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PREPARATION AND PRACTICE: THE UNITED STATES' IMAGE IN HUNGARIAN STATE SECURITY TRAINING MATERIALS 1970–1989

Introduction

During the Cold War, the United States was among the main targets of the state security agencies of all of the countries of the Eastern bloc, including the Hungarian People's Republic. Magdolna Baráth explains in her overview of the relationship between the Hungarian state security and its Soviet counterpart¹ that cooperation against the United States (and Hungarian émigrés there) was constantly present in documents concerning joint operations of the two agencies. In March 1955, the heads of the state security agencies of the socialist countries met in Moscow and established a division of labor between their intelligence organizations. One of the main points on the agenda was the “unification of the efforts of the intelligence services of the participant countries against the USA and Great Britain” and the former was named as one of the countries “where the Hungarian intelligence organization had real opportunities.”² Documents from the following period concerning cooperation between the Soviet and Hungarian security organizations refer also to the United States in 1959,³ 1963⁴ and in the 1970s,⁵ which shows that America was considered one of the objects of Hungarian intelligence operational activity throughout this entire time. In order to be able to conduct effective intelligence activity in the United States, Hungarian state security officers needed substantial preparation on the target country, which was especially important given the situation regarding the availability of information about America in the Hungarian People's Republic.

This study therefore analyzes the training materials of the Hungarian state security created for this purpose in the 1970s and 1980s, which are today available at the Historical Archives of the Hungarian State Security (Állambiztonsági Szolgálatok

¹ M. Baráth, “Some Aspects of the Cooperation between the Hungarian and Soviet Intelligence Services,” *Aparat Represji w Polsce Ludowej 1944–1989* 18 (2020), pp. 431–446.

² Ibid., p. 434.

³ Ibid., p. 437.

⁴ Ibid., p. 441.

⁵ Ibid., p. 442.

Történeti Levéltára, hereinafter: ÁBTL). This study concerns not the actual activity of the Hungarian state security in the United States, but the contents of the preparatory textbooks, the image of America presented there, and how those textbooks are comparable to the contemporary discourses about the United States in the Hungarian People's Republic, how relevant they were, and whether these materials could serve as a basis for effective intelligence activities.

The textbooks analyzed in this study were published in the period characterized by improving US-Hungarian relations. This improvement began parallel to a *détente* between the two blocs, especially between the United States and the Soviet Union, then continued even after its deterioration. US-Hungarian relations hit rock bottom in the aftermath of the Hungarian Revolution of 1956 and in certain aspects were even worse than in the Stalinist period – for example, diplomatic relations were reduced to the level of temporary *chargés d'affaires*. In the Hungarian-American bilateral context, the most important issues were related to the Revolution of 1956 and its aftermath (including the stay of Cardinal József Mindszenty at the US Legation in Budapest until 1971) and the status of the most important Hungarian historical artifact, the Holy Crown of St Stephen, which ended up in American custody at the end of World War II.⁶ The normalization of bilateral relations started with the removal of the Hungarian question from the agenda of the United Nations in 1963 and reached its peak with the return of the Holy Crown in 1978. There was an economic incentive to the process, as in 1968: the economic reform known as New Economic Mechanism (*Új Gazdasági Mechanizmus*) that introduced certain market elements into the centrally planned and controlled Hungarian economy. One of the main goals of this program was to improve trade with the West, first with West Germany then with the other countries, including the United States. Diplomatic relations with Washington that were raised to the ambassadorial level in 1966 and the increasing economic cooperation with the United States, especially after the 1973 claims settlement,⁷ provided new opportunities and challenges for Hungarian intelligence.

During this period, access to information about the United States was heavily restricted in the Hungarian People's Republic. This was in contrast to the interwar period when Hungarians could freely discuss American matters, even the political

⁶ For more on bilateral relations, see L. Borhi, “‘We Hungarian communists are realists’: János Kádár's foreign policy in the light of Hungarian–US relations, 1957–67,” *Cold War History* 4 (2) (2004). For more on the story of the Holy Crown in the United States, see T. Glant, “Nixon, Ford, Kissinger, and the Holy Crown of Hungary in Bilateral Relations,” *Hungarian Journal of English and American Studies (HJEAS)* 24 (1) (2018), pp. 137–164.

