

November 3, 1956
**Notes of a Secure Phone Call from the Soviet
Ambassador in Romania, A. A. Epishev**

Citation:

"Notes of a Secure Phone Call from the Soviet Ambassador in Romania, A. A. Epishev", November 3, 1956, Wilson Center Digital Archive, TsKhSD, F. 3, Op. 12, D. 1005, LI. 67-69, compiled by V. N. Malin. Translated for CWIHP by Mark Kramer.
<https://wilson-center-digital-archive.dvincitest.com/document/117079>

Summary:

Imre Nagy reports that Soviet troops plan to enter Romania, and contacts Gheorghiu-Dej for advice on how to proceed.

Credits:

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Original Language:

Russian

Contents:

Translation - English

3/XI/56(1)

Bucharest, Cde. Epishev(2)

A message.

Late in the evening of 2 Nov. after a discussion with the Soviet ambassador, Imre Nagy summoned the Romanian ambassador and told him that he, Imre Nagy, has received verified information that Soviet troops are entering the country.

In this connection, he asks the ambassador to transmit to Cde. Gheorghiu-Dej his request for advice on what to do.

This request to the ambassador has been transmitted to Cde. Gheorghiu-Dej.

Cde. Gheorghiu-Dej responded to the ambassador-in a message to be conveyed to Imre Nagy-that he received his appeal and stated, by way of reassurance, that for the life of the Hungarian working class and of the Hungarian Republic it is never too late, and I am sending Cde. Malnasan to you.(3)

The response has not yet been sent to Budapest.

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An LI-2 aircraft (a single one) will fly out of Bucharest at 10:20 Bucharest time for a trip into Budapest city airport. On board the aircraft is Malnasan.(4)

(1) No source is specified for the information in this telegram from Soviet ambassador Aleksei Epishev, but the content leaves little doubt that the Romanian embassy in Budapest was relying at the time on the Soviet embassies in Budapest and Bucharest to relay information.

(2) Aleksei Alekseevich Epishev had been a commissar in the Soviet army during World War II. After the war he served in a number of regional party posts, and from 1955 until 1962 he was the Soviet ambassador to Romania and then Yugoslavia. In 1962 he was given the military rank of army-general and appointed the head of the Soviet Army's Main Political Directorate, a post he retained until his death in 1985.

(3) The surname of Aurel Malnasan (who was then a deputy foreign minister in Romania) is correctly spelled in the original Malin notes, but for some reason the published versions of the notes (in both Hungarian and Russian) mistakenly render Malnasan's surname as Malnasanu. The editors of the published versions erroneously claim that Malin's notes misspelled the name.

(4) On 2 November in Bucharest, Khrushchev and Malenkov briefed the Romanian leader, Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej, and his Czechoslovak and Bulgarian counterparts about the forthcoming invasion. On the eve of the invasion, Malnasan held lengthy talks with Nagy. Gheorghiu-Dej's motivation in sending Malnasan to Budapest must have been to keep Nagy occupied and to prevent him from taking any steps to counter the imminent military operation. For brief reports by Malnasan on the talks, see the newly declassified cables from the Romanian Foreign Ministry archive in Corneliu Mihai Lungu and Mihai Retegan, cds., 1956 Explozia: Perceptii romane, iugoslave si sovietice asupra evenimentelor din Polonia si Unguria (Bucharest: Editura Univers Enciclopedic, 1996), pp. 181-182.