

Kádár and the United States in the 1960s**László BORHI**

Except for the process of Sovietization and the anti-Soviet uprisings, which were discussed from the viewpoint of Soviet-American conflict, Eastern Europe has not been the focal point of Cold War historiography. That ethnically and politically diverse entity appeared as a passive object of power politics, not an active participant in it.¹ This one-sided approach must have been due to a variety of factors. Firstly, it was hard to conceive Cold War Eastern Europe, or even parts of it, as more than instruments of Moscow's will. Nations of limited sovereignty could hardly be expected to pursue independent foreign policies. The possible exception was Ceausescu's Romania, which was widely regarded as a maverick state that occasionally frustrated Soviet imperial aspirations. Nonetheless few if any scholars, were inspired by Romania's alleged *Sonderweg*. In the public image the Soviet zone, in spite of all its impressive and colourful cultural heritage was seen as a grey bufferzone led by dull, if not spineless, party bosses who were little more than lackeys of the Kremlin. Second, most of the satellites were not even potentially powerful enough to exert any influence on power politics whatsoever. Their importance in the Cold War – and in scholarly writings that deal with it – was derived from the fact that they were caught in the middle of Soviet-American hostility. Finally, there are technical difficulties: until the archives of at least some of the former communist states were

opened, researchers had little reliable evidence on Eastern Europe's external relations.

A view of the Cold War "from the other side" may reveal important information that could contribute to our understanding of this still highly controversial conflict. In broad terms it may shed light on the relationship between ideology and pragmatism in the foreign policy of a communist, that is ideologically constructed, state. Understanding the foreign policy of a Soviet client could add to our knowledge of communist images of the Western world, its notion of peaceful coexistence and other significant aspects of international relations in the years leading to *détente*.

This paper will address the following issues. How did János Kádár, one of the important and most innovative figures of the contemporary communist movement, whose economic experimentations gave a ray of hope to theorists of convergence, think about basic issues of war and peace? Was a communist leadership necessarily in agreement about all issues of international relations or were there differences concerning the relationship between socialism and capitalism? How and to what extent did the Soviet Union influence the external politics of its client? How was US policy towards the Soviet bloc as envisioned in a multitude of policy papers actually put into practice? A crucial issue was the impact of psychological warfare, or, as President Truman aptly called it, the struggle for the hearts and minds of men. Was the United States as ineffective in shaping attitudes behind the Iron Curtain as it is generally and with some justification believed?

Foreign relations have a lot to do with discrepancy between foreign and self-images. America's self-image was, and still is, problematic. Critical domestic observers, with Americans among them, have depicted the US to be self-centred and imperialistic. Others, on the opposing side of the spectrum, like to see it as enlightened, democratic and even messianic to the point of being self-sacrificing.² But what was America's image on the other side of the Iron Curtain? These are some of the is-

sues that the archives of a former Soviet satellite allow us to address.

The concrete context within which these broader issues will be addressed is in itself a significant chapter in the Cold War: the normalization of US-Hungarian relations in the framework of important change in Washington's approach to the eventual rollback of communist influence in East-Central Europe. This bilateral relationship was no less significant from the perspective of the Kádár regime. These were the years of domestic consolidation, which were to some extent hampered by the regime's lack of proper international legitimacy. A legitimacy that could not be achieved without the active acquiescence of the United States, which in turn would be granted in return for a relaxation of domestic repression. The other thread the paper will follow is the fate of Cardinal Mindszenty, who found refuge at the US Legation in Budapest. The struggle over the Catholic primate evolved into a game of nerves between a nuclear superpower and a small Soviet client state.

1 The Context of Hungarian-US Relations

János Kádár's career was marked by a paradox. Kádár, like his predecessors, came to power after a failed revolution, instituted massive reprisals, resulting in many deaths.³ Yet, by the end of his life he emerged as a paternalistic figure with genuine popular support, perhaps even affection.⁴ Moreover he was a turncoat and was widely thought to have betrayed the revolution. If ever there was one, Kádár's was a puppet regime. He was carried to Budapest literally in a tank; his cabinet was put together behind closed doors in the Kremlin. Even though the Soviet leadership selected Kádár to administer their rebellious province, he had little reason to feel secure. Failure would definitely lead to his removal.⁵ Hungary's fallen dictator Mátyás Rákosi was not idle in his Moscow political asylum, but was bombarding the Kremlin with petitions urging his return. Rákosi felt that the cause of communism was betrayed regretted nothing and was poised to reintroduce an unrelenting Stalinist regime. Although the Soviet leadership announced that Moscow's rela-

tionship with the fraternal states would need to be placed on a new, more equal footing⁶, Khrushchev may have toyed with the idea of reintroducing him should Kádár fail. In 1957 Khrushchev paid a visit to Hungary, which was being held under Soviet military administration. Although he received a welcome befitting emperors, including triumphal arches at the locations of his visit, he did not dispel fears of Rákosi's return. Moreover, Kádár's position was imperilled within the Hungarian party by both diehard Stalinists and party liberals.

It was not until the first years of the sixties that he was able to consolidate his position. Eventually Kádár and Khrushchev developed cordial relations to the extent that when Khrushchev was removed in 1964, Kádár expressed his disapproval to Brezhnev. Of course, having owed his position to Khrushchev, he had personal reasons to be resentful. But his loyalty was not tied to a single leader. Kádár, like Rákosi or even Imre Nagy, owed almost unconditional allegiance to the international communist movement. And, just like his predecessors, Kádár did not doubt that the Soviet Union alone was the legitimate leader of that movement, which status gave the Soviets a licence not to be mindful of the country's sovereignty. Even Nagy thought that it was all right to work out political problems with Soviet assistance. Hence interests of the (imagined) community of fraternal (communist) peoples superseded the interests of their nation: in fact the two coincided. This does not mean that Kádár was unable to think in national terms, or even in national characteristics. On one occasion he professed to understand the Hungarian soul, which, according to him liked "fairs, pocket knives, goulash, but not the narrowing of norms".⁷

Kádár and others accepted the primacy of the Soviet Union in international affairs. As Prime Minister Münnich once put it, "by virtue of its position Hungary cannot take the initiative in international politics, which was the prerogative of the Soviet Union".⁸ Kádár explained that Hungarian-Soviet friendship was founded on the ideological community of the two countries. He added that Hungary's national interests coincided with those of the Soviet Union.⁹ He supported Moscow's lead-

ership in ideological matters and took Moscow's side in the Sino-Soviet dispute: "Hungarian communists have always believed that the touchstone of internationalism was always and still is today the comradely-principled relationship with the Soviet Union. There is no anti-Soviet communism and never will be".¹⁰ Kádár's loyalty was obviously dictated by geopolitical considerations as well – the proximity of the Soviet Union as opposed to China. The brutal efficiency with which the Soviets put down the revolution must have left a deep imprint on his consciousness, regardless of what he may have said about "friendly assistance" afterwards.

Nonetheless, there is little doubt that Kádár was honest about his ideological affinity with the Soviets. Moreover, he had little taste for Mao's belligerent anti-capitalist rhetoric. He enthusiastically espoused peaceful coexistence and championed the cause of world peace. This was clearly revealed in a letter to Brezhnev occasioned by Khrushchev's dismissal. The former leader was reproached for having taken members of his family to international gatherings. But, according to Kádár, "one is more credible" about his desire for world peace when he can show that he has grandchildren to worry about.¹¹ When the Soviet inspired Hungarian efforts to mediate in the Vietnam crisis broke down, Kádár was genuinely disappointed. Although he distributed blame for the failure equally between the Americans and the Chinese, he harshly condemned the latter: "Next time our Chinese friends should take their own grandfathers for fools and not us", he fumed.¹² Like his counterparts in Moscow, Kádár thought that peaceful coexistence did not rule out ideological struggle with the capitalists, even though he lacked the Soviet optimism about communism's prospects in the Western world. Ideological belligerence left a deep imprint on Hungary's relationship with the United States, which for a while was the country's second most important foreign relationship after the Soviet Union.

In the early 1950s US-Hungarian contact consisted of little more than the exchange of abuse. Party leader Rákosi was dogmatic even by Stalinist standards, which made his regime

highly unpalatable. Relations remained frigid even though in 1953 Beria and Molotov accused Rákosi of making overtures to Eisenhower. Washington saw the 1956 revolution as a low cost opportunity for rolling back Soviet power through self-liberation, even though the US leadership viewed Imre Nagy with a large measure of mistrust. Immediately before the revolution relations seemed to improve slightly, primarily because facing grave economic hardship the Hungarians were ready for minor political concessions in return for increased trade.

The Soviet crackdown put an end to these overtures at a time when America was placing its policy toward Eastern Europe on a new footing. Instead of undifferentiated economic, political and cultural embargo the building of closer ties was envisioned in the hope of mellowing the communist regimes, fostering conflict between them and the Soviets and countering communist indoctrination of east European societies. This policy would not be implemented unconditionally. Rather, it was predicated on the communist leaderships' willingness to liberalize their regimes, toning down anti-American measures and propaganda. As we shall see, the Kádár government was unwilling to take the steps required to normalize relations and thereby qualify for better treatment. Until 1967 Hungary remained one of the last three countries in the world which had only Legation level diplomatic contact with the US.

