MIKLÓS IVÁNFI
VIKTOR ATTILA SOÓS

The Foreign Policy of Hungary in the Shadow of the Red Star, 1945–1956

István Kertész,[1] the distinguished Hungarian diplomat and international lawyer, published his magnum opus, *Between Russia and the West*,[2] in the United States during his exile, dedicating it to the history of Hungarian peace preparations in 1945–1946. In describing the contemporary tribulations of Hungarian diplomacy, Kertész consciously alluded to the fact, stemming partly from geopolitical and partly from historical peculiarities, that Hungarian foreign policy in the 1940s – much like that of other states in the region – was fundamentally determined by the Third Reich and the Soviet Union. The peace preparation conducted „in the shadow of the swastika and the red star"[3] – and, we might add, Hungarian foreign policy as a whole – proceeded along highly constrained paths. From 1945 onwards, however, only Moscow's expectations were decisive, and in time they became exclusive. The period we are examining was marked by ever-increasing Soviet expansion in East-Central Europe, and although the political influence of the ideology symbolised by the swastika waned in the region in 1945, another totalitarian dictatorship was simultaneously

1 István Kertész (1904–1986) was a Hungarian lawyer, diplomat, and university professor. Between 1945 and 1947, he directed the Hungarian peace preparations; in 1947, he was appointed minister to Rome, but after the forced resignation of Prime Minister Ferenc Nagy, he also went into exile.

2 Kertész 1984.

3 In the introduction to his book, Kertész wrote: „This book sets forth the vicissitudes of an ex-enemy state, Hungary, at the Paris Peace Conference in 1946 and analyzes the intricacies of preparations for peace in the shadow of the Swastika and the Red Star." Kertész 1984, XI.

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beginning to establish its power on its newly conquered periphery. It is for this reason that we have borrowed only the second half of Kertész's simile for the title of our study, since the ascent of Moscow's red star increasingly eclipsed all other, democratic alternatives.

After 1945, Hungary's foreign policy was decisively shaped by two factors: the advent of the Soviet occupation, and the emergence and escalation of the Cold War conflict. The troops of the Red Army first entered Hungarian territory after the Romanian defection of 23 August 1944, and by April 1945, they had occupied the entire country. The Soviets did not arrive in the territory of a sovereign state, since Hungary, Hitler's[4] „reluctant satellite"[5], had been occupied by the invading forces of the Third Reich on 19 March 1944; thus, the beginning of the Soviet occupation also meant the end of the Nazi one.[6] Soviet military units were continuously present on Hungarian territory between 1944 and 1991, and the occupying forces created a power dynamic that decisively shaped the possibilities of Hungarian political life. The escalation of the Cold War in 1946–1947, the creation of a bipolar world order, and subsequently the permanent presence of the Cold War–détente relationship determined the international framework that also demarcated the room for manoeuvre for the states of the region.[7]

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4 Adolf Hitler (1889–1945) was a German politician, chancellor, and leader (Führer) of the Third Reich, a dictator with far-right views whose policies culminated in wars and genocide.

5 The term was used for Hungary by John Flournoy Montgomery (1878–1954), an American diplomat. Between 1933 and 1941, Montgomery was the United States minister in Budapest, where he maintained particularly close relations with prominent figures in Hungarian political life, especially with Regent Miklós Horthy. He published his memoirs under the title Hungary: The Unwilling Satellite, and the term referred to his assessment that Hungary's commitment to the Axis side was primarily a consequence of geopolitical constraints. See Montgomery 1947.

6 On Hungary's role in the Second World War, see Cornelius 2011.

7 For a comprehensive interpretation of the history of the Cold War, see the three volumes of The Cambridge History of the Cold War: Leffler–Westad 2010. The history of Hungary's Cold War years has been comprehensively and modernly treated by Csaba Békés: Békés 2022. Cf. Bottoni 2017; Borhi 2004. Among the collections of documents, indispensable from a Hungarian perspective are: Allison, Békés, Feinberg et al. 2017; and Békés–Byrne–Rainer 2002.

Since the period between 1945 and 1991 was defined by the Cold War confrontation, and the international system adapted to this bipolar division, some conceptual clarification may be necessary. In our study, we do not interpret the terms Cold War and détente as consecutive periods but, at least after 1953, as coexisting and concurrently operating phenomena. Our interpretation follows the research of Csaba Békés, who analyses the concept of détente in a new framework, using it not for the period from the 1960s to 1975, but for the entire period from Stalin's[8] death in 1953 to 1991 – all this, of course, interpreted within the framework of the Cold War international system. According to Békés, the most important international realisation of the period 1953–1956 was that the confrontation between the power blocs dominated by the two superpowers – the United States of America and the Soviet Union – was not a temporary but a lasting reality, and that the spectre of a potential third world war could only be avoided if the great powers created a moderate framework for coexistence.[9] The automatism he terms the 'mechanism of forced cooperation' made it possible to maintain the status quo and to manage situations through diplomacy rather than war, even during the most serious confrontations between the superpowers, such as over Cuba in 1961.[10]

In our study, we seek to answer the question of to what extent we can speak of independent Hungarian foreign policy activity in the period under examination, and what internal and external circumstances influenced Hungarian foreign policy. We will examine the chaotic conditions of Hungary emerging from its defeat in the Second World War in 1944–1945, the foreign policy activities of the coalition governments that held power between 1945 and 1949, and finally, the foreign policy of the first decade of the Party-state dictatorship, which was concluded by the 1956 Revolution. Our paper is a summary of Hungarian foreign policy between 1945 and 1956 – and at the same time, of the latest historical research – which, in addition to previous works, also relies on primary sources. Our aim is a balanced and nuanced presentation of the topic, and, within the available

8 Joseph Stalin (1878–1953) was a Soviet politician, a far-left dictator, and the leader of the Soviet Union between 1922 and 1953. His rule was accompanied by political murders and genocides.

9 Békés 2014, 3.

10 Békés 2014, 4.

spatial constraints, the avoidance of simplistic, schematic explanations. However, as this is an overview, it seeks to convey a professional consensus, presenting research findings shared by the majority of historians working on the topic – but without concealing our potential questions regarding certain subject areas.

THE SOVIET OCCUPATION AND THE REORGANISATION OF HUNGARIAN POLITICAL LIFE AT THE TURN OF 1944–1945

In the southern Hungarian city of Szeged, occupied by the Soviets, the Independent Smallholders' Party, the Hungarian Communist Party, the Social Democratic Party of Hungary, the Civic Democratic Party, and the National Peasant Party formed an anti-German and pro-Soviet party alliance on 2 December 1944, named the Hungarian National Independence Front.[11] Shortly thereafter, the members of the alliance, along with Hungarian communist émigré politicians who had in the meantime returned from Moscow, established a provisional legislative body (the Provisional National Assembly) in Debrecen – also under Soviet occupation – on 21 December 1944. Debrecen was one of the country's most significant provincial cities and had briefly served as the capital of Hungary during the 1848–1849 War of Independence. The members of the new assembly were elected at popular rallies, but democratic procedure was rendered almost impossible by the wartime conditions.[12] The new body declared itself the sole representative of a democratic Hungary, and on 22 December, a provisional wartime cabinet was formed (the Provisional National Government), led by a general, Béla Miklós,[13] and including Smallholders,

11 On the Hungarian resistance movement during the Second World War, see Szent-Iványi 2013.

12 Kertész 1984, 29–31. Cf. Gyarmati 2011, 37–39.

13 Béla Miklós (1890–1948) was a Hungarian professional military officer, politician, and Prime Minister of Hungary. He came from a noble Transylvanian family; between 1933 and 1936, he was a military attaché in Berlin; from 1938, a brigade commander; and from 1941, a lieutenant general. In 1942, he became the head of the Regent's Military Office, then a

communists, and social democrats in its ranks..[14] The provisional Ministry of Foreign Affairs was established in the building of the Debrecen financial administration office, with an extremely small staff – in February 1945, only 15 people worked at the ministry.[15] In addition to personnel problems, the administrative infrastructure also lay in ruins; the country was afflicted by a paper shortage, and cultural differences, such as the employment of Russian interpreters or the procurement of Cyrillic-script typewriters, also had to be overcome.[16]

The new Hungarian foreign policy had to face extremely serious tasks, the most important of which were concluding an armistice with the Allied powers and declaring war on Nazi Germany. The latter was declared by the Hungarian legislature as early as 28 December, but the delivery of the Soviet armistice terms was delayed, so the Hungarian government was only able to sign it on 20 January 1945.[17] In the armistice agreement, Hungary undertook to cease hostilities against the Allies, disarm the German troops stationed on its territory, ban far-right organisations and parties, pay reparations to the Soviet Union, Yugoslavia, and Czechoslovakia, and withdraw its administration behind the 1937 borders.[18] To implement the agreement, the Soviet-dominated Allied Control Commission[19] was established, with the Soviet Marshal Voroshilov[20] as its chairman.

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colonel general, and from 1944, commander of the Hungarian First Army. After the failed attempt to defect on 15 October 1944, he crossed over to the Soviets with his staff officers, but his army did not follow his example. On 22 December 1945, he was elected head of the Provisional National Government, a post he held until 15 November 1945.

14 *Magyar Közlöny*, 4 January 1945, 1.

15 Romsics 2006, 96. Cf. MNL OL XIX-J-1-j-4/fc-25.274-1945. Küm. Box 35. Relocation of co-ministries, Debrecen, 26 February 1945.

16 MNL OL XIX-J-1-j-4/fc-25.285-1945. Küm. Box 35. Letter from János Gyöngyösi to Georgy M. Pushkin, Debrecen, 18 February 1945. (Unsigned copy.)

17 The agreement was signed in Moscow by Foreign Minister János Gyöngyösi, State Secretary of the Prime Minister's Office István Balogh, and Minister of Defence János Vörös. The text of the armistice agreement is published in Fülöp 2018, Appendix 1. Cf. Gyarmati 2011, 39–40.

18 Fülöp 2018, Appendix 1.

19 Földesi 1995.

20 Kliment Yefremovich Voroshilov (1881–1969) was a Soviet politician, professional soldier, and Marshal of the Soviet Union. He was the chairman of the Allied Control Commission in Hungary between 1945 and 1947.

