Introduction

Following the death of Stalin, many Eastern European countries hoped for change and sought freedom. Hungary was no exception. On October 23, 1956, through a series of both violent and nonviolent demonstrations, many took to the streets to protest against the Soviet occupied government. Soon after the Soviet government responded with force and quelled the uprising, resulting in the death of roughly 3,000 civilians. The event sent shock waves through Europe and its side effects can still be felt today.

Originally occupied by Nazi Forces during World War II, Hungary was liberated by the Soviet Union’s Red Army. Led by Rakoski, a communist party made its way to power. For some time, Rakoski ruled with an iron grip, exiling, executing, and imprisoning many. He was subsequently replaced with Imre Nagy only to be later removed from power when the Kremlin reinstalled Rakoski to power. Rakoski continued to rule with absolute control and violated human rights. He was responsible for the deaths of over 300,000 civilians. A year after his re-installment, Rakoski was replaced with Erno Gero. Unfortunately, little changed under Gero’s rule. Many continued to being oppressed and the Hungarian Secret Police was in full swing. Amidst the oppression, disdain for the Soviet-run government and longing for popular Nagy grew.

The night before October 21, students in Budapest drafted sixteen demands: a new government led by Nagy, a National Assembly, secret ballots, elections, and removal of Soviets from Hungarian soil. By the evening of the 23rd, the demonstration had 200,000 participants. In response, on the dawn of November 4, Soviet sent in tanks and troops. Teenagers and rebels stood alongside the Hungarian Army against the Soviet Army. Workers went on strikes. For a few weeks, it seemed that the insurgents were likely to drive out the Soviets. Unfortunately, by the end of the week, the Soviets had taken control over the capital and quashed the protesters.

Following the unsuccessful uprising, Nagy sought fled to the Yugoslavian embassy was replaced with Janos Kadar, who implemented harsher laws than his predecessors to suppress any counter-revolutionaries. Under Kadar’s rule, thousands were executed or imprisoned. 200,000 Hungarians fled across the border into Austria. The events in Hungary only served to reaffirm Western leaders’ need to contain communism.
Definition of Key Terms

uprising:
An uprising is an act of resistance to the established government. Initially leaderless, a protest led by students surged to 200,000 participants. This demonstration sought to overthrow the Soviet Regime.

ceasefire:
Ceasefire is the suspension of hostilities during a conflict, where both sides agree to end violence. Ceasefire is often taken as the first step to achieve peace during a conflict. In addition, countries may decide to have a ceasefire due to pressures from other nations.

civilian:
Any individual not in armed forces. In the midst of violence exchanged between the Soviet Army and the Hungarian Army, many civilians were killed. Following the event, many civilians were oppressed under Kadar’s rule and fled into Austria.

intervention:
The act of intervening. Although there was no foreign intervention, foreign aid could have reduced violence and civilian exposure to violence. Foreign interventions usually do not take place when countries are occupied with their own internal issues. Foreign intervention could possibly lead to more violence.

sovereignty:
The belief that every state has its right to govern itself. Sovereignty is a one of the principles in the United Nations Charter. Thus the UN should work to ensure Hungary’s sovereignty and end Soviet hegemony. Following the removal of the Soviet regime, a transitory government should be set up. There should be limited assistance in aiding Hungary’s establishment of a new government.

puppet regime:
The party ruling a state that is influenced by a foreign power. In this case, Raoski, Guero, and Kadar are all part of a puppet Regime under the Soviet Union. Through such a puppet Regime, the Soviet can exert its control over Hungary and take control over the country’s resources and economy.
Background

History

Following the dissolution of the Tsarist Russian Empire, the Bolshevik Party, later named the Communist Party, seized control over the Russian government and implemented social rule. Countries that had originally been part of the Russian empire, like Latvia, Ukraine, Poland, Estonia, Lithuania, Georgia, and Finland wanted to break away. The Communist Party wanted a union made up of several states. Through the unification of Yugoslavia, Ukraine and Russia, the Soviet Union was formed. Countries that formed part of the Soviet Union had puppet regimes that allowed the Soviets to exert control in foreign countries.

Economy during the uprising

Prior to the uprising, Hungary’s economy was largely mismanaged due to Raoski’s adoption of communist practices. Under the Raoski’s rule, the country’s economy collapsed. Furthermore because so many people were either executed or imprisoned, there was a depletion in the work force. The Hungarian economy also suffered when Hungary spent 40% of its national wealth, to pay war reparations to Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia, and Soviet Union. Hungary’s economy improved when Nagy came to power. Nagy revitalized the economy by increasing consumerism and abolishing some communist practices. When Gero was installed into power, Hungary’s economy collapsed again when Gero implemented economic policies similar to those of Raoski.

The Hungarian economy continued to worsen after the uprising. Hungary agreed to pay $300 million worth of war reparations to the Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia, and the Soviet Union. Approximately 22% of its economy was used for war reparations. The Uprising also proved that the people of Hungary would be intolerant to communist economic practices. As a result, Kadar and other regime leaders sought economic policies that improved the standard living. These policies were formulated by specialists and not based on the ideologies of communism. These changes introduced Hungary to a free market in what became known as the “goulash communism”. Much of the country’s income was given to the Soviet union.

Social

The protest against the government was originally leaderless and conducted only by students. Many exposed to the fighting for three weeks. A month after the uprising ended, women too took to the streets. Ignoring the presence of Russian tanks and armed men, women marched with flags and flowers to commemorate the dead. However under the oppressive rule of Kadar, the government continued to abuse the rights of its people and imprison or execute many without a fair trial.
Major Parties Involved

Soviet Union:

A delegate to the Soviet Union claimed that the situation in Hungary was not as dire as it had been portrayed. The Soviet Union explains that the motive of the protesters was not over their discontent over the government, but over mismanagement of economic and social issues. The Declaration of the Government of the USSR on the Principles of Development "The Soviet Government is prepared to enter into the appropriate negotiations with the government of the Hungarian People's Republic and other members of the Warsaw Treaty on the question of the presence of Soviet troops on the territory of Hungary.". Under the provision government of the Soviet Union after the uprising, Hungary had to pay exorbitant war reparation fees.

Hungary

The Hungarian government believed it could reform and satisfy the students’ demands. To appease student protesters, Raoski was replaced with Gero, who took a less hard-line communist. When protests continued to intensify, Gero ordered the cracking down on protesters. The following day Gero asked of USSR assistance to quell the protesters. After many exchanges of violence, Gero was removed from power and replaced by Nagy. Pressured by the public’s demands, Nagy ordered the withdrawal of Soviet troops, free elections, and more independence from the USSR. Nagy announced Hungary’s removal from the Warsaw Pact on November 1. USSR sent in 60,000 troops into Hungary and by the night of November 3, the Soviet troops surrounded the capital. After the USSR quashed the rebellion, the USSR arrested Nagy and installed a puppet government.

U.S.

Immediately after the crackdown of Hungarian protesters, the United States condemned USSR for its actions. The U.S. also brought forth many resolutions to the United Nations. Ambassador Henry Cabot Lodge was primarily responsible for drafting a resolution to the UN Security Council. Unfortunately, with the U.S. devoted most of its attention to the emerging Suez Canal Crisis in Egypt, thereby the U.S. could not directly intervene or contribute significantly. The U.S. was reluctant to providing military aid to the Hungarian Army for fear of more conflicts. Instead, the Eisenhower Administration chose to shift its focus to finding a solution the Suez Crisis. It believed that by doing so, the U.S. could prevent USSR from aiding and potentially influencing Egypt. In 1956, the U.S. created a special immigration quota for Hungarian refugees. More than 30,000 Hungarians had settled in the U.S. through the program.

The United Nations

On January 10, 1957, the General Assembly created a Special Committee on Hungary for investigation and observation requested permission to enter Hungary. The UN High Commission on Refugees that the request to
enter Hungary had been denied by the government. The Hungarian Government denied such request on the ground that it violated the UN Charter. As a result, the Special Committee was limited to only interviewing and conducting research outside of Hungary. Based on 111 witnesses, the committee released a report that was accepted by the General Assembly on September 14, 1957. The report concluded that the Soviet Union violated the Paris Treaty of Peace and the Geneva Convention of 1949. The USSR government conducted an armed invasion and deprived Hungary from its rights and political autonomy. Due to frustrations over inability to intervene in Hungary, the Special Committee sent a letter to the former Hungarian prime minister concerning political trials with USSR leaders. The former prime minister replied, saying that he was in no position to give a decision. Sir Leslie Munro concluded that there were no significant changes that took place in Hungary since 1956.

**Previous Attempts to Resolve the Issue**

After Hungary announced its withdrawal from the Warsaw Pact, Ambassador Henry Cabot Lodge, representative to the U.S., proposed a resolution regarding the situation in Hungary in the UN Security Council. The following day, in response to Hungary’s withdrawal, USSR sent 60,000 troops into Hungary. Through the night, Lodge called for delegates to pass the resolution. USSR used its veto power and the resolution failed. The following day the Soviet Army crushed the rebellion, killing thousands and causing hundreds of thousands to flee into Austria.

Following the uprising, a Special Committee had been established specifically for the situation in Hungary. After having been denied to enter Hungary, the Committee achieved little and released a report only verifying the USSR’s abuse and inhumane treatment of Hungarian civilians.

**Possible Solutions**

There are some aspects of the issue that have to be dealt with. One is the USSR’s predisposition to veto any resolution regarding the Hungary Uprising. Another is the right to intervene in Hungary and who will be responsible for intervening? Furthermore, how should the intervention be conducted. To avoid further conflict in an already politically volatile region, military intervention should be avoided at all costs. Intervention should focus to aid refugees out of violence and provide aid to those in need, excluding militants. The UN should also aim to mediate a ceasefire agreement. The ceasefire will set aside the necessary time to retrieve dead bodies and negotiate before proceeding to exchange violence. Negotiations should focus on ensuring Russia’s swift withdrawal from Hungary and perhaps return complete autonomy. Economic sanctions, employed by many and voluntary countries, should be enforced to pressure USSR into withdrawing. In addition, a safety zone should be established to ensure that all civilians are not within proximity of danger. Lastly, how should the Hungarian government be dealt with following the USSR’s government? It is advisable for the United Nations to not be heavily involved in establishing Hungary’s new government. Some aid could be possible. The UN should also take measures to monitor Hungary’s condition over the years. To make USSR responsible for the damages in Hungary and enforce repercussions could
be risky. Rather a collective effort, including the USSR, should be aimed to restore streets and buildings in Hungary.

Bibliography