In the aftermath of the revolution the objective was to induce the Hungarian regime to relax and ultimately to halt political reprisals and repression and eventually to raise relations to a "bloc normal" level. Hungary, on the other hand, wanted the US to put an end to the regime's international non-recognition. Considering that the two political systems were worlds apart, these were no small aims to be achieved even in an international environment which was, albeit slowly and indecisively, changing towards a relaxation of tension and away from rigid bipolarism.

2 From Non-Recognition to Political Amnesty, 1957–1963

Kádár's foreign policy was dictated by two main motives: the iron logic of bipolar conflict and the conviction that international relations were about the historic struggle between progressive and reactionary forces. The confines of Hungarian external relations were set by Soviet imperial interests. Washington, ever since 1948, encouraged Titoist deviation within the Soviet bloc, namely the triumph of 'national' communism, which would take national interests sufficiently into account to oppose the Soviet Union. Hungary took a different path. Paradoxically Kádár wanted to placate mass resistance by relaxing central control of the economy, cultural affairs and the free movement of people and ideas. On the other hand, by declaring that he could not conceive of anti-Soviet communism he shattered any hope of Titoist dissent. Welcoming the first US Ambassador to Budapest, Martin J. Hillenbrand, Kádár insisted that the US "should not even dream about something like the aggression in Vietnam in this region."¹³

It was clear that the US would not be able to support its objectives in Eastern Europe with armed forces "and therefore could not be interested in provoking counter-revolutionary situations". Hence, according to a Hungarian appraisal, the United States was out "to improve its position in the people's democracies, to widen its mass appeal, to drive a wedge between the country in question and the Soviet Union, and as in the Polish case to extend economic assistance with the open intention of promoting the establishment and development of a more independent political line".¹⁴ If this was the case, one asks what drove the Kádár regime towards a state that questioned even its legitimacy? Firstly, it nilly-willy followed the example of bloc nations like Poland, which was building better relations with the US, chiefly economically. Soviet-American economic and cultural ties were expanding. In addition, the country was still struggling economically, making it imperative to expand commercial relations with the Western world, including the United States. Like the Soviet Union, the Hungarians were eager to receive the most favoured nation treatment. Most impor-

tantly, however, the US held the key to the regime's international legitimacy. In order to consolidate itself, the leadership needed to relax the ideological straitjacket on its foreign relations.

In a recent article Nigel Gould-Davis argued that the policy of ideological states sometimes reflects traditional motives like security concerns and pragmatic thinking. Under certain conditions pragmatism may even temporarily gain the upper hand, or at least complement the ideological elements in order for the triumph of ideology.¹⁵ Kádár, who took great interest in foreign policy, thought that concessions were needed for the victory of communism. Like Khrushchev or Malenkov he believed that the survival of human civilization was more important than the world-wide triumph of Marxism-Leninism. Reflecting on the diminishing role of ideology, he explained that "the Hungarian government sincerely accepted peaceful coexistence", which "perhaps may not have been possible twenty years ago, when the force of ideologies was stronger, but at present the greatest problem is to avoid a nuclear war among the great powers".¹⁶ He saw no contradiction between peaceful coexistence and ideological struggle: "peaceful coexistence and the struggle against imperialism exists simultaneously... [there will be a] third world war, or we have to tolerate each other, exist together".¹⁷ Anti-imperialist struggle though, meant more than just ideological competition: it was also an imperative to support "fraternal" states, like North Vietnam.

As far as the United States was concerned Kádár consciously used the German term *Realpolitik* (even though he claimed to dislike Germans). He sought to appear as a dedicated *communist* politician, who accepted the existing distribution of *power*. Unlike some of his comrades, Kádár was aware of his country's insignificance in world politics, using the expression "tiny flea" to describe its position. He once had to dine in the company of Khrushchev and Kennedy's ambassador-at-large, Averell Harriman. He felt distinctly uncomfortable in their company. "I would be satisfied if the great powers just left us to live", he confessed after the event.¹⁸ Kádár had fewer illusions about the

future of communism than the Soviets. While Khrushchev and Mikoyan confided to Eisenhower and Kennedy respectively that the communist revolution would at some stage triumph in the United States, Kádár, in a conversation meant for the ears of the US leadership, expressed his doubt. "I must honestly admit that we have no illusions about the triumph of socialism or communism in the United States. We, Hungarian communists, are realists".¹⁹ Perhaps we shall never know what this devoted communist thought about these matters at the bottom of his soul. Nevertheless, it is noteworthy that he was dwelling on the same ideas whether he was talking in the UN, to American diplomats or the Hungarian Politburo.

Hungarian-US relations were ultimately the function of the Moscow-Washington relationship. In 1958 the Hungarian Foreign Office opined that "the improvement of our relationship with the United States is subordinated to the development of the international situation and to the extent that the success of Soviet policy, to which as a matter of course we also have to contribute, will be able to make the Americans change their openly anti-socialist politics".²⁰ In 1959 the Political Committee made the normalization of bilateral relations contingent upon the outcome of the Eisenhower-Khrushchev summit²¹; later the Vietnam War impeded more amicable relations. In the words of the Foreign Ministry, "it is understandable that the United States' aggression in Vietnam and its international consequence influences Hungarian-US talks".²² Deputy Foreign Minister Béla Szilágyi admitted to Assistant Secretary of State John M. Leddy that bilateral relations ran into trouble primarily because of America's policy in Vietnam, Cuba and the Middle East and only on "a second level" because of bilateral issues.²³

Ultimately, US-Hungarian relations were dictated in Washington. Right after the revolution President Eisenhower explained to Tito that the US was concerned by the fact that the Soviet Union was extending its power into the heart of Europe, which posed a threat to world security. There could be no relaxation of tension in Europe until the Soviet Union returned to its own borders and released Eastern Europe.²⁴ Several factors

suggested a reevaluation of America's tactics for the 1960s. First of all, the Eisenhower administration had to deal with domestic, as well as foreign recriminations: to wit that US propaganda encouraged armed struggle against the Soviets in Hungary without any prospect of Western intervention. Moreover, it started to look as though the communist regimes were consolidating themselves and were there to stay. What even a few years before seemed inconceivable became a possibility: as time passed by, people would get used to communism. Economic conditions would improve, Soviet occupation would become less conspicuous, communist indoctrination would stick, particularly among the youth, which had no experience of its own in any other way of life. The rapprochement between the governments and their people made efforts to isolate the bloc satellites pointless.²⁵

The US leadership was not unanimous about the path to take. The Joint Chiefs of Staff wanted to stick to the old policy on the grounds that there was no chance for independence without fighting. Therefore passive resistance and guerrilla activity was to be supported, but only when the US was ready to stand up against the Russians. Dulles prevailed in the debate and the new NSC paper discarded force as a means to end Soviet occupation. Since the isolation of Iron Curtain states did not bring the desired results, the expansion of contacts would be the order of the day. The long term objective was still the restoration of independence and political pluralism, but only through slow change. East Europeans would be encouraged to achieve their goals only gradually. The US was ready to restore its traditional (otherwise never too close) links with Eastern Europe. This would be done on a country by country basis. Hungary would be a special case because its evolutionary process was to be encouraged without compromising the symbol it became in the combat against communism.

Economic relations were an important part of the debate about the new approach. Eisenhower had favoured the expansion of trade practically since he had entered office. He believed that trade would serve political aims and not financial profit.

Dulles disagreed with any general statement on economic relations and opposed the Commerce Department's proposal to encourage the US business community for trading with the satellites. Finally, consensus was reached in the formula that Washington would strive for "normal" economic contact with the satellites on an individual basis in order to increase American influence and to reduce dependence on the Soviets. The doctrine of liberation was officially discarded.²⁶

US-Hungarian relations reached a new low point after the revolution. The appointed minister, Edward Wailes did not present his letter of credentials and left. Under the pretext that US diplomats were spying, the Hungarian authorities demanded that the Legation reduce its personnel, which in itself might have provoked the cessation of diplomatic relations.²⁷ On the Hungarian side, Prime Minister Münnich broached the idea, but no one else was willing to go that far.²⁸ Nonetheless the government spokesman accused the Americans of espionage and subversive activities, and the Foreign Ministry protested against such alleged activities in a diplomatic note.²⁹ The frigid atmosphere resulted from the Soviet intervention and the events that transpired in its aftermath. The United States wanted to put an end to the trial, execution or incarceration of the participants, while for Hungary the main issues were the Hungarian question and the suspension of the Hungarian credentials in the UN, as well as Mindszenty's asylum at the US Legation.