On 18 January 1945, Soviet troops occupied Budapest up to the line of the Danube, and on 13 February, the German garrison was driven out of the entire Hungarian capital.[21] The German occupation was replaced by a Russian one, and thus the reorganisation of the collapsed ministerial structure also began here. The first days of the occupation in Budapest – just as in the rest of the country – were chaotic: in addition to restarting the city's infrastructure, the clearance of ruins, the removal and burial of corpses, and the supply of the occupying army had to be resolved, all amidst the often violent behaviour of the Soviet troops. After the liberation of the capital, however, the political parties and the government also returned to Budapest, and soon the Second World War also came to an end on Hungarian territory.[22]

THE FOREIGN POLICY OF THE COALITION ERA

„First and foremost, there is a fundamental fact: Hungary lost the war. It is not a question of war responsibility—I will speak of that separately: it is about the fact itself. Which is undeniable."[23]

The period between 1945 and 1948/49 is termed the coalition era by Hungarian historiography. The name refers to the fact that, on the instructions of the Allied Control Commission established by the Soviet occupying forces and their Western allies, the country was governed during this period by coalition governments, into which the former resistance parties were drawn. It is still debated today whether the coalition era can be considered an independent historical period or the initial stage of the communist takeover.[24] The foreign policy of the coalition era was characterised by the

21 For more on this, see: Ungváry 2005.
22 Kertész 1984, 19–28. Cf. Gyarmati 2011, 29–63.
23 MNL OL XIX-J-1-c II-4-591-konf.-1946. Box 24, fol. 104. Speech by Dr. Viktor Csornoky, legation counsellor and acting Hungarian chargé d'affaires, Ligonier, 1946.
24 The Hungarian historian György Gyarmati, for example, describes the period as the first phase of the Rákosi era in his monograph: Gyarmati 2011.

political parties participating in public life, and decisively by the fault lines and disputes between these parties. The period can be said to be unified in the sense that until the beginning of the acceleration of the communist takeover in the summer of 1947, there was one foreign minister in office, the Smallholder János Gyöngyösi,[25] who, however, lacked any serious foreign policy concept. Hungarian foreign policy could only build upon the realities of the situation, and the greatest given in this respect was the fact of having lost the world war, as well as the great-power status quo established in 1945, which in these years could perhaps only be suspected, but was not yet evident.[26]

In 1945, the fate of Europe was decided by the leaders of an American and a partly European, partly Asian state: the United States of America and the Soviet Union – both leading powers of the victorious Allied coalition – created a mutually, albeit tacitly, recognised system in which the two sides fixed their spheres of influence and demarcated the room for manoeuvre for the individual European states. This status quo remained in place until 1991, the dissolution of the Soviet Union, and fundamentally determined the history of the region.[27]

The new Hungarian foreign policy had to organise its independent profile after a total defeat in war.[28] The impact of the lost war cannot be overemphasised: Hungary emerged from the global conflagration with a human loss of almost one million people and the destruction of approximately 40% of its national wealth. The Hungarian Holocaust, the passage of the front through the country, the masses of civilians deported to the Soviet Union for forced labour, and the large number of prisoners of war plunged Hungarian society into a serious crisis.[29] This was compounded by one of the greatest hyperinflations in world history, which consumed

25 János Gyöngyösi (1893–1951) was a Hungarian politician, and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Hungary between 1944 and 1947. He was a politician of the Independent Smallholders' Party, selected for the post of foreign minister by the Soviet authorities. He had no diplomatic experience; after the forced resignation of the government led by Ferenc Nagy, he headed the Central Office of Financial Institutions.

26 Kertész 1984, 19–28.

27 Békés 2019, 29.

28 Kertész 1984, 7–28. and 73–112.

29 Stark 1986. See also: Bank 2016.

virtually all savings – or what had survived the devastation of the war.[30] The most important foreign policy challenge of the coalition era was the restoration of severed diplomatic relations, the ending of the country's international isolation, and the preparation for making peace.

The Restoration of Diplomatic Relations

Although the Hungarian government had some limited room for manoeuvre in the direction of foreign policy, the more important issues were decided at inter-party conferences.[31] The prerequisite for restarting international relations was the reorganisation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The new minister was János Gyöngyösi, a bookseller from a small southern Hungarian town and a former Latin teacher, who had no significant foreign policy experience or concept. A significant portion of the ministry's senior officials came from among the anti-German diplomats of the Horthy era. The administrative head of the ministry was Pál Sebestyén,[32] who had served in the ministry since 1919. Elek Bolgár,[33] Gyöngyösi's deputy, returned to Hungary from his Moscow exile in 1944, and in the ministry, he represented the interests of the Communist Party, as did György Heltai,[34] the head of the Political Department,[35] and László Pődör,[36] the head of the minister's cabinet.

30 Siklos 1989. Cf. Bomberger–Makinen 1983.

31 Vida 2002, 111.

32 Pál Sebestyén (1893–1973) was a Hungarian diplomat, an employee of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs from 1919, and from 1941, a ministerial head of department. From 1945, he was the administrative head of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and until 1954, a professor at the Academy of Foreign Affairs.

33 Elek Bolgár (1883–1955) was a Hungarian politician and diplomat. From 1937, he was a university professor in the Soviet Union; in 1945, he participated in the leadership of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Between 1946 and 1947, he was State Secretary for Foreign Affairs, and then minister to Prague and London.

34 György Heltai (1914–1994) was a Hungarian politician, and from 1945, head of the Political Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In 1949, he was arrested and convicted in a show trial; he was released in 1954. In 1956, he was deputy foreign minister of the revolution. He emigrated abroad.

35 Baráth 2015, 14.

36 László Pődör (1911–1984) was a Hungarian diplomat and literary scholar. He studied at the Hungarian elite institution, the Eötvös Kollégium. During the Second World War, he

The situation of the Hungarian foreign missions was seriously complicated by the fact that their contact with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was severed during 1944 – first as a result of the German occupation (19 March), and then the Arrow Cross takeover (16 October). On 1 October 1937 – that is, before the momentous changes of 1938 – Hungary had 25 legations and 106 consular offices (including consulates-general, consulates, and honorary consulates).[37] By January 1943, the number of legations had fallen to 17, as diplomatic relations with several countries – the United States, the Soviet Union, Great Britain, etc. – had been broken due to Hungary's participation in the world war. The number of consular offices (48) also plummeted, despite the fact that in some states occupied by the Germans – such as Austria or the Netherlands – former Hungarian legations were automatically converted into consulates.[38] After the German occupation in 1944, a so-called Committee of Envoys was formed from the Hungarian ministers in the capitals of neutral states, led by the senior Hungarian diplomat György Barcza,[39] the former minister to London. It sought to assist the Allied powers with advice, but did not form a government-in-exile.[40] Until the arrival of the Hungarian armistice delegation in Moscow

led a resistance group. From 1944, he was a member of the Provisional National Assembly, then worked in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and between 1947 and 1948, at the Hungarian legation in Rome. Between 1950 and 1953, he was imprisoned due to a show trial, and then took on a role in literary life.

37 The legations actually operating in 1937 were: the United States of America, Argentina, Austria, Belgium, Great Britain, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Egypt, Finland, France, Greece, Yugoslavia, Poland, the Netherlands, Germany, Italy, Portugal, Romania, Spain, Switzerland, Sweden, the Soviet Union, Turkey, the Vatican, and the League of Nations. Several of the listed legations also handled foreign representation for other countries. Foreign Affairs Gazette, 1937/8, 39–77.

38 For the number of legations and consulates, see: *Külügyi Közlöny*, 1943/2, 13–29.

39 György Barcza (1888–1961) was a Hungarian diplomat, minister to the Vatican and London. During the Second World War, he was one of the leaders of the pro-Western diplomatic group. He died in Australia.

40 „The immediate aim of the Committee of Envoys is to function as an advisory and informing body to the governments or diplomatic representations of Great Britain, the USA, and other allied states. The committee will study by what means military and civil resistance can be organised against the Germans occupying Hungary within Hungary, and generally the shortening of the war and the restoration of peace and order. The committee, although its ultimate goal is the restoration of Hungary's independence and sovereignty on constitutional grounds and according to democratic principles, will not deal with internal

in October 1944, the Committee of Envoys was Hungary's only semi-official link to the Western Allies. They contacted the provisional government immediately after its formation, but the new Hungarian foreign affairs leadership did not wish to welcome back the leading diplomats of the Horthy era into its ranks, so Barcza dissolved the committee.[41]

The foreign missions in Budapest – or those that were in the capital during the 1944–1945 siege – resumed their activities after the liberation of the city from German occupation and informed the Hungarian government of this. The normalisation of international relations was accelerated by the National Assembly elections held on 4 November 1945, which, although won by the Independent Smallholders' Party with a large majority (57%), nevertheless resulted in a coalition government led by Zoltán Tildy,[42] under pressure from the Allied Control Commission. The elections provided significant legitimacy for the Hungarian government, and at the turn of 1945–1946, the Belgian, Swiss, Polish, Italian, and Danish governments also indicated their intention to establish diplomatic relations.[43]

Results of the National Assembly Elections of 4 November 1945[44]

Party	Number of Votes	Share of Mandates
Independent Smallholders' Party	2,697,503	57.02%
Social Democratic Party	823,314	17.40%
Hungarian Communist Party	802,122	16.96%
National Peasant Party	325,285	6.88%
Civic Democratic Party	76,424	1.62%
Hungarian Radical Party	5,762	0.12%

political issues and does not represent political parties." MNL OL P 2066. dosier 23. (Microfilm roll No. 53671.) Summary of the activities of the Committee of Envoys. N.p., n.d.

41 MNL OL P 2066. 23. dosszié. (Microfilm roll No. 53671.) Letter from György Barcza to the members of the Committee of Envoys, Ouchy [Lausanne], 19 March 1945. Cf. MNL OL P 2066. 12. dosszié. (Microfilm roll No. 53671.) Letter from Pál Sebestyén to György Bakach-Bessenyey, Budapest, October 1945. Cf. Baráth 2015, 14.

