

The 20th Congress of the CPSU and its place in the history of Bolshevism

Václav Veber

The 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU), at which first secretary Nikita Khrushchev spoke at a secret session on 25 February 1956, was probably the biggest event to reach the world from Moscow since November 1917. He delivered shocking news that nobody had expected. Though there had been murmurs about Communist crimes, for the world public to be informed about them from a Communist rostrum was unexpected to say the least.

Rákosi versus Nagy Hungary's de-Stalinisation prelude, 1953–1955

Jan Adamec

One of the causes of the Hungarian Revolution in 1956 was a long-standing deep crisis within the Communist Party. However, it was not out of the blue – its basic contours had begun to take shape during the period of the so-called correction of Stalinist industrialisation and collectivisation known as the New Course. The most visible symptom of the crisis was the clash between two ideological platforms and power groupings personified by the leader of the party, Mátyás Rákosi, and the prime minister, Imre Nagy.

Is it time to abandon the alliance with Moscow?

The organisation of the Warsaw Pact in the context of the Eastern Bloc crisis of 1956

Matěj Bílý

At the start of July 1956 – in a period when a crisis was getting underway in the Eastern Bloc – an American government memorandum on US policy toward Soviet satellites in Eastern Europe stated that Soviet dominance in that space would remain an essential reality. In Washington's view, there was no evidence whatever that Mos-

cow's ability to control events in the region had been influenced by anything that had occurred in the wake of Stalin's death. The report identified as the key instrument in that control Soviet advisors in the state and security apparatuses of individual satellites, as well as the steering of economic and military matters by the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance and the Warsaw Pact. Though subsequent months were turbulent they nevertheless confirmed the US government's assessments.

Today you have a more important role than mechanic Students of the Budapest University of Technology during the Hungarian Revolution, 1956

Mária Palasik

The study explores the role of the Budapest University of Technology during the events of 1956 in view of the fact that a student gathering there on 22 October 1956 played a key role in the launch of the revolution, becoming legendary among pre-revolutionary student meetings. In addition the study outlines the events that preceded that revolutionary gathering and relations between students from the University of Technology and their peers at other universities. It then examines the degree of earnestness among the students in the last days of October and the first days of November, the stances taken by their teachers during the revolution, and what positions they held in the subsequent months. It also looks at what was regarded as unacceptable at individual meetings of the relevant bodies labelled revolution and counterrevolution. In conclusion it explores and characterises in summary the individual phases of the quelling of the revolution.

De-Stalinisation in Radio Free Europe leaflets

Prokop Tomek

The 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and the speech delivered there by Nikita

Khrushchev got the surprising developments of 1956 rolling. While it was solely intended for party ears, even citizens of Czechoslovakia were able to read it quite soon. In large part thanks to a Radio Free Europe leafletting campaign within which millions of sheets featuring anti-Communist content, including the most important sections of Khrushchev's speech, reached Czechoslovakia.

In the services of the Czechoslovak Intelligence Office

The double life of Josef Potoček

Prokop Tomek

One of the most important spies working for the West was uncovered in 1956. The case of a state employee trusted by the regime who was nevertheless a spy by conviction, Josef Potoček, led to the introduction of tighter rules for screening state apparatus staff and following a mild political thaw in 1956 contributed to a hardening of conditions and partial purge.

Operation "Terrorists" The background to the anti-communist resistance activities in Žleby by Čáslav in 1950

The first months of 1950 were an unusually busy period for the regional command of the State Security in Pardubice. Spontaneous resistance began springing up against the arbitrary actions of Communist functionaries in the region, who in keeping with the enforced line of an implacable class struggle against the power structures became in the local conditions zealous instruments in the persecution and harassment of their fellow citizens. Žleby by Čáslav became one centre of such anti-regime activities. The name that Communist secret police investigators gave to the case – "Operation Terrorists" – testifies eloquently to the seriousness that they attached to it. As does the final outcome in the form of three death sentences and a total of 137.5 years in prison.

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