erate decision by Party leaders afraid to let the whole distressing, shocking and for them - dangerous truth be known.

5. Györ

My German Red Cross companions decided that the need for medical aid at Magyaróvár was so urgent that they would return the same evening to the Austrian border to spread the news.

By sheer luck I found a Hungarian willing to drive me to Györ, 20 miles farther on, which would break the back of the journey to Budapest. His car was an ancient and ramshackle Ford, tied together with bits of wire. But at least it was a car, and before we left Magyaróvár we made ready for the journey with a tot each of some ferocious spirit, home-brewed in his illegal still. After the day at Magyaróvár I badly needed a drink; wisely, the Nagy Government had banned the sale of anything intoxicating, even beer. The road to Györ was very dark and very bumpy, but there was neither sight nor sound of fighting. Every single Hungarian Army unit in the Györ-Sopron county had gone over to the revolution and the Soviet Army was sitting tight and doing nothing. I was later to learn how the neutralisation of the Soviet troops had been accomplished.

I reached Györ about 9.30 p.m., booked in at the Vörös Csillag (Red Star) hotel, and shouldered my way through the crowds of people still standing about and holding discussions in the square outside the Town Hall, the seat of the Györ national committee. The word 'national' was not intended to imply that this body arrogated to itself any authority outside its own region; such committees called themselves indifferently 'national' or 'revolutionary'. In their spontaneous origin, in their composition, in their sense of responsibility, in their efficient organisation of food supplies and of civil order, in the restraint they exercised over the wilder elements among the youth, in the wisdom with which so many of them handled the problem of Soviet troops, and, not least, in their striking resemblance at so many points to the soviets or councils of workers', peasants' and soldiers' deputies which sprang up in Russia in

The Hungarian Tragedy

Peter Fryer

1956

For instance, Coutts quoted a Hungarian Communist Party member who said to him during the fighting: 'The feeling here is like that May Day in 1947, when we danced in the streets.'

This was omitted. So was a passage about the 'revolt of the intellectuals'. So was a statement that 'the Communist Party had ceased to be a Communist Party - it had become an organ of the State and nothing else', backed up by what honest Communists had told him: 'Ours is not a Communist Party. You can't change anything.'

Particularly significant was the cutting out of Coutts' statement that the security police was deliberately created by a dominant clique inside the Party, the people who had returned from the USSR: Rákosi, Farkas, and Gerö, and that this dominant clique, 'incapable of independent thought, relied on the thinking of the Soviet Communist Party, right or wrong.

They felt that if the Soviet Party made a turn, then they had to make a turn.'

The Daily Worker also deleted Coutts' considered opinion that there was no reason for calling in Soviet troops on October 24, other than the concern of Gerö and the other leaders to save their skins and their positions. 'They were not called in to restore order nor to defend Socialism,' he told me. His description of how forty AVH men trapped in the Budapest Party headquarters were captured and hanged and of how thirteen and fourteen-year-olds were fighting with machine-guns and tommy-guns was also left out. Coutts told me how Freedom Fighters said to him: 'It is better to die than to live as they have made us live.' The Daily Worker thought that this, too, had better be withheld from its customers. Finally Coutts' forecast of the emergence, for the first time in eight years, of 'a real Communist Party in Hungary, not a Party run by professional politicians and bureaucrats but led by those Communists who have remained true to principle and have suffered for it' - this, too, fell victim to 'normal editing'.

Readers can judge for themselves how far this was in fact 'normal editing and "subbing"', and how far it was the result of a delib-

fast that Friday morning in the Duna Hotel. I limited this dispatch to what Coutts told me for two very good reasons. First, calls were severely restricted, and my piece had to be kept reasonably short - not more than a typist could take down in twenty minutes. Secondly, and more important, it provided an independent assessment of the causes of the revolt by a man whose judgement the paper was bound to respect, even if it no longer respected mine. After all, he had been in Budapest three years - long enough to find out a fair amount.

When the dispatch was received there was a half-hearted attempt to dismiss Coutts as 'politically naive.' George Matthews, assistant general secretary of the Communist Party, who was standing in at the Daily Worker in place of the editor, J.R. Campbell, at that time in Moscow, blue-pencilled the dispatch to ribbons. I gather there was a certain amount of feeling about this among the staff. After all, Fryer might have got drunk, or had a nervous breakdown, or temporarily lost his political bearings and balance. But here was old Charlie Coutts, whom everyone knew as a reliable, level-headed man, backing him up.

As a result of this pressure, it seems, some of the cuts were restored in time for the first edition. Others were restored in between the first and second editions, but many important things - essential, I would have thought, if the readers were to understand the Hungarian turmoil properly -were still omitted altogether. The Daily Worker has made the amazing claim that this dispatch was given merely 'normal editing and "subbing".' In view of the fact that a total of 455 of Coutts's words were omitted altogether (I am not counting my introduction) and several others were subtly changed ('uprising' for 'revolution', 'Mr. Coutts asserted' and 'Mr. Coutts believed' for 'Mr. Coutts said') the editing of such an important interview seems to me to be completely abnormal. The whole effect of the deletions was to water down the piece and to conceal really vital facts from the reader.

Contents

Rákoczy út, carrying the national flag and black flags in honour of the dead. On their way to Parliament Square they met a Soviet tank. The tank stopped, a soldier put his head out, and the people in the front of the crowd began to explain they were unarmed and were engaged in a peaceful demonstration. The soldier told them to jump on the tank; a number of them did so, and the tank set off in the demonstration - 'and I have a photograph of this', said Coutts.

Entering Parliament Square they met another Soviet tank which had been sent to fire on them, and this tank, too, turned and joined the demonstration. In the square were three more Soviet tanks and two armoured cars. The crowd went right up to them and began to talk to the soldiers. The Soviet commandant was saying: 'I have a wife and children waiting for me in the Soviet Union. I don't want to stay in Hungary at all', when suddenly from the roof-tops there were three salvoes of gun-fire. Some of the people ran to the sides of the square for shelter. Others were told by the Russians to shelter behind the tanks. Some thirty people were left lying on the square either dead or wounded, including a Soviet officer. Tanks and cars opened fire on the roof-tops.

'It is not clear to me who it was that began the shooting, _ Coutts added. 'It is more than likely they were security police.' More than likely. And the provocation served its purpose: to prevent fraternisation, and to start the story that Soviet troops had opened fire on unarmed demonstrators. If the Soviet withdrawal had begun on October 24 instead of one week later, better still if the Soviet Army had never entered the fight, and if the AVH had been disarmed and disbanded on October 24, much bitterness and suffering could have been prevented.

My second dispatch from Budapest, telephoned on November 2, dealt with the causes of the revolution and with how it broke out in Budapest. The dispatch consisted entirely of an interview with Charlie Coutts. Except for a short 'intro' of my own, everything in it was taken down as Coutts told it, while we sat together at break-

factory armouries of the Hungarian Voluntary Defence Organisation. The 'mystery' of how the people were armed is no mystery at all. No one has yet been able to produce a single weapon manufactured in the West.

The Hungarian Stalinists, having made two calamitous mistakes, now made a third - or rather, it would be charitable to say, had it thrust on them by the Soviet Union. This was the decision to invoke a nonexistent clause of the Warsaw Treaty and call in Soviet troops. This first Soviet intervention gave the people's movement exactly the impetus needed to make it united, violent and nation-wide. It seems probable, on the evidence, that Soviet troops were already in action three or four hours before the appeal, made in the name of Imre Nagy as his first act on becoming Prime Minister. That is debatable, but what is not debatable is that the appeal was in reality made by Gerö and Hegedüs; the evidence of this was later found and made public. Nagy became Prime Minister precisely twenty-four hours too late, and those who threw mud at him for making concessions to the Right in the ten days he held office should consider the appalling mess that was put into his hands by the Stalinists when, in desperation, they officially quit the stage.

With Nagy in office it would still have been possible to avert the ultimate tragedy if the people's two demands had been met immediately - if the Soviet troops had withdrawn without delay, and if the security police had been disbanded. But Nagy was not a free agent during the first few days of his premiership. It was known in Budapest that his first broadcasts were made - metaphorically, if not literally - with a tommy-gun in his back.

There were forces which still hoped to give the people a thrashing and so bring the Rákosi- Gerö group back to power, and these forces engineered the provocation in front of the Parliament building on Thursday, October 25.

According to Charles Coutts, whom I met a week later, and who still had the details of the whole turmoil very fresh in his mind, a big and completely unarmed demonstration had started from

'A people which enslaves others forges its own chains'.

Karl Marx

'The victorious proletariat can force no blessings of any kind upon any foreign nation without undermining its own victory by so doing'.

Frederick Engels

'If Finland, if Poland, if the Ukraine break away from Russia, there is nothing bad about that. Anyone who says there is, is a chauvinist. It would be madness to continue the policy of the Tsar Nicholas … No nation can be free if it oppresses other nations'.

V. I. Lenin

Preface to the 1986 reprint

Any writer whose first book is thought to be worth reprinting after 30 years, for a new generation of readers, is bound to feel a sense of pride. But my pride in the reappearance of Hungarian Tragedy does not blind me to its flaws. This little book was written in a week.

Or rather, it poured itself on the page white-hot. It bears the marks of haste, emotion and disillusionment. It is not free from naivetés and purple passages. There are two errors of fact: the 'North-East district secretary' quoted in the Introduction was in fact the Durham area secretary; the interview with Charles Coutts took place, not on November 2, but the day before.

Yet, for all its faults, this book does tell the truth about the Hungarian uprising of 1956. To tell that truth was, I thought, my duty to the Hungarian workers who had fought and died so selflessly and whose gallant struggle, so brutally suppressed, I had witnessed.

For telling the truth in this book I was expelled from the Communist Party. Thirty years later, the problem discussed in the Postscript - the regeneration of the world communist movement - is still unresolved. This problem has proved more stubborn, and more contradictory, than anyone could have foreseen. It is the key problem of our epoch, and the future of humanity depends on its solution.

Some of the Hungarians referred to in these pages were soon to fall victim to Stalinist repression. Attila Szigeti slashed his wrists with his spectacles, then jumped to his death from his cell window. Géza Losonczy went on hunger strike. His health had been shattered in Rákosi's jails, where he had suffered a lung haemorrhage;

Secondly, the crowds which had gathered outside the radio station to ask that the students' demands be broadcast were fired on by AVH men, 300 of whom were in the building. This was, without question, the spark that turned peaceful demonstrations ('the quiet and orderly behaviour of the marchers was impressive', Coutts had telephoned the Daily Worker) into a revolution.

What had the students been demanding before the shooting at the radio station? First and foremost the replacement of Hegedüs as Prime Minister by Imre Nagy. The election of a new Party leadership by a national congress. Friendship with the Soviet Union, but on the basis of equality. Withdrawal of Soviet troops from Hungary. Free elections. Freedom of the Press. Academic freedom. The use of Hungary's uranium stocks by Hungary herself.

After the AVH men shot into the crowds the pent-up feeling burst forth. News of the shooting swept through the city like wildfire and soon the people were armed and engaged in running street battles against the AVH. Their demands now crystallised into two points: the abolition of the AVH and the withdrawal of Soviet troops.

Where did the arms come from that found their way so speedily into the hands of the workers and students of Budapest? According to Kádár (Daily Worker, November 20) there were 'hidden arms' on the Szabadsághegy (Liberty Hill), and the young people had been told at midday, before the demonstration, to go to a 'certain place' where they would find them. This version of the arming of the people side-steps the whole question of the attitude of the Hungarian People's Army. The troops in Budapest, as later in the provinces, were of two minds: there were those who were neutral and there were those who were prepared to join the people and fight alongside them. The neutral ones (probably the minority) were prepared to hand over their arms to the workers and students so that they could do battle against the AVH with them. The others brought their arms with them when they joined the revolution. Furthermore, many sporting rifles were taken by the workers from the

At 7.30 that night I was on the telephone to Szabad Nép, giving them a review of British Press comments on the events in Poland and - ironically enough - a short piece about the arrest of twelve British seamen in the aircraft carrier Ocean, following unlawful meetings. I also dictated an article asked for by the magazine Szovjet Kultúra about the Bolshoi Ballet in London. When I had finished, the interpreter, Dobzsa - he used to take my articles down in shorthand, translating them into Hungarian as he did so at about 120 words a minute - said:

'Don't ring off. Comrade Bebrits wants to speak to you.' Anna Bebrits, the quiet, efficient deputy foreign editor, sounded unusually excited.

'There are big student demonstrations,' she said. 'Does the Daily Worker want anything from us?'

'I expect we shall be getting a piece from Coutts,' I said. 'But I'll find out and let you know. Is there any trouble?'

'No,' she said. 'A few nationalist slogans, but everything is good-humoured.'

That was the last conversation I ever had with Szabad Nép. Two and a half hours later telephone communication between Budapest and the outside world had been cut off. What had happened in the intervening time?

Two things had happened.

First Gerö had gone on the wireless to make an address which, I was told, 'poured oil on the flames'. He had called the demonstrators ;'now joined by workers from the factories, to which the students had sent delegations) counter-revolutionaries - 'hostile elements' endeavouring to disturb 'the present political order in Hungary'. In other words he had made it clear to the most obtuse among his hearers that nothing was going to change. Not even the resignation of Martin Horváth, editor-in-chief of Szabad Nép, and of Berei, the chief planning officer, from the Party's Central Committee, could undo the disastrous effect of this speech.

when his new captors carelessly pushed a feeding tube down his windpipe, he died.

Another victim was the 'outstandingly shrewd, well-informed and intelligent Hungarian communist' who is quoted in Chapter 3. His name was Miklós Gimes. He was a very brave man. He took his wife and child to safety in Vienna during the uprising, then went back to Budapest to face arrest. He was hanged in 1958 with Imre Nagy, Pál Maléter, and József Szilágyi, after the shameful farce of a secret trial. The whole business was finished, and the murderers were washing the blood off their hands, before the world labour movement had been given the slightest chance to protest. Gimes and his three comrades refused to compromise. They went to their deaths without confessing to 'crimes' they had not committed. They died as they had lived: sworn enemies of capitalism and Stalinism alike.

Though I only met him once, Gimes's integrity and passion, his fierce love of truth and justice, made a powerful impression on the young man I then was. He represented all that was best in Hungary. I dedicate this new edition of Hungarian Tragedy to his memory.

P.F.

Introduction

There are really two Hungarian tragedies.

There is the immediate and heart-breaking tragedy of a people's revolution - a mass uprising against tyranny and poverty that had become insupportable - being crushed by the army of the world's first Socialist State.

I was in Hungary when this happened. I saw for myself that the uprising was neither organised nor controlled by fascists or reactionaries, though reactionaries were undeniably trying to gain control of it. I saw for myself that the Soviet troops who were thrown into battle against 'counter-revolution' fought in fact not fascists or reactionaries but the common people of Hungary: workers, peasants, students and soldiers. The army that liberated Hungary in 1944-5 from German fascist rule, that chased away the collaborating big landowners and big capitalists and made possible the land reform and the beginning of Socialist construction - this army now had to fight the best sons of the Hungarian people.

At least 20,000 Hungarians dead; at least 3,500 Russians dead; tens of thousands wounded; the devastation of large areas of Budapest; mass deportations of Hungarian patriots; hunger verging on starvation; widespread despair and the virtual breakdown of economic life; a burning hatred in the hearts of the people against Russia and all things Russian that will last at least a generation: these are the bitter fruits of the Soviet leaders' decision to intervene a second time.

There is another tragedy, too. It, too, is written in blood on the streets and squares of Budapest. It, too, can be read in the lines of suffering long-endured on the faces of Hungarian citizens, in

4. How the revolution began

I was not, of course, an eyewitness of the start of the revolution in Budapest on October 23. I have pieced together the account which follows from those who were, both Hungarians and a British Communist, Charles Coutts, English editor of World Youth, who had lived in Budapest for three years.

