



# FOR FREEDOM AND INDEPENDENCE

1956  
2016



A MAGYAR SZABADSÁG ÉVE

## TWO WEEKS OF FREEDOM

The Revolution and Freedom Fight of 1956 lasted for no more than two weeks. Nevertheless, it shook the world. It wrecked the regime established by the great powers after World War II and unveiled the cruel reality of the Soviet-type terror apparatus. Once and for all, the world woke up from the illusions of communism. In October 1956 the Hungarian nation proved that it was capable of taking control of its own destiny.

The desperation and anger that had been bottled up for so many years finally broke to the surface during the revolution. The spontaneous uprising grew to become a revolution, and since the prerequisite of freedom is to regain national independence, it became a freedom fight. Sixty years ago the whole world turned its attention to Budapest. This life-and-death struggle that barely lasted two weeks made it clear for everyone that the then existing great powers did not allow the Hungarians' fight for freedom to have the least chance. Yet, the death defying courage of the boys of Pest inflicted an incurable wound upon communism and shook the Soviet empire.

On the occasion of the 60th anniversary of the 1956 Hungarian revolution and freedom fight, this exhibition pays tribute to the "boys of Pest".

*"The Hungarian youths were making history, what is more, world history!"*

Gergely Pongráz

*"There are no small peoples, only greedy ones, no one is suppressed once and for all, and it is reasonable to launch an armed rebellion against the power that is believed to be the strongest at any time, at any moment, if the suppression can no longer be tolerated, if it threatens a nation's existence and character!"*

Béla Dénes



**TerrorHáza**  
ANDRÁSSY ÚT 60.  
HOUSE OF TERROR





# WHO WERE THE BOYS OF PEST?

Most of those who took part in the armed fights sixty years ago were schoolchildren, university students, young workers, the legendary boys and girls of Pest. Whether they took up arms consciously or out of an ad-hoc decision, they were always driven by their desire for freedom. Many of them were hardly able to carry the guns, but they were fighting for freedom, for a life free of fear and distress with the persistence of teenagers. But without the boys and girls of Pest and Buda, the revolution that broke out on October 23, 1956 would have fallen victim to political deals within a couple of days. They were the winners of the revolution.

In the 1950s the world was still struggling with World War II in their living memory and with the nightmare of a possible third cataclysm fought with nuclear weapons. Hungarian youths were constantly fed with war stories, and there were documentaries about heroic Soviet partisans in the movies. It was compulsory to attend military training and drills. During the days of the revolution these young people began to make use of what they had learned at those drills and from the movies on the street. Within a few days' time, the boys of Pest rushing out to the streets grew to an organized, fearsome army, launching attacks on Soviet tanks from upstairs windows and gateways. Many of them became legends already during those days of the revolution. There was a joke spreading among the fighters: Why will the Hungarian freedom fight be victorious? Because there is a 'puskás öcsi' (literally: 'a guy with a gun') standing on every corner. (The pun made use of the nickname of the famous footballer Ferenc Puskás, i.e. 'Puskás Öcsi'.)

*"These young 12-13-year-old children gave us spirit to continue the fight."*  
Gergely Pongrácz

*"The doctors showed me around the wards of the injured rebels. The children's ward was located on the second floor. This is where I met Lajos, a twelve-year-old revolutionist, whose arm was shot through when he and his fellows were trying to blow up a tank. He was playing with a model airplane in his bed.*  
– What did you fight with, Lajos? – I asked.  
– Only with a wretched rifle – he said with a wave of his hand. – You know, I got a machine-gun from the soldiers but Mihály took it away from me.  
– Who is that Mihály?  
– The boy who lives next door. He is sixteen, so he is stronger than me, and he only had this rifle... But it was a good gun, I liked it.... Of course, a machine-gun is different – he sighed."

Endre Marton

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# the revolution from the children's point-of-view

Never was happy childhood a rarer gift than in the middle of the 20th century. As witnesses to the horrors of World War II, the generation born after 1930 grew up with death, armed battles, and constant family tragedies occurring right before their eyes. Most of them became adults too early. Many experienced the everyday life of the communist dictatorship developed after the war as young teenagers.

One of them, Gyula Csics was born in Budapest on November 7, 1944. He started to write a journal at the age of twelve during the first days of the revolution. He wrote his first journal entries in an exercise book, and then he bought a larger sized notebook for this purpose, framing each page in the national colors and decorating them with numerous drawings. The journal shows and follows up on the days of the revolution and freedom fight from a child's point of view. After the freedom fight had been defeated, the twelve-year-old boy hid his journal and he did not get it out until the Soviet troops left the country in 1991, some thirty-five years later.

October 23, 1956: The demonstration of students  
"When I was walking in the street, I saw three large trucks carrying university students at Corvin. A boy was standing on the top of the vehicle and shouted along with the others: 'Russians go home! Enough of leaders like Rákosi! Let's not waste any more time, we want Imre Nagy to be the leader!' Later I accompanied Maja to her religion class because she was afraid to go alone. On our way back we met a demonstrating crowd which stopped at Népszínház Street and sang the National Anthem. In the evening we listened to Ernő Gerő's speech. During this time Góré was at the studio. I went to sleep at nine. I was already in bed when I heard people yelling: 'We'll pull the Stalin statue down! Down with Gerő!'"

October 24, 1956: The revolution broke out  
"I was sorry for all those good books, but everyone said we should let them burn. Liptai, who lived in the passageway and was in Kígyósi's class with me, actually stole two books. We also saw streetcars knocked over. At this place some people said the Stalin statue was there at the crossing of 'körút' (the 'boulevard') and Rákóczi út. Then, since the tanks could not take the boulevard, they came along our street and were immediately shot so that the oil container was punctured and covered in oil."

November 1, 1956 All Saints' Day: Mindszenty speaks in the radio  
"In the evening there were candles in the windows in memory of those injured and deceased in the freedom fights."

