

ABSTRACTS

Bence Csatóri: “Hi Gábor, How Are You?” Attitudes of Agents and Subjects of Surveillance in the Kádár Era Pop Music Scene through the Lens of Present-Day Narratives

Examining prominent figures and cult venues of the Kádár Era pop music scene, the study explores the various attitudes of the III/III department of state security in the Ministry of Interior towards their own work and the subjects of their surveillance. In addition, it also discusses the intentions of the operative corps overseeing the agents, in this case the Budapest Police Headquarters. One of the main sources is the responses of the subjects of surveillance when they discovered that they had been monitored by state security operatives in the past. Csatóri also analyses the reports filed by agents whose motivations were different. His analysis reveals the various considerations behind the cooperation between musicians and the state security operatives and assess the influence of the state security on their decisions. Finally, the study compares archival documents with the oral history interviews conducted by pop and rock musicians involved. This comparison provides an insight into the ways in which the individual musician subjectivity processed the recent past that has now become known through ministry documentation, and into the overpoliticised media hype of the recent past that created an oddly distorted image about the operation of state security.

Heléna Huhák: Alternative Modes of Surveillance: Party Agitation at Home and the Visits of a Council Member in Angyalföld

Besides their agent network, the Hungarian Workers' Party used various other channels for the surveillance of the general public. After 1948, agitation was the most frequently used method of obtaining information in the party surveillance of residential areas, which was performed by agitators (also known as community educators). Their task was the political 'education' of the general public, as well as motivating them to implement party orders and monitoring the political attitudes and opinions of the residents. At the beginning of the council system in 1950, council members were among the officials visiting people's homes more frequently, especially because their job often entailed making house calls. They were not mandated to write reports about the residents but since they had to maintain a close relationship with their constituents, they had access to private spaces and information. The present study examines these alternative channels

of surveillance through agitation reports written by community educators and the diary of a council member from Budapest's thirteenth district. Based on these sources, the study addresses a variety of questions: what aspects of the Angyalföld residents' everyday life were relevant for community party operatives and for a council member working in the same community? What image of society emerges from the agitation reports and the diary entries? How did the home setting affect the exchanges between the residents and the representatives of the party-state? What can we find out about the use of the information obtained this way?

András Murai – Brigitta Németh: “The System Had their Eye on Us”: Surveillance among Former Gulag Prisoners

The study investigates how surveillance affected the lives of former Gulag prisoners. In nearly thirty oral history interviews, children of former Gulag prisoners all noted the parent's surveillance and some related how their parents' fear of informers affected their childhood. Individuals returning from Soviet prison camps in 1953 and 1955 were treated as political prisoners and they were monitored in the Kádár Era for a long time. Both their employers and their building's caretaker were approached to provide information about them, their neighbours reported about them, and some of them were approached to cooperate with state security at their workplace. Due to their fear of surveillance they chose not to keep in touch with each other or met only in secret. This was revealed by members of the second generation, the children of the Gulag prisoners during their interviews. The story of János Rózsás is also part of this study of former Gulag prisoners and surveillance. Rózsás was the first former prisoner to publish his tragic life story, *Keserű ifjúság* (Bitter Youth) but in the early 2010s he, too, was found to have worked as an informant for a couple of years in the mid-1970s. Using survivor accounts, own interviews with the second generation, and archival sources, the present study describes how surveillance was conducted among former prisoners returning from the Soviet Union and what it meant for them in their everyday lives.

Péter István Pap: Under Pressure by Force or by Choice: The Attila József Circle and the Establishment 1983–1986

Based on an overview and interpretation of the activities of the Attila József Circle between 1983 and 1986, the study provides insight into the cultural life and opposition movement in the late Kádár Era. Since the membership of this

circle was at the intersection of various opposition groups and the establishment itself, their study reveals the political and cultural aims and intentions of the individuals involved. Placed in the wider context of the history and sociology of intellectual life, the study also aptly illustrates how the authorities were able to disintegrate, manipulate and monitor groups of dissent. Further, Pap also investigates if there was any movement between critical opposition groups and to what extent this movement was hampered either by the establishment or by the differences between the advocacy strategies that these groups subscribed to. Pap's findings nuance the cultural history of the late Kádár Era as well as the (cultural) public in the age of political transformation and the period after 1990.