Although the UN was powerless against the Soviet intervention and the initial mass reprisals, it was able to exert diplomatic pressure on the Kádár regime for the sake of political liberalization. In January 1957 the UN set up a committee of five to investigate the Hungarian question in the hope that the committee could force the Hungarian authorities to accept UN observers. Simultaneously the US broached the rejection of the Hungarian mandate in the world organization, which would have amounted to exclusion from the UN. In spite of accusations that he was using a double standard in making a distinction between Hungary and the Middle East, Eisenhower re-

jected the proposal and settled for the suspension of the mandate. Clearly, Hungary's ejection from the UN would have created a dangerous precedent. Nevertheless, the committee of five and the suspension of its mandate brought the Kádár regime – and indirectly the Soviet Union – into a precarious situation. It is hardly surprising that Hungary concentrated all its efforts to bring this situation to an end. But the price to pay was way too high, at least initially. For the sake of normalization Budapest was required to fulfil all UN resolutions, receive the world organization's observers, grant safe conduct for Mindszenty and appease the Hungarian people.³⁰

As the new government consolidated its hold, these conditions would change. In 1957 Kádár eliminated the Central Workers Council, the "right wing party opposition", that is Imre Nagy and his associates, were facing trial, Rákosi and Gerő were exiled in the Soviet Union, and, most importantly, Kádár enjoyed Khrushchev's backing.³¹ A leading State Department official advocated more flexible policies on the grounds that the internal situation in Hungary was consolidating, internationally the revolution was on its way to oblivion, and it was doubtful whether world public opinion could extract the regime's liberalization.³² But the President's speech on the first anniversary of 1956 signalled that a reappraisal of Washington's stance was not yet timely. In response the Hungarian Foreign Ministry even recommended the suspension of diplomatic relations, but Kádár rejected the proposal. Instead, a harshly worded *démarche* was drafted, but at Soviet advice it was not delivered.³³ In the meanwhile change for the better took place in the way diplomacy was practiced. Hungary's chargé in Washington, Tibor Zádor, took the initiative to recommend certain measures to placate the Americans, which would include the "revision" of the case of arrested US employees and the decision to downsize the US diplomatic mission in Budapest. Zádor offered his Legation's services for diplomatic overtures.³⁴ At his own initiative he negotiated with Senator Karl Malone on developing commercial contacts. Such individual moves would have been inconceivable prior to 1956. In January 1958 the For-

eign Ministry made a recommendation to the party leadership for normalizing US-Hungarian relations.

Soviet policies were conducive for such initiatives. Khrushchev launched a peace offensive, and although he would not discuss the status of Eastern Europe, he pulled out all Soviet troops from Romania and one division from Hungary as well. The Political Committee discussed a general plan for normalizing relations with the Western world and in April Foreign Minister Endre Sík talked about the prospect of an "initiative" concerning the US. As it turned out this would have been an offer for exchanging ministers – since 1956 both Legations were headed by *chargés* – but in May he told the US *chargé*, James Ackerson, that the initiative was taken off the agenda.³⁵ Ackerson speculated that Khrushchev stood behind the affair, but this is unlikely in view of the fact that the Hungarians had consulted with Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko about the proposal, who had expressed his consent.³⁶ The affair was of slight significance: the US had no intention of exchanging ministers whatsoever. But it does reveal that Americans may have misunderstood the power relations in Eastern Europe. In all likelihood Minister of the Interior Béla Biszku halted Sík's initiative, which was inimical to relaxing the restriction on movement that applied to US diplomats. Disagreement with the Soviets, it seems, did not necessarily mean more liberal policies, but occasionally less liberal ones. It was a mistake to think that Moscow alone stood behind the satellites' anti-Western stance.

Imre Nagy's execution suddenly revitalized waning international interest in Hungary. Soviet intervention in Hungary was once again in the limelight, meaning that the Hungarian question could be kept on the UN agenda. The State Department considered severing diplomatic relations.³⁷ This did not transpire, but the renewed campaign in the UN caused serious difficulties for the Hungarian regime. The Political Committee prepared a "counter offensive" for the XIIth session of the General Assembly. This consisted of publicly "revealing" that the US diplomatic mission in Budapest was a "spy centre", plus an announcement that with the latest executions legal proceedings

against the participants of 1956 had come to an end. During the debate Münnich suggested that the Americans "go home", but the *éminence grise* of Hungarian foreign policy, the otherwise conservative Dezső Nemes disapproved.³⁸ While the Hungarians were launching their diplomatic offensive, the US was busy arranging the rejection of the Hungarian credentials even though China's position in the UN³⁹ required a two third majority in the General Assembly.⁴⁰ In this critical situation Sík announced that legal proceedings had been terminated. In an immediate rebuttal the US representative, Cabot Lodge, announced that four more revolutionaries had been imprisoned a few days before. Lodge's unexpected statement foiled the incoherently constructed diplomatic offensive. The State Department pushed for the rejection of the Hungarian credentials to put psychological pressure on the Soviets⁴¹, but the President backed down.

Political repression was not the only obstacle in the way of normalization. Mindszenty's status eventually turned out to be a more complicated issue and would remain unresolved until 1971. The Cardinal was granted asylum at the US Legation on 4th November, while Soviet tanks were drawing a cordon around the Budapest Parliament. The same was denied to a member of the Nagy cabinet, the smallholder Béla Kovács, who had spent long years in Soviet captivity. The surprising thing is not that asylum was denied Kovács, but that it was extended to Mindszenty. Using a diplomatic building as a place of asylum was contrary to international law and US custom. Secretary of State Dean Rusk once admitted that the Cardinal's position was rather sensitive and was exceptional in the US practice of not granting asylum in its diplomatic missions.⁴² But this state of affairs was not altogether undesirable from the Hungarian perspective. Mindszenty was considered a criminal, yet trying him would have been politically suicidal in view of the public outrage a trial would have entailed. Therefore, for a while both parties remained bashfully silent about the affair.

The death of Pope Pius XII put an end to the policy of head in the sand. Without the State Department's consent, the US

embassy in Rome approached the Sacred College of Cardinals suggesting that Mindszenty be summoned for the conclave. Since the Vatican thought that there was a chance that the plan would work, the State Department instructed the Legation in Budapest to negotiate with officials on the College's behalf. In the meanwhile Washington decided that if the Hungarians released the Cardinal, the US would guarantee that he would not be allowed to assume a public or political role. Unfortunately, however, the guarantee of silence was not included in the note delivered to the Foreign Ministry in Budapest.⁴³ As it turned out, Mindszenty had no desire to leave his refuge and gave in only after lengthy persuasion. All in vain, since the reply was unequivocally negative. The Foreign Ministry asserted that Mindszenty's status was against international law and US regulations; his fate constituted a Hungarian domestic affair and "could not form a part of Hungarian-US talks." US diplomats drew the correct conclusion that the Hungarians were, for the time being satisfied with the *status quo*.⁴⁴

Soon Hungary's image in the US started to turn for the better. A CIA estimate dating from 1959 found a strong measure of consolidation and deemed that mass uprising could not be expected.⁴⁵ The Legation advocated economic and political concessions, including readiness to drop the Hungarian question in the UN.⁴⁶ Although the Hungarian chargé in Washington received no instructions for even exploratory talks with US officials, at his own initiative he spelled out the conditions for direct talks. The essence of these was that Hungary would not even consider any recommendation or demand that was directed at implementing change in its social order, or was "designed to offer unilateral advantages to the country's opponents".⁴⁷ His negotiating partner, Assistant Secretary of State Livingston Merchant hinted that Washington was less interested in domestic issues than in the satellites' relationship with Moscow. He used Yugoslavia as an example, which was almost an ally: not because of its political structure, but because of its independent foreign policy.

But, in the case of Hungary, there was no sign of even a minor rift with Moscow. Official analyses presented the international arena though as a struggle between progressive and reactionary forces, where the task was to defy "American imperialism". The Foreign Relations Department of the party's Central Committee nevertheless proposed bold measures for improvement: in order to "liquidate" the Hungarian question it recommended the solution of the Mindszenty question, but without granting any concessions "of principle", or surrendering "the prestige and sovereignty of the Hungarian People's Republic". Hungary's initiative would be contingent upon the outcome of the Eisenhower-Khrushchev meeting scheduled for May 1960. Betraying considerable misperception as to their possibilities in the international arena, the Hungarian leadership hoped that in return for Mindszenty the Americans would consent to the removal of the Hungarian question. But even their Mindszenty formula was rigid: as a "compromise" solution they offered that the Archbishop should be held under house arrest somewhere in Hungary; whether he would be allowed to leave the country was up to the "international situation". In the latter case silence would have to be imposed on him.

If the Hungarian question could be done away with in return for Mindszenty, as the Kádár regime hoped, it would have been a low price to be paid indeed. In spite of all the rhetoric, Mindszenty's position could hardly have been more favourable. It provided opportunities for verbal attacks on the US; a new ecclesiastical structure was established and, most of all, it spared the authorities from having to arrest him. Any kind of change in his status would be undesirable, since if he were "seized by the authorities, it would occasion renewed propaganda about his 'martyrdom'." This meant that if released, Mindszenty could become just as uncomfortable for Hungary as he was for the Americans while he was sitting in the Legation. Hence the conclusion that if his silence could be guaranteed, thus ruling out any "cold war attack" on Hungary from the part of the Cardinal, it would be worthwhile showing flexibility and allowing him to leave the country. The trick was not

to show what a relief it would be to get rid of him; instead this option was to be presented “in an offensive manner” to make it seem like a great concession. To make the deal work the cooperation of the Vatican and of Mindszenty himself would be needed. Budapest insisted on depriving Mindszenty of his ecclesiastical function as the Archbishop of Esztergom (which meant that he was the Primate of Hungary).⁴⁸ The Hungarians waited for the American side to make the first move so as not to give the impression that they were eager for a deal: an own initiative was envisioned only in case the great power summit was a success. Since the summit broke down because of the U 2 affair, the whole matter was abandoned.⁴⁹ But the episode revealed that the Kádár regime was capable of showing a measure of imagination in its diplomatic manoeuvring.

