

‘Moscow throttles Hungary’s freedom’ from the Süddeutsche Zeitung (5 November 1956)


Caption: On 5 November 1956, the German daily newspaper Süddeutsche Zeitung describes the intervention of Soviet troops in Budapest during the night.

Source: Süddeutsche Zeitung. Münchner Neueste Nachrichten aus Politik, Kultur, Wirtschaft und Sport. Hrsg. Friedmann, Werner; Goldschagg, Edmund; Schöningh, Dr.Franz Josef; Schwingenstein, August ; R Herausgeber Friedmann, Werner. 05.11.1956, Nr. 265; 12. Jg. München: Süddeutscher Verlag. "Moskau würgt Ungarns Freiheit ab", p. 1; 2.

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Moscow throttles Hungary's freedom

Early on Sunday, Soviet troops went into battle throughout Hungary / fate of the Nagy Government uncertain / Moscow puppets have set up a rival government for the restoration of a people's democracy / In Budapest, desperate defensive action against the Russian tanks

Budapest (AP) — In the early hours of Sunday morning, backed up by thousands of tanks, squadrons of aircraft and several infantry divisions, invading Soviet troops throughout Hungary began to seize power and to defeat the revolutionary groups and the Hungarian army, which had taken their side. In the capital, the Russian tanks were able to advance as far as the Parliament Building, and yet, by evening, they still did not seem to have broken the desperate resistance. What is more, the Government of Imre Nagy does not yet appear to have fallen into the hands of the Soviets. While it still had control of the Budapest radio transmitter, it used it on Sunday morning to broadcast a call for help to the whole world, primarily to the Western Powers and the United Nations. That morning, the UN Security Council was already debating an American-Cuban motion calling for the immediate withdrawal of Soviet troops from Hungary and an end to the bloodshed. Once that initiative had been nullified by the Soviet delegation's veto, the Council resolved to refer the Hungarian situation to the General Assembly, which was convened at 10 o'clock on Sunday evening.

The attack by Soviet troops began at 4 o'clock on Sunday morning, after the Soviet High Command, which on Saturday had still maintained the fiction of negotiating with the Hungarian Government over the withdrawal of the Soviet troops, had, in an act of treachery, seized the Hungarian Minister of Defence, General Pal Maleter, along with the Hungarian military command. Soviet artillery opened fire on Budapest, while simultaneously some 1 000 Soviet tanks forced their way into the capital, and Soviet jet fighters swooped down, strafing the streets with all their firepower. At the same time, the Soviet High Command in Szolnok formed a rival Communist government under the leadership of the Party Secretary, János Kádár.

In spite of their superiority in firepower, Soviet troops did not achieve their objectives in the first onslaught. Within minutes, roadblocks sprang up all over the city, and deadly fire crackled down from every house onto the invaders. On the Danube bridges and at the approaches to the Parliament Building, the seat of the Government, Soviet troops were met by Hungarian tanks and were repulsed.

They also failed to take immediate control of the radio transmitters. Shortly after the initial assault, the Hungarian Prime Minister, Imre Nagy, broadcast from every Budapest transmitter a speech in which he declared: 'At dawn, Soviet troops began to attack Budapest with the clear aim of overthrowing the legitimate democratic Government of the Hungarian People's Republic. Our troops are resisting the Soviet troops in a struggle for right and freedom. The Government remains in office. We are bringing this news to the attention of the Hungarian people and of the whole world.' Nagy's speech, which was followed by the Hungarian National Anthem, was then continuously repeated in English, French, German, Italian and Spanish. The station called in Russian on the Soviet soldiers not to participate in the bloodbath.

Second and third Soviet attacks at 6 o'clock and 10 o'clock in the morning failed to achieve their objectives because of bitter resistance from the entire population. A Soviet ultimatum that was to expire at 12 noon threatened the bombardment of Budapest, but it went unanswered. Communications with Budapest were severed at 10.55. However, reports emanating from short-wave radio hams in Budapest state that the fighting continued undiminished into the afternoon and that the Soviets did not manage to take full control of the city until the evening.

Hungarian men, women and children advanced on the Soviets with whatever weapons they could find. They destroyed tanks with Molotov cocktails. As the hours passed and it became clear that they could not count on the expected immediate help from the West, their courage and determination still did not wane.

Imre Nagy and the Government again and again used the few remaining telex services to Vienna to ask whether they could count on receiving any assistance.

In other parts of Hungary, too, according to the few reports available, bloody struggles are raging. Only in a few areas do the Soviet troops appear to have been successful in taking control of cities through surprise attack. In some cases, they have obviously been helped by acts of treachery.

Nothing definite is known about the whereabouts of the Prime Minister, Imre Nagy, and the members of the Hungarian Government. However, it appears that they have been able to evade the Soviet forces. Cardinal Mindszenty, Primate of Hungary, who was released a few days ago, is under American protection in the US Embassy in Budapest.

The Communist rival government under Party Secretary János Kádár, which was formed in response to Soviet orders, describes itself as a 'revolutionary workers' and farmers' government'. It has declared a state of siege and a curfew across the whole country. Every contravention of its orders is to be punished by summary execution by firing squad. It has annulled every decree issued by the Nagy Government since 23 October.

Yugoslavia interns refugees

On Sunday afternoon, Radio Belgrade announced that 'several groups of armed people have today crossed the north-western part of the Yugoslav-Hungarian border.' According to the report from the radio station, the refugees were disarmed and interned in camps. No details were given.

Vienna (AP)