

# Hungarian Foreign Policy in the Bipolar World, 1945–1991<sup>1</sup>

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## *Introduction*

Until as late as 1989, the European status quo established at the end of World War II largely determined the destiny and potential of the East Central European region. The two superpowers at the helm of the bipolar international system – the United States and the Soviet Union – tacitly acknowledged this fact; indeed, they regarded it as the cornerstone of East-West relations throughout the period. Under the system of spheres of influence, Hungary (along with other countries in the region) became a part of the Soviet sphere of interest and of the Soviet empire, and it kept this status for some decades.

Thus, in the post-1945 era, one cannot speak – in the case of Hungary – of an independent national foreign policy in the traditional sense, as the country's subordination to the Soviet empire was the prime determinant of its foreign policy. That is to say, in order to understand such concepts as *foreign policy*, *independent foreign policy*, and *national interest* within the frame of the communist dictatorship established in 1945–1948 and sustained until 1989, we need to examine these categories within the given political alliance system – rather than compare them with the practices and possibilities of democratic states.

The question we need to address is, therefore, the extent to which the various political leaderships were able or willing to realise their *necessarily limited* national interests in the face of the determining influence of the Soviet Union.

In this respect, significant differences may be observed between the various countries of the Soviet bloc and, similarly, between different periods in the post-war history of individual countries.

This study identifies and explores Hungary's principal foreign policy challenges in the various distinct periods of post-war Hungarian history and examines the responses of the Hungarian leadership to such challenges.

## *The Period of Coalition Government: Sovietisation and the Peace Treaty*

Historians continue to debate whether the Sovietisation of East Central Europe was Stalin's original intent or whether the restructuring of the countries of the region based on the Soviet model was merely a consequence of the break-up of the coalition between the Great Powers and the declaration of the Truman Doctrine and the Marshall Plan. Supporters of the latter view argue that Stalin had not planned the Sovietisation of the region prior to 1947 and had expected democracy to survive in at least in two countries, in Czechoslovakia and in Hungary.<sup>2</sup> There is no doubt that the acceleration and conclusion of the communist takeover, the placing of formerly mutually hostile countries in one camp, and the establishment of Cominform were indeed elements of the Soviet response to the announcement of the Marshall Plan in the summer of 1947, but each of these developments also had deep antecedents. Thus, in each country, the communist party had been aware of its task *from the outset* and had acted accordingly. The *immediate goal*, however, was not the takeover of power, but the *formal* maintenance of a democratic system of institutions, the achievement of a monopoly of power with at least a *semblance* of democracy. This was then to facilitate the gradual and "peaceful" introduction of the Soviet system, offering a smooth transition without civil war. Stalin believed that all this could be achieved through continued cooperation with the Western allies, and so it was important to him that *Western public opinion* might still hope that not everything had been lost in Eastern Europe.<sup>3</sup>

For their part, the leading politicians of the Western allies tacitly acknowledged the Soviet Union's advance in East Central Europe, although they doubtless hoped that Stalin would not seek the Sovietisation of the region – a fate that had already befallen the Baltic states – but would be satisfied with the establishment of a system of security guarantees under a kind of *regional Finlandisation*. In this regard they could do no more than hope, because, short of starting a war with the Soviet Union (which could hardly be in their interest), the Western powers had no real means of influencing developments in Eastern Europe.

Meanwhile, the Soviet leadership under Stalin considered the region to be of prime strategic importance. Indeed, as recent research has revealed, the Soviet Union was ready to wage war in order to keep the region.<sup>4</sup> We now know that regardless of the formal legal situation and the presence of mostly coalition governments, the local communist party in each of the region's states successfully achieved political dominance in the course of 1945 and 1946, whereby we should probably speak of *quasi-Sovietisation* (in Albania, Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, Poland and Romania) and *pre-Sovietisation* (in Czechoslovakia and Hungary) rather than of a democratic interlude or a limited parliamentary democracy.<sup>5</sup>

The primary foreign policy issue of the coalition era was the peace treaty ending World War II. As various myths still persist about this treaty, it is worth looking at Hungary's chances as it prepared to sign the peace treaty.

After World War I, the formula had been a remarkably simple one: it was good to be a victor and bad to be a loser. The situation was far more complex in the aftermath of World War II and with the advent of the status quo system and spheres of interest in Europe – because Albania, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia and Poland had all been allies of the anti-fascist powers. Indeed, with the exception of Albania, they were all founding members of the United Nations Organization (est. April 1945). After their incorporation in the Soviet empire, however, these countries suffered the same fate as the defeated regional states – Bulgaria, Hungary and Romania. Thus, in terms of the final outcome, the wartime roles and achievements of individual countries counted for nothing, for, as we know, Bulgaria had not even declared war on the Soviet Union and yet it could not avoid Sovietisation after the war. Nevertheless, regarding the final terms of the peace treaty, the location of national boundaries and other major issues, there were significant differences between individual countries, even if such differences were determined less by their wartime roles than by the political and strategic interests of the Soviet Union. For this reason, it is worth looking in greater detail at how the interests of the nascent *pax sovietica* influenced the development and implementation of Hungary's peace objectives.<sup>6</sup>

Regarding Hungarian preparations and chances for peace, the position of Hungary's three neighbours – Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, and Romania – deserves special attention. In the course of the carving up of Hungary under the Treaty of Trianon, these countries had received territories with substantial and concentrated Hungarian populations. In this way, approximately three million Hungarians had found themselves in foreign territory.

Thus, if the ethnic principle had been applied, Hungary would have had legitimate territorial claims on these three countries. Still, to determine what real chances a Hungarian government had of realizing its demands, we must examine the international status of these countries in the aftermath of the war and the manner in which the Great Powers – in particular the Soviet Union, which played the leading part in resolving disputes – treated these demands.<sup>7</sup>

Yugoslavia – together with Czechoslovakia – had supported the Allies throughout the war. Beginning in 1941, the country had undertaken a large-scale partisan war against the German occupiers and the armed force of the pro-German “independent” Croatian state. Yugoslavia was the only occupied country in Europe to achieve liberation almost exclusively through its own efforts. In the eyes of the leaders of the Great Powers and of the world, the significance of all this was not diminished by the wartime existence and role of the fascist Croatian state led by Ante Pavelić. During the war, Yugoslavia had

had a government-in-exile in London, while the Western allies had actively supported the Yugoslav partisans. Further, in 1943 the Allied Great Powers had undertaken to guarantee the territorial integrity of the country.<sup>8</sup>

From the outset the coalition parties in Hungary were of the view that Hungary had no territorial claims on Yugoslavia. In addition to the high esteem in which Yugoslavia was held in the aftermath of the war, this position was also due to the emotional effect on Hungarian public opinion of revelations concerning ethnic cleansing by Hungarian forces in Novi Sad (Újvidék) in 1942.<sup>9</sup> Meanwhile, the new Yugoslavia with its federative system of government recognised the equality of the peoples and national groups living in the country – including Hungarians – and provided them with broad minority rights.<sup>10</sup> This relative tolerance reinforced the view that there were no unresolved issues between Hungary and Yugoslavia.

The country's relations with Czechoslovakia and with Romania were more problematic. In the aftermath of the war, the authorities in Czechoslovakia, a country that was home to around 700,000 Hungarians, decided that the minorities issue should be resolved once and for all through the creation of a homogeneous nation-state. All political parties in the country – among them the communists – were agreed that in line with the Košice government program of 5 April 1945, the German and Hungarian minorities should be removed from Czechoslovakia, whereby Czechoslovakia would become the state of the Czech and Slovak nation.<sup>11</sup> Czechoslovakia raised this demand – originally articulated by Beneš and his government-in-exile in London in late 1942 and early 1943 – with representatives of the Great Powers at every opportunity.<sup>12</sup> Thus, during preparations for the armistice agreement between Hungary and the Allies – signed in Moscow on 20 January 1945 – the Czechoslovak government representative argued that Hungary should undertake to accept the transfer to Hungary of Czechoslovakia's Hungarian population.<sup>13</sup> In the end, the Czechoslovak leadership managed to secure the Soviet Union's support for this measure, but although they continuously lobbied the Western Allies, they failed to win the support of American and British diplomacy for the expulsion of the Hungarians from Czechoslovakia.<sup>14</sup> Thus, in spring 1945, Czechoslovakia – in an attempt to foist a *fait accompli* on the Western Great Powers and based in effect on the principle of collective responsibility – began implementing a whole series of measures against the Hungarian (and German) populace in an action that was reminiscent of the sanctions imposed on Jews a short time earlier.<sup>15</sup> Although the Potsdam Conference – thanks to the resolute position of British and American politicians – rejected Czechoslovakia's request for the resettlement of its Hungarian population, it nevertheless approved a proposal that the ethnic German population should be expelled not only from Czechoslovakia and Poland but also from Hungary.<sup>16</sup> With this decision, however, the Western Great Powers unintentionally established a point of reference for the Czechoslovak government, which it could then use to justify

its policy of resettlement. Indeed, thereafter the Czechoslovak government could and did argue that the resettlement of Czechoslovakia's Hungarian population in Hungary would cause no particular problems, because the Hungarians could be settled in places vacated by the Germans.<sup>17</sup> After the Potsdam Conference, however, the surprising argument could be heard in Czechoslovak diplomatic circles that "the resettlement (expulsion) of the Hungarians depended, not on the goodwill of the three Great Powers, but exclusively on the approval of the Russian military authorities in Hungary, which were alone responsible for maintaining law and order in Hungary."<sup>18</sup>

The easiest way for Czechoslovakia to rid itself of its Hungarian population would clearly have been the cessation to Hungary of territory lying along the Czechoslovak–Hungarian border where the Hungarian population was concentrated. Understandably, this solution was not raised by the Czechoslovak side. Nor could the Hungarian government make such a proposal, as Czechoslovakia had the full support of the Western Powers and the Soviet Union for its territorial integrity.<sup>19</sup> Yet, in Czechoslovakia's case, there was a relatively stable ethnic border. Thus, if the ethnic principle had been applied, the new border would have left only very small minority populations on both sides. That is to say, in Czechoslovakia's case, it would have been uniquely possible to correct the unjust Trianon decisions, to settle the issue of the Czechoslovak–Hungarian border in a just manner (i.e., based on the ethnic composition). Owing to the mixing up of ethnic groups in the course of history, similarly precise ethnographic borders were impossible to identify on the Hungarian–Romanian and Hungarian–Yugoslav frontiers.

