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THE IMPACT OF SOVIET MINISTRY OF STATE SECURITY'S ADVISERS ON HUNGARIAN STATE SECURITY INVESTIGATIONS, LATE 1949–1950. A CASE STUDY

The activities of the Soviet state security advisers delegated to various Central and Eastern European countries' secret services is a special issue mostly because of the questions it raises concerning the degree of Moscow's control over those organisations. The advisers' presence is particularly crucial concerning the early Cold War era, when the newly formed Soviet Bloc security organs realised large-scale politically motivated show trials.

Regarding Soviet advisers in Hungary, there was hardly any information available for a long time, mainly due to the scarcity of sources. However, scholarly publications, especially those by historian Magdolna Baráth,¹ have gradually shed more light on the subject. As a result, we are now familiar with the general framework and main characteristics of the adviser system in Hungary. Nevertheless, there are still considerable gaps in our knowledge, especially when it comes to the inner workings and daily routine of cooperation or adviser involvement in individual cases.

The present case study intends to fill some of those gaps by examining the first significant case the Hungarian state security organ realised after the arrival of the first permanent delegation of Soviet advisers in late 1949. By providing an insight into how the advisers' work affected the preparation of

¹ She summed up the results of her extensive research into the topic in her book, *A szovjet tényező. Szovjet tanácsadók Magyarországon* [The Soviet Factor. Soviet Advisers in Hungary] (Budapest: Gondolat, 2017).

a specific case, the paper aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of their activities in Hungary (and, indirectly, elsewhere in the Eastern Bloc), including the day-to-day workings of cooperation with the local officers.

The case in question is the so-called Standard or Standard Electric affair. Standard Electric Ltd. (Standard Villamossági Rt.), Budapest, was an American-owned firm manufacturing telecommunications equipment.² After negotiations between the Hungarian government and the American owner had broken down, Hungary's state security organ, the State Protection Authority (ÁVH), began to arrest the company's senior management and their acquaintances in November 1949. The affair evolved into a major public show trial, one of Hungary's largest such proceedings during the Stalin Era. The key defendants included Imre Geiger, the company's general manager; Zoltán Radó, a department head in the Ministry of Heavy Industry overseeing Standard Electric; Robert Vogeler, an American citizen representing the parent company; and Edgar Sanders, a British man who worked as the firm's comptroller in Budapest. Reciting their previously memorised forced confessions, all of them had to face charges of espionage and sabotage, with the above-mentioned two Hungarians receiving the death sentence.³

There are three main factors that make the Standard Electric affair an ideal candidate for providing a case study of the Soviet Ministry of State Security (MGB) adviser activities at ÁVH. With the first arrests made in November 1949 and the public trial held in February 1950, the preparations of the case cover the same period during which the MGB delegation initiated the most sweeping changes at the Hungarian state security organ. The documents associated with the Standard Electric case offer a unique insight into how these changes influenced Mátyás Rákosi's secret police's everyday operation.

The second factor is the wealth of primary sources available relating to the affair. The Standard Electric investigation material, totalling over 15,000 pages, has survived almost wholly intact in the archives, making it a remarkably complete source for studying Stalinist show trials in Hungary. Moreover, some participating ÁVH officers' later accounts have also proved to contain highly valuable information as to the preparation of this case, including the advisers' activities. Of paramount importance among

² Standard Budapest was owned by International Telephone and Telegraph (IT&T) of New York through its subsidiary, International Standard Electric (ISEC).

³ For details of the Standard Electric affair, see A. Szörényi, 'A Standard-per előzményei és előkészítése, 1948–1950' [The Origins and Preparation of the Standard Trial, 1948–1950], unpublished PhD dissertation (Piliscsaba: Pázmány Péter Catholic University, 2012). A summary of the case is provided in: V. Pécsi, 'The Standard Electric Trial', *Hungarian Quarterly*, 162 (2001), 85–98.

these accounts is a 1984 interview with ex-ÁVH Colonel Gyula Décsi,⁴ one of the organisation's most prominent figures at the time as head of its Department of Investigation. Thus, the affair is characterised by a wealth of archival sources relative to other investigations even though one particularly valuable group, that of Soviet sources, remains unavailable.