It began with a students' demonstration, partly to show the students' sympathy for the people of Poland, who that weekend, through Gomulka and the Central Committee of the Polish United Workers' Party, had resolutely rebuffed an attempt by an unprecedented delegation of Soviet leaders to get tough with them. This sturdy assertion of independence captured the imagination of the Hungarians, and the student orators who addressed the demonstration from the statue of Josef Bem, a Polish general who helped lead the Hungarians in 1849, recalled the words of Petöfi:

> Our battalions have combined two nations,
>
> And what nations! Polish and Magyar!
>
> Is there any destiny that is stronger
>
> Than these two when they are united?

The students had started marching and meeting in different places during the afternoon. Their demonstration was at first prohibited by the Ministry of the Interior, but the ban was lifted after the Central Committee of the Party intervened. Nagy himself addressed a great gathering of the students outside the Parliament building, but his words were guarded, and obviously had to be.

'No,' he replied. 'Nor would the majority of Hungarians want to see the clock put back in that way. But every front-rank leader of the Communist Party is mistrusted. Except one: Imre Nagy. He is at present outside the Party, and it is said that he will not come back without certain guarantees.

'The solution is to put Nagy at the head of a new People's Front Government, to return to the new course of 1954 and try to rally people behind that. I mean a real People's Front, not an association of stooge parties. For a long time our Party will have to take a back seat. Both the future of the Party and the future of Hungary itself depend on Nagy and a People's Front government.

'Without them' - and he spoke with great emphasis - 'Hungary is facing disaster.'

This conversation took place on Sunday, August 5. When I returned to London I told my colleagues on the Daily Worker about it. The measure that could have prevented the disaster my friend warned about was taken. But it was taken too late, when the guns were already firing in Budapest. At every stage the Party lagged behind events. At every stage it failed to read the people's mood in time.

The enormous crowds that attended the reinterment of Rajk should have been a warning. But the leaders were blind. The last two catastrophic acts of blindness were Gerö's broadcast on the night of October 23, after the demonstrations had already started, and the calling in of Soviet troops in a request made officially by Imre Nagy, but in actual fact by Gerö and Hegedüs. They were Stalinist to the very end.

the forlorn gaze of the children who press their noses against the windows of Western cars and beg for chocolate, in the tears of men and women who have been promised much and given little. It is the long-term tragedy of the absolute failure of the Hungarian Communist Party, after eight years in complete control of their country, to give the people either happiness or security, either freedom from want or freedom from fear.

Most Hungarians, while they do not want capitalism back or the landowners back, today detest, and rightly so, the regime of poverty, drabness and fear that has been presented to them as Communism. The responsibility for this lies squarely on the shoulders of the Communist leaders, and principally on those of Rákosi, Farkas and Gerö, who promised the people an earthly paradise and gave them a police state as repressive and as reprehensible as the pre-war fascist dictatorship of Admiral Horthy. The workers were exploited and bullied and lied to. The peasants were exploited and bullied and lied to. The writers and artists were squeezed into the most rigid of ideological strait-jackets - and bullied and lied to. To speak one's mind, to ask an awkward question, even to speak about political questions in language not signposted with the safe, familiar monolithic jargon, was to run the risk of falling foul of the ubiquitous secret police. The purpose of this highly-paid organisation was ostensibly to protect the people from attempts at the restoration of capitalism, but in practice it protected the power of the oligarchy. To this end it used the most abominable methods, including censorship, thought control, imprisonment, torture and murder. The tragedy was that such a regime was presented as a Socialist society, as a 'people's democracy', as a first step on the road to Communism.

The honest rank-and-file Communists, inside whose party the reign of terror was in full force ' saw their ideals and principles violated, their sacrifices abused, their faith in human beings rejected in favour of a soulless bureaucracy which mechanically copied the Soviet model and which stifled the creative initiative of a people

that wanted to build Socialism. The honest Communists, inside and outside Rákosi's jails, saw their party brought into disrepute, their ideology made to stink in the nostrils of the common people to whose elevation they had dedicated their lives. No wonder they joined in the people's revolution; no wonder they helped to resist the Soviet invasion.

There is yet another tragedy with which this book must deal to some extent. But it is a British, not a Hungarian tragedy. It is the tragedy that we British Communists who visited Hungary did not admit, even to ourselves, the truth about what was taking place there, that we defended tyranny with all our heart and soul. Till the Twentieth Congress of the Soviet Communist Party half-lifted the bandage from our eyes we admitted what we called certain 'negative aspects' of the building of Socialism. We were confident that healthy criticism and self-criticism would enable these 'negative aspects' to be overcome. After the Twentieth Congress we allowed ourselves to speak of 'errors', 'abuses', 'violations of Socialist legality' and sometimes, greatly daring, 'crimes'. But we were still the victims of our own eagerness to see arising the bright new society that we so desperately wanted to see in our lifetime, and that our propaganda told us was being built.

When, in the Daily Worker last August, I revealed that the standard of living in Hungary had fallen since 1949, and ventured some very mild criticisms of certain inessential features of Hungarian life, the paper came under heavy fire from Communist Party functionaries. The Surrey district secretary complained that such articles were undermining the morale of the Party and making it hard to sell the Daily Worker. The North-East district secretary warned me sternly to 'think again, leave the sniping and the muck-raking to the capitalist Press, and write with passion and enthusiasm about the New Hungary you are privileged to see'. Two months later I was privileged to see the New Hungary collapse like a house of cards as soon as its people rose to their feet, and I must reserve my passion and enthusiasm for the

Such a compromise could not solve the glaring contradiction between the wishes of the Hungarian people and the set-up which Moscow and the native Stalinists deemed good for them. From an outstandingly shrewd, well-informed and intelligent Hungarian Communist, long before removed from any position of influence because he insisted on thinking for himself and telling others what he thought, I had a brutally realistic assessment of the situation. By and large, he said, the Party leaders were hated. The Party itself was corrupt, and at least half of its 700,000 members were simply careerists. Communists who expressed dissenting views had either been put in positions where they could do no harm, or terrorised into silence, or imprisoned, or murdered. 'I do not say killed,' said my friend. 'If a man is executed for crimes he did not commit then that is murder, and whoever is responsible must be punished. In other words, I am calling Rákosi as well as Farkas a murderer, and the people will not be content until he is publicly disowned and publicly brought to justice by the Party.

Until it takes those steps the Party is discredited in the people's eyes, and they just will not listen to us.' My friend said that if next day there were genuinely free elections without the presence of foreign troops, and a guarantee that neither the West nor the Soviet Union would occupy Hungary whatever the result, then the Communist Party would be extremely lucky to poll its 1945 figure of 17 per cent of the votes - and he personally would estimate about 10 or 12 per cent.

'We have to face,' he said, 'a moral problem. How far is one justified in imposing on a country the rule of a Party against the will of the majority of its inhabitants? Even if, "objectively", and from the standpoint of our beloved "historical necessity", that Party represents the "best interests" of the country and of its people? Even if the interests - I would say the great power interests - of a neighbouring Socialist State are involved?'

'Well, what is your solution?' I asked. 'Must there be - or ought there to be - a return to capitalism?'

provinces. Mrs Rajk protested against this formal rehabilitation of a man who had been a good Communist, and demanded that he be given his rightful place in the Party's history. (One of the jokes current in Budapest at that time was: 'What is the difference between a Christian and a Marxist? The Christian believes in a hereafter; the Marxist believes in a rehabilitation hereafter.')

The ferment among the intellectuals was first welcomed by Szabad Nép on June 24, then denounced in an angry Pravda article, upon which the Szabad Nép hastened to carry a Central Committee resolution, passed on June 30, denouncing 'demagogic behaviour', 'anti- Party views', 'vacillating elements', 'articles with a provocative content' and 'attempts to spread confusion'. In the middle of July the Central Committee met, attended by Mikoyan. I arrived in Budapest on July 16, to be told by my friends: 'You have arrived during a very delicate political situation. Big changes are expected. Stand by for a big story.' Two days later the story broke. Rákosi had resigned and General Farkas, as the man mainly responsible for the 'violations of Socialist legality', was reduced to the rank of private and expelled from the Party. Two men who had spent periods in jail as 'Titoites' and had later been rehabilitated were put on the Political Bureau: Kádár and Marosán (a former Social-Democrat). It was big news indeed - so big that Neues Deutschland in Berlin did not believe its Budapest correspondent's account, and rang Szabad Nép to check it. But that the change was essentially a compromise was shown by three facts: the new first secretary was Ernö Gerö, a Stalinist; Imre Nagy, whom the people and the honest Party merbers wanted back in the leadership, was not even readmitted to the Party; and Rákosi retained a good deal of power, as was proved within a day or two by the announcement side by side with the demotion of Farkas of the similar demotion of a relation by marriage of Nagy's. Inquiries revealed that this sop to the Stalinists was given on Rákosi's , orders, without the knowledge or consent of the Political Bureau.

Communists and non-Communists who fought for liberty, won it - and had it torn from their grasp by foreign intervention. Theirs is the glory, not ours. Yes, we Communists are always right; we know all the answers, and if we don't our questioner has base motives - and has he stopped beating his wife? We are the leaders; we are making history. But here was history being made in a way that none of us had foreseen. Our preconceived theories were shattered overnight. Painful though it may be, if we are really Marxists we must be brave enough to revise our theories. We must no longer try to twist or stretch or mutilate the facts to make them fit the Procrustean bed of textbook formulas or of Soviet policy.

I know a former Communist - he eventually left the Party in disgust - who was appalled by what he found during a lengthy stay in Eastern Europe as a journalist. On his return to Britain he went to see Harry Pollitt, then general secretary of the Communist Party, and told him everything that had distressed him. Pollitt's reply was: 'My advice to you is to keep your mouth shut'. The day is over when Communists will follow such advice. Never again shall we keep our mouths shut. The Daily Worker sent me to Hungary, then suppressed what I wrote. Much of what I wrote was concealed even from my colleagues. Both as a Communist and a human being I believe it my duty to tell the truth about the Hungarian revolution. I believe this will help bring about the urgently-needed redemption and rebirth of the British Communist Party, which for too long has betrayed Socialist principles and driven away some of its finest members by defending the indefensible. That is why I have written this book.

1. Arrival - Hungary

A naked girl rose Venus-like from the milky-blue waters of Lake Balaton. Her hair brushed bunches of luscious grapes on the lakeshore at Badacsony. There were more grapes behind her head, at Eger and Tokay, framing the Miskolc blast furnace. Gaudy lengths of cloth, representing the Szeged textile works, ran to the very foot of the four-towered, thousand- year-old cathedral of Nécs. In between were dancing peasants in national costume, peasants in everyday clothes driving tractors, sportsmen proving Hungarian prowess, railway trains speeding to and from Budapest. To one side of the pictorial map stood two idealised, red- scarved Pioneers - solemn, angelic children blowing long trumpets. And around and above stretched an immense scroll welcoming the foreign visitor to the Hungarian People's Republic and bearing that Republic's coat of arms, its most prominent feature a hammer and an ear of wheat crossed and, above, a five-pointed red star. It was this red star that the young soldier was working on.

He whistled happily between his teeth as he bent forward in his ill-fitting uniform, closely modelled on the uniform of the Soviet Army. He was absorbed in his task of picking with a nail-file at the red star. It was not an easy task, for the mosaic was stuck firmly on the wall. It had been put there to stay. But eventually the red star came away. Pocketing his nail-file the young soldier ground the bit of stone to powder with his heel and sauntered away. Another red star was easier to remove. A group of soldiers hauled down the red, white and green Hungarian flag, and carefully cut a circle round the coat of arms in the middle of it, took it out, then hoisted the flag once more.

Uneasy it might well have been. Already there were stirrings among the writers, who had taken the instructions to model themselves on the Russians so literally as to copy the famous 'thaw'. The Stalinists gave István Kovács the task of bringing the writers to heel, and he did so in November 1955 in a speech that Zhdanov would have been proud to call his own. The intellectuals were furious at this tirade.

Then, in February 1956, came the Twentieth Congress of the Soviet Communist Party and the famous secret session report by Khrushchov denouncing Stalin's crimes. It was not long before the substance of this report was common knowledge. The country seethed with discussion. But Rákosi remained, just as the bronze statue of Stalin remained at the edge of the City Park. The demand for Rákosi's removal was put forward more and more openly.

This, however, was not a question that could be settled in Budapest. And people gradually realised that the decision whether Rákosi fell or was confirmed in power was being delayed by a difference of opinion in the Political Bureau of the CPSU. There was speculation as to which prominent figure was on which side, but it could not be more than speculation. All that people knew for certain was that Rákosi's 64th birthday, on March 9, had earned him a more than usually fulsome message of congratulation from the CPSU.

It was the intellectuals, and primarily the young intellectuals, who brought matters to a head.

They held the now famous all-night meeting at the Petöfi circle, run by the youth organisation and named after the great revolutionary poet who fought in the Hungarian War of Independence in 1849. Attended by some 6,000 people, who spilled out into the street, this meeting consisted of a succession of vigorous demands for democratisation and for intellectual liberty. There were further meetings, at one of which Rajk's widow made a moving speech. Her husband's rehabilitation had been announced by Rákosi at the end of March; it was a passing reference made in a speech in the

The AVH. There were Gestapo-like torture chambers with whips and gallows and instruments for crushing people's limbs. There were tiny punishment cells. There were piles of letters from abroad, intercepted for censorship. There were batteries of tape recorders to take down telephone conversations. There were prostitutes retained as police spies and agents provocateurs. And the young brutes who made up this strong arm of the people's democratic State were paid - according to documents found on their dead bodies - 3,000 to 4,000 forints a month as men, 9,000 to 12,000 as officers: three to twelve times the average wage. Plus luxurious flats while thousands in Budapest lived cramped in slums and cellars.

After the death of Stalin in March 1953 there were some signs of a change in Hungary. On July 5, 1953, Imre Nagy took over the premiership and certain concessions were made to the people's wishes. Rákosi retired into the background. There was some correction of the blunders made in economic planning. There was more stress on the production of consumer goods, especially food, and less on heavy industry. People began to breathe a little more freely. But it was not to last. And the way the new course was abandoned, besides being a slap in the face to public opinion, was just one more proof that decisions of the most vital importance to the Hungarian people were taken, not in Budapest, but in Moscow. Malenkov resigned; Khrushchov took his place. Moscow took pepper; Budapest burst into an uncontrollable fit of sneezing. On April 18, 1955, Nagy was ousted from the premiership (by a unanimous vote of the National Assembly) and later expelled from the Party as an incorrigible Rightwing deviationist. Rákosi came back with a bang. The policy of satisfying the people's needs was condemned in a wordy Central Committee resolution that showed every sign of having been both drafted in the Kremlin and imposed by big stick methods on an unwilling and uneasy Central Committee.

headquarters were AVH men. See p. 41.

This was at the Hegyeshalom frontier station on the morning of Saturday, October 27. The Hungarian revolution was less than four days old. Since its outbreak in Budapest on the night of October 23, it had surged irresistibly through the provinces; and now I was seeing the tide of revolt lap the very frontier. Across the road, chafing and fuming behind the red, white and green stripes of the barrier, stood a small army of journalists - mostly Austrian, British and German - being soothed by Austrian frontier police. They had cars but no visas, and at that stage the Austrian authorities were not letting visa-less journalists through. I had a visa but no car. All of us wanted to get to Budapest. Across the barrier we commiserated with each other, and I scribbled a telegram to be sent in Vienna to the Daily Worker announcing that I had crossed into Hungarian territory and was trying to get ahead.

