



PERMANENT MISSION OF HUNGARY  
TO THE UNITED NATIONS  
NEW YORK

**Opening remarks by  
H.E. Ambassador Katalin Bogyay  
Permanent Representative**

**‘Remembering Povl Bang-Jensen’**

**Panel discussion**

**5 December 2016**

Dear Bang-Jensen family members,

Excellences,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Dear Guests,

Thank you for joining us this evening to remember Povl Bang-Jensen, the Danish hero of the 1956 Hungarian Revolution.

On the occasion of the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 1956 Revolution our mission organized several events, but today's panel discussion is the one I was waiting for most.

### **The background – 1956**

As many of you know, our Revolution 60 years ago was a spontaneous nationwide revolt against communist dictatorship, the government of the Hungarian People's Republic and its Soviet-imposed policies and it lasted only from 23 October until 10 November 1956.

Despite the failure of the uprising, it was highly influential in changing the world order of the cold war years.

Our revolution has a special relationship with the United Nations.

On the 4<sup>th</sup> of November 1956, when it became clear that the revolution will be crushed by the Soviet military forces, the renowned Hungarian lawyer and political theorist, **István Bibó**, then Minister of State in the revolutionary Government of Imre Nagy, stayed in the Parliament building “as the only representative of the existing legal Hungarian government”. In that evening, Bibó wrote his famous proclamation, in which he turned to the UN for help.

Let me quote Bibó's sentences:

*“The Hungarian people have already sacrificed enough of their blood to show the world their devotion to freedom and truth. Now it is up to the world powers to demonstrate the force of the principles embodied in the United Nations Charter and the strength of the world’s freedom-loving peoples. I appeal to the major powers and the United Nations to make a wise and courageous decision to protect the freedom of our subjugated Nation.”*

Today, when the international community is exploring how it could stop the atrocity crimes currently being committed in Syria and help its people, I recall that the dynamics at the UN was shockingly similar 60 years ago.

Just like today, the Security Council was paralyzed and – despite Bibó’s and many others’ plea for help – the Council was unable to take timely and decisive action that would have been necessary to protect the Hungarian lives and ensure our country’s freedom.

The General Assembly was a lot more active. It adopted several resolutions, both at emergency and regular sessions.

### **The Special Committee and the Special Representatives**

In one of these resolutions adopted in January 1957, the General Assembly decided to establish the so-called ***Special Committee on the Problem of Hungary*** to investigate and gather evidence on what happened during and following the Hungarian Revolution.

In addition, the GA – in 1957 – designated a ***Special Representative on the Question of Hungary***. First, Prince Wan Waithayakon of Thailand (13<sup>th</sup> PGA), then, for several years, Sir Leslie Munro of New Zealand (14<sup>th</sup> PGA) served in this role.

The Special Committee composed of 5 State representatives (from Australia, Denmark, Ceylon/Sri Lanka, Tunisia, and Uruguay) heard **111**

**witnesses** in New York, Geneva, Rome, Vienna, and London, among them ministers, military commanders and other officials, workers, revolutionary council members, factory managers and technicians, Communists and non-Communists, students, writers, teachers, medical personnel, and Hungarian soldiers.

The Special Committee operated for several years and produced two impressive reports. While the first one focused on explaining the causes that had led to the outbreak of the revolution and outlining the events that had actually taken place, the second, complementary report, reviewed the period of retaliation which followed the crushing of the revolution.

### **Povl-Bang Jensen**

The deputy secretary of the Special Committee was a courageous Dane, a former diplomat who – before joining the UN – served at the Danish embassy in Washington DC. His name was Povl Bang-Jensen.

We are here today to remember him and his brave efforts to protect Hungarian secret witnesses and their families from any retaliation for testifying before the Special Committee.

Povl Bang-Jensen had to make some terribly difficult decisions in those months, for which he paid the “highest price”. First, he lost his job, then on the 25<sup>th</sup> of November 1959 he was found dead in Alley Pond Park, in Queens, New York. The circumstances of his death are still unclear.

For his courageous efforts, Povl Bang-Jensen has been decorated posthumously by the President of Hungary in 1992.

In 1989, Hungary erected a memorial to Bang-Jensen next to the gravesites of Imre Nagy and other leaders of the 1956 Revolution and, in 1999, a bust of Bang-Jensen was set up in the lobby of the Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Only two weeks ago, on 25 November, on the initiative of the Hungarian Government, the first statue of Bang-Jensen was erected in his home country, in the Solbjerg Park Cemetery in Copenhagen, where Bang-Jensen is buried. The statue was inaugurated jointly by the Danish Minister for Culture and Church and the Hungarian Minister of State for Cultural and Science Diplomacy.

### **The panel discussion**

This evening we will hear about Povl Bang-Jensen's life and work at the UN following the Revolution from the most renowned Danish and Hungarian experts, **Dr Bo Lidegaard** and **Dr András Nagy**. I am very happy to announce that Povl Bang-Jensen's son, **Per Bang-Jensen** also accepted to serve as a panelist. I am extremely grateful for that.

Before and during the panel discussion, we will also hear a few Hungarian and Danish pieces from the wonderful **Ms Terry Eder**, who specialized in twentieth century piano music by Hungarian composers, in particular, Béla Bartók. As an interesting detail, let me mention that Ms Eder's musical mentor, Bálint Vázsonyi fled Hungary in 1956, after the failed revolution.

### **Welcoming the guests**

Before closing, let me also say a few words about our exclusive audience.

I am most honoured to welcome here **9 members of the Bang-Jensen family**. Four of Povl Bang-Jensen's five children, - in addition to Per – his three daughters: Karen, Lise, and Nina, as well as three sons-in-law and two grandchildren, Christine and Ella are here tonight. Thank you for being here. It really means a lot to us.

I am also grateful for the presence of the **five members of the Special Committee** (namely Australia, Denmark, Sri Lanka, Tunisia, and Uruguay), as well as of the two countries whose senior diplomats served as **Special Representatives** on the Question of Hungary (New Zealand and Thailand).

We also invited a number of UN officials. I would like to recognize the presence of the colleagues from the UN **Department of Political Affairs** and the **UN Archives**. Thanks to their tireless efforts and the decision made by Mr Jeffrey Feltman's, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs earlier this year, almost 1500 pages of previously **classified UN documents** on 1956 and Povl Bang-Jensen have been opened for research.

[I also welcome here the representative of the Office of the President of the General Assembly. - *ONLY IN CASE PGA OFFICE IS REPRESENTED*]

And finally, in the audience, we also have Danish and Hungarian UN staff members, Danish and Hungarian diplomats, and almost a whole movie making crew currently working on a TV series about Povl Bang-Jensen.

Thank you all for being here.

Enjoy the evening!

And now I invite my dear friend, Ambassador Ib Petersen to say a few words.