

November 4, 1956
**Working Notes from the Session of the CPSU CC
Presidium on 4 November 1956**

Citation:

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Summary:

At this session of the CPSU CC, Molotov raises concerns over the new Hungarian government's decision to condemn the "Rakosi-Gero clique" and call for the condemnation of Stalinism. Molotov argues that the CC must exert influence on Kadar to prevent Hungary from going the way of Yugoslavia. The session also discusses recommendations for purging higher educational institutions and Kadar's withdrawal of appeals to the UN for assistance.

Original Language:

Russian

Contents:

Translation - English

Working Notes from the Session of the CPSU CC Presidium on 4 November 1956(Re: Protocol No. 51)Those Taking Part: Bulganin, Voroshilov,Kaganovich, Malenkov, Molotov, Pervukhin, Saburov, Suslov, Khrushchev, Zhukov, Shepilov, Furtseva, Pospelov.On the Operations and Situation in Hungary(1)Cde. Kaganovich's ciphered cable fromCde. Malinin at Cde. Khrushchev (4 XI).(2)1) Bring back Cdes. Mikoyan and Brezhnev.2) Provide assistance to Hungary.(3)3) More actively take part in the assistance to Egypt.(4)Think through a number of measures (perhaps a demonstration at the English embassy). More widely in the newspapers.Cde. Molotov—think about Hungary. Exert influence on Kadar so that Hungary does not go the route of Yugoslavia. They made changes in the Declaration—they now condemn the Rakosi-Gero clique—and this might be dangerous.(5) We must convince them that they should refrain from this reference to the Rakosi-Gero clique. Kadar is calling (1 XI) for a condemnation of Stalinism.(6) The title of Hungarian Workers' Party should be retained. We should come to agreement with them and prevent them from shifting to Yugoslav positions.Cde. Molotov—reinforce the military victory through political means.Cde. Khrushchev—I don't understand Cde. Molotov. He comes up with the most pernicious ideas.Cde. Molotov—you should keep quiet and stop being so overbearing.Cde. Bulganin—we should condemn the incorrect line of Rakosi-Gero. Cde. Khrushchev:The declaration is good —we must act honorably.Cde. Shepilov—during the editing they added the phrase “the clique of Rakosi and Gero.” We are giving them legal opportunities to denigrate the entire 12-year period of the HWP's work.Cde. Shepilov—is it really necessary to disparage cadres? Tomorrow it will be the “clique of Ulbricht.”(7)Cde. Saburov—if they themselves don't comprehend their mistakes, we will deal at length with the matter. Reward the military personnel. Take care of the families of those who perished. (8)V. On Purging the Higher Educational Institutions of Unsavory Elements(Cdes. Zhukov, Khrushchev, Furtseva, Pervukhin, Voroshilov) Furtseva, Pospelov, Shepilov, and Elyutin are to come up with recommendations for purging the higher educational institutions of unsavory elements.(9)IV. On the Response to Cde. Kardelj and the Telegram About Imre Nagy Affirm the text of the response.(10)On Instructions to the Soviet Ambassador in Hungary On the Raising of the Question at the Gen. Assembly's Session on Hungary Cde. Kadar is to say that he will withdraw the question from the UN.(11)Translator's Notes1 This topic was not included in the formal protocol for the session (“Protokol No. 51 zasedaniya Prezidiuma TsK KPSS,” in APRF, F. 3, Op. 64, D. 484, Ll. 60-61).2 Most likely, there is a mistake or omission in Malin's text. These phrases, as given in the original, do not make sense.3 The reference here is to financial, not military, assistance. A Soviet economic aid package for Hungary was approved on 5 November and announced the following day.4 These points about the Suez Crisis are intriguing in light of what happened the following day (5 November). During the first several days of the Suez Crisis, Moscow's response was limited to verbal protestations through the media and at the UN. On 5 November, the day before a ceasefire was arranged, Soviet prime minister Nikolai Bulganin sent letters to the U.S., French, British, and Israeli governments. His letter to President Eisenhower warned that “if this war is not halted, it will be fraught with danger and might escalate into a third world war.” Bulganin proposed that the United States and Soviet Union move jointly to “crush the aggressors,” an action he justified on the grounds that the two superpowers had “all modern types of arms, including nuclear and thermonuclear weapons, and bear particular responsibility for stopping the war.” Not surprisingly, Eisenhower immediately rejected Bulganin's proposal. Bulganin's letters to France, Great Britain, and Israel were far more minatory, including thinly-veiled threats to use missiles if necessary to prevent Egypt's destruction. The letters to France and Britain contained identical passages: “In what position would [Britain and France] have found themselves if they had been attacked by more powerful states possessing all types of modern weapons of destruction? These more powerful states, instead of sending naval or air forces to the shores of [Britain or France], could use other means, such as missile technology.” Bulganin's letter to Israel declared that “Israel is playing with the fate of peace and the fate of its own people in a criminal and irresponsible manner.” This policy, Bulganin warned, “is raising doubts about the very existence of Israel as a state. We expect that the Government of Israel will come to its senses before it is too late and will halt its military operations against Egypt.” For the texts of the letters and other Soviet statements during the crisis, see D. T. Shepilov, ed., *Suetskii krizis* (Moscow: Politizdat, 1956). Although the letters represented a much more forceful and conspicuous Soviet stance against the allied incursions, they came so belatedly

