

Document: Budapest—Washington, 1956

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editor

Editor's Note:

The purpose of this article is to provide some insight into American official actions during a crisis abroad by placing on public record two reports which previously could not be published because of their security classification. One, dated October 25, 1956 was sent to the Department of State by the Legation in Budapest at the start of the Hungarian uprising, and the other, dated November 4, 1956 on the day of its collapse under the onslaught of Russian armed forces. They have been exempted by the Department at the request of the author who was chief of the Hungarian section in the Division of Intelligence and Research on the USSR and Eastern Europe at the time of the events reported. The documents reflect a crisis situation in which an American diplomatic mission abroad and its governing agency at home were in direct and continuous communication about unexpected developments which posed a possible physical threat to the officials and other Americans present at the foreign capital, and created major policy challenges and security problems for the home office.

Twenty-five years ago, through the most violent defiance of Communist authority to erupt in Eastern Europe, the Hungarian people secured within one week the formation of a government headed by a man of their choice. The Communist party of nearly a million members in a population of ten million disappeared overnight; its principal leaders fled to Moscow. The new leader declared that the previous

regime "brought the socialist reorganization of agriculture to a dead end, destroyed the worker-peasant alliance, undermined the power of the People's Democracy, trampled upon the rule of law, debased the people's living standards, established a rift between the masses of the party and the government; in other words, the country was swept toward catastrophe."¹ A lifelong Communist himself, Imre Nagy pledged domestic policies of a socialist nature within a democratic framework, pursuance of a neutral foreign policy, a free press, and a multi-party system based on free and secret elections. He demanded the withdrawal of Soviet troops which were attacking throughout the city as the teletype conversations between the American Legation and the Department of State went underway. The country became the scene of a Hungarian civil war and a simultaneous Hungarian-Russian war in overlapping theatres of operations.

[A few weeks before the date of the first document, Minister Christian M. Rayndal had completed his tour of duty at the head of the Legation and returned to Washington for reassignment. A successor, Edward T. Wailles, arrived shortly before the date of the second document; in the interim, Counselor N. Spencer Barnes acted as chargé d'affaires.]

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

INCOMING TELEGRAM

Control: 14766

Rec'd: Oct. 25, 1956

FROM: Budapest
TO : Secretary of State
NO. : Unnumbered, Oct. 25

Following is running overseas Teletype conversation between American Legation and Department starting at 6:30 a.m., October 25, 1956.

Quote

Legation: This is clear. Communications open temporarily. Am typing on floor. A big battle has just taken place in front of Legation seems to have gone towards Parliament seems all Americans still OK and safe. Street fighting again flaring up with tanks fighting it out at present. Stand by please, chief coming down into Telex room.

Department: Roger, will do.

Legation: Here he is. Do you have any questions at present? Here some news. Parliament Square 10:45 crowded with people afternoon October 24 continued street fighting many Soviet tanks and troops. Legation skeleton staff returned to homes without incident. Two officers and two Marines remained in Legation. Intermittent shots heard through night.

Quieter towards morning October 25. Crowds moving in streets, center town especially [Buda-]Pest Danube river bank area full of Soviet tanks and troops. US staff with no difficulty. About 10 heavy movement of tanks reported on Stalin Street. 10:30 large crowd marched north past Legation proceeded farther towards Parliament. Heavy gun fire from Parliament area. Some Legation reports that of some Soviet tanks going over to the crowd flying Hungarian flags from tanks with crowds. Budapest radio broadcasts statement that isolated groups firing in town. Advised people stay off streets. Large crowd dispersed before Parliament now mainly dispersed by Soviet tanks firing over crowds heads. Some tanks in control of crowd withdrew from Parliament area. Heavy firing continues hearing distance of Legation apparently tank guns. Any questions?

Department: Chief Warrant Officer is contacting Budapest officer here for questions. Do you people believe this fighting is going to spread further?

Legation: Have no way of knowing but seems very possible that it will spread. We all are in Telex room huddling on floor to avoid gunfire. Believe non-Hungary-stationed Soviet troops pulled into Budapest overnight. Prefix on truck numbers is Soviet 'F'. Have report that no airplane service to or from Budapest. Train service probably interrupted and no information on conditions Vienna Budapest highway except some reports of disturbances in Győr. Also heard reports of disturbances Debrecen and Szeged and Miskolc. Any questions?