42 Zoltán Tildy (1889–1961) was a Hungarian politician and Reformed pastor. Between November 1945 and February 1946, he was Prime Minister; between 1946 and 1948, President of the Republic. In the 1956 Revolution, he was a minister of state.

43 Sáringer 2013, 42–43.

44 Gyarmati 2011, 61.

Priority, however, belonged to the occupying state, and thus the Allied Control Commission, which exercised tutelage over Hungarian foreign affairs, indicated to the Hungarian government in the summer of 1945 that the country's diplomatic relations would soon be normalised.[45] The breakthrough finally came at the turn of 1945–1946, when the Soviet Union and the United States established diplomatic relations with Hungary, which gave the green light for the normalisation of foreign relations. In 1946, official relations were thus established with, among others, Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, Poland, the Netherlands, Italy, Romania, the republican Spanish government (which operated in Paris), Switzerland, and Turkey. In 1947, these were joined by Albania, Austria, Belgium, Chile, Egypt, the Netherlands, Yugoslavia, Norway, and later Finland, Czechoslovakia, and Great Britain.[46]

Changes in Hungary's Diplomatic Relations, 1938–1945[47]

	1938	**1943**	**1945**
Number of Legations	25	17	3
Distribution by Continent of Legations			
Europe	22 (88%)	15 (88.2%)	2 (66.6%)
North America	1 (4%)	0	1 (33.3%)
Central & South America	1 (4%)	1 (5.9%)	
Total Americas	2 (8%)	1 (5.9%)	1 (33.3%)
Asia	0	1 (5.9%)	0
Africa	1 (4%)	0	0
Australia	0	0	0

Peace Preparation and the Paris Peace Treaty

After 1945, Eastern Europe became a Soviet sphere of influence. The United States showed only some interest towards Czechoslovakia, Poland, and Hungary, in the latter case partly in defence of the interests of American

45 Baráth 2015, 11.

46 Sáringer 2013, 46.; Cf. Baráth 2015, 13.

47 The data in the table is based on the following sources: Foreign Affairs Gazette, 1937/8, 39–77, and Foreign Affairs Gazette, 1943/2, 13–29. The source for the 1945 section is: Baráth–Gecsényi 2015. The tables contain our own calculations.

oil companies. Great Britain concentrated on its colonial empire, but its interests did not extend beyond the northern border of Yugoslavia. The Soviet Union, in contrast, sought to extend its western borders and to create a security zone, a kind of reverse *cordon sanitaire*,[48] that would protect its own territory from a potential new attack from the West.[49]

It followed from the reality of the lost war that the greatest foreign policy undertaking of the coalition era would be the peace preparation and participation in the Paris Peace Conference, which from the summer of 1945 was coordinated by the Peace Preparation Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, led by István Kertész.[50] Kertész was one of the most experienced international lawyers of the era, who in the 1930s had deepened his knowledge at several Western research institutes and universities – Yale, Oxford, Geneva, The Hague. Indeed, in 1943, he was one of the diplomats who, in the Political Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, had already been conducting peace preparatory work under the strictest secrecy.[51] His department sought to collect studies, statistics, and maps that could support the Hungarian position at the peace conference. However, the development of the Hungarian line of argument proceeded very slowly, as there was no great harmony among the coalition parties in foreign policy (or other matters). All ministries, scientific institutes, the Hungarian National Bank, and the Central Statistical Office were involved in the preparatory work. The starting point for peace preparation had to

48 The term cordon sanitaire (French) originally meant a sanitary protective zone, but in a figurative sense, after the First World War, it meant a security zone created against the possible expansion of the Soviet Union, which effectively covered the states of Central Europe.

49 Vida 2002, 108.

50 MNL OL XIX-J-1-a-43-Res.-Be.-1945. Box 1, 50–72. (Microfilm roll No. 12406, heading 1, I-1, 1–138.) Memorandum on the resumption of peace preparation works. Budapest, 1 June 1945.

51 „For the newly started peace preparation work, a certain ease was provided by the circumstance that regular peace preparation activity had been ongoing in the political department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs since the summer of 1943. However, since these works were conducted not only on the assumption of a total German defeat, but also on the certainty of the liquidation of the counter-revolutionary regime of Szeged, the greatest caution was necessary at that time." MNL OL XIX-J-1-a-75-Res.-Be.-1946. Box 1, 31–36. (Microfilm roll No. 12406, heading 1, I-1, 1–138.) Report on the activities of the Peace Preparation Department. Budapest, 23 October 1946. Cf. Kertész 1984, 73–79; and Gyarmati 2011, 87–95. For Kertész's intellectual habitus, see Gyarmati 2018.

be a confrontation with the past, that is, what Hungary should do with the foreign policy of the pre-1945 governments. Perhaps on this one issue, a strong consensus prevailed among the political parties: they rigidly rejected the foreign policy orientation of the Horthy era, and not only the pro-German foreign policy but also the revisionist concept.[52]

Before 1945, Hungary's foreign policy was defined by the 1920 Treaty of Trianon, which radically reduced the territory of the Hungarian state but took the ethnic principle into account only partially, thus assigning several million ethnic Hungarian inhabitants to the neighbouring successor states (primarily Czechoslovakia, Romania, and the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes).[53] The necessity of revising the Treaty of Trianon was emphasised by every Hungarian government after 1920. After 1938, with German-Italian assistance, the country's territory almost doubled. In 1945, it was perfectly clear that the country's previous, revisionist foreign policy could not be continued: „[…] 25 years of unfortunate policy have completely discredited the revisionist slogans in the international arena. To this is added, as a burden, our conduct during World War II towards Yugoslavia, Russia, and the Anglo-Saxon powers. Due to all these circumstances, it would be a mistaken policy on our part if we were to force excessive territorial claims at the post-war negotiations. This would only increase the antipathy that already exists towards us and would discredit the current system of government, but would in no way lead to results. […] The well-known, mainly historical and geographical arguments used in revisionist propaganda, and even the modes of expression associated with them, must be consciously and completely expunged from our political vocabulary."[54] However, the effective operation of Hungarian foreign policy

52 The Treaty of Trianon was concluded by the victorious powers with Hungary at the Grand Trianon Palace in Versailles on 4 June 1920. According to the treaty, about two-thirds of Hungary's former territory was annexed to neighbouring states (Czechoslovakia, Romania, the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes, and Austria), along with several million Hungarian inhabitants. The primary objective of Hungarian foreign policy after 1920 was the revision of the Treaty of Trianon, to achieve which it was even prepared to ally with Nazi Germany.

53 Romsics 2020.

54 MNL OL XIX-J-1-a-14-Res.-Be.-1945. Box 32, 1–24. (Microfilm roll No. 12457, heading 133, IV-10, 1–722.) Memorandum on the guiding principles for the preparation of post-war international negotiations, and particularly in territorial questions. Budapest, 2 July 1945.

was seriously hampered by the fact that the different political parties had entirely different concepts, and reconciling these was almost impossible.[55]

On the Hungarian political palette, a full Soviet orientation was represented by the Hungarian Communist Party. Ernő Gerő,[56] one of the most influential communist politicians, only very subtly alluded to his party's commitment at the inaugural session of the Provisional National Assembly: „There is no democratic Hungarian foreign policy that does not begin by breaking once and for all with the German orientation and reorienting towards those nations that are interested in putting a stop to German expansion. [...] In our opinion, the new Hungarian foreign policy must be oriented towards creating peaceful, good-neighbourly relations with the surrounding democratic states, building on Tehran, on the agreement between the democratic great powers, and seeking friendship with the democratic great powers, the Soviet Union, and also the United States of America."[57] The Social Democratic Party envisioned a kind of mediating role for Hungary between East and West, while the National Peasant Party adopted the goal of transcending the capitalist and socialist alternatives, the Western and Eastern orientations, envisioning a kind of uniquely interpreted Hungarian „third way." All three party formations, however, leaned strongly towards the political left and sympathised with Soviet aspirations. The foreign policy orientation of the Independent Smallholders' Party was clearly pro-Western, and it sympathised with civil democratic systems, while also striving for friendly relations with the Soviet Union. However, with the exception of the Communist Party, several factions clashed within every party, and the dividing line became the question of Eastern or Western orientation.[58]

55 Békés 1990, 30–32.

56 Ernő Gerő (1898–1980) was a Hungarian communist politician, and holder of several ministerial portfolios. He belonged to the top communist leadership; with Mátyás Rákosi, they directed the Party-state dictatorship. In 1920, he fled Hungary; he participated in the Spanish Civil War and returned to Hungary in 1944. After 1956, he was removed from the party leadership.

57 *Nemzetgyűlési napló* 1944, Vol. I, 21 December 1944 – 13 September 1945, 1st session, 21 December 1944, 14.

58 Győri-Szabó 2011, 96.

The fault lines between the political parties were so serious that they could not even agree on unified peace objectives, which were crucial for Hungarian foreign policy. In a peculiar manner, a press debate that broke out in December 1945 helped to break through the rigid positions.[59] The debate was opened by an article by the Smallholder politician Géza Rubleczky[60] entitled *'Let Us Prepare for Peace'*, in which he urged the formulation of unified goals.[61] The position of the Communist Party was articulated by József Révai,[62] who called Hungarian public life and foreign policy provincial and envisioned the revival of old, reactionary reflexes and of a chauvinistic Hungarian foreign policy – allusively addressing the essence of his message to the Smallholders. Révai rigidly rejected all Hungarian territorial claims, proposing only the strengthening of the minority protection system and possibly a population exchange to solve the problems.[63] The leading figure of the anti-fascist civic resistance, Gyula Dessewffy,[64] followed the line of argument of the civic parties,[65] while the communist journalist Márton Horváth[66] condemned the concept of the National Peasant Party, which, in his view, was sliding in a nationalist direction by invoking national sentiment.[67] In January 1946, József Révai was more permissive, calling the press polemic useful, and identifying the fight against reaction as the most

59 The issue was exhaustively discussed by Csaba Békés, presenting the main positions and publicists: Békés 1990, 29–32.

60 Géza Rubleczky (1909–1953) was a chemical engineer and politician. After 1945, he was active in the Independent Smallholders' Party. In 1950, he was imprisoned on trumped-up charges and died in captivity under unclear circumstances.