⁷ The United States had financial claims towards Hungary, some of which were dating back to the period after World War I. Settling these claims was a prerequisite for the further improvement of economic relations (and getting the most favored nation status), and it was achieved in 1973. For more, see M.G. Balogh, *The Road to the Hungarian-American Claims Settlement: Hungarian-American Relations after 1956 and the Claims Settlement of 1973 between Hungary and the United States of America*, Saarbrücken: VDM Verlag Dr. Müller, 2009.

system.⁸ In communist Hungary, there were at least three different layers of discourse about the United States. The first of these was the “official” narrative, based on the party line, controlled by the Communist Party (after 1956, the Hungarian Socialist Workers’ Party) and indirectly by the Soviet Union. The narrative about the United States was presented to the public in the media, popular culture, and travel literature.⁹ Tibor Glant notes that the vast majority of books dealing with America published at the time were travel accounts that tended to follow the official rhetoric.¹⁰ They mostly expressed disappointment with the United States, which was described as consumerist and decadent, and presented in a condescending manner of assumed superiority.¹¹ The narrative about the Hungarian-Americans echoed the claims of the Kádár propaganda about 1956 refugees, claiming they allegedly left the country for economic reasons and now they were all secretly hoping to return to Hungary one day.

The second level of discourse refers to the private level, how individuals communicated when they believed to be beyond the authorities’ reach. This level of conversation was mostly based on personal experience and popular culture, and was predominantly positive. Many Hungarians personally benefitted from the various American relief operations after both World Wars, which saved the lives of thousands in the country.¹² The Kádár regime was especially worried about the spread of American popular culture and tried to maintain control over circulation of information about the United States.¹³ *The Mitrokhin Archive* shows that the KGB shared Kádár’s concern about the influence of the Western culture in Hungary (as well as elsewhere in the Eastern Bloc), especially when it came to radio broadcasts and personal contacts with the West. They saw this as a subversive activity, which was “seeking to persuade the population of the superiority of the Western way of life.”¹⁴

The third level in this regard was academia, which represented a genuine attempt to understand and interpret United States relations as well as American culture, history, literature, etc., but it had a limited audience and negligible impact on the public image of America in Hungary. In addition, such an academic activity was seen as suspicious; for example, the English Department at the University of Debrecen

⁸ See T. Glant, “Amerikás könyvek és Amerika-kép a két világháború közti Magyarországon” [‘Books on America and Images of the US in Interwar Hungary’], in ‘Minden gondolatomra számtalan másik árnya hull...’ *Emlékkönyv Frank Tibor 60. születésnapjára* [‘Festschrift for Tibor Frank’s Sixtieth Birthday’], eds. T. Magyarics, and M. Lojkó, Budapest: Prima Rate Kft, 2008.

⁹ T. Glant, “Travel Writing as a Substitute for American Studies in Hungary,” *Hungarian Journal of English and American Studies* 16 (1–2) (2010), pp. 171–184.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 179.

¹¹ E.g. T. Glant mentions Tamás Vitray, a sports reporter, finding Niagara Falls “surprisingly small” (p. 180).

¹² T. Glant, “Kvéker segélyakciók Magyarországon az első és a második világháború után” [Quaker Relief Operations in Hungary After the Two World Wars], *Aetas* 39 (1) (2024).

¹³ T. Glant, “Travel Writing,” p. 179.

¹⁴ Ch.M. Andrew, *The Sword and the Shield: The Mitrokhin Archive and the Secret History of the KGB*, New York: Basic Books, 1999, p. 249.

was closed twice for political reasons.¹⁵ Studying the American political system was especially discouraged. Even though the publication of *Bevezetés az amerikanisztikába* [Introduction to American Studies], the first American Studies textbook in Hungary, was allowed to be published in 1972, its author, László Országh, was not allowed to cover certain aspects of the American culture, including history, politics and government.¹⁶

The archival research has revealed that there was yet another level of discourse, namely that of the state security agencies required to gather and analyze the information about the opposing superpower. During their training, intelligence officers were introduced to various aspects of American life and for this reason they needed better quality information about the country than that was available for the general public in the Hungarian People's Republic. This article thus shall first briefly review the information available on the training of intelligence officers in the Hungarian People's Republic in general. Considering the presumed importance of the United States for Hungarian intelligence, only a few textbooks were published about the preparation for operations in this country, which raises a number of questions to be addressed later. Next, the training materials, focusing on the topics discussed and the language used, shall be discussed. This is followed by a comparative analysis of the various textbooks, with a focus on the background of the individual authors and the time period in which those textbooks were produced. In conclusion, the relevance of the available teaching materials shall be considered and an attempt made to determine the potential goals of the training based on the limited sources that are available.