I was still in a state of bewilderment and, I must confess, a little afraid. My naive expectation that as soon as I got to Vienna - or, at the worst, Hegyeshalom - I would be whisked to Budapest like the honoured guest I had been in July had not been fulfilled. My announcement that I was the London correspondent of the Communist Party paper Szabad Nép (which means 'free people') and the special correspondent here in Hungary of the Daily Worker had been treated by the customs officials and soldiers with complete indifference. They told each other that I was a Communist journalist, but they gave me blankets and let me sleep on the sofa in the reception room, and next morning they gave me coffee and simply smiled when I said I had no Hungarian money to pay for it. When, however, I asked if it were possible to telephone Budapest, or at least Györ, to ask for a car to be sent for me, they told me curtly that there was a revolution on, and that both telephones and cars were required for other purposes. It was not till the morning came to the desolate flat fields and I took stock of my position that I noticed that the soldiers were not wearing their cap badges. I was in the hands of troops who - whether one called them revolutionaries or counter-revolutionaries - had revolted against the Hungarian

Government. I could not go back, or, if I did, I would not be allowed to re-enter Hungary on my one-visit-only visa, and my assignment would be over before it had begun. I could not go forward, for I had no transport. I could not stay where I was, for coffee was all they could give me and I was already desperately hungry. The only thing to do was to hang around in the hope that some other journalist, with room in his car, would cross the frontier during the day.

I remembered ruefully the optimism of the young man at the Hungarian Legation in Eaton Place, who assured me as he gave me my visa - 'issued on the personal instructions of Comrade Imre Nagy', he said - that Budapest knew I was coming; it was all arranged; all I had to do if there was no plane from Vienna was go to the Hungarian legation there 'and they will give you every assistance'. That was why I took only £10 with me. I had friends in Budapest and money in the bank there, and even if the Vienna-Budapest planes were grounded, what would be easier than for the Legation in Vienna to send me to the frontier in a car, and for Budapest to send a car to pick me up? Only the previous day the Daily Worker had assured its readers that 'the Government is master of the situation', that 'the situation is steadily improving'.

I had spent the best part of five hours at the Legation in Vienna's Bank Gasse. They were polite and sympathetic. But they could not telephone Budapest - communication had ceased at midnight. They could not lend me a car. And - very regretfully - they could not lend me any money. 'If you want to go to Budapest we cannot stop you,' they said. 'But we cannot help you.'

Among the journalists applying for a visa at Bank Gasse had been Jeffrey Blyth of the Daily Mail, looking resplendent in brand-new clothes. He had flown out suddenly from Cairo and had to re-equip himself for Vienna's autumn chill. But the re-equipment for the Budapest assignment was more than sartorial. He told me how British journalists, his own colleague Noel Barber included, were hiring cars at fabulous prices in Vienna for the hazardous 160-mile run to Budapest; some even bought cars outright. I imagined

The AVH. The oppressors of a whole people, including the Communist Party. Moulded and trained on the approved Stalinist pattern, completely lacking in either political understanding or common humanity, guilty of the most unspeakable crimes. In the British Legation at Budapest I met an Austrian, a gaunt, hollowcheeked man, who sought sanctuary, was refused it since he was not British, and then collapsed in the entrance-hall with a heart attack. He was with us throughout the bombardment. He was not a bitter man, despite his years in the hands of the Soviet secret police and then of the AVH. He bore no special grudge against the fiends who had tortured him; he was too sick and too old in pain to have the energy for hatred. He showed us his body. The Russians had merely stuck cotton wool on his arm and set it alight.

But the Hungarian AVH men, to whom they handed him over, had pinned his genitals to a table and flogged them.

The AVH. Do you wonder that working men and women not only shot them on sight in Budapest, not only strung them up by the score, but then spat in contempt and loathing at the bodies as they swung head downwards? Lynching is wrong, mob justice is wrong, terribly wrong, whatever the provocation. But as each political prisoner was released from the cells to add his story to the indictment, could the citizens of Budapest be expected to confine their anger to pious protest resolutions? And if some of them, in Budapest but not in the provinces, went further and sought out Communist Party officials to vent their hatred on, as some of them did, then who is responsible? It did not need American-trained émigrés, or Cardinal Mindszenty, to inflame the people. Rákosi, Farkas and Gerö had already inflamed them, and Rákosi, Farkas and Gerö are as guilty of the murder of Communist officials in the Budapest Party headquarters at the hands of a vengeful mob as they are guilty of the murder of Rajk.[2]

[2] According to Charles Coutts, forty of those killed in the Budapest Party

and discoveries. And Russian was often the only foreign language taught in a school.

This insensate praise of everything Russian, this blind, mechanical copying of everything the Russians did, extended into every field. Writers and artists and composers were compelled to write and paint and compose in strict conformity with the principles of Socialist Realism, as laid down by the coryphaeus of art, Comrade Stalin. Scientists were required to study and popularise only the achievements of their Russian colleagues, and woe betide a biologist who found fault with Lysenko or a psychologist who found Pavlov inadequate to explain every aspect of human consciousness. And when the world's greatest scientist, Comrade Stalin, pronounced on Marxism in Linguistics, it was not enough for the Hungarian philologists to hold a conference on this immortal contribution to Marxism-Leninism: the historians and economists and mathematicians and geologists had to meet as well to consider its application to their own fields of study. No wonder the revolutionaries tore down the red stars.

Friendship with a Socialist country and gratitude for the blood it spilt in liberating you is one thing: bootlicking is quite another thing.

But by far the worst aspect of the mechanical transference of Soviet methods to Hungary was the atmosphere of suspicion and fear, and the whole destestable security apparatus. When the Soviet Union had a doctors' plot and arrested Jewish doctors, Hungary had to follow suit with a doctors' plot and the arrest of Jewish doctors. And the heart specialist who attended the Party theoretician József Révai was for weeks not allowed to communicate in any way with his family, lest the 'enemy' discover where Révai was staying and assassinate him. The specialist was in fear for his own life, since if Révai had suddenly collapsed and died it would have been the easiest thing in the world for the AVH men to have trumped up a charge of murder against him.

the startled look on the face of David Ainley, the Daily Worker's secretary, if I wired for the money to buy a car. So I gratefully accepted Blyth's offer to give me a lift to Hegyeshalom, where he was meeting Barber and collecting his dispatch. Barber had driven alone through the previous night to Budapest and got through, and might be willing to take me back with him. But Barber, when I met him, was setting out for a tour of Western Hungary. His tremendous personal courage later earned him a bad skull wound from Soviet bullets, and he lay dangerously ill in hospital for many days.

So Blyth and I had set out from Vienna through the drizzle and had reached Nickelsdorf, the Austrian frontier post, about 9 p.m. It was full of journalists and Red Cross men. Inside the guardroom an excited girl was shouting down a telephone something about 'two hundred wounded: they desperately need plasma and anything else you can send'.

'From Budapest?' asked a harassed Austrian officer, seizing my proffered passport and reached for his rubber stamp. 'No', I said, 'to Budapest.' He looked at me in consternation.

'You cannot get to Budapest,' said a young man. 'I shall have a good try,' I replied. 'You will be killed,' he said. 'You are committing suicide.'

It took several minutes to convince them that I meant what I said. They peered at my Hungarian visa, stamped my passport regretfully, and sent two soldiers with rifles to sit in the car with us, an escort along the no-man's-land road that led through a dark, wet wilderness to Hegyeshalom. As I got out of the car the Austrian soldiers shook my hand. I am sure they thought I was mad.

Here I was back again in the first foreign country I had ever visited, a country whose people I loved and on whose soil I felt safe and among friends. A country where all my private symbols for the past fourteen years, most of all the red star of the Soviet Union, were the official insignia. A country where 'we' were in power. A country where a new life was being built, where the workers were in command, where, as Rákosi had put it five years before, 'the

inheritance of the accursed past has disappeared' and 'our working people look calmly forward to tomorrow and build their free, Socialist country successfully according to a plan, in the secure knowledge of a better future'.

A bitter awakening was in store for me.

Rákosi's leadership. He had to be got rid of, as an awful example to dissenters.

While I was in Hungary last July and August I was told how Rajk was made to confess. First he was tortured by Farkas' son. Then, when the softening-up process had made him suitably receptive, a Soviet Communist - 'a Beria man', I was told - put it to him that the Soviet Union needed his confession as a weapon against Tito. If he agreed to do this important political job he would (though officially dead) be well looked after in the Soviet Union for the rest of his life, and his child would be given a good education. He agreed. When they came to take him to the execution, which his wife Julia was made to witness, they put a gag - a piece of wood - in his mouth to prevent his revealing to the soldiers how he had been betrayed. His last words were: 'What are you doing to me?'

A final turn of the screw was the removal of his child from the custody of its mother, and its rearing, by strangers, under another name.

When Rajk and three other Communists executed with him were reburied with full honours last September the ceremony was attended by 200,000 of Budapest's citizens. It was a pity the Daily Worker carried no report of this not inconsiderable event. Its readers might then have been better prepared for the October 23 uprising.

The corruption within the Hungarian Working People's Party was not confined to careerism and terror. The whole of Party education was based, not on the voluntary creative study of the critical, antidogmatic method of Marxism, but on the compulsory assimilation of texts. It turned workers into parrots and cliché-mongers. Members went to classes not because they wanted to, but because it was inadvisable not to be there, every Monday night, from 6.30 to 8.30 p.m. Education of children was just as bad. In August some long-needed revision of textbooks was being undertaken; the old ones were appalling. Not content With teaching the infallibility of Stalin, they told the children all about supposed Russian inventions

Out of Rákosi's own mouth, this is the picture of how the rule, not of the Communist Party, but of a tiny handful of Stalinists, was imposed on 9,500,000 Hungarians. This way of building Socialism could not but lead to the corruption of the Communist Party, in which honest Marxists and honest workers were swamped by an influx of careerists, swarming onto the bandwagon as soon as it became clear that was the way to obtain a lucrative job. But in order to maintain a dictatorship over the honest Communists, free discussion and criticism within the Party had to be stifled. Dissenters were victimised, and if they persisted in their dissent they soon found themselves the object of attentions from the AVH. One honest Communist who paid a heavy price for his honesty was László Rajk.

I attended the trial of Rajk for treason in 1949, and, in common with other Communist journalists there, I was convinced by the evidence and by the lengthy and detailed confessions of Rajk and his fellowaccused. It is all too obvious now that the trial had two purposes. First and foremost it was designed to provide ammunition for the attacks of the Soviet leaders on Tito and the Jugoslav Communist Party. It was on the basis of the Rajk trial that Tito was first called a fascist, and a fantastic plot was alleged, reaching right back to the Spanish Civil War and involving the Deuxiéme Bureau, British Intelligence and the US Secret Service. Largely basing himself on the Rajk trial James Klugmann wrote a book called From Trotsky to Tito (1951). The book was withdrawn, rather belatedly, last April, but Klugmann remains in charge of the education of British Communists. The second, internal purpose of the Rajk trial was to crush every vestige of opposition to Rákosi and his fellow Stalinists within the Hungarian Party. Rajk was in a leading position in the Party during the days of illegality. He was popular, hard-working and honest. He had doubts about the wisdom of

lished by the Hungarian News and Information Service in June 1952. Page references are to this.

2. Magyaróvár

Half-way through the morning the barrier was lifted and a car came through and drew up in front of the customs house. Inside were German Red Cross men and a German journalist. The car was full of food and medical supplies; something had happened at the town of Magyaróvár, ten minutes drive along the main road to Györ. They did not know what, but it was reported that many were wounded. They intended to leave the supplies at Magyaróvár and then try to get through to Budapest to see what was needed there. I begged for a place in the car and they agreed to squeeze up and take me. Soon we were speeding through the Kis Alföld, Hungary's Little Plain, a countryside of harvested fields as monotonously flat as my native Holderness, and that was the only comforting feature of this plunge into the unknown.

In Hegyeshalom village, a few minutes away, adults stared at our car and children waved. But there were not many people about. In Magyaróvár the streets were packed, and the car was at once surrounded by people who tried to talk to us in German, English and French.

There was an air of tremendous tension in the town as if some terrible natural calamity had taken place. It was a feeling such as hangs over a British mining town when a pit disaster draws crowds to the pit-head. Some women were crying. No one smiled. From the disjointed phrases, we learned that a demonstration had been fired on the previous day by men of the secret police. There were eighty dead and between one hundred and two hundred wounded.

We must see the bodies of those who had been murdered. But first would we go to the revolutionary committee, which was in session at the Town Hall?

The Hungarian tricolour and the black flag of mourning flew side by side from almost every house. In everyone's button-hole there was a scrap of red, white and green ribbon and, pinned with it, a scrap of black ribbon.

The revolutionary committee received us with great courtesy. It had been set up after the events of the previous day, and was in continuous session, mainly organising food supplies and arranging contact with the similar committee at Győr, the county town. The twenty members of the revolutionary committee were all local men; none could be called an émigré.

Some were Communists, but rank-and-file Communists, not officials. What had happened to the officials? 'The party secretary was a bully, but he was not a criminal. We told him to go home and stay there for a bit.'

Most of the committee members were former members of the Social-Democratic Party, who for one reason or another had dropped out of political activity since the Communist Party and the Social-Democratic Party were merged in the Hungarian Working People's Party in June 1948. Magyaróvár, its population of 22,000 almost entirely working-class, had elected a town council with a Socialist majority in 1945. But after the merger of the two parties the people's own creative initiative, their desire to build Socialism, was stifled. They were neither consulted nor drawn into the administration of their own affairs. The Party bosses ran the town by issuing orders. There was no feeling that the town and its factories belonged to the people, or that the Party was an organisation of the people, despite all the propaganda about Socialism. 'Entrance allowed only on official business', said a notice at the Party headquarters. Where could the people turn in their poverty? The trade unions were a farce - dominated by Party puppets, and existing not to protect and improve the wages and

the elections for the National Assembly held in November 1945, the Communist Party received 17 per cent of the votes, the Social-Democratic Party 17 per cent, and the Smallholders' Party 56 per cent.

Our Party used the election results to strenghten its position. Therefore it demanded the post of Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior, which it received after some procrastination. (p. 19).

The possession of the Ministry of the Interior made possible the 'unmasking' and 'removal' of leaders of the Smallholders' Party.

In those days this was called 'salami tactics', whereby we sliced off bit by bit reaction in the Smallholders' Party … We whittled away the strength of the enemy. (p. 22).

Indeed one of the 'enemy', Béla Kovács, was 'whittled away' to the Soviet Union for nine years, after being accused of conspiracy to restore the old regime. Rákosi describes the merger of the two workingclass parties in June 1948 as 'the victory of the Communists and the complete defeat of the Social Democratic Party' (p. 29). He goes on to give a revealing description of the capture by the Communist Party of the army, police and State security forces. This was achieved in 'bitter battle … the more so because our Party also had a strong foothold in those organisations … When, in the autumn of 1948, our Party took over the Ministry of Defence, the vigorous development of the defence forces could start' (p. 32).

Then, in a passage of enormous interest in the light of later events, Rákosi turns to the security police:

There was a single position, the control of which was claimed by our Party from the first minute and where it was not inclined to consider any distribution of posts according to the strength of the parties in the coalition; and this was the State Security Authority … We kept this organisation in our hands from the first day of its establishment. (p. 33)

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the people into their confidence in the building of Socialism, the method of relying on the people's own initiative, they chose the method of deceiving the people, of concealing from the people what was being done until some new measure was presented to them as a fait accompli. Fortunately, we have a frank description of how this was done - indeed a Stalinist theoretical substantiation of the entire process - in a speech delivered by Rákosi on February 29, 1952, at the Party Academy of the Hungarian Working People's Party and printed in the February-March 1952 issue of Társadalmi Szemle (Social Review).[1]

This was the famous 'salami' speech, which aroused misgivings in the Manchester Guardian at the time, and a defence by John Gollan. It is a remarkable study in how to make a revolution 'from above' before the people are ready for it, when you have no real mass support but only a foothold in the State machine, an infinite capacity for political duplicity and dishonesty, and Soviet tanks in the background. To read this speech and to see how the Hungarian people were tricked into squeezing twenty or thirty years of political development into five years is to understand the roots of the uprising of October 23, 1956. Rákosi admits that in 1945 the Communist Party had not got majority support, even among the working class. The problems involved in achieving the dictatorship of the proletariat were raised only in narrow Party circles.