61 *Kis Újság*, 28 December 1945.

62 József Révai (1898–1959) was a Hungarian politician, the defining communist ideologue of the Rákosi regime. He participated in the organisation of the international workers' movement and returned to Hungary in November 1944. Between 1949 and 1953, he essentially directed Hungarian culture.

63 *Szabad Nép*, 25 December 1945, 3.

64 Gyula Dessewffy (1909–2000) was a Hungarian politician and publicist, a central figure in the civic resistance during the Second World War. After 1945, he was active in the Independent Smallholders' Party; in 1949, he went into exile.

65 *Kis Újság*, 20 December 1945.

66 Márton Horváth (1906–1987) was a Hungarian journalist and politician. Between 1945 and 1950, he edited the communist party's paper, Szabad Nép.

67 *Népszava*, 12 January 1946, 1.

important national interest, which was the best antidote to all chauvinistic foreign policy aspirations.[68]

Despite the lack of unified peace objectives, the Hungarian preparatory work, accounting for practically every eventuality, had been underway since the summer of 1945, and the material was essentially ready by the summer of 1946.[69] This proved to be a significant success, not least because initially, in 1945, the Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs was only able to communicate with the representatives of the victorious powers in Budapest with great difficulty – and in this, the various diplomatic notes summarising Hungary's political aspirations were of assistance.[70] The international situation that Hungarian foreign policy faced in 1945–46 was rather complicated, as the room for manoeuvre for a country that had lost a war and was occupied was in any case quite small. In developing the peace objectives, however, the relationship and wartime role of Hungary and the states of the region had to be examined. Among Hungary's neighbours, Austria enjoyed a special status as the first victim of Hitler's aggression in 1938, while Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia belonged to the ranks of the victorious states. Both states had internationally recognised governments-in-exile during the Second World War; moreover, Yugoslavia waged an active partisan war and liberated its occupied state largely through its own efforts.[71] In the territory of Yugoslavia occupied by the Hungarians, in and around the city of Novi Sad, the Hungarian military authorities had, moreover, carried out an ethnically based genocide in January 1942, primarily among the Serbian and Jewish citizens, which received a strong international response.[72] Hungarian foreign policy thus did not even

68 *Szabad Nép*, 13 January 1946, 1.

69 MNL OL XIX-J-1-a-2-res-Be-1946. Box 1, 46–47. (Microfilm roll No. 12406, heading 1, I-1, 1–138.) Event diary of the Hungarian peace preparation works. Budapest, 4 July 1946.

70 One of the most important notes: Memorandum of the Hungarian Government relating to the free access to the sea, and to the solution of problems arising from the hydrographic unity of the Carpathian Basin, 12 November 1945. Published in Kertész 1985, 87–106, Document 12.

71 Békés 2011, 98–99. Cf. Vida 2002, 107–108.

72 On the memory of the Novi Sad massacre and the 1945 Yugoslav reprisal actions against the ethnic Hungarian population in the context of 1956, see Klimó 2016.

attempt to make territorial claims against Yugoslavia, but rather strove for reconciliation and the establishment of a mutually friendly relationship.[73]

Czechoslovakia was also a member of the victorious coalition; however, the fascist Slovak state was considered one of Hitler's most reliable allies, and Hungary had previously had territorial claims only against the former Slovakia. The Slovak-Hungarian border established by the so-called First Vienna Award,[74] signed on 2 November 1938, moreover, followed the Slovak-Hungarian linguistic border relatively accurately and thus seemed more just than the 1920 Trianon border.[75] In 1945, the Czechoslovak government wanted to achieve the expulsion of the German and Hungarian minorities with the Allied powers, to which they did not consent. Therefore, various disenfranchising measures were applied against the German and Hungarian populations, and the Potsdam Conference[76] approved the expulsion of the German population in Czechoslovakia, Romania, and Hungary.[77] The expulsion of the Germans also played a major role in Hungarian foreign policy; many argued that the application of the principle of collective guilt would at the same time create a basis of reference for, e.g., the Czechoslovak government to get rid of its Hungarian minority by citing the same legal conception. The Hungarian government could not announce claims to Czechoslovak territories and sought to settle the matter of the expulsion of Hungarians through bilateral negotiations.[78] The Czechoslovak-Hungarian

73 Kertész 1984, 111–112.

74 The First Vienna Award was an arbitral decision by Germany and Italy proclaimed on 2 November 1938, which pushed the Slovak-Hungarian border northwards in Hungary's favour, as a result of which the Hungarian population living in the southern territories of the former Czechoslovakia came under Hungarian rule again.

75 The Hungarian geographer András Rónai reported on the scientific preparatory work for the First Vienna Award and the process of determining the ethnic and linguistic border in his memoir: Rónai 1993.

76 The Potsdam Conference was held between 17 July and 2 August 1945 by the leaders of the Allies, in the presence of British Prime Minister Attlee, American President Truman, and Stalin. It was here that the decision was made to establish the Council of Foreign Ministers.

77 Békés 2011, 98–99.

78 István Kertész clearly formulated his reservations to the prime minister: „[…] for a small state that has lost a war, it is fundamentally important, almost a matter of existence, to consistently adhere to certain fundamental moral, legal, and political principles. We can only gain the sympathy, support, and respect of the civilised world in this way. Therefore, the Hungarian government's position on the expulsion of German native speakers and

population exchange agreement, concluded in the spring of 1946, made it possible for the Czechoslovak government to resettle an equal number of Hungarian minority inhabitants to Hungary in place of the ethnic Slovak inhabitants who voluntarily moved from Hungary to Czechoslovakia – though in the latter case, there was no question of voluntariness.[79]

The case of Romania seemed simpler, as the country had fought as a member of Hitler's alliance system until August 1944, and despite its change of sides, the Allied powers treated it as a defeated state. It is well known that one point of the armistice agreement concluded with Romania promised Transylvania – or the greater part of it – to Romania, but the ambiguous wording was addressed to the Hungarian government, which was then still fighting on the Axis side, and was an encouragement for a possible defection.[80] Hungarian foreign policy thus concluded that it could only formulate territorial claims against the defeated Romania, and so the peace preparatory work was also channelled in this direction.[81]

The relationship between the United States and Hungary in the coalition era was relatively friendly, given the circumstances. From the region, only the government delegation led by Prime Minister Ferenc Nagy[82] was received in Washington in 1946, and not long after, Hungary received back from the American occupation zone the gold reserves of the Hungarian National Bank that had been looted by the Nazis, which could form the basis of the

ethnic Germans is very regrettable and may have a fatal effect on the future development of our foreign policy situation. Despite the fact that we have repeatedly and solemnly declared before foreign powers that we will only carry out expulsions on the basis of individual guilt, and not collective responsibility, the government has nevertheless decided to issue a decree completely contrary to our previous positions. This decision is all the more regrettable because the acceptance of the principle of collective responsibility could have a boomerang effect on the Hungarians living in the neighbouring states. Thereafter, the principled basis that provided us with such a moral superiority in the Prague negotiations, which the Czechoslovak delegation was almost unable to attack, will be lacking." MNL OL XIX-J-1-a-151-res-Be-1946. Box 2, 444–457. (Microfilm roll No. 12409, heading 5, I-5, 1–491.). Letter from István Kertész to Zoltán Tildy, Budapest, 28 December 1945.

79 Győri-Szabó 2011, 105–107. Cf. Kertész 1984, 134–160.

80 Békés 2011, 99.

81 Kertész 1984, 113–133.

82 Ferenc Nagy (1903–1979) was a Hungarian politician, a member of the Independent Smallholders' Party, and Prime Minister between 1946 and 1947. In 1947, he went into exile and died in the United States.

1946 currency reform.[83] Moreover, at the peace negotiations, American foreign policy treated the Hungarian peace objectives benevolently.[84] Soviet-Hungarian relations had normalised by 1946 but remained severely asymmetrical. The Soviet Union regarded Hungary as an enemy – and therefore occupied – country and clearly treated it as part of its own sphere of influence. Although a Hungarian government delegation did visit Moscow in 1946, it was unable to show any particular results in gaining support for Hungarian foreign policy objectives, and at the Paris Peace Conference, the Soviet delegates took a stance against the Hungarian peace aims.[85]

The preparation of the peace treaties on the part of the Allies had already begun in 1945, with the creation of the Council of Foreign Ministers, in which the Soviet, American, British, French, and Chinese foreign ministers participated. During its operation, the council discussed the draft peace treaties over several sessions and decided on their final wording.[86] The composition of the Hungarian peace delegation began in the spring of 1946, and the political parties engaged in serious skirmishes over the nomination of individual members – just as István Kertész had predicted in a memorandum six months earlier.[87] The head of the delegation was Foreign Minister János Gyöngyösi, his deputy was the prominent Communist Party member Ernő Gerő, and the secretarial duties were performed by Kertész himself.[88]

A very serious turning point in the peace preparation process was the decision of the Council of Foreign Ministers on 7 May 1946, in which they took a stand in favour of maintaining the Trianon borders in connection with the Hungarian peace treaty. The decision shocked the Hungarian public, but by then there was no time for a significant modification of the Hungarian strategy. On 29 July 1946, the Paris Peace Conference opened, but besides the plenary session, most of the work was carried out in committees. The peace conference essentially drew up the drafts of the future peace treaties

83 Borhi 2015, 87. On the government delegation's American trip, see Vida 1978.
84 On British-Hungarian relations, see: Madarász 2018.
85 On the government delegation's trip, see Békés 1992. Cf. Győri-Szabó 2011, 172–173.
86 Fülöp 1985.
87 MNL OL XIX-A-1-n-"Z"-986-1945-M.E.K. Box 2. Memorandum drafted by István Kertész. Budapest, 17 November 1945.
88 Kertész 1984, 182–194.