The Training of Intelligence Officers in the Hungarian People's Republic

The state security services of the Hungarian People's Republic, including foreign intelligence, were created in the second half of the 1940s after World War II, parallel with the communist takeover, but became defunct and had to be completely reorganized after the Hungarian Revolution of 1956. The identity of a number of state security officers operating undercover in the Hungarian embassies in the West was partly revealed during the Revolution and as a consequence, the intelligence stations in the United States, Italy, and Switzerland ceased to function.¹⁷ In addition, the revolutionaries entered the building of the Ministry of the Interior and gained access to the archives and a number of documents disappeared or were destroyed.

¹⁵ Z. Abádi-Nagy, "Anglisztika-amerikanisztika a mai Magyarországon" [English and American Studies in Hungary today], in *Anglisztika és Amerikanisztika. Magyar kutatások az ezredfordulón*, ed. Tibor Frank, and Krisztina Károly, Budapest: Tinta Könyvkiadó, 2009, p. 16.

¹⁶ L. Országh, *Bevezetés az amerikanisztikába*, Budapest: Tankönyvkiadó, 1972.

¹⁷ E. Tóth, "A politikai hírszerzés szervezettörténeti vázlata, 1945–1990" [Overview of the organizational history of political intelligence, 1945–1990], *Betekintő* 2 (2011), pp. 7–8.

The extent of the security breach caused by the Revolution was impossible to determine after its crushing.¹⁸

The reorganization provided an opportunity to improve the quality of intelligence activities, because, as Eszter Tóth revealed, already before the 1956 Revolution, the Soviets as well as the Hungarian Foreign Ministry indicated that they were dissatisfied with the performance of the Hungarian intelligence and the level of preparedness of the officers.¹⁹ While most of the people newly recruited for the foreign intelligence before 1956, during the Rákosi regime, were indeed poorly trained and incompetent, in *Mesés kémjátszmák* [Fabulous spy games] Borvendég notes that there was a significant minority of Hungarian intelligence officers, who were trained by the Soviets (some of them were Soviet citizens themselves) and were more experienced and quite capable.²⁰

Following the organizational structure of the GRU and the KGB²¹ in the Soviet Union, there was also a distinction between civilian and military intelligence in the Hungarian People's Republic. The military agencies were operating under the supervision of the Ministry of Defense, or the Hungarian People's Army and the civilian agencies were supervised by the Ministry of the Interior. The documents of the MNVK-2 (*Magyar Néphadsereg Vezérkar 2. Csoportfőnöksége* – Second Chief Directorate of the Hungarian People's Army General Staff), the – evidently more competent – military intelligence of the Hungarian People's Republic, are still not available for research. Consequently, the scope of this study is restricted to the training textbooks that were used by the civilian intelligence, supervised by the Ministry of the Interior.

After various institutional changes, Chief Directorate III of the Ministry of the Interior was created in 1962 and it remained responsible for civilian state security until 1990. It coordinated all intelligence activity except for military foreign intelligence, which was the purview of MNVK-2, the agency of the Hungarian People's Army. Chief Directorate III was further divided into various smaller Departments and five Main Directorates, all responsible for specific aspects of intelligence activity. The Main Directorate III/I was tasked with foreign intelligence, III/II with counterintelligence, III/III with internal security or according to the contemporary terminology, with “countering internal reaction,” [*belső reakció elhárítás*] III/IV with military counterintelligence and III/V with operational technology.²²

¹⁸ M. Palasik, “A Hírszerző Osztály szervezete és állománya, 1956–1962” [The organization and personnel of the Intelligence Department, 1956–1962], *Betekintő* 2 (2011), p. 6.

¹⁹ M. Palasik, “A Hírszerző Osztály,” p. 4.