Department: Have none at present.

Legation: Strength of Soviet troops which arrived in Budapest initially at 0400 hours local time 24 October estimated to be one mechanized infantry division. Hungarian troops held in background. Soviet doing bulk of fighting. Some Hungarian troops known to have joined the crowd. Situation in front of Legation building now quiet, fighting seems to have left this immediate area.

American apartment house on Szechenyi sprayed with Russian machine gun fire due to presence of insurgents firing from roof. All Americans and domestic help safe in basement, however windows broken from shell fire and front of building sprayed with machine gun fire from Russian troops dug in, in and around the building.

Some members in crowd before Legation have been shouting for United States assistance.

Army and Legation officers have personally observed several instances of Soviet tanks going over to crowds just prior to firing. These were seen flying Hungarian flags.

Still on floor, reason for bad typing.

All this information given by Legation officers.

Legation wife observed at 10:45 local time 76 Soviet trucks fully loaded with troops field kitchens towing howitzers proceeding from east in the direction of Parliament. All trucks bearing numbers beginning with Cyrillic letter 'F'. Agriculture attache has observed trucks bearing this letter by chance in Rumania.

Situation around Legation quiet. Any questions?

Department: None.

Legation: Is anyone from military there?

Department: Military will be informed.

Legation: Have set the printer back on table. State Department are you still there? This is American Legation Budapest.

Department: Yes, still with you.

Legation: Appears to be rather quiet around the Legation area again. Still there, State Department?

Department: Yes, will stay with you until you advise.

Legation: Just so long we don't get cut off is what I'm worried about. Budapest radio has just announced Gerő has been relieved of the party and has been replaced by Kádár who is to speak over radio shortly. Things seem a little quieter at moment and one city bus on normal run just passed by. In meantime John MacCormac of New York Times reported today to us on the basis of eye witness as follows.

What began Tuesday as demonstration in Budapest turned late the same night into revolution. Yesterday it became something like a small war after Russian troops had been called in to 'restore order'. At noon today the square before Hungarian Parliament was strewn with dead and dying Hungarian men and women shot down by Russian tanks. But the revolution did not seem to be over. New crowds of youthful demonstrators continued to form in Szabadság Square near the American Legation and only a few blocks from the Parliament. They carried Hungarian flags and shouted, 'Down with Gerő!' An hour later Gerő was relieved as boss of Hungarian Communist party and was succeeded by János Kádár. The massacre in front of Parliament occurred after some hundreds of demonstrators had come to it in trucks, armored cars and even riding on top of Russian tanks. They shouted to this correspondent, 'The Russians are with us! They say they don't want to shoot down Hungarian workers.' The Russian tank crews seemed to corroborate this statement when they smiled and waved. But this love feast became first a disappointment and then a tragedy. Some ten minutes later another Russian tank roared up and opened fire on the crowd. This correspondent saw some dozens of prone bodies and saw a number of

wounded men and women being carried away by rescuers who had to run the gauntlet of Russian fire. The tanks fired not only their machine guns but their big guns. Armored cars roared past but directed their fire mostly in the air apparently with the intention of terrorizing the fleeing crowd. The situation at 1:00 was completely confused. Some Hungarian soldiers seemed to have thrown in their lot with the insurgents. Others like the Russians were obeying orders to quell the insurrection. Today's insurgents were unarmed. All they had to oppose the mechanized might of the Russians and the Hungarian secret police was the Hungarian flag and their own bodies. When a truck full of Hungarian soldiers appeared in Szabadság Square and warned the demonstrating crowd that 'we are armed', one of the demonstrators held up the Hungarian flag he carried and replied, 'all we are armed with is this flag'. Hold on, will have more later. Please hang on. While we will have the circuit can inform you that large crowd still in front of Legation shouting for help, etc. Have you any questions?

Department: None right now. Hope you can hold circuit.

Legation: Hope so too. Appears we have friends in telegraph office. Very unusual.

