

EASTERN EUROPE

5. The situation in Hungary: The peaceful anti-Russian mass demonstrations which began the afternoon of 23 October in Budapest erupted into large-scale, armed violence during the night, necessitating a sudden call for Soviet military assistance from the threatened Hungarian Communist regime. Although the regime is claiming that the first group of rioting "counter-revolutionaries" has surrendered to Soviet and Hungarian troops, the situation apparently remains out of control and the government has declared martial law and has forbidden public access to Budapest streets.

Budapest radio has announced that Soviet troops, at the request of the Hungarian regime, intervened on the morning of October 24 to put down "the dastardly armed attack of counter-revolutionaries" in Budapest. The USSR has approximately 27,000 ground troops stationed in Hungary. The Hungarian request for Soviet aid was made on the basis of the Warsaw treaty, after the unreliability of Hungarian army and police personnel was demonstrated by their participation in the rioting.

The new Hungarian premier, appointed on the night of 23 October, broadcast a demand the next morning that the rebels lay down their arms by 1800 (Budapest time) that day. An address at 1900 the night before by party first secretary Gero, stressing the continuance of Hungary's ties to the "glorious" Soviet Union, apparently provoked the demonstrators into armed attacks on public buildings. Budapest radio has implied that casualties have been numerous.

The efforts the night of the 23rd to appease the demands of the increasingly restive demonstrators by the hurried election of new party and government leaders--almost entirely nationalist-oriented Communists--did not have any effect. A last-minute plea to the crowds to return to their homes by the newly appointed premier, Gomulka-like Imre Nagy, whose restoration to power the demonstrators had been demanding, also failed.

In addition to naming Nagy premier, an emergency meeting of the central committee elected a new politburo, only three of whose members predate the Rakosi ouster of last July. Although headed by Gero, the politburo is dominated by the nationalist Communists. Only eight of the former 16 members were returned and virtually all of these, with the exception of Gero, have been identified with the moderate group. The retention of Gero--which may be temporary--may be designed

Approved for ~~KW~~
Date

15

to prevent direct Soviet intervention against the course of intraparty development toward "nationalist Communist independence" and "democratization."

All Western telephone contact with Budapest has been severed and Hungarian authorities have closed the frontier with Austria to all traffic.

The party and government reorganization is--because of Gero's retention--a more cautious development than the Polish parallel, but the nationalist moderates are in control of the party. These forces are in complete sympathy with Gomulka's "declaration of independence." Nagy is at this time the most powerful man in Hungary. He has long argued for Hungarian independence and a cutback in draining Hungarian commitments to the USSR.

N.R.