– Italian, Finnish, Bulgarian, Romanian, and Hungarian – which ultimately had to be approved by the Council of Foreign Ministers.[89]

Gyöngyösi read out his fifty-minute introductory speech in French on 14 August 1946.[90] Hungary only formulated territorial claims against Romania, but the requested territories were continuously reduced. On 5 October, it became certain that Hungary's 1937 borders would be restored – and with this, the territorial gains of the Second World War would be annulled – and by 15 October, the final text of the Hungarian peace treaty had been produced.[91] In a private letter, the Hungarian foreign minister honestly voiced his disappointment with the conference: „The cause of the Hungarian peace is proceeding with great difficulty and so far without any positive result. Arguments do not help here, and the whole game with its high-sounding moral principles is becoming increasingly nauseating. One has the feeling of not being at a peace conference, but at some kind of armistice negotiation, where one can never know when they will break down and the weapons, and indeed weapons more terrible than before, will speak in place of words. Individually, everyone here stands on a high moral pedestal, but as representatives of their states, collectively they are only the spokesmen of raw force and power interests. That is why the conference, and especially the committee negotiations, are most often below the standard of a village council. […] It seems that much more travail, movement, turmoil, and perhaps conflict is needed before a perhaps poorer and more colourless, but in any case healthier and calmer, world can emerge from this chaos."[92] The Hungarian peace preparation and the performance at the Paris Peace Conference thus brought failure for the country, since the new Hungarian borders – apart from the annexation of three villages, Oroszvár, Dunacsún, and Horvátjárfalu, to Czechoslovakia – followed the 1920 borders. However, the Hungarian delegation did achieve one minor success: it was able to prevent Czechoslovakia from unilaterally expelling 200,000 of its ethnic Hungarian citizens.[93]

89 Romsics 2006, 189. Cf. Fülöp 2008, 211–213. Cf. Kertész 1984, 182–224.
90 Balahó–Gál 2005, 113.
91 See Győri-Szabó 2011, 179–181; cf. Romsics 2006, 189–247.
92 MNL OL XIX-J-1-c-315-Konf.-1946. Box 24, 529–530. Letter from János Gyöngyösi to Ernő Wittmann, Paris, 7 September 1946.
93 Békés 2011, 103.

The total Hungarian defeat in the war, hyperinflation, and the supply of the Red Army placed a serious burden on the ruined Hungarian economy; moreover, from the summer of 1945, the repayment of Soviet reparations had to begin. The supreme managerial tasks over the Hungarian economy were carried out by the Supreme Economic Council, which was under clear communist influence and thus served Moscow's instructions to the letter. In 1945, a Soviet-Hungarian economic agreement was concluded, which radically favoured Soviet economic expansion. The deepening of economic relations at that time served to lay the foundation for the deepening of political relations, and Hungary, in terms of its foreign economy, was also drifting more and more towards the Soviet Union.[94]

FOREIGN POLICY AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS IN THE YEARS OF REVERSAL (1947–1949)

On 10 September 1947, Hungary signed the Paris Peace Treaty in the Salon de l'Horloge of the Seine-side building of the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs (referred to in diplomatic circles as the Quai d'Orsay)—thereby restoring the sovereignty it had lost on 19 March 1944. In the closing phase of the coalition era, Hungarian foreign relations began to expand dynamically; 1947 can be regarded as the most active year of diplomatic engagement in the period under study.

Changes in Hungary's Diplomatic Relations, 1946–1947[95]

	1946	**1947**
Number of Legations	8	20
Distribution by Continent of Legations		
Europe	4 (75%)	17 (85%)
North America	1 (12.5%)	1 (5%)
Central & South America	1 (12.5%)	1 (5%)

94 Győri-Szabó 2011, 156–157.

95 The table contains our own calculations, based on: Baráth–Gecsényi 2015.

	1946	1947
Total Americas	1 (25%)	2 (10%)
Asia	0	0
Africa	0	1 (5%)
Australia	0	0

The peace treaty was due to enter into force on 15 September 1947, but in the meantime, changes occurred in the international arena that increasingly turned the two camps of the bipolar world against each other. Winston Churchill[96] – no longer in the office of Prime Minister – expressed relatively early, on 5 March 1946, in his Fulton speech, that an iron curtain was descending across the middle of Europe, effectively cutting off the countries of the Western and Eastern blocs from one another.[97] On 5 June 1947, US Secretary of State George C. Marshall[98] announced a large-scale aid programme, which the war-torn economies of Europe could claim. However, the countries occupied by the Soviets were unable to take advantage of the aid – with the exception of the German Democratic Republic to a very small extent, and Yugoslavia, which was not under Soviet occupation. Thus, under Soviet pressure, Hungary also rejected the opportunity, which

96 Winston S. Churchill (1874–1965) was a British politician, Prime Minister of Great Britain between 1940–1945 and 1951–1955. During his first term, he successfully opposed Hitler's aggression and played a decisive role in the success of the anti-Nazi coalition. In 1953, he received the Nobel Prize in Literature.

97 „From Stettin in the Baltic to Trieste in the Adriatic, an iron curtain has descended across the Continent. Behind that line lie all the capitals of the ancient states of Central and Eastern Europe. Warsaw, Berlin, Prague, Vienna, Budapest, Belgrade, Bucharest and Sofia; all these famous cities and the populations around them lie in what I must call the Soviet sphere, and all are subject, in one form or another, not only to Soviet influence but to a very high and in some cases increasing measure of control from Moscow. [...] The Communist parties, which were very small in all these Eastern States of Europe, have been raised to pre-eminence and power far beyond their numbers and are seeking everywhere to obtain totalitarian control. Police governments are prevailing in nearly every case, and so far, except in Czechoslovakia, there is no true democracy." The speech is available on the website of the International Churchill Society: https://winstonchurchill.org/resources/speeches/1946-1963-elder-statesman/the-sinews-of-peace/ (Accessed December 11, 2024).

98 George C. Marshall (1880–1959) was an American professional soldier, politician, and Chief of Staff between 1939 and 1945. Between 1947 and 1949, as Secretary of State of the United States, he announced the economic aid programme for European states. In 1953, he received the Nobel Peace Prize.

contributed to the intensification of its isolation from the Western world. In September 1947, however, the Cominform[99] was established, which, in the Cold War atmosphere, was intended to strengthen Soviet dominance in the satellite states.

The period from the summer of 1947 to August 1948 was called the 'year of the reversal' by Mátyás Rákosi, the number one leader of the Hungarian communists, which created the possibility of a total communist takeover and, ultimately, the establishment of a Stalinist-type Party-state dictatorship in Hungary.[100] Shortly after the signing of the Paris Peace Treaty, a serious crisis developed in Hungary, as in the spring of 1947, the final phase of the communist takeover – that is, the dismantling of the remnants of democratic state functioning in Hungary – began. In December 1946, the Ministry of the Interior, which was under communist leadership, and the secret services fabricated an anti-republican conspiracy out of a minor secret civilian initiative, into which the leaders of the Communist Party sought to implicate the prominent figures of the Independent Smallholders' Party, including Prime Minister Ferenc Nagy. On 25 February 1947, the Soviet authorities – in violation of parliamentary immunity – arrested the General Secretary of the Independent Smallholders' Party, Béla Kovács,[101] and deported him to the Soviet Union. Shortly thereafter, Ferenc Nagy was forced to resign during his holiday in Switzerland, and a new government was formed under the leadership of Lajos Dinnyés, who, although a Smallholder politician, served the interests of the communists to the fullest.

The foreign minister succeeding János Gyöngyösi was temporarily the Minister of Information, Ernő Mihályfi,[102] who, although a Smallholder politician, represented the left wing of the party, which was willing to cooperate

99 The Cominform (Information Bureau of the Communist and Workers' Parties) was an international organisation created by the Soviet Union in which the countries of the socialist bloc participated.

100 Rákosi 1948.

101 Béla Kovács (1908–1959) was a Hungarian politician, Minister of Agriculture, and General Secretary of the Independent Smallholders' Party. On 25 February 1947, he was arrested by the Soviet authorities and was imprisoned in the Soviet Union until 1956. In the final days of the 1956 Revolution, he was a minister of state in the Imre Nagy government.

102 Ernő Mihályfi (1898–1972) was a Hungarian politician and journalist. After 1945, he was active in the Independent Smallholders' Party, then in the spring of 1947, he became Minister of Information, and then temporarily Foreign Minister.

with the communists. He was succeeded in September 1947 by Erik Molnár,[103] who won the post in the colours of the Communist Party – thus, for the first time since the fall of the short-lived Hungarian communist experiment of 1919, the so-called Soviet Republic, the country had a communist foreign minister. Serious changes also began in Hungarian foreign policy: after the prime minister's resignation, the Hungarian ministers in Western countries – and often a large part of the embassy staff – left their posts and went into exile. This was done by, among others, István Kertész, the minister in Rome, and Aladár Szegedy-Maszák,[104] the minister in Washington.[105] Although the communist politicians had expected the departure of several diplomats – and probably considered it desirable – they had not anticipated the magnitude of the wave of resignations. At the meeting of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Hungarian Communist Party held after the government crisis, József Révai, the head of communist cultural policy, summed up his opinion frankly: „After drawing the lessons, we can state that our weakest front was foreign affairs. There are several reasons for this. Among them, the disagreements between the comrades working in foreign affairs. […] But primarily, the responsibility of the comrades working in foreign affairs must be raised. Was there any warning that there were problems in foreign affairs? Did no assimilation take place, which obscured the comrades' vision?"[106] The use of the term „vigilance" began to spread in communist circles at this time and became a defining term by the 1950s, a kind of reflection of Cold War paranoia. The departing diplomats, however, were only the beginning of an even larger wave of purges, which began in January 1948 with a decree

103 Erik Molnár (1894–1966) was a Hungarian politician, historian, university professor, and academician. After 1945, he was a defining figure in communist politics, holding several ministerial portfolios. After 1956, he was exiled to the scientific sphere.

104 Aladár Szegedy-Maszák (1903–1988) was a Hungarian diplomat. He played a decisive role in the secret peace preparations of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 1943–1944. After the German occupation on 19 March 1944, he was arrested by the Gestapo and deported to Dachau. In 1946, he was appointed Hungarian minister to Washington; in the summer of 1947, following the forced resignation of Prime Minister Ferenc Nagy, he also went into exile.

105 The Hungarian ministers in Bern, Washington, Paris, Prague, Vienna, Rome, and Ankara, as well as numerous legation staff, resigned. Sáringer 2013, 54. Cf. Baráth 2015, 23.

