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HUNGARY

FOREIGN RELATIONS

Hungarian Diplomatic Missions Abroad

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THE LEADER OF THE REVOLUTIONARY COMMITTEE AT THE  
BERLIN EMBASSY.

SOURCE BERLIN: Confidential source.

DATE OF OBSERVATION: Mid-November 1956.

EVALUATION COMMENT: The name and position of KURTAN are confirmed. Similar turncoats have been observed at other legations, too.

It must be pointed out that the personnel of the Hungarian diplomatic service had a thorough Party training and many of them had connections with the political police.

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Sandor KURTAN, the press attaché and Communist Party secretary at the Hungarian Embassy in East BERLIN, came into public prominence as the leader of the "revolutionary committee" at the Embassy. This committee expressed solidarity with the short-lived free government of Imre NAGY.

For about a year, KURTAN has cultivated contacts with West-BERLIN press circles. As press attaché, it was natural that he should do this, but unusual in the sense that satellite press attachés do not generally go out of their way to cultivate friendship with Western newspapermen. However, this does not appear to have been a personal idiosyncrasy on KURTAN's part, but rather a part of an active coexistence policy carried out for the last year by the Embassy. One of the objects of this policy was to promote the redefection campaign.

Nevertheless, KURTAN tried to exploit the overtures he had made in the past as soon as it appeared to him that the revolution was succeeding. He recalled that he had always been a good friend of Western press men, had privately helped them by giving them confidential information, etc. Of course,

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he had never really been a Communist, even if he was forced to keep up appearances to some extent.

His Western newspaper contacts, whose memories were not as short as KURTAN might have wished, actually recalled that KURTAN used to speak about as follows: I am a sincerely convinced Communist, you are a sincerely convinced non-Communist. But that is no reason why we should not be friends. I know that the victory of Socialism is inevitable, but until then I am all for coexistence.

The attitude of KURTAN at various subsequent times was expressed as follows. We give his own words, or approximations thereof.

After the POZNAN uprising: "Anything like POZNAN would be impossible in Hungary because the whole population is behind the Government, and has faith in its policies."

In the first days of the Hungarian uprising: "This is a counter-revolutionary putsch, which will quickly be put down by the workers."

After NAGY had formed a coalition government and called for free elections: "This is a great victory for the Hungarian people. I have formed a revolutionary committee at the Embassy. Never again will the flag with the Soviet star in it fly at our Embassy. We have asked that SAFRANKO, who is the worst type of Communist, be recalled. I am only sorry that I cannot be in BUDAPEST now so I could take part in fighting the Soviet tanks." /At that moment, the Soviet tanks were withdrawing from BUDAPEST/.

After the Soviet attack on BUDAPEST and the formation of the KADAR "government": "We did not realize it at the time, because we could not obtain enough information from BUDAPEST, but it turns out that NAGY was a tool in the hands of the HORTHY fascists. The workers and peasants will prevail over the counter-revolutionaries."

Today: "Never again will Hungary return to the repressive regime of RAKOSI. The Hungarian people will not give up what they have fought for. I would not be at all surprised if NAGY came back again."

Unfortunately, it must be admitted that, in addition to men of such character and principles as KURTAN, there are a number of rank opportunists at the Hungarian Embassy in East BERLIN.