In April 1961 Foreign Minister Sík thought the time had come for a significant initiative. In return for jump-starting US-Hungarian relations, he was ready to relax the travelling restrictions concerning US diplomats.⁵⁰ Since this would have been a bold step – similar restrictions existed for US diplomats in the Soviet Union – Sík had to consult with Soviet Ambassador Ustinov. Ustinov informed the Foreign Minister, János Péter, that the USSR agreed with the proposed measure. This was not enough: Sík needed the consent of the staunchly conservative Minister of the Interior, since the movement of foreigners fell under his jurisdiction. Foreign policy was sometimes constrained by domestic power relations.

Finally, in January 1962 the State Department spelled out the conditions for normalization of bilateral relations. The US was in a position to stop UN actions against the Kádár regime and thereby open the door for bilateral talks in case domestic changes of such magnitude occurred in Hungary that would convince the American public and legislation that the concession was justified. Aside from the fact that Hungary did not envision more far-reaching concessions than letting Mindszenty out of the country, the other problem was that the US conditions could be conceived as interference in domestic affairs. Even though many aspects of the Soviet Union’s presence con-

stituted a violation of Hungarian sovereignty, vis-à-vis the West Hungary wanted to appear as a sovereign state, which guarded itself from imperialist encroachments.⁵¹

The conciliatory measure the State Department expected was a statement to the effect that no one was sitting in prison in connection with 1956 anymore. This would be the only moral foundation that could protect the US government in the face of domestic criticism.⁵² Considering that the government had already granted partial amnesty to political prisoners this was not an impossible condition. But the regime clearly thought that it owed the cause of progress to resist American imperialism. In the UN Deputy Foreign Minister Péter Mód accused the Americans of tying the normalization of bilateral relations to a political amnesty. The US claimed that the Hungarian chargé had misunderstood what was said to him: amnesty was not a precondition, since that would constitute interference in Hungary's internal affairs.

The counsellor of the Legation in Budapest came up with a face-saving formula, claiming "he needed some kind of a theatrical measure, but he does not dare pronounce the word amnesty", because it "could be conceived as interference in Hungary's domestic affairs". Zádor's successor in Washington, János Radványi who had Kádár's personal instruction to normalize bilateral relations⁵³, found the statement acceptable and informed the State Department that "the Hungarian Government would study every serious, well-founded proposal".⁵⁴ However, the Foreign Ministry rejected the formula.⁵⁵ Radványi lost his self-confidence, and thought it better to adopt a hard-line stance vis-à-vis the Americans, while asking his Foreign Minister to provide "professional guidance" to interpret his communications with the Americans. Under Secretary of State George McGhee reaffirmed that Hungary had to make an unambiguous gesture to show that the 1956 events were permanently closed. He added that this was not a condition, but a "suggestion" only. When he reported the conversation to Budapest, Radványi, in order to make sure that there would be no misunderstanding, added the English original to the translation

of the key word, 'suggestion'. Perhaps to avoid getting rebuked once more, the chargé changed his previous stance and told McGhee that the American proposal was not new either in form or content and "still constitutes interference in our domestic affairs". In his report to the Foreign Ministry he accused the Americans of being "captives of their own propaganda": they "immerse their own public opinion with the poison of hatred" and therefore not even out of self-interest "are they able to break their own circle". Nevertheless he informed Péter that the government would not challenge Congress or public opinion because of the Hungarian question. He thought that "within the subversive framework of the Kennedy administration" the Americans strove for normalization.⁵⁶ Who can tell whether Radványi offered his sincere appraisal of American attitudes or was he only satisfying the expectations of his superiors?

Be that as it may, Radványi recognized that Hungary had few options. His superiors did not reject the renewed US offer off-hand, but decided to wait.⁵⁷ Taking the initiative, the Americans approached the representative of the Hungarian news agency in Washington, Dénes Polgár, obviously because they thought that Polgár could communicate directly with the party leadership. The message they wanted to get through was for the Hungarians to understand that the amnesty was needed to pacify domestic opinion. If the Government in Budapest declared amnesty for the people sentenced for their role in 1956 on their "own initiative", the Hungarian question would be dropped, negotiations could be started to "mutual satisfaction" on expanding commercial and cultural relations and the Mindszenty issue. As if reading the minds of the Politburo, a word of warning was added: normalization could begin only if the Americans had the question removed; but not if it was allowed to "sleep" otherwise. The ball was clearly in Hungary's court.⁵⁸

But Budapest still hoped that Mindszenty would suffice for the deal, although the Cardinal himself refused to hear about leaving his refuge even in the (unlikely) case that he were offered the possibility of resuming his ecclesiastical function. The papal nuncio in Washington agreed and was assured that

Mindszenty could stay.⁵⁹ The Pope himself thought that, as the spiritual leader of the Hungarian people, it was undesirable for Mindszenty to leave, which would have a dismal effect on the people.⁶⁰ Nevertheless, the Vatican was not inimical to summoning him and in 1962 jointly with the Americans raised the possibility of his attendance of the Synod, after which he would be shunted to one side.⁶¹ Budapest drew the conclusion that it was winning the long-standing diplomatic game. The Politburo asserted that the Americans wanted to get rid of their guest, and therefore their demands were placed lower and lower. Therefore a diplomatic 'package' was assembled, which contained a new element, the return of the crown jewels⁶² in return for Mindszenty's departure to the Vatican, where his silence would have to be guaranteed. They thought they were doing a favour, since "the US could rid itself of both the Hungarian question and Mindszenty". At the same time the removal of the Hungarian question had "domestic political significance", could have a "democratizing effect on the hostile émigré elements" and was also significant from "the perspective of the Soviet government". In return for the Hungarian question the Government was ready to close 1956 within "a reasonable time".⁶³ Of course there was an element of truth in the argument. It was getting harder and harder to keep Hungary on the UN agenda and Mindszenty's presence was problematic.

Radványi was instructed to make the necessary diplomatic moves, which came about after consultation with the Soviet Ambassador in Washington, Anatoly Dobrynin. Dobrynin agreed with the "principle and execution" as well.⁶⁴ Head of State Department Office of European Affairs Harold Vedeler told Radványi that if the Hungarian government carried out the amnesty publicly, as a first step the US would see to it that the Hungarian question was removed. All other matters – cultural exchanges, economic relations and the exchange of ministers would be discussed subsequently. The crown jewels were not even mentioned.⁶⁵ At this point Assistant Secretary of State Richard Davis delivered a written document – but emphatically not a note – on the US condition. This document opened a new

chapter in Hungarian-US relations. In order to avoid the semblance of interference in domestic affairs, the wording was carefully chosen. The United States expressed its hope that at its own initiative Hungary would release the persons still in prison because of their participation in the events of 1956 and would make this fact public. In this case Washington would see to it that Sir Leslie Munro's mission would be terminated, no anti-Hungarian resolutions would be passed and the mandate would be accepted. In addition the US would make a declaration calling attention to changing conditions in Hungary and would reaffirm that further discussion of the Hungarian question would be counterproductive. Then talks could start on lifting restrictions on the travel of official personnel, US assets in Hungary, sending of ministers, cultural exchanges, family unification, and the fate of József Mindszenty. Davis presented the document to Radványi for his "personal use" as the "text of his unofficial declaration".⁶⁶ In spite of its high confidentiality, at his Government's instruction, the chargé showed the document to Dobrynin, who as his "personal opinion" declared that if Hungary had "decided to make certain domestic political steps anyway, we [the Soviet Union] can only agree".⁶⁷ In spite of the ambassador's statement Radványi still considered that the amnesty was tantamount to "surrendering our principles".⁶⁸

The Cuban missile crisis interrupted the talks, but in November Khrushchev assured Kádár that the conditions were not unacceptable.⁶⁹ At the VIIIth Congress of the HSWP Kádár announced that 95% of those sentenced for "counter-revolutionary crimes" had been released, Deputy Foreign Minister Mód publicly hinted that his Government was considering a general amnesty, which was finally announced in April 1963. In May the credentials were accepted and at the end of the year the Hungarian question was taken off the UN agenda.

American diplomacy thus played a significant role in the general amnesty, which was an important landmark in the liberalization of the Kádár regime. As a memorandum worded in the Foreign Ministry later put it: "the Hungarian Government, *in order to eliminate the 'Hungarian question' from the UN agenda,*

granted amnesty to those still in prison... the Hungarian question... was a serious burden to Hungary and the rest of the socialist world"⁷⁰ (emphasis added). This was a considerable success for US diplomacy in a part of the world where success had evaded it ever since the end of the war. It is another matter that the general amnesty was not fully implemented. The Hungarian question was difficult to keep in the focus of world attention such a long time after the events, and therefore the US got a lot in return for relatively little. The episode showed that diplomatic pressure behind the Iron Curtain could work, since by now countries like Hungary actually had a stake in expanding contacts with the West and enjoyed Soviet support in this quest.