We did not bring them before the Party publicly because even the theoretical discussion of the dictatorship of the proletariat as an objective would have caused alarm among our companions in the coalition and would have made our endeavour to win over, not only the petitbourgeoisie, but the majority of the mass of the workers more difficult. (p. 8)

In other words, don't take the workers into your confidence. Trick them, deceive them, conceal from them and from your allies your real aims. This was particularly important since, in

[1] An English translation, The Road of Our People's Democracy, was pub-

conditions of their members but to 'mobilise' them in the struggle for higher production.

They were no longer an instrument of the working people but an instrument of the State. Magyaróvár was a poor town, its poverty made no more bearable by the veneer of Socialism: the red star, the slogans, the portraits of Lenin, Stalin and Rákosi (until recently), the expression elvtárs ('comrade'), and the compulsory May Day demonstrations. The people had been promised a better life, and were prepared to co-operate to the full to achieve it. But life grew worse instead of better. The townsfolk knew from personal experience that the propaganda in Szabad Nép and on the wireless was so much hypocrisy.

This was the story the revolutionary committee told me, and the old Socialists among them, men who remembered what it had been like before the war, were the most vehement and passionate in their denunciation of the 'Socialism' that had been foisted upon their fellow- citizens in the past eight years. 'It has been eight years of hell', they said.

They began to speak of the preceding day's events. On Wednesday and Thursday the word had spread round the factories and streets of the fighting in Budapest. By Friday the whole town was in ferment, and at about 10 o'clock in the morning the people poured out of their houses in a spontaneous demostration. They were unarmed, and at that stage they did not want arms. Their only weapons were red, white and green flags, and occasional rough posters bearing the two fundamental demands of the national uprising: 'End the Russian occupation' and 'Abolish the AVH' There were 5,000 people in the demonstration, including old men and old women, young girls from the aluminium factory, women with their babies in their arms and schoolboys. Singing the Hungarian National Anthem, they marched through their town in the first spontaneous demonstration since 1945. They were entirely peaceful - except that wherever they saw a red star they tore it down. This was not an expression of their desire for the

restoration of capitalism. It expressed their desire for an end of Soviet occupation, for the removal of the Soviet symbols that had been thrust down their throats in place of bread, for the silencing of the empty slogans that had been dinned into their ears in place of truth.

The crowd, a good-humoured one, drew near the AVH headquarters where a huge red star stood out against the sky. 'Take down the red star', they roared.

The reply was a hoarse word of command, the rattle of machine-gun fire, the mowing down of those in the front ranks; then the screams of the wounded.

No warning was given, no Riot Act was read, for Hungary does not have a Riot Act. There was not even an initial burst of firing into the air, or over the people's heads. At the command of AVH Lieutenant Jósef Stefko, two machine guns hidden behind the windows of the headquarters pumped bullets into the thickest part of the crowd. AVH men also threw hand- grenades. The firing went on for four minutes, and some of those wounded were shot again in the back as they tried to crawl away. Men and women, students and workers, children and even an 18-months-old baby were among the victims.

Nothing could now restrain the crowd, and they rushed to the army barracks to pour out the story to the soldiers. Without hesitation the soldiers broke open the armoury and gave the people weapons. There was a fierce battle for the AVH headquarters, in the course of which one of the detachment's four officers was killed. Another was captured and lynched and the other two were wounded and taken to hospital. One of these had died during the night and the other, Lieutenant Stefko, was still lying there; a crowd had gathered outside the hospital and was demanding that he be handed over to them for summary justice.

When we had listened to this story, the revolutionary committee insisted that the German and English journalists go out on the balcony and address the crowds, and then visit the cemetery to see for

and he remained in the Soviet Union until the liberation of Hungary by the Soviet Army. Rákosi's fortitude cannot be denied; but his record as dictator of Hungary from 1945 to 1956 makes it doubtful whether a man who had spent fifteen years in prison and then five years in Moscow, all the time remote from the lives of the ordinary people and ordinary Communist Party members, should have been entrusted with such immense responsibilities. He brought the Hungarian people to disaster and turned the widespread respect and admiration for himself into hatred 'because he could never say "no" to Stalin', a Budapest Communist told me last July, when Rákosi resigned, too late, from the office of first secretary of the Party.

It would be idle to deny the many positive achievements registered in Hungary after the liberation. An immense amount of reconstruction work was carried out, though even in 1956 the effects of the Second World War are still visible. The land reform broke up the great estates of the landowners and satisfied the land hunger of the peasants. Four and a half million acres were distributed among 400,000 peasant families. The great bulk of industry came under public ownership. Until 1949 the standard of living rose. Excellent advances were made in the fields of education, culture and public health. Recreation facilities were provided for workers and young people who had never had them before.

There were many achievements, thanks very largely to the self--sacrificing work of honest Communists, many of whom did two jobs, 14 or 16 hours a day, seven days a week, for months on end, because of the actute shortage of trained personnel. I know one Communist who, the week one big industry was nationalised, worked solidly through three days and nights without sleep. On May Day 1947 -the people of Budapest danced in the streets. Life, they felt, was becoming better.

But life did not get better. It began to get worse. Mistakes were made. Crimes were committed. The Communist Party leaders did not keep faith with the people. Instead of the method of taking

of Hungarian history since 1919, and especially since 1945, made such an uprising inevitable, just as the February and October revolutions of 1917 in Russia were inevitable. Hungary's October had to happen, sooner or later, whether or not the Americans were doing their utmost to provoke trouble. The people could not go on living in the old way.

Hungary has never known democracy, except for four and a half quite abnormal months at the end of 1918 and the beginning of 1919, under the bourgeois-democratic government of Károlyi. The Soviet Republic which followed, and which was crushed after three months by foreign intervention, made serious mistakes. Among them was its failure to win the land- hungry peasants as allies; it socialised the land instead of distributing it to the poor peasants and the agricultural workers. There followed the first fascist regime in Europe, the rule of Admiral Nicholas Horthy de Nagybánya, former commander-in-chief of the Austro- Hungarian Navy. Horthy's regime began with White Terror: the torture and murder of thousands of Communists and Jews. It is said that when members of a British Labour delegation investigating atrocities complained to Horthy that officers responsible for the White Terror were not punished, he replied indignantly: 'Why, they are my best men!'

Under Horthy forty rich families owned practically two-thirds of Hungary. One-third of the total arable land was in the hands of 980 big landowners; 1,130,000 peasants were landless out of a total population of nine million. Trade unions were repressed, and the tiny Communist Party carried out its work in deep illegality and made the kind of sectarian mistakes that are so easy to make under such conditions, with leaders in jail and murdered.

The best known of those leaders was Mátyás Rákosi, People's Vice-Commissar for Trade and Transport, and later People's Commissar for Social Production, in the Hungarian Soviet Republic. Rákosi was in prison from 1925 to 1940 and was tried for his life in 1925, 1926 and 1935. In 1940 the Soviet Government negotiated his release from prison in exchange for some historic Hungarian flags,

themselves the victims of the atrocity. Interpreters were provided, and we faced a crowd of several hundreds: soldiers, workers, students and women. The German said simply that medical help was on the way from West Germany. I did not know what to say; my heart was too full to do more than tell the people that the British people had not yet any reliable news of what was happening in Hungary, that I would make it my business to tell them as speedily as possible, and that I was sure that as soon as the news spread medical aid would be on its way from Britain, too. I have tried to keep the promise to tell the truth I made that day as the black flag hanging from the Town Hall balcony flapped in my face and the faces of the people striken by a grief beyond words merged into a blur in my eyes. I should be interested to know what J.R.Campbell, editor of the Daily Worker, or Mick Bennett, assistant editor, or George Matthews, assistant secretary of the Communist Party, who suppressed the dispatch I wrote about Magyaróvár, would have said to the people of that town if they had been in my place. Would they have insulted their grief with warnings about 'counter-revolution', or delivered a little homily about 'White Terror'? Would they have addressed them in the lofty, omniscient tones of the Daily Worker editorial of the day before, the day this abominable mass murder took place:

What has happened in Hungary during these past days has not been a popular uprising against a dictatorial Government. It has been an organised and planned effort to overthrow by undemocratic and violent means a Government which was in process of carrying through important constructive measures.

And when they were taken to see the dead, as I then was, how would they have described them? As fascists? Reactionaries? Counterrevolutionaries? I should like to know.

They took us in slow, silent procession along an avenue of plane trees to the little chapel and mortuary in the town cemetery. Hundreds went with us; we passed many more coming away, having identified kinsfolk or sweethearts or friends, or having stood in

homage to dead workmates or fellow-students. Some faces were set and stern, others were contorted with weeping, and I wept myself when we reached the chapel and the mortuary. The mourners made way for us and gently pushed us to the very front, so that we should see and know and tell what we had seen. The bodies lay in rows; the dried blood was still on the clothing. Some had little bunches of flowers on their breasts. There were girls who could not have been more than sixteen. There was a boy of six or so. Already in a coffin, lightly shrouded, lay the corpse of the eighteenmonths-old baby. After eleven years of 'people's democracy' it had come to this: that the security police was so remote from the people, so alien to them, so vicious and so brutal that it turned its weapons on a defenceless crowd and murdered the people who were supposed to be masters of their own country.

I did not want to hear any more or see any more. But I was forced to. For several hours I stood at the entrance to the cemetery, hemmed in by a gigantic crowd, a succession of interpreters coming forward to translate through English or French. I must have spoken to well over a hundred people that day alone. All were obviously working-class people. All told more or less the same story. I made a point of questioning every one who claimed to be an eyewitness of the atrocity. I did not want to believe what they told me, but their stories tallied in every important detail. In particular, I sought to make absolutely sure that the demonstrators did not carry arms, and that the arms they ultimately obtained were given them by the soldiers. The answers I received to these points carried complete conviction.

But the crowds spoke also to me of their lives in this small industrial town, of the long years of grinding poverty, without hope of improvement, of their hatred and fear of the AVH. 'I get 700

[1] At the official rate of exchange, 600 forints is worth about £18, at the tourist rate of exchange £9. The purchasing power is probably about £12-£14, but it should be remembered that rents are generally speaking lower in Hungary than in Britain, while clothing, quality for quality, is much dearer. The average wage

believed to be the independence of their country'. On November 16 János Kádár himself was quoted as referring to the 'great people's movement'. On November 19 an ordinary Csepel worker was quoted as saying:

> The West should not believe that the workers fought to bring back Horthy or the landowners and counts. We shall not give back the land or the factories or the mines.

These estimates of the origin of the Hungarian revolution are in direct conflict with the opinion of Mr. V. Kuznetsov, the Soviet delegate, who told the United Nations on November 13 that the uprising was led by fascists and reactionaries and was a matter of 'bloodthirsty orgies' staged by counter-revolutionary forces. Indeed they are in conflict with the statement of Kádár himself on November 19 about 'a wellprepared military campaign.

Clearly there is a deep difference of opinion. There is the view that, although by the eve of the second Soviet intervention reactionary forces had become active (whether that in fact justified the second intervention is a separate issue) the uprising was essentially a genuine popular movement, a spontaneous upsurge of pent-up feeling. And there is the view that the uprising was essentially a fascist plot, planned beforehand, which somehow or other managed to win the support of large masses of honest but deluded workers. Kádár cannot have it both ways. It was either 'a great people's movement', in which the element of reactionary activity was secondary - or 'a well-prepared military campaign' by counter-revolutionary forces, in which the element of mass revolt was secondary.

The view that in origin and in essence the Hungarian revolution was an example of what Marx used to call a 'real people's revolution' is the only view consistent with the facts of Hungarian history, let alone with the observations of eyewitnesses. The logic

3. Background to October

However tragic the outcome of Hungary's revolution of October 1956, it may well have an effect on the development of the international working-class movement no less profound and far-reaching than that other October Revolution of 1917, which gave birth to the Soviet Union and the Communist International. The whole labour movement has therefore a duty to understand why Hungary's October Revolution took place. It would be wrong to dismiss the sudden upsurge of October 23 in Budapest as merely the result of years of effort by American imperialism to bring about the overthrow of Socialism in Hungary. Undoubtedly the Americans had been trying very hard; undoubtedly their reactionary friends inside Hungary, and those who were sent over the border to exploit the situation, tried harder still to gain control of the movement. This is undeniable. But who could be content with this shallow, one-dimensional explanation of a movement which clearly embraced over 90 per cent of the Hungarian people, which produced such dogged mass heroism, and which, as these lines are written, still continues in the form of obstinate strike action by the industrial workers in open defiance of a 'Workers' and Peasants' Government'?

Certainly the Daily Worker could not and did not remain content for long with branding the movement as counter-revolution which had 'staged an uprising in the hours of darkness' (October 25). Four days later it was clear 'that counter-revolutionary actions and just demands of the people were both factors in the situation'. On November 13 the Daily Worker's own early estimate was called 'fantastic' and it was admitted that 'large masses of honest workers came out against the Government' and 'fought for what they

forints a month,' said one. 'I only get 600.' said another.[1] They were ill-dressed, the women and girls doing their pathetic best to achieve some faint echo of elegance. They spoke to me about the AVH men. 'They were beasts, brutes, animals who had sold themselves to the Russians.' 'They called themselves Hungarians and they mowed our people down without hesitation!' 'We shan't leave a single one of those swine alive - you'll see.' They asked me what the West was doing to help, and some asked outright for arms. I for one do not regard these as counterrevolutionaries. If after eleven years the working people, goaded beyond bearing, look to the West for succour, whose fault is that? If the Americans are guilty of seeking to foster counter-revolution with the Mutual Security Act, surely the Rákosis and the Gerös are a hundred times more guilty for providing the soil in which seeds sown by the Americans could grow.

There was a general movement in the direction of the hospital, where an immense crowd had gathered, clamouring more and more insistently with every minute that passed for Stefko to be brought out to them. The German journalist and I were admitted into the hospital, where we met the director's wife and a French-speaking woman who had volunteered to help with the nursing. It was here that I got for the first time reasonably accurate figures of the number of wounded. There had been about 80 wounded brought here, of whom eleven had died, and about 80 had been taken to the hospital at Györ. The need for plasma and other medicaments was desperate if lives were to be saved and so was the need, said the director's wife, to end the tumult outside. A deputation from the revolutionary committee was interviewing her husband to demand that Stefko be handed to the people.

A few minutes later the director was forced to give in, and we saw a stretcher carried by four men appear out of a hut in the hospital grounds. On it lay Stefko, wearing a blue shirt. His legs were

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in Hungary before the revolution was between 900 and 1,000 forints a month - say £25.

covered by a blanket. His head was bandaged. He was carried close enough to me for me to have touched him. He was fully conscious, and he knew quite well what was going to happen to him. His head turned wildly from side to side and there was spittle round his mouth. As the crowd saw the stretcher approaching they sent up a howl of derision and anger and hatred. They climbed the wire fence and spat at him and shouted 'murderer'. They pushed with all their might at the double gates, burst them open and surged in. The stretcher was flung to the ground, and the crowd was upon Stefko, kicking and trampling. Relations of those he had murdered were, they told me, foremost in this lynching. It was soon over. They took the body and hanged it by the ankles for a short time from one of the trees in the Lenin Street. Ten minutes afterwards only a few people were left outside the hospital.

I wrote later in my first, unpublished, dispatch:

> After eleven years the incessant mistakes of the Communist leaders, the brutality of the State Security Police, the widespread bureaucracy and mismanagement, the bungling, the arbitrary methods and the lies have led to total collapse. This was no counter-revolution, organised by fascists and reactionaries. It was the upsurge of a whole people, in which rank-and-file Communists took part, against a police dictatorship dressed up as a Socialist society - a police dictatorship backed up by Soviet armed might.

I am the first Communist journalist from abroad to visit Hungary since the revolution started.

And I have no hesitation in placing the blame for these terrible events squarely on the shoulders of those who led the Hungarian Communist Party for eleven years - up to and including Ernö Gerö They turned what could have been the outstanding example of people's democracy in Europe into a grisly caricature of Socialism. They reared and trained a secret police which tortured all -

Communists as well as nonCommunists - who dared to open their mouths against injustices. It was a secret police which in these last few dreadful days turned its guns on the people whose defenders it was supposed to be.