November 4, 1956: The Russians attacked our Hungarian homeland  
"I woke up at about six in the morning and I heard shootings and said: "Hey, what is going on, are they shooting again?" At this moment Aunt Bözsi turned on the radio which was broadcasting Imre Nagy's speech. It was something like this: "Today at daybreak Soviet troops attacked our capital with the obvious intent of overthrowing the legal democratic Hungarian government. Our troops are in combat." After that they played the National Anthem, and then the announcement was repeated in German, French, English and Polish, accompanied by the National Anthem and the Appeal [Szózat]. Next, Imre Nagy called on Pál Maléter and István Kovács to come to the Parliament from the Russian camp at once. Then we went over to the Szabados family's place while the other residents of the building moved to the shelter. We kept on listening to the radio, which was put to silence at 9:14 a.m. We left it turned on, and all of a sudden we heard Radio Free Europe, which announced that Imre Nagy's government were captured by the Russians."

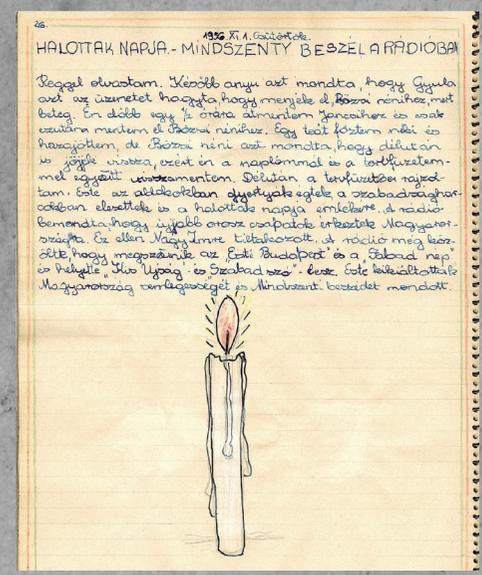
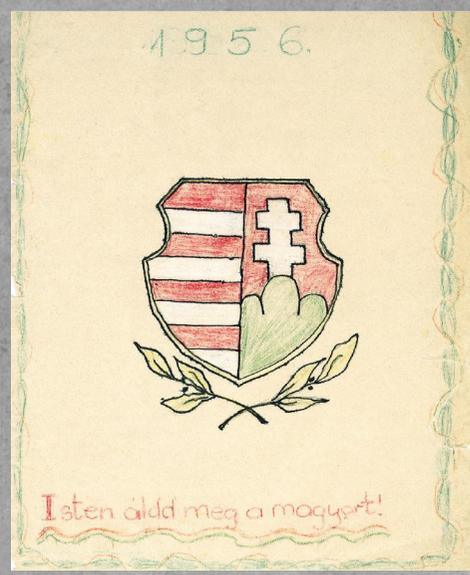
November 9, 1956: A short walk  
"In the morning I was reading books. In the afternoon we visited Aunt Bözsi with mom. When we got to Rákóczi Road we were faced with a miserable view: there were gunshots, collapsed floors and torn electric cables all around. The tower of Rókus Chapel fell down. Despite the flag with the red cross stretched across two floors, Rókus Hospital received five shots. The upstairs of Minőségi Department Store burned out completely. On the way back we took Wesselényi Street and the boulevard. We checked if Aunt Vali's house was intact. The furniture store at the corner of Wesselényi Street also burned out. The building at 4 Erzsébet Boulevard collapsed."



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# THE PATH TO THE REVOLUTION

At the end of World War II the Red Army invaded Hungary. The occupiers introduced a communist dictatorship, put an end to free elections, and power was ultimately exercised by one party, the Hungarian Working People's Party (MDP). The state security organization controlled by the communist party, the notorious AVO could arrest anyone and at any time, and it did so. There was some kind of an action taken against every third Hungarian citizen. Arrests were an everyday practice, and in "peacetime" more than four hundred people were executed. There was resistance against the communist dictatorship in all layers of society, and anti-communist groups were set up all over the country. If revealed, the organizers could be sentenced to long years of imprisonment or to death. Over a period of ten years, between 1945 and 1956, some one thousand five hundred people were accused of "organized action against the state" in more than fifty cases.

When in 1955 the great powers agreed to withdraw Soviet troops from Austria, many Hungarians cherished the hope that the occupying forces would finally leave our Hungarian homeland as well. In fact, despite the peace treaty, the Soviet troops stayed in the territory of Hungary under the pretext of ensuring supplies to their Austrian squads. Therefore it resulted in a great disappointment when the prime minister of the communist Hungarian government, András Hegedüs asked the Soviet Union to keep its troops stationing in Hungary's territory. The desperation was further aggravated by the speech delivered at the 20th Congress of the Soviet Communist Party in February 1956, in which the First Secretary of the Party, Nikita Sergejevich Khrushchev himself declared the Stalinist era guilty and terrorist. The speech, which was meant to be confidential, was soon disclosed to the public and upset the communists' self-confidence.

By 1956 the tension building up in the Hungarian society was close to a state of explosion. The news of the events taking place in Poznań, Poland spread like wildfire. In October some students at Szeged University formed an independent organization, which students from other universities began joining, one after the other. On October 22, students from the Technical University of Budapest put down their most important goals: they wanted the Soviet troops to leave and the country to be transformed into a democratic one. They demanded a multi-party system, the freedom of opinion and the press, the removal of the Stalin statue and a new government.

*"Withdraw all Soviet troops from Hungary in accordance with the Hungarian peace treaty. Review the system of delivery of agricultural products and support independently working farmers. In place of the existing coat-of-arms, which is foreign to Hungarian people, re-introduce the old Kossuth coat-of-arms. Immediately remove the Stalin statue, the symbol of tyranny and political oppression."*  
Excerpt from the demands of the Alliance of Hungarian University and College Students

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*"I was fed up with communism because we were deprived of everything we had had. So they simply broke us. All we had left was three beds, a table, four chairs, a cupboard and a fireplace. They took all our belongings away. I swore that as long as I lived I would fight against communism. I was always wondering where and how I could do harm to these damn communists."*

Sándor Szabó

*"We were all in fear, and we were not only afraid of our neighbors or friends, of our good and bad friends. We were also afraid of each other."*

Edina Koszmovszky





# OCTOBER 23, 1956

University students organized a demonstration for October 23 in the capital city. The holders of power were uncertain. They seemed to be unable to make up their minds whether to let the students' demonstration take place or prevent it altogether. Their hesitation only put oil on the fire. The students marched to the statue of József Bem and thereafter a part of the increasingly zealous and growing crowd walked over to the square outside the Parliament building. At that point Imre Nagy, a politician who was, for his earlier reforms, more popular than other communist leaders, addressed the demonstrators. He began by saying: "Comrades!" And the nearly two hundred thousand strong crowd roared up: "We are not comrades!" This proved to be the turning point.