It was not until the end of 1963 that Deputy Foreign Minister Mód approached his counterpart, Averell Harriman, in order to start the talks envisioned in the Davis memorandum. Harriman informed Mód that the crucial issue was Mindszenty. He explained that the key to the good Polish-American relationship was Warsaw's political independence and quoted Khrushchev to the effect that "the children have grown up, they are harder to control".⁷¹ The notion that the satellite regimes were beginning to assume a nationalistic creed in their foreign, but mainly in their domestic politics was gaining currency in Washington. Such developments pointed towards the realization of the long standing hope for anti-Soviet dissent in Eastern Europe. A new and less inflexible relationship was taking shape between Moscow and the satellites. This was partly due to changes in Soviet politics, but more importantly to the fact that the communist leaderships recognized that they had more room to consider their own national interests.⁷²

Such appraisals failed to take into account the individual traits of local administrations. As far as the Hungarian one was concerned, it was not 'looking for an opportunity' to distance itself from Moscow. Kádár's pro-Soviet stance stemmed from a variety of factors, including personal conviction. In return he exploited cordial relations with Moscow for domestic liberalization. On the other hand, the US wanted to see spectacular acts of defiance. It was enough to demonstrate a certain distance

from Moscow to curry favour, even if the domestic system was dictatorial. A case in point was Ceausescu's Romania. In spite of the oppressive traits of his rule Ceausescu was hosted by two presidents. Moreover, Romania received MFN status, which the domestically far more liberal but, in terms of foreign policy, more pro-Soviet Hungary was never able to get. Kádár's reforms were nevertheless appreciated and within the region the US accorded special attention to Hungary.

Therefore, when in early 1964 Hungary recommended bilateral talks on "a mutually acceptable basis" to resolve outstanding issues,⁷³ the response was positive. The National Security Advisor believed that long-term, fundamental advantage could be derived from increasing American presence in Budapest, since Hungary had gone further than any other satellite in destalinization and the process was continuing.⁷⁴ Talks on political, economic and cultural affairs got under way in Budapest in May 1964, but there was no breakthrough. In order to end the impasse Secretary of State Dean Rusk invited his Hungarian colleague for a private conversation. The meeting was in itself of great significance as the highest level US-Hungarian personal contact since 1946. Rusk discussed a whole range of international issues and treated Péter as an equal partner throughout the conversation. Péter wanted to speed up the negotiations with an exchange of ministers. He was authorized to tell Rusk that Mindszenty could leave the country in return for guarantees for his silence. Péter tied the settlement of US financial claims – for example indemnification for nationalized American property – to the relaxation of the trade embargo, but the US wanted to go about it in a reverse order. Rusk held out the prospect of granting MFN status to Hungary. The Secretary recommended a gradual approach: the solution of easy issues first, leaving the complex ones for later.⁷⁵ Mutual goodwill was clearly not enough: when it came to the technical details the difficulties were hard to overcome.

One of these was the Mindszenty affair. In an unofficial parley with Kádár, Harriman revealed that this problem was the greatest obstacle to the normalization of bilateral relations. Har-

riman turned theatrically to Khrushchev, who was also present, asking him to "use his influence so that US-Hungarian relations should be normalized".⁷⁶ Even though these conditions were acceptable to the US, the stumbling blocks were the Vatican and the Cardinal himself. The Vatican wanted to retain Mindszenty's position as head of the Catholic Church even after his departure and admitted that it would be hard to keep him for making political statements.⁷⁷ Mindszenty refused to leave, claiming that this would be negligence as far as his ecclesiastical duties and his loyal priests were concerned.⁷⁸ For propaganda reasons the Kádár regime insisted that Mindszenty should appeal to the Presidential Council for clemency, which would be published in the press. Moreover they wanted him divested of his function as Archbishop of Esztergom together with guarantees of silence.⁷⁹

Even though political relations were by and large frozen, on another level US infiltration was more successful. For the first time ever, in 1965, the United States participated at the Budapest International Fair, making it possible to introduce the Hungarian public to the feats of American technology and consumerism, a task that formed an important part of the design to transform the communist regimes with peaceful, evolutionary means. The dangers of this policy were not lost to the party leadership. The Political Committee devoted several sessions to the theme of "imperialist loosening propaganda". Deputy Prime Minister Jenő Fock complained that the claim, according to which "imperialist propaganda in Hungary is unable to rock the masses' confidence in the Socialist system and to reduce the attraction of Socialist ideas", "is not true", "it is capable of reducing it and is reducing it".⁸⁰ Attributing socialism's lack of mass appeal to external subversion, the party's leading organ found that the US (and the FRG) were "striving to set the socialist states against the Soviet Union and each other to disorganize the socialist system from inside, to stir mistrust, dissatisfaction towards the society's leading party, the government, and ultimately against the social order, and hence to prepare the restoration of capitalism in the socialist states". Attempts to "loosen

up" the socialist states "manifested themselves most of all in their differentiated treatment". Cultural and scientific contacts were used so that "under the pretext of peaceful coexistence they opened the door to bourgeois ideology and its products". Hence the Politburo's conclusion was in stark contrast with the State Department's gloomy prediction that the youth, in particular, would get accustomed to and accept communism. Washington officials would have read the following lines with satisfaction: "the loosening propaganda plays a role in that within society as a whole, but particularly among the intelligentsia and the youth, love of the West, nationalism increased, which is coupled with the underestimation of the results of socialism".⁸¹

Since these attitudes were antithetical to basic communist doctrines – socialism as the highest form of social organization, and internationalism – the foundations of the system were at stake. Little could be done. There was no way back to the isolationism of the Rákosi years. The relative openness of the consolidated Kádár regime left the door ajar to Western influence. Doubtlessly, the door would open wider and wider. The only option was to compete with Western propaganda in providing access to *Western* culture from domestic sources. From the American perspective it obviously did not matter whether the source was RFE [Radio Free Europe] or Hungarian State Radio. State propaganda would have to be tailored to satisfy demand. In the words of Deputy Premier Kállai "the youth does not ask or need a full explanation of Marxism but the satisfaction of their needs and in the meanwhile adequate propaganda" would be provided under its guise. One had to point out the "swinishness" of imperialism, but that was not enough. National feelings and "national self-esteem would have to be taken into consideration, popular American musical programs such as *Teenager Party* would have to be counterbalanced by domestic programming". Perhaps it was already too late to turn the tide. Kállai complained: if *Ifjúsági Magazin* (Youth Magazine) "was a communist journal in spirit, I do not know what communism means. It is but a propaganda forum for Western life style

without critique... There is not a single socialist hero in it, but the Beatles".⁸²

Official relations were hindered by the Vietnam War, as a result of which Hungary suspended the ongoing bilateral talks.⁸³ The US Legation reported that the Hungarians considered Vietnam as the most important element of bilateral relations and their harsh propaganda campaign was hardly reconcilable with their suggestions for normalization. Just like the Soviets, Hungary was suffering from its own Vietnam syndrome. Throughout 1965 and 1966 Hungarian diplomacy was busy arranging for a political solution. Kádár was very unhappy with China's influence, which the Hungarians believed was forcing the Vietnamese to wage a hopeless war, as well as with Vietnam's unhelpful attitude: holding back information while demanding unconditional support. As a culmination of these efforts, on October 6 1966 Péter informed Rusk that the Vietnamese were "in a position to negotiate", were "not interested in occupying South Vietnam" and expressed his "conviction that Hanoi is ready to respect the 17th parallel". Rusk deemed this "new and very important information", but North Vietnam distanced itself from Péter's statements, after the Foreign Minister made them public at a press conference.⁸⁴

Moderate members of the leadership realized that US economic support was needed, but this would not be forthcoming unless Hungary satisfied outstanding American claims. Nonetheless, considerations of socialist solidarity and the cause of (communism) overrode this consideration. Kádár could not afford to surrender his regime's ideological legitimacy for pragmatic reasons. As opposed to some, he did not want a complete breakdown either. He argued for the continuation of talks with simultaneous "political attacks". When the Foreign Ministry proposed that government officials should not visit the American stand at the Budapest Fair and that the US be condemned for its aggression in the opening speech, he resisted. He thought it unwise to discriminate against the American exhibitors or to use such a non-political forum for anti-American propaganda. Unlike some of his colleagues, he be-

lieved that such measures would be counterproductive. This realization sprang from his purported understanding of his people. "For years", he argued, "I have struggled to eliminate this strongly political matter, because this is not good from our perspective. The Hungarian soul likes fairs, pocket-knives and goulash, it does not like smaller norms".

Kádár rejected the proposal that the recipients of Ford Foundation grants cancel their invitations, and the use of the composer Zoltán Kodály's US visit for political protests. He affirmed that the normalization of US-Hungarian relations was possible in spite of Vietnam – after, of course, consultation with Moscow.⁸⁵ Kádár was pragmatic to the point where his ideological convictions were not compromised. In this spirit, in April 1966, the Hungarians accepted an American offer to renew talks. Emphasis would now be on financial and economic affairs. Cultural relations would be kept "on level", because they were claimed to serve the American interest.⁸⁶ In October 1966 Péter discussed normalization with Rusk and urged the exchange of ministers irrespective of the Mindszenty question. As a turning point in the Hungarian attitude he asked for US mediation between Hungary and the Vatican. Rusk made it clear that Mindszenty was an obstacle, but agreed that "we should get rid of this old bone stuck in our throats".⁸⁷

Mindszenty's presence was getting increasingly burdensome. Not only because the stubborn old man insisted on sharing his political views with his hosts, but also because in 1965 his tuberculosis broke out again. Small wonder that the chargé, Elim O'Shaughnessy, exclaimed that the solution was hopeless, or should they "poison him?"⁸⁸ Since Mindszenty refused to leave, and the Vatican refused to guarantee his silence in any case, the Americans expected Hungary to come up with a proposal since they could not just "throw him out".⁸⁹ The Vatican found that the Cardinal was obstinate and could not "see a chance for solution". This at the same time meant that there was no point in maintaining the US-Hungarian diplomatic impasse. On 11 November 1966 Assistant Secretary of State John Leddy informed the Hungarian chargé that the US was ready to raise

its representation to embassy level on a mutual basis. Mindszenty almost foiled it by threatening to walk out of the Legation if the US Ambassador set foot in Hungary. It took the Vatican's envoy, Cardinal Casaroli's diplomatic skills, to talk him out of it.