I wrote this under the immediate impact of a most disturbing and shattering experience, but I do not withdraw one word of it. Much of the rest of the dispatch was never received in London because the call was cut off after twenty minutes, and the first ten had been taken up by three different people giving me contradictory instructions as to the 'line' I should take. Mick Bennett insisted on reading me a long extract from a resolution of the Central Committee of the Polish United Workers' Party. I had had enough of resolutions. I had seen where eleven years of terror and stupidity had led Hungary, and I wanted to tell the readers of the Daily Worker the plain unvarnished truth, however painful it might be. But the readers of the Daily Worker were not to be told the truth. The day after I had sent this dispatch they were reading only about 'gangs of reactionaries' who were 'beating Communists to death in the streets' of Budapest. The paper admitted in passing that 'some reports claimed that only identified representatives of the former security police were being killed'. Next day Hungary disappeared altogether from the Daily Worker's front page.

For many years I had opposed, in what I wrote and said, and in my heart, the crimes of British imperialism in the Colonies. At Magyaróvár on October 27 I vowed that in future I would oppose with equal passion and energy crimes committed by those who called themselves Communists, crimes which besmirched a noble and humanitarian cause.

Peter Fryer
The Hungarian Tragedy
1956

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the 1905 revolution and again in February 1917, these committees, a network of which now extended over the whole of Hungary, were remarkably uniform. They were at once organs of insurrection - the coming together of delegates elected by factories and universities, mine and Army units - and organs of popular self-government, which the armed people trusted. As such they enjoyed tremendous authority, and it is no exaggeration to say that until the Soviet attack of November 4 the real power in the country lay in their hands. Of course, as in every real revolution 'from below', there was 'too much' talking, arguing, bickering, coming and going, froth, excitement, agitation, ferment. That is one side of the picture. The other side is the emergence to leading positions of ordinary men, women and youths whom the AVH dominion had kept submerged. The revolution thrust them forward, aroused their civic pride and latent genius for organisation, set them to work to build democracy out of the ruins of bureaucracy. 'You can see people developing from day to day,'

I was told.

Both sides of the picture could be studied in the Györ Town Hall. There were deputations arriving here, delegations departing there. There was noise and bustle and, outside on the balcony during most of next day, constant speech-making. At first glance one might have seen only flags, armbands, rifles slung over shoulders, a jostling throng of people in room after room; or heard only uproar and argument and jangling telephone bells. But each room had its point of rest: one or two calm, patient figures engaged in turning near-chaos into something like order, sorting things out, soothing the hasty tempers of men who badly needed sleep, organising, advising, building an apparatus to prevent, above all, hunger and demoralisation. These were the leaders - some of them Communists who had at last found the revolution of their dreams, some of them Socialists, many of them indifferent to political distinctions, since all Hungary was now united around two simple demands that even the children of six were shouting. Here was a revolution, to be stud-

ied not in the pages of Marx, Engels and Lenin, valuable though these pages may be, but happening here in real life before the eyes of the world. A flesh and blood revolution with all its shortcomings and contradictions and problems - the problems of life itself. As they took me to see the president and vice-president of this committee not yet forty-eight hours old I caught sight of a portrait of Lenin on the wall, and I could almost fancy his shrewd eyes twinkling approvingly.

The president, György Szabó, a metal-worker, was a tall figure in a shiny blue suit, the inevitable red, white and green ribbon in the buttonhole. But the real personality of the committee was its vice-president, Attila Szigeti, an M.P. for the National Peasant Party (a party that had long been a dormant ally of the Communists: a few days later it renamed itself the Petöfi Party.) Szigeti looked for all the world like an English academic, with his stoop, his untidy hair, his Sherlock Holmes pipe, his bulging briefcase tucked under his arm and his swift, quizzical, appraising glance. His and Szabó's main efforts that Saturday and Sunday were devoted to calming the hotheads among the youth. From all over the county delegates had been coming to demand trucks for a grandiose 'march on Budapest', where fighting between Hungarians and Russians was reported to be still going on. This would clearly have been folly. The national committee, in touch with the Nagy Government by railway telephone, had information that a Soviet withdrawal from the capital was only a matter of two or three days. For young people with rifles and tommy-guns to converge on Budapest would prejudice Nagy's delicate negotiations. I watched Szabó and Szigeti arguing with each fresh delegation, convincing them that their exuberance could only prejudice the success of the revolution, and that such trucks as were available must be used to carry food to the people of Budapest.

No one who was there would pretend that this line of the national committee was universally popular in Györ. The Catholics were conducting a lively agitation outside the Town Hall on the

Sunday afternoon. They mustered around 3,000 people (the population of Györ is 66,000) to hear a priest say, 'I speak to you not as a priest, but as a Hungarian', and demand the removal of the 'compromisers' on the national committee. It was in Györ that I met my first real counter-revolutionary, a young man behind the reception desk at the Vörös Csillag hotel who crossed off the name Vörös Csillag from my bill and wrote 'Royal' in big, bold letters; who kept declaiming in ringing tones: 'This is the proudest moment of our history'; and who said of Szigeti and Szabó: 'They are trying to pacify us instead of mobilise us'. But the majority of Györ citizens seemed to be solidly behind the committee they had elected from their factories. Huge numbers, for instance, had responded to its call for help in the loading of food for Budapest, and I was most impressed by the efficiency of this organisation when I visited the central depot where provisions were assembled and loaded.

By 11 p.m. on the Saturday night over a dozen journalists of different nationalities had arrived in Györ, and Szigeti agreed to give a press conference. He made no bones about his committee's broad support for the Nagy government, 'but there are things which the Nagy government has not yet said'. The basis of the committee was a people's front. They wanted complete independence and the withdrawal of Soviet troops. It was true that Nagy was a Communist, 'but he is a clean man and an honest man'. The next step was to persuade people to start work again.

'Gee, that's all Commy double-talk,' muttered an irate American correspondent behind me.

'This guy's just a stooge.' Obviously the US Press wanted something in the nature of a permanent revolution.

Szigeti told us how the AVH had been overcome in Györ. The ordinary police and the soldiers went over to the side of the workers, and a concerted assault was made on the prison, from which the political prisoners - some of them had been tortured off and on for years in an attempt to extract from them confessions of spying - were liberated. So were a few petty thieves. Three insurgents and

three AVH men were killed, one AVH man committed suicide and three others were taken prisoner. 'They will be put on trial for their crimes,' said Szigeti.

It was in Győr, too, that I met a group of Communists for the first time and was able to have a long talk with them. They were members of a theatrical and puppet theatre company and, hearing that I was in town, they sought me out, took me to their club and gave me a meal.

They were first class comrades, open and forthright about what had happened in the past few days and the past eleven years. One of them, who had left the Party in 1948, when things began to go wrong, was revelling in the new freedom of discussion. It was from them I heard how the Soviet troops at Győr had been neutralised. On the Wednesday Soviet tanks and armoured cars had patrolled the town. Youths had catcalled and thrown apples, and one soldier had levelled his gun as if to fire, but his colleague had knocked his arm down. Then the Russians disappeared to their camp a few kilometres away. By Friday there was news of foraging parties at nearby farms, and the national committee decided to send a delegation to the Soviet commander with the following proposal: that if the Russians would promise to stay away from the town and not fire on people the national committee would supply them with food. That promise, said my Communist friend who had been on the delegation, had been kept.

The Communist Party district organisation had fallen to pieces, but that Sunday, as I changed pound notes for forints at the Ibusz office opposite the hotell, the clerk obligingly translated for me a proclamation by the entirely new district committee - 'all Nagy men' - printed prominently in the local paper that morning. (The slogan by the title-piece was no longer 'Proletarians of all countries unite!' but 'For an independent, democratic Hungary!') The local Party statement declared complete support for the two main demands: abolition of the AVH and the withdrawal of Soviet troops.

The clerk looked up in surprise as I signed my name on the form he passed me. 'I have seen that name many times before,' he said, 'in Szabad Nép.' He paused for a moment. 'What do you as an English Communist think of our revolution?' I told him my first impressions. 'And will you write the truth?' he asked. 'Yes,' I said, 'I will.'

6. Bábolna

That day I had the good fortune to acquire a fine interpreter in Károly, a Hungarian who spoke excellent English. His wife and children were in Budapest and, like myself, he was more than anxious to get there. When the revolution broke out he had been with a German visitor shooting stags in the Bakony hills south of Györ. The German wanted to get out of the country as soon as possible, and Károly accompanied him to the frontier. They passed through the mining town of Várpalota, where the car was stopped by a group of miners who asked that two of their number, both badly wounded, should be taken to the nearest hospital.

One of the wounded miners said as they laid him in the car: 'Carry on the fight, comrades.

Don't give up till we win!' The miners told Károly that they were solidly behind the revolution, and that their workmates at the famous mining town of Tatabánya had risen 'to a man'.

Károly had a plan for getting to Budapest, and he was willing to take me with him. Half and hour's bus ride away, if the bus was running, was the big Bábolna State farm, where he had friends who owned a jeep and might (he stressed 'might') be prepared to lend him it to complete the journey. It turned out that there was a country bus leaving Györ at six in the evening. Two days later the buses were standing in the street with placards saying 'strike' on them. The busmen had decided to show their solidarity with the railwaymen and the revolution. But on Sunday we were lucky. We arranged to meet at the terminus at a few minutes to six.

My actor friends tried hard to persuade me not to go. It was off the main road, where there were chances of picking up a car;

own small way we British Communists, too, can become Freedom Fighters.

in the mouth of the British worker, who is quick to detect and condemn hypocrisy.

Stalinism is Marxism with the heart cut out, de-humanised, dried, frozen, petrified, rigid, barren. It is concerned with 'the line', not with the tears of Hungarian children. It is preoccupied with abstract power, with strategy and tactics, not with the dictates of conscience and common humanity. The whole future of the world Communist movement depends on putting an end to Stalinism. The whole future of the British Communist Party depends on a return to Socialist principles.

That I am ostracised by the petty Stalins in the British Communist Party is of no consequence. What is important, and what must be stopped without delay, is their dragging Socialism in the mud. The writing is on the wall for them. Once too often they have lost an opportunity to speak out in ringing words against oppression. This time their shame is so obvious that anyone who has not retired into a fantasy world can recognise it. Thousands of British Communists in these past few weeks have seen this sickening betrayal of Socialism by leaders who put their faith in T54 tanks rather than in the Hungarian people, who are prepared to spit on a nation's agony and grief rather than venture even the mildest doubt about the infallibility of Soviet policy. For many Communists this tragic betrayal by their leaders has brought a poignant personal dilemma, and they have resolved it by leaving the Party. Their decision is regrettable, for it strengthens the Stalinist hard core at a moment when the chance of removing them has never been so strong.

The British Communist Party will be able to hold up its head before the British people only when it has settled accounts with the dark heritage of Stalinism which still fetters it, which makes its leaders walk by on the other side while Hungary lies bleeding. Then we shall witness the flourishing of a real Communist Party, dedicated to the principles of Socialist humanism. Marx called revolution 'a human protest against an inhuman life'. The Hungarian revolution was precisely that. It has shown the way forward. In our

the road beyond Bábolna ran through mining areas, where there was heavy fighting, and it would be dangerous. But I had to take whatever chance there was of getting through, and this seemed as good as any. As it happened we could get no transport at Bábolna and came back to Györ on the Tuesday. But I was glad to have been to Bábolna; what took place there was a microcosm of the whole revolution, and I was the only foreigner and the only journalist to see it. My friends took me to a restaurant near the station and bought me tea and cakes and laughed as I politely denied that the tea was any weaker than I was used to. 'Be sure to come to us if you come back to Györ,' said Zsuzsa the puppetmistress. I promised, and we said good-bye.

The single-decker bus ran unlit over what felt like a cart-track. On the way Károly told me about Bábolna. It was Hungary's outstanding show farm: 35,000 acres of game preserve and farmland. But the central feature was the celebrated stud farm, where for 200 years Arab and Hungarian horses have been crossed to produce the magnificent Bábolna strain. The whole farm employed over 1,000 workers, veterinary surgeons, stable-hands, game-keepers, foresters, labourers and so forth.

We got off the bus at the main entrance to the farm, and there, by chance, was a friend of Károly's who promptly invited us to stay the night at his home. His father was a shepherd and I would be interested to hear his story. So we set off down a long lane and clambered over a field and across a railway line to a little settlement where our arrival set the fiercest dogs in Hungary all barking at once.

The old man was lying on the couch in his sheepskin jacket when we went in, while his wife, a typical peasant woman in dark blue shapeless garments and greasy apron, sat rosy-cheeked in front of the stove, feeding it with logs. Neither would believe at first that I came from London, but they welcomed me with almost embarrassing hospitality.

'The old man's been at the bottle a bit,' murmured Károly. 'But don't blame him. Perhaps he's had something to celebrate.' He had. He shook my hand vigorously. He seemed a year or two over 70, and his gnarled hands and weather-beaten face, and the faint smell of sheep that clung about him, told of hard work to bring his family to a level of prosperity about that of a skilled worker in Britain. Deaf to our protests they went out and killed ducklings to make us a gigantic meal, first taking the skin off my throat with a soup livid with paprika - not the anaemic stuff you buy as paprika in London but something altogether more caustic.

'They' had called the old shepherd a 'kulak'. Not even a Hungarian word, you notice, but a Russian word meaning 'fist', and easy to apply to a man who has a couple of dozen sheep and knows how to make them pay. 'They' had bullied him into joining an agricultural co- operative, as 'they' had bullied other peasants in the village. Every peasant was rejoicing tonight at the disbanding of this co-operative which nobody wanted. They had taken back their individual pieces of land and their own animals. It was a second land distribution.

'Trying to tell me I don't know how to run things,' grumbled the old man. 'Trying to tell me I'd got to apply Soviet experiences and the latest discoveries of bloody Lysenko.' He hawked and spat voluminously into the stove. What accumulation of mistakes had been piled on this unrepentant 'kulak's' shoulders, I reflected.

But he had another reason for celebration. It appeared that the director of the Bábolna State farm for the past five years had been, not a countryman, but a former ironworker, a Party appointee, who knew nothing about horsebreeding or agriculture, but was sent down to administer from the comfortable side of a desk. Four years ago, before the shepherd was 'de- kulakised', he allowed his sheep to stray one day on to a field belonging to the State farm, a field in which shoots of rye were springing up. According to the shepherd, for rye to be nibbled down by live-stock for a week or two is not a bad thing, as it strengthens the crop. Be that as it may, along

to go on leading, and cannot protect themselves from exposure by an appeal to the Communist principles they have grossly betrayed.

Look at the hell that Rákosi made of Hungary and you will see an indictment, not of Marxism, not of Communism, but of Stalinism. Hypocrisy without limit; medieval cruelty; dogmas and slogans devoid of life or meaning; national pride outraged; poverty for all but a tiny handful of leaders who lived in luxury, with mansions on Rózsadomb, Budapest's pleasant Hill of Roses (nicknamed by people 'Hill of Cadres'), special schools for their children, special well-stocked shops for their wives - even special bathing beaches at Lake Balaton, shut off from the common people by barbed wire. And to protect the power and privileges of this Communist aristocracy, the AVH - and behind them the ultimate sanction, the tanks of the Soviet Army. Against this disgusting caricature of Socialism our British Stalinists would not, could not, dared not protest; nor do they now spare a word of comfort or solidarity or pity for the gallant people who rose at last to wipe out the infamy, who stretched out their yearning hands for freedom, and who paid such a heavy price.

Hungary was Stalinism incarnate. Here in one small, tormented country was the picture, complete in every detail: the abandonment of humanism, the attachment of primary importance not to living, breathing, suffering, hoping human beings but to machines, targets, statistics, tractors, steel mills, plan fulfilment figures ... and, of course, tanks. Struck dumb by Stalinism, we ourselves grotesquely distorted the fine Socialist principle of international solidarity by making any criticism of present injustices or inhumanitites in a Communist-led country taboo. Stalinism crippled us by castrating our moral passion, blinding us to the wrongs done to men if those wrongs were done in the name of Communism. We Communists have been indignant about the wrongs done by imperialism: those wrongs are many and vile; but our one-sided indignation has somehow not rung true. It has left a sour taste

be Communists. Their attitude to the Hungarian revolution is the final proof of this.