The Hungarian–Slovak ethnic boundary more or less coincided with the border stipulated by the First Vienna Award, at which time the ethnic factor had been decisive. The First and Second Vienna Awards, however, were the result of arbitration by Germany and Italy. As such, they had been annulled by the Allied Powers, who were now unlikely to agree to borders identical or similar to those created by the Awards.

Romania – as a similarly defeated state – was Hungary's only neighbour required to sign a peace treaty. This fact, as well as Romania's role in the war before it switched sides in August 1944, raised hopes among the Hungarian public and in government circles that the Great Powers would support at least some of Hungary's territorial claims against Romania. Such hopes were based in part on Article 19 of the armistice agreement between Romania and the Allies, signed on 12 September 1944, which had declared, somewhat ambiguously, that "Transylvania (or the larger part of it), must be returned to Romania."<sup>20</sup>

In order to gauge whether Hungary had a real chance of implementing its territorial claims against Romania, we need to examine the position of the Great Powers – above all, the Soviet Union – on this issue. In the period preceding Nazi Germany's attack on the Soviet Union in June 1941, Soviet diplomacy made efforts to prevent the participation of Germany's Central and Eastern European allies in a campaign against the Soviet

Union. Three days after Nazi Germany's attack, Molotov informed Hungary's minister to Moscow that the Soviet Union had no claims against Hungary, did not intend to attack the country, and had no position on Hungary's revisionist ambitions in Transylvania.<sup>21</sup> Thus, *before* the German attack on the Soviet Union, Hungary was in a much better position than Romania to win Moscow's good favour, for Hungary had no territorial claims on the Soviet Union. Even so, Hungary's revisionist aspirations, which underlay its foreign policy throughout the interwar period and enjoyed strong public support, drew the country ever closer to Berlin from the mid-1930s onwards. Thus, after securing its "territorial acquisitions" (assisted by Germany) and trusting in the superiority of German arms, the Hungarian leadership chose to win the good favour of Germany rather than that of the Soviet Union. It believed that this would ensure its retention of Northern Transylvania, and it even hoped that competition with Romania might create an opportunity for Hungary to regain further territories in Transylvania. It was this intention – rather than any territorial claim on the Soviet Union – that led Hungary to take part in the campaign against the Soviet Union.

Meanwhile, Romania was forced to surrender Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina to the Soviet Union in 1940.<sup>22</sup> In the course of the centuries Bessarabia had belonged partly or entirely to the Principality of Moldavia and to the Ottoman Empire; since 1812 it had been Russian territory. In 1920, the Entente Powers had awarded to Romania the whole of this mostly Romanian-inhabited territory – together with Bukovina, which had formerly been a part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. The Soviet government refused to accept this decision, claiming the territory on historical grounds. When, in 1940, Romania was forced to surrender these territories to the Soviet Union, it was already clear that, when the opportunity arose, it would do everything to win them back. Moreover, in addition to these territories with their ethnic Romanian majorities, Romania had further territorial claims against the Soviet Union, and it had received a pledge from the German leadership that these claims would be met in return for its participation in the war.<sup>23</sup> Thus, Romania's participation in the war against the Soviet Union was motivated not only by a desire to gain Germany's support for its retention of Southern Transylvania and its possible reacquisition of Northern Transylvania, but also by additional specific territorial claims against the Soviet Union. In other words, Romania was far more inclined than Hungary to participate in the war, and there was much less chance of it staying out of the war. For this reason, *prior to* the German attack on the Soviet Union, Romania's perceived chances of winning the support of the Soviet Union in any post-war settlement were worse than those of Hungary.

The situation was fundamentally altered, however, by Germany's attack on the Soviet Union and the entry into the war of both Romania and Hungary. When, besides Romania's anticipated attack, there was a failure to prevent Hungary's participation in the war, Soviet diplomacy set other priorities. As early as 1941, Stalin told the British

foreign secretary that Romania's western borders should be expanded at the expense of the Hungarians, because 1,250,000 Romanians were living in that territory, while Hungary needed to be punished for its participation in the war.<sup>24</sup> Stalin went on to speak of his desire for an alliance between Romania and the Soviet Union, which would provide security to Romania vis-à-vis Hungary, and would authorise the Soviet Union to maintain military and navy bases on Romanian soil.<sup>25</sup> In his letter to the British ambassador to Moscow of 7 June 1943, Molotov explained that "for the help which Hungary has given Germany by means of her armies and also for the murders and violence, pillage and outrages caused in the occupied districts, the responsibility must be borne not only by the Hungarian Government but to a greater or lesser extent by the Hungarian people."<sup>26</sup> He also stated that "the Soviet government does not regard as fully justified the arbitration award of 30 August 1940, which was made under orders from Germany and which granted Northern Transylvania to Hungary."<sup>27</sup>

By going to war against the Soviet Union, Hungary clearly lost its advantageous position; indeed, at the time of the post-war settlement, Soviet diplomacy – with one eye on the strategic aspects – essentially supported Romania. This happened despite the fact that Romania's fighting force in the military operations against Soviet Union was significantly larger than Hungary's. And while the conduct of the Hungarian occupation forces understandably annoyed the Soviet government, similar behaviour was also shown by Romanian troops as they advanced into southern Ukraine. Despite this fact, no mention is made in the cited documents of Romania's wartime role. Indeed, on a 1943 visit to Moscow, Beneš managed to persuade the Soviet leaders to accept his position that Romania's government rather than its people was guilty for the war.<sup>28</sup>

The Soviet Union maintained its supportive position on Romania from 1941 until the signing of the peace treaties. Nevertheless, for a long time no one knew how this support would be realised in terms of specific territorial issues. While the Soviet Union's cited positions indicated that it would not recognise the Hungarian annexation of Northern Transylvania, their aim was not necessarily to preserve the Trianon status quo. Thus the possibility of Hungary regaining some territory – relative to the 1939 Hungarian–Romanian border – was not ruled out. This position was formulated in Point 19 of the aforementioned Romanian armistice agreement, signed on 12 September 1944, which stated that "Transylvania, or the greater part thereof, must be returned to Romania."<sup>29</sup> This was the first time that the Soviet Union made relatively clear the extent to which it was willing to support Romanian demands. After Romania switched sides on 23 August 1944, its position was further enhanced, as indicated by the fact that under the armistice agreement only a small part of Transylvania could be returned to Hungary.<sup>30</sup> This position was a natural consequence of the earlier ones. One wonders, however, why this condition was even included in the agreement. Despite the fact that Hungary continued the fight against the Soviet Union even after Romania's switch of allegiance, it would

seem the allies were not prepared to abandon their efforts to turn Hungary against the Germans. Such a development – in conjunction with the exit of Finland, Romania and Bulgaria from the war – could well have accelerated the advance of the Soviet troops and thus the capitulation of Nazi Germany. The Allies were also aware, however, that a switch of allegiance on the part of Hungary was unlikely, if the country was forced at the same time to renounce its previous territorial gains. It was for this reason – that is, for the possibility that Hungary would abandon its German ally – that the Romanian ceasefire agreement included a provision (in reality addressed to the Hungarian government) that under a post-war settlement a smaller portion of Transylvania might be awarded to Hungary. After Hungary's failed attempt to switch sides of 15 October 1944, this was no longer an option, for under the Arrow Cross government there could be no hope of the country switching allegiances. Although the Provisional National Government – established on 22 December 1944 in parts of the country liberated by the Red Army – declared war on Germany, nevertheless, under the circumstances, it had little chance of contributing in a meaningful way to the Allied war effort. Thus, after 15 October 1944, there was nothing to prevent the Soviet government from giving its full support to Romanian demands in the Hungarian–Romanian territorial dispute. The territorial provisions of the armistice agreement signed in Moscow on 20 January 1945, by representatives of the Provisional National Government and the Allies are evidence of this, for it was stipulated that *the whole of Transylvania* should be returned to Romania.<sup>31</sup> And since this agreement was signed four months after the ceasefire with Romania, this provision *de facto* overruled the promise made in Article 19 of the Romanian armistice agreement that Hungary would have a chance to regain a smaller part of Transylvania. The Soviet leadership wished to transform the armistice agreements with Germany's allies into peace treaties with minimal changes,<sup>32</sup> and so, as the Great Powers negotiated on the terms of the peace settlement, it stuck to its position on the Hungarian–Romanian border. On 6 March 1945, Petru Groza, leader of the Ploughmen's Front, was installed as Romanian premier following a Soviet political intervention. Groza's political program and left-wing policies added to the Soviet leadership's fondness for Romania. At the same time, such developments had an effect on Hungary's chances of realizing its territorial claims against Romania. It was not only that the Hungarian government – led by the Smallholders Party from November 1945 – could not count on the same amount of goodwill when its demands were being appraised. An additional factor was that the promise of Northern Transylvania's return to Romanian administration and sovereignty rule had become crucial to the domestic political stabilisation of Groza's pro-Soviet left-wing government, which lacked a parliamentary majority.<sup>33</sup>

Many continue to regard the contemporary Hungarian leadership as at least partially responsible for the failure of the Paris Peace Treaty to correct the serious territorial injustices of the earlier Trianon Treaty. The aforementioned developments show, however, that such a correction was an unrealistic hope, after Hungary's declaration of war on the Soviet Union and particularly after its failure to switch sides in October 1944. It is worth noting, however, that in logical terms it is difficult to refute the hypothesis that if Hungary had successfully changed sides, the Red Army would probably have reached the country's western border more quickly – even in the event of strong resistance on the part of the German troops in Hungary. Under such circumstances, the Soviet Union would doubtless have been able to occupy larger portions of Austria and Germany than was actually the case in the spring of 1945. All of this would not have fundamentally altered the post-1945 status quo and the division of Europe. Still, a Soviet occupation of the whole of Austria would have had disastrous results for that country; indeed, in all likelihood, it would have been incorporated into the Soviet bloc of countries.

A little known fact is that the Hungarian delegation to the Paris Peace Conference achieved a major political success: the delegation managed to scupper Czechoslovakia's plan to unilaterally expel 200,000 ethnic Hungarians.<sup>34</sup> If the plan had succeeded, not only would extremely difficult conditions have arisen in Hungary, but also, in view of the re-Slovakisation program in Czechoslovakia, the territorial unity of that country's ethnic Hungarian community would have been fatally undermined. This, in turn, could have opened the door to the complete assimilation of the Hungarians of Slovakia.