106 MNL OL M-KS 274, Group 10, Custody Unit 1: Minutes of the meeting of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Hungarian Communist Party (HCP), 25 June 1947.

that, citing the democratic reorganisation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, forced almost all non-communist staff to leave.[107] By December 1948, some 259 people had left the ministry.[108]

After the government crisis, Hungary's foreign relations began to undergo a serious change. In the years of the reversal, Hungary established very few diplomatic relations.

Changes in Hungary's Diplomatic Relations, 1948–1949[109]

	1948	**1949**
Number of Legations	24	28
Distribution by Continent of Legations		
Europe	19 (79.2%)	21 (75%)
North America	1 (4.2%)	1 (3.6%)
Central & South America	1 (4.2%)	2 (7.1%)
Total Americas	2 (8.4%)	3 (10.7%)
Asia	2 (8.4%)	3 (10.7%)
Africa	1 (4.2%)	1 (3.6%)
Australia	0	0

The Western world almost unanimously condemned the removal of the prime minister and correctly considered it a communist takeover. Moreover, not long after, in December 1948, József Mindszenty,[110] the Archbishop of Esztergom and head of the Hungarian Roman Catholic Church, was arrested on trumped-up charges. In the Mindszenty trial, which took place in February 1949, the cardinal was sentenced to life imprisonment, which provoked enormous outrage in the Western world. On 12 June 1948, the Hungarian Communist Party and the Social Democratic Party merged, and

107 At that time, 152 people were dismissed. Sáringer 2013, 55.

108 Baráth 2015, 25.

109 The table contains our own calculations, based on: Baráth–Gecsényi 2015.

110 József Mindszenty (1892–1975) was a Hungarian Roman Catholic prelate, cardinal, and Archbishop of Esztergom. During the Second World War, he stood up for the persecuted and was interned by the far-right authorities in 1944. In 1945, Pope Pius XII appointed him Archbishop of Esztergom, making him the head of the Hungarian Roman Catholic Church. In 1948, he was arrested by the communist authorities. He was freed during the 1956 Revolution and then stayed at the American legation in Budapest until 1971, from where he went into exile.

with this, the Hungarian Working People's Party, led by Mátyás Rákosi, was born, which clearly aspired to the status of a state party. On 20 August 1949, the new constitution was promulgated, which transformed the Hungarian political system based on the 1936 Soviet constitution.

THE EMERGENCE OF A UNILATERAL SOVIET FOREIGN POLICY ORIENTATION: THE EARLY YEARS OF THE RÁKOSI ERA (1949–1953)

The political system that had consolidated by 1949 fundamentally followed the Soviet model: although the multi-party system was not banned, the 1949 elections were the last in which other parties besides the state party ran – albeit on a common electoral list. By this time, the prominent figures of the opposition parties had already left the country, and the Rákosist communist leadership in time sought to rid itself of its rivals within the party: the period of purges within the state party began, to which leading communist politicians such as László Rajk,[111] the former minister of the interior and foreign affairs, fell victim, but János Kádár[112] was also imprisoned.

From the time of the communist takeover, Hungarian foreign policy was determined in the supreme bodies of the Hungarian Working People's

111 László Rajk (1909–1949) was a Hungarian politician, one of the architects of the Party-state dictatorship. He participated in the international workers' movement, fought alongside the republican troops in the Spanish Civil War, and then organised the illegal Hungarian communist party during the Second World War. Between 1946 and 1948, as minister of the interior, he sought to liquidate non-communist civil organisations by administrative means; between 1948 and 1949, he was foreign minister. Mátyás Rákosi saw a rival in him, so he was convicted and executed in a show trial.

112 János Kádár (1912–1989) was a Hungarian politician and communist activist, a leading figure in Hungarian politics between 1946 and 1989. He participated in the resistance during the Second World War, and then in the building of the Party-state dictatorship after 1945. Between 1948 and 1950, he was minister of the interior; between 1951 and 1954, he was in prison. In the 1956 Revolution, he was first a minister of state in the Imre Nagy government, and then prime minister of the Revolutionary Workers' and Peasants' Government, established to crush the revolution. The reprisals against the participants of the 1956 Revolution – including Imre Nagy – are associated with his name. After 1963, he consolidated his system.

Party, often by Rákosi and his inner circle. The tendency generally characteristic of the socialist bloc countries, whereby the party organs and the state organs were intertwined, with the former having the leading role in everything, also prevailed in Hungary. In this period, Hungarian foreign policy was characterised by a unilateral Soviet orientation; Hungary followed Moscow's instructions in practically every foreign policy issue – one cannot speak of an independent foreign policy that kept the national interest in mind in the Hungarian context during this period.

The Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs – thanks to the previous waves of purges – operated with a completely new staff, but since the new employees generally had a working-class or peasant background, and their training took place in short diplomatic courses, they lacked the general education essential in diplomatic life, as well as an adequate depth of language skills or good Hungarian spelling skills. The foreign service of the Rákosi era thus underwent a huge decline in standards compared to previous years, which the Party-state system was only able to overcome by the end of the 1960s.[113]

Between 1943 and 1949, Soviet policy bound the East-Central European states that had fallen into its sphere of influence to itself with bilateral friendship and cooperation treaties, the aim of which was the total extension of Soviet hegemony over the region. Bilateralism also played a key role because it allowed Moscow to successfully control all contact between the states belonging to its alliance system. An essential point of the treaties was the guarantee of military cooperation in the event of a Western attack.[114] The countries belonging to the socialist bloc naturally also concluded cultural or friendship treaties among themselves, but Moscow's approval was an indispensable condition for the deepening of relations.

Western foreign relations were further damaged by the major economic show trials of 1948–1949. In 1948, the leaders of the Hungarian-American Oil Company were arrested, and then in 1949, they were convicted of sabotage

113 Characteristic are the titles of some contemporary Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs documents: MNL OL XIX-J-1-o. Box 1. Decree on the organisation of learning basic Hungarian spelling and grammar at foreign missions. Cf. MNL OL XIX-J-1-o. Box 1. Collegial draft on the planning of language learning. Cf. MNL OL XIX-J-1-o. Box 1.

114 Győri-Szabó 2011, 194–195. Proposal for a competition call for those participating in language learning in the ministry.

and other crimes. In addition to this procedure, which seriously damaged American economic interests, other trials also strained Western relations. The American company Standard Electric Co., which had been operating in Hungary since 1928, managed to avoid nationalisation in 1948, but its leaders – including American and British citizens – were taken into custody by the Hungarian authorities and then convicted in a show trial in 1950.[115] Thanks in part to these trials, the Western world practically completely dismantled its Hungarian commercial relations.

Within the socialist bloc, the biggest crisis erupted in connection with Yugoslavia: the country's leader, the former partisan commander Tito,[116] did not follow the Soviet leadership's instructions in every respect, and there were also serious principled differences between Belgrade and Moscow on the nature of the communist system. The actual break occurred in the summer of 1948, when Yugoslavia was expelled from the Cominform. The socialist states of the Soviet sphere of influence one by one scaled back their relations with the South Slavic state and began to organise anti-Tito campaigns. In Hungary, anti-Yugoslav sentiment reached particularly serious proportions; indeed, Rákosi Mátyás constructed the removal of his party rival, László Rajk – and his subsequent conviction in a show trial and execution – within the framework of a Yugoslav spy trial.[117] The Hungarian party leadership had much to compensate for, as Yugoslav-Hungarian relations had been among Hungary's best foreign relations in the summer of 1948. The break also had a peculiar consequence from a Hungarian perspective: the headquarters of the Danube Commission, an international organisation that was already under Soviet influence and had been founded in Yugoslavia in 1948, was moved from Belgrade to Budapest.[118]

Foreign economic relations with the Western world were practically severed, which further exacerbated the already serious crisis of the Hungarian economy. Moreover, from 1948, the Western states implemented

115 Bátonyi 2015.; Cf. Szörényi 2006.

116 Josip Broz Tito (1892–1980) was a South Slavic politician, one of the leaders of the Yugoslav partisan movement. Between 1945 and 1953, he was Prime Minister of Yugoslavia, and between 1953 and 1980, its President. As the creator of Yugoslavia's special path policy, he was an initiator of the Non-Aligned Movement.

117 For the context of the Rajk trial, see: Gyarmati 2011, 149–159.; Cf. Ötvös 2018.

118 Kertész 1984, 221–224.

a strict embargo policy against the socialist states, including Hungary, which placed a serious obstacle in the way of technical development. In 1949, the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (Comecon) was established, which regulated the economic cooperation of the socialist bloc, keeping Soviet interests in mind in every respect. Between 1950 and 1953, the growth in the number of Hungarian foreign missions practically stagnated; in 1953, Hungary did not establish diplomatic relations with a single country.

Changes in Hungary's Diplomatic Relations, 1950–1952[119]

	1950	**1951**	**1952**
Number of Legations	29	31	32
Distribution by Continent of Legations			
Europe	21 (72.4%)	21 (67.7%)	21 (65.6%)
North America	1 (3.4%)	1 (3.2%)	1 (3.1%)
Central & South America	2 (6.9%)	2 (6.4%)	3 (9.4%)
Total Americas	3 (10.3%)	3 (9.6%)	4 (12.5%)
Asia	4 (13.8%)	6 (19.3%)	6 (18.8%)
Africa	1 (3.4%)	1 (3.2%)	1 (3.1%)
Australia	0	0	0

László Rajk – who was arrested as foreign minister – was succeeded at the head of the ministry by Gyula Kállai,[120] but in 1951, he too fell victim to a party purge. After his arrest, his successor was Károly Kiss,[121] and then for a short time – and for the second time since 1945 – Erik Molnár became foreign minister. The unilateral Soviet orientation is well characterised by the 1951 guideline of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which served the instructions of the state party in everything and conveyed Moscow's foreign policy position in its entirety: „The Hungarian People's Republic, follow-

119 The table contains our own calculations, based on: Baráth–Gecsényi 2015.

120 Gyula Kállai (1910–1996) was a Hungarian politician, Foreign Minister between 1949 and 1951, and served a prison sentence between 1951 and 1954. He was Prime Minister between 1965 and 1967.