Meanwhile, a group detached from the crowd and marched to the enormous statue of the hated dictator Stalin to bring it down. It took several hours of hard work to remove the thirty-or-so-foot statue from its pedestal but the thing was brought down by half past nine in the evening. All that was left there was a pair of boots. Thereafter the statue was dissected in virtually no time, and people took bits and pieces as a souvenir from the revolution. Another group, together with part of the disappointed and increasingly emboldened crowd from outside the Parliament marched to the Radio building to have their demands aired. The leaders of the Radio, however, did not allow them to read out their demands and the state protection gunmen securing the building made an attempt at dispersing the crowd. Finally, the state protection militiamen started firing at the demonstrators but after a bloody exchange of fire the Radio was taken over by the revolutionists, which brought victory to the revolution.

*"We marched over to Kossuth Square, which was when the flags with the coat-of-arms cut out appeared."*

Sándor Pechál

*"There was the Stalin statue, with flashes of light around it, welding pistols at work, a floodlight in the night, as the sculptors (as those bringing down the statue would come to be called in prison, while those destroying red stars were called astronomers) were busying themselves, working hard to topple the great leader of nations."*

Gábor Karátson

*"On Blaha Lujza Square Stalin's head was already crumpled, a big dent was made in it with all those big hammers. There was this kid of eight or nine, somebody put him onto Stalin's head. He had a newspaper in his hands, which he put into that dent and then set fire to the paper and shouted 'See the flame of the genius!' I couldn't believe my eyes! It was wonderful!"*

Sándor Szabó

*"Nothing but a pair of boots was to be seen where the Stalin statue used to be, the radio building was under siege, Soviet tanks were rumbled along the streets of Budapest – the revolution was underway. And although it had no leaders or scenario, it spread across Hungary like a wildfire."*

Endre Marton

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# REVOLUTIONARY FIGHTS

The Soviet army units stationed in Hungary entered the capital city on the morning of October 24. They expected a quick victory. However, with their small arms and petrol bombs freedom fighters forced Soviet tanks at some of the main junctions of the capital to withdraw. It was the Soviet intervention that turned the revolution into a true freedom fight. A patriotic war unfolded in Budapest. Passions were further intensified when peaceful demonstrators came under fire from Soviet tanks stationed on the square in front of the Parliament and from the rooftops of surrounding buildings. The ruthless bloodbath ended with nearly 80 dead and more than 300 wounded.

The ingenuity of the Hungarian freedom fighters, however, seemed to be unlimited: paved roads were smeared with soap on which tanks slipped all over the place, barricades were erected of paving stones, petrol bombs were manufactured, chains of notification were organized to let people know about tank movements. The success of the revolutionists was backed by the support of the capital city, indeed, the whole of Hungary. Groups of freedom fighters inflicted heavy casualties on Russian troops, even taking tanks, artillery and other military equipment as well as disarming their soldiers. The attacks on insurgent headquarters failed one after another, just like the communists' efforts to create conflicts among revolutionists and the residents supporting them, by granting minor allowances or favors. The united action on the part of Hungarians to recover their freedom forced the communist power to retreat. On October 28, 1956 the revolution seemed to be about to achieve its aims.

*"The worst of it was that so many buildings were hiding state protection officers who kept shooting insurgents one after another."*

Mária Sebestyén

*"Everyone was scared to death during the minutes before attacks. Once in battle we had no time for fear."*

Gergely Pongrácz

*"Bakers kept working day and night, farmers kept delivering flour and all, nobody was on an empty stomach."*

Béla Dénes

*"The petrol bomb or Molotov cocktail, the poor man's nuclear bomb, was deadly in the hands of those kids. Once I watched a tank being killed by two youngsters led by a flaming red-haired not particularly pretty girl of about 15 in one of the streets of Buda leading to Moscow Square. The task was straightforward – the three teenagers executed it as if in a gamely fashion but with perfect precision. They seemed to be idling away in a doorway about a hundred yards from the square, with bottles full of petrol in their hands. Then when the tank passed by the building, the girl commanded: 'Now!'"*

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# VICTORY

On October 28, 1956 Imre Nagy announced the immediate withdrawal of the occupying Soviet troops from Hungary. The political police, that is, the State Protection Authority, the dictatorship's most hated organization, was disbanded. An amnesty was announced for participants of the uprising and the hated coat-of-arms of the Rakosi regime was replaced by the so-called "Kossuth coat-of-arms". March 15 was restored as national holiday. Arms fell silent during the day and the freedom fighters took a rest. The curfew was lifted by the evening. Peace reigned over the streets of Budapest.

By the last days of October the institutions of an independent and democratic Hungary – including Revolutionary and National Committees taking care of public administration functions, workers' councils taking over the management of places of work, Revolutionary Military Councils supervising law enforcement organizations, the National Guard also including rebel groups as well as the political parties that had been forcibly dissolved after 1945 but now re-established – got to be formed and started doing their jobs. The fulfillment of the demands put forward on October 23 seemed to be within an arm's reach.

On November 1 the government headed by Imre Nagy declared Hungary an independent and neutral state. On November 3 a new multi-party government was formed with the leadership of Prime Minister Imre Nagy. Work on clearing away the debris caused by the fighting in Budapest started, transport services were reestablished and shops opened. A new, free life began to be taking shape in Hungary.

