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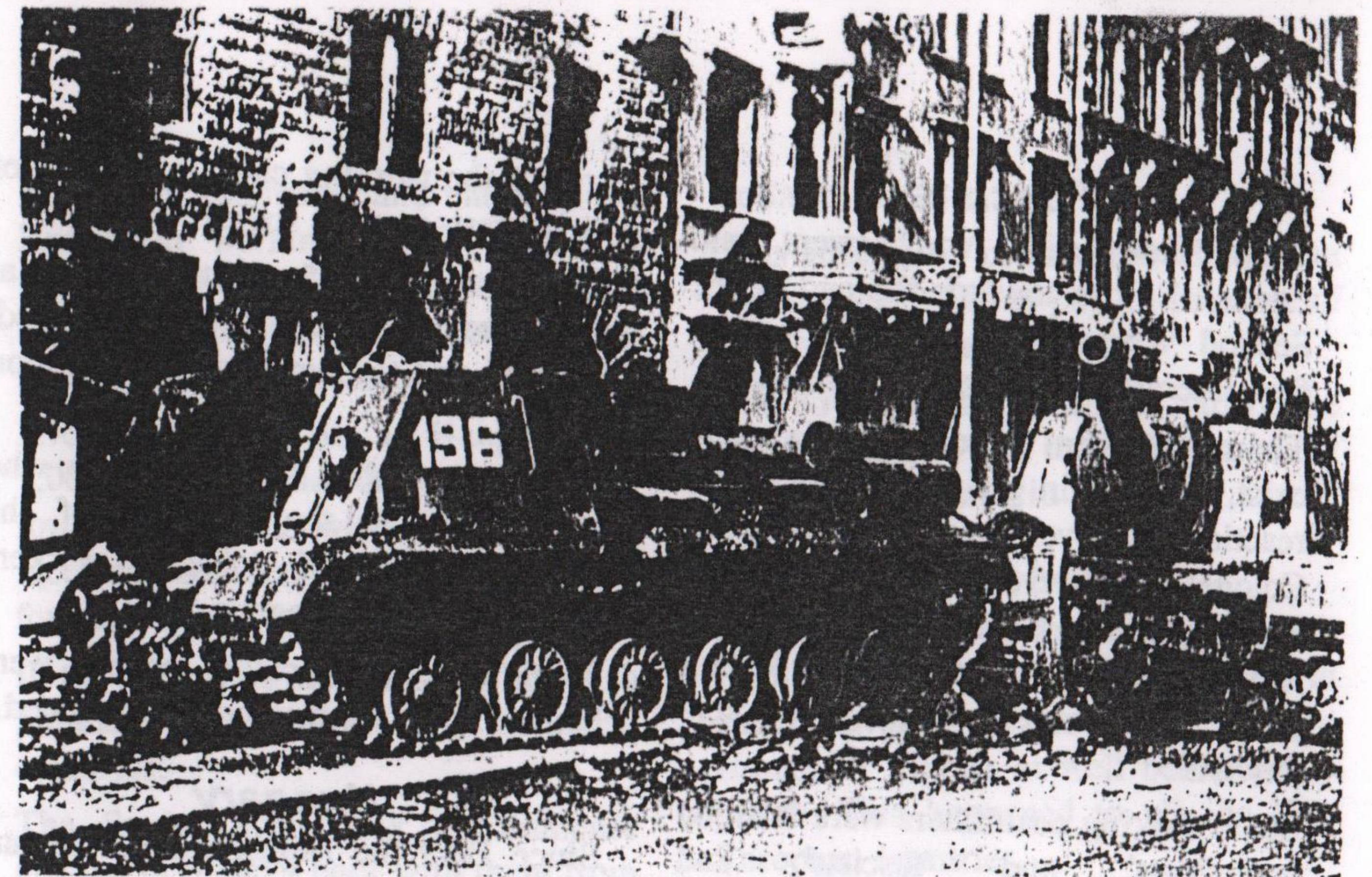
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A Brief Flowering of Freedom: The Hungarian Revolution 1956



Anarchist Communist Federation (London)



Tanks destroyed by Molotov cocktails in Budapest

Introduction

A version of this pamphlet first appeared as a Supplement to Anarchist Worker, the paper of the Anarchist Workers Association, in November 1976.

This considerably revised version corrects the AWA's underestimation of the working class as the prime catalyst for the events of 1956.

The Hungarian Revolution remains important as a fine example of the new forms of working class revolutionary organisation, embryos of a new stateless society, which have regularly appeared during the course of revolutions and insurrections over the last 120 years or so.

The Hungarian Workers Councils were organs through which the working class as a whole could have directly taken

over and administered society, without the mediation of Parliament. The Hungarian working class, directly attacked the State power controlled by the Communist Party and re-affirmed the idea of a future society where there would be no State or hierarchy, a free society based on equality and social justice.

IT IS NOT out of love for nostalgia that we are commemorating the 1956 Hungarian uprising.

Hungary '56 was a prime example of the working class itself reaching for power: doubly significant, it took place in one of the mythical 'workers' states'.