Department: If you speaking of us, sure you have. Any more running comments?

Legation: Seems that crowd has left from in front of Legation and things again seem rather quiet. However, numerous times we thought this whole mess was over but it starts up very suddenly without any warning as you can well imagine. Earlier this morning I had the printer on floor typing from prone position with many more typing errors than appearing on this later transmission. Was rather afraid of bullets coming in the window since this Telex room is facing the crowd and would have more protection on floor. Fortunately no shells or the like came in this direction. I have man in back of me who was in Bogota in 1948 so situation we are facing is familiar. Have been informed that my own apartment all shot up, windows broken and a fire broken out in empty apartment adjacent to mine. Have not had opportunity to go see extent of damage but sure that some of my things are damaged from the numerous rifle and machine gun fire which occurred in that area when the Russians discovered some of the crowd on the roof of the American apartment. Am having bits to eat at my side and do not want to leave this machine while we still have contact. Any questions?

Department: No questions. Want to hold you on, don't jeopardize connection.

Legation: Believe Legation has reported situation in immediate vicinity

as fully as possible. Barnes in snack bar, will be here momentarily. Here now.

Department: What is your estimate of Imre Nagy's position now? Is there anything we can do to facilitate your task? We all appreciate magnificent job you all are doing. Sure you will be glad to know Wailes has applied for visas and should be departing within week or ten days.

Legation: Thanks. Good to hear that news. Here is answer to question one. This is a battle situation and we have no idea what is going to happen. Our impression yesterday was that in view of he being blamed for calling in Soviet troops, he lost a great deal of popularity. Where he stands today and how the people would view a further retreat from Kádár to Nagy we do not, repeat not, know. We presume Nagy is to all intents and purposes premier. Should the blame for the calling in of Soviet troops now be placed on Gerő and he made a scapegoat for all that is going on now, and if he made further concessions, he might have a chance. But we do not know enough to say anything very certainly.

As you undoubtedly know, Foreign Minister Horváth, and Sik, requested visa for attending General Assembly UN. Foreign Minister inquired today about them, after being incommunicado yesterday. Unless you see objection, we will issue them this afternoon or tomorrow, assuming contact with Foreign Office. What can you tell us about Secretary's statement last night?

Department: No objection to issuance of visas to Horváth and Sik. Cases of other officials will be subject of later communication.

Legation: We assume you will report to press and close relatives soonest that all Americans on Legation staff are in no imminent danger. Couriers OK, please inform Frankfurt. So far as we know there have been no American casualties, but our information is very meagre. We have been asked by the following American citizens to inform relatives that they are safe (LIST). Another group of seven Americans arrived by train this morning and we now are attempting to remove them from station to hotel and will give names later if possible.

Crowd has put up a ladder on Russian monument in front of Legation and is attempting to knock down red star. Otherwise rather quiet in front of Legation at present. In response to crowd which continued to grow before the Legation, demanding assistance, and as what apparently was the only way to prevent this crowd from growing into unmanageable proportions, we have just made the following statement and asked them to move away peacefully, they appeared satisfied. 'We understand the situation and it has been reported to our Government as fully as we were able. You will understand that we ourselves can take no decision,

this is a matter for our Government and the United Nations. We have been in Hungary for many years and we think we understand the situation.'

Department: Answer to previous question. Statement expected probably today. Secretary has asked us to pass on word to you that he is pleased and gratified by Legation's performance under these trying circumstances.

Legation: In speech just delivered on radio, Imre Nagy has promised inter alia that as soon as arms laid down, Soviet troops now, repeat now, fighting will be withdrawn to former position in Hungary and that negotiations will be started to have all Soviet troops withdrawn. Deadline of 18:00 yesterday for laying down arms canceled. Americans referred to earlier who were to be taken from station to hotel turned out to be Canadians, deposited safely. All except duty officers and those who cannot get to apartment are rapidly pulling out as it is getting dark. We will have only one further brief coded message unless something very dramatic takes place.

Thousands of Hungarians gathering in front of Legation again, shouting for Russians to leave. They are still gathering.

In notifying families please don't forget newlywed wife of Jerry Bolick, Marine Guard.