Péter told the first American ambassador in Budapest, Martin J. Hillenbrand, that bilateral talks could be pursued concerning the "international situation" only.⁹⁰ He ruled out the possibility of rapid development even though the experienced ambassador, who according to Hungarian information was considered to be friendly towards the Soviets in Washington circles, expressed his desire to make progress in bilateral relations. Kádár's welcoming thoughts expressed, that there was no turning back either. In what can be conceived as his political credo he told the ambassador that the majority of people supported improved relations with the Americans and the leadership had to take this sentiment into account. Hungary fully supported peaceful coexistence, the prerequisite of which was the *mutual* recognition of each other's political system.⁹¹ If all world leaders had been this explicit about the conditions of peaceful coexistence, the world would have been a safer place to live in.

3 Conclusion

This decade of US-Hungarian relations was as turbulent as world politics in general. At first glance little was achieved. Mindszenty was still sitting in his self-chosen exile. Mutual financial claims were unsettled, bilateral trade was negligible, cultural relations lagged behind the rest of Eastern Europe. But these raw facts do not tell the whole story. In 1957 there was no government in Europe with a worse image in the US than Kádár's. By the mid-60s, it was gaining a measure of appreciation as a result of liberalization. What was misunderstood in Washington was that liberalization did not necessarily mean a rejection of Soviet policies. In Hungary it was the other way round. Kádár's allegiance to Moscow permitted far-reaching economic reform and more tolerance for cultural diversity than

elsewhere in Eastern Europe. Paraphrasing Marx, reform helped dig the regime's own grave.

Washington's new approach to psychological warfare, *Teenager Party* versus Marx's *Das Kapital*, was causing serious concern by winning the hearts of the younger generation. This was made possible, in part, by the fact that Hungary in late 1963 stopped jamming foreign broadcasts. Washington scored one of its few diplomatic successes behind the Iron Curtain by extracting a general amnesty for the participants of the revolution. Initially they offered Mindszenty in return for the settlement of Hungary's status in the UN. But the US persevered in demanding amnesty noticing that their opponents had a serious stake in normalization.

Kádár's Hungary rejected military confrontation with the West for any conceivable purpose and, in tune with Soviet policy helped to find a political solution to the crisis in Vietnam, but at the same time provided economic assistance to Hanoi, reflecting Kádár's ambiguous stance towards the Western world. Communist functionaries regarded the US as an imperialist power, which opposed and oppressed the progressive forces of the world. On this point, to quote Vojtech Mastny, there was no double book-keeping. The same harsh terms were used behind the padded doors of Politburo meetings as in public rallies or the press. Few comrades doubted its economic and technological power. But only some realized its immense cultural potential. In a Politburo debate on cultural contacts a member reminded his comrades that the Ford Foundation had more money than the annual Hungarian GDP.

Soviet guidance was sought in important matters, but their advice was not always heeded. In certain cases the Soviets were more flexible than the Hungarians.⁹² There were differences of opinion within the party leadership, as well as between the dogmatic Interior and the Foreign Ministries. The latter took an active part in the formulation and execution of foreign policy. On at least one occasion Kádár overruled it in favour of less rigid policies. The diplomatic mission in Washington occasionally took the initiative. By the mid-60s Kádár sided with the

reformers. Unlike some colleagues he recognized that, even with Soviet backing, his country was not a player in world affairs and realized America's importance in gaining international legitimacy. Kádár could be pragmatic to the point where pragmatism did not compromise his ideological conviction. He did not allow the conflict in Vietnam to completely halt the process of normalization, yet there was no question as to where he stood. He was a self-confessed *Realpolitiker*, which served the preservation of *socialism* at home. Kádár never noticed that even a small measure of it would eventually undermine the regime he did so much to build.

NOTES

- ¹ One of the rare exceptions is Radvanyi, Janos, *Hungary and the Superpowers – The 1956 Revolution and Realpolitik*. Stanford, Hoover University Press, 1972. The volume is an insider's appraisal of Hungarian foreign policy in the first Kádár years. The only treatment of the US and Eastern Europe *throughout* the Cold War is Kovrig, Bennett, *The Myth of Liberation – The United States and Eastern Europe*. New York University Press 1991.
- ² For the former, obvious examples are the writings of Cold War revisionists. For the latter, see Gaddis, John L., *We Now Know – Rethinking Cold War History*. Oxford, Clarendon Press 1997.
- ³ We now know that Kádár took an active role in the trial and consequent execution of Imre Nagy.
- ⁴ In this sense Kádár's political career bore striking resemblance to Francis Joseph's and Miklós Horthy's, both of whom were branded as reactionary oppressors of progressive forces and the people. This may explain his success in the deeper context of Hungarian political culture.
- ⁵ In 1953 for example the Soviet leadership dismissed Rákosi, whose policies were not satisfactory.
- ⁶ As expressed in the CPSU declaration of 30 October 1956.
- ⁷ Az MSZMP KB Politikai Bizottsága ülésének jegyzőkönyve, 11 May 1965. Magyar Országos Levéltár (Hungarian National Archives, hereafter cited as MOL) M-KS 288. f. 5. cs. 365. ő. e.
- ⁸ Cited by Vida, István, "Az MSZMP Politikai Bizottságának 1958. január 15-i határozata a Külügyminisztérium munkájáról". In Fischer, Ferenc et. al. eds., *Magyarország a (nagy)hatalmak erőterében*. Pécs, University Press 2000, 631.
- ⁹ Cited by Felkay, Andrew, *Hungary and the USSR, 1956-1968. Kadar's Political Leadership*. New York, Greenwood Press 1989, 184.
- ¹⁰ Cited by Földes, György, "Kötélhúzás felsőfokon. Kádár és Brezsnyev". In Rácz, Árpád ed., *Ki volt Kádár? Harag és elfogultság nélkül a Kádár életútról*. Budapest, Rubin-Aquila könyvek 2001, 106. On the Sino-Soviet conflict Kádár wrote to Brezhnev in 1964: "We think that in all significant aspects of the debate – together with the CPSU and the other fraternal parties – we are right". Published in Békés, Csaba, "Magyar-szovjet csúcstalálkozók, 1957-1964". In Hegedűs, B. András et. al. eds. *Évkönyv 1998*. Budapest, 1956-os Intézet 1998, 165.
- ¹¹ At a Soviet-Hungarian meeting in Moscow in 1964 Kádár told Brezhnev: "Simple folk living in capitalist countries show more sympathy to politicians who show their human side. A politician talking about peace is

- more credible if people know he has children, grandchildren". The document is published in Békés, Csaba, *Magyar-szovjet csúcstalálkozók*, 171.
- ¹² In a message to Budapest Hanoi threatened with "serious consequences" should the Hungarian effort to mediate in the Vietnam conflict continue. Kádár was offended. This sentence, he declared, "contains a certain threat". "I myself would call this point the Peking point... I would like to exert on the Vietnamese as well something to take their matters more seriously". Hungary thought that China stood behind Hanoi's rejection of a political settlement. Az MSZMP KB Politikai Bizottsága ülésének jegyzőkönyve, 16 January 1966. MOL M-KS, 288. f. 5. cs. 385/1966. ő. e.
- ¹³ Telegram from the Embassy in Hungary to the State Department, 3 October 1967. *Foreign Relations of the United States* (hereafter cited as FRUS), 1964-1968, Vol. XXVII, 313-314.
- ¹⁴ A washingtoni magyar követség elemzése a magyar-amerikai viszonyról, 1959, MOL Külügyminisztérium [Ministry of Foreign Affairs hereafter cited as KüM], XIX-J-1-j, USA 5/a, 0020461, 9. d.
- ¹⁵ Davis, Nigel-Gould, "Rethinking the Role of Ideology in International Politics during the Cold War". *Journal of Cold War Studies* 1/1 Winter 1999, 90-109.
- ¹⁶ Telegram from the Embassy in Hungary to the Department of State, Conversation with Kádár, Introductory Call (Hillenbrand), 30 November 1967, FRUS 1964-1968, Vol. XVII, 318-320; Emlékeztető Kádár János, az MSZMP KB első titkára és Martin J. Hillenbrand amerikai nagykövet megbeszéléséről, MOL, KüM, XIX-J-1-ny-114/PJ-1967, 003309/1967.
- ¹⁷ Az MSZMP KB Politikai Bizottsága ülésének jegyzőkönyve, 11 May 1965, MOL, M-KS, 288. f., 5. cs., 365. ő. e.
- ¹⁸ Kádár János előadói beszéde az MSZMP KB ülésén, 2 August 1962, MOL, M-KS, 288. f. 4., cs. 63. ő. e.
- ¹⁹ Instruction from the Department of State to the Legation in Hungary, 21 October 1960, *FRUS* 1958-1960, Vol. X. p 126-130. Mikoyan's remark is cited in Dobrynin, Anatoly, *In Confidence – Moscow's Ambassador to America's Six Cold War Presidents (1962-1986)*. New York, Times Books 1995, 92.
- ²⁰ Az USA-val való kapcsolatok normalizálása, 30 October 1958, MOL, KüM, XIX-J-1-j, USA, 4/b, i. k. n., 11. d.
- ²¹ Az MSZMP KB Politikai Bizottsága ülésének jegyzőkönyve, 1 March 1960. MOL, M-KS, 288. f., 5. cs., 172. ő. e.
- ²² A Külügyminisztérium V. Osztályának összefoglaló feljegyzése a magyar-amerikai viszonyról, MOL, KüM, XIX-J-1-j, USA IV-526, 001304/1965, 13. d.