It showed for many, throughout the world, a new alternative to the capitalism vs. Soviet communism - read state capitalism - polarisation, and it galvanised movements towards genuine revolutionary politics.

Fascists

When the Soviet Army swept into Eastern Europe towards the end of the Second World War, they did not, in fact, liberate the workers and peasants.

The same system as before continued to exist, with Stalin giving backing to the reactionary governments. In Bulgaria, Colonel Georgiev, who now had the backing of the Communists, and who had in 1934 attacked strikers, killing some, and called striking workers 'fascists'.

Some striking coalminers were labelled 'anarchists' and 'fascists' and imprisoned. Earlier, the Russian military and their Bulgarian stooges dismantled the workers' militias that had been created, and the soldiers' councils that had emerged inside the army.

Party members who objected were told by Molotov, *"If certain Communists continue their present conduct, we will bring them to reason. Bulgaria will remain with her democratic government and her present order.... you must retain all valuable army officers from before the coup d'etat. You should reinstate in the service all officers who have been dismissed for various reasons."*

In Bulgaria, the Anarchists commanded widespread following among the workers and peasants, intellectuals and youth.

The Stalinists now began to crush this movement, banning the Anarchist Communist Federation newspaper because it had said that the strongest

arm of the working class in defence of its interests was the strike!

On March 10, 1945, ninety delegates at an Anarchist conference were arrested, tortured and thrown into concentration camps.

Among these had been militants who had fought in the forefront of the general strike of tobacco workers against the fascist regime.

Soon all other socialist parties were banned and their members imprisoned.

Hungary

Since 1919 the Hungarian people had suffered the fascist regime of Admiral Horthy, which had murdered thousands and had deported over 400,000 Jews to the Nazi concentration camps.

In 1944 a new Hungarian government was set up by the Russians, whose head was the Commander in Chief of the Hungarian Army, Bela Miklos, who had been personally decorated with the Iron Cross by Adolf Hitler.

This new government still supported Horthy as the ruler of Hungary.

The Stalinists were frightened of workers and peasants creating councils to run Hungary and would rather support these 'ex'-fascists than open the door to proletarian revolution.

The Communist Party began to infiltrate the government, taking with it the Ministry of the Interior and the control of the State police, the AVH.

This force was formed of hangmen and butchers who had served under Horthy, and thugs from the Communist Party.

The AVH was feared and hated by the Hungarian working class because of their record of torture and murder and because of the privileged position they held in Hungarian society.

Average monthly pay in Hungary was 1,000 forints: the AVH got 3,000 forints a month, while their officers received between 9,000 and 12,000 forints a month.

In the meantime, the Russians began to plunder the Eastern European countries.

The Soviet Army took an immense amount of plunder back with them from Hungary and requisitioned huge amounts of grain, meat, vegetables and dairy products.

They loaded an immense reparations demand on Hungary of 300 million

dollars.

This meant, of course, the Hungarian working class had to pay. in shortage of food and low wages.

The Kremlin had to cancel half of the reparations still due in 1948 because of fears of an uprising in Hungary.

Robbery

Moscow continued to exploit Hungary in other ways: they sold to Hungary at above world prices and bought Hungary's exports at well below world prices. This happened to all the East European countries.

"The robbery of Poland through this transaction alone amounted to over 100 million dollars a year. British capitalism never got such a large annual profit out of their investments in



Insurrectionary Workers

India." (Ygael Gluckstein, Stalin's Satellites in Europe)

By 1950, the Eastern European states were thoroughly integrated into the political and economic system of the USSR, with the state-decreed collectivisation of agriculture and nationalisation of industry.

But ill feeling and unrest was beginning to grow: workers in Czechoslovakia, Poland and Hungary reacted to the newly introduced piece work system with go-slows, poor quality work and absenteeism. Disaffection spread rapidly.

Jozsef Revai, a Party theoretician in Hungary, complained in October 1948 that the Party daily was read by only 12% of the membership.

Purges began in part set off by the clash between the Yugoslavian leader Tito and Stalin. Titoist hunting became a favourite sport among the bureaucrats. In Hungary alone, 483,000 Party members were expelled and hundreds executed, including the leading Party member Rajk.

End

Josef Stalin died on March 6, 1953. The hopes of workers rose: they thought there was a chance of ending the dictatorship over the proletariat.

In June of that year, there were risings in Czechoslovakia, which were very quickly suppressed.

Two weeks after this. East Berlin workers rose up. The whole affair was sparked off by a building workers

demonstration for better pay and a decrease in the workload.

Thousands joined the demo. Unrest spread throughout East Germany, but Soviet tanks flattened this revolt beneath their tracks.

In the Soviet Union itself, in the forced labour camp of Vorkuta, a strike movement began on July 20 involving 250,000 slave labourers and the Black Flag of Anarchism was raised above the gulag buildings. The Stalinists responded by executing 120.

In Hungary the first major strike took place since the late 40's when 20,000 workers came out on strike in the Csepel district of Budapest in June. The Stalinists frantically make concessions by granting wage rises. These did not stop the strike wave spreading to other parts of Hungary.

