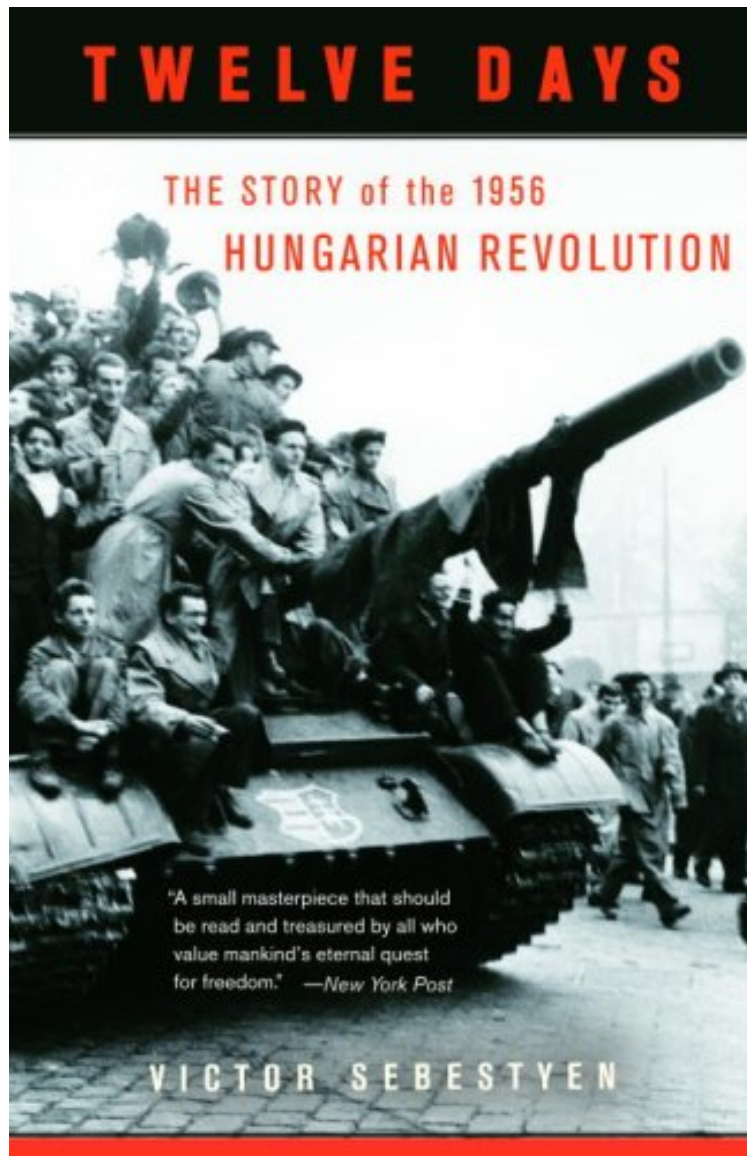


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Twelve Days: The Story of the 1956 Hungarian Revolution

Victor Sebestyen

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Victor Sebestyen : Twelve Days: The Story of the 1956 Hungarian Revolution before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Twelve Days: The Story of the 1956 Hungarian Revolution:

6 of 7 people found the following review helpful. A VERY COMPELLING BOOKBy J. lorenzoI Think this Book is very well written, I liked how it follows a logical order and tells about the events in a clear way giving all the

background necessary to understand the development of the revolution and its aftermath. I think the Author makes it more interesting in the way he tells the story in a simple and logical way. The Revolution itself is a great history which has everything including Heroes (The revolutionaries), lots of Action, Treachery, espionage, Villains (Mr. Andropov, Rakosi, Kadar), Superpowers in Action (USSR), and Inactive Superpowers (USA and The West), indifference (UN), and victims. After this I want to express my great admiration to the Hungarian people who showed so great courage and fought incredibly against a superpower empire, and the sadness for all the people that died or suffered under these events and the rule of communism. And at last but not least I hope that Mr. Andropov stays well attended in Hell by you know who.