- ²³ Telegram from the Embassy in Hungary to the Department of State, 3 October 1967, FRUS, 1964-1968, Vol. XVII, 313-314.
- ²⁴ Eisenhower to Tito, National Security Archives, Washington D.C., Record No. 66140.
- ²⁵ Draft Paper by N. Spencer Barnes of the Policy Planning Staff – Long Term Trends in the Soviet European Satellites, 28 June 1958, FRUS, 1958-1960, Vol. X. 40-44. Barnes had served in Budapest, and therefore had first hand experience in conditions behind the Iron Curtain. Then he contrived hairbrained schemes to subvert the regime. The PPS was not unanimous in its appraisal of the situation, not all members thought that the communist systems would be able to consolidate their hold permanently.
- ²⁶ See Memorandum of Discussion, 366th Meeting of the National Security Council (hereafter cited as NSC), 22 May 1958, FRUS, 1958-1960, Vol. X; NSC Report, Statement of United States Policy Toward the Soviet Dominated Nations in Eastern Europe, *ibid.*, 18-31; Memorandum of Discussion at the 369th Meeting of the NSC, 19 June 1958. *Ibid.* p 34-40. In 1959 the Operations Coordinating Board opined that the military balance between the two blocs ruled out the use of force, US objectives would be realized through slow change, not revolution. Operations Coordinating Board Report, Report on Soviet Dominated Nations in Eastern Europe (NSC 5811/1), 15 July 1959. *Ibid.* 95-98.
- ²⁷ The US Legation was charged with maintaining contact with 'subversive elements' and gathering intelligence. A Külügyminisztérium jegyzéke a budapesti amerikai követséghez, 25 May 1957. MOL, KüM, XIX-J-1-j, USA, 4/a, 002418/1, 4.d.; A budapesti amerikai követség jegyzéke a Külügyminisztériumhoz, 10 June 1957. *Ibid.*; A Külügyminisztérium III. Osztályának feljegyzése, 10 June 1957 *ibid.*; A Külügyminisztérium feljegyzése a budapesti amerikai követség létszámcsökkentéséről, 11 June 1957. MOL, KüM, XIX-J-1-j, USA, 4/bd, i. k. n., 6. d.; A Külügyminisztérium feljegyzése a budapesti amerikai követség ügyvivőjének látogatásáról, 27 July 1957. MOL, KüM, XIX-J-1-j, USA 4/a, 002418/4, 4. d.; A budapesti amerikai követség jegyzéke a Külügyminisztériumhoz, 12 September 1957, *ibid.* See also Radvanyi, 32-33.
- ²⁸ Az MSZMP KB Politikai Bizottságának jegyzőkönyve, 2 September 1958. MOL, M-KS, 288. f., 5. cs., 93. ő. e.
- ²⁹ A magyar kormány szóvivőjének tájékoztatója a magyarországi amerikai hírszerző tevékenységről, 13 september 1958, MOL KüM, XIX-J-1-j USA 4b/d i.k. n./1958, 11. d.; A Külügyminisztérium tiltakozó jegyzéke

- a budapesti amerikai követséghez, 20 September 1958, MOL, KüM, XIX-J-1-j, 4/b, i. k. n., 11. d.
- ³⁰ The Chargé in Hungary (Ackerson) to the Department of State, 14 November 1957, National Archives, Washington D.C. (hereafter cited as NAWDC), Record Group (hereafter cited as RG) 59, 611.64/11-1457.
- ³¹ See Kalmár, Melinda, *Ennivaló és Hozomány. A korai Kádár-korszak ideológiája*. Budapest, Magvető 1998.
- ³² FRUS, 1955-1957, Vol. XXV, 685-690.
- ³³ Radvanyi, 32-33.
- ³⁴ Zádor Tibor ideiglenes ügyvivő jelentése Horváth Imre külügyminiszternek, 31 December 1957. MOL, KüM, XIX-J-1-j, USA, 4/bd 005851, 1.d.
- ³⁵ The Chargé in Hungary (Ackerson) to the Department of State, 9 May 1958, NAWDC, RG 59, 611.64/5-958. US officials approached Deputy Foreign Minister Mód about the status of political prisoners. Mód said he would look into the affair, but on 13 March he refused to answer on the pretext of "interference" in domestic affairs. See: Magyarics, Tamás, "Az Egyesült Államok és Magyarország 1957-1967". *Századok* 3/1996, 573.
- ³⁶ Baráth, Magdolna – Feitl, István, "Két összefoglaló a magyar-szovjet tárgyalásokról". *Múltunk* 4/1993, 182-185.
- ³⁷ Memorandum by the Department of State Policy Planning Staff, 11 July 1958, NAWDC, RG 59, PPS Lot 60 D 216, Box 2, Wilcox.
- ³⁸ At a Political Committee session Münnich said: "If anybody is interested in maintaining an American representation and for it to work with large personnel, it is only the international enemy, the government of American imperialism. There is no need for great tact. Their representation is a very important spy center for them, they will not liquidate it... We are an independent, sovereign state, no one should poke their nose here... concerning their representation it is not our interest for them to be here. Let us not court them, if they want they can go home". See note 27.
- ³⁹ Taiwan's place in the UN was being challenged by mainland China.
- ⁴⁰ Memorandum by Wilcox to Dulles, 13 September 1958, NAWDC, RG 59, Lot 60 D, Box 1, Wilcox.
- ⁴¹ Memorandum by Wilcox and Elbrick to Murphy, 7 October 1958, Ibid.
- ⁴² Memorandum from Secretary of State Rusk to President Kennedy, 3 November 1961. FRUS, 1961-1963, Vol. XVI, 1-2.
- ⁴³ A budapesti amerikai követség jegyzéke a Külügyminisztériumhoz Mindszenty József távozásának ügyében, 18 October 1958. MOL KüM, XIX-J-1-j, USA, 4/c, 005726, 6. d.

- ⁴⁴ Despatch from the Legation in Hungary to the Department of State on the future of Mindszenty, 20 November 1958. FRUS, 1958-1960, Vol. X., 54-59.
- ⁴⁵ CIA NIE, Political Stability in European Satellites, NIE 12-59, 11 August 1959, FRUS 1958-1960. Vol. X, 100-102.
- ⁴⁶ Despatch from the Legation in Hungary to the Department of State, Recommendations Regarding US Policy Toward Present Day Hungarian Regime, 23 January 1959. *Ibid.*, 62-71.
- ⁴⁷ Zádor Tibor ideiglenes ügyvivő jelentése Sík Endre külügyminiszternek Livingston Merchantnél tett látogatásáról, 17 February 1959. MOL, KüM, XIX-J-1-j, USA, 5/e, 001867, 15. d.
- ⁴⁸ On the deliberations see: Az MSZMP KB Külügyi Osztálya és a Külügyminisztérium előterjesztése az MSZMP KB Külügyi Bizottságához Mindszenty helyzetének rendezése tárgyában, 25 March 1960, MOL, M-KS 288. f., 5. cs., 176. ő. e.
- ⁴⁹ The Foreign Ministry warned that US-Soviet relations had deteriorated. A Külügyminisztérium III. Osztályának előterjesztése a magyar-amerikai viszonyról, 11 August 1960. MOL, KüM, XIX-J-1-j, USA, 4/bd, i. k. n.
- ⁵⁰ Sík Endre feljegyzése Biszku Béla belügyminiszternek, 14 April 1961. MOL, KüM, XIX-J-1-j, USA, 4/a, 001745/61, 4. d.
- ⁵¹ According to the official position "the question of amnesty is a Hungarian domestic affair, Western pressure could only make things worse". The author of the report, Dezső Nemes thought that it was harder and harder to keep the Hungarian question on the agenda, at the same time its removal would mean loss of prestige. Therefore Hungary was in a bargaining position. A Külügyminisztérium és az MSZMP KB Külügyi Osztályának jelentése, 9 May 1962. MOL M-KS 288. f. 32. cs. 1. ő. e.
- ⁵² Zádor Tibor feljegyzése Péter János külügyminiszternek a magyarországi általános amnesztiára vonatkozó amerikai feltételekről, 23 January 1962, MOL, KüM, XIX-J-1-j, USA, 5/e, 001234 (15. doboz).
- ⁵³ Radványi, 92-93.
- ⁵⁴ Radványi János ügyvivő jelentése Péter János külügyminiszternek az amnesztia kérdéséről, 24 March 1962, MOL, KüM, XIX-J-1-j, USA, 5/e, 001224/B, 15. d.
- ⁵⁵ Rác Pál külügyminisztériumi főosztályvezető leirata Radványi János ügyvivőnek, 16 April 1962. *Ibid.*
- ⁵⁶ Radványi János ügyvivő jelentése Péter Jánosnak a McGhee államtitkárral folytatott megbeszéléséről, 29 April 1962. *Ibid.*, 005115/1962.
- ⁵⁷ Rác Pál külügyminisztériumi főosztályvezető leirata Radványi János ügyvivőnek, 24 May 1962. *Ibid.*