Mass demonstration carrying Hungarian flags and black flags running over two thousand have sung Hungarian anthem and appealed for help in front of Legation. In efforts to disperse crowd we have repeated in essence message given earlier. Some of crowd has dispersed but others are attempting to enter Legation, nothing really violent. Crowd presently singing, demonstrating. Time here 16:30 local time. We have just remade statement to crowd quoted earlier. If you have suggestions as to what we can say in future, we would like to have it.

Crowd slowly dispersing, 16:40 local time. We would like to have suggestions for statement, however, for future use.

Department: No suggestions for future statements except you may wish to reiterate our sympathy and assure crowds you are keeping your Government as fully informed as possible. Reluctant to keep this circuit tied up much longer, and unless you want to send further message we had better terminate.

Legation: Following this last message we have nothing more, many thanks for support. Following tactical estimate 17:03 local time. Budapest proper very unclear, outline seems as follows. Soviet, State security forces and other government units have set up downtown defense based on east end Margit Bridge and covering Defense Ministry and security

headquarters and north end Parliament Square. South of Parliament, but unknown to what degree east, anti-government crowds freely moving. Gellért area and bridge appears under the control of anti-government forces but tanks on Chain Bridge unknown as to allegiance. Soviet setting up heavy guns back in Városliget Park. If this outline is correct, heavy trouble may break out. Please note that as far as Legation concerned we desire to break contact and will route through Vienna if possible, or if very important, attempt to contact Secretary of State office direct.

Department: OK, we will sign off, thanks for everything, all you guys doing wonderful job, take care.

Moscow issued a momentous declaration on October 30. As carried by the official news agency TASS, the main points were:

The Hungarians "are justified in raising the question of eliminating serious mistakes"; the USSR "deeply regrets" that events in Hungary led to bloodshed, and "has agreed to the withdrawal of Soviet military forces from Budapest"; it "is prepared to start negotiations with the Hungarian government and other signatories of the Warsaw Pact about the question of stationing Soviet troops in Hungary"; and "it is ready to withdraw all Soviet economic, cultural, technical and military advisers from Hungary."

Order was being rapidly restored in the heavily damaged streets of the capital as well as in the provinces. A free press was already functioning, and free political parties, newly formed or resuscitated, took over the arena formerly occupied by a Soviet-imposed single party.

On November 1, Nagy summoned the Soviet ambassador and told him that he had received authoritative information of the entry of new Soviet army units into Hungary; he demanded their immediate withdrawal. At the same time he informed the ambassador of his decision to proclaim Hungary's withdrawal from the Warsaw Pact and to appeal to the United Nations to safeguard the country's neutrality. On the next day, additional Soviet troops were reported entering. On November 3, Budapest was encircled and provincial areas saturated with troops and tanks, and at dawn on November 4, a general assault was begun.

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

INCOMING TELEGRAM

Control: 2536
Rec'd: Nov. 4, 1956

FROM: Budapest
TO : Secretary of State
NO. : Unnumbered, Nov. 4

Following represents exchange of comments with the American Legation in Budapest by direct Telex connection commencing 11:45 pm November 3 and terminating 5:15 am November 4.

Legation: The Minister is out at present. Have someone looking for him but in meantime, in case this circuit goes out, would like to inform you that it appears at 5:00 am local time Russian artillery and mortar has begun falling on outskirts of Budapest. Earlier note from Minister follows. Interesting to note firing in suburbs began exactly 05:00 local time. Guns are heavy caliber and to date firing appears to be going out from city rather than in. Garbled local broadcasts are reporting either Nagy or Tildy have advised people to take to cellars as the city is being occupied. That's all for now, but we would like to hold the circuit for a while yet. Please get this to watch officer immediately. Now Minister here.

Department: Watch officer is here.

Legation: Unconfirmed reports state convoy across border. Have you any information?

Department: Did US dependents get out to Vienna today on second try? Hope you are aware of our immediate protest to Russian ambassador here on word that they had been turned back.