Krisztina Slachta: *Invisible Aggression: The Force Fields of the Invisible Presence of State Security and the System of their Concepts of Enemy – Possibilities of Interpretation and Analysis*

The study explores research on the history of East German and Hungarian state security to find the possible conceptual frameworks of interpreting invisible aggression in communist dictatorships, and to analyze the existing theoretical and methodological paradigms and their possibilities. From the 1960s onwards, state security in the Eastern European countries of the Soviet Bloc not only progressed in the field of surveillance and interrogation techniques but using nuanced evidence and argument they developed an increasingly sophisticated definition and concept of the enemy. At the same time, the distance between the enemies of state security and the state itself grew, and the system of interests of both state and state security diverged. In the 1950s, state violence was practiced either openly or in secret (but known to all members of society), which was gradually replaced by increasingly sophisticated methods of psychological violence. State security control was no longer directed at the "enemies" of the system – real or imagined – but was widened to "cover" all of society and all walks of life: from the workplace, culture, and education to leisure, living spaces, and institutions, as well as the movement and permitted travel – of the whole population.

Lajos Somogyvári: *The 1949 Elections through American Eyes: Diplomatic Field Reports from the Hungarian Countryside*

The digitized archives of the Embassy of the United States of America in Hungary (Archives Unbound) provides interesting details about the western perceptions of the post-1945 history of Hungarian politics, society, and economy. Sev-

eral field reports written about the 1949 election have been preserved, which show what kind of information was available for the American embassy staff, and how it was selected and interpreted. The texts give an insight into the perceptions of the general public about the workings of power and politics in the country – from an American perspective. American diplomats, officials and their translators travelling along the main itineraries (Győr, Miskolc, Debrecen, Szeged, Balaton and environs) formed their narratives about the events through formal and informal exchanges. Especially interesting are the differences between the controlled official information and the spontaneous (at least seemingly so) interactions, as well as the diversity of the utterances and communication strategies among the Hungarian interview subjects.

Viktor Attila Soós: Conspired Apartment “Wedge” in the Intelligence Service

The study investigates the everyday relationship between Kádár Era society and the intelligence services through the history of a conspired apartment (so called K-apartment). The analysis addresses two main themes. On the one hand, based on archival documents, the K-apartment is studied as a clandestine space: the selection criteria and the circumstances of its acquisition, as well as the framework of its everyday operation are examined to see how it was possible to keep it from the rest of the building that the apartment was not lived in by tenants. On the other hand Soós also reconstructs the ways in which the everyday operation such as visits by various people, including high ranking ecclesiastic figures, participated in the life of the community. For five years, the apartment was used as a base of operations by the “Világosság” (Light) unit of intelligence officers working inside the State Office for Church Affairs. But the property continued to be in use for exchanging information for over a decade beyond the years of Világosság (1969–1973). The state security documents pertaining to the apartment allow an insight not only into its use as a conspired apartment but, through the analysis of the careers of the people involved in its operation, into the career prospects of intelligence officers as well.

Géza Vörös: Nuns in the Crosshairs of the Political Police, or What’s a Wiretap Worth?

Once the communist party seized power in Hungary after the Second World War, their foremost aim was to disrupt and denigrate the operation of Churches and religious life in general. In the summer of 1950, over two thousand nuns

and monks were forced to leave their church on account of 'public safety and security' concerns. Although, on 30 August 1950, the Hungarian Catholic Church and the Hungarian state did sign an agreement which formally settled their relationship, Decree Law no. 34, issued on 7 September in the same year, suspended the operating license of all but four religious orders in the country. In this way, the Society of the Heart of Jesus, Daughters of the People, an order founded by Ferenc Bíró in 1921, was also dissolved. Since the sisters were forced to continue their religious service in secret, they were actively trying to conceal their operation from the prying eyes of state security. The nuns were risking their lives to keep their vows and maintain their regula. In 1967, the military police's counter-intelligence unit designated to deal with religious affairs launched an investigation against the sisters of the Society of the Heart of Jesus, under the code name *Összetartók* (The Faithful). Using their methods of subterfuge, state security attempted to monitor their everyday activities and disrupt their communications in order to force them to relinquish their illegal operation as an order. The investigation files provide an insight into how the sisters lived at the time, how they managed to organize retreats and recruitment, and what possibilities opened for them after the government's agreement with the Vatican in the Kádár Era.