The third reason why the Standard Electric investigation suitably serves as a case study for Soviet adviser activities is that some sources indicate the level of adviser involvement was particularly high in this affair. Gyula Décsi later recalled that the case's preparation had been in fact directed by one of the advisers, Colonel Polyakov.⁵ On the other hand, however, it is noteworthy that two of Décsi's ex-subordinates later testified, without mentioning the advisers, that the investigation had been led by Décsi.⁶ What is more, the Standard case was Décsi's last assignment at the ÁVH as he left the organisation later in 1950 and went on to become undersecretary of state in the Ministry of Justice.⁷

The main focus of this research was to identify and understand all traces of Soviet adviser involvement, direct or indirect, in the Standard Electric material and related primary sources. I intended to find out how organisational and methodological changes introduced by the MGB comrades reflected in the investigation and also hoped to answer the crucial question whether the Soviets or the Hungarians were ultimately in charge of the affair and the overall direction of the trial.

Soviet Security Advisers in Hungary

In late August 1949, a delegation of twelve Soviet MGB officers was selected to come and serve in Hungary as advisers on a permanent basis. The officers were dispatched to Budapest on the special request of Mátyás Rákosi, General Secretary of the Hungarian Workers' Party. The group was led by Colonel Sergey Nikolayevich Kartashov and his two deputies, Colonel Georgiy Stepanovich Yevdokimenko, a counterintelligence expert, and a Colonel Polyakov (full name unknown), a legal/investigation specialist.

⁴ Interview with Gyula Décsi by Tibor Zinner, 1984 (MS; hereinafter: Interjú Décsi Gyulával).

⁵ Állambiztonsági Szolgálatok Történeti Levéltára (hereafter: ÁBTL), 3.1.9 V-15009/1, Farkas Mihály és társai, Testimony by Gyula Décsi, 23 or 24 Oct. 1956, p. 268.

⁶ Ibid., Testimony by Márton Károlyi, 18 Dec. 1956, p. 219; *ibid.*, Testimony by György Szántó, 10 Oct. 1956, pp. 5–6.

⁷ Magyar Nemzeti Levéltár (hereinafter: MNL OL), M-KS-276. f. 62. cs. 203. ő. e. MDP KV Iroda, A Farkas Mihály tevékenységét vizsgáló bizottság iratai, Memorandum by Gyula Décsi, 19 Apr. 1956, p. 26.

Their task was to aid and assist the ÁVH in its activities.⁸ Kartashov's permanent delegation was preceded in Hungary by a temporary one sent to Budapest in the summer of 1949 with the specific aim of realising the trial against ex-Minister of Interior László Rajk.⁹ We know that this temporary delegation had overwhelming powers and completely took over direction of the investigation and trial preparations in the Rajk affair.¹⁰

There was indeed a lot of room for improvement in the performance of the ÁVH even if one disregards the serious abuses against detainees the organisation became notorious for. Most officers, including the top brass, were chosen on ideological grounds or because of communist party merits, irrespective of their actual fitness for the job. In consequence, ÁVH officers had the loyalty and the blind enthusiasm, but many of them lacked the skills, let alone training, needed to do their job effectively, making the organisation's overall work efficiency poor.

Rákosi was also well aware of the limits of his secret police's capabilities; principally, that is why he personally requested the advisers. We know of several examples of direct and harsh criticism of the party's organ. One of the most telling of those is from early 1949, the period when the show trial against Cardinal József Mindszenty was being prepared. Having received the first "comprehensive statement"¹¹ taken from Mindszenty, Rákosi fumed that "the confession has been prepared by people with absolute zero knowledge of politics and lacking even the faintest idea of state security".¹²

The first opportunity for the permanent adviser delegation to assist their Hungarian colleagues in delivering improved performance was the Standard Electric case. The MGB officers' activities had both a direct and an indirect impact on the case; Kartashov's men were directly and

⁸ M. Baráth, 'Szojvet tanácsadók a magyar állambiztonsági szerveknél' [Soviet Advisers at Hungarian State Security Organs], in *A Nagy Testvér szatócsboltja. Tanumányok a magyar titkosszolgálatok 1945 utáni történetéből* [Big Brother's Miserable Little Grocery Store. Studies on the History of the Hungarian Secret Services after World War II], ed. Gy. Gyarmati, M. Palasik (Budapest: ÁBTL-L'Harmattan, 2012), pp. 55–56.