Their blind, disgraceful approval of Soviet intervention has shown that they are unfit to lead any longer. They are clearly prepared to destroy the Party as a political force rather than allow free discussion of their mistakes. The sooner they are swept away the better. And I do not doubt that they will be swept away, once the honest, rank-and-file members of the Party realise how shamefully they have been lied to and misled.

The crisis within the British Communist Party, which is now (Daily Worker, November 26) officially admitted to exist, is merely part of the crisis within the entire world Communist movement. The central issue is the elimination of what has come to be known as Stalinism. Stalin is dead, but the men he trained in methods of odious political immorality still control the destinies of States and Communist Parties. The Soviet aggression in Hungary marked the obstinate re-emergence of Stalinism in Soviet policy, and undid much of the good work towards easing international tension that had been done in the preceding three years. By supporting this aggression the leaders of the British Party proved themselves unrepentant Stalinists, hostile in the main to the process of democratisation in Eastern Europe. They must be fought as such.

They were Stalin's men. They did what he told them and they were dependent on him. To what extent is an open secret inside the Party. The famous programme The British Road to Socialism, for example, issued in February 1951 (without the rank and file being given a chance to amend it) contained two key passages, on the future of the British Empire and of the British Parliament, which were inserted by the hand of one Joseph Stalin himself, who refused to let them be altered.

These men remain Stalinists. But Stalinism has been revealed, both in theory and practice, as a monstrous perversion of Marxism. Leaders who still believe in it and still practise it cannot be trusted

came the director and swore at the shepherd, ordering him 'as you wouldn't speak to a dog', to get his sheep off State farm land at once. The old man's command of Hungarian invective was equal to the occasion, and he told the director in a few sentences exactly what his mother was. Whereupon the director punched the old shepherd in the face, knocking him to the ground, and then seized his crook and beat him with it savagely.

That was four years before.

Come the revolution, three days ago, the shepherd's two husky sons had made their way to the director's office. He was not slow to guess their errand, for he reached in his desk draw for his revolver. But they overpowered and disarmed him before he could use it and then beat him. He had left Bábolna and had not returned.

Next morning the newly-elected workers' council was to meet to elect in its turn a leading committee and a new director. A foreign journalist would be welcome. So next morning, after a long farewell to the old couple, who spoke with tears in their eyes of their relations in Canada, we set out for the farm offices. There was time first to look at the horses, to see the tablet in the courtyard bearing the name of the Arab stallion Obayan, grandsire of the Bábolna breed, and to admire the little horses' heads, like white knights, that topped the posts along the fences.

Then we were asked to watch the entry into the Party committee office, the opening of the safe, the discovery of hundreds of dossiers, one for each worker at the farm, in which were recorded his whole career, his political reliability or otherwise, any scrap of information known about him. Any sordid little informer who had a grudge against a workmate could be sure of having his tale, true or false, solemnly recorded on one of these documents. In some cases a man's history was taken back twenty years or more. All over Hungary in these days of revelation the people were finding and burning these dossiers, whose contents were unknown to the individual concerned, which were passed on from job to job and

which might easily prevent promotion or lead to arrest, secret trial, torture, imprisonment or death.

The workers' council meeting comprised some eighty delegates representing every section of the farm. Some sat around a long trestle table adorned with little tricolour flags, others on rows of wooden seats facing the chairman and a woman secretary taking a careful record of the proceedings.

First there were general speeches: about the revolution, its aims and tasks and prospects, and about Bábolna's place in a new, genuinely Socialist, genuinely democratic Hungary. I was given a fairly full translation, and I noted down outstanding phrases: 'We shall obey a democratically-elected Parliament.' 'Our duty today is to make sure we elect the best men.'

'This is our country now.' 'We must set our faces resolutely against any personal revenge.

We don't want Hungarians to kill Hungarians.' 'Rákosi cheated and deceived the people.'

One elderly man got up and said:

I am an ordinary workman. I am convinced that the system we have had up to now was only working for foreign interests. Many of those who joined the Communist Party did so for bad reasons. I ask that those we choose today should be reliable, honest people. We don't want turncoats.

He was warmly applauded. Another delegate addressed 'the English journalist' directly: 'Tell the English people and your friends in England about the heroism of this little country.'

Several who spoke made it clear they were Communists, and they were listened to gravely.

But there was one man who demanded the banning or voluntary dissolution of the Communist Party as a completely discredited organisation. The next speaker, a serious, bespectacled man of about twenty-five, said:

I am against demanding that the Communist Party be dissolved, because in a democratic country there should be freedom for all

As I write there lie in front of me two of the many letters I have recieved from Communists, Labour Party members and others. The writers of these two both spent long periods in Eastern Europe. 'Anyone who has "seen" must speak out', says one. 'It is an imperative duty to speak out and warn.' The other, who lived in Hungary, says: 'Every honest Communist ought to be heartsick at the suffering inflicted by the Party on the Hungarian people.'

The real reason for my suspension is that the leaders of the Communist Party are afraid of the truth. Fortunately they have no AVH to help them suppress it. They kept the truth out of the Daily Worker, but cannot censor what I write elsewhere. They cannot put me in prison. The most they can do is threaten me - and the threat serves only to show their bankruptcy.

Many people have asked me why, when I resigned from the Daily Worker, I did not also resign from the Communist Party. Such a step, they tell me, would be consistent with the horror and revulsion I felt at what I saw in Hungary. To this my reply is that the Hungarian revolution, for all the evil and rottenness it revealed, has not made any difference to the need for a working-class party in Britain based on Marxist principles. In so far as I understand Marxism I agree with it, and I believe that its application to the British people's problems in a creative, undogmatic way will help us build a Socialist Commonwealth in our country and so make our lives much happier. No doubt there will be many readers of this book who are against the idea of a Socialist Commonwealth anyway, or who do not agree with the Marxist idea of how it is to be attained. I respect their opinions, but I hold to mine: that Marxists have a big contribution to make as an organised force to the British Labour movement, both in the field of ideas and in the field of leadership. I am all too well aware that the British Communist Party has been to a large extent discredited through the political dishonesty and mistakes of its leaders and their abandonment of Socialist principles. I would say, however, that just as Hungary was not an example of Socialism or Communism, so these leaders have ceased to

Postscript

Since I began this book I have been informed that the London District Committee of the Communist Party has suspended me from Party membership for three months. The reason given is my 'action in publishing in the capitalist Press attacks on the Communist Party'. The District Committee's statement says that when asked why I had not discussed my views with the editor of the Daily Worker or the Executive Committee of the Party 'he replied that he had no confidence in either'. That is perfectly accurate. The statement ends with a warning, to which my attention is drawn in a covering letter from the district secretary, that if 'Peter Fryer should resort to the capitalist Press or to a capitalist publisher to carry forward his attacks on the Party, this would make it necessary for the District Committee to take further action'. This is quite clearly a threat to expel me if I continue to tell the truth about Hungary.

The publication of this book is my answer.

It is painful after fourteen years to contemplate an estrangement - even if, as I am convinced, it will be only temporary - from a movement which has meant everything in the world to me.

It was equally painful, after nearly nine years' work proudly performed at less than a labourer's wage for the Daily Worker, work which gave me profound satisfaction and joy because I felt able to tell the truth and do battle against injustice every day of my life, to have to resign from the paper because it would not let me do an honest job in Hungary.

The decision is a hard one. But I am not going to be gagged.

parties. But it will have to be a Communist Party that operates in an entirely new way.

This clearly expressed the general feeling of the meeting.

Soon the delegates, in a buzz of excitement, proceeded to the election of their leadership.

Three candidates were proposed for the directorship, all local men. The one whom Károly told me was most likely to head the poll was a tall sober-looking man in riding breeches, some forty-five years old, who came over and chatted with us. Károly said he was an agricultural expert. His popularity was shown when a spokesman for one section rose and said if this candidate did not win, that section wanted him as section leader and hereby got its claim in first. The election was by secret ballot. Everyone was given a slip of paper and wrote on it the name of one of the candidates, and then the slips were collected and the votes counted by the chairman. It all took a very long time indeed, and one of the delegates came across and said to me through Károly something that has stuck in my mind ever since: 'I am sorry it is so slow, but you must understand we have not got any practice in electing people.'

I think my last remaining illusion about the past was destroyed at that moment.

The agricultural expert was elected director by 57 votes against his nearest opponent's 13.

Then the council elected a committee. Fifteen members were chosen, one or two by the delegates from each section. Again it was a secret ballot, and again these novices in democracy took their time. But at last the committee took office and the council meeting broke up.

We left with the delegates, but the committee sent word after us that we were welcome to watch its proceedings for as long as we wished. We sat in for about an hour. All kinds of questions, from the most trivial to the most momentous, were under discussion, and it was impossible to miss the sense of responsibility with which these new leaders approached their tasks. Should they con-

tinue to use the old, tainted word elvtárs ('comrade')? Or would it be better to address each other as polgártárs ('fellowcitizen')? By a large majority the comrades became fellow-citizens. What practical measures should be taken to set up a local militia to keep order and protect farm property? What precisely were the limits of the decisions the director could take without immediately consulting the committee? And, above all, what could this farm do to send food to hungry Budapest? After an exchange of views it was agreed to send a deputation to the national committee at Györ to see how many trucks were available to come to Bábolna and be loaded with meat and milk and eggs and butter and flour for the people of the capital.

At this point we left them, the young man who had opposed the banning of the Communist Party counting a number of proposals off on his fingers. And what has puzzled me ever since, and what puzzles me greatly, is this: where exactly was the 'White Terror' at Bábolna? Where was the 'counterrevolution'? Where were the 'reactionaries'? Where were the 'Horthyites'? Where was 'the terrible spectre of the fascist beast' which, according to D.T. Shepilov's speech at the General Assembly of the United Nations on November 22, had 'risen over the peaceful fields of Hungary'? just what had the workers of Bábolna done to justify foreign intervention?

enough to act in time. A revolution has been crushed, but the troops who crushed it, and the Government they have installed, are sitting on a volcano of hatred and resentment. It will be a very long time indeed before the economy recovers. Already the total loss of production in Hungary since October 23 exceeds 6,000 million forints (£181 million at the official rate of exchange).

It is hard to say what the immediate future holds for Hungary. The present regime, so unrepresentative and so obviously powerless to act on its own, cannot last. There can be no return to the past. Capitalism has nothing to offer Hungary, and most people do not want it.

The return to power of the Rákosi-Gerö group would be unthinkable. Equally, the people do not want the present limbo, this shadow-world of chaos, hunger and despair. If Nagy were brought back as Prime Minister, a representative people's front govenment formed, and the country cleared of Soviet troops the people's co-operation might then be won for the gigantic task of reconstruction that faces this gallant but crippled little country.

The land of Rákóczy and Kossuth, of Petöfi, Vörörsmarty Arany, Ady, Madách and Móricz, of Bartók and Kodály, deserves liberty and happiness. Fresh tribulations may await the Hungarians, but they will win liberty and happiness in the end.

the extraordinary episode of the strike of journalists and printers employed on the Communist newspaper Népszabadság. It was a strike against Government interference with the freedom of the Press. In an attempt to have printed a commentary on the dispute between Pravda and the Yugoslav Communists, the staff of Népszabadság rewrote it every day for several days. But the Government demanded that these Communist journalists should support unconditionally the views expressed by Pravda. In Hungary, as in Britain, many Communist journalists prefer to think for themselves.

Gradually, the truth about events in Hungary is becoming known to honest Communists all over the world. According to the Manchester Guardian's Warsaw correspondent, Polish journalists returning from Budapest 'have described in their papers in the most vivid colours what really happened in Hungary'. The Polish newspaper Zycie Warszawy has roundly condemned Soviet intervention in Hungary, glorified the Hungarians as heroes and attacked the revival of Stalinism. The paper said the Hungarian revolution started like the Poznan uprising in Poland, which was to change the course of Polish history, and developed into 'a mutiny against Stalinism on an international scale'. The real struggle, the paper added, was about Soviet domination of the countries of Eastern Europe.

This comment from Socialist Poland suggests a significant aspect of the Hungarian tragedy: the contrast between Poland and Hungary. In Poland the healthy forces inside the Communist Party acted quickly enough and resolutely enough; by great good fortune the outstanding anti-Stalinist, capable of rallying the bulk of the Party and the mass of the people behind him, and strong-nerved enough to stand up to Russian bluster, had not been shot. Today in Poland the people are behind the Party as never before, democratisation is proceeding swiftly, and there is every chance that Poland will achieve a measure of prosperity in a matter of a few years. In Hungary the picture is a very different and a very sombre one. Rajk was executed and, unhappily, Kádár and Nagy were not bold

7. Budapest

Unable to get transport at Báblona, we returned to Györ with two members of the workers' committee, passing on the way two check-points manned by Freedom Fighters. I spent one more night at Györ, and the evening was made memorable by the hospitality and comradeship of the actors. They were planning a tour of the hospitals to play before the not- too-badly wounded, and they were bubbling over with longterm plans for the vigorous theatre they were going to develop in a really Socialist Hungary.

Next morning I met three Austrian journalists with a free place in their car, and at last I began the final lap of the trip to Budapest. It took us something over three hours to cover the 80 miles, since we had to stop several times at check-points. Funerals were distressingly frequent in the villages. We saw nothing of Soviet troops, but the Hungarian sentries who stopped us told us the glad news that the fighting between Russians and Hungarians in the capital was over, and the Soviet evacuation had begun. This was Wednesday, October 31.

'My friends, the revolution has been victorious, Imre Nagy told a mass demonstration in front of the Parliament House that afternoon. 'We have chased out the Rákosi-Gerö gang. We will tolerate no interference in our internal affairs'. That day Anna Kéthly, after six years in prisons and concentration camps, became chairman of the newly reborn SocialDemocratic Party. That day János Kádár announced the birth of a new Communist Party, the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party, whose ranks would be closed to those responsible for the crimes of the past. That day score upon score of secret police swung head downwards from the Budapest trees and

lamp-posts, and the crowds spat upon them and some, crazed and brutalised by years of suffering and hatred, stubbed out cigarette butts in the dead flesh.

That day British bombs were dropped on Egyptian territory and sank an Egyptian frigate in the Suez Canal, and President Eisenhower called the attack an 'error'. It anticipated the Soviet aggression in Hungary by four days.

At this point of time effective power in Hungary was divided between the Nagy Government, which had the support of the people because it reflected their will - and the armed people themselves, as represented and led by their national committees. It was a dual power.

Delegates from the national committees in western, eastern, south-eastern and southern Hungary were meeting at Györ and putting forward the people's demands: the immediate withdrawal of the Soviet reinforcements that were reported to be arriving in the east; the withdrawal of all Soviet troops by the end of the year; and free elections. Some reports said a provisional government had been formed at Györ, but this seems to have been a garbled version of the demand that representatives from the national committees be included in the Nagy Government. At all events there could be no doubt who held the power in Budapest.

The people who had held the arms held the power.

