

REPORT OF SIR LESLIE MUNRO, UNITED NATIONS SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE
ON THE QUESTION OF HUNGARY

1. In this fifth year since the armed intervention of the Soviet Union to defeat the spontaneous uprising of the people of Hungary, and to remove its legal Government, a wide range of other issues of a broad and pressing character has necessarily diverted to some extent the attention of world opinion from the question of Hungary. The General Assembly has rightly proclaimed that "all peoples have the right to self-determination".^{1/} The question of Hungary, which has now been before the General Assembly for almost five years, is fundamentally a question of the repression of the right of self-determination. No effect has been given to the basic resolution of the General Assembly, passed at the second special emergency session, which provided that free elections should be held in Hungary under United Nations auspices to enable the people of Hungary to determine for themselves the form of government they wished to establish in their country.^{2/}

2. The background of the question of Hungary has been amply documented in previous reports to the General Assembly, which have been endorsed by resolutions of the General Assembly. The report of the Special Committee on the Problem of Hungary,^{3/} which contained a full account of the Soviet armed intervention and the resulting suppression of political independence and the denial of human rights within Hungary, stands as an unchallengeable statement on developments during and immediately after the uprising of October/November 1956. The Special Report of the Special Committee^{4/} and my two previous reports^{5/} have outlined in some detail

- 1/ General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV), para. 2.
- 2/ General Assembly resolution 1005 (ES-II).
- 3/ Official Records of the General Assembly, Eleventh Session, Supplement No. 18 (A/3592).
- 4/ Ibid., Thirteenth Session, Annexes, agenda item 69, document A/3849.
- 5/ Ibid., Fourteenth Session, Annexes, agenda item 74, document A/4304 (25 November 1959); A/4606 (1 December 1960).

measures of repression carried out in Hungary under foreign pressure in continual violation of resolutions of the General Assembly, which called upon the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and the existing authorities in Hungary to desist from repressive measures against the Hungarian people and to respect the liberty and political independence of Hungary and to allow the Hungarian people their enjoyment of fundamental human rights and freedoms.^{6/}

3. In my report of 1 December 1960 to the fifteenth session of the General Assembly, I recalled briefly the sequence of events which gave rise to the inclusion of the question of Hungary in the agenda of the General Assembly, and summarized the course of United Nations action with regard to the question. I regret that the General Assembly was unable to take up the question of Hungary at the last session, and I would wish to draw attention to the considerations which I urged in my last report. They are still fully relevant to the present situation. Though the real character of the question of Hungary tends to be obscured with the passage of time, I shall not repeat here what was set out in my previous report. However, to avoid misunderstanding, it would seem desirable to restate as briefly as possible the essence of this problem.

4. The question of Hungary may be briefly termed the complaint regarding aggression by the armed forces of the Soviet Union against the political independence of Hungary, and the persistent violation of the fundamental freedoms and human rights of the Hungarian people. The question of Hungary is a question whether the people of a small European country were, and are, entitled to demand the withdrawal of the armed forces of a foreign Power stationed within their land; whether they should be free to set up a government of their own choice to replace the minions of an alien Power; whether they were, and are, entitled to claim for themselves as a small people within the framework of the United Nations a neutralist position in the conflicts of the great Powers; whether a great Power may rightly suppress by the exercise of armed force their claim to self-government, and may impose upon them a foreign-dominated régime of its own creation; whether a great Power, having violated its obligation under the Charter to refrain from the use of force, may assert that its own actions are not the legitimate concern of the United Nations.

^{6/} e.g. General Assembly resolution 1133 (XI) of 14 September 1957.

5. That is the question of Hungary. Yet the strange contention has been advanced that the matter is not a matter within the competence of the United Nations. The facts themselves have at no time been in doubt. The Soviet Union has not denied the serious character of the uprising in October 1956. It has not denied that its armed forces - its tanks and its infantry - were moved in to shoot down the resistance of the Hungarian workers; it has not denied that a duly constituted government was established under Imre Nagy to replace the Rákosi régime, whose crimes and repression have been the subject of denunciation by Soviet leaders themselves; it has not denied that a spurious Hungarian government was proclaimed under Soviet control to provide the appearance of authorization for the actions of the Soviet Army against the Hungarian people. The facts are known to the world, and these facts have remained unchanged since 1956. The situation then created persists.