Legation: We do not know if they are out. But someone has reported that the Voice of America has reported that they were out. We are checking now to see if any last dope on that. Tildy's secretary has just phoned to say Russians attacking in all Hungary. He requested us to report that the Hungarian Government is asking the United States for aid. Broadcast at 05:45 reported Nagy stated Russians advancing on city and presently engaged with Hungarian army. We think there is enough in these reports that we have started priority material destruction . . .

Department: Here Washington, is this Legation Budapest?

Legation: Yes, we were cut off.

Department: Do you have any further word on American dependents that tried to enter Austria yesterday?

Legation: The answer is no, but we are trying to find out.

Department: Suggest you present your credentials. You may act on this immediately if feasible, and if desirable in your view.

Legation: Things have been quiet for about ten minutes, do not yet know what this means. Streets patrolled and Parliament Square filled with Hungarian troops. As for presenting credentials, doubt that at the moment could find the gentleman on whom I should call even if I could navigate streets. Will therefore wait temporarily to see what present lull means. Minister of State has just rung our doorbell, will sign off for a minute to see what he has on his mind.

Department: OK, we stand by here. Think you would like to know we are getting in touch with Lodge who is asking for a Council meeting immediately. No other news for moment, except good luck we still stand by. We will pass on to you immediately any news that comes in from New York.

Legation: That would be highly appreciated here.

Department: We also have call in to Vienna and will give you any news we can develop on convoy.

Legation: That also would be highly appreciated as some of the husbands are quite worried about safety of wives and children. The sooner you can supply information the better in order that they will know one way or other.

Department: Please assure all concerned that we are highly sympathetic and doing all possible.

Legation: Have examined credentials of Minister of State and find he is one of those appointed yesterday, will give you his name in a few minutes. He tells me Nagy has gone to Soviet Embassy and has not returned, he is thus one of two cabinet members now acting, he has a message he wishes to have transmitted to President. We are now translating it, he says it is most urgent. Translation proceeding as rapidly as possible. Meanwhile he says Soviet tanks at second bridge, in fact report is that they have two main bridges each about half mile from Legation, and we also hear that Defense Ministry completely surrounded.

Translation coming along. Note was delivered by Bibó, Minister of State, member of Peasant Party, now Petőfi Party. Tildy is the other Minister of State on the job. Here is the message.

Hungary in its present exceptionally difficult situation turns with particular confidence to President whose love of peace, wisdom and bravery so often firmly shown till now. Although people of Hungary are determined to resist with desperation the attack upon them, there is no doubt that in this unequal struggle they will be defeated if help not received. In this moment the most necessary kind of help is political, not military. It is clear that the new phase of the intentions of USSR are related to the

British intervention in Egypt. The subjugation of Hungary, however, would not only mean renewal of oppression in this country but it would also stop the liberation trends which have started so hopefully in the other East European countries. It would also bankrupt the ten year old American liberation policy which was pursued with so much firmness and wisdom. It would create a crisis of confidence for all the Eastern European peoples in the USA and on the other hand in view of the adverse effects of the Egyptian intervention it would bring to the fore isolationist currents which as shown by experience to date would be the most certain road to the inception of a world war. This is the historical moment to which both President Eisenhower and Secretary Dulles referred in earlier speeches when they said that only by risking a world war can a sure way be found to avert the outbreak of one. Without attempting in any way to give advice, we cannot forego bringing to the attention of the President the possibility that taking into account the most difficult consequences he can on the one hand bring the Western powers to end the Egyptian intervention by acting as intermediary in an armistice, and on the other hand he can call on the USSR to quickly withdraw its troops from Hungary. We know that the moral significance of the simultaneous execution of the two measures is as great as the practical difficulty in carrying them out.'

That is all that has been translated up to now.

Department: Believe Lodge will speak very shortly at the General Assembly, and meeting of the Security Council will probably be held early today, Sunday.

Legation: A few jets overhead but no immediate street fighting. Still no news from convoy, and Soviet Embassy says they do not know what is going on here in town.

Rest of message from Minister of State says in brief fate of the world now depends on President. Just made phone contact with convoy, I will tell you in a minute which side of border they are on. Wait. Sorry, it was not convoy. Lots of action here but nothing new to give you for the moment. May have something in a moment. Just having coffee at present, sure is good. We hope soon we will have information on dependents, all husbands standing by for any news, when you get it please relay soonest.