And who held the arms? Fascists? No, the people who had done the fighting, the Freedom Fighters, the workers of Csepel and Újpest, the students, teen-age boys and girls, bandoliers over their shoulders, hand-grenades stuck in their belts and tommy-guns - 'guitars', they called them - in their hands, the soldiers who had exchanged the red star of servitude for the red, white and green ribbon of liberty. They had won a glorious battle, and for a time (how dreadfully short a time!) they rejoiced, even as they mourned their dead and lit candles on the thousands of freshly-dug graves. Even the children, hundreds of them, had taken part in the fighting and I spoke to little girls who had poured petrol in the path of

10. What now?

'In The Hungarian People's Republic', says the 1949 Constitution, 'all power belongs to the working people,,' For a brief time this autumn that statement became true. The people tasted power, and they are not relinquishing it without a most tenacious struggle. Every day that has passed since the fighting stopped has brought news confirming this book's chief contention: that the turmoil in Hungary was a people's movement against tyranny, poverty and foreign occupation and tutelage. The revolution was defeated - was drowned in blood and buried in rubble and lies, rather; but the movement continues, stubborn, desperate, seemingly irrepressible. The industrial proletariat of Hungary is daily demonstrating before the entire world its calm defiance of a puppet government, buttressed by foreign arms, which has the audacity to call itself a 'Workers' and Peasants' Government'. The government threatens dismissal, cajoles, pleads, bribes with offers of food, but the workers prove that they are the real masters. The miners stand by to flood the pits, the factory workers simply stay away from the factories. They prefer starvation and ruin to submission. This is a people whose spirit will be very hard to break.

Such an episode as the disappearance (or deportation) of Imre Nagy and his companions, allegedly for their own safety, provides fresh evidence of the true state of affairs in Hungary and adds fresh fuel to the flames of the workers' anger and determination. The workers' councils are clearly still flourishing and are refusing to limit their activities to production matters, but are interfering vigorously in affairs of State. Proof of the dissatisfaction of Hungarian Communists with the crushing of the revolution is

told us to get to hell out of it. 'Fine,' said Terry, 'I just wanted to make sure they had bazookas. That bloke had.' In my fear I had not even noticed. A few minutes later we came across this hotel, and were invited inside to meet the commander, an army officer of twenty-six. He recognised that resistance was hopeless. But resist they would until the very end: as individuals, if necessary.

He claimed to be in control of the whole Dohány utca - literally, Tobacco Street - area. We rather doubted this, but he sent a worker in a khaki padded jacket to see us off his 'territory'.

By Saturday, November 10, it was clear that the fighting was as good as over, though the resistance continued in the form of an obstinate general strike. The people of Budapest were out again on their streets, weeping at the devastation they saw, staring sullenly at the Soviet patrols as they rumbled by with that curious insect-gait of tanks. The journalists decided it was time to go, for no telephone lines out of the capital were yet open, and a week-old story was clamouring to be told. How we agitated and waited for our exit permits is no part of the Hungarian tragedy; it is a comedy that is better told elsewhere, as is my fight with a certain Red-hating American journalist to keep the seat I had been allotted in one of the American cars. About 2 p.m. on November 11 we set out, and passed through nine check-points till, at last, we crossed the frontier. Then Vienna, where I telephoned to the Daily Worker the dispatch italicised above. My wife came through half an hour later. 'Are you all right?' she asked. 'I'm all right,' I said, 'but what about my story?' 'The editor won't even let the staff see it,' she said. It was there and then that I knew I must resign.

Soviet tanks and lit it. I heard of 14-year-olds who had jumped to their deaths on to the tanks with blazing petrol bottles in their hands. Little boys of twelve, armed to the teeth, boasted to me of the part they had played in the struggle. A city in arms, a people in arms, who had stood up and snapped the chains of bondage with one gigantic effort, who had added to the roll-call of cities militant - Paris, Petrograd, Canton, Madrid, Warsaw - another immortal name. Budapest!

Her buildings might be battered and scarred, her trolley-bus and telephone wires down, her pavements littered with glass and stained with blood. But her citizens' spirit was unquenchable.

There was still some mopping-up of AVH to be done. At 45 May the First Road, over in the City Park, they discovered the headquarters of the AVH radio jamming branch, and found there a great number of tommy-guns, rifles, pistols, ammunition, hand-grenades and a variety of clothing. One spectacular operation with picks and shovels and pneumatic drills disclosed a vast system of cellars running under the street from the Party headquarters. These cellars, two floors deep, must have taken months, perhaps years to construct. There were six-foot- thick concrete walls, hermetically-sealed doors, vast stores of food and clothing, vast stocks of arms, and a varied apparatus of torture. The whole city knew of the tappings from somewhere deep inside this subterranean fastness, tappings that might have been made by AVH men, or by prisoners, or by both, but which made it impossible to use high explosives freely to blast open the secrets of this maze of tunnels. As far as I know, those trapped down there were still trapped when the Soviet attack began on November 4 … From prisons elsewhere in the city, those who had been in darkness came out into the light and told their stories. From underground cells, sometimes ankle-deep in water, they stumbled into the arms of their deliverers, and it was the latter-day fulfilment of Pushkin's prophecy:

The heavy-hanging chains will fall,

The walls will crumble at the word;

And Freedom greet you with the light,

And brothers give you back the sword.

They were ghosts, many of these prisoners: men and women whom their friends had long ago given up for dead. Men and women like Dr. Edith Bone, former Daily Worker correspondent in Budapest, whom I last met there in September 1949, when she was preparing to return to Britain. I remember going shopping with her and helping her to choose a chess set. A few days later she disappeared, just before she was due to board the aeroplane.

She was accused of espionage, kept in solitary confinement for fourteen months, handcuffed so tightly that her wrists carry a permanent mark, taken before a secret court ' sentenced to fifteen years' imprisonment without being told how long the sentence was, put back in solitary confinement for six months for defying the court and kept in jail for another five and a half years till the revolution set her free.

Dr. Bone prides herself on her phyiscal and spiritual toughness. Others were less tough. On the Friday night I saw 450 prisoners, still in their striped jackets and trousers, like pyjamas, set free from the Gyustofogház jail in Budapest. Some of them were raving mad, and had to be restrained and taken into a gentler custody. Four of the prisoners were engineers who had been accused of sabotage when they built the Stalin Bridge across the Danube. In one of the cells, on the black, grimy wall, one of these prisoners had scratched a poem with a Latin title: Pro Libertate. By the Friday night the revolution had released 5,500 political prisoners.

There were in all three and a half days of freedom, and at times it seemed as if the people of Budapest felt in their bones that the interregnum was destined to be a short one, so ardently did they practise democracy. Life was hardly gay. Only food shops were open. There was no public transport till the Saturday, when a few buses began

tank. I recorded all the authenticated instances of Soviet excesses, since it was well to know how small they were compared with the fantastic and completely false story, later denied by the three main news agencies, of the shooting-up of a children's clinic.

In building after building there are gaping shell holes like eye sockets. In most of the main shopping streets every single window was blown out. Some of the loveliest buildings in the city have had their facades cruelly spoiled.

In 1945 they came as liberators. They wanted Budapest declared an open city, and they sent officers in a car, prominently white-flagged, to propose this to the Nazis. The Nazis waited till the car came within range, then shot its occupants. The Russians took Gellért Hill inch by inch. And now they come back, thrust against their will into the role of vandals and oppressors and destroyers of liberty.

As late as Thursday I visited the headquarters of a guerilla detachment in the VIIth district.

While Soviet tanks were only round the corner, 20-year-olds in fur hats stood outside an hotel, strumming the butts of their tommy-guns as if they were real guitars. As tanks approached they would slip inside and inside was a well-stocked armoury, in the hands of workers and students ready to slip out of the back door and carry on the fight as soon as the hotel was attacked.

The audacity of these boys summed up the whole spirit of the resistance. Anthony Terry of the Sunday Times, his wife and I had crossed the 'lines' (in fact, of course, there were no real lines - just pockets of resistance) without realising it, into an area, five minutes away from the National Theatre, where brisk fighting was still going on. I felt not in the least brave, but Terry insisted on forging ahead, heedless of prowling tanks and stray bullets. He ventured into the Lenin körút a centre of heavy battles, amid the bricks and the stinking corpses, with me creeping after him, trying to look small and not worth shooting. A Freedom Fighter in a steel helmet, hidden in a doorway near one of the ninety-five damaged cinemas,

From windows and from the open streets, they fought with rifles, home-made grenades and Molotov cocktails against T54 tanks. The people ripped up the streets to build barricades, and at night they fought by the light of fires that swept unchecked through block after block.

In the hospitals crammed with wounded, operations were performed without anaesthetics while shells screamed and machine guns sputtered. I was heart-sick to see the army of a Socialist State make war on a proud and indomitable people.

On the Sunday and the Monday, while the din of the artillery bombardment and the ceaseless tank-fire mingled with the groans of the wounded, the battle spared neither civilians nor those bringing aid to the wounded. Bread queues were fired on by Soviet tanks, and as late as Thursday I myself saw a man of about seventy lying dead outside a bread shop, the loaf he had just bought still in his hand. Someone had half-covered the body with the red, white and green flag. Soviet troops looted the Astoria Hotel as far as the first storey, even taking the clothes from the porters' rest room; they ransacked the Egyptian Embassy; they shot dead a Yugoslav diplomat looking out of the window of his Embassy. On the other hand, five Hungarian bullets broke five windows at the British Legation. These are things that happen in the heat of battle and it should be said that the Soviet troops are now making efforts to fraternise with the people. Some of the rank-and-file Soviet troops have been telling people in the last two days that they had no idea they had come to Hungary. They thought at first they were in Berlin, fighting German fascists.

Nothing will make me forget Stalingrad, and the debt the whole world owes to the Soviet Army, whose officers and men were given a filthy job to do in Budapest, a job that many of them obviously hated. By and large, they did it without excesses. I for one believe that the firing on bread queues might well be explained by the fact that many Freedom Fighters fought in civilian clothes, and that in the heat of battle a queue might look menacing from a moving

running, crowded to danger point, and with people clinging on outside. Lorry loads of youth and soldiers and cars with Red Cross flags swept by, but there was little other traffic on the streets. Cinemas, theatres and restaurants were closed. But no one needed the stimulus of entertainment. Political parties sprang up in a ferment of discussion and organisation. I have mentioned the reappearance of the SocialDemocratic Party, the rebirth of the Communist Party and the invigoration of the National Peasant Party as the Petöfi Party. The Smallholders' Party reappeared. A Hungarian Christian Party was formed. So was a new Federation of Trade Unions. Rough placards were hung outside their headquarters. The ice of eleven years had cracked, and democracy had flooded incontinent into the people's lives.

The most visible aspect of this ferment, and the most exciting, especially to a journalist, was the sudden, explosive advent of no fewer than twenty-five daily papers in place of the five sad, dreary, stereotyped sheets of recent years. Very often the Budapest worker used to find exactly the same announcement, word for word, and sometimes with just the same photographs, in Szabad Nép, Népszava, Magyar Nemzet, Szabad Ifjúság and the evening paper Esti Budapest. Now he had two dozen papers to choose from (what a field-day the newsvendors had!) with independent editors, clashes of opinion, fullblooded polemics, hard- hitting commentaries, and, above all, news. Szabad Nép, the Communist daily, came out for a day and then gave place to Népszabadság when the new Communist Party was launched. Népszava, the trade union daily, became the organ of the Social-Democratic Party again. The trade unions brought out Népakarat. The Smallholders' Party resurrected their Kis Ujság after six years. The National Revolutionary Committee brought out Magyar Függetlenség.

The Revolutionary Hungarian Army and Youth Organisation produced Igazság. The Revolutionary Council of Young Workers launched Magyar Ifjúság. The Petöfi Party launched

Új Magyarország. There were Magyar Világ, Valóság, and many more.

I went to see the editor of one of these papers in his office at what had formerly been the Szabad Nép and Esti Budapest building, and which now housed in its warren of offices, more rationally, several newspapers and committees. He turned out to be an old friend of mine, a Communist, whose journalistic skill was being taxed to its uttermost limits by the sudden but welcome blossoming of new writers, principally from among the youth. 'Wait half a minute, will you?' he asked, motioning me to a chair. It was an hour before he had finished, first correcting a mass of copy, then interviewing a stream of shy but enthusiastic youngsters. 'They bring us poems, news items, articles, short stories about the revolution by the score,' he said. 'Some of them are good, some not so good. But we try to help them. New talent. We never suspected it, never.' He asked me suddenly if I would be prepared to help with an English-language newspaper giving the revolutionaries' point of view to the world.

This was the first time I had been faced with a direct decision about helping the Hungarian people, but I did not hesitate. It never came to anything, however, for 24 hours later Soviet guns were pounding Budapest.

I was staying at the Duna Hotel, on the Danube bank a few minutes' walk from the Parliament House. The hotel was practically taken over by journalists, who scrambled desperately each day for the few telephone lines available. To be reasonably sure of getting a call within twelve hours one had to go to the exchange on the fourth floor, where two harassed switchboard operators struggled with an evergrowing pile of slips demanding calls to all over Europe. One day a call to London I had booked for 3.30 in the afternoon came through about two the next morning, far too late for the edition. I managed to get through to Moscow and have a chat with Sam Russell, Daily Worker correspondent there, who was sent to Budapest after my return and resignation. Tass, he said, was sending very little from Budapest. On the whole I was not surprised.

The Minister, Mr. Fry, delivered a tirade against the Daily Worker and its luckless correspondent. Ivor Jones of the BBC and Davidson soothed us both - by Tuesday we could leave the Legation during the day and reconnoitre. Five minutes' walk eastwards the havoc began.

The people of Budapest are hungry today. Many are almost starving. By eight each morning hundreds of thousands are standing in long silent queues all over the city waiting for bread. Shops and restaurants are still closed, and the workers refuse to end their general strike, despite frantic appeals by the new 'Workers' and Peasants' Government.

Back at the Duna I found my room strewn with broken glass. A corpse lay on the opposite pavement. Breakfast was one slice of bread and one cup of tea. Other meals were scanty, too.

The citizens of Budapest must have had less. No one believed the tale that Kádár's Government, miles away at Szolnok for the first few days, had invited this holocaust.

Corpses still lie in the streets - streets that are ploughed up by tanks and strewn with the detritus of a bloody-war: rubble, glass and bricks, spent cartidges and shell-cases. Despite their formidable losses in the first phase of the Hungarian revolution, Budapest's citizens put up a desperate, gallant, but doomed resistance to the Soviet onslaught. Budapest's workers, soldiers, students, and even schoolboys, swore to resist to the very end. And every foreign Journalist in Budapest was amazed that the resistance lasted so long.

Each day we told each other: 'Tomorrow will have finished it'. But the battle of tanks versus men was not so easily won.

In public buildings and private homes, in hotels and ruined shops, the people fought the invaders street by street, step by step, inch by inch. The blazing energy of those eleven days of liberty burned itself out in one last glorious flame. Hungry, sleepless, hopeless, the Freedom Fighters battled with pitifully feeble equipment against a crushingly superior weight of Soviet arms.

9. The second Soviet intervention

Vienna, November 11

I have just come out of Budapest, where for six days I have watched Hungary's new-born freedom tragically destroyed by Soviet troops.

There was general agreement among us at the Duna that the wisest thing was to take shelter in the British Legation, five minutes' walk away. There was a Soviet ultimatum threatening to bomb Budapest, and the Legation cellar offered protection against anything but a direct hit.

Basil Davidson lay in bed reading Tacitus and refusing to get up; but eventually he accepted the majority decision. Crossing Vörösmarty tér while tank-fire rattled and jets screamed overhead I recalled with a pang of nostalgic regret the last time - only in August, but it seemed an epoch ago - I had drunk coffee at the famous pavement café, now closed and deserted.

Vast areas of the city - the working-class areas above all - are virtually in ruins. For four days and nights Budapest was under continuous bombardment. I saw a once lovely city battered, bludgeoned, smashed and bled into submission. To an one who loves equally the Socialist Soviet Union and the Hungarian people it was heart-breaking.

Each day the tanks patrolled the city, shelling the buildings at point-blank range. Each night they withdrew, but the heavy artillery kept up its thunder. Inside the Legation tempers frayed.

The Duna was full of rumours about Soviet reinforcements and troop movements and the seizure of Hungarian aerodromes. About 600 tanks and 30,000 fresh troops were said to be advancing. The Russians were said to be building a broad-gauge railway into Hungary from the USSR. But most of us discounted these rumours. We just did not believe the Russians would attack. Neither did the Nagy Government, which on the Saturday, during a break in the negotiations with the Soviet officers about the withdrawal of Soviet troops, gave a Press conference in the Gobelin room at the Parliament House.