*"The comrades cannot take control of the masses – indeed, anti-communist elements are growing increasingly emboldened."*  
Report by Mikoyan and Suslov to the Communist Party of the Soviet Union on October 29, 1956

*"The revolution has won!"*  
Federation of Hungarian University and College Students, October 29, 1956

*"Nobody is firing from rooftops anymore – all that is to be heard is the soft and patient patter of the rain. Stains of blood are vanishing from the wet pavements and perhaps things may calm down at long last. But this week will forever be remembered by all!"*  
The daily Magyar Nemzet, October 30, 1956

*"We, communists, are aware of our defeat. The elections will result in our utter failure" – he said. "But we made so many mistakes during the last ten years that we deserve to be defeated."*  
Endre Marton

*"It took hours or just a few days for the symbols of Bolshevik rule to disappear! The statue of Stalin in the City Park was the first one to be brought down – all that remained after it was a pair of empty boots standing upright. Not far from my home there was the multi-storey building of the Post Office headquarters, with its walls pierced by hundreds of bullets and gaping holes caused by tank fire. The huge red star on top of the building could be seen from miles away at nights. It was absolutely stunning to see how volunteers climbed up, risking their lives, never giving up until they brought down the entire iron structure with those axes, hammers and jacks."*  
Béla Dénes

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# WAR AGAINST HUNGARY

Although the Soviets began to pull out of Budapest on October 30, the Soviet army did not leave the territory of Hungary: indeed, they set about preparing an all-out military operation against the country. Those heading the Soviet empire considered that "losing" Hungary would have entailed unpredictable consequences so they mobilized a military machine that could have annihilated half of Europe. Residents of Budapest dreaming about freedom awoke to the rambling of artillery fire and the rattling of tank tracks on November 4, 1956: during the small hours the Soviet army launched a full-scale attack on Budapest. At the same time, a puppet government headed by János Kádár, devised back in Moscow, was formed. It was not much later that the last radio address was delivered by the revolution's Prime Minister Imre Nagy. "Today at daybreak Soviet troops attacked our capital with the obvious intent of overthrowing the legal democratic Hungarian government. Our troops are in combat. The government is at its post. I notify the people of our country and the entire world of this fact."

The Soviet Union mobilized such a mighty destructive army against Hungary that the country stood no chance of successful military resistance. The boys of Pest armed with small arms only as well as some hell-bent groups of revolutionaries faced up to the Russian troops flooding into our country.



*"Tanks were shelling the capital city since early morning. Last evening they were still talking about leaving Hungary in three weeks or months. When they were saying that, they were already loading their guns."*

Radio Free Europe, November 4, 1956

*"We will never recognize the puppet government formed of betrayers of the motherland and killers of the nation."*  
The fighting revolutionary youth, November 5, 1956

*"Tanks kept rattling towards the city along Pesti Road all night long. Finally they told us to record the number of tanks passing and then report it in the morning. All right, but guns had been rumbling away right from early morning, we heard the whole thing. We were outraged. It felt so humiliating, so unworthy. For of course they had said that the Soviet Union would withdraw its troops from Pest."*

Attila Szabó

*"In the early hours of November 4 I was out on guard duty. Rumbling was heard from Nagyvárad Square at 4:30, which is when the Russian invasion was started, tanks came pouring in. I then shot into the air; that was the alarm."*

György Máriási

*"One of the adults shouted – he must have done military service, he understood things better than the rest – 'On the ground, everyone!' I tripped and fell, others were pushed down by adults, everyone was lying on the ground but immediately – all it took was a few seconds – a T-34 shot there from Üllői Road, pulling down the 60 cm thick fence at about the height of a man."*  
Károly Törő



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# ARMED GROUPS IN BUDAPEST

Already in the early morning of October 24, the boys of Pest began to prepare their positions at parts of the city that were of key strategic importance and easy to defend. The major centers of resistance in Buda were at and around Széna Square and at Móricz Zsigmond Square. In Pest, armed groups were formed in Józsefváros, Ferencváros and in the outer districts. The most significant ones were in Corvin Lane, in Tűzoltó Street and at Baross Square.

Wherever they were, most of the youths taking part in these armed groups were those referred to as "the boys of Pest": unskilled workers, miners, apprentices and university students who took up arms in order to fight for the independence of their nation. The armed groups enjoyed the support of the entire country: medical students and nurses joined them and others delivered food supplies or helped them in any other way. After the ceasefire of October 28, many of the rebels applied for admission to the National Guard, the law enforcement body of the revolution.

It did not take the members of the spontaneously formed armed groups long to shake together, and they often achieved great successes in combat. They caused serious losses to the Soviets even after the general assault had been launched on November 4. The sacrifices they made for the sake of the revolution are recorded among the most glorious chapters of Hungarian national history.

*"In front of Corvin Movie Theater there was a building which had already collapsed by that time. The ruins of this house served as a cover. Two Russian tanks were coming from the direction of Boráros Square. From behind the ruins of the collapsed house we threw gasoline bottles at the two tanks and fired them with our guns because this is how we were able to set them on fire."*

Miklós Keczől

*"Scattered all around the roofs and gateways, these enthusiastic young revolutionists, who seem to have learned bush-fighting excellently, are disturbing the tanks with their nonstop firing. The courage of the boys is amazing."*

The daily Népszava, November 2, 1956

*"From the very beginning, the whole fight was of a defensive nature, we never took the initiative. We defended the neighborhood. [...] if we were attacked, we used all our efforts to resist and hold out to the end."*

István Angyal

*"On the day of my release, I went to Corvin Lane and joined the armed group of revolutionists stationing there. As I heard, during the revolution it was around Corvin Lane that the fights between the Hungarian revolutionists and freedom fighters and the invading Soviet troops were the most severe."*

Jenő Sujánszky

*"They brought a big cannon and they said I was the one who would have to feed the ball into it. After the first cannon-shot I thought I would get deaf. My ears were buzzing for a long time. I stayed there for four days. We were standing there and waiting for the tankers to come, and we really did them in. Many of them were shot there along Üllői Road, they were all blown away."*

László Almási

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# OUR HEROES

*"We caught 690 people. The oldest one was 28 years old. We found hundreds of 14-18 year-olds."*

László Földes, Central Committee of the Hungarian Working People's Party (MDP)  
October 26, 1956

*"We tried to send these young, 12-13-year-old children home, but they refused to go."*

Gergely Pongrátz

*"Most of the youths were under the age of 18. They escaped from home so as to join the freedom fighters. The pavement of the Boulevard was covered with masses of their corpses. Their blood was mingling with the rain, but they were still holding on to their guns tight."*

The daily Igazság, October 30, 1956



Ács Lajos (1938–1959)  
Districts VIII and VII  
An armed revolutionist who continued the insurgence after the revolution was suppressed. He was executed.