6. The General Assembly has repeatedly called for the withdrawal of Soviet forces from Hungary as the essential preliminary of the restoration of Hungarian freedom.^{7/} The General Assembly could not but assume that the Soviet Declaration of 30 October 1956 looking towards the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Hungary would be fully implemented, and that effect would be given to the assurances given by János Kádár in statements of 4, 8, 11 and 12 November 1956, and at later dates after his installation in power, to the effect that the withdrawal of Soviet forces would be a prime objective of the "Revolutionary Worker/Peasant Government".^{8/} The essential problem is that the Soviet forces which occupied Hungary in 1956 in defiance of the wishes of the Hungarian Government and in the face of the bitter opposition of the Hungarian people remain on Hungarian soil. The refusal of the Hungarian authorities to negotiate with the Soviet Union a speedy withdrawal of these troops must be considered proof that the present Hungarian rulers are unable to maintain their position within their land without foreign military support.

7. Previous reports have given details of the legal framework of repression established after the crushing of the uprising by Soviet forces. Special

^{7/} Resolution 1004 (ES-II), of 4 November 1956, para. 2; resolution 1005 (ES-II), of 9 November 1956, para. 1; resolution 1131 (XI) of 12 December 1956, para. 4.

^{8/} Report of the United Nations Representative on Hungary (A/4606), para. 26.

legislation was passed in 1956 and 1957 under which the leaders of the uprising were tried under summary jurisdiction and later by specially devised "people's benches" which were set up within the Supreme Court, the Budapest Metropolitan Court and in County Courts all over the country. The practices established by and within these courts, in violation of principles enunciated by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, were reviewed in some detail in past reports. These practices were introduced in violation of Point 3 of the original "Government" programme of János Kádár of 4 November 1956, which stated: "The Government will not tolerate the persecution of workers, on any pretext, for having taken part in recent events".^{9/} Past reports have brought out clearly the prosecution and, in many cases, the liquidation of workers' leaders. This persecution naturally diminishes with the elimination of its potential victims. During the past year, therefore, the Hungarian Government decided to abolish the people's benches within the Supreme Court, the Budapest Court and the Pest County Court.^{10/} This followed the abolition of people's benches in four provincial courts which had taken place in 1958. There remain in force certain features in the system of justice in Hungary which continue to curtail fundamental freedoms and human rights in that country. The dreaded secret police continues under the guise of "security troops", under the direction of officers, many of whom had been trained in the Soviet Union, though the freedom of action of the individual security officer has been curtailed. The system of people's control committee's social courts and worker's guards persists - all obedient tools of the régime placed and kept in power by the military forces of the Soviet Union.

^{9/} Report of the Special Committee on the Problem of Hungary, Official Records of the General Assembly, Eleventh Session, supplement No. 18 (A/3592), para. 642.

^{10/} Decree Law of the Praesidium, No. 6/1961 (Magyar Közlöny, No. 27, 16 April 1961). The abolition of the People's Courts was announced on 14 April in the following terms by Radio Budapest:

"The Praesidium abolished the validity of the rules enacted in 1957 and concerning People's Courts. These People's Courts were set up with temporary character to handle cases of counter-revolutionary crimes. Some of them were dissolved in 1958 as there were no more cases falling under their jurisdiction. As the last of them have been inactive for a considerable time and in view of the increasing normalization and solidity of the social order, they appear to be no more necessary and are being abolished together with the rules pertaining to their procedure."

8. From time to time, reports have circulated regarding the liberation of writers and other intellectuals in Hungary. Neither confirmation nor denial has been forthcoming regarding these reports from any Hungarian official source. Little doubt can be entertained that there are still many persons in Hungary who have not regained their freedom. I would wish to single out for special mention certain persons still imprisoned for their participation in the 1956 uprising. First of all, the distinguished professor of sociology and former Minister of State in the Nagy Government, who is serving a life sentence - István Bibó. Other outstanding names amongst those sentenced to life imprisonment are:

György Adám, economist and university professor;

Sándor Kopácsi, a former Chief of Police of Budapest and co-founder in October 1956 with Mr. Kádár of the Hungarian Socialist Workers Party;

Ferenc Mérei, educationist and psychologist;

Gyula Obersovszky, the editor of the revolutionary newspaper Igazság; and

Sándor Rácz, a leader of the Greater Budapest Workers Council.