31 of 34 people found the following review helpful. Twelve Days That Shook The World. By Llonya October 20, 2006 marked the fiftieth anniversary of the Hungarian Revolution, the seemingly spontaneous (at least to those outside Hungary) set of demonstrations that quickly morphed into a full-fledged revolution that almost freed Hungary from Soviet hegemony. Twelve days after it began the revolution was crushed under the tread of Red Army tanks. Victor Sebestyén's "Twelve Days: The Story of the 1956 Hungarian Revolution" is an informative and well-written examination of the revolution, its causes and its consequences. Twelve Days is divided into three parts: "Prelude", "Revolution" and "Aftermath". In the Prelude Sebestyén provides a concise history of Hungary in the first half of the twentieth century. This is an invaluable introduction for readers, such as this reviewer, who have not previously immersed themselves in Hungarian history. After the First World War and the subsequent Treaty of Versailles, Hungary came to be ruled by a fascist regime led by Admiral Horthy. Hungary under Horthy became an ally of Hitler's Germany and found itself at war with the Allied Powers, most importantly the USSR. Toward the end of the Second World War, the German Army occupied Hungary and fought a desperate battle against the Red Army. The 100 day siege and conquest of Budapest was brutal and the damage to Budapest was exceeded only by the damage done to Leningrad, Stalingrad, and Warsaw. (Krisztián Ungváry's "The Siege of Budapest" makes an excellent companion volume to Twelve Days). Sebestyén then takes the reader through the immediate post-World War II years in which the Hungarian Communist Party, under the leadership of Matyas Rakosi gradually seized total control of the reins of power. Sebestyén's description of the brutality of Rakosi, who fancied himself as something of a Stalin-protégé follows. Rakosi's brutality, which rivaled that of Stalin's, laid the groundwork for the 1956 uprising. As noted by Sebestyén, Stalin's death and Khrushchev's denunciation of the cult of Stalin left many Hungarians feeling that the time was ripe for liberalization and it is with this feeling in mind that Sebestyén begins his recitation of the revolution itself. The revolution starts with a series of small demonstrations in Parliament square but these demonstrations caused the Communist party structure to collapse like a house of cards. The relatively small Soviet troop presence was humbled by the demonstrators. The Soviets deposed Rakosi and announced that Imre Nagy would take over Hungary's leadership. Nagy is a compelling figure. Sebestyén paints a sympathetic yet objective portrait of Nagy. Nagy, a dedicated Communist (albeit not a hardliner) found himself immersed in a situation he could not control. A jovial, if somewhat plodding bureaucrat, Nagy underwent a transformation from a party-liner to the leader of the drive for total independence from the USSR and from the one-party system then in place in Hungary. Events in Hungary did not take place in a vacuum and Sebestyén's narrative covers the critical roles played by both the USSR and the USA. Sebestyén takes the reader into the Kremlin and paints a picture of a fragmented and confused Politburo that initially was prepared to grant Hungary some 'freedoms' but ultimately decided it had to crush the revolution brutally lest it lose its grip on the rest of Eastern Europe. The USA's role was marked more by inaction than action. The Eisenhower administration, most notably his Secretary of State John Foster Dulles, made the 'roll back of Communism' a key tenet of the administration and Eisenhower's 1956 re-election campaign. At the same time, the USA-sponsored Radio Free Europe regularly urged its Eastern European listeners to take a stand against Communist rule. Unfortunately, the Hungarian people were cruelly disappointed to find that the USA had absolutely no interest in doing battle with the USSR over Hungary. In fact, Eisenhower made it a point to let the USSR know that it wished to remain neutral and, in effect, let the Kremlin know it had a free hand to do what it wanted. The Kremlin did send in the tanks in great numbers and crushed the incipient revolution twelve days after it started. Order was restored and the Communist Party took back control of the government. The new party leader, Janos Kadar, was responsible for the prosecution and execution of the revolt's leaders, including Nagy. Life returned to the status quo until the fall of the Soviet Union over thirty years later. Victor Sebestyén's "Twelve Days" provides a great service in providing a concise history of these twelve days. Twelve Days is a scholarly work (thoroughly researched and annotated) that is written with the lay reader in mind. Twelve Days is a thoughtful, well-written account of twelve tumultuous days in Hungary that left this reader hungry for more accounts of Hungary and its history. Highly recommended.