⁹ László Rajk (1909–1949), was a high-ranking Hungarian Communist politician who was sentenced to death on fabricated charges of being a spy for Yugoslavian President Josip Tito in a major show trial in Budapest in September 1949, and consequently executed in the following October.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 53–54.

¹¹ Comprehensive statement: an extensive statement (confession) compiled of several smaller statements taken earlier, edited by state security officers in a way which serves their political aims and supports the desired political message of the trial. Only one final 'comprehensive statement' of each defendant was sent to the court, containing all the items necessary for the trial.

¹² J. Gergely, *A Mindszenty-per* [The Mindszenty Trial] (Budapest: Kossuth, 2001), p. 34.

personally involved in the Standard Electric investigation and during the same period they implemented some general changes at the ÁVH that unavoidably had an indirect effect on how the affair was handled.

Indirect Effect of the Adviser Measures on the Standard Electric Case

The New Department of Investigation

The most important structural change and one of the very first measures implemented by the advisers at ÁVH was the establishment, on 1 January 1950, of a separate Department of Investigation,¹³ dedicated to interrogations and other post-arrest investigative tasks necessary for bringing charges against the suspect.¹⁴ The first head of the new department was Colonel Gyula Décsi.

Up to that point, ÁVH's operational departments realised all cases from operational planning to interrogation with no specialised units for different tasks.¹⁵ Interrogations were conducted by operations officers often lacking proper interrogation training or skills. A so-called Legal Department did exist, but it merely had a formal role and only during the final stages of the process; it merely checked if the detainee upheld his confession obtained earlier by one of the operational departments, then made the necessary administrative steps to transfer the case to the public prosecutor.¹⁶ What is more, during large-scale investigations with lots of detainees such as the Rajk affair, practically everyone at the ÁVH "with eyes and a heartbeat" was seconded to interrogation duty on an emergency basis.¹⁷

¹³ Interjú Décsi Gyulával, p. 91.

¹⁴ Investigation (or examination). It is rather difficult to provide an accurate English translation of the Hungarian term 'vizsgálat' due to fundamental differences between the Hungarian criminal procedure and that of English-speaking countries. For the purposes of this paper, in correspondence with international literature, the term 'investigation' is used as the translation of 'vizsgálat', referring to the stage in a criminal procedure during which, roughly speaking, all the facts are established in connection with a crime through a series of interrogations and the analysis of evidence with the purpose of deciding whether the case should be sent to court or not. In the ÁVH's practice, the investigation phase lasted from the arrest until the last 'comprehensive statement' (confession) was taken and the case was forwarded to the public prosecutor/court. The investigation was mostly characterised by an endless chain of interrogations in the course of which various methods of coercion were applied; it was the scene of trial preparations, where confessions were adjusted and streamlined until they matched one another and fitted the desired political message of the trial.

¹⁵ ÁBTL, 3.1.9 V-150019/4 Farkas Mihály és társai, Testimony by György Szendy, 9 Oct. 1956, p. 187.

¹⁶ Ibid., Testimony by Ferenc Toldi, 12 Oct. 1956, p. 126.

¹⁷ Ibid., Testimony by György Szendy, 9 Oct. 1956, p. 187.

Adviser Polyakov decided to end the earlier practice. He was of the opinion that the two lines of activity had to be separated; operational work must be done by operational officers while interrogations and other investigative tasks ought to be carried out by investigation officers.¹⁸ Therefore, a new organisational unit needed to be set up to fulfil the function of handling investigations.

In his 1984 interview, Décsi says that the new department was filled with officers who had previous interrogation experience.¹⁹ However, this was not true for all newly joining officers. There is evidence that the new posting was not voluntary; some of the officers were transferred to the new department against their will.²⁰

Under such circumstances, it is evident that many in the newly established outfit desperately needed firm guidance in their new function by the seasoned Soviet advisers, especially during the first period of their career as examiners. This ‘first period’ happened to coincide with the preparation of the Standard case. An ex-ÁVH officer’s later account even points out that he and his colleagues “had not known the investigation methods [...] until 1950, when the Advisers came and explained what investigative work actually meant”.²¹

By the time the new investigation department was set up, the Standard Electric investigation had been ongoing for about two months, still under the old structural framework, in the hands of one of ÁVH’s operational units, the Department of Counterintelligence. On 1 January 1950, the new department immediately took over the case from Counterintelligence, making it the first interrogation assignment for most new investigation officers.