Department: We will certainly forward to you immediately anything we can develop. In meantime can you give us the rest of the text of the message to President?

Legation: Here is rest except for an eight line sentence which we cannot make out.

'We are not in position to further pursue these suggestions, but we

strongly emphasize that in this moment the fate of Eastern Europe and the entire world depends on the action of the President. The next few critical days will determine whether we enter on a path of peace and liberation, or whether we shall increase the appetite of aggressors and proceed to an inevitable world catastrophe.'

Department: The Security Council is meeting within a few minutes.

Legation: Delighted, and hope to get to you today for Lodge as accurate information on Soviet buildup as possible. We have actually seen numbers of tanks bearing markings, stop, Cardinal is now at the door and we are now taking him in, I'll speak to him and be right back.

Department: OK, standing by.

Legation: Minister has gone downstairs, will return shortly.

Continuing, Cardinal accompanied by his secretary, can we also take him in?

Department: Will have answer in a moment.

Legation: Waiting.

Department: Here is reply. Let the secretary in.

Legation: Henceforth will admit only Americans unless instructions from you.

Department: Can you get statement from Cardinal Mindszenty?

Legation: Am now asking him. In the meantime so far as we know there are only about eight Americans other than Legation here in city. They are journalists and we will take them in if they come.

Department: Who are they, please?

Legation: One moment, we'll see if we can get the list.

Department: Is Garst party still there?²

Legation: They left their hotel last Thursday and we have checked but we assume they are safely out of Hungary.

Department: Any progress on Mindszenty statement?

Legation: Please hold on. Minister has just gone down to ground floor to see what has developed along those lines, should be back shortly.

Department: Have you names of journalists?

Legation: There is a list in the Legation someplace, someone has gone up to third floor to see if it is still around. Anything else we can do?

Department: What is situation outside of Legation now?

Legation: Am here alone now, have blinds down and some safes against the window, cannot see a thing from here but it appears to me rather quiet, this room rather sealed off for over a week, we put the safes by window to stop any bullets from entering this room and reduce possibility of damage the Telex equipment and personnel working in this section of Legation. Here is translation of Cardinal's statement.

'Under the pretense of serious negotiations the assembled Soviet troops at dawn occupied the Hungarian capital and the entire country. I protest against this aggression and ask for forceful and speedy defense of my country by the United States and other powers.'

Did you get that OK?

Department: Yes, OK.

Legation: Several American newspapermen in group, believed to be all that are here have phoned from Duna Hotel they have tentatively decided not to take refuge in Legation unless permitted to bring a few German and other non-Hungarian assistants with them. What about it? Just heard that Russians have taken over Parliament building, about two blocks from Legation.

Department: Do you have any contact with British and other Western diplomatic missions?

Legation: No, not at moment, however am now trying to get British. In meantime here are the names of American correspondents. (LIST.)

Department: That's fine. We are still trying to reach Vienna regarding convoy. Stand by, something coming up. OK, we are still awaiting a reply and feel quite sure husbands are very anxious to hear of their whereabouts as soon as possible.

Legation: Have contacted British Legation and they know nothing more than we, they are sitting tight as we.

Legation: Regret, cannot authorize further refuge for other than American nationals. If you are still able to communicate you may recommend exceptions, otherwise, must leave to your judgment.

Legation: I think we must stick to Americans for the reason that food in the city is getting short and we must keep those at Legation at minimum from standpoint of our supplies which are sufficient for us, as well as possibly water shortage.

Just heard from Cardinal that some time ago he saw white flag raised on Parliament building. Unable to confirm.

We at Legation are grateful for this machine being installed when it was and is of great help and assistance to the cause, it is a fine bit of equipment and we shall protect it. We have managed to keep almost twenty-four hour coverage on this equipment by putting beds near the machine and bells would awaken operator to receipt of any and all urgent night-action telegrams, priorities, et cetera. By the way, what is the correct time there?

Department: It is now 2:45 November 4.

Legation: It is 8:45 am here, have just reset my watch to conform to yours.