Bakos Gyuláné Salabert Erzsébet (1930–1958)  
Districts XIII, VII and VIII  
An armed revolutionist who participated in armed battles from the outbreak of the revolution. She was executed.



Angyal István (1928–1958)  
District IX  
The leader of the Tűzoltó Street armed group. He was executed.



Bán Róbert (1934 –1957)  
District II  
The deputy commander of the Széna Square armed group, then the leader of the miners' brigade. He was executed.



Balás-Piri László (1935–)  
District VIII  
An armed revolutionist and a member of the National Guard of the Medical University of Budapest. He was imprisoned.



Bárány János (1930–1959)  
District IX  
The leader of the Tompa Street armed group. He was executed.



Bosnyák Gábor (1930–1958)  
Districts VIII  
An armed revolutionist and one of the squad commanders of the Práter Street armed group. He was executed.



Brusznjai Árpád (1924–1958)  
Veszprém  
The chairman of the Revolutionary Council of Veszprém County. He was executed.



Csizmadi Ferenc (1932–1958)  
District XIII  
The commander of the armed group formed at the junction of Váci Road and the Rákos Brook in Angyalföld. He was executed.



Csongovai Per Olaf (1930–2005)  
District IX  
One of the commanders of the Tűzoltó Street armed group. He emigrated.



Dalmadi Jenő (1937–)  
District III  
An armed revolutionist and a soldier, one of the leaders of the fighters of the Schmidt Castle in Óbuda. He was imprisoned.

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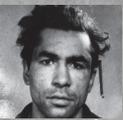
Dandos Gyula (1938–1957)  
Nyíregyháza  
The chairman of the Revolutionary Student Council. He was shot dead at the border while he was trying to escape.



Diera Emil (1925–2013)  
District IX  
An armed revolutionist and soldier, one of the defenders of the Kilián Barracks.



# OUR HEROES



**Dilinkó Gábor (1929–2014)**  
District VIII  
An armed revolutionist and a member of the Corvin Lane armed group. He was imprisoned.



**Fejes József Tibor (1934–1959)**  
District VIII  
An armed revolutionist and a member of the Corvin Lane armed group. He was executed.



**Gérecz Attila (1929–1956)**  
District VIII  
An armed revolutionist who joined the fights as a former political convict just released from prison. He was killed in action.



**Gyarmati Dezső (1927–2013)**  
Melbourne  
The chairman of the revolutionary committee of the Hungarian Olympic Team, a national representative water polo player. He emigrated but returned home in 1958.



**Havrila Béláné Sticker Katalin (1932–1959)**  
District VIII  
An armed revolutionist and a member of the Corvin Lane armed group. She was executed.



**Horváth István (1936–1957)**  
Districts IX and XXI  
An armed revolutionist and a member of the National Guard. He was executed.



**Iván Kovács László (1930–1957)**  
District IX  
One of the commanders of the Corvin Lane armed group. He was executed.



**Kabelács Pál (1937–)**  
Districts VIII and IX  
An armed revolutionist and a member of the Corvin Lane armed group and then that of the Tompa Street group. He was imprisoned.



**Karátson Gábor (1935–2015)**  
District V  
A member of the Revolutionary Committee of Eötvös Loránd University. Earlier he was one of the founders of the Alliance of Hungarian University and College Students (MEFESZ). He was imprisoned.



**Kiss Tamás (1934–)**  
Szeged and Budapest  
One of the founding members of the Alliance of Hungarian University and College Students (MEFESZ) and a member of the National Guard. He was imprisoned.



**Kósa Pál (1921–1959)**  
District IV  
One of the chairmen of the Revolutionary Committee of Újpest responsible for supplying the district with guns. He was executed.



**Koroly Tivadar György (1928–2013)**  
District XIX  
Second Lieutenant, the commander of the Kispest National Guard. He was imprisoned.



**Mansfeld Péter (1941–1959)**  
District II  
A revolutionist and a member of the Széna Square armed group, one of the participants of the armed insurgency after the suppression of the revolution. He was executed.



**Nagy Attila (1933–1992)**  
Miskolc  
The vice-chairman of the Workers' Council of Borsod County. He was imprisoned.



**Nickelsburg László (1924–1961)**  
District VII  
One of the commanders of the Baross Square armed group. He was executed.

# 1956 2016



A MAGYAR  
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**Nóvé Gyula (1938–2013)**  
District VIII  
An armed revolutionist and a member of the Corvin Lane armed group. He was imprisoned.



**Obersovszky Gyula (1927–2001)**  
Budapest  
A journalist and editor, one of the organizers of the silent demonstration on November 23 and the women's demonstration on December 4. He was imprisoned.



# OUR HEROES



Oltványi László (1915–1996)  
District XX  
The commander of the armed group of Pesterzsébet. He emigrated.



Pálincás-Pallavicini Antal (1922–1957)  
Rétság  
Major and the chairman of the Revolutionary Military Council of the Rétság tank regiment. He was executed.



Pércsi Lajos (1911–1958)  
District III  
Major, armed revolutionist and one of the commanders of the fighters of the Schmidt Castle in Óbuda. He was executed.