121 Károly Kiss (1903–1983) was a Hungarian politician and foreign minister. He participated in the Hungarian illegal communist movement between the two world wars; after 1945, he held high party offices. During the crushing of the 1956 Revolution, he supported the Soviet intervention but was removed from the front line of the party leadership.

ing the leadership and example of the Soviet Union, unswervingly continues its struggle for the preservation of peace, uncovering and thwarting the provocative attempts of the imperialists and their agents – primarily the Titoist bandits threatening our southern borders – directed against us. We are constantly tightening our economic and cultural relations with the Soviet Union and the people's democratic countries, and at the same time, we are working to maintain and broaden peaceful commercial relations with other countries as far as possible – even with the imperialist powers pursuing a hostile policy towards us. Regarding the international situation, the words of Comrade Rákosi are still fully valid today: 'The international situation is characterised by the successes and growing superiority of the peace camp led by the Soviet Union.'"[122] Beyond the self-contradictory nature of the term „struggle for peace," the foreign policy of the Rákosi era was defined by Cold War paranoia. Since the centrally regulated, command planned economy, that is, the adaptation of the socialist model, forced industrialisation, and the subordination of agriculture to these goals, had plunged the Hungarian economy into a serious crisis by 1952–1953, the presentation of external enemy images also served the internal stability of the system. And since we cannot speak of an independent Hungarian foreign policy in this period, its propagandistic use served the achievement of domestic political goals: the demonisation of the Western, imperialist world and the proclamation of the superiority of the supposedly progressive and democratic socialist bloc served to strengthen the community by creating a common enemy image.

Hungarian diplomacy sought to use major Hungarian sporting successes for its foreign propaganda, with which it hoped to raise the country's tarnished nimbus. A typical case of this was the 15th Summer Olympics in 1952 (Helsinki), at which the Hungarian team finished third in the medal table, after the United States and the Soviet Union. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs instructed all Hungarian foreign missions to popularise the Hungarian results: „The attention of the foreign missions must be drawn by decree to the exploitation of the results of the Helsinki Olympiad, to the task of seeking out all possibilities in the field of making contacts and

122 Guidelines for the work of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Hungarian diplomatic missions abroad, 1951. Iványi 2020, Document 1.

information work, and to mobilising the organisations at their disposal in order to take advantage of the mass interest. In their information work, they must present Hungarian sport to the maximum, the preconditions for our achievements, and through this, the Hungarian people's democracy as well."[123] It was in these years that the international performance of the Hungarian national football team also began to rise: the legendary „Golden Team" which won an Olympic gold medal in Helsinki in 1952, also became an important arsenal of foreign policy.[124]

THE BEGINNINGS OF FOREIGN POLICY CONSOLIDATION (1953–1956)

In March 1953, Stalin died, as a result of which serious changes began in the Soviet party leadership. Khrushchev[125] emerged victorious from the ensuing power struggle and, at the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, condemned Stalinist policy in a secret speech. In 1953, decisive changes also began in Hungary. In June, Mátyás Rákosi was summoned to Moscow, where his activities were severely criticised, and he was forced to resign.[126] Thus, the country's leader became Imre Nagy, the former communist minister, who pursued a significantly more moderate policy than his predecessor – among other things, he had the Recsk prison camp, known as the „Hungarian Gulag," closed, and de-Stalinisation also reached the secret services.[127]

123 Published in Iványi 2020, 393, Document 56.

124 It should be noted: the (foreign) political exploitation of sporting successes was an important part of the foreign propaganda of every country. To illustrate with an American example in connection with the 1952 Olympics, see: Rider 2016.

125 Nikita Khrushchev (1894–1971) was a Soviet politician, First Secretary of the CPSU between 1953 and 1964, and leader of the Soviet Union. In 1956, at the 20th Congress of the CPSU, he condemned Stalinism in a closed-door speech. The crushing of the 1956 Hungarian Revolution, as well as the building of the Berlin Wall and the Cuban missile crisis, were the most important events of his years in office.

126 Published in Békés–Byrne–Rainer 2002, 24–33, Document 2.

127 Bank 2018. and Gyarmati–Palasik 2017, 25–45.

There was also a change of minister at the head of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, as Erik Molnár was replaced by János Boldóczki,[128] who exchanged his post as minister to Prague for his new office. Boldóczki clearly represented a strong Soviet orientation, and there were serious doubts about his diplomatic expertise – at the time of his appointment, he had only been in the foreign service for three years, and before his political career, he had been a day labourer. After 1953, the Hungarian party leadership strove to somewhat relax the previous isolationist foreign policy – naturally following Soviet models – and to move the frozen Western relations off the dead point. On the one hand, the surveillance of the foreign missions in Budapest was eased, and on the other, concrete gestures were also made: the release of the British citizen Edgar Sanders, who had been convicted in a show trial, was, for example, a gesture towards Great Britain.[129] For a similar purpose, Hungarian sports diplomacy was also activated, the most large-scale event of which was the „Golden Team's" two matches against the English national team in London (3:6) and Budapest (7:1).

In May 1954, the Soviet and Hungarian party leaderships held talks in Moscow, at which the Soviet delegation expressed its dissatisfaction, on the one hand, with Imre Nagy, who had criticised his predecessor in office on too many points, and on the other, once again with Mátyás Rákosi, who was said to have hindered Imre Nagy's policy. Since by the spring of 1955, the air had run out around Imre Nagy – and he also had health problems – he resigned in March, which also meant that his party rival, Mátyás Rákosi, had prevailed in their struggle, although the latter no longer took on the prime ministerial position. On 15 May 1955, the four occupying powers signed the Austrian State Treaty, which settled Austria's international status. Since the country undertook perpetual neutrality, the occupying – and among them, the Soviet – troops left the territory of Austria. This was also of key importance from a Hungarian perspective, since the 1947 Paris Peace Treaty had permitted the stationing of the Soviet army in Hungary – and in other satellite states – as long as Austria was under occupation. To avoid troop withdrawals, the Warsaw Pact was thus created the day before

128 János Boldóczki (1912–1988) was a Hungarian communist politician and diplomat, Foreign Minister between 1953 and 1956.

129 M. Madarász 2018. 1.; Cf. Szörényi 2006.

the proclamation of the Austrian State Treaty, which established a military alliance among the socialist countries.[130]

From 1955, a serious improvement occurred in relations with Yugoslavia, which was closely linked to the change of direction in Soviet foreign policy. On 9 May 1955, the Yugoslav leadership proposed the establishment of mixed commissions to put an end to the border incidents, which was the first official rapprochement between the two states since 1949. Between 26 May and 2 June 1955, Khrushchev and Tito met in Belgrade, and after the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, Moscow dissolved the Cominform: from then on, Yugoslav-Hungarian relations began to improve significantly.

The Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs formulated its foreign policy objectives in accordance with Soviet instructions: „Our main foreign policy objectives are therefore identical; the basis for cooperation exists. This determines the further development of our relations. Our objectives – as summarised by the comrade minister in his report at the conference of envoys: we must work effectively to ensure that our relations fully correspond to the relationship of two countries building socialism. The significance of this is, moreover, underlined by the circumstance that in our case it is not only a matter of asserting the principle of proletarian internationalism, not only of the radical elimination of old mistakes, but also of the fact that we are neighbours with Yugoslavia, and thus the establishment of an intimate relationship is of particular importance to us."[131] On 14 December 1955, as a result of an agreement between the United States and the Soviet Union, Hungary, along with several other states, was admitted as a member of the UN. Meanwhile, in accordance with Soviet expectations, Hungary began a gradual foreign policy opening towards the now-neutral Austria, one result of which was the dismantling of the technical border barrier installed on the Austrian-Hungarian border.[132] From 1954, diplomatic relations also began to grow dynamically:

130 On the connections between the Austrian State Treaty and the 1956 Revolution, see Mueller 2011, 89–102.

131 Submission of the Collegium of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on Yugoslav-Hungarian relations, 28 September 1956. Published in Iványi 2020, 77–91, Document 6.

132 Győri-Szabó 2011, 215.

Changes in Hungary's Diplomatic Relations, 1954–1956[133]

	1954	1955	1956
Number of Legations	35	39	43
Distribution by Continent of Legations			
Europe	22 (62.9%)	25 (64.1%)	26 (60.5%)
North America	1 (2.9%)	1 (2.6%)	1 (2.3%)
Central & South America	3 (8.6%)	3 (7.7%)	4 (9.3%)
Total Americas	4 (11.5%)	4 (10.3%)	5 (11.6%)
Asia	8 (22.6%)	9 (23.1%)	9 (20.9%)
Africa	1 (2.9%)	1 (2.6%)	3 (7%)
Australia	0	0	0

The 20th Congress of the CPSU was also important from the point of view of Hungarian foreign policy, as it rejected a significant part of the Stalinist doctrines. In the spirit of peaceful coexistence, the Cominform was dissolved, and relations between the socialist states of the region revived. Paradoxically, the year preceding the 1956 Revolution bore the signs of détente. In the summer of 1956, Mátyás Rákosi once again – and this time permanently – fell from grace; he was transported to the Soviet Union for medical treatment, from where he never returned. In July, there was also a change at the head of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, as Imre Horváth was appointed in place of János Boldóczki. Horváth had previously served as a diplomat in Moscow, Berlin, Washington, London, and Prague, so his expertise in foreign affairs could be said to be much better than that of his predecessor.