Improved Work Management

In February 1950, the head of the adviser delegation in Hungary, Colonel Kartashov, sent a report to Soviet Minister of State Security, V.S. Abakumov, on his findings in connection with the ÁVH. Kartashov voiced strong criticism about the ÁVH’s performance, mentioning among other things its “fundamentally flawed methods” and the “lack of control in the execution of orders”.²²

¹⁸ Interjú Décsi Gyulával, p. 91.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 91–92.

²⁰ ÁBTL, 3.1.9 V-150019/1, Farkas Mihály és társai, Testimony by György Szántó, 10 Oct. 1956, pp. 4–5. The officer in question had been engaged in counterintelligence duties before his reassignment and had no experience in the field of interrogations.

²¹ ÁBTL, 2.1 I/1-e (V-142673/5), Ref. no. 101-3878/1/54, Memorandum by Márton Károlyi, 18 May 1954, pp. 118–119.

²² M. Baráth, ‘Szojvet tanácsadó feljegyzése Magyarországról, 1950’ [Memorandum of a Soviet Adviser on Hungary, 1950], *Betekintő*, 4 (2008), <http://www.betekinto.com>.

Some accounts by ÁVH officers also show serious work management issues. Referring to the Rajk investigation that almost directly preceded the Standard Electric case in 1949, one of these accounts states that “nobody knew what he wanted; there was no planning in work at all”.²³

Studying the Standard Electric investigation material, it is striking that some new document types appear from early January 1950 which precisely correspond to some of the criticism expressed in Kartashov’s report mentioned above. The fact that the new documents directly respond to some of the Soviet concerns indicates they were most probably introduced on the MGB advisers’ instructions.

The introduction of ‘Activity Reports’ was clearly motivated by the intention to make investigatory work more methodical as well as controllable. The first such reports in the Standard Electric case were produced on 5 January 1950, almost the same time as the new Department of Investigation came into being. In these reports interrogators summed up the work done in connection with a given detainee that day, including the topic and results of the questioning, the methods applied, the suspect’s reactions and other background tasks carried out. The ‘activity reports’ served both as a means of control and as a tool to move the investigation forward because the officers used these reports to inform their superiors about problems and questions and also requested further instructions in them. It even occurred that an officer exercised self-criticism in one of these reports: “Following the conversation with the Comrades I have revised the work I have done so far, and I will make every effort to obtain the confession needed”.²⁴ Unfortunately, there is no way to tell whether ‘Comrades’, with a capital C, refers to the officer’s Hungarian superiors or the Soviet advisers.

Another new document type was the ‘Interrogation Plan’ which recorded the results of a person’s previous interrogations and listed the remaining topics on which a confession must be obtained from the detainee. The plan also included the list of physical evidence yet to be gathered, as well as the treatment the suspect should receive. The Interrogation Plan obviously served to make the investigation process more methodical and focused. Only one such plan was made for each detainee in the Standard Electric case, all in mid-January 1950.

On the other hand, it is also obvious from the Standard material that the Soviet advisers could not easily put an end to old practices even in the field

hu/2008_4_barath, accessed 13 May 2013.

²³ ÁBTL, 2.1 I/1-e (V-142673/5), Ref. no. 101-3878/1/54, Memorandum by Márton Károlyi, 18 May 1954, pp. 118–19.

²⁴ Budapest Főváros Levéltára (hereinafter: BFL), VII.5.e B.XL.1789/1950 Standard-per V-600/39, Activity report, 30 Jan. 1950, p. 237.

of paperwork. Kartashov's report complains that before the delegation's arrival, ÁVH officers did not sign "any of the documents" they produced, which gave rise to a "lack of accountability".²⁵ Nevertheless, apart from the activity reports, the overwhelming majority of the Standard Electric investigation documents are still unsigned. This is most striking in the case of interrogation protocols that have the suspect's signature on them but not the questioner's.