The Russian leaders were threatened by the spectre of working class action and engineered the dismissal of the Hungarian Stalinist boss, Rakosi, and his replacement by Imre Nagy.

Upsurge

This upsurge among the workers of the Iron Curtain countries forced the Party bosses to take a softer line.

At the 20th Congress of the Russian Communist Party in February 1956, Khrushchev began his famous attacks on Stalin.

This was followed almost immediately by the Poznan revolt in Poland, which was planned and premeditated.

On June 28, 1956, the workers at the ZISPO locomotive works marched out

and demanded better pay and more control in the running of the plant.

Soon thousands joined them in the streets: this time Polish tanks crushed the revolt.

Petofi

Similar events were beginning to unfold in Hungary.

The Petofi Circle was formed in April 1956 by Young Communists: it was named after Sandor Petofi, the famous national poet who had fought for Hungarian national independence in 1848 against the Austrian Empire, and was backed by the Writers Union.

Pamphlets began to be secretly circulated, at first demanding literary freedom, and later that Hungary should decide itself how to reach communism.

The communist writer Gyula Hay attacked the lack of freedom of speech.

Soon thousands were attending the meetings of the Petofi circle: Rajk's widow demanded justice for her dead husband who had been 'rehabilitated'.

The articles that they wrote for the literary gazette began to circulate outside the literary circles - among workers.

These developments were only possible because of the earlier movement of the working class in 1953. Indeed, the working class were deeply scornful of the Stalinists. It was among the intellectuals and political activists that illusions were rife about some sort of 'workers paradise' set up by the Stalinists, illusions which they were now losing. It was the seething

dissent among the masses that created the developments in the intellectual circles.

By July, discussions on the conditions in Hungary and in particular the secret police had multiplied.

Some speakers at the Circle meetings even demanded the resignation of Imre Nagy, the party head.

In September, at the Writers Union Congress, there were denunciations of the lack of freedom of speech and of the repression in general.

The poet Konya said to the Congress, *"in the name of what morality do the Communists consider themselves justified in committing arbitrary acts against their former allies, in staging witch-trials, in persecuting innocent people, in treating genuine revolutionaries as if they were traitors, in jailing and killing them? In the name of what morality?"*

The discontent in the intellectual elites now emerged in the working class demands for more control over 'their' factories. These demands were limited to union democracy, workers control (that is participation) and consultation of management with union committees on wages and welfare.

The initial demands of the workers were still within union parameters and influenced by union activists. As the struggle was to unfold, workers began to formulate more radical demands and to develop revolutionary forms of organisation.

The Petofi Circle supported these demands. They were put to the

government in a request to hand over the factory administration to the workers.

While First Secretary of the Party Gero was meeting Tito in Belgrade, the Petofi Circle decided to call for a demonstration in solidarity with the Polish workers who were on trial as a result of the Poznan revolt.

They obtained permission for this because otherwise there would have been a direct confrontation, which the authorities wanted to avoid.

Students

The Petofi Circle, the Kossuth Circle and other discussion groups met, as well as groups at the universities.

It was decided to march to the statue of Josef Bem in Budapest, a Pole who had fought with the Hungarians against the Austrian monarchy in the 1848-9 revolution.

At Szeged University a new students organisation, MEFESZ, was formed: many members of DISZ, the official Communist students group, joined it.

The Party and the DISZ leadership had to accept this new formation, and DISZ even went as far as deciding to support the demonstration.

Demonstrations

By now, the Stalinist hierarchy had panicked. The Minister of the Interior banned the march, but because the march was already forming up in parts of the city, they lifted the ban!

The demonstration was mostly formed of young people, with a small number of workers downing tools to join in.

A crowd of several thousand formed up at the Petofi statue and then joined the march: it was here that the medical students were demonstrating.

Outside the Parliament buildings they called for Imre Nagy, who had been expelled from the party for 'deviationism'.

Nagy had faithfully carried out all of Stalin's policies. When, however, he was replaced by arch-Stalinist Rakosi, he had won much misplaced sympathy.

50,000 people assembled at the foot of the Bem statue. Peter Veres of the Writers Union read out the following resolution:

We want

1. An independent national policy based on the principles of socialism;
2. Equality in relations with the USSR and the People's Democracies;
3. A revision of economic agreements in the spirit of the equality of national rights;
4. The running of the factories by workers and specialists.
5. The right of peasants freely to decide their own fate.
6. The removal of the Rakosi clique, a post in the Government for Imre Nagy, and a resolute stand against all counter-revolutionary attempts and aspirations.

7. Complete political representation of the working class - free and secret elections to Parliament and to all autonomous organs of administration.

As Andy Anderson says in his Solidarity book, Hungary 56: "in some respects the resolution was remarkably vague. There was really very little in it that Khrushchev himself had not advocated at some time or other. The demands could, it is true, have been developed into a revolutionary programme. No mention was made of how all this might be achieved, even as it stood"

By now, Gero was broadcasting over the radio and denouncing the demonstrators as counter-revolutionary.

"The Soviet Union must continue to be treated by us with respect as the liberator of Hungary," he said. He added that the Central Committee would not meet for eight days.

Crowds converged on Parliament Square, and stood in silence.