During his summer holiday in the Crimea, Ernő Gerő – at Soviet request – met with Tito, and they agreed on a visit of a high-level Hungarian party delegation to Belgrade. At this time, the rehabilitation of Imre Nagy, who had in the meantime been removed from the party, was also discussed, which was all the more important for Budapest, since in the meantime a serious debate had taken place in Hungarian intellectual circles about the country's current state and future, and Imre Nagy's previous reforms were particularly popular in the wider circles of Hungarian society. Between 15 and 22 October, the Hungarian party leadership travelled to Belgrade, where

133 The table contains our own calculations, based on: Baráth–Gecsényi 2015.

upon his arrival, Ernő Gerő praised his hosts, and his speech amounted to an apology: „We have already largely buried those harmful relations, which were highly detrimental to both countries and both peoples, as well as to our parties, and which for several years poisoned and exacerbated the relations between our countries and peoples."[134] Upon the delegation's return, a tense atmosphere already prevailed in Budapest; the university youth organised a demonstration, which on 23 October resulted in the outbreak of the Hungarian revolution.[135]

THE FOREIGN POLICY OF THE 1956 REVOLUTION

The Hungarian Revolution of 1956 began on 23 October with a demonstration organised by university students,[136] and on 4 November, a Soviet intervention put an end to the event, although the street fighting dragged on for several more days. Given the shortness of time, the revolution's foreign policy could not come to fruition. Nevertheless, it is worth taking stock of the revolution's main foreign policy achievements and events, because without them, the change of direction in the foreign policy of the Kádár era cannot be understood. The 1956 Revolution, despite its failure, had a very serious impact on the Hungarian party leadership, from which they drew the conclusion that pre-1956 Hungarian policy required radical changes: this diagnosis of the crisis became the most important foundation of Kádár's foreign policy.

The immediate cause of the revolution was a solidarity demonstration called by university students for 23 October, with which they wanted to demonstrate in support of the reforms of the Polish party leadership. The party leadership initially banned, then permitted the demonstration, which grew larger in the afternoon and eventually led to the toppling of the Stalin

134 Ernő Gerő's statement in Belgrade, 15 October 1956. *Szabad Nép*, 16 October 1956, 1.
135 Békés 2011, 108.
136 The university students summarised their reform demands in 16 points; see Békés–Byrne–Rainer 2002, 188–190, Document 24.

statue in Budapest and the storming of the Hungarian Radio building. On 23 October, the Moscow leadership authorised the deployment of Soviet troops on the 24th to disperse the mass demonstration. The solution chosen by Moscow not only failed to help a quick resolution of the crisis, but led precisely to its escalation.[137]

On 24 October, Soviet tanks did indeed appear in Budapest, and in the meantime, Imre Nagy was elected prime minister. Initially, according to the official position of the party leadership, he condemned the uprising, but since his way of thinking and intellectual habitus were quite different from the Stalinist interpretation of communism, he in time modified his position.[138] The uprising in the meantime spread to the whole country, and on 27 October, Imre Nagy included two former Smallholder ministers in his government, for which there had been no precedent since 1949. Then on 28 October, the military units of the capital also sided with the insurgents, which led to the victory of the revolution. The prime minister declared the event a national revolution and broke with the unilateral Soviet orientation of Hungarian foreign policy. This meant that in terms of its foreign affairs, Hungary, for essentially the first time since 19 March 1944, could pursue a sovereign policy without trying to please the occupying German or the occupying Soviet authorities at all costs. In Moscow at this time, they were still analysing the developments and applied a wait-and-see tactic.

On 30 October, Imre Nagy announced the restoration of the multi-party system and formed a coalition government in which social democrats and smallholders also participated.[139] He also initiated negotiations on the withdrawal of Soviet troops. On 31 October, the communist state party, the Hungarian Working People's Party, was dissolved, and the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party was formed under the leadership of János Kádár. Kádár himself also joined Imre Nagy's line and also took on the portfolio of minister of state in the Nagy cabinet. On 31 October, a decision was made in Moscow to crush the revolution, for a new Soviet intervention.

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137 Békés 2011, 109.

138 The development of Nagy's thinking is followed in his article by Rainer 1997.

139 Radio Message from Imre Nagy Announcing the Formation of a New Government, 28 October 1956, and Proclamation by Imre Nagy on the Creation of a New Government, 28 October 1956. Both sources are published in: Békés–Byrne–Rainer 2002, 284–285 and 290–291, Documents 44 and 46.

On 1 November, Imre Nagy announced Hungary's neutrality and its withdrawal from the Warsaw Pact. „The Hungarian national government, imbued with a deep sense of responsibility before the Hungarian people and before history, expressing the undivided will of the millions of the Hungarian people, declares the neutrality of the Hungarian People's Republic. The Hungarian people, on the basis of independence and equality and in accordance with the spirit of the UN Charter, wish to live in true friendship with their neighbours, the Soviet Union, and all the peoples of the world. They wish to consolidate and further develop the achievements of their national revolution without joining any power bloc. The centuries-old dream of the Hungarian people is thus realised. The revolutionary struggle waged by the heroes of the Hungarian past and present has finally brought the cause of freedom and independence to victory. This heroic struggle has made it possible for our people to assert their fundamental national interest, neutrality, in their interstate relations. We appeal to our neighbours, to the near and distant countries, to respect the unalterable decision of our people."[140] It is important to emphasise that in his statement of 1 November, János Kádár spoke in harmony with the prime minister about the desirable foreign policy when presenting his party's programme: „The new party breaks once and for all with the sins of the past! It defends and will defend our national honour, the independence of our country, against everyone. On this basis, on the basis of national independence, it builds its fraternal relationship with all the progressive socialist movements and parties of the world. On this basis, on the basis of national independence, it desires friendly relations with all near and distant countries, primarily with the neighbouring socialist countries. It defends and will defend the achievements of the Hungarian Republic, the land reform, the public ownership of factories, banks, and mines, the indisputable social and cultural achievements of our people."[141] It is telling that Kádár designated the form of state not with the term 'people's republic' introduced by the

140 Imre Nagy's radio speech, 1 November 1956. Népszabadság, 2 November 1956, 1. Published in Békés–Byrne–Rainer 2002, 334, Document 68.

141 János Kádár announces the statement of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party, 1 November 1956. Népszabadság, 2 November 1956, 1.

1949 constitution, but with the concept of 'republic', which indirectly evoked the years of the coalition.

The Revolutionary Committee of the Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs also issued its statement on this day, which was sent to the foreign missions and in which they called for support for the revolution: „The Revolutionary Committee of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs identifies itself with the Hungarian freedom fight and condemns the unauthorised intervention of the Soviet troops, the bloodshed by the State Protection Authority (ÁVH), demands that the Rákosi–Gerő–Hegedüs clique responsible for them be brought to justice, and the immediate withdrawal of Soviet troops from the territory of the country. The Revolutionary Committee of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs joyfully welcomes the declaration of the Revolutionary Committee of the Hungarian Intelligentsia, identifies with it, and in its own field will do everything to ensure that the principles expressed in them are realised. To this end, it has decided the following: 1. The basic principles of an independent Hungarian foreign policy must be worked out without delay, and the foreign policy of the Hungarian People's Republic must be placed on new foundations accordingly. 2. We condemn the statement made by Péter Kós,[142] the Hungarian UN representative, at the meeting of the Security Council regarding the situation in Hungary, and demand his immediate recall from the UN. 3. We demand that those leaders and staff of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the foreign missions who are alien to the people and who represented and represent the anti-national, treasonous policy of the Rákosi–Gerő clique be replaced or recalled. 4. The employees of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs declare that they will participate with all their strength in ensuring order and establishing a peaceful life in Budapest. 5. Finally, the Revolutionary Committee of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs calls on the employees of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to appear at their workplaces on Wednesday morning."[143]

142 Péter Kós (1921–1994) was a Hungarian diplomat and politician, an employee of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs between 1949 and 1990. In 1956, he represented a position contrary to the provisions of the Imre Nagy government at the UN.

143 Statement of the Revolutionary Committee of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 31 October 1956. Published in Iványi 2020, Document 7.

The Hungarian government continuously monitored the Soviet troop movements. At the very beginning of November, it became clear that another Soviet intervention was being prepared, as large numbers of Soviet units were advancing towards Budapest. The declaration of neutrality was thus made in a context where Hungary no longer had any other realistic chance of a negotiated settlement of the situation with the Soviets, but drawing the attention of the international community offered some hope. Of course, the Hungarian government could not know – but could suspect – that neither superpower was interested in dismantling the 1945 status quo. The 1956 Hungarian Revolution was considered a Soviet internal affair in this bipolar system, and the American leadership treated it as such throughout, just as the Soviet government considered the Suez crisis, which broke out on 27 October, a Western affair.[144] On 3 November, the Hungarian military delegation that arrived in the provincial Hungarian town of Tököl – led by Minister of Defence Pál Maléter[145] – was arrested by Ivan Serov,[146] the head of the KGB, and the next day, the second – this time successful – Soviet invasion began.

CONCLUSION

When drawing up the foreign policy balance sheet of our period of examination, we must first emphasise the difference between the foreign policy of the coalition era, the Party-state dictatorship, and the brief 1956 Revolution. The foreign policy of the coalition era could not be unified due to the different foreign policy concepts of the various political parties, but despite the ever-increasing Soviet pressure, there were, to a very small

144 Boyle 2005.

145 Pál Maléter (1917–1958) was a professional soldier, and Minister of Defence during the 1956 Revolution. The Soviets, initiating negotiations, lured him to their base at Tököl, where they arrested him. In 1958, he was sentenced to death and executed in a show trial.

146 Ivan Serov (1905–1990) was a Soviet soldier, head of the KGB between 1954 and 1958. During the Second World War, he organised the deportation of the citizens of the Baltic countries, as well as the Volga Germans and the Crimean Tatars to Siberia.

extent, foreign policy issues that could be achieved by Hungarian diplomats through clever compromises or tactics. At the same time, the most important foreign policy undertaking of this period, the peace preparation, was a complete failure for Hungary, and the state could not regain its sovereignty, as the communist takeover accelerated in 1947. Between 1948–1949 and October 1956, complete Soviet dominance was realised in Hungary in the field of foreign policy as well, which was only temporarily broken by the 1956 Revolution. Although the latter failed, its impact was invaluable: the Kádár regime in time completely distanced itself from the political practices of the Rákosi regime, and in the field of foreign policy, by opening up to the Third World, it was able to lend some autonomy to its foreign policy, which continued to adapt to Moscow's interests. In the days of the dismantling of the 1945 status quo in 1989, the most important model for the Hungarian democratic transformation also became 1956, which at the same time could be the most important ideological catalyst of the Hungarian change of regime. The three periods, however, also have a common feature: Hungary's foreign policy had to be shaped along very serious constrained paths. The full sovereignty of Hungarian foreign policy could only be achieved when the free Hungarian government, formed after the first democratic elections, took office in 1990.

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