The Trianon Peace Treaty had demanded grave sacrifices from Hungary, but the treaty had also had a positive aspect; it had restored, both formally and in practice, the sovereignty of the Hungarian state. For its part, the Paris Peace Treaty, which concluded World War II and came into force on 15 September 1947, arose under fundamentally different international circumstances. Moreover the almost synchronous creation of the Communist Information Bureau (Cominform)<sup>35</sup> clearly indicated that under the system of spheres of interest based on the newly established European status quo, the regaining of *formal* sovereignty by a country within the Soviet security zone in East Central Europe did not mean the restoration of its independence. On the contrary, the conference held in the Polish mountain resort of Szklarska Poręba, the main aim of which was to speed up the process of Sovietisation in the various countries of the region, also marked the beginning of the full incorporation of these countries in the Soviet empire.

## *The Era of the Active Foreign Policy Doctrine: De-Stalinisation and Destabilisation, 1953–1956*

For the countries of the nascent Soviet bloc, the period 1948–1953 was characterised by voluntary isolation, a freezing of relations with the West, and the propaganda of a total Cold War. Accordingly, today's historians continue to date the beginnings of a thaw in East–West relations to the death of Stalin in March 1953, whereas, in reality, the processes leading to the end of complete isolation from the Western world and to a reduction in Cold War tensions began somewhat earlier both in the Soviet Union and in the communist states of East Central Europe.<sup>36</sup>

Recent research has revealed that economic policy in the bloc, which was aimed at developing a war economy both in the Soviet Union and in the communist countries of East Central Europe, had run aground by 1952.<sup>37</sup> Signs of a crisis were perceptible in many fields of life. Consequently, it seems reasonable to assume that the Soviet leadership would have been forced to make changes to its policies even if Stalin had not died in March 1953. In Hungary, in the course of 1952, there were several developments in both domestic politics and foreign relations that were indicative of significant changes ahead.<sup>38</sup>

Still, it was only after Stalin's death that real *change* occurred in the foreign policy of the Soviet bloc.<sup>39</sup>

From June 1953 until October 1956, a gradual but steady opening of Hungarian foreign policy took place – always in conformity with the prevailing Soviet line, and to varying degrees, relations with other countries underwent a steady improvement.

It was a peculiar feature of the Hungarian “New Course,” however, that while the most remarkable reforms were initiated in domestic policy and economic policy in the Soviet Bloc during Imre Nagy's government between July 1953 and March 1955, during this period only modest results were achieved in the field of foreign relations. This reflected the limited international role that had been inherited from the Stalinist period and was common to all members of the Eastern camp prior to 1953. From the spring of 1955, however, following the ousting of Nagy, when a partial restoration in Hungarian domestic politics was instituted by Rákosi (who sought to halt or reverse the liberalisation process), an intensive opening towards the West was made in the foreign relations field – once again in full conformity with prevailing Soviet wishes. Another major positive change was that Hungary – alongside fifteen other states – became a member of the UN in December 1955.

After Stalin's death the Soviet leadership was preoccupied with dispelling tensions among its European allies, with dealing with crises, and avoiding repeat situations. Thus, in the course of 1953, these countries were not yet encouraged to be particularly active in the foreign policy field; the main goal at this time was the restoration of the

*status quo ante*, that is, an end to the abnormal situation that had arisen after 1949. Accordingly, the first foreign policy measures of Imre Nagy's government, which came into office in July 1953, aimed to improve Hungarian–Yugoslav relations<sup>40</sup> and Hungarian–British relations,<sup>41</sup> the former having deteriorated due to the Rajk trial and the latter due to the detention of the British businessman Edgar Sanders. Sanders was released unconditionally in August, and economic talks were opened between the two governments several weeks later.

From the spring of 1954 and with the commencement of the Four-Power Conference of Foreign Ministers in Geneva, however, the Soviet leadership encouraged each of the East Central European states to pursue an “*active foreign policy*.” The essence of the new doctrine was that these countries – naturally in close cooperation with Moscow – should attempt to present themselves in international politics as independent actors, capable of taking the initiative in the international organisations. The Soviet Union aimed to transform the European communist countries – regarded in the West as mere “satellite states” – into presentable partners and “real” allies on the international stage that would be able, as the policy of *détente* proceeded, to form a viable and united *bloc* in the East, capable of pursuing a dialogue with NATO, the Western political and military alliance. The reform of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (CMEA, or Comecon) in the spring of 1954 was begun with this goal in mind, and the formation of the military-political organisation of the Eastern bloc, the Warsaw Pact, in May 1955 also served this purpose. The accelerated military, political and economic integration of the Soviet bloc was quite clearly one of Khrushchev's aims.

In the course of 1954–55, Hungary re-evaluated and gradually improved its relations with the other Western European countries, and in the summer of 1956 diplomatic relations were established between Hungary and the NATO member Greece.

Hungary's greatest challenge was attaining improved relations with the United States. Although from 1955 both sides stressed the need for an improvement, the normalisation of relations was difficult for several reasons.<sup>42</sup> The main hindrance to improved economic relations was the significant Hungarian debt (compensation for wartime damages and for the nationalisations), which the Hungarian side was unable and unwilling to settle. The Americans were particularly aggrieved by measures affecting the functioning of their legation in Budapest (travel restrictions and the detention of the legation's Hungarian employees, etc.), and while the Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs did its best to resolve such problems in the course of 1955–56, the Interior Ministry, which functioned like a “state within a state,” successfully sabotaged these efforts for some time. In the summer of 1956, relations began to improve once more, as demonstrated by the following gesture: the American authorities invited representatives of the Hungarian government (among them, the party's new leader Ernő Gerő) to observe the U.S. presidential elections due in November.

Around this time, Soviet diplomacy began to give particular attention to the neutral countries, while maintaining its Western-oriented activities.<sup>43</sup> In the spirit of a differentiated approach, Hungary “received” Austria as its task. Moscow imagined that the Austrians, who had just regained their independence, would choose – under appropriate external pressure and in return for certain economic benefits – the *eastern* version of neutrality (the Finnish model) rather than the *western* version. Accordingly, Hungarian–Austrian relations were developed promisingly from the spring of 1955. To illustrate this, it suffices perhaps to note that in the summer of 1956 a visit to Budapest by the Austrian chancellor Julius Raab was on the agenda.<sup>44</sup> Of even greater significance was an event that was widely known and talked about at the time but is now largely forgotten: in the spring of 1956 and with the aim of promoting good neighbourly relations, the removal of landmines on the Hungarian–Austrian border was begun. By September of the same year this part of the Iron Curtain had been removed. It would be difficult to overestimate the historical significance of this development, particularly if one considers how quickly the barrier was reconstructed – between January and May 1957 – after the 1956 revolution.<sup>45</sup> Another known fact is the dynamic development of Hungarian–Austrian relations from the early 1960s, which for a time served as an example of cooperation between countries with different social systems. Still, it was only with the weakening of the communist regime in the summer of 1989 that the “Iron Curtain” was finally torn down in a symbolic joint act by the Hungarian and Austrian foreign ministers.<sup>46</sup> It is, of course, no minor matter that as a consequence of these historical developments, the landmines were no longer (and not yet) functioning at the time of the revolution in October 1956 – which meant that after the failure of the uprising almost 200,000 people were able to emigrate from the country in relative safety.

Soviet foreign policy in the latter half of the 1950s was characterised by the dual message formulated at the Moscow Conference of Foreign Ministers in November–December 1945, a conference convened to debate a system of collective security in Europe. The Eastern bloc declared on the one hand – after the Western powers had rejected the collective security proposal – that it would do everything to enhance its own security; it then put words into action by founding the Warsaw Pact. At the same time, however, primarily as a means of neutralizing in a *peaceful* manner the threat from Germany, the government in Moscow encouraged the Eastern European countries even more firmly to develop and establish relations with neutral Austria (an important partner in terms of Hungary’s western borders) and with the West German state, which had recently become a NATO member. More generally, the Soviet Union also encouraged these countries to develop relations with all Western capitalist countries and the Third World. Soviet diplomacy, which became even more active in the summer of 1955, created a favourable climate for tentative moves on the part of the

Eastern European countries. The Geneva Conference of July 1955 – which provided the first opportunity for four-power talks since the Potsdam Conference – produced no spectacular results, but the personal contacts established between great powers of West and East exerted a significant effect on the subsequent favourable development of East–West relations.<sup>47</sup> As a result of this development, Konrad Adenauer, the West German chancellor, travelled to Moscow, and in September diplomatic relations were established between the Soviet Union and the Federal Republic of Germany. The Soviet policy of opening to the West and this specific step demonstrated to the countries of East Central Europe that the Eastern bloc would benefit from an improvement in relations with Austria and with the Federal Republic of Germany.

Hungary – alongside Romania and Bulgaria – was one of the communist countries that had no major unsettled issues with the Federal Republic of Germany. Further, Hungary had a particular interest in restoring economic relations interrupted in the aftermath of World War II. Exploiting the favourable tail wind, the Hungarian foreign minister proposed as early as the end of June 1955 that Hungary – depending on the outcome of the negotiations in Moscow – should establish diplomatic relations with the Federal Republic of Germany.<sup>48</sup> What is more, the Political Committee of the Hungarian Workers' Party (MDP) under Rákosi's leadership adopted a resolution that this step must be taken after consultation with Moscow and the Soviet bloc countries.<sup>49</sup> Thus, the Hungarian leadership correctly recognised in 1955 that the Soviet initiative represented an excellent opportunity for Hungary to settle its relations with the FRG. Theoretically, such a development should have been important to both states. West Germany was already Hungary's prime Western trading partner, and the establishment of diplomatic relations could have exerted a positive influence on Hungarian society in many other fields. At this time, the Soviets firmly supported the plan; Yuri Andropov, the Soviet ambassador to Hungary, offered his encouragement to the Hungarian leaders.<sup>50</sup> Nevertheless, there were two hurdles that could not be overcome. The first arose in the West: under the so-called Hallstein Doctrine, the Bonn government refused to establish diplomatic relations with countries that had recognised the German Democratic Republic. (The West German leadership only made an exception in the case of the Soviet Union – as one of the four powers responsible for the peace treaty with Germany.) Among the various Eastern bloc countries, Poland, Czechoslovakia and the GDR had grave disagreements with the West Germans, and they were not pleased when other members of the Soviet camp – following the Soviet example – showed a readiness to establish diplomatic relations with West Germany *unconditionally*. Ultimately, lobbying by the former group of countries frustrated such contacts. Major conflicts of interest within the Soviet camp at the time of the formation of the Warsaw Pact demonstrated that intra-bloc cooperation in the future would hardly be smooth. This was underlined by the *qualitatively* new development that multilateral coordination within the nascent

model would have to prepare itself for confrontation and conflicts of interest not only between the Soviet Union and its allies but also *among* the various allies.