Peredi László (1943–1997)  
District VIII  
An armed revolutionist, one of the youngest members of the Corvin Lane armed group. He got injured in the fights.



Pongráz Gergely (1932–2005)  
District VIII  
One of the commanders of the Corvin Lane armed group. He emigrated.



Rajki Márton (1901–1959)  
District IV  
One of the chairmen of the Revolutionary Committee of Ujpest and a founder of the Christian Party. He was executed.



Regéczy-Nagy László (1925–)  
District V  
He liaised between István Bibó, Árpád Göncz and the British Ambassador to Budapest. He was imprisoned.



Rémiás Pál (1930–1958)  
District XX  
Second Lieutenant who started fighting against the Soviets at the Juta Hills. He was executed.



Sorn Károly (1931–)  
District XXI  
The leader of the armed group formed in Királyerdő. He emigrated.



Steiner Lajos (1930–1958)  
District VII  
The commander of the Csengery Street armed group. He was executed.



Szabó János (1897–1957)  
District II  
The leader of the Széna Square armed group. He was executed.



Szalontay-Kovács Ilona (1940–)  
District VIII  
An armed revolutionist who managed to protect the flag of the Corvin Lane armed group. She emigrated.



Székely Dezsőné Sebestyén Mária (1935–)  
District IX  
She helped to take care of the injured as a nurse and participated in the women's demonstration on December 4. She was imprisoned.



Szigethy Attila (1912–1957)  
Győr  
The chairman of the Temporary National Council in Győr and then that of the Transdanubian National Council. He committed suicide before his case was brought to court.



Szobonya Zoltán (1909–1958)  
Jánoshalma  
The secretary of the revolutionary committee of Jánoshalma, who organized and led local events. He was executed.



Tóth Ilona (1932–1957)  
District VII  
Involved in the political resistance activities of the Péterfy Sándor Street Hospital, she took care of the injured as a final-year medical student. She was executed.

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Veréb László (1935–1959)  
Törökbálint  
A member of the National Guard, an escaped conscript. He was executed.



Wágner István (1936–1985)  
District IX  
He was the commander of the Berzenczey Street armed group. He emigrated.



Wittner Mária (1937–)  
District VIII  
An armed revolutionist and a member of the Corvin Lane armed group. She was imprisoned.



# OUR DEAD

During the revolution and freedom fight almost 20 thousand people were injured, more than two and a half thousand died – nearly two thousand of them in Budapest – and 200 thousand people were compelled to leave their country. In the first few days of November the Soviets arrested about five thousand people, 860 of whom, including soldiers, university students and boys and girls, were deported to the Soviet Union as prisoners of war.

Almost half of those who died in the revolution and freedom fight were from among the "boys of Pest". As a result of the armed fights, eleven years after World War II Budapest was once again in ruins. It was the inner parts of Józsefváros and Ferencváros near the Boulevard that were the most severely damaged. The Corvin Lane, the surroundings of Blaha Lujza Square and the 8th District, i.e. Józsefváros suffered the greatest destruction. Significant damage was caused to Móricz Zsigmond Square as well. Due to the extent of the devastation, it was impossible to restore several buildings after 1956. The bullet-holes on several buildings still remind us of the heroic acts of the revolutionists.

*"It is the evening of the dead: the evening of heroes and martyrs."*  
The daily Egyetemi Ifjúság, November 2, 1956

*"Budapest. This word does not simply refer to a city any longer. Today, Budapest is the symbol of heroism."*

Isván Örkény

*"We woke up [on October 25] to gun-fire and the roar of tanks. There were tanks standing in front of the house and in Városház Street. We went down and walked along Múzeum Boulevard, Üllői Road and the Great Boulevard and saw the buildings destroyed by gunshots and dead youths and people smashed by caterpillars all over the street. Both Russians and Hungarians."*

Isván Angyal

*"All of a sudden, machine-guns began rattling on the roof of the Ministry of Agriculture. They were firing at the crowd. The people started to spread. The tanks were firing at people lying on the ground with heavy machine-guns. There were limbs and heads all over the place. When they stopped firing, we went to help the injured. They started to fire again, so I picked up one of the injured, a small ten-year-old child, who died in my arms."*

Dr. Bertalan Andrásfalvy

*"The square was full of dead people. There were even more people lying on the paving-stone. We went around the Rákóczi Statue. That is where most people were lying. There was a beautiful young girl. She was about twenty. She must have just washed her hair. It was so moving to see how the soft breeze was blowing her hair."*

János Meszlényi

*"At the beginning of the street fights the Russians were stationed at Oktogon, and an old lady wanted to cross Andrásy Street. And we told her: 'Don't go there!' She said: 'But why not?' So we told her that the Russians were there at Oktogon. 'But why? I always go this way!' And off she went. And they were shooting at her. With a gun."*

Géza Dámós

1956  
2016



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# RETRIBUTION

Many freedom fighters held out until the middle of November. However, they had no chance of winning against superior forces. The revolutionists were arrested. The Kádár government, which relied on the Soviet troops, took all kinds of actions against those who protested against the reorganized communist dictatorship.

The Hungarian society paid a huge price for those less than two weeks of freedom. The Kádár regime took brutal revenge for 1956. The reprisal and terror was unprecedented in Hungarian history. Martial law was introduced. The age limit of the death penalty was reduced to 16 years. It was under this legislation that Péter Mansfeld, among others, was executed. Until the end of 1961 some twenty-two thousand people were imprisoned for some time. 229 freedom fighters were executed, and thirteen thousand people were interned. The amnesty that entered into force due to international pressure in 1963 did not prove to provide full protection. Those "boys of Pest" who had avoided the death penalty could not continue their studies after their release from prison. They could barely find a suitable job or earn a decent income. The heroes and their family members were subject to stigmatization, observation and harassment, and their heroic acts were meant to be deleted from memory by all possible means. The holders of power had referred to the revolution as "the counter-revolution" and "the regretful events" before the regime change, and then on June 16, 1989, along with the reburial of Imre Nagy and his fellow martyrs we finally buried communism, the Kádár regime and the dictatorship. After the regime transformation, in 1990 the first freely elected Hungarian Parliament adopted an act on the historical significance of the 1956 Hungarian revolution and freedom fight.