²⁰ Z. Borvendég, *Mesés kémjátszmák. A nyugati külkereskedelmi hálózatok kiépülése 1945 után* [Fabulous spy games: The building of the Western international trade networks after 1945], Budapest: Magyarságkutató Intézet, 2020, p. 47.

²¹ *Glavnoye razvedyvatel'noye upravleniye* (Main Intelligence Directorate), and *Komitet Gosudarstvennoy Bezopasnosti* (Committee for State Security).

²² K. Ungváry, “Az állambiztonsági szervek intézménytörténeti struktúrájának vázlata” [Historical overview of the structure of state security organizations], in *A Szakértői Bizottság jelentése 2007–2008*, ed. János Kenedi, Budapest, 2008, pp. 52–56, <http://mek.oszk.hu/08400/08450/> (accessed 24 August 2021).

Main Directorate III/I had to be reorganized again in 1968 after various high level defections took place in the 1960s: in 1964, László Szabó, an intelligence officer in the United Kingdom,²³ then in 1967, János Radványi, the *chargé d'affaires* of the legation of the Hungarian People's Republic in Washington and Ernő Bernát, the "resident spy" (chief of the station)²⁴. Additional reasons for the reorganization were the changing priorities of intelligence operations due to *détente* and the strengthening economic ties between Hungary and the West, the emergence of new opportunities due to the easing of tension between the blocs and the growing technological gap between the East and the West.²⁵ During this reorganization, Department III/I-10, the Personnel and Training Department, was created. Its objectives were "finding suitable candidates for foreign intelligence," "providing individual training for intelligence officers," "research and proposal of new methods" and "the development of personnel."²⁶ It should be noted the textbooks analyzed in this study were all published by this department.

István Pál lists some of the common characteristics of the operative manuals that were used to prepare intelligence officers in Hungary during the communist period.²⁷ He notes that these books are impersonal, that is, they avoid references to specific cases and are full of self-repetition, and the obligatory ideological self-congratulation. István Pál claimed that these manuals were intended to prepare younger officers for working abroad and another objective was to strengthen their political commitment.

The materials produced by the Personnel and Training Department of Chief Directorate III are kept in Section 4 (Collections) of the ÁBTL. When researching the archival records, one always has to consider the characteristics of the material in question, especially when it comes to texts marked with secrecy clauses. As Gábor Gyáni explained, all archives have their internal logic that researchers have to understand²⁸ and this is increasingly true in the case of state security materials. First, using the documents in the ÁBTL as primary sources, one need be aware that the archives hold only a portion of the records that were produced by Hungarian state security over

²³ M. Palasik, "A szolgálati helyéről eltűnt hírszerző – Az USA-ban politikai menedéjért folyamodó Szabó László története" [The intelligence officer who disappeared from his assigned station – The story of László Szabó, who applied for asylum in the United States], *Betekintő* 1 (2016).

²⁴ G.M. Szebeni, "A Radványi-ügy" [The Radványi case], *Grotius* 5 (2011), http://www.grotius.hu/doc/pub/DBTRNE/2011_115_m.%20szebeni%20geza_a%20radvanyi-%C3%BCgy.pdf, (accessed 1 May 2021).

²⁵ Z. Borvendég, *Az impexek kora*, p. 14.

²⁶ ÁBTL 1.11.4. 67-146/1968. "Javaslat a III/I-10. Osztály létrehozására. 1968. január 24," in E. Tóth, "Szervezettörténet," p. 16.

²⁷ I. Pál, "Egy magyar hírszerző Amerikában. Pozsonyi István rendőr alezredes beszámolója az Amerikai Egyesült Államokban szerzett tapasztalatairól" [A Hungarian intelligence officer in America – Police lieutenant-colonel István Pozsonyi's report on his experiences in the United States], *Polymatheia* 18 (3–4) (2021), p. 91.

²⁸ G. Gyáni, "Levéltári kánon és történetírói tapasztalat" [Archival canon and historiographic experience], in G. Gyáni, *Elveszített múlt – A tapasztalat mint emlékezet és történelem* [Losable past – Experience as memory and history], Budapest: Nyitott Könyvműhely, 2010, p. 36.

the years. Certain documents were never archived, others were accidentally or intentionally destroyed, or removed for various reasons and it is practically impossible to estimate what is missing. In addition, because of their potentially sensitive nature, some of the documents are still only partially or not at all available for research.