Accordingly, between January and October 1956, Hungarian foreign policy-makers initiated – in full agreement with Soviet policy at the time and in line with its intentions – a radical process of opening up both to other members of the bloc and to the West and the Third World. In essence, this new policy formulated the principles that would serve as the basis of Hungarian foreign policy from the early 1960s onwards. This new approach appeared in the general foreign policy guidelines<sup>51</sup> drafted in the spring of 1956 and in the detailed plans concerning individual foreign countries. The Foreign Ministry's increased role and a desire for a partial correction in the country's foreign policy orientation were indicated by the fact that the first ministerial change after Rákosi's dismissal in July came in this area: in August 1956, Foreign Minister János Boldoczki, who had received his "training" in the workers' cadre and was known for his unconditionally pro-Soviet stance, was replaced by the former head of mission in London, Imre Horváth. It was also at this time that the Foreign Ministry began a series of biweekly press conferences designed to inform the media. Meanwhile the conference of ambassadors and ministers in August was the first real advisory and consultative forum for the heads of Hungarian missions abroad, where they received thorough and detailed instructions concerning the implementation of the new foreign policy line.<sup>52</sup>

This initially slow evolutionary process soon acquired momentum, but it was rudely interrupted by the domestic social explosion, which created radically new challenges for Hungarian foreign policy.

### ***The 1956 Revolution: The Two Soviet Interventions, the Mikoyan Doctrine, and the Withdrawal of Troops Myth***

The fate of the Hungarian revolution of October 1956 was determined principally by the two Soviet military interventions of 24 October and 4 November. From the perspective of Hungarian society, the two interventions differed only in terms of the scale and military methods of the armed forces deployed against the revolutionaries. However, if one examines the Soviet decision-making mechanisms, two drastically different actions become manifest: the decision taken in Moscow on 23 October was not the only possible solution, whereas the intervention of 4 November took place as the inevitable consequence of the earlier mistaken decision.

Contrary to previous assumptions, the Soviet leadership, which was preoccupied with resolving the Polish political crisis that had arisen on 19 October 1956, was initially reluctant to authorise, at Ernő Gerő's behest, the use of Soviet troops to quell the protests in Budapest on 23 October. However, following a renewed request in the course of the

evening and under pressure from Ambassador Andropov, who viewed the situation as extremely grave, a decision was finally taken in favour of intervention.<sup>53</sup>

The Presidium of the CPSU debated the issue in the late hours of 23 October. In the Soviet leadership's view, the situation in Hungary was more serious than the Polish crisis. Still, despite the outbreak of armed conflict – still on a smaller scale – it might have been possible to replicate the Polish scenario. Mikoyan, a distinguished member of the Soviet leadership with the best knowledge of the Hungarian situation, outlined in clear terms this alternative:

“Without Nagy they can't get control of the movement, and it's also cheaper for us. [...] Expresses doubt about the sending of troops. What are we losing? The Hungarians themselves will restore order on their own. We should try political measures, and only then send troops.”<sup>54</sup> We may therefore refer to the resolution of a serious political crisis in a communist country using *local forces and without a Soviet military intervention* as the *Mikoyan Doctrine*.<sup>55</sup> In subsequent periods, the Soviet leadership tried instinctively to apply this method: for instance in Czechoslovakia in 1968 and again in Afghanistan in 1979. The doctrine was successfully employed at the time of the introduction of martial law in Poland in December 1981.

Mikoyan's proposal thus represented a rational alternative in the given situation, and yet he remained isolated in the CPSU Presidium. The Soviet leadership, which had employed, since 1953, a basically pragmatic approach to the major international issues and which, in the face of the Polish crisis, had renounced at the last minute a military intervention driven by Cold War reflexes and ideological-emotional factors, thus proved unable to adopt such patient tactics in the case of Hungary. Consequently, Khrushchev and his supporters took the worst decision possible, one with disastrous implications *for themselves too*. Indeed, their decision unleashed a process – the only anti-Soviet war of liberation in the history of the Cold War<sup>56</sup> – whose consequences they had originally sought to escape by the demonstration of force. The rapidly implemented Soviet intervention led inevitably to a radicalisation of the masses and to an irrational escalation of the revolutionaries' demands, as a result of which the possibility of a political solution acceptable to Moscow was lost within a few days.

Regarding the Hungarian revolution, many myths and legends continue to exist in the public consciousness, most of which are nurtured by insufficient knowledge of the facts. For this reason, special attention should be given to a new theory suggesting that the Soviet leadership was prepared, on 30 October 1956, to relinquish control over Hungary. This “sensational” finding arose in the course of analysis of the so-called Malin notes,<sup>57</sup> which were made public in the mid-1990s, and as part of a general reappraisal of Soviet policy towards the Hungarian uprising.

The unofficial and often fragmentary notes on the discussions of the CPSU Presidium in connection with the Hungarian crisis are extremely informative and offer

insights into the debates of the most senior leadership in Moscow, debates that resulted in the decisions known to us all. These documents confirm earlier suppositions that there were sometimes serious and sharp disagreements at the Kremlin concerning the policy to be followed. However, even in the knowledge of the new sources, historians are divided on *what was at stake*.

Based on their analysis of the notes, some researchers have concluded that the Soviet leadership was much more open-minded in its attempts to deal with the crisis than historians had previously thought. In their view, therefore, the suppression of the uprising was not the only possible alternative; if circumstances had developed more favourably – in general no more details are given – the revolution might well have succeeded. Indeed, the 1989–90 liberation of East Central Europe might even have taken place 33 years earlier.<sup>58</sup> These historians base their conclusion essentially on a single piece of new information: the notes revealed that on 30 October the CPSU Presidium – acting under pressure from a Chinese delegation in Moscow – unanimously agreed that if the Hungarian government so requested, the Soviet troops would have to be withdrawn from Hungary. And although the Soviet leadership changed its position the very next day and decided to suppress the revolution, this new fact has been interpreted by some as indicating that *at that particular moment* the Soviet Union would have been prepared to relinquish Hungary.

The problem here thus concerns the *interpretation* of a verified and accepted new evidence. Most researchers hold an opposing opinion. In their view, the Malin notes do not contradict previous appraisals of Soviet policy; on the contrary, they strengthen them. There were serious debates within the Presidium, and these were perhaps more intense than was previously assumed. Nevertheless, the issue at stake was not the loss of Hungary (i.e., recognition of the victory of the revolution and Hungary's independence), but rather what concessions should be made to Imre Nagy's government, with a view to enabling it to consolidate the situation within the framework of the communist system.

The key to understanding the Malin notes, which are often very fragmentary, is to analyze each piece of new information in conjunction with *all* previously known facts and in the context of the general international situation and of East–West relations as a whole. Seen from this perspective, it is more than clear that this potential decision on the part of the Soviet leadership was not directed at “relinquishing” Hungary. On the contrary, this was the *maximum political concession* that the Soviet leadership would have been prepared to make – allowing them to avoid the military suppression of the uprising, which even they considered to be the worst possible solution – if Imre Nagy's government had succeeded in consolidating the situation while also preserving the unity of the Soviet bloc. The Malin notes contain substantial evidence that a withdrawal of troops would only have been countenanced in the event of the fulfilment of these two conditions. It suffices perhaps to cite only the most vehemently expressed opinion.

When giving his support to the above decision, Foreign Minister Shepilov stated: „With the agreement of the government of Hungary, we are ready to withdraw troops. We'll have to keep up a struggle with national-Communism for a long time.”<sup>59</sup> Clearly, the calculated consequence of a withdrawal was not the restoration of capitalism, but the consolidation of circumstances similar to those prevailing in Poland, that is, the establishment of a reformed communist system with greater domestic autonomy, which would nevertheless remain loyal to Moscow and continue to be a part of the Soviet bloc. At a meeting of the CPSU Presidium on 30 October 1956, hopes were expressed that events in Hungary might not have overstepped such a framework. A day later, however, the Soviet leadership had no choice but to accept that the Hungarian revolution would not stop half-way and that, as a consequence, communist rule in Hungary and the integrity of the Soviet empire could only be upheld by military intervention.

### ***The Kádár Era: The Triad of Determinants and the Impact on Hungarian Foreign Policy***

In the Kádár era, the principal Hungarian foreign policy objective was to create the international conditions necessary for the successful realisation of the domestic and economic policy goals which underlay the country's political stability, established steadily and purposefully after the 1956 revolution.

In the light of recent research, we may conclude that the country's manifest dependence on the Soviet Union was not the only determinant of Hungarian foreign policy. Rather, a far more complex *triad of determinants* limited Hungary's room for manoeuvre.<sup>60</sup> Hungary's affiliation with the Soviet empire was the first obvious restriction, but a further limitation of similar weight was the country's reliance on *Western* technology and on Western loans. At the same time, bearing in mind the two former limitations and with a view to realizing its own interests, Hungarian foreign policy from the early 1960s onwards had to take part in a *lobbying free-for-all involving the whole of East Central Europe*. For Hungarian foreign policy, this triad of determinants was always present in some form or another, but from the mid-1960s the weight of each factor became increasingly similar.

In its relations with the *Soviet Union*, Hungary – even after the sudden replacement of Khrushchev, Kádár's patron, in October 1964 and until as late as 1989 – fulfilled the role of a loyal, dependable and predictable partner. In addition to Kádár's conviction that this was the most profitable path for Hungary, two main factors justified this course of action. The first was the pressing need to develop economic relations with the West, which became crucial for the modernisation of the Hungarian economy. In the mid-1960s, this objective was done no harm by Hungary's reputation as a steadfast

and reliable partner of the Soviet Union, for it was no coincidence that in January 1965 Brezhnev emphasised in Warsaw, at a meeting of the Political Consultative Committee of the Warsaw Pact, that “the imperialists are attempting to expand their relations with the Socialist countries with a view to utilizing their economic, technical and scientific possibilities to influence domestic life in our countries in a fashion that they deem desirable and to undermine our unity. It is therefore particularly important to prevent and defend against ideological penetration and subversion.”<sup>61</sup> A second and equally important factor entailed preparations for the New Economic Mechanism, a reform undertaken at this time. The planned transformation of the Hungarian economy promised to be the greatest structural change since the formation of the Leninist-Stalinist communist regime, and so it was particularly important to reassure the Soviet leadership that the reforms would apply solely to the *economic* sphere.