Department: We are now in touch with Vienna on a weak circuit somewhat garbled version follows. Convoy was waiting at border last night. Vienna has an officer waiting at the Austrian side and attempting to get word to them. No report from the officer so far this morning. We are trying to get a clarification of the garbles.

Legation: OK, we will pass this to interested parties.

Department: Vienna is trying to reach Vienna officer by radio and phone.

Legation: Fine, hope you have success and then we will probably get more information on latest developments on Austrian border. When you get the information you will I am sure pass it along to us.

Department: You may be interested to know that Lodge broke news on Soviet occupation Budapest at General Assembly meeting tonight.

Legation: When Russians surrounded Parliament building, no firing took place as far as we know.

When next budget is presented we hope plenty of money put in for Telex expenses as this is certainly a great help at the moment.

Assume in due course you will let out Missions in neighboring countries know what is going on as we do not have time to communicate with them.

Department: We have United Press report from Vienna that Nagy Government captured and that Budapest radio now on air in Russian language. Associated Press reports from Vienna that Russians are bombarding and strafing city. It says Budapest radio went off the air moments ago. Hungarian news agency reports to Vienna that new Soviet controlled government has been formed outside city of Budapest headed by six Hungarian Communists. Any confirmation?

Legation: We have no confirmation. We can hear no bombing or strafing at this moment, if it is going on it must be well in suburbs.

Department: We have Vienna on line, anything you wish to ask?

Legation: We have reached American journalist group and told them if they wanted to come in here they may, and bring with them the German and other non-Hungarian assistants who definitely work for American press if there are not more than five. I said we could not take in Hungarian associates, which they seem to appreciate.

Department: Security Council in session, Lodge speaking, he says Soviet has ring of tanks around city. While this going on, Soviet press says Nagy has turned out to be enemy of people. Also, Budapest radio heard playing national anthem, voice saying 'You are Hungarians, here you live and here you must die'.

Legation: British military attache called and stated that he had heard

officially that Soviets had given the Hungarian government an ultimatum at 8:00 to the effect that if the government did not capitulate within four hours, Budapest would be bombarded. He states he was told that the government would technically capitulate under those terms but that the insurgents would not. Do you have any information on this?

Legation: No, we do not.

Department: We have word from Vienna through Defense Department that convoy was again turned back at Austrian border by Soviets, convoy is staying overnight at Red Cross Hospital at Magyaróvár but will try again to cross the border this morning.

Legation: Thanks, we knew that but were hoping for something later. New subject. Béla Kovács, Smallholder Party leader, with two associates, now at front door. Seeking asylum. We will have to turn them away, unless you instruct to contrary.

Department: Lodge concluded statement before Security Council by asking for adoption of resolution he introduced last night. Cuban now speaking.

Department: You are authorized to grant shelter tentatively to Kovács and his associates. We wish to consider disposition later.

Legation: Action being taken now to permit them to enter. Just made contact with head of International Red Cross to inquire what supplies have been coming in, as it was our opinion that road blocs had cut off transportation. In fact we have seen many Red Cross vehicles stopped from entering city. Red Cross said they have enough medical supplies for about ten days under present circumstances. We imagine a good bombing would use them up very rapidly. Food is probably a more critical problem as we gather that with city ringed by Soviets there is not more than two or three days supply. This does not apply to Legation.

Department: Cuban reviewed events in Hungary which he described as 'world shame' and laid it at feet of USSR. Britain's Dixon now speaking, he condemned 'brutal slaughter' of women and children and male civilians by Soviet troops in Hungary. Australian now speaking.

Legation: Just had a good flight of jets overhead. They kept right on going, did not stop.

Kovács has apparently left but may come back and we will let him into vestibule with his associates with firm understanding that this is tentative and no asylum granted.³ If they do come back and we have bombing at noon as threatened in ultimatum, we will take them in for a few minutes as the vestibule is largely glass. We plan to send staff to basement just before twelve and if it gets really hot we will all go there for a few minutes but will tell you beforehand in case you can keep machine

running. It is now ten o'clock here so there is still two hours to go. If you have nothing urgent, I will now give you list of Americans here. (LIST.)