According to the search aid of the ÁBTL, the documents that were created by the Personnel and Training Department of the Main Directorate III/I and were used during the preparation and training of intelligence officers are kept in 36 boxes, which contain about 350 individual titles. The oldest was published in 1970, the latest in 1986; both covering a wide variety of topics that were part of the training of intelligence officers, some of which are more general, others more specific. This study consequently shall focus on the four longer and two shorter textbooks concerning the United States, penned by Soviet and Hungarian authors.

Preparatory Textbooks about the United States

Beside the fact that they were all written about the United States, there are a number of other significant similarities between the textbooks analyzed in this study. As has been pointed out, they were published by the Personnel and Training Department and they were meant for a small target audience, namely intelligence officers who had already been recruited and trained earlier. These materials were not meant for general training, but served as part of the preparation for a specific task.

A major difference between the books is the nationality of the authors. The oldest books are translations of works originally written by Soviet authors, which reflects on the nature and operation of Hungarian state security in the period. First, this highlights the fact that the Soviet “advisors” and “experts” were heavily involved in the activities of Hungarian intelligence – as in many other aspects of life in the Hungarian People’s Republic, similarly to the other Soviet satellite countries.²⁹ When the Personnel and Training Department began its operation, materials were needed in order to begin the training of the Hungarian intelligence officers – but due to incompetence or having been compromised after the defections in the late 1960s, there were not any Hungarian intelligence officers who would have been capable of writing such textbooks. Thus, the Department used materials translated from Russian, which demonstrates that the perspective of Soviet intelligence was seen as fully compatible with that of the Hungarians. The finding aid of the ÁBTL shows that especially in the beginning, the Personnel and Training Department relied heavily on Soviet training materials. There were more Hungarian authors among the books published later, in the 1970s and 1980s; by then, there were Hungarian intelligence officers with enough experience to compile training materials for new officers, not to mention that by that time the prior-

²⁹ See M. Baráth, *A szovjet tényező – Szovjet tanácsadók Magyarországon* [The Soviet factor – Soviet advisors in Hungary], (Budapest: Gondolat, 2017).

ities of the Hungarian intelligence also underwent a certain degree of change. Further, another difference between the books is the subject material. While, obviously, they are all related to intelligence activities in the United States, and there is a certain degree of overlap between what is discussed in the books, they all cover different aspects of officers' training. As expected, the longer textbooks tend to discuss a larger number of topics in more detail, they present a more thorough description of the United States, while the shorter ones tend to focus on one particular field.

In chronological order, the first textbook under discussion is *Az Amerikai Egyesült Államok /Általános ismertetés/*³⁰ [The United States of America (General description)] by an unknown Soviet author (originally written in 1965, published by the Personnel and Training Department in Hungarian in 1970). This 187-page long book provides a general overview of the United States as the target of Soviet (and Eastern Bloc) intelligence and discusses a number of the country's features. The main focus is on the presentation of the historical development and contemporary situation of the American economy, with an emphasis on the dominant role of the "monopolies" and "monopolistic capital." The content as well as the form, and the vocabulary used to describe the American economy, are characteristic of the period. The political system is presented there as being under the total control of the economic interests of the monopolies. The book provides a description of the American economy (especially heavy industry), which it compares to the Soviet economy and gives an organizational overview of scientific research and development in the USA, as well as the goals of Soviet scientific-technological intelligence. There is a chapter on the global military, economic and political expansion, and influence of the USA, and one on the national characteristics of the American people, focusing on the aspects that could be used to recruit Americans to become assets for the intelligence agencies of the Eastern Bloc. The appendix at the end of the textbook contains information about various scientific research institutes, a one-page syllabus for the course that would accompany the textbook, a bibliography and a table of contents. The bibliography consists of books by Marx, Lenin, documents of the CPSU, texts by various Russian authors and reports of the Soviet agencies. The majority of the sources in the bibliography come from the public domain and about one third are secret sources, mostly referencing to other state security training materials. This is in line with the content of the textbook, which also seems to be heavily influenced by ideology.