Accordingly, Hungarian foreign policy-makers sought to maintain a policy of *constructive loyalty* in the field of Hungarian–Soviet relations. The main features of this policy were, on the one hand, *conflict prevention* – primarily in the political field and above all in multilateral forums – *flexibility*, continuous *adjustment* to Soviet demands, and a *readiness to cooperate*. Thus, throughout the period, Hungary played a mediating role in the Warsaw Pact, in the CMEA (Comecon), and during multilateral negotiations, in order to promote Soviet interests. *Constructive loyalty* also implied, however, opportunities for testing the boundaries. Indeed, the underlying principle until 1988 was that “what is not forbidden is (perhaps) allowed.” A further important element of this policy was, moreover, a continuous effort on the part of the Hungarian leadership – exploiting its status as dependable partner, which in turn stemmed from its good behaviour – to influence the position of the Soviet leadership *within the framework of bilateral relations* in such a manner that accorded with Hungarian interests (and the interests of the East Central European countries in general), which often differed from Soviet interests. Of course, its efforts were not always successful. Even so, on many occasions, Hungarian foreign policy-makers managed to exert a positive influence on the leadership in Moscow even when it came to the fundamental issues of East–West relations. Hungary’s constructive stance had an additional benefit. Since a basic and ongoing objective of the Hungarian leadership was to preserve the conditions for a relatively independent *domestic policy*, Soviet–Hungarian economic relations – in particular the uninterrupted supply of Soviet raw materials and energy at subsidised prices – were of great significance to the functioning of Hungary’s domestic economy. As long as Hungary avoided conflict in the political field, the Soviets would turn a blind eye when, in the course of bilateral economic negotiations, the Hungarian negotiators turned out to be rather difficult partners, who regularly sought to extort economic concessions in return for political cooperation.

Hungary's economic needs were the main reason for the policy of steadily fostering *relations with the West*. A functional economy with steady growth was a prerequisite for Kádár's strategy of political stability and improved living standards. In the emerging global economic environment of the 1960s, modern technology was rapidly gaining in importance. In this area, however, Hungary was clearly reliant on its relations with the West, for apart from military hardware and space research, Soviet technology increasingly lagged behind the West. Owing to the peculiarities of a shortage economy, even those products that met the required standards were not always available, and so the Soviet Union simply could not deliver. The embargo imposed on the Eastern bloc countries became an incentive for developing relations with the West, as the Hungarian leadership was aware that a relaxation of restrictions depended on improved relations. For this reason, from the mid-1960s onwards, Hungary worked hard to broaden its relations with Western European countries, constantly testing the boundaries of Soviet tolerance and becoming one of the main driving forces behind a policy of *détente*. The spectacular results of this policy in the 1970s, however, had several downsides: Hungary, suffering from a perpetual shortage of capital, was forced to rely heavily on Western loans. In conjunction with the oil crisis, this reliance led to spiralling debt, which, in turn, brought the country to the brink of bankruptcy by 1988–1989.

In the political sphere, the need for improved relations with the West forced the Hungarian leadership into making concessions to the democratic opposition, which began to form in the late 1970s. The authorities also found themselves in a constant struggle against the influences of Western ideology. Their efforts in this area were doomed to failure, and so by the end of the 1980s most of Hungarian society was willing to embrace democracy and the market economy. Indeed, by that time, even many of the leaders and members of the ruling party were able to identify with and support the political changes that would result in a peaceful transfer of power.

The historical reconstruction of Hungary's relations with *other countries in East Central Europe* is a more difficult task than the above analysis of its relations with the West and the Soviet Union. Beginning in the early 1960s an extremely complex and alternating system of relationships developed among the Soviet Union's European allies. The various countries strove to realise their economic, political and strategic interests in a struggle not just against Moscow but also against each other. As a consequence of the constant *lobbying* and infighting – manifest to the international community only in Romania's deviant path – several permanent and numerous ad hoc *virtual coalitions* formed within the Soviet bloc. Two particularly important and durable groupings were formed on the basis of the level of economic and social development: the more developed group comprised Czechoslovakia, Poland, Hungary and the GDR, while Bulgaria and Romania constituted the less developed group.<sup>62</sup> But even this division was not quite so simple. Within the more developed group, the relatively undeveloped

Poland and Hungary tended to side with others in the group on matters concerning the direction of development of the CMEA and on integration, but these two countries often sided with the less developed countries when this was necessary to protect their own economic interests. From the early 1960s, a crucial issue for the Soviet bloc was settlement of the *German question*. From the outset there was a divergence of interests between a group of countries seeking to *prioritise security* and another group wishing to *prioritise the economy*. For Czechoslovakia, Poland and the GDR, a diplomatic settlement with the FRG was only possible if the West Germans renounced in full their previous position.<sup>63</sup> In contrast, three other countries – Bulgaria, Hungary and Romania – had no major unresolved issues with the FRG and were more interested in the development of economic relations.<sup>64</sup> On the issue of European security, opinions were divided on similar lines, reflecting the fact that settlement of the German question was a central element of this issue. Hence, within the Soviet bloc Hungary conducted a coalition-building policy based on pragmatism and driven by its interests as they arose. The rather complex system of relationships can be illustrated by several noteworthy examples in the period under investigation.

Polish–Hungarian relations were excellent throughout the period, and the two leaderships tended to share the same opinion on international politics and on the issue of East–West relations. In numerous instances, however, their positions differed substantially. Indeed, on occasion – for instance, during the early phase of preparations for the European security conference – Hungarian diplomacy joined forces with the Soviets to scupper over-ambitious Polish efforts.

In the case of Romania, the equation was the reverse: bilateral relations were afflicted by severe problems – above all the grave discrimination suffered by the large ethnic Hungarian community in Romania – throughout the period, as a consequence of which the Hungarian leadership exhibited an antipathy towards Romania that bordered on nationalist indignation.<sup>65</sup> Still, in the field of East–West relations and on the issue of European security – and, from time to time, in many areas of political and economic cooperation within the Soviet bloc – the interests of the two leaderships coincided or were similar. Although the Hungarian leadership refrained overtly from supporting Romania’s customary position during *multilateral* negotiations, nevertheless Hungary often employed the tactic of benevolent neutrality disguised as passivity to facilitate Romania’s efforts. Within the framework of Hungarian–Soviet *bilateral* relations, the Hungarian negotiating partners frequently gave their support to proposals that served to promote such shared interests.

Relations between Hungary and the GDR were also of unique character. Regarding the progression of Hungary’s economic and domestic policy, throughout the period the harshest criticism tended to come from the GDR, alongside the Soviet Union. As we now know, on some occasions, East German functionaries even “spied on”

developments in Hungarian cultural life.<sup>66</sup> For its part, the Hungarian leadership spoke, in internal political discourses, derogatorily and critically of the political and ideological orthodoxy of the East Germans. Moreover it viewed with scepticism the cynical manner in which the East German leadership portrayed itself as the true torchbearer of Marxism-Leninism while doing its utmost to draw the full benefit from its extremely profitable economic relations with the FRG and to conceal from the other Eastern bloc countries the true nature and magnitude of “intra-German affairs.” At the same time, however, Hungary’s relations with the GDR in the economic field were fairly balanced. Indeed, *within* the Eastern bloc it was this relationship that proved the most valuable to Hungary in terms of obtaining (relatively) advanced technology. In the 1960s and 1970s, Hungarian diplomacy vigorously supported efforts to gain international recognition for the GDR. This moral support was motivated in part by a feeling of solidarity rooted in the Hungarian regime’s own experiences: in the period after the revolution (1956–1963), Hungary had struggled to overcome its foreign policy isolation. An even more important factor, however, was that after February 1967 it was clear to the Hungarian leadership that diplomatic relations with the FRG could only be established within the framework of a general settlement of the German question.<sup>67</sup> It is an historical irony that after several decades of political support for the GDR, it was a Hungarian diplomatic action in 1989 – namely the opening of the Hungarian–Austrian border to East German refugees – that facilitated the collapse of the East German communist regime and, ultimately, German reunification and the scrapping of the GDR.

### ***The Change of Regime: Domestic Transition and External Determinism***

Hungarian foreign policy achieved a relative degree of independence from the late 1970s. A main feature of this development was Hungary’s burgeoning economic and political relations with Western countries at a time of unprecedented uncertainty in East–West relations. Owing to the stalling of détente in the late-1970s and the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan, relations between the two superpowers were worse than at any time since the Cuban Missile Crisis. Even so, the Hungarian leadership pursued its policy with the acknowledgement and agreement of the Soviet leadership rather than against its will. Kádár managed repeatedly to persuade Brezhnev and his successors – and this was no easy task – that in view of the worsening economic situation, Hungary’s political stability could only be maintained by such means.<sup>68</sup> And for a time the Soviet Union tolerated Hungary’s increased use of Western loans, for indirectly it reduced the burden on the Soviet economy. Meanwhile, in the person of Kádár, the Soviets had a guarantee of Hungary’s unswerving loyalty.