*"We called on the fighters to stop struggling. Not all of them obeyed our command. We had no alternative but to shoot them dead."*

János Kádár

*"I said it was a revolution. They transferred me to the State Protection Authority, where I spent a year in a private cell. I was beaten twice: first they knocked my teeth out and then they beat my kidney down."*

Mrs. László Stancel

*"Soon after November 4, news started to spread about the deportations. Some of the deportees were leaders of student and worker groups, but most of those who were forced to get on trains to the Soviet Union were simple citizens, young and not so young alike."*

Endre Marton

*"I was beaten up several times. The charge was 'armed uprising aimed at overthrowing the People's Republic'. I was sentenced to death. Mrs. Béla Havrila, née Katalin Sticker – we were mates during the revolution and we were in the same prison cell waiting for our execution. It was really shocking for me when she was taken away and hanged."*

Mária Wittner

*"I went out for a walk on Margaret Island early in the morning, and when I returned my father was waiting for me outside and said: Edina, the State Protection Authority officers are looking for you, run away!"*

Edina Koszmovszky

*"The judge at the court in Markó Street asked the convict: – How come you joined the fascist mob as an old communist? – The defendant József Pendli (Bozsó) jumps up and spits his words in the judge's face: – They didn't speak to me with any respect, so I had no choice, I took up arms! – Then he points an imaginary machine-pistol at the judge and pretends to fire a salvo: – Ratatatatamm!"*

Gábor Karátson

*"I got injured. I had three operations. First I was taken to the hospital in Vas Street, and then to the Rock Hospital, which I left on the morning of October 26, and already in that afternoon I was taken away. They didn't take me to the court-martial, but I was badly tortured. Just imagine, I was alone in the whole building in Markó Street. I was the first to be arrested. I spent Christmas and New Year's Day there. First I was sentenced to 8 years, then to 15 years, and then I spent 6 months there alone as a prisoner condemned to death. That was the end. I was released under the great amnesty in '63."*

Vilmos Weinhardt

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# THE RESPONSIBLE

**Chairman of the Presidential Council**



Dobi István (1898–1968)  
Chairman of the Presidential Council

**Members of government**



Kádár János (1912–1989)  
Chairman of the Council of Ministers (1956–1958, 1961–1965)



Münnich Ferenc (1889–1967)  
Vice-Chairman of the Council of Ministers (1956–1958), Chairman of the Council of Ministers



Antos István (1908–1960)  
Minister of Finance (1957–1960)



Apró Antal (1913–1994)  
Minister of Industry (1956–1958)  
Deputy Prime Minister (1957–1971)



Benke Valéria (1920–2009)  
Minister of Education (1958–1961)



Biszku Béla (1921–2016)  
Minister of the Interior (1957–1962)



Czinege Lajos (1924–1998)  
Colonel General, Minister of Defense (1960–1984)



Dögei Imre (1912–1964)  
Minister of Agriculture (1956–1960)



Fehér Lajos (1917–1981)  
Deputy Prime Minister (1962–1974)



Fock Jenő (1916–2001)  
Deputy Prime Minister (1961–1967)



Horváth Imre (1901–1958)  
Minister of Foreign Affairs (1956–1958)



Ilku Pál (1912–1973)  
Minister of Education (1961–1965)



Kállai Gyula (1910–1996)  
Minister of Education (1956–1958)  
Deputy Prime Minister (1960–1965)



Kossa István (1904–1965)  
Minister of Finance (1956–1957)



Losonczi Pál (1919–2005)  
Minister of Agriculture (1960–1967)



Marosán György (1908–1992)  
Minister of State (1956–1960)



Nezvál Ferenc (1909–1987)  
Minister of Justice (1957–1966)



Nyers Rezső (1923–)  
Minister of Finance (1960–1962)



Pap János (1925–1994)  
Minister of the Interior (1961–1963)

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Péter János (1910–1999)  
Minister of Foreign Affairs (1961–1973)



Révész Géza (1902–1977)  
Colonel General, Minister of Defense (1957–1960)



Rónai Sándor (1892–1965)  
Minister of Trade (1956–1958)



Sík Endre (1891–1978)  
Minister of Foreign Affairs



# THE RESPONSIBLE

## Members of the Political Committee of the Hungarian Socialist Workers'



Gáspár Sándor (1917–2002)  
Member of the Political Committee (1962–1987)



Kiss Károly (1903–1983)  
Member of the Political Committee (1956–1962)



Komócsin Zoltán (1923–1974)  
Member of the Political Committee (1962–1974)



Nemes Dezső (1908–1985)  
Member of the Political Committee (1957–1980)



Somogyi Miklós (1896–1980)  
Member of the Political Committee (1957–1966)



Szirmai István (1906–1969)  
Member of the Political Committee (1962–1969)

## Members of the Central Committee of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party



Aczél György (1917–1991)  
Member of the Central Committee (1956–1989)



Cservenka Ferencné (1918–2010)  
Member of the Central Committee (1957–1988)



Földes László (1914–2000)  
Member of the Central Committee (1956–1970)



Gyurkó Lajos (1912–1979)  
Major General, member of the Central Committee (1959–1962)



Nógrádi Sándor (1894–1971)  
Colonel General, member of the Central Committee (1957–1971)



Uszta Gyula (1914–1995)  
Lieutenant General, member of the Central Committee (1956–1966)

## Presidents of the Supreme Court



dr. Domokos József (1890–1978)  
President of the Supreme Court (1954–1958)



Jahner-Bakos Mihály (1912–1996)  
Colonel, military judge, President of the Supreme Court (1958–1963)

## Prosecutor General



Dr. Szénási Géza (1919–1979)  
Prosecutor General (1956–1975)

## Those responsible for the Soviet military intervention



Gerő Ernő (1898–1980)  
First Secretary of the Central Leadership of the Hungarian Working People's Party (July 18, 1956 – October 25, 1956)