L. Fleisig 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Amazing how progressive the Hungarians are now after enduring the ... By Stephen D. Frankum The most comprehensive account I've read about the Hungarian revolution. Outstanding. I read it both before and after visiting Budapest in April 2015. Amazing how progressive the Hungarians are now after enduring the brutal Nazis and Russians.

Twelve Days is a riveting day-by-day account of the defining moment of the Cold War—the inspiring but brutally crushed Hungarian Uprising. Victor Sebestyén, a journalist whose own family fled Hungary, gives us a totally fresh

account, incorporating newly released official documents, his family's diaries, and eyewitness testimony. We witness the thrilling first days when—armed only with a few rifles, petrol bombs, and desperate courage—the people of Budapest rose up against their Soviet masters and nearly succeeded. As the world watched in amazement, it looked as though the Hungarians might humble the Soviet empire. But the Soviets were willing to resort to brutal lengths—and, sadly, the West was prepared to let them. Dramatic, vivid, and authoritative, *Twelve Days* adds immeasurably to our understanding of this historic event and reminds us of the unquenchable human desire for freedom.

From Booklist Fifty years ago one of the most heroic but saddest episodes of the cold war unfolded. The Hungarians, led by the Fascist sympathizer Admiral Horthy, were allied with Germany during World War II. After the Red Army "liberated" Hungary, the Soviets imposed an especially brutal, oppressive regime upon the Hungarian people. In October 1956, spontaneous resistance against both the Hungarian government and their Soviet masters exploded. Once a hesitant Soviet government acted decisively, the rebels were crushed. Using newly available resources, Sebestyen tells this story with a fast-paced narrative that shows the heroism of many Hungarians and the venality of others. As always, historical tumult created some unlikely martyrs and villains. For example, Hungarian prime minister Imre Nagy, viewed by many as a typical Soviet stooge, bravely resisted Soviet demands, ensuring his eventual doom. The American government encouraged Hungarian opposition to the Soviets but, for reasons of realpolitik, refused to provide assistance when the revolution broke out. This is an excellent recounting of an inspiring but tragic struggle for freedom against insurmountable odds. Jay Freeman Copyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved "This is a vivid, heartbreaking account of the brutal crushing of the first armed insurrection against Soviet occupation. *Twelve Days* is essential reading for understanding the great risks people will take for freedom."—Kati Marton, author of *The Great Escape: Nine Hungarians Who Fled Hitler and Changed the World* "On the anniversary of 1956, wielding a vast array of newly released archives and completely new eyewitness testimony, Victor Sebestyen has written a magisterial but also totally gripping and fresh account of the noble, violent, and doomed Hungarian revolution: a tale of murder and battles on the streets of Budapest and in the dungeons of the KGB, and of high-level intrigue from the White House to the Kremlin. Above all, it is a story of courage and decency among ordinary Hungarians. The result is a tour de force."—Simon Sebag Montefiore, author of *Stalin: The Court of the Red Tsar* From the Hardcover edition. About the Author Victor Sebestyen was born in Budapest and was an infant when his family left Hungary. As a journalist, he has worked on numerous British newspapers: he reported widely from Eastern Europe when Communism collapsed in 1989, and covered the war in the former Yugoslavia. At the *London Evening Standard* he was foreign editor, media editor, and chief lead writer. He writes frequently for *The Times* and *The New Statesman*.