that they had only a minor impact at best on efforts to achieve a ceasefire.⁵ This passage refers to the appeal to the nation that Kadar's government issued when it was installed in power on 4 November.⁶ Molotov is referring to Kadar's radio address on 1 November, which was published in Nepszabads the following day.⁷ This in fact is precisely what Ulbricht himself feared; see the detailed account by the chief of the East German State Security forces in 1956, Ernst Wollweber, in Wilfriede Otto, ed., "Ernst Wollweber: Aus Erinnerungen — Ein Portrait Walter Ulbrichts," *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Arbeiterbewegung*, No. 3 (1990), esp. pp. 361- 378. For more on the impact of the 1956 crises on the East German communist leadership, see the papers presented by Hope M. Harrison and Christian F. Ostermann at the "Conference on Hungary and the World, 1956: The New Archival Evidence," which took place in Budapest on 25-29 September 1996 and was organized by the Institute for the History of the 1956 Hungarian Revolution, the National Security Archive, and the Cold War International History Project. Copies of the papers, both of which draw extensively on the archives of the former Socialist Unity Party of Germany (SED), are available from the conference organizers.⁸ Saburov is referring to the families of Soviet troops who were killed, not to the much larger number of Hungarians who died in the fighting.⁹ This illustrates how concerned CPSU leaders were that the crisis was spilling over into the Soviet Union. Both before and after 4 November, unrest and protests occurred at a number of higher educational institutions in the USSR, including Moscow State University (MGU). At MGU, "protests against Soviet military intervention" were accompanied by "anti-Soviet slogans and posters." Both students and faculty took part in the actions. The KGB quickly moved in and restored order, but the crackdown was not as vigorous and sweeping as some CPSU officials wanted. See the first-hand account by the longtime deputy director of the KGB, Filipp Bobkov, *KGB i vlast'* (Moscow: Veteran MP, 1995), pp. 144-145. Bobkov claims that Pyotr Pospelov and some other senior party officials, as well as a number of high-ranking personnel in the KGB, wanted to launch "mass repressions" to deter any further unrest, but their proposals were never formally adopted. Subsequently, a commission headed by Brezhnev issued secret orders and guidelines to all party organizations to tighten political controls.¹⁰ On 4 November, the Soviet ambassador in Yugoslavia, Nikolai Firyubin, sent a telegram to Moscow with information provided by Kardelj (at Tito's behest) about the refuge granted to Imre Nagy and his aides in the Yugoslav embassy. The response, as approved by the CPSU Presidium, called on the Yugoslav authorities to turn over the Hungarian officials to Soviet troops. See "Vypiska iz protokola No. P51/IV zasedaniya Prezidiuma TsK KPSS ot 4 noyabrya 1956 g.," 4 November 1956 (Strictly Secret), in APRF, F. 3, Op. 64, D. 485, Ll. 103-104.¹¹ Nagy had appealed to UN Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld on 1 November asking for support of Hungary's sovereignty and independence. The UN Security Council began considering the matter on 3 November. On 4 November, the UN Security Council took up the question of Soviet military intervention in Hungary, and the UN General Assembly voted to condemn the Soviet invasion. On 5 November, the CPSU newspaper Pravda featured a letter purportedly sent by Kadar and Imre Horvath to Dag Hammarskjöld. The letter claimed that Nagy's submission of the Hungarian question to the UN had been illegal, and requested that all consideration of the issue cease.