

DOCUMENT NO. 6

Working Notes and Attached Extract from the Minutes of the CPSU CC Presidium Meeting, October 31, 1956

At the October 31 Presidium meeting, Nikita Khrushchev announced, seemingly unexpectedly, that the conclusions reached at the previous day's momentous session should be re-examined. Soviet troops, he said, should not be withdrawn from Hungary and Budapest. On the contrary, the USSR "should take the initiative in restoring order in Hungary," in other words in suppressing the revolution, which had been only one of the possible solutions under discussion just three days before, on October 28.

In stating his position, Khrushchev made no mention of the news coming from Budapest, nor did he refer to the Chinese views he had heard the previous day, nor to the American position. He did raise the weakness of the Hungarian communist government as a factor, but his argument was based mainly on the need to defend the Soviet empire's prestige and on the implications of an eventual withdrawal for Soviet domestic politics. His warning made special reference to those "circles" which might have influence at the top levels of the party, the army, state security, and the party apparatus. He called attention to the risks of a possible power struggle and a rupture within the party. Interestingly, there is no indication in the meeting notes that Khrushchev's measures were meant to be discussed; he seems to have intended simply that they be carried out.

The only detail on which Khrushchev was uncertain was whom to appoint as head of the provisional revolutionary government: Kádár or Münnich. Aside from the amount of time needed to make military preparations, this circumstance explains why the final decision was postponed for four days. Strangely enough, even though the plan was to overthrow the Nagy government, Khrushchev did not exclude the possibility of involving Nagy in the "normalization" process. Within the Politburo, Deputy Prime Minister Saburov was the only one who tried to uphold the "liberal" position, but at this point nobody supported him.

Information about Discussions with Gomulka Regarding the Situation in Poland and Hungary⁹⁴ (Khrushchev)

A meeting with Cde. Gomulka (in the Brest region) was proposed.

On Hungary

Cde. Khrushchev sets forth the various considerations.

⁹⁴ This refers to a telephone conversation between Khrushchev and Gomulka during which they agreed that Khrushchev, Malenkov, and Molotov would meet with Gomulka and Cyrankiewicz the next day, November 1, in Brest.

We should reexamine our assessment and should not withdraw our troops from Hungary and Budapest. We should take the initiative in restoring order in Hungary. If we depart from Hungary, it will give a great boost to the Americans, English, and French--the imperialists. They will perceive it as weakness on our part and will go onto the offensive. We would then be exposing the weakness of our positions. Our party will not accept it if we do this. To Egypt they will then add Hungary. We have no other choice. If this point of view is supported and endorsed, let's consider what we should do.

Agreed: Cdes. Zhukov, Bulganin, Molo-tov, Kaganovich, Voroshilov, Saburov

We should say we tried to meet them halfway, but there is not now any government. What line are we now adopting?

We should create a Provisional Revol. Gov't (headed by Kádár).
Best of all--a deputy.
Münich--as premier and min. of defense and internal affairs.

This government--we should invite them to negotiations about the withdrawal of troops and resolve the matter.⁹⁵
If Nagy agrees, bring him in as dep. premier.

Münich is appealing to us with a request for assistance. We are lending assistance and restoring order.
We should negotiate with Tito.
We should inform the Chinese comrades, the Czechs, the Romanians, and the Bulgarians.
There will be no large-scale war.

Cde. Saburov--after yesterday's session this discussion is all pointless.
It will vindicate NATO.

Cde. Molotov--yesterday was only a compromise decision.

Cdes. Zhukov, Voroshilov, Bulganin: We should reject the view that we are reexamining our position.

Cde. Furtseva--What further should be done?
We showed patience, but now things have gone too far. We must act to ensure that victory goes to our side.

Cde. Pospelov--we should use the argument that we will not let socialism in Hungary be strangled.

⁹⁵ This sentence can be interpreted in two ways. It might refer to future negotiations with the new government concerning the withdrawal of Soviet troops after the intervention. The more likely interpretation involves a plan to lure the Nagy government into a trap with the promise of negotiations.

Cde. Shvernik--Cde. Khrushchev's proposal is correct.

Cde. Molotov--we should not defer the creation of organs in localities. We should act simultaneously in the center and in the localities.