The Direct Involvement of Advisers in the Investigation

The Standard Electric files and the participating officers' later accounts reveal that the Soviet advisers were actively involved in the preparation of the court case in multiple areas including the number of detainees, the selection of suspects to be used as defendants in the show trial, as well as the concept and methods of interrogation.

We know from ex-ÁVH Colonel Décsi that some weeks after the first arrests in the Standard case Polyakov submitted a proposal of about 160 additional arrests to the Hungarian party leadership, which was considered unrealistically high by the ÁVH officers. The head of the ÁVH, General Gábor Péter, then instructed Décsi to write a 'normal' proposal. Décsi believed such an extension of the case was "completely unjustified and unnecessary". Rákosi favoured the ÁVH's proposal over Polyakov's, and the final number of arrests in the case eventually totalled at 35.²⁶

Polyakov also played an important role in the selection of defendants to be used in the public show trial. We know that it was on his initiative that Zoltán Radó, who had been arrested in relation to one of the side-plots to the Rajk affair, was transferred to the Standard Electric case as a key defendant. The insistence on giving Radó a prominent role in the case corresponds with the contents of Kartashov's report sent to Moscow. In it, the chief adviser complained that "the necessary effort [was] not being made to uncover the hostile activities of Trotskyists, Western emigrants and other suspicious elements that infiltrated the party".²⁷ Radó was a perfect match; he was a state official and a long-time member of the communist party who spent the war years in Britain. In the trial, he received the role of the Trotskyist inner-party enemy, which was obviously a result of the advisers' demands.

²⁵ Baráth, 'Szovjet tanácsadó feljegyzése'.

²⁶ Interjú Décsi Gyulával, p. 104.

²⁷ Baráth, 'Szovjet tanácsadó feljegyzése'.

It appears that Polyakov and Décsi clashed over the Radó issue as well. Décsi says in his interview that he thought Radó's confessions were forced by the interrogator, Lieutenant Ervin Faludi, and that Décsi was unhappy that communist party cadres were again involved right in the first major case after the Rajk affair. The disagreement between Décsi and Polyakov was allegedly so deep that General Péter was afraid Décsi could be accused of anti-Soviet behaviour and therefore they decided Décsi should leave the ÁVH.²⁸ As the story comes from Décsi himself, and 35 years later, it must be taken with a pinch of salt but the bottom line, that he eventually left ÁVH because of certain differences with the Soviet adviser, is most probably true.²⁹

The daily 'Activity Reports' by interrogators contained information on how the advisers instructed the ÁVH officers to apply specific questioning methods regarding a certain suspect. One of Ervin Faludi's reports says "on orders from the Adviser Comrade, I started to put increased pressure on Radó so that he would [...] confess additional details".³⁰ In the next day's report, Faludi confirmed that he "spoke to Radó in a sharper tone and strove to press him to make further confessions".³¹ Another method we know the ÁVH applied on MGB instructions was to blackmail a male suspect by taking a statement from a female detainee with whom he had had an intimate relationship.³² The statement contained intricate details of their love life, and the ÁVH threatened the suspect to make it public if he did not cooperate.

One has to bear in mind that it was an essential characteristic of Stalin era show trials in Hungary, and elsewhere in the Eastern Bloc, that by the end of the series of interrogations the final 'comprehensive' confession reflected the intentions of the interrogator (and through him the party

²⁸ MNL OL M-KS-276. f. 62. cs. 203. ó. e. MDP KV Iroda, A Farkas Mihály tevékenységét vizsgáló bizottság iratai, Memorandum by Gyula Décsi, 19 April 1956, p. 26.

²⁹ Apart from Radó's role and Polyakov's proposal of several additional arrests, Décsi also had some other differences with the adviser. Polyakov proposed the establishment of a State Security Special Court consisting of the head of the ÁVH, the head of ÁVH's Department of Investigation and a representative of the Minister of Justice. This body would have had exclusive authority over political cases, without the possibility of appeal. The Soviet officer also proposed that the institution of internment should be abolished on security and legal grounds. However, Décsi disagreed and submitted his own proposals that contradicted Polyakov's concept. Eventually, neither of these Soviet suggestions were realised (Interjú Décsi Gyulával, pp. 92–95).