A qualitative change in foreign policy – and in domestic policy – came in 1988. This change was linked not with János Kádár's dismissal at the extraordinary party conference in May or with the conference itself, but with the major positive changes in the international political arena that followed Gorbachev's ascent to power. It was at this time that Hungarian foreign policy-makers began to formulate a strategy whereby Hungary would play the role of a *bridge* between East and West in an evolving new world order based on cooperation. This concept anticipated the continued existence of the alliance frameworks (Warsaw Pact, CMEA), but also a democratic restructuring of these multilateral organisations. In this way Hungary would not longer be prevented from developing – in line with its national interests – relations with any country or organisation in the world.<sup>69</sup>

Hungary's foreign policy since the late 1970s had been founded on a *relative independence*, whereby in simplified terms *what was not forbidden, was (perhaps) allowed*. In contrast the new concept – to draw an analogy with the “rules” of the road – meant that if a policeman told you to stop, you were not to lose heart but to persuade him to let you through. Indeed, where justified, you might even drive straight across the intersection despite the presence of a policeman and at the risk of subsequent admonition. This new foreign policy, driven by initiative and dynamism and aiming for *quasi-neutrality*, was never articulated – either publicly or among the domestic leadership – in such categorical terms. Today, however, one can state that this was the essence of Hungarian foreign policy endeavours from 1988 until the national elections in 1990.<sup>70</sup>

Hungarian–Soviet relations were characterised by a peculiar duality with regard to Perestroika, Glasnost and the reforms in general: Hungary simultaneously played the roles of best pupil and master. Not surprisingly, Gorbachev's policies were particularly well received in Hungary, for they were perceived as vindication of the earlier Hungarian reforms that had faced a headwind from the east ever since the late 1960s. Meanwhile the Soviets, when implementing reforms and innovations, often invoked Hungary's experiences (for instance, when restructuring agriculture, in accepting a limited role for the market, and when introducing a system of multiple candidates for elections). In the fall of 1988, it was based on similar recent measures by the HSWP that the CPSU CC established various special committees, including the International Committed led by Yakovlev.<sup>71</sup>

In the course of 1988–1989, a *virtual Moscow–Warsaw–Budapest triangle* was created among the three pro-reform Eastern bloc countries, which contemporary documents referred to as “closely cooperating countries”<sup>72</sup> despite the fact that this term had been used, since the 1960s, to identify the six countries without Romania. The leaders of the three countries sought in bilateral talks to coordinate their ideas on economic and political reform and to present a united front within the Warsaw Pact and the CMEA (in which they formed a minority) with a view to exerting pressure on the conservative-

led countries. This “special relationship” most likely contributed to Soviet toleration of Hungarian domestic reforms and of the – in many respects – pioneering initiatives of Hungarian foreign policy.<sup>73</sup>

This period saw two fundamental changes in Soviet policy determining the fate of the East Central European region: the first was acceptance of the principle of “Socialist pluralism,” while the second was the introduction of a new tactical element: the *floating of the Brezhnev doctrine* in the alliance relationship.<sup>74</sup> At the party conference in June 1988, Gorbachev declared, in a surprise move, that every nation had the right to choose its own social and economic system. The Soviet leader’s principal aim may have been to initiate *a new public discourse* on the Soviet Union’s relationship with the Eastern European countries, which had become increasingly critical, in order to establish *greater room for manoeuvre* for Soviet reformers, increasing their chances of responding in a flexible manner to the changing situation.<sup>75</sup>

Versions of the cited proposition were repeated by Gorbachev and other members of the leadership throughout 1988–1989. Soon a promise not to employ military force was added. The essence of these intentionally ambiguous declarations was that they *implicitly* ruled out the possibility of a Soviet intervention but never *categorically* stated that the Soviet Union would not interfere in the internal affairs of its Eastern European allies even if the *horribile dictu* of the political transition were to lead to the complete abandonment of socialism and the reintroduction of Western-type parliamentary democracy.<sup>76</sup> In other words, the reference to the free decision of countries could be interpreted by all parties according to their interests and aims, whereby there was still a possibility of opposing interpretations, reflecting the circumstances of the transition. Moreover, all of this was supplemented by the provision of confidential information and “orientation” at the highest level of Soviet bilateral relations with the Eastern European countries. It was in this relationship that the above “dialectical” approach took on a more concrete form. For instance, during Károly Grósz’s visit to Moscow in late March 1989, Gorbachev on the one hand stated that “today the possibility of a recurrence of interference in the internal affairs of the Socialist countries must be completely ruled out,” but also emphasised that “there must be clear boundaries both for ourselves and for others. The need is for democracy and for the coordination of interests. *The boundary, however, is the preservation of Socialism* (my italics) and the provision of stability.”<sup>77</sup> As far as the interpretation of “boundaries” was concerned, in the Eastern bloc the Hungarian party leadership had unparalleled experience. Indeed, the official explanation for the Soviet invasion of 4 November 1956 was based on this rationale, whereby the intervention was considered to have been the proper application of the lofty principles mentioned in the Soviet government’s declaration of 30 October rather than a violation of those same principles. For whereas the declaration had ruled out an intervention *in relation to the Socialist countries*, the events in Hungary had threatened the very existence of the Socialist system.

Consequently, after mid-1988, when Gorbachev and his colleagues renounced the possibility of military intervention, the *floating of the Brezhnev doctrine*<sup>78</sup> was the sole “weapon” at the Soviet leadership’s disposal, by which it could influence for a time political developments in Eastern Europe. As they sought to transform East–West relations and establish a new world order based on cooperation, the Soviet reformers could not allow – unlike their predecessors with their more prosaic goals – interventions aimed at restoring a regime to jeopardise their achievements. The threat stemmed not only from international politics, but from the fact that under such circumstances the West would have withdrawn their support for Gorbachev. This, in turn, could well have resulted in the failure of the Soviet leader’s greatest achievement – Perestroika.

In Soviet policy, the fate of Eastern Europe was subject to two forces: first, the ambitious international political objectives of the Gorbachev leadership; second, the success of Soviet reforms.<sup>79</sup> Based on our present knowledge of the events, we may call the latter, rather euphemistically, the Soviet Union’s life or death battle for survival. Hence, in my view, the Soviet Union relinquished Eastern Europe first and foremost because, for the first time since the Russian Civil War, the Soviet state found itself unable to guarantee *its own survival*. This was a great paradox, for the Soviet Union was still regarded as an equivalent superpower in the bipolar international system. At the time, however, the logical and necessary priority was to rescue the imperial “core,” whereby the East European periphery of the empire was of reduced significance. If we are looking for a historical analogy, we might refer to this as the *Brest-Litovsk syndrome*. At a critical juncture in the Russian Civil War, Lenin had also argued in favour of a peace treaty with the Germans, in order to save the Soviet state despite the sacrifice of large swathes of territory. Lenin had been proved right, but his latter-day successor Gorbachev and indeed the Soviet Union were soon to be overtaken by history.

## Notes

- 1 Research for this essay was supported by the Institute for Political Science, Hungarian Academy of Sciences.
- 2 Concerning the Sovietisation of Hungary, the theory of a democratic alternative is supported by several leftist historians in Hungary as well as historians abroad such as Charles Gati (Charles Gati: *Magyarország a Kreml árnyékában* [Hungary in the Shadow of the Kremlin]. Budapest: Századvég, 1990) and most recently by Péter Kenéz (Peter Kenéz: *Hungary from the Nazis to the Soviets: The Establishment of the Communist Regime in Hungary, 1944–1948*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006). The process of Sovietisation – although there are differences concerning the defining circumstances thereof – began in 1944–45 in my view (Csaba Békés: “Soviet Plans to Establish COMINFORM in Early 1946. New Evidence from Hungarian Archives”. *Cold War International History Project Bulletin*, No. 10. [1998]. pp. 135–137.) and in the view of such historians

- as Ignác Romsics (Ignác Romsics: *Magyarország története a XX. században* [History of Hungary in the 20th Century]. Budapest: Osiris, 1999. p. 271.); László Borhi (László Borhi: *A vasfüggöny mögött. Magyarország nagyhatalmi erőterében, 1945–1968* [Behind the Iron Curtain. Hungary amid Great Power Politics, 1945–1968]. Budapest: Ister, 2000); and Krisztián Ungváry (Krisztián Ungváry: “Magyarország szovjetizálásának kérdései” [Issues of the Sovietisation of Hungary]. In: *Mitoszok, legendák, tévhitek a 20. századi magyar történelemről* [Myths, Legends, Misbelieves on the 20<sup>th</sup>-Century Hungarian History] [ed. by Ignác Romsics]. Budapest: Osiris, 2002. pp. 279–308).
- 3 See Csaba Békés: *Európából Európába. Magyarország konfliktusok keresztjében, 1945–1990* [From Europe to Europe. Hungary in the Crossfire of Conflicts, 1945–1990]. Budapest: Gondolat, 2004. pp. 37–52.
  - 4 Vladislav Zubok – Constantine Pleshakov: *Inside the Kremlin's Cold War. From Stalin to Khrushchev*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996. p. 53.
  - 5 Békés: *Európából Európába*. p. 49. The Soviet occupation zone in Germany – which later became the GDR – also belongs in this category.
  - 6 For details of the peace settlement after World War II, see Mihály Fülöp: *A befejezetlen béke. A Külügyminiszterek Tanácsa és a magyar békeszerződés, 1947* [The Unfinished Peace. The Council of Foreign Ministers and the Hungarian Peace Treaty, 1947]. Budapest: Héttorony, 1994; Ignác Romsics: *Az 1947-es párizsi békeszerződés* [The 1947 Paris Peace Treaty]. Budapest: Osiris, 2006.
  - 7 For the initial draft of the following analysis, see Csaba Békés: “Kísérletek a külföld felvilágosítására a párizsi béketárgyalások előtt” [Attempts to Inform Foreign Powers Prior to the Paris Peace Talks]. (PhD dissertation). Szeged: József Attila University, 1988.
  - 8 Gyula Juhász: “Magyarország nemzetközi helyzete és a magyar szellemi élet 1938–1944” [Hungary's International Situation and Hungarian Cultural Life in 1938–1944]. *Magyar Tudomány*, No. 2. (1986). p. 99.
  - 9 According to a public opinion survey of February 1946, a majority of respondents placed on a scale of wartime responsibility the “independent” Croatia in last but one position among six countries – Slovakia, Romania, Croatia, Bulgaria, Austria and Hungary. (Report of 12 February 1946 of MTI – Hungarian News Agency, Hungarian Public Opinion Research Service.) Thus it is not surprising that Hungarian public opinion found it relatively easy to give up the former Hungarian territory ceded to Yugoslavia.
  - 10 In the final months of war, this was preceded by a relatively short but tragic period for the Hungarians of Vojvodina, during which thousands succumbed to a campaign of vengeance.
  - 11 The issue of the sizeable Ruthenian minority resolved itself after the cessation to the Soviet Union of the Carpatho-Ukrainian region in 1945.
  - 12 Sándor Balogh: *Magyarország külpolitikája 1945–1950* [Hungary's Foreign Policy, 1945–1950]. Budapest: Kossuth, 1988. p. 103.
  - 13 *Foreign Relations of the United States. Diplomatic Papers. 1944*. Vol. III. Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1967 (henceforth: FRUS). pp. 967–968. Telegram of Harriman, U.S. ambassador in Moscow, to the Secretary of State, 9 January 1945; Balogh: *op. cit.* p. 106.
  - 14 FRUS 1944. Vol. III. pp. 975–976. Telegram of Grew, acting Secretary of State to Harriman, U.S. ambassador in Moscow, 15 January 1945; Balogh: *op. cit.* p. 106.
  - 15 The measures are explored in Balogh: *op. cit.* pp. 106–108 and in Iván Boldizsár: *Megbűnhődte már e nép... Röpirat a magyar békéről és közös hazánkról, a Dunavölgyéről* [The People Have Suffered for Their Sins... Flyer on the Hungarian Peace and Our Common Homeland, from the Danube Valley]. Budapest: Új Magyarország, 1946. pp. 65–71. For a more recent appraisal, see Árpád Popély, Stefan Sutaj, and Szarka László (eds.): *Beneš-dekrétumok és a magyar kérdés 1945–1948. Történeti háttér, dokumentumok és jogszabályok* [The Beneš Decrees and the Hungarian Question, 1945–1948. Historical Background, Documents, and Legislation]. Máriabesnyő–Gödöllő: Attraktor, 2007.
  - 16 Balogh: *op. cit.* p. 108.
  - 17 *Ibid.*

