



Language

Hungary suffered under the brutal Stalinist regime of Rakosi until 1953, and after the death of Stalin sections of the Party leadership (with support from Moscow) moved towards reform. The central figure in this change of policy was Imre Nagy, who became Prime Minister in 1953 and allowed political debate to re-emerge. However, the hardliners made a comeback in 1955 and ousted Nagy, leading to a bitter struggle in 1956 between different factions of the Party. Following Khrushchev's February 1956 attack on Stalin's crimes, many Communists demanded the rehabilitation of Laszlo Rajk, executed in a Stalinist show trial as a 'Titoist' in 1949. Writers and students engaged in campaigns for change, culminating in mass demonstrations demanding greater democracy, a new government under Nagy and withdrawal of Soviet troops. Protests erupted into fighting outside the radio building after security policy fired on the crowd, and crowds also attacked the secret police stations.

The government declared martial law and called in Soviet troops (October 23-24), triggering armed defiance by many Hungarians. After heavy fighting, Soviet troops withdrew from Budapest on October 29, but after Nagy declared Hungary's withdrawal from the Warsaw Pact new troops moved into Hungary and attacked Budapest; bitter fighting continued from November 4-11 and Nagy and colleagues were arrested by Soviet troops when leaving the Yugoslav embassy on November 22 (contrary to explicit promises), and later executed. But during the period November 12 – December 13 the industrial workers, who had been at the forefront of the fighting, began to organize independent workers' councils and to call brief general strikes. (Hannah Arendt has celebrated this expression of popular nonviolent resistance and participatory democracy in the Epilogue to the second edition of her *Origins of Totalitarianism*, London, Allen and Unwin, 1958, pp. 492-502.)

Azcel, Tamas ; Meray, Tibor, [The Revolt of the Mind: A Case History of Intellectual Resistance behind the Iron Curtain](#) [1], New York, Praeger, 1959, pp. 449

Focuses on the Hungarian Writers' Union from 1953-59.

Harman, Chris, [Bureaucracy and Revolution in Eastern Europe](#) [2], London, Pluto Press, 1974, pp. 296

Examines the 1956 Revolution primarily from standpoint of role of the workers, with emphasis on the workers' councils, pp. 124-87.

Kecskemeti, Paul, [The Unexpected Revolution: Social Forces in the Hungarian Uprising](#) [3], Stanford CA, Stanford University Press, 1961, pp. 178

Kopacsi, Sandor, [In the Name of the Working Class](#) [4], London, Fontana/Collins, 1989, pp. 348

Eyewitness account by the police chief of Budapest in 1956, who refused to obey Soviet orders to quell the uprising and was later sentenced to life imprisonment, but released in 1963 in an amnesty granted by Khrushchev.

Lomax, Bill, [The Workers' Councils of Greater Budapest](#) [5], In Ralph Miliband and John Saville (eds.), *Socialist Register* 1976, London, Merlin Press, pp. 89-110

Excerpt from his book *Hungary 1956*, London, Alison and Busby, 1976, pp. 222, which provides a chronology, background to the 1956 uprising and an account of the events of October/November.

Meray, Tibor, [Thirteen Days that Shook the Kremlin: Imre Nagy and the Hungarian Revolution](#) [6], London,



Thames and Hudson, 1959, pp. 290

Sebestyen, Victor, [Twelve Days: The Story of the 1956 Hungarian Revolution](#) [7], New York, Pantheon Books, 2006, pp. 340

Vali, Ferenc, [Rift and Revolt in Hungary](#) [8], Cambridge MA, Harvard University Press, 1961, pp. 590

Detailed scholarly study of Hungary from the Communist takeover to 1956, and with a final section on the period of 1957-61 when the Kadar regime established control.

Zinner, Paul E., [Revolution in Hungary](#) [9], New York, Columbia University Press, 1962, pp. 380

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