

CROSSROADS AND DECISIVE EVENT:
"1956" AND ITS LONGTERM EFFECTS ON EAST
CENTRAL EUROPE'S ECONOMIES AND SOCIETIES

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The different and specific ways in which the crises of 1956 were solved in Hungary and Poland had a decisive longterm effect on the relationship between society and those in power. Kádárism, having understood that another "1956" must be prevented at all events, adopted the method of moderately and gradually liberalizing its economy and society while allowing no doubt that it remained strictly loyal to the Eastern bloc, supporting this strategy with placing greater emphasis on consumer goods availability. In Poland, the crisis was brought to a close below the threshold above which Soviet intervention would have taken place; opportunities remained for considerably more intensive struggle between those in power and the opposition. The solution to the Czechoslovak crisis in 1953 with a comparatively low level of violence and the handling of "June 17" in the GDR, where intervention was more violent, had basically comparable longterm effects on the way the relationship between party power and society evolved.