also would disagree with Mićunović's opinion that Nagy should have stayed in Hungary.¹⁰¹ Finally, another document that supports the claims of Yugoslav unfamiliarity with the Soviet plans is the Memorandum of Yurii Andropov of 29 August 1957. The Soviet Ambassador was well aware that Yugoslavia would raise its voice against the trial of Nagy's group, which Tito did in Pula's speech in November 1956. Therefore, he made an agreement with the Hungarians to inform official Belgrade that the trial would begin soon since new facts had been found on Nagy's betrayal and his criminal activities.¹⁰² The White Book, issued by Hungarian authorities about counterrevolution, was printed in order to "prove" his treachery.¹⁰³ Andropov expected that Yugoslavs would change their mind when they hear "new" facts about Nagy.

⁹⁸ C. Békés, *op. cit.*, 458.

⁹⁹ „Govor druga Tita u Puli“, *Borba*, 16. 11. 1956.

¹⁰⁰ Yugoslav note to Hungary explicitly requested that the Hungarian government respect international law since the issue of asylum was an agreement between the two countries and not a unilateral decision. Therefore, the Yugoslav government did not consider Nagy's matter over yet. See more: AJ, 112/221, TA CB, AFP o novoj jugoslovenskoj noti Mađarskoj, 6. 12. 1956.

¹⁰¹ V. Mićunović, *op. cit.*, 202.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 541.

¹⁰³ OSA, 398-0-1, USSR International Affairs - White Book Shows Imre Nagy's Treachery, 21 August 1957.

Hence, during the crisis at the embassy, the Soviet leadership, as well as Kádár, started to lose patience, and since an option for Nagy to reach Yugoslavia was unacceptable, they decided to kidnap him after he had left the Yugoslav embassy. It was a top-secret KGB decision,¹⁰⁴ known only to a few people including Münnich and Kádár. Kádár never mentioned to Yugoslav representative Dobrivoje Vidić that Nagy would not reach its home destination. He mentioned it earlier at the time when negotiations were still underway with Ambassador Soldatić, and this could be interpreted as a threat during the negotiations. Later, he tried to deny this, by stating that he did not give any guarantees at all.¹⁰⁵ However, the White Book¹⁰⁶ proves that Kádár signed the agreement with Vidić and gave false written guarantees on Nagy's freedom and non-persecution. Therefore, Yugoslavia was not aware of a potential kidnapping scenario, although it could have assumed it.

¹⁰⁴ Alexander S. Stykalin, "Soviet-Yugoslav Relations and the Case of Imre Nagy", *Cold War History*, V, no. 1, (2005), 11.

¹⁰⁵ OSA 398-0-1, János Kádár Denies that Safe Conduct Was Promised to Imre Nagy, 2 July 1958.

¹⁰⁶ *Bela knjiga o politici Jugoslavije prema Mađarskoj i slučaj Imre Nađa* (Beograd: Savezno izvršno veće, 1959), 155–158.

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ENDING THE NAGY AFFAIR: YUGOSLAVIA, SOVIET UNION
AND THE TERMINATION OF HUNGARIAN REVOLUTION REVISITED

Summary

Relations between Hungary, the USSR, and Yugoslavia had many ups and downs in 1956. It was a time of liberalization of the East, de-Stalinization, detente in International Relations, and a period of reducing tensions between two global superpowers. Consequently, Hungarian Prime Minister Imre Nagy tried to reform the country, and to find Hungarian unique road to socialism. Nagy's reforms endangered the communist regimes and raised a question of system stability throughout the Soviet Bloc. The USSR realized that the consequences of that would be catastrophic for Soviet influence in Europe, particularly after Nagy declared neutrality and a multi-polar political system. The Soviets decided to intervene, backed by their allies and Yugoslavia. Nagy unwillingly became a symbol of one of the biggest resistance against the Soviet Union in Eastern Europe. Instead of becoming a new "Tito", he turned into an example of how the Soviets would deal with any such attempts. The Yugoslavs, on the other hand, supported the Soviet intervention, while simultaneously providing political asylum to Nagy and his group. Yugoslavia was at risk to undermine good relations with the Soviet Union after reconciliation, by refusing to deliver Nagy to new Hungarian authorities. Hence, the Soviet leadership decided to kidnap Nagy after he leaves the Yugoslav embassy. Prior to his capture, three sides concluded the agreement that guaranteed Nagy and his group a free return to their homes. Many documents, letters, and memoirs confirm the Yugoslav surprise in Nagy's capture. Yugoslavs were not informed of that plan, which caused many negative reactions in Belgrade that damaged relations between the three countries until Nagy was executed in 1958.

KEYWORDS: Imre Nagy, Soviet Intervention 1956, Yugoslavia, Hungary, Soviet Union, Eastern Bloc, Socialism