

DOCUMENT NO. 7

Minutes of the Nagy Government's Fourth Cabinet Meeting, November 1, 1956

The Hungarian Cabinet met in the afternoon of November 1 for its second session of the day. Yuri Andropov was invited to the meeting to explain the re-entry of Soviet troops into the country, but his attempt to play up Moscow's good intentions was unconvincing. The Cabinet decided unanimously (János Kádár included) to renounce Hungary's membership in the Warsaw Pact and declare the country's neutrality. Simultaneously, the government turned to the United Nations with the request that the four great powers jointly "help in defending" Hungary's neutral status. The decision amounted to a heroic, last-ditch effort to save the revolution. For the first time under the Soviet empire, an Eastern European government headed by a communist had turned to the Western powers for political assistance. However, Imre Nagy had no illusion about the West's willingness or capability to come to Hungary's rescue. While addressing a second telegram to U.N. Secretary General Dag Hammarskjöld on November 2 (see Document No. 74), Nagy, fully aware of the nature of Soviet imperial thinking, was also doing everything he could behind the scenes to convince the Kremlin that his government was in control of the situation and that Hungary represented no threat to Moscow.

November 1, 1956

Present:

Imre Nagy
Zoltán Tildy
János Kádár
Ferenc Erdei
Géza Losonczy

Also in attendance: István Dobi.

1. The Cabinet commissions Deputy Prime Minister József Bognár to temporarily supervise financial affairs and make sure that all financial institutions are working and properly directed. In the case of general economic measures he should involve Zoltán Vas in the decision-making.

2. The Ambassador of the Soviet Union in Budapest, Andropov, could not satisfactorily answer the questions of the National Government regarding the entering of further Soviet troops at the eastern border. Consequently Imre [sic: István] Kovács, chief of the General Staff, had to reveal to the ambassador in the presence of the members of the Cabinet details of Hungarian military observations about military movements, which undoubtedly prove that major Soviet military forces had crossed the border and are making their way towards Budapest.

Considering this situation, the Cabinet makes the following decisions:

- a) It immediately issues a declaration of neutrality.
- b) The Hungarian government immediately renounces the Warsaw Treaty and declares Hungary's neutrality, at the same time seeking recourse to the United Nations, asking the four great powers for help in defending the country's neutrality. The Hungarian government asked the U.N. secretary general in a telegram to put the issue on the agenda with special dispatch.
- c) The heads of diplomatic missions resident in Budapest will be informed of the above decisions.
- d) Finally, the decisions will be publicly announced partly through a radio speech by Imre Nagy and partly through an government statement on the radio and in the press.
- e) At the same time, the Hungarian National Government will take the opportunity for negotiations offered by the Soviet Union, and immediately appoint a committee, asking the Soviet government to set the time and place of negotiations as soon as possible.
- f) Finally, the Cabinet told Ambassador Andropov if Soviet troops are withdrawn from Hungary in the shortest amount of time allowed by such a military operation, then they will annul their telegram to the United Nations.

[Source: MOL, XX-5-h, Nagy Imre és társai pere, Minisztertanácsi jegyzőkönyvek, 25. köt., pp. 103-104.; MOL, XIX-A-83-a. 160. d., pp. 107-108. Originally published in Ferenc Glatz, ed., "A kormány és a párt vezető szerveinek dokumentumaiból, 1956. október 23-november 4," História 11, nos. 4-5 (1989): 49. Translated by Csaba Farkas.]