Cde. Zhukov is instructed to work out a plan and report on it.⁹⁶

Shepilov, Brezhnev, Furtseva, and Pospelov are to handle the propaganda side.⁹⁷

An appeal to the people from the military command or the government.

An appeal to the people from the Prov. Revol. Gov't.

An order from Cde. Konev.⁹⁸

We should send a group to the region of Cde. Konev's headquarters.

Cde. Rákosi--favors Münnich (as premier)

Cde. Hegedüs-- "

Cde. Gerő-- "⁹⁹

Apró

Kádár

Kiss Károly

Boldoczki

Horváth¹⁰⁰

On Negotiations with Tito

(Cdes. Khrushchev, Molotov, Bulganin)

Draft a telegram to Tito about the meeting.

To Brest: Khrushchev, Molotov, Malenkov.

⁹⁶ See also attached resolution in this document.

⁹⁷ The "propaganda side" involved preparing the documents that were to be issued at the start of military operations. See also attached resolution in this document. Probably dissatisfied with their work, the CPSU Presidium on November 3 handed the task over to Mikoyan, Suslov and Shepilov. See Document No. 78.

⁹⁸ All these documents were eventually issued on November 4. The first two communiqués, entitled "Appeal by the Command of Soviet Troops in Hungary to the Hungarian People and the Officers and Men of the Hungarian Army" and "Appeal to the Hungarian People" by the Hungarian Revolutionary Workers' and Peasants' Government addressed the Hungarian population and were broadcast over the radio after the military intervention was underway. For their text, see Zinner, National Communism, 480-481 and 474-478. The third document, "The United Armed Forces Commander in Chief's Order No. 1," issued by Marshal Konev, was distributed among the Soviet units prior to the operation. Its English translation can be found in Györkei and Horváth, Soviet Military Intervention, 257-258.

⁹⁹ This indicates the opinions of the three former Hungarian leading party officials, who at that time were in Moscow. Whether they expressed their views beforehand through consultations with Khrushchev or were present at the Presidium meeting is not clear, but the second possibility cannot be ruled out.

¹⁰⁰ This is the list of politicians to be included in the new government.

To Yugoslavia: Khrushchev, Malenkov.

To discuss with you the situation that has emerged in Hungary. What is your view of it? If you agree, our delegation will visit incognito from

1. XI in the evening to
2. XI in the morning your time.

Confirm the telegram to the Soviet ambassador in Belgrade.

[Resolution]

Workers of the World, Unite!
Communist Party of the Soviet Union
CENTRAL COMMITTEE

Strictly secret

Extract from Minutes No. 49/VI taken on the October 31, 1956 meeting of the Presidium of the CC

About the situation in Hungary

1. In accord with the exchange of opinions at the session of the Presidium of the CC CPSU, Cdes. Khrushchev, Molotov, and Malenkov are empowered to conduct negotiations with the representatives of the CC PZPR.

2. Confirmed is the text of the telegram to the Soviet Ambassador in Belgrade for Cde. Tito (Enclosed).¹⁰¹ In the event of an affirmative reply, Cdes. Khrushchev and Malenkov are authorized to conduct negotiations with Cde. Tito.

3. Provide Cde. Zhukov with an account of the exchange of opinions at the CC CPSU Presidium session, [instruct him] to prepare a plan of measures [plan meropriatii] in connection with the events in Hungary, and to inform the CC CPSU.

4. Inform Cdes. Shepilov, Brezhnev, Furtseva, and Pospelov on the basis of the exchange of opinions at the CC Presidium to pre-prepare essential documents and submit them to the CC CPSU for review.

Secretary of the CC

[Source: TsKhSD, F. 3, Op. 12, D. 1006, Ll. 15-18ob, compiled by V. N. Malin. Originally published in English in the Cold War International History Project Bulletin no. 8-9 (Winter 1996/1997): 393-394. Translated by Mark Kramer. The resolution is located at TsKhSD, F. 89, Per. 45, Dok. 15. Originally published in the Cold War International History Project Bulletin no. 5 (Spring 1995): 32. Translated by Johanna Granville.]

¹⁰¹ Not printed here.