- 18 Stephen D. Kertész: *The Last European Peace Conference, Paris 1946 – Conflict of Values*. Lanham, M.D.: University Press of America, 1985. p. 38 and pp. 130–131.
- 19 Juhász: „Magyarország nemzetközi helyzete”. p. 99. The British made it clear that while they would recognise a border change agreed upon by both states, they would not attempt to persuade the Czechoslovak government to accept such a change. Stephen D. Kertész: *Between Russia and the West: Hungary and the Illusion of Peacemaking 1945–1947*. Notre Dame – London: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984. p. 140.
- 20 Cited by Gyula Juhász: *Magyarország külpolitikája 1919–1945* [Hungary’s Foreign Policy, 1919–1945]. Budapest: Kossuth, 1988. p. 413.
- 21 *Ibid.*, p. 258. It is noteworthy that at the time the Soviet Union made no claim to Carpatho-Ukraine, which was mostly inhabited by Ruthenians and which had been returned to Hungary in 1939. And yet such a claim would not have been completely baseless in view of the ethnic composition of the region. In the aftermath of the war, the Soviet Union managed to implement this demand with no great difficulty against Czechoslovakia, a member of the anti-fascist coalition.
- 22 Whereas Germany recognised the Soviet demand for these territories (and then, at Soviet behest, exerted pressure on Romania to relinquish them), it firmly rejected the subsequent Soviet demand for Southern Bukovina. And so, in the end, the territory was never transferred. Raymond J. Sontag – James Stuart Beddie (szerk.): *Nazi–Soviet Relations, 1939–1941: Documents from the Archives of the German Foreign Office*. Washington D.C.: Department of State, 1948. pp. 163–237.
- 23 György Ránki: *A második világháború története* [A History of World War II]. Budapest: Gondolat, 1976. pp. 97–98.
- 24 Gyula Juhász (ed.): *Magyar–brit titkos tárgyalások 1943-ban* [Hungarian–British Secret Talks in 1943]. Budapest: Kossuth, 1978. p. 180.
- 25 *Ibid.*
- 26 Cited *Ibid.*, pp. 158–159.
- 27 Cited *Ibid.*
- 28 Juhász: „Magyarország nemzetközi helyzete”. p. 100.
- 29 Cited in Juhász: *Magyarország külpolitikája 1919–1945*. p. 413.
- 30 It should be noted, however, that this could have meant as much as several tens of thousands of square kilometres, for at the time Transylvania was understood in international politics to mean the 102,000 square kilometres of territory ceded to Romania under the Treaty of Trianon. For the Soviet leadership’s policy on Transylvania, see Tofik Iszlamov, “Erdély a szovjet külpolitikában a II. világháború alatt” [Transylvania in Soviet Foreign Policy in World War II], *Múltunk*, No. 1–2. (1994). pp. 17–50.
- 31 Balogh: *op. cit.* p. 18.
- 32 Fülöp, Mihály: “A Külügyminiszterek Tanácsa és a magyar békeszerződés” [The Council of Foreign Ministers and the Hungarian Peace Treaty]. *Külpolitika*, No. 4. (1985). pp. 126–127.
- 33 On the policy of the Groza government, see 6. *Martie 1945: Incepturile comunizarii Romaniei* [March 6, 1945. The Beginnings of Communism in Romania]. Bucharest: Editura Enciclopedia, 1995.
- 34 For the most recent appraisal, see Romsics: *Az 1947-es párizsi békeszerződés*. pp. 212–223.
- 35 Moscow already had plans to establish Cominform in the early spring of 1946. However, its plan was to establish the body somewhat later, so that cooperation with the Western Allies could be maintained in the meantime. Békés: “Soviet Plans to Establish COMINFORM”.
- 36 For more details, see Csaba Békés: “Hidegháború, enyhülés és az 1956-os magyar forradalom” [Cold War, Détente, and the 1956 Hungarian Revolution]. In: *Évkönyv 1996/1997* [Yearbook 1996/1997] (ed. by András Hegedűs B., Péter Kende, Gyula Kozák, György Litván, and János, Rainer M.). Budapest: 1956-os Intézet, 1997. pp. 201–202.
- 37 The significance of the year 1952 was underlined for the first time by Melinda Kalmár in her analysis of literary policy in Hungary. See Melinda Kalmár: “A politika poétikája. Irodalomideológia az ötvenes évek első felében” [The Poetics of Politics. Literary Ideology in the First Half of the 1950s].

- Holmi*, No. 5. (1993). pp. 715–730. The economic crisis beginning in 1952 is explored in Károly Urbán: *Sztálin halálától a forradalom kitöréséig. A magyar–szovjet kapcsolatok története (1953–1956)* [From Stalin's Death to the Outbreak of the Revolution. The History of Hungarian–Soviet Relations (1953–1956). (Manuscript). 1996. The so-called Working Committee's report referred to the same, but did so in less categorical form: "Történelmi utunk. A Munkabizottság állásfoglalása a jelen helyzet kialakulásának okairól" [Our Historical Path. The Position of the Working Committee on the Reasons for Our Present Predicament]. *Társadalmi Szemle* (1989). Special issue. p. 26.
- 38 See Békés: „Hidegháború, enyhülés”; László Borhi: *Magyarország a hidegháborúban. A Szovjetunió és az Egyesült Államok között, 1945–1956* [Hungary in the Cold War. Between the Soviet Union and the United States, 1945–1956]. Budapest: Corvina, 2005. pp. 234–235, 243; János Rainer M.: “The New Course in Hungary in 1953”. *CWIHP Working Paper*, No. 38. (2002); Attila Szörényi: “A brit–magyar diplomáciai kapcsolatok és a Sanders-ügy, 1949–1953” [British–Hungarian Diplomatic Relations and the Sanders Affair, 1949–1953]. *Valóság*, Vol. 49. No. 6. (2006); and Péter Winternantel: “A magyar–japán diplomáciai kapcsolatok helyreállítása, 1944–1959” [The Restoration of Hungarian–Japanese Diplomatic Relations, 1944–1959]. *Külgügyi Szemle*, No. 2. (2009).
- 39 For a recent appraisal, see Klaus Larres – Kenneth Osgood (eds.): *The Cold War after Stalin's Death: A Missed Opportunity for Peace?* Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2006. For changes in Hungarian foreign policy in general and in Hungary's relations with the various countries during the period 1953–1958, see Csaba Békés: “Magyarország és a nemzetközi politika az ötvenes évek közepén” [Hungary and International Politics in the Mid-1950s]. In: *Evolúció és revolúció. Magyarország és a nemzetközi politika 1956-ban* [Evolution and Revolution. Hungary and International Politics in 1956] (ed. by Csaba Békés). Budapest: Gondolat–1956-os Intézet, 2007. pp. 9–27.
- 40 On Hungarian–Yugoslav relations, see Zoltán Ripp: “Jugoszlávia” [Yugoslavia]. In: *Evolúció és revolúció*. pp. 55–82.
- 41 On the Sanders affair and Hungarian–British relations, see Békés: „Hidegháború, enyhülés”; Csaba Békés: “Nagy-Britannia” [Great Britain]. In: *Evolúció és revolúció*. pp. 264–265; and Szörényi: „A brit–magyar diplomáciai kapcsolatok”.
- 42 On Hungarian–U.S. relations in the mid-1950s, see László Borhi: *Magyarország a hidegháborúban. A Szovjetunió és az Egyesült Államok között, 1945–1956* [Hungary in the Cold War. Between the Soviet Union and the United States, 1945–1956]. Budapest: Corvina, 2005. pp. 302–305; and Csaba Békés: “Egyesült Államok” [The United States]. In: *Evolúció és revolúció*. pp. 226–238.
- 43 “A szovjet külügyminisztérium feljegyzése a külpolitika kérdéseiről” [Memorandum of Soviet Foreign Ministry on Foreign Policy Questions]. Magyar Országos Levéltár [Hungarian National Archives] (henceforth: MOL), M-KS 267. f. 62. cs. 75. ő. e. In: József Kiss, Zoltán Ripp, and István Vida István (eds.): *Top Secret. Magyar–jugoszláv kapcsolatok, 1956. Dokumentumok. 1. kötet* [Top Secret. Hungarian–Yugoslav Relations, 1956. Documents. Vol. 1.] Budapest: Contemporary Research Committee of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, 1995. pp. 33–40.
- 44 “Jegyzőkönyv az MDP Politikai Bizottságának üléséről, 1956. május 24.” [Minutes of the Meeting of the HWP Political Committee, 24 May 1956]. MOL M-KS 276. f. 53. cs. 288. ő. e. On Hungarian–Austrian relations, see Lajos Gecsényi (ed.): *Iratok Magyarország és Ausztria kapcsolatainak történetéhez, 1945–1956* [Documents on the History of Hungary's Relations with Austria, 1945–1956]. Budapest: Magyar Országos Levéltár, 2007; Lajos Gecsényi: “Ausztria” [Austria]. In: *Evolúció és revolúció*.
- 45 Gecsényi: “Ausztria”. p. 224.
- 46 On the international background to the political changes in Hungary, see Csaba Békés: “Vissza Európába. A magyarországi rendszerváltás nemzetközi háttere, 1988–1990” [Back to Europe. Historical Background of the Change of Regime in Hungary, 1988–1990]. In: *A rendszerváltás forгатókönyve. Kerekasztal tárgyalások 1989-ben. 7. kötet. Alkotmányos forradalom. Tanulmányok* [The Scenario of the Change of Regime. Roundtable Discussions in 1989. Constitutional Revolution. Studies] (ed. by András Bozóki). Budapest: Új Mandátum, 2000. pp. 792–825. On the opening of