Department: Australian in UN said delegates who went to negotiate with Soviets for withdrawal of Soviet troops from Hungary have not returned and have apparently been taken prisoner. Said 'no need to multiply recitation of tragic events, we have before us American resolution and we can do nothing less than adopt it.'

Legation: We understand that as late as 10:00 the Hungarians were negotiating with the Soviets, and have also heard this morning that Hungarian delegation has not returned, so it looks like Australian is correct although we have no positive proof.

Legation: We have telephoned Soviet ambassador, got him out of bed and told him we expected action on convoy as promised previously. Ambassador said he would send another telegram on the matter.

Some sort of press conference has been called at Parliament and we will let you know results when available. We do not know who called conference, believe all local radios now being jammed.

Department: We are on the phone to New York and will have something for you in a moment on Security Council meeting.

Legation: We now have Foreign Office on phone and will send their view of things in few minutes.

Department: Peruvian said yesterday we had hopes that Hungarian-Soviet negotiations might produce favorable results. Soviets had tried to force conditions which Hungary forced to reject. As result, Soviets understood to restore regime of 1948. A regime of force, he added, with all objections it produces, collides with moral forces of the world which will ultimately defeat it. The Soviet government has not only committed a 'great crime' but also a mistake in trying to restore 'Stalin tyranny'. It is impossible for any state to fight successfully against moral forces of the world which in the end prevail for all time. Soviets, he concluded, are guilty of slaughtering youth, women and children, and one of the beautiful cities of Europe, 'the pride of our culture, is now being wrecked in vengeance'. Further in UN, Chinese proposed change in US resolution. Proposed first point be changed to read: 'To call upon the government of USSR to desist forthwith from making war on government and people of Hungary and from any form of intervention in internal affairs of Hungary'. Belgium accepted the Chinese amendment.

We are on the line to New York again and will give you the gist as soon as we get it. We have all been with you in spirit on this thing and sure admire the way you have all held up.

Legation: Thank you very much. We are now translating what we

received from Foreign Office and local employee is taking down the substance of long talk with Minister of State.

Military attache reports two explosions a few minutes ago, more on the order of dynamite than bombing, target might have been Margit Bridge and Chain Bridge.

Department: Further on Security Council meeting, Soviets are speaking, will give you summary of remarks shortly. Have spoken to Bohlen in Moscow, asking him to take up the matter with the Foreign Office here.

Department: New York has just come in again on phone and may have summary of Soviet remarks.

Vienna: This is Vienna telex operator, we were cut off again, one moment, we will try to get them on the other line.

(No further contact established with American Legation Budapest.)

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[One final message came through Radio Budapest, the last words to be heard from the head of the revolutionary government:

“This is Imre Nagy, president of the Council of Ministers of the Hungarian People’s Republic, speaking. Today at dawn Soviet forces launched an attack against the capital with the obvious purpose of overthrowing the legal Hungarian government. Our troops are fighting. The government is at its post. I hereby report this to the people of our country and of the entire world.”]

NOTES

1. Imre Nagy, “On Communism: In Defense of the New Course” [New York, 1957].

2. A group of Iowa farmers led by agronomist Garst had toured Soviet agricultural areas in connection with a type of hybrid corn developed by them, in which Russian specialists had expressed an interest. The farmers planned to return home through Hungary and Austria; the outbreak of the uprising found them in Budapest.

3. “. . . the right is that of the State voluntarily to offer asylum, not that of the refugee to insist upon it.” [Chandler v. US, Court of Appeals 1st Ct, 171 F.2d 921935.] In American practice, each request must be dealt with on an individual basis, taking into account humanitarian principles, applicable laws, and other factors. In cases of such requests occurring within foreign jurisdiction, the ability of the US Government to give assistance will vary with location and circumstance of the request. It is the policy of the US not to grant asylum at its units or installations within the territorial jurisdiction of a foreign state. However, immediate temporary refuge for humanitarian reasons may be granted [except to board aircraft because of their vulnerability to hijacking] in extreme or exceptional circumstances wherein the life or safety of a person is put in danger, such as pursuit by a mob. Protection shall be

terminated when the period of active danger is ended, except that authority to do so shall be obtained from the Department of State.