By now it was evening. A hundred thousand had gathered.

"Suddenly all the lights in the Building and in the Square went out. The crowd remained where it was. Someone struck a match and lit a newspaper. Newspapers flared up all over the square. The people watched the building take on a gaunt menacing look in the flickering yellow light." (Andy Anderson, bid)

It was as if this scenario meant so much more: the darkness that the Stalinists had plunged the night into.

And then the fires that the people had lit, the fires of freedom.

Then the crowd decided to march to the radio station with the request that their demands be broadcast.

A hundred thousand set off.

Stalin Tumbles

On the way, 2-3,000 people split off from the march and went into City Park.

Here ropes were tied round the neck of twenty-six foot high bronze statue of Stalin, and hundreds dragged the statue to the ground.

The statue was taken away by lorry to the National Theatre, where the crowd demolished it amidst much jubilation and laughter.

However, the six foot jackboots still stood on the pedestal. As Anderson says:

"What an omen for those who believed in such things! It is not much use getting rid of one man. Another will always fill his boots. You must get rid of the need for rulers."

Many thousands more had joined the main march, including thousands of workers who had come from all over Budapest.

The radio building was heavily guarded by AVH thugs: eventually a delegation was let into the building with their demands.

But two hours passed and still no sign of the delegation. The crowd grew extremely restless.

They began to demand that the delegation be released. Suddenly the crowd leapt forward. The hated AVH men opened fire with machine-guns on the unarmed mass.

Many fell, some never to rise again.

But the crowd continued to advance and overwhelmed the policemen, taking their weapons to fire at the radio buildings.

News of the events in Sandor Street spread fast. Workers returned to arms factories where they worked and with the night shift workers loaded lorries with arms.

These were then taken to Sandor Street and distributed.

Meanwhile, policemen and soldiers were beginning to hand over their arms to the crowd although few actually joined in the revolutionary actions.

In the surrounding streets workers and students began to set up road blocks.

Gero was still continuing to broadcast over the radio:

"Fascists and reactionary elements have launched an attack on our public buildings and on our security units. To restore order and until further measures are taken, all meetings, gatherings, and marches are banned"

Various manoeuvres were taking place inside the Government and the Party.

Gero arranged that Nagy should replace the colourless Hegedus as Premier.

At 8am Wednesday morning it was announced that the Government had asked for Russian Army units stationed in Hungary to help 'restore order'.

There is some dispute over whether or not Nagy was tricked into calling in the Russian tanks. Whatever happened, it is undeniable that he was a bureaucrat, a 'liberal' bureaucrat, but a bureaucrat all the same.

Some intellectuals and students felt 'betrayed'. Yet the working class which had just joined the fray felt no such illusions.

"it was the workers, who, on the morning of Wednesday, October 24, saved the struggle from complete collapse. They saw the Nagy issue as largely irrelevant. In the society they were glimpsing through the dust and smoke of the battle in the streets, there would be no Prime Minister, politicians, and no officials or bosses ordering them about".

(Anderson, *ibid.*)

It is very important to see that the chain of events had not been premeditated, each move plotted out previously by a tightly knit group.

There had been a feeling among students and intellectuals and workers for a more liberal regime. None thought that things would go so far.

A seventeen year old young woman student told George Sherman, an Observer reporter:

"For weeks, we had been talking about reforms-at first educational, and then more and more political and economic. We only wanted to better the lot of the Students. No-one thought it would end in revolution".

If the students and intellectuals had started events off, had expressed certain ideas, then it was the working class who strengthened and carried the events forward.

This has always been, and must always be the case in genuine social revolutions.

"On Wednesday morning the revolt began in our factory. it was unorganised and spontaneous. if it had been organised the AVO would have known and stopped it before it started. The young workers led the way and everyone followed them. Yes, it was the young workers who made the revolution against Communism- the workers on whom the whole system was supposed to be based": (21 year old worker at United Electric factory in a Budapest suburb.)

As a 28 year old refugee stated:

"The young workers were the power of the revolution. The students began it, but when it developed they did not have the numbers or the ability to fight as hard as these young workers".

"it was the proletariat of Hungary, above all, that fought the tanks which came to destroy the revolutionary order they had already established in the shape of workers councils".-Peter Fryer.

Councils Form

Workers and students in Budapest set up a revolutionary council early on Wednesday morning. A pitched battle continued around the radio building.

And the manoeuvring continued inside the Communist Party. Gero was

replaced as First Secretary by Janos Kadar.

Kadar came from the working class. He had been a 'Titoist' and had been imprisoned and tortured horribly. The bureaucrats thought this a fine move - a perfect sop to the rising discontent.

Nagy broadcast at 5am calling for the laying down of arms and promising widespread democratisation in every sphere - Party, State, the economy, politics.

This failed to deter many people. The Revolutionary Council of Workers and Students issued leaflets demanding a general strike.

Tanks Arrive

The Russian tanks began to roll into the city on Wednesday morning. Fierce fighting broke out in several parts of the city.

Barricades were built from hundreds of barrels. Later these were strengthened with railway coaches and wagons from a goods yard.