Among others who were sentenced to terms of imprisonment, ranging from six to fifteen years, who are still held:

Sándor Báli, another leader of the Budapest Workers Council;

László Kardos, former director of the People's Colleges;

János Kiszely, a former trade union leader in the Miskolc-Borsod district;

György Litván, historian;

Pál Löcsei, former political editor of the newspaper of the Communist Party before the uprising;

István Márkus, sociologist; and

Gábor Tanczos, former secretary of the Petöfi Club.

9. During the last year, the régime in Hungary has reverted with persistence towards policies and practices reminiscent of those against which the uprising took place. It may be recalled that the uprising was not intended to subvert the basic social and economic changes introduced in Hungary in the previous decade, but to replace an arbitrary government by a socialist government resting on broad national support. The detestable practices which resulted in, and were revealed by, the uprising five years ago have received renewed emphasis. A new norm system has been adopted under which Hungarian workers earn some 15 per cent

less than during the past years. Under a recent decree, individual factory managements have been empowered to raise norms in the future at will without having to refer to the central authorities.^{11/} The total agricultural collectivization launched under a resolution of the Central Committee of the Hungarian Socialist Workers Party of 29 October 1960 resulted, by the middle of June 1961, in the collectivization of 93 per cent of Hungary's arable land. In this final phase of the collectivization drive, according to the admission of Dezső Nemes, a member of the Politburo, about 700 people were prosecuted, of whom 230 were taken into custody.^{12/} This statement appears to correspond to previous statements by the leadership which admitted that "there is coercion even now"^{13/} and that a "rough and brutal tone was occasionally used"^{14/} in connexion with previous collectivization campaigns.

10. Moreover, since the autumn of 1960, a "harder-hitting" atheist propaganda^{15/} has been put into effect. This campaign was inaugurated by an article in the October 1960 issue of World Marxist Review which stated that the Party was "fighting not against believers but against religion as an ideology to shape the new outlook of the working people".^{16/} Early in December 1960, a number of students were expelled from a Catholic seminary after they had refused to attend a conference called by the "Peace Priests" who have been excommunicated by the Church. Later the arrest was reported of some fifty priests, mainly of the Cistercian and Piarist Orders. At the beginning of March 1961, additional mass arrests were reported of priests, along with several hundred laymen engaged in church activities. Shortly before these developments, the Government announced that six priests, three monks and others had been arrested "as leaders of an anti-State organization".^{17/} Four months later, an official communiqué announced

^{11/} Decree of the "Revolutionary Worker/Peasant Government", No. 22/1961 (VI.9) (Magyar Közlöny, No. 43, 9 June 1961).

^{12/} Társadalmi Szemle, No. 6, June 1961.

^{13/} Statement of János Kádár on 4 April 1959.

^{14/} Népszabadság, 19 February 1960.

^{15/} Elet és Irodalom, 2 December 1960.

^{16/} "The Church and Religion in the Hungarian People's Republic", by I. Köteles.

^{17/} Népszabadság, 8 February 1961.

that twelve of these persons were brought to trial before the Municipal Court in Budapest charged with "subversive activities". Sentences were passed on them on 19 June. The official announcement stated that the Court established the "anti-social character of the organization" and that "the majority of the defendants had shown repentance". The following were the sentences passed on the twelve defendants:

Ödön Barlay has been sentenced to eight years' imprisonment,
László Emödy to seven years' imprisonment,
Endre Földy to six years and six months' imprisonment,
Dr. Zoltán Gáldy to two years and six months' imprisonment,
Géza Havass to five years and six months' imprisonment,
Miklós Hontvári to three years and six months' imprisonment,
Dr. László Ikvay to six years and six months' imprisonment,
György Kölley to three years' imprisonment,
Ödön Lénárd to seven years and six months' imprisonment,
Gyula Merény to four years and six months' imprisonment,
Gábor Nobilis to four years' imprisonment, and
István Tabódy to twelve years' imprisonment.^{18/}

It would appear that the major purpose of the campaign which culminated in the above trial is to break the church's resistance to the political objectives of the régime imposed on Hungary, in particular, to induce priests to join the "Peace Priests" organization.