The second textbook, *Az Amerikai Egyesült Államok ügynöki-operatív helyzetének elemzése és az amerikaiak közötti beszerző munka néhány sajátossága*³¹

³⁰ ÁBTL-4.1. A-3005/2 *Az Amerikai Egyesült Államok /Általános ismertetés/* [The United States of America – General description, hereinafter referred to as *General Description*].

³¹ ÁBTL-4.1. A-3005/6 *Az Amerikai Egyesült Államok ügynöki-operatív helyzetének elemzése és az amerikaiak közötti beszerző munka néhány sajátossága* [Analysis of the agent-operative situation in the United States and certain characteristics of recruitment among the Americans, hereinafter referred to as *Agent-Operative Situation and Recruitment*].

[Analysis of the agent-operative situation in the United States and certain characteristics of recruitment among the Americans] (written in 1967, published in Hungarian in 1970) actually contains two distinct teaching materials. As its title already suggests, the objective is more specific than that of *General Description*. The first chapter in the book is 80 pages long and it describes the USA from a narrower perspective, specifically focusing on intelligence activity. It begins with the presentation of the economic and military situation of the United States, compares it to the Soviet Union, and points out the main objectives of Soviet intelligence. This is followed by the discussion of the political situation in the USA and its relevance when it comes to the operational situation. The final part of the text provides some advice on the recruitment of Americans, it contains a description of the common characteristics of American people and how these can be exploited by Soviet intelligence.

The second chapter in *Agent-Operative Situation and Recruitment* is shorter, a forty-pages-long text. It contains a description of New York and Washington, the cities where the officers would be stationed, as well as advice on maintaining contact with agents and avoiding detection by the American counterintelligence agencies, especially when it comes to the surveillance of Soviet citizens working at diplomatic posts. At the time of the writing of the book, contact between the two superpowers was fairly limited and most Soviet intelligence officers were working under diplomatic cover either at the embassy in Washington, or at the Soviet diplomatic mission at the UN Headquarters in New York. The movements of the diplomats were restricted to within a 25-mile radius surrounding their posts, which is why the text focuses on the description of these areas.

The third book, *Beszámoló a külföldi munkáról (Egyesült Államok)*³² [Report on work abroad [United States]] (1971) is shorter, only 32 pages long. Its author is István Pozsonyi, whose personnel file is available in the ÁBTL.³³ Pozsonyi was born in 1930, both of his parents were communist party members and he became active in the Hungarian Communist Party as a teenager, during World War II. He graduated from the Budapest University of Technology, then he worked for the Ministry of the Interior until his retirement in 1984. He passed an advanced level English language exam in 1961 and was promoted to lieutenant-colonel in 1968. Pozsonyi belonged to a newer generation of state security officers. His personnel file indicates that he was a lifelong party member; he had been involved in the communist movement since his early childhood, which meant that he was probably seen as loyal – but at the same time, he was also well educated and probably spoke good English.

³² ÁBTL-4.1. A-3000/1 István Pozsonyi, *Beszámoló a külföldi munkáról (Egyesült Államok)* [Report on work abroad [United States]], hereinafter referred to as *Report*, which is analyzed by István Pál in “Egy magyar hírszerző Amerikában.”

³³ ÁBTL 2.8.1. BM Központi Fogyatéék 17053 (Pozsonyi István).

In his *Report*, István Pozsonyi reveals that he worked as the chief engineer of the Hungarian Nuclear Energy Commission, which is how he got into the Foreign Ministry in 1965.³⁴ His first deployment was in London, then in November 1967 after the defection of Radványi and Bernáth,³⁵ Pozsonyi was sent to Washington, where he served as a “resident spy” (chief of station) under the cover of scientific-technological attaché, as well as cultural attaché. Pozsonyi returned to Hungary from the US after three years. The prologue to the booklet, written by the head of the Personnel and Training Department, notes that Pozsonyi’s experience could potentially be helpful for the “comrades”, who were going to work in the United States, or those who would train them. István Pál, who made an in-depth research on Pozsonyi, claims in his 2021 study that currently it is impossible to map the full extent of Pozsonyi’s activities, as the personal files of the people involved in scientific-technological intelligence after 1967 are not in the ÁBTL, meaning that they are still not available for research. At the same time, he notes that according to an unnamed source, Pozsonyi was prone to exaggerations, and tended to overrate his own achievements and importance. Pál also reveals that Pozsonyi passed away in 1994.³⁶

The