Two members of the new, enlarged cabinet answered questions for over an hour, progress being made painfully slow by the need to translate replies into English, French and German, one after the other. The replies were given by the Minister of State, Dr. Zoltán Tildy, who had been President of the Republic from 1946 to 1948, when he resigned after his son-in-law was accused of spying and arrested, and Géza Losonczy, a rehabilitated Communist. Nagy had promised to appear, but, understandably, found himself too busy.

Both Tildy and Losonczy were quite hopeful about the results of the talks with the Soviet officers. 'There are encouraging signs that they will lead to a further easing of tension,' said Losonczy. 'The talks will be continued at ten tonight,' said Tildy. 'Meanwhile the Soviet side has made a promise that no more Soviet military trains will arrive at the Hungarian frontier.' Had the Hungarian Government any information that the Polish Government supported its demand for the withdrawl of Soviet troops? 'Yes,' replied Losonczy, 'we know that the point of view of the Polish Government is that all that is happening in Hungary is the internal affair of Hungary.'

In view of the suggestions that the Nagy Government was blind to the dangers of counter- revolution, it is worth recalling that Losonczy went out of his way at this Press conference to emphasise those dangers. 'Counter-revolutionary forces are active,' he said. 'The Government declares that it does not desire to let any of the gains of the past period be lost: the agrarian reform, the na-

tionalisation of factories, the social achievements. It desires also to maintain the consquences of the present revolution: national independence, equality between nations, the building of Socialism on a democratic and not a dictatorial basis. The Government is unanimous that it will not permit the restoration of capitalism.' Losonczy said his Government wanted to continue its relations with the Soviet Union 'on the basis of equality'. Then he added laconically: 'Even in the countries of Socialism there are misunderstandings about the character of the Hungarian Government and the present situation in Hungary.'

Tildy was asked point-blank how strong, in his opinion, was the, danger of Soviet attack. He replied:

> I believe it is humanly impossible that such a tragedy could take place. It would be tragic from the point of view of the Hungarian people, from the point of view of the Soviet people, from the point of view of the whole world. That is why I believe it will never take place.

Three hours later the Hungarian Government delegates to the negotiations were arrested by the Soviet authorities. Before dawn next morning we were awakened by the thunder of Soviet guns shelling the city from the Gellért Hill and from the other hills of Buda. The 'humanly impossible' had happened. The tragedy had moved inexorably to its climax. The statue of Stalin might have been toppled from its plinth with blow-lamps and hawsers and broken into ten thousand bronze fragments for souvenirs. But Stalinism, vengeful, cruel, remorseless, had returned to Budapest.

I have met Stil and have a great personal respect for him, as comrade, journalist, novelist and militant, but I should be dishonest if I did not say that the words I have italicised are unworthy of him. The truth about the 'White Terror' has been told by Bruce Renton:

> In the provinces only the AVH was physically attacked. (New Statesman, November 17) I had seen no counter-revolutionaries. I had seen the political prisoners liberated … I had seen the executioners executed in the fury of the people's revenge … But there was no 'White Terror'. The Communists walked free, the secret police were hanging by their boots. Where then was this counter-revolution, this White Terror? (Truth, November 16)

The arguments in favour of the second Soviet intervention do not hold water. But even if Nagy had been making concessions all along the line to fascism, even if counter-revolution had succeeded, even if White Terror had been raging, it must be said, and said openly and with emphasis, that from the standpoint of Socialist principle the Soviet Union would still not have been justified in intervening. The Soviet aggression against Hungary was not merely immoral and criminal from the standpoint of the Hungarian people. It was a clear and flagrant breach of what Lenin called 'that elementary Socialist principle … to which Marx was always faithful, namely, that no nation can be free if it opresses other nations'. November 4, 1956, saw the leaders of the Soviet Union defy Lenin's warning never to 'slide, even in trifles, into imperialist relations with the oppressed nationalities, thereby undermining entirely our whole principle of sincerity, our principle of defence of the struggle against imperialism'.

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of the same corpse was in the paper's possession, but was not used, showing clearly that the lynched man wore AVH uniform.

of AVH men who were lynched. At the Agony of Hungary exhibition in London, and in all the hundreds of photographs I have seen, there was not a single one showing a lynched Communist. But there were many showing lynched AVH men in their uniforms.[1] There was one sequence showing a woman in civilian clothes being molested by a crowd, who accused her of being an AVH spy. The caption stated that the crowd let her go.

Now the only circumstantial evidence for the murder of Communists is that put forward by André Stil in an article translated in World News of November 24. Stil arrived in Budapest on November 12, nine days after the second Soviet intervention. His article was published in Humanité on November 19. Even bearing in mind the assertion of Coutts and others I spoke to that forty of those killed in the Budapest Party headquarters were AVH men, it is impossible to find Stil's account of the treatment of the seven Communists whom he names anything but convincing and horrible. Yet Stil is obviously performing the disagreeable task of a propagandist making the most of a small number of atrocities. His need to have the attack on the Party headquarters begin on October 30 makes him antedate the Soviet withdrawal from Budapest by three days; he describes 'the vandals attacking the liberation monument built upon the Gellért Hill', whereas in fact the main figure was not attacked; and, worst of all, he mentions the AVH and its crimes in the following curious and oblique way:

> Many of those who were there did not at first believe that the Party and its active members were being attacked, but that the attack was directed to the members of a secret police about whom the most unlikely stones were being told.

[1] On November 14 the Daily Worker published under the headline The White Terror in Hungary a photograph of 'the body of a lynched Communist Party member in one of the wrecked Budapest Party offices'. Another photograph

8. Revolution and counter-revolution

The question of the origin of the Hungarian revolution was discussed in Chapter Three. It was argued that the revolution was not a well-prepared plot by counter-revolutionary forces, but a genuine upsurge of the overwhelming majority of the Hungarian people, for whom life had become intolerable - an upsurge prepared for by the past thirty-seven years and called forth in particular by the blunders, crimes and trickery of the Stalinist leaders of the Communist Party. There are some who would accept this view, and who would deplore the initial Soviet intervention, but who would defend the second Soviet intervention as a regrettable, but bitter, necessity. Three arguments are advanced to support this defence. In the first place it is said that the Nagy government as reconstituted on Saturday, November 3, had moved considerably to the Right, and was on the point of sliding still further to the Right, since it included people who wanted not merely to neutralise Hungary but to restore capitalism and landlordism. Secondly, it is held that a growing danger of counter-revolution, the increasing activity of reactionary forces throughout the country, which the Nagy government was powerless to check, made Soviet intervention imperative. (Cardinal Mindszenty's broadcast on the evening of November 3 is usually cited as proof.) Thirdly, the defenders of the second Soviet intervention claim that White Terror was raging in the country, and that prompt action by Soviet troops was needed to save the lives of Communists. I propose to try to answer these arguments in turn.

The character of the Nagy Government on the eve of the Soviet attack, and the positions taken up by the parties represented in it, have been analysed by Daniel Norman in an article in Tiibune of November 23, 1956, to which I am indebted for some of the translations below.

The 'Inner Cabinet' of three Communists and four non-Communists had been replaced by a Government consisting of two representatives of the Socialist Workers' (Communist) Party, three each from the Social-Democratic Party and the Smallholders' Party, two from the Petöfi (National Peasant) Party and - what Norman does not mention - one representative of the revolutionary committees, Colonel Pál Maléter, who sat as Minister of War, and who was one of the two delegates arrested by the Russians. The suggestion seems to be that this change meant a certain swamping of the Communists, and that the non-Communists in the coalition could not be trusted to retain Socialism, but would pave the way for fascism.

To which it must be answered first, that this coalition was more truly representative of the Hungarian people than any government Hungary had known since 1947: it was a real people's front goverment, and, if the matter had been put to the test, would undoubtedly have enjoyed the trust of the national committees; and, secondly, that statements by responsible leaders of the three non-Communist parties in the coalition gave no grounds whatever for branding them as enemies of Socialism. In the first issue of the new Népszava, on November I, the Socialist leader Anna Kéthly had written:

The Social-Democratic Party ... has won its chance of living, and it has won this from a regime which called itself a popular democracy, but which in form and essence was neither popular nor democratic. We greet with profound respect the heroes who have made possible the rebirth of the party, thousands of young intellectuals and workers who have fought, starving and in rags, spurred on by the idea of a free and independent Hungary ... Freed from

Union to have refused to intervene would have been 'inhuman'. Leaving aside the still uncertain question of whether anyone ever did appeal to the Soviet Union to intervene, let us make quite sure what White Terror is. just as Red Terror is the organised, systematic repression by a proletarian dictatorship of its counter-revolutionary opponents, so White Terror is the organised, systematic repression by a bourgeois dictatorship of its revolutionary opponents.

Heaven help Andrew Rothstein and those others who call the state of affairs in Hungary on November 1, 2 and 3 'White Terror' if they ever come face to face with real White Terror. In ten days the Versailles army which suppressed the Paris Commune of 1871 slaughtered between 20,000 and 30,000 men, women and children, either in battle or in cold blood, amid terrible scenes of cruelty and suffering. 'The ground is paved with their corpses', gloated Thiers. Another 20,000 were transported and 7,800 sent to the coastal fortresses. That was White Terror. Thousands of Communists and Jews were tortured and murdered after the suppression of the Hungarian Soviet Republic of 1919, and hideous atrocities took place at Orgovány and Siófok. That was White Terror. In 1927 Chiang Kai-shek massacred 5,000 organised workers in Shanghai. That was White Terror. From the advent of Hitler to the defeat of fascist Germany untold millions of Communists, Socialists, trade unionists, Jews and Christians were murdered. That was White Terror. It is perfectly true that a section of the population of Budapest, outraged to the pitch of madness by the crimes of the secret police, was seized with a lust to exterminate Communists. It is true that the innocent suffered as well as the guilty. This is a painful and distressing fact. But to describe the murder of a number of Communists (which all observers agree was confined to Budapest) as 'White Terror' necessitating Soviet intervention is to describe events in Hungary in a one-sided, propagandist way. How many innocent Communists were murdered in Budapest? Twenty? Fifty? I do not know. But certainly fewer - far, far fewer - than the number

to private ownership came in a sentence beginning: 'We want a classless society'! As Jones said, the speech was 'reminiscent … of a Labour Party policy statement'.

There is one further proof of how false was the claim that the Soviet troops went into action against reactionaries and fascists, and that is the indisputable fact that they were greeted, not with joy, as the Soviet communiqués claimed, but with the white-hot, patriotic fury of a people in arms; and that it was the industrial workers who resisted them to the end. 'Soviet troops are re-establishing order … We Soviet soldiers and officers are your selfless friends', said the Soviet communiqué of November 5. It was the proletariat of Hungary, above all, that fought the tanks which came to destroy the revolutionary order they had already established in the shape of their workers' councils. In my dispatch of November 11, I asked:

> If the Soviet intervention was necessary to put down counterrevolution, how is it to be explained that some of the fiercest resistance of all last week was in the working-class districts of Újpest, in the north of Budapest, and Csepel, in the south - both pre-war strongholds of the Communist Party? Or how is the declaration of the workers of the famous steel town of Sztálinváros to be explained: that they would defend their Socialist town, the plant and houses they had built with their own hands, against the Soviet invasion?

Not only was no answer forthcoming to these questions, but the questions themselves never saw the light of day. The Stalinists in control of the Daily Worker backed the export of Socialism in high explosive form against the bare-handed heroism of 'Red Csepel'. They took their stand on the wrong side of the barricades.

The third argument in favour of Soviet intervention is that there was 'White Terror' raging in Hungary, and that for the Soviet

one prison, let us not allow the country to become a prison of another colour. Let us watch over the factories, the mines and the land, which must remain in the hands of the people. (My italics - P.F.)

On October 31, in a speech to the inaugural meeting of the Pécs branch of the Smallholders' Party, Béla Kovács said:

> No one must dream of going back to the world of counts, bankers and capitalists: that world is over once and for all. A true member of the Smallholders' Party cannot think along the lines of 1939 or 1945.

On November 3 Ferenc Farkas, general secretary of the Petöfi Party, and one of its members in the Nagy government (the Daily Worker on November 5 described this party as 'semi- fascist') said there were a number of points on which the Government was unanimous, including the following:

The Government will retain from the Socialist achievements everything which can be, and must be, used in a free, democratic and Socialist country, in accordance with the wish of the people.

We want to retain the most sincere and warmest friendly economic and cultural relations with every Socialist country, even when we have achieved neutrality. We also want to establish economic and cultural relations with the other peace-loving countries of the world.

The demand for neutrality, which Nagy supported, was no evidence of a slide to the Right, nor of 'open hostility … to the Soviet Union,' nor of 'repeated concessions … to the reactionary forces', as that shameful statement of the Executive Committee of the British Communist Party, issued only twelve hours after the Soviet attack began yet thoroughly approving it, sought to make out. If Yugoslavia could choose its own path to Socialism without joining one or other bloc, why could not the Hungarian people, too, have both neutrality and Socialism? I am in complete agreement

with Norman's conclusion that, far from being 'reactionary forces', the parties associated in the Coalition Government of Imre Nagy on the eve of the Soviet attack 'were the only forces capable of dealing with the dispersed fascists, little groups of fascists or plain hooligans who had made their appearance lately among the revolutionary mass and perpetrated crimes condemned by everyone among the insurgents. Their number was not great. They had no possibility of organising themselves.

Only a government which had the backing of the overwhelming majority of the Hungarians, as Nagy's last government had, could have detected and dealt with them.'

This brings us to the second question. Were reactionary forces becoming more active? Of course they were. Was there a danger of counter-revolution? It would be senseless to deny it.

The night I reached Vienna, November 11, I was told by Austrian Communists how 2,000 Hungarian émigrés armed and trained by the Americans, had crossed over into Western Hungary to fight and agitate. But the danger of counter-revolution is not the same thing as the success of counter-revolution. And between the two lay a powerful and significant barrier, which I for one was prepared to put my trust in: the will of the Hungarian people not to return to capitalism. As Bruce Renton wrote in The New Statesman and Nation on November 17:

> Nobody who was in Hungary during the revolution could escape the overwhelming impression that the Hungarian people had no desire or intention to return to the capitalist system.

And remember that these people who wanted to retain Socialism and improve it had arms in their hands; they were armed workers, armed peasants, armed students, armed soldiers. They had guns and tanks and ammunition. They had splendid morale. They were more than equal to any putsch, if one had been attempted. But they

were never given the chance to prove it. It was none other than the Communist Party paper Szabad Nép which on October 29 indignantly rebuffed Pravda's article The collapse of the adventure directed against the people of Hungary. What happened in Budapest, said Szabad Nép, had not been directed against the people, it had not been an adventure, and it certainly had not 'collapsed'. The demands were demands for Socialist democracy. Pravda's claim that the insurrection had been instigated by 'Western imperialists' was 'an insult to the whole population of Budapest'.

It was not imperialist intrigue which produced this 'bloody, tragic, but lofty fight,' but the Hungarian leadership's own 'faults and crimes', and, in the first place, its failure to 'safeguard the sacred flame of national independence'. And Szabad Nép answered in advance the cry that counter-revolution obliged the Soviet Union to intervene:

> The youth will be able to defend the conquests which they have achieved at the price of their blood, even against the counter-revolutionaries who have joined them. (The students and workers) have proved that they represent such a political force as is capable of becoming a guiding and irreplaceable force … From the first moments of the demonstration and fighting they declared many times - and in the course of the fighting they proved it - that they were not against popular rule, that they were neither fascists nor counter-revolutionaries nor bandits.

As for the Mindszenty broadcast of November 3, the lengthy extracts quoted by Mervyn Jones in Tribune (November 30) make nonsense of Andrew Rothstein's claim that it 'issued a programme of capitalist restoration', and John Gollan's description of it as 'the virtual signal for the counterrevolutionary coup'. Mindszenty on the whole supported the Nagy Government, and his one reference