³⁰ BFL VII.5.e B.XL.1789/1950 Standard-per V-600/40, Activity report, 17 Jan. 1950, p. 39.

³¹ Ibid., Activity report, 18 Jan. 1950, p. 27.

³² Ibid., Activity report, 22 Jan. 1950, p. 148.

leadership) to a large extent and in many cases bore little resemblance to what the suspect had originally said. Defendants' confessions had to match each other, and all had to fit the so-called political "concept" or political message of the trial.³³ In this context, we know that the MGB advisers not only instructed the Hungarian officers regarding interrogation methods but also on the desired structure and contents of the confessions in the Standard Electric case. For example, one officer reported, "[t]oday I put together the final version of [the suspect]'s testimony which I will go through with the adviser comrade once again tomorrow before having it signed by the suspect".³⁴ Another interrogator reported that "today I prepared [the suspect]'s draft confession based on the preliminary discussion with the adviser comrades",³⁵ and later that "I revised [the suspect]'s confession based on the discussion with the adviser comrade".³⁶ A third ÁVH officer informed his superiors that "I rewrote [the suspect]'s confession following the instructions received from the adviser comrades, then had it signed by [the suspect]".³⁷ We do not know the circumstances under which these "discussions" took place, but it seems quite certain that even if the Soviets merely "advised" or "recommended" something, the average ÁVH officer took that as an order.

Scholarly research has pointed out that the Soviet advisers dispatched to Eastern European countries not only sent updates to Moscow on the various ongoing investigations but also attached the confessions themselves. This enabled Stalin to build up an enormous collection of derogatory material from all over the Soviet Bloc, which could be presented at the right moment to exert pressure or have a showdown against certain people.³⁸ The Standard Electric files shed light on how this mechanism worked. Some of the interrogators' daily reports state that a copy or copies of a new confession have been handed over to the advisers. One officer reported he "passed one copy of the confession taken today to the adviser comrades".³⁹ His colleague said he "gave two copies to Comrade Colonel Décsi and the

³³ That is why such documents pose a huge challenge to historians when one intends to validate individual pieces of information.

³⁴ BFL VII.5.e B.XL.1789/1950 Standard-per V-600/39, Activity report, 1 February 1950, p. 186.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, Activity report, 24 Jan. 1950, p. 60.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, Standard-per V-600/40, Activity report, 9 Feb. 1950, p. 154.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, Activity report, 11 Jan. 1950, p. 4.

³⁸ M. Baráth, "'Testvéri segítségnyújtás'. Szovjet tanácsadók és szakértők Magyarországon' ['Fraternal Help']. Soviet Advisers and Experts in Hungary], *Történelmi Szemle*, 3 (2010), 363.

³⁹ BFL VII.5.e B.XL.1789/1950 Standard-per V-600/40, Activity report, 6 Feb. 1950, p. 151.

rest to the Adviser Comrade”.⁴⁰ One can see from these two examples that it was standard procedure for the interrogators to hand over the confessions to the Soviets with no further explanation is given in any case. After having received a confession, the advisers had it translated into Russian. Only one confession survived in Russian translation among the Standard Electric documents,⁴¹ that one confession is from a person who played an insignificant role in the case. This confirms that the Soviets had copies of all the confessions; given they even had the unimportant statements, one can be sure they possessed the critical ones, too.

What is more, some confessions might have been written originally in Russian for there is evidence some Soviets took part in interrogations and even led some. One ÁVH officer reported that he questioned Imre Geiger “in collaboration with a Soviet adviser”.⁴² On the other hand, Vogeler, the American defendant, told representatives of the US State Department after his release that he had been interrogated by a Soviet officer in Hungary for about a week.⁴³ However, Vogeler said the questioning concentrated on military issues; therefore, it is possible he was in fact interviewed by a Soviet military intelligence officer, and not one of the advisers.

