



## Imagining Postcommunism

by *General Bela Kiraly, Ph.D.,  
Commander, Hungarian National Defense Force*



Bela Kiraly was born in Kaposvar, Hungary, on April 14, 1912. He became a soldier in 1930. After graduating from the Military Academy, he fought on the eastern front in 1942-44. Following the Second World War, he was division chief of the general staff, then commander of the infantry. From 1950 he was the founding commander of the legal predecessor of the current Zrínyi Miklós National Defence University. In 1951 he was arrested and sentenced to death. After spending four years on death row, his sentence was commuted to life in prison. He was released in 1956 and joined the government of Imre Nagy.

Immediately after the outbreak of the uprising in the fall of 1956, revolutionary Prime Minister Imre Nagy, appointed Kiraly to lead the new national army in the defense against Soviet forces. On 22 October, 1956, demonstrating students demanded merely the democratic reform of socialism and in the first days the groups of armed rebels were mostly disorganized. The rebellion was only triggered by a provocation. The ceasefire of 28 October put an end to the clashes between the army and rebels. However, the lack of central military leadership led to avoidable bloodshed at Kossuth Square and Köztársaság Square, highlighting the importance of the establishment of the Revolutionary Armed Forces Committee and the organization of the National Guard. The Soviet invasion began on 1 November and although Ambassador Andropov had assured the Hungarian Prime Minister, Imre Nagy that the Soviets would not wage war on Hungary, on 4 November conflict was a reality. The Hungarian armed forces were unable to resist.

With the help of covert CIA operatives, such as the AHF's Col. Commandant Michael Kovats Medal of Freedom winner James McCargar, Kiraly was able to escape Hungary after the country couldn't withstand the overwhelming military machine of the enemy. He found new home in the United States where he worked as military historian and military scientist. He is author of 20 books and several dozen scientific studies. Following the transition to democracy from 1990 he served as a general, from 1990 to 1994 he was a Member of Parliament. From 2004 he has been an associate member of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences.

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**Bela Kiraly** earned a Ph. D at Columbia University. He is professor Emeritus at Brooklyn College of the City University of New York. He is the author of many books and articles, and was instrumental in the publication of numerous volumes through Atlantic Research and Publications. **Available on:**  
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