Hegedüs András (1922–1999)  
Chairman of the Council of Ministers (April 18, 1955 – October 24, 1956)

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# THE RESPONSIBLE



Khrushchev, Nikita Sergeevich (1894–1971)  
General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (1953–1964)



Bulganin, Nikolai Alexandrovich (1895–1975)  
Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the Soviet Union (1955–1958)



Pervukhin, Mikhail Georgievich (1904–1978)  
Vice-Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the Soviet Union (1955–1957)



Zhukov, Georgy Konstantinovich (1896–1974)  
Marshal, Minister of Defense of the Soviet Union (1955–1957)



Serov, Ivan Alexandrovich (1905–1990)  
Major General, Head of the KGB (1954–1958)



Shepilov, Dmitri Trofimovich (1905–1995)  
Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Soviet Union (1956–1957)



Sokolovsky, Vasily Danilovich (1897–1968)  
Marshal, Chief of Staff of the Soviet Army (1952–1960)



Konev, Ivan Stepanovich (1897–1973)  
Marshal, Commander-in-Chief of the United Armed Forces of the Warsaw Pact (1956–1960)



Andropov, Yuri Vladimirovich (1914–1984)  
Soviet Ambassador to Budapest (1954–1957)



Aristov, Averky Borisovich (1903–1973)  
Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (1955–1960)



Brezhnev, Leonid Ilyich (1906–1982)  
Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (1956–1957)



Furtseva, Yekaterina Alexeyevna (1910–1974)  
Alternate member of the Presidium of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (1956–1957)



Kaganovich, Lazar Moiseyevich (1893–1991)  
Member of the Presidium of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (1930–1957)



Mikoyan, Anastas Ivanovich (1895–1978)  
Member of the Presidium of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (1935–1966)



Malenkov, Georgy Maximilianovich (1902–1988)  
Member of the Presidium of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (1937–1957)



Molotov, Vyacheslav Mikhailovich (1890–1986)  
Member of the Presidium of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (1926–1957)



Saburov, Maksim Zakharovich (1900–1977)  
Member of the Presidium of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (1952–1957)



Pospelov, Pyotr Nikolayevich (1898–1979)  
Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (1953–1960)

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Suslov, Mikhail Andreyevich (1902–1982)  
Member of the Presidium of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (1955–1982)



Voroshilov, Kliment Yefremovich (1881–1969)  
Marshal, Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Council of the Soviet Union (1953–1960), member of the Presidium of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (1926–1960)



"We did not even know what time it was, or indeed what day it was. We heard no news broadcasts, word of things that had happened just simply got round."

József Nagyidai

"God, how wonderful, what an elevating feeling it is to be Hungarian in these moments!"  
The daily Magyar Nemzet, October 30, 1956

"A board hanging on the shop-window of a pharmacy reads: The purity of our revolution makes it possible for us to collect contributions to help the families of our martyrs. Coins keep dropping into the box each and every second. Hardly anyone passes by without making a modest donation. But none reaches out with a sinner's hand either."  
The daily Magyar Szabadság, November 3, 1956

"In memory of our martyred hero freedom fighters put a flower and candle in every window!"  
leaflet

"Fly the national flag!"  
leaflet

"The freedom fight and the strike will continue as long as the Soviet army units are here!"  
leaflet



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"No stealing! And some shop windows were broken in and there was the phone. And tokens were placed there, by anyone who made a call. Such a pure revolution it was."  
Sándor Szabó

"Lots of shop windows had been shattered by all the shooting. Many a shop window was emptied – with handwritten notes such as 'The objects taken from here have been deposited with the janitor.' Some even left a list of the objects taken, duly signed in hand."  
Endre Marton

"I walked down to the shop to buy things for breakfast. No police was to be found anywhere but the street was full of people busy discussing last night's events."  
Zoltán Géher

"Julia worked in an Újpest textile factory. She was living with her parents, factory workers themselves. She wore a man's pants, and a pair of massively oversized boots. Yes, and I want to dance in the pink dress – she continued. – I have never had a chance to dance. There was always too much work to be done, at the factory and at home. Julia died fighting, in defense of the Kilián barracks."  
Endre Marton



# 1956 AND THE WORLD



"Even if weapons are on the Russians' side, history is on the Hungarians' side."  
Washington Post and Times Herald, October 27, 1956



BERLIN

"Hungarian blood is such a treasure for Europe and freedom, we must take care to protect every drop of it."

Albert Camus, 1957



COLOGNE

"Though the Hungarian revolution could be crushed but the thirst for freedom could not be eradicated from the hearts of the Hungarian nation. Though Soviet tanks brutally crushed the Hungarian uprising, the thirst for freedom lived on, and in 1989 Hungary became the first communist nation in Europe to make the transition to democracy. The lesson of the Hungarian experience is clear: liberty can be delayed, but it cannot be denied."

George W. Bush, 2006

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NEW YORK

"The Hungarians' thirst for freedom spread on to the other East European countries as well and the defeat eventually lead to victory over the communist regime in 1989."

Helmut Kohl, 2006



PARIS



# 1956 AND THE WORLD

*"They lit a candle of hope and inspiration that can never be extinguished. The revolution was a true revolution of, by and for the people. The Hungarian revolution forever refuted communism's claims to represent the people, and it told the world that brave hearts still existed to challenge injustice."*

Ronald Reagan, 1986



ROME

*"There was no chaos, robberies or looting. No masses were murdered in vengeance. The public hanging of some State Protection Authority officers reflected extreme self-restraint and prudence. Instead of the rule of the mob, revolutionary and workers' councils were set up practically immediately, simultaneously with the uprising. The election and functioning of these councils was the clearest signs of dictatorship and tyranny being replaced by democracy and freedom."*

Hannah Arendt, 1958



LONDON

*"The Hungarian revolution is the beginning of the end of communism."*

Milovan Dilas, 1956



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WARSAW

*"The tragedy of 1956 remains a stain on the Soviet system that will never be washed away."*

Boris Yeltsin, 1992