Conclusions

The Standard Electric material and other related documents offer a number of conclusions to be drawn regarding the impact the Soviet delegation of MGB advisers had on ÁVH investigations. The establishment of the Department of Investigation constituted a fundamental change in the organisational framework bringing a new, more professional approach to investigations and thus indirectly affecting all future cases that the ÁVH pursued. The adoption of new working methods and report types also served to professionalise the Hungarian state security organ and introduced more methodical elements to the ongoing Standard inquiry. From the documents and later accounts, it is evident that the advisers also exercised a strong effect directly on the case by placing in one of the key defendants, closely assisting the ÁVH interrogators regarding their

⁴⁰ Ibid., Activity report, 22 Jan. 1950, p. 148.

⁴¹ Ibid., Standard-per V-600/19a, ППОТОКОЛ ДОПРОСА, 8 Jan. 1950, pp. 120–23.

⁴² ÁBTL, 3.1.9 V-150019/1, Farkas Mihály és társai, Testimony by György Szántó, 10 Oct. 1956. p. 6.

⁴³ US National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland, USA, RG 59, Entry (A1) 3083, Vogeler Interviews, Interview with R.A. Vogeler, 13 Jun. 1951, pp. 31–35.

methods and the desired results, as well as occasionally questioning the suspects themselves.

Nevertheless, based on the documents, one cannot say that the case was fully directed by the advisers; the level of Soviet influence was much higher during the Rajk affair. Although the repeated conflicts between Polyakov and Décsi may indicate an actual rivalry between the two over who heads the investigation, it is important to bear in mind that Décsi's ex-subordinates later identified him, and not Polyakov, as the leader of the investigation and it was only Décsi himself, perhaps in a bid to play down his own responsibility for the affair, who said the case had been directed by the adviser.

The sources are by no means exhaustive but what we have indicates that the advisers had wide-ranging powers that occasionally overrode those of the ÁVH leaders and obviously exceeded a traditional advisory mandate; still, the MGB representatives' will did not prevail in all aspects of the Standard Electric case. Senior ÁVH officers were not completely subdued; Décsi was allowed to voice his opinion.

The fact that Polyakov's proposal was rejected by Mátyás Rákosi shows that the man in charge of the Standard affair was in fact the head of the Hungarian Workers' Party. It is no accident that in March 1950 Rákosi complained that "every day I spend the better part of the working day conducting the investigation and this has been so for almost a year".⁴⁴ Another prominent party figure said, explicitly mentioning the Standard Electric affair among other major cases, that Rákosi "personally devised the plan, tactic and strategy of every such battle".⁴⁵ The political direction of this affair was ultimately set by Rákosi and not the advisers nor anyone else.

Perhaps it is also worth mentioning that Rákosi presumably had a perfect reason to reject the MGB advisers' proposal to make numerous additional arrests related to Standard Electric. After the Rajk trial, the leader of the Hungarian party was most probably reluctant to allow Polyakov to extend the scope of the affair significantly as a series of uncontrolled arrests could easily have led to a situation in which even more party members were involved. Ever keen to guard his own position, Rákosi was not prepared to take that risk.

It is up to future research to establish whether the advisers' involvement in other investigations, and in other countries, followed the trend indicated

⁴⁴ Baráth, "Testvéri segítségnyújtás", p. 363.

⁴⁵ Á. Pünkösti, *Rákosi a csúcson 1948–1953* [Rákosi on the Top 1948–1953] (Budapest: Európa, 1996), p. 276.

by the Standard Electric files and whether a pattern might be drawn up based on possible differences in the depth of adviser participation in different cases and locations.

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Wpływy doradców sowieckiego Ministerstwa Bezpieczeństwa Państwowego na dochodzenia prowadzone przez państwowy aparat bezpieczeństwa na Węgrzech, 1949–1950 – studium przypadku