- ⁵⁸ Radványi János ügyvivő jelentése Péter Jánosnak Polgár Dénes megbeszéléséről, 25 May 1962. *Ibid.*, 005413.
- ⁵⁹ Memorandum of Conversation, 13 February 1962. Participants: Edigio Vagnozzi, Harold C. Vedeler, August Velletri. FRUS, 1961-1963, Vol. XVI, 14-16.
- ⁶⁰ Memorandum of Conversation, Situation of Mindszenty, 2 May 1962. Participants: Edigio Vagnozzi, Harold C. Vedeler, August Velletri. *Ibid.*, 22-23.
- ⁶¹ Az MSZMP KB titkárának előterjesztése a Mindszenty-ügy rendezésére vonatkozóan, 7 August 1962, MOL, M-KS, 288. f., 5. cs., 275 ő. e.
- ⁶² They had been seized by the US army in Austria's American occupation zone and were being held in Fort Knox.
- ⁶³ *Ibid.*; See also Nemes Dezsőnek, az MSZMP KB titkárának előterjesztése a Mindszenty-ügyre vonatkozóan, August 11 1962, *Ibid.*
- ⁶⁴ Radványi János ügyvivő összefoglaló jelentése Péter Jánosnak a Magyarkérdésről és az általános amnesztiáról, 11 September 1962. MOL, KüM, XIX-J-1-j, USA, 4/b 001224/6, 6. d.
- ⁶⁵ *Ibid.*
- ⁶⁶ Az amerikai Külügyminisztérium Emlékeztetője a magyarkérdés és az amnesztia tárgyában, 20 October 1962, MOL, KüM, XIX-J-1-j, USA, 4/bd, i. k. n., 6. d.
- ⁶⁷ Radványi János ügyvivő jelentése az amerikai Külügyminisztérium Emlékeztetője tárgyában, 7 November 1962, MOL, KüM, XIX-J-1-j, USA, 4/b 001224/8/1962, 6. d.
- ⁶⁸ A washingtoni magyar követség jelentése a Külügyminisztériumnak, 22 November 1962. *Ibid.*, 00598.
- ⁶⁹ Radványi, 140-141.
- ⁷⁰ Memorandum by the Foreign Ministry on Efforts to Improve Hungarian-American Relations, May 1964. MOL XIX-J-1-j USA 4/bd KüM, i. k. n. In János Radványi's account, Kádár told him that he could not afford to announce the amnesty while under foreign pressure to do so. In this light US pressure was counterproductive. See Radványi, 92-93. The Foreign Office memorandum suggests otherwise. Moreover, on a later page Radványi writes that Kádár "could not bring himself to admit either to himself or to Khrushchev that his government would be acting under pressure of the American condition to trade 'amnesty for normalization'." *Ibid.* 141. The US face saving formula that was eventually acceptable for the Government was already on the table in April, yet it was another six months of diplomatic wrangling until Kádár accepted it.

- ⁷¹ Memorandum of Conversation, U.S.-Hungarian relations, 14 December 1963. Participants: Governor Harriman, Frederick Chapin, Christopher A. Squire, Mód Péter, Radványi János. FRUS, 1961-1963, Vol. XVI, 58-62; Feljegyzés Mód Péter megbeszéléséről Averell Harrimannal, 15 December 1963. MOL, KüM, XIX-J-1-j, USA, 4 /bd, 320/Szi/1963. Harriman cited Khrushchev in the context of US-Yugoslav relations.
- ⁷² See for example Special Report by the CIA, 27 March 1964, FRUS, 1964-1968, Vol. XVII, 2-8.
- ⁷³ The Political Committee discussed bilateral relations on February 18 1964. Az MSZMP KB Politikai Bizottságának jegyzőkönyve, MOL, M-KS, 288. f., 5. cs., 327. ó. e. The Government passed a resolution on starting bilateral talks the following day. A Magyar Forradalmi Munkás-Paraszt Kormány 3062/1964 számú határozata a magyar-amerikai tárgyalások megkezdéséről. MOL, KüM XIX-J-1-j, USA, 4/b, 002812/1964, 6. d. The main aim was to expand commercial relations and eventually to receive MFN status. The growth of Hungarian exports to the US was seen as the precondition for the settlement of American financial claims. On the other hand, Washington wanted to proceed in the reverse order.
- ⁷⁴ Memorandum from the President's Special Assistant for National Security (Bundy) to President Johnson, 14 April 1964. FRUS, 1964-1968, Vol. XVII, 301.
- ⁷⁵ Az MSZMP KB Politikai Bizottságának jegyzőkönyve, Péter János és Dean Rusk találkozásának előkészítése, 26 November 1964. MOL, M-KS, 288. f., 5. cs., 352. ó. e; A Péter-Rusk találkozó, 4 December 1964. MOL, KüM, XIX-J-1-j, USA, 4/b, 116612/1964, 6. d.; Memorandum of Conversation, New York, Secretary's Delegation to the 19th Session of the UNGA. Participants: Secretary, Mr. Givan, Péter, Radványi. FRUS, 1964-1968, Vol. XVII, 305-306.
- ⁷⁶ Kádár met Harriman during his official visit in Moscow in July 1963. Several informal conversations took place, one of these in a sport stadium. Kádár wanted a guarantee that Mindszenty's mouth would be "shut" after his release. Kádár előadói beszéde az MSZMP KB ülésén, 2 August 1964, MOL, M-KS, 288. f., 4. cs., 63. ó. e.
- ⁷⁷ Az MSZMP KB Politikai Bizottsága ülésének jegyzőkönyve, 29 October 1963. MOL, M-KS, 288. f., 5. cs., 318. ó. e.
- ⁷⁸ Telegram from the Legation in Hungary to the State Department, 11 March 1964. FRUS, 1964-1968, Vol. XVII, 299-300.
- ⁷⁹ Az MSZMP KB Politikai Bizottsága ülésének jegyzőkönyve, 14 September 1965, MOL, M-KS, 288. f., 5. cs., 37. ó. e; Az MSZMP KB Politikai Bizottsága ülésének jegyzőkönyve, 29 October 1963, *op. cit.*

- ⁸⁰ Az MSZMP KB Politikai Bizottsága ülésének jegyzőkönyve, 23 November 1965. MOL, M-KS, 288. f., 5. cs., 380. ó. e.
- ⁸¹ Az MSZMP KB Politikai Bizottsága ülésének jegyzőkönyve, 26 April 1966. MOL, M-KS, 288. f., 5. cs., 393. ó. e.
- ⁸² Az MSZMP KB Politikai Bizottsága ülésének jegyzőkönyve, 23 November 1965, *op. cit.*
- ⁸³ Az MSZMP KB Politikai Bizottsága ülésének jegyzőkönyve, 26 April 1966, *op. cit.*
- ⁸⁴ Radványi János feljegyzése a Péter János magyar és Dean Rusk amerikai külügyminiszterek között lezajlott megbeszélésről, 10 October 1966. MOL, KüM, XIX-J-1-j, USA, IV-135 005244/1966, 15. d. Radvanyi, who participated in the talks claims that the mediation served Péter's personal ambition, and were completely groundless. On the basis of material I saw there were more of these efforts than Radvanyi believed.
- ⁸⁵ Az MSZMP KB Politikai Bizottsága ülésének jegyzőkönyve, 11 May 1965. MOL, M-KS, 288 f., 5. cs., 365. ó. e.
- ⁸⁶ Az MSZMP KB Politikai Bizottsága ülésének jegyzőkönyve, 26 April 1966, *op. cit.*
- ⁸⁷ Radványi János ügyvivő feljegyzése a Péter János magyar és Dean Rusk amerikai külügyminiszter között lezajlott megbeszélésről, 10 October 1966. MOL, KüM, XIX-J-1-j USA, IV-135, 005244/1966, 15. d.
- ⁸⁸ Házi Vencel feljegyzése Elim O'Shaughnessy amerikai ügyvivővel folytatott beszélgetésről, 11 August 1965. MOL, XIX-J-1-j, USA, IV-14, 004704/1965, 13. d.
- ⁸⁹ Feljegyzés Szilágyi Béla külügyminiszter-helyettes megbeszéléséről az amerikai ügyvivővel, 6 September 1965. MOL, KüM, XIX-J-1-j, 5/b, i. k. n., 12. d.
- ⁹⁰ Martin J. Hillenbrand amerikai nagykövet bemutatkozó látogatása Péter Jánosnál, 21 November 1967. MOL, KüM, XIX-J-1-ny-114/PJ-1967, 14. d.
- ⁹¹ Emlékeztető Kádár János és Martin J. Hillenbrand megbeszéléséről, 30 November 1967. Ibid; Telegram from the Embassy in Hungary to the Department of State, 3 October 1967, *op. cit.*
- ⁹² In 1964 the US requested a military aircraft to pick up members of the Legation and fly them to West Germany. It was turned down, although the Politburo noted that such requests were regularly honoured by the Soviet Union and even Bulgaria and Romania. Az MSZMP KB Politikai Bizottsága ülésének jegyzőkönyve, 17 March 1967. MOL, M-KS 288. f., 5. cs., 329. ó. e.