- the border to East German refugees, see István Horváth – István Németh: *... és a falak leomlanak. Magyarország és a német egység, 1945–1990. Legenda és valóság* [And the Walls Come Tumbling Down. Hungary and German Unity, 1945–1990. Legends and Reality]. Budapest: Magvető, 1999. pp. 350–375; and András Oplátka: *Egy döntés története. Magyar határnyitás 1989. szeptember 11. nulla óra* [The History of a Decision. The Opening of Hungarian Borders at Zero Hundred Hours on 11 September 1989]. Budapest: Helikon, 2008.
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- 51 “Írányelvek a Külügyminisztérium és a külképviseletek munkájához 1956 II. és III. negyedévre. 1956. április 7.” [Directives for the Work of the Foreign Ministry and the Missions Abroad for the Second and Third Quarters of 1956, 7 April 1956]. MOL M-KS 276. f. 71. cs. 29. ó. e.
- 52 “A követi konferencia anyaga” [Material of the Conference of Ambassadors] (no date), MOL, KÜM TŰK XIX-J-1-j 4/fb 27.d. 4956/1956.
- 53 On the first Soviet intervention of 24 October 1956, see Tibor Hajdu: “Az 1956. október 24-i moszkvai értekezlet” [The Moscow Conference of 24 October 1956]. In: *Évkönyv I.* [Yearbook 1] (ed. by M. János Bak, Csaba Békés, András Hegedűs B., and György Litván). Budapest: 1956-os Intézet, 1992. pp. 149–156.
- 54 Mark Kramer (ed.): “The ‘Malin Notes’ on the Crises in Hungary and Poland, 1956”. *CWIHP Bulletin*, (Winter, 1996–Spring, 1997). p. 389.
- 55 Csaba Békés: *Az 1956-os magyar forradalom a világpolitikában* [The Hungarian Revolution of 1956 in World Politics]. Budapest: 1956-os Intézet, 2006. p. 85.
- 56 In view of the peculiar circumstances of the intervention, I do not place the anti-Soviet Afghan insurgency in this category.
- 57 For the English translation of the Malin notes, see Kramer (ed.): “The ‘Malin Notes’”.
- 58 Mark Kramer: “New Evidence on Soviet Decision-Making and the 1956 Polish and Hungarian Crises”. *CWIHP Bulletin*, No. 8–9. (Winter, 1996–Spring, 1997). pp. 358–385, Zubok, Vladislav – Constantine Pleshakov: *Inside the Kremlin’s Cold War. From Stalin to Khrushchev*. Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1996pp. 55–66.
- 59 Kramer (ed.): “The ‘Malin Notes’”. 392.
- 60 For more details, see Csaba Békés: „Magyar külpolitika a szovjet szövetségi rendszerben, 1968–1989” [Hungarian Foreign Policy in the Soviet Alliance System, 1968–1989]. In: *Magyar külpolitika a 20. században* [Hungarian Foreign Policy in the 20th Century] (ed. by Ferenc Gazdag – László J. Kiss). Budapest: Zrínyi, 2004. pp. 133–172.
- 61 “Jegyzőkönyv az MSZMP Politikai Bizottságának 1965. január 26-i. üléséről” [Minutes of the Meeting of the HSWP Political Committee of 26 January 1965]. MOL, M-KS-288. f. 5/237. ó. e.
- 62 From 1961, Albania took no part in the Warsaw Pact. In September 1968, it withdrew unilaterally from the alliance.
- 63 The main points of West Germany’s position were as follows: 1. Based on the Hallstein Doctrine, the FRG did not establish diplomatic relations with countries that recognised the GDR. 2. West Germany regarded itself as the sole legal representative of the German people. 3. West Berlin was treated as a part of the FRG. 4. Non-recognition of the eastern borders as designated by the Potsdam Conference of 1945.

- 64 On Hungarian–West German relations, see László J. Kiss: “Az első államközi megállapodástól a diplomáciai kapcsolatok felvételéig. A magyar–NSZK kapcsolatok egy évtizede (1963–1973)” [From the First International Agreements to the Establishment of Diplomatic Relations. A Decade of Hungarian–West German Relations, (1963–1973)]. *Külpolitika*, No. 4. (1978); and Csaba Békés “Magyarország, a szovjet blokk, a német kérdés és az európai biztonság, 1967–1975” [Hungary, the Soviet Bloc, the German Question and European Security, 1967–1975]. *Évkönyv, 2009* [Yearbook, 2009] (ed. by János Rainer M. – Germuska Pál). Budapest: 1956-os Intézet, 2009. pp. 315–352.
- 65 On Hungarian policy related to Romania, see György Földes: *Magyarország, Románia és a nemzeti kérdés, 1956–1989* [Hungary, Romania and the National Question, 1956–1989]. Budapest: Napvilág, 2007.
- 66 “Aczél György és Komócsin Zoltán feljegyzése egy ‘állítólagos NDK-beli’ könyvkiadó magyarországi tevékenységéről. 1969. február 4. [Memorandum of György Aczél and Zoltán Komócsin on the Activity in Hungary of an “Allegedly East German” Publishers. 4 February 1969]. MOL, M-KS-288. f. 5/483. ó. e.
- 67 See Csaba Békés: “Titkos válságkezeléstől a politikai koordinációig. Politikai egyeztetési mechanizmus a Varsói Szerződésben, 1954–1967” [Secret Crisis Management to Political Coordination. The Political Consensus Mechanism in the Warsaw Pact, 1954–1967]. In: *Múlt századi hétköznapiak. Tanulmányok a Kádár-rendszer kialakulásának időszakáról* [Weekdays in the Last Century. Studies on the Forming Period of the Kádár Regime] (ed. by János Rainer M.). Budapest: 1956-os Intézet, 2003. pp. 9–54.
- 68 For more details, see Békés: “Magyar külpolitika a szovjet szövetségi rendszerben”. pp. 162–164.
- 69 For more details on the international background to the political changes in Hungary, see Békés: „Vissza Európába”.
- 70 In 1989, even the opposition organisations and parties supported neutrality. See *Ibid.* pp. 814–816; and Romsics, Ignác: *Volt egyszer egy rendszerváltás* (Prohászka Imre fotóival) [There Once was a Change of Regime. With Photos by Imre Prohászka]. Budapest: Rubicon, 2003. pp. 145–149.
- 71 “Grósz Károly felszólalása az MSZMP PB 1988. július 12-i ülésén” [Speech of Károly Grósz at the Meeting of the HSWP CC of 12 July 1988], MOL M-KS-288. f. 5/1031. ó. e.
- 72 See, for instance, “Jelentés a Politikai Bizottságnak és a Minisztertanácsnak a Varsói Szerződés tagállamai Politikai Tanácskozó Testületének varsói ülésszakáról, 1988. július 18.” [Report to the Political Committee and the Council of Ministers on the Warsaw Meeting of the Political Advisory Body of the mMember States of the Warsaw Pact]. MOL M-KS-288 f. 11/4453. ó. e.
- 73 On the political transition in Hungary, see Melinda Kalmár. “Modellváltástól a rendszerváltásig: az MSZMP taktikájának metamorfózisa a demokratikus átmenetben” [From Model Change to Regime Change: The Metamorphosis of the Communist Party’s Tactics in the Democratic Transition]. In: *A rendszerváltás foratókönyve. Alkotmányos forradalom. Tanulmányok* [The Scenario of the Change of Regime. Roundtable Discussions in 1989. Constitutional Revolution. Studies] (ed. by András Bozóki). Budapest: Új Mandátum, 2000, pp. 283–307; András Bozóki: *Politikai pluralizmus Magyarországon, 1987–2002* [Political Pluralism in Hungary, 1987–2002]. Budapest: Századvég, 2003; and Zoltán Ripp: *Rendszerváltás Magyarországon, 1987–1990* [Change of Regime in Hungary, 1987–1990]. Budapest: Napvilág, 2006. On the various steps of Hungarian foreign policy – above all the opening of the Hungarian–Austrian border to East German refugees – see Békés: „Vissza Európába...” and Oplatka: *op. cit.* The most important documents of the political transition are published in Csaba Békés – Malcolm Byrne (eds.): *Rendszerváltozás Magyarországon 1989–1990. Dokumentumok* [Regime Change in Hungary, 1989–1990. Documents] (co-edited by Melinda Kalmár, Zoltán Ripp, and Miklós Vörös). Budapest: 1956-os Intézet, 1999; and in Lajos Gecsenyi – Gábor Máthé (eds.): *Sub clausula 1989. Dokumentumok a politikai rendszerváltozás történetéhez. A Grand Strategy*. [Sub-clause 1989. Documents on the History of the Change of Political Regime. The Grand Strategy]. Budapest: Magyar Közlöny Lap- és Könyvkiadó, 2009.

- 74 Békés: „Vissza Európába”.
- 75 For an excellent documentary volume on Soviet policy towards Eastern Europe see: Tom Blanton, Svetlana Savranskaya, and Vladimir Zubok (eds.): *Masterpieces of History. The Peaceful End of the Cold War in Europe, 1989*. Budapest: CEU Press, 2010.
- 76 A typical example of this: At the Bonn meeting of Helmut Kohl and Mikhail Gorbachev on 14 June 1989, the Soviet leader first stated that the Brezhnev Doctrine was no longer valid, but then indicated that in Eastern Europe *the realisation of the new model of socialism* was the Soviet Union's interest. See “The End of Cold War in Europe, 1989: New Thinking and New Evidence”. [A Compendium of Declassified Documents Prepared for a] Critical Oral History Conference organised by the National Security Archive, Washington D.C., Musgrove, Georgia, (USA) 1–3 May 1998.
- 77 “Jelentés a Politikai Bizottság tagjai részére Grósz Károlynak 1989. március 23–24-én a Szovjetunióban tett látogatásáról” [Report for Members of the Political Committee about the Visit of Károly Grósz to the Soviet Union on 23–24 March 1989]. In: Békés – Byrne (eds.): *Rendszerváltozás Magyarországon*, doc. no. 27.
- 78 This demonstrates that the doctrine that became associated with Brezhnev's name after the 1968 intervention in Czechoslovakia could just as well be called the Khrushchev Doctrine in view of the suppression of the 1956 Hungarian Revolution. In fact, the policy was simply a continuation of the Stalinist tradition. It is merely an irony of history that Stalin himself never had to apply the policy.
- 79 Lévesque, Jacques: *1989 – Egy birodalom végjátéka* [1989 – Endgame of an Empire]. Budapest: Aula, 2003. p. 86.

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