Streszczenie: Artykuł bada pierwszą poważniejszą sprawę prowadzoną przez węgierskie organy bezpieczeństwa po przybyciu delegacji sowieckich doradców ds. bezpieczeństwa pod koniec 1949 r., aby lepiej zrozumieć ich działalność w Budapeszcie. Artykuł przygląda się rutynowym praktykom roboczym przedstawicieli MGB we współpracy z lokalnymi funkcjonariuszami, zwłaszcza w przygotowaniu procesów pokazowych, które w epoce stalinowskiej były kluczowym elementem polityki uprawianej w bloku wschodnim. Badanym przypadkiem jest proces pokazowy w sprawie Standard Electric z lutego 1950 r., w którym wysokiemu kierownictwu amerykańskiego przedsiębiorstwa działającego na Węgrzech, w tym obywatelowi USA i Wielkiej Brytanii Robertowi Vogelerowi oraz Brytyjczykowi Edgarowi Sandersowi, postawiono zarzuty szpiegostwa i sabotażu. Wyjątkowo bogato zachowane materiały archiwalne i relacje funkcjonariuszy pokazują, że delegacja sowiecka pod przewodnictwem płk. Kartaszowa oraz jego zastępców, Poljakowa i Jewdokimienki, miała bezpośredni i pośredni wpływ na przygotowywany proces. Dochodzenie prowadzone było przez nowy departament utworzony przez doradców w ramach węgierskiego organu bezpieczeństwa (ÁVH). Materiały z procesu Standard Electric pokazują, że sowieccy oficerowie wprowadzili również pewne nowe metody pracy. Bezpośrednie zaangażowanie doradców MGB w procesie obejmowało (nie-skuteczną) propozycję przeprowadzenia znacznej liczby nowych aresztowań; wybór Zoltána Radó (zatrzymanego w innym procesie) na jedną z kluczowych postaci w procesie Standard Electric; a także codzienne konsultacje i instrukcje udzielane węgierskim partnerom na temat metod przesłuchań i pożądaných wyników śledztwa. Doradcy, których działania wywołały również konflikty z lokalnymi funkcjonariuszami, zwłaszcza z płk. Gyulą Décsim, brali nawet osobisty udział w części przesłuchań i otrzymywali kopie wszystkich oświadczeń podejrzanych o przyznaniu się do winy. Na koniec artykuł zwraca uwagę na znaczenie badań porównawczych spraw i przypadków w innych krajach, które pokazują, że pomimo swoich szerokich uprawnień, znacznie przekraczających tradycyjny mandat doradcy, funkcjonariusze sowieccy nie mieli całkowitej kontroli nad procesem, bo tę sprawował węgierski przywódca Mátyás Rákosi.

Słowa kluczowe: Węgry, ZSRR, ÁVH, MGB, tajna policja, zimna wojna, epoka stalinowska, proces pokazowy, doradca, dochodzenie

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Abstract: Examining the first major case the Hungarian state security organ realised after the arrival in late 1949 of the delegation of Soviet state security advisers, the paper aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of their activities in Budapest. The paper's focus includes the everyday working practices of the MGB representatives in cooperation with the local officers, with a special emphasis on the preparation of show trials, an essential element of policy making in the Eastern Bloc during the Stalin era. The case in question is the Standard Electric show trial of February 1950, featuring espionage and sabotage charges against the senior management of an American-owned company in Hungary, including a US and a British citizen, Robert Vogeler and Edgar Sanders. The exceptionally rich surviving archival material and officers' accounts show that the Soviet delegation, led by Colonel Kartashov and his deputies Polyakov and Yevdokimenko, affected the preparations of the case both indirectly and directly. The examination was handled by a new department established by the advisers within the Hungarian state security organ (ÁVH). The Soviet officers also introduced some fresh working methods, as reflected in the Standard Electric files. Direct involvement by the MGB advisers in the case comprised of a failed proposal to make a substantial number of new arrests; the selection of a detainee from another case, Zoltán Radó, to be used as one of the key figures in the Standard Electric trial; as well as consulting and instructing Hungarian counterparts on a daily basis as to interrogation methods and the desired results. The advisers, whose activities also led to some conflicts with local officers, especially Colonel Gyula Décsi, even took part in some of the interrogations personally and received copies of all confessions made by the suspects. The paper concludes, calling attention to the importance of comparative research into other cases and examples from other countries, that even though the Soviet officers had wide-ranging powers that obviously exceeded a traditional advisory mandate, they did not have complete control over the case as the ultimate direction rested in the hands of Mátyás Rákosi, Hungary's supreme leader.

Keywords: Hungary, Soviet Union, ÁVH, MGB, Secret Police, Cold War, Stalin Era, show trial, adviser, investigation

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