11. Despite adversity and repression, Hungarian national feeling remains alive, to the evident discomfort of the régime. The new national consciousness of the youth of Hungary which stems from the uprising of 1956 has been referred to by a Hungarian leader as "a grave and worrying problem".^{19/} As a consequence of this, the present authorities in Hungary have felt bound to make certain concessions in a number of fields; the following are examples: somewhat better living conditions have been created since the beginning of 1957. The people of Hungary

^{18/} Népszabadság, 20 June 1961.

^{19/} Magyar Ifjúság, 17 December 1960.

have been given a limited freedom of speech and freedom of movement which enables a few to travel abroad. In the course of the years, limited amnesties have been adopted, and the population has perhaps rather greater security against the vexations of the secret police. These are, however, but slight alleviations to be set against the background which I depicted in the closing words of my previous report - the subjection of the Hungarian people to foreign domination and the denial to them of the elementary human right of freely choosing those whom they wish to govern them.

12. Throughout the consideration of this question by the United Nations, the Government of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and the Hungarian authorities have persistently refused all co-operation with the United Nations and with the subsidiary agencies set up by the General Assembly to deal with the question. On my appointment as United Nations Special Representative, I sought in a conciliatory manner to enter into contact with the Permanent Representative of Hungary at the United Nations with a view to arriving at some understanding how best to proceed. I hoped that it might at least be possible to bring to an end the abrupt denial on the part of the USSR and Hungary of all right on the part of the United Nations to concern itself with the question. The refusal of the Hungarian authorities to authorize any contact with me, despite the responsibility with which I had been entrusted by the General Assembly, has made it essential for me to discharge my responsibility by reporting to the General Assembly on the sad development of events in Hungary. My second attempt on behalf of the United Nations to make an approach to the Hungarian authorities in February 1960 elicited from them only the renewed allegation, made in a communication to the Secretary-General on 29 February 1960, that consideration of the Hungarian question by the General Assembly was unlawful, and that the question of Hungary was non-existent. It is, therefore, the Government of the USSR and the Hungarian authorities who are responsible, and solely responsible, for the inability of the United Nations to make any progress whatsoever on a problem which concerns so vitally the right of self-determination of a small European country. The claim of the USSR is, in effect, that the principles of the United Nations, and its activities, shall not extend to the sphere within which the Soviet Union exercises control. The General Assembly has, by an earlier decision, declared that it remains seized of this problem.

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13. I would recall that even the amnesties so far granted have been limited; they do not grant full pardon to those who were imprisoned for political offences, and persons included in the grants of amnesty may be recalled at any time to gaol by the authorities in Budapest. Many still remain in gaol because of their political offences, and there have been new trials for political offences this year. There is still no rule of law in Hungary, nor are the Hungarian people permitted to exercise the right of self-government. The question of Hungary stands as the outstanding question in respect of which the principles of the Charter have been flagrantly violated and in which the Government and authorities responsible repudiate any obligation to answer to the United Nations for their action or to take any steps which would enable the Organization to progress towards the achievement of its objectives.

14. The wide-spread concern evoked by the repression of the uprising of the Hungarian people, which was so evident in 1956, has diminished but little with the passage of time. It has continued to be shown in various ways - on the one hand, by the observations of eminent statesmen of many lands and, on the other, through the continued expressions of concern by men and women in all walks of life. This continued concern is impressed upon me by the large number of communications addressed to me on the problem. These communications have in recent months taken the form of petitions which have been circulated in many countries and which have received numerous signatures. They are to be numbered not in thousands, but in millions. The petitioners draw attention to the resolutions of the Assembly on the question of Hungary, and request that efforts be continued to secure their observance. The requests of the petitioners concentrate on three main points: (1) the immediate release of all political prisoners; (2) the withdrawal of foreign troops; (3) free elections under United Nations supervision. It is, of course, not possible for me to acknowledge individually the virtually innumerable communications that I have received, but I would wish to take the opportunity afforded by this report to bring them to the attention of the Assembly.