The workers and students used Molotov cocktails, arms they had captured, and even a small field gun with which they bombarded the tanks.

Two of the main battles took place around Szena Square, and at the Killian Barracks. The fighting went on for nearly three days.

Meanwhile, the revolution was spreading to other parts of the country.

At Magyarovar on Oct 25 a demonstration of 5,000 students and working people gathered outside the

AVH building to demand that the Red Star, symbol of Russian domination, be removed.

The AVH fired on the unarmed crowd and killed 101 people, and seriously wounded 150, including women and children.

When the news reached Gyor soon after, a large group of armed workers and students piled into lorries and joined those surrounding the AVH building.

After the gun battle was over, the AVO



A Bust of Rakosi is hung from a lampost

men who survived were beaten to death or lynched.

This was understandable. Not only had the AVH thugs fired without provocation on an unarmed crowd, but the resentment built up by years of arrests, torture, and the crushing of freedom of speech and expression had reaped a harvest of retribution.

General Strike

The strike called by the Revolutionary Council of Workers and Students spread through the whole of Budapest and out into the main industrial towns - Miskolc, Gyor, Szolnoc, Pecs, Debrecen. Revolutionary committees and councils were set up all over Hungary.

The miners in Pecs, Dunpentele, Tatabanya and Varpalota took a full part in the Revolution. Councils were formed in the mines, the steel mills, the power stations, and many other workplaces.

Everywhere workers armed themselves and in some towns, radio stations broadcast messages against the Stalinists, telling the people not to be fooled by the Government into surrendering their arms.

Hundreds of workers councils existed throughout the country. Many issued programmes.

None of these programmes were the same, although they all called for political and civil liberty, the withdrawal of Russian troops, workers management of the workplace and of

industry, the banning of the AVH, and freedom for trade unionists and parties.

They all demanded an amnesty for those who had taken part in the Revolution.

Some of the programmes wanted the return of 'parliamentary democracy' while others gave support to Nagy.

None of this was surprising. The people had no active and strong libertarian revolutionary organisation informing them of ideas of genuine libertarian communism, and that a free classless, moneyless society was possible.

Yet the essential demands of the Hungarian working people were thoroughly revolutionary in that they shook the foundations of the bureaucracy, and were almost certain to lead from there to the creation of real socialism.

This was seen in the creation of the councils and committees and the workers and students militias.

The workers of Hungary had been told over and over by the State that they were living in a socialist country, that they were proceeding towards a paradise of full communism.

All this while, the bureaucrats, managers and policemen dragooned them in correct 'socialist discipline' and while the style of living difference between rulers and workers was immense.

The class consciousness of the Hungarian working people was to be marvelled at.

"it is quite extraordinary to note how these councils, born spontaneously in different regions, partially isolated by the Russian armies, immediately sought to federate themselves. At the end of the first revolutionary week, they tended to form a republic of councils".

(L'Insurrection Hongroise, Socialisme ou Barbarie, Paris 1957.)

In Miskolc, as an example, a Revolutionary Council had formed early on Wednesday, elected by all the workers in the factories of the neighbourhood.

It organised a strike in all jobs except the public services public transport, electricity, hospitals. It created militias.

The organisations of the Communist Party were dissolved. Peasants in the area started the redistribution of land. White collar workers and peasants were represented on some councils.

Peasants, and farm workers organised deliveries of food to the workers in the cities. They drove out the kolkhoz (State farm managers. In some areas they redistributed the land, while in others they kept the collectives going under their own management.

They realised the advantages of collective and co-operative work, but they knew this work must be through their own efforts and not through State collectivisation.

"A fantastic aspect of the situation is that although the general strike is in being and there is no centrally organised industry, the workers are nevertheless taking upon themselves to keep essential services going for

purposes which they themselves determine and support. Workers' councils in industrial districts have undertaken the distribution of essential goods and food to the population, in order to keep them alive. The coal miners are making daily allocations of just sufficient coal to keep

the power stations going and supply the hospitals in Budapest and other large towns. Railwaymen organise trains to go to approved destinations for approved purposes. It is self help in a setting of Anarchy." Observer 2-11-56.

Fighting Continues

The fighting between the insurgents and the Russian Army increased in intensity.

On Saturday night, Budapest prison was captured and all the political prisoners' were released. The people soon heard all the stories of terrible conditions, of torture and beatings that had been inflicted.

Budapest Radio continued to call for a cease-fire, promising immediate wage increases, negotiations for Russian-Hungarian political and economic equality.

Promises

Nagy attempted to calm the situation down. He promised that the AVH would be disbanded, and that the Government would be re-organised.

Though several groups of insurgents had surrendered, due to lack of ammo, the fighting continued around Szena Square and the Killian Barracks.

A meeting of Council delegates at Gyor reaffirmed their demands to Nagy.

On Tuesday morning, Budapest Radio announced the withdrawal of the Russian troops. Nagy asked for calm from the people while this withdrawal took place, and for a return to work.

The Red Army began to withdraw from Budapest at 4pm. Some of the Hungarian Army and police units, loyal once more to the Government, took over the Red Army positions.

The workers in Budapest and in other parts of the country remained armed and ready.

Double Cross

It was fortunate indeed that they maintained their vigilance because the Russians had only withdrawn to surround the capital with a ring of tanks.



Lynched AVO secret policeman

And from the north east, Russian reinforcements were entering the country.

The councils in that part of Hungary sent news to all other councils.

Nagy was warned that unless Red Army troops withdrew, the Councils would attempt to stop them.

The strike throughout industry would not end until the troops were withdrawn

By November 3, the Red Army detachments had occupied most strategic points in the country, apart from the cities, which were controlled by the insurgents.

Members of the Nagy government assured the people that the Russians would not attack again.

The working class did not believe in their assurances. The General Strike now paralysed all industries.

Their suspicions were proved correct when Pal Maleter and Kovacs, who had led the fighting in Budapest, were arrested during negotiations with the Red Army.

Russians Attack

The Russians opened fire with tanks and artillery on all the major cities at 4am on Sunday November 4. MIG fighters strafed the population.

The barricades went up again. The Russian tanks trundled into Budapest, firing incendiary shells as well as the ordinary ones.

The working class bore the brunt of the fighting.

The Russian troops now confronting the Hungarian workers had been told that they were 'fascists' and 'capitalists'. Some actually thought they were in Berlin, fighting a Nazi uprising. They saw the many burnt-out tanks in the streets, and as a result the fighting was ferocious and bloody.

Janos Kadar, a member of the Nagy government, now formed a 'Workers and Peasants' Government.

Nagy had already sought refuge in the Yugoslav Embassy with fifteen other officials and their families.

This new government asked the Russian government to help them in liquidating the counter-revolutionary forces.

The fighting went on for over a week. Over the radio Moscow had announced the complete crushing of the 'counter-revolution' by midday of November 4.

But the resistance of the Hungarian working class continued. Many Russian tanks were destroyed, many by molotov cocktails thrown at close range.

The AVH came out the holes they had been hiding in. They began to hang insurgents in groups on the bridges over the Danube and in the streets. Many of those hanged were workers.

Kadar in his efforts to fool the Hungarian people, had changed the name and uniforms of the AVH in the same way as he had changed the name of the Communist Party to the Socialist Workers Party.

Yet they still remained what they had always been - butchers and hangmen of the Red Bureaucracy.

Sporadic

By November 14, armed resistance on an organised scale had ended in the towns. Fighting continued in country areas into 1957, but it was sporadic and isolated.

During the last days of the fighting hundreds of posters were fly-posted all over Budapest - or what was left of it.

"These posters showed the contempt of Hungarian workers for the way they had been slandered as 'counter-revolutionaries'. Here are some quotes from the posters:

"Former aristocrats, land and factory owners, Cardinals, Generals and other supporters of the old regime, disguised as factory workers and peasants are making propaganda against our Russian friends"

"Come and see our beautiful capital in Soviet-Hungarian friendship month".

Although many began to return to work, the strike continued in most industries.

Kadar worked to undermine the power of the Workers Councils.

He arrested a few members of the Councils Action Committees. This failed to intimidate.

Next he promised the abolition of the AVH, the withdrawal of Russian troops, and a purge of Stalinists from the Party.

He then pretended that twelve leading Stalinists had been expelled.

Some workers believed this and returned to work. But the strike continued in many areas and in many industries.

The Workers Councils continued to consolidate their power. On November 16, Kadar was forced to start talk with delegates from the Councils.

They demanded that a National Workers Council be set up, which Kadar rejected, because he said that there was already a "workers government."

However, he was forced to agree to the recognition of individual councils and the setting up of a factory militia.

Kadar said that if work resumed, he would negotiate for a withdrawal of the Russian Army. The delegates asked that he put this in writing, which he refused.

Kadar tried other methods. He used the Red Army to stop food deliveries to the towns by peasants. He started issuing ration cards - but only to workers who

reported for work. But still the strike continued.

Kadar and his Russian masters were getting impatient. Already disaffection was spreading inside the Red Army. A few joined the guerrillas, whilst many more had to be disarmed and sent back home because they refused to carry out orders.

Kadar promised safety to Nagy and his group in the Yugoslav Embassy. On November 23, they left the Embassy, and were immediately seized by Russian secret policemen.

Later, Nagy, along with Pal Maleter and others, was executed in Romania.

Arrests

"The Government's plan to divert the workers' councils into innocuous channels by legalising them as organs of economic self-government, somewhat on the Yugoslav model, but denying them the right to put forward political demands or issue newspaper, has merely led to continued deadlock in Budapest..." Observer 2.12.56.

Arrests of workers' delegates began.

Two members of the Central Workers Council - one an ex-CP member - were arrested at the Government Building.

A sit-in began at their place of work - the Belajanis Electrical Works. Hundreds of armed police and government militia swarmed into the factory. Despite this, the sit-in lasted three days.

Many council delegates were rounded up, as well as delegates of student bodies.

Many came forward to take their place. When the State realised this, they began imprisoning the rank and file as well.

Over the next few months, resistance continued against the onslaught of the 'Workers Government'.

Mass demonstrations continued, and workers fought the AVH and the soldiers when they came to arrest their delegates. Many were gunned down by the AVH men.

Through 1957, the arrests, imprisonment's and executions continued. Those Council members not arrested began to resign. The Workers Council of Railwaymen was outlawed on January 29.

Apro, Deputy Premier, had announced on September 29 that the workers council would be replaced by 'works councils' controlled by trade union bureaucrats, completely subservient to the State.

Finally, on November 17, it was announced that any remaining councils were to be abolished.

'Plot'

Even today, members of the Communist Parties still think that the Hungarian uprising was a 'counter-revolutionary, 'fascist' plot.

That conservatives and even fascists were involved in attacks on the authorities is true. They hoped to take advantage of the unrest to further their own interests.

Yet it cannot be denied that the struggle remained firmly in the hands of a working class that were looking into the

future - towards a real, free communist society managed by the majority of the working people through the councils they had already started forming.

Aftermath

There are no official figures for how many people died in Hungary in 56-57. Between 20,000 and 50,000 Hungarians and 3,500 to 7,000 Russians is the estimate.

The number of wounded was much higher, and over 100,000 fled over the border.

Trouble - strikes, demonstrations - continued into 1958 and 1959, and during these years thousands were executed.

It comes as no surprise that the Hungarian working class received no support, no arms, no medical supplies, from the western powers.

For what they fought for was as much opposed to capitalist bourgeois democracy as it was to the state capitalism of the Soviet sort.

It was totally against the interests of the western ruling classes to give any help. They whined and moaned about the crushing of democracy and free speech, and about the 'Communist' dictatorships, whilst they were keeping their fingers crossed and hoping that this sort of unrest wouldn't spread to the western European countries.

Was there any support for the aims of the Hungarian working class from the Labour Party or the TUC? No, of course there wasn't!

And what about the working class in the other countries of western Europe?

Many were moved by the courageous struggles of their Hungarian sisters and brothers, but were unable to lend assistance: they were still under the complete sway of social democracy.

One example of practical assistance that will always be remembered by Hungarian workers was when stevedores and dockers at Hull and Liverpool refused to touch cargoes on Soviet ships.

Compare this with the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, who rejected an appeal by the Workers Councils to implement an international boycott.

The Hungarian revolution was a watershed in socialist history.

Now, after the Stalinist ice age which had gripped the working class movement for so long, came a thaw: a lot of people began to question the very nature of Communist Party ideology.

New bodies of ideas began to emerge which to a greater or lesser extent rejected the hierarchical structures of the Communist Parties.

Revolutionary anarchism, council communism and other bodies of thought reappeared: people began to read thinkers like Luxemburg, Pannekoek and so on, all of whom had profound criticisms of Leninist practice.

The Hungarian Revolution helped dispel the clouds of mystification around the USSR and its satellites. It reaffirmed the notion of unrelenting struggle by the working class against all bosses and masters, no matter how they attempt to disguise themselves as the workers' representatives.

It lights the way to a new society for which so many working people have given their lives. We must honour the memory of the Hungarian people, crushed by Soviet armour by struggling towards that society with every means at our disposal.

APPENDIX

Further Reading

HUNGARY 1956 by Bill Lomax

HUNGARY 56 by Andy Anderson a *Solidarity* pamphlet.

HUNGARIAN TRAGEDY by Peter Fryer.

THE HUNGARIAN WORKERS REVOLUTION. A *Direct Action* pamphlet.

The Hungarian Anarchist Movement

1907 - the journal *Tarsadalmi Forradalom* appears, advancing anarchist communist ideas up to 1911. One of the editors is Ervin Batthyany (born 1877) who after having spent a long time in England- where he met the anarchist communist thinker Kropotkin-devotes himself to work with agricultural workers. With other young anarchists he breaks away from the group of Eugen Heinrich Schmitt-Tolstoyan pacifist- to create a popular libertarian organisation.

A group led by Ervin Szabo (1877-1918) opposes its programme, and believes that the movement should be built on the lines of French anarcho-syndicalism.

1914-18 Szabo organises coordination of shop stewards in key factories with anti-militarist movement initiated by Galileo Circle, composed of socialists and liberals. At his funeral in 1918, thousands turn out. As a result - and because of the Russian revolution- the Budapest Soviet is set up, but crushed

by reactionary forces. Many anarchists are killed, but many also rally to the new Communist Party, fooled by Lenin's apparent libertarian rhetoric. Among them are Tibor Szamuely, the anarcho-syndicalist Rabinowicz and Otto Korvin. Many of these later perish in Stalin's purges when exiled in the USSR.

The fascist Admiral Horthy sets up a regime and continues the liquidation of anarchist groups.

1944- Anarchist groups re-emerge around the veteran Torockoi (who was 80 in 1945). the first libertarian action is against German forces, by an anarchist student group. One of them, surnamed Christ(!)- a 15 year old poet(!)- is captured. In prison he meets comrade Aton M of the Hungarian-Yugoslav anarchist group Bacska. ('the South') which is a hundred strong, and is one of the strongest resistance groups.

October 1944 - Christ and the Russian anarchist Alexei Korsakin are freed after the Szalazi coup against Horthy.

They make contact with Torockoi and with P.M.- a student who had set up an anarchist group supported by the 'Communists'. They start to harass the Nazi and Fascist military, adopting the legendary red belt of Korsakin. They refuse unity of action with the Communists, who denounce them to the Germans- who arrest 67 militants including P.M. His group splits, and two thirds go over to the Communists.

Korsakin's group- wearing red belts- attack and destroy two units of the Hungarian river fleet, in central Budapest. The following night, Christ's group- Sz.F. (Libertarian Front) blow up a munitions dump. A third group are executed after an attack on Nazi Party headquarters. the movement continues attacks up to the Battle of Budapest, which claims 200,000 lives. The movement decides to safeguard its forces for the political struggle to come after the expulsion of the fascists.

July 1945- The movement regroupes. P.M.'s group wants a working arrangement with the 'Communists' against the ruling class. Torockoi's group wants the legalisation of the movement, Korsakin's and Christ's groups want to continue the armed struggle against the State and the Russian troops. Torockoi's views gain majority. A print-shop is set-up and propaganda distributed. The movement has 500 militants, and its influence spreads.

The 'Communists' then ban the movement. Torockoi dies after arrest. Four anarchist students open fire on Russian troops, and die in the fighting. In the factories of Csepel Island, anarchists lead the only strike after liberation from the fascists. Thirty workers, including 24 anarchists, are subsequently executed. The movement is liquidated. P.M. flees to Italy, Christ and Korsakin to France.

AIMS & PRINCIPLES

1. The Anarchist - Communist Federation is an organisation of revolutionary class struggle anarchists. We aim for the abolition of all hierarchy, and work for the creation of a world-wide classless society: anarchist communism.
2. Capitalism is based on the exploitation of the working class by the ruling class. But inequality and exploitation are also expressed in terms of race, gender, sexuality, age, health and ability, and in these ways one section of the working class oppresses another. This divides us, causing a lack of class unity in struggle that benefits the ruling class. Oppressed groups are strengthened by autonomous action which challenges social and economic power relationships. To achieve our goal we must relinquish power over each other on a personal as well as a political level.
3. We believe that fighting racism and sexism is as important as other aspects of the class struggle. Anarchist - Communism cannot be achieved while sexism and racism still exist. In order to be effective in their struggle against their oppression both within society and within the working class, women and black people may at times need to organise independently. However, this should be as working class women and black people as cross-class movements hide real class differences and achieve little for them. Full emancipation cannot be achieved without the abolition of capitalism.
4. We are opposed to the ideology of national liberation movements which claims that there is some common interest between native bosses and the working class in face of foreign domination. We do support working class struggles against racism, genocide, ethnocide and political and economic colonialism. We oppose the creation of any new ruling class. We reject all forms of nationalism, as this only serves to redefine divisions in the international working class. The working class has no country and national boundaries must be eliminated. We seek to build an anarchist international to work with other libertarian revolutionaries throughout the world.
5. As well as exploiting and oppressing the majority of people, Capitalism threatens the world through war and the destruction of the environment.
6. It is not possible to abolish Capitalism without a revolution, which will arise out of class conflict. The ruling class must be completely overthrown to achieve anarchist communism. Because the ruling class will not relinquish power without the use of armed force, this will be a time of violence as well as liberation.

7. Unions by their very nature cannot be the vehicles for the revolutionary transformation of society. They have to be accepted by Capitalism in order to function and so cannot play a part in its overthrow. Trades unions divide the working class (between employed and unemployed trade and craft, skilled and unskilled, etc.). Even syndicalist unions are constrained by the fundamental nature of unionism. The union has to be able to control its membership in order to make deals with management. Their aim, through negotiation, is to achieve a fairer form of exploitation of the work force. The interests of leaders and representatives will always be different from ours. The boss class is our enemy, and while we must fight for better conditions from it, we have to realise that reforms we may achieve today may be taken away tomorrow. Our ultimate aim must be the complete abolition of wage slavery. Working within the unions can never achieve this. However, we do not argue for people to leave unions until they are made irrelevant by the revolutionary event. The union is a common point of departure for many workers. Rank and file initiatives may strengthen us in the battle for anarchist communism. What's important is that we organise ourselves collectively, arguing for workers to control struggles themselves.
8. Genuine liberation can only come about through the revolutionary self activity of the working class on a mass scale. An anarchist communist society means not only co-operation between equals, but active involvement in the shaping and creating of that society during and after the revolution. In times of upheaval and struggle, people will need to create their own revolutionary organisations controlled by everyone in them. These autonomous organisations will be outside the control of political parties, and within them we will learn many important lessons of self activity.
9. As anarchists we organise in all areas of life to try to advance the revolutionary process. We believe a strong anarchist organisation is necessary to help us to this end. Unlike other so-called socialists or communists we do not want power or control for our organisation. We recognise that the revolution can only be carried out directly by the working class. However, the revolution must be preceded by organisations able to convince people of the anarchist communist alternative and method. We participate in struggle as anarchist communists and organise on a federative basis. We reject sectarianism and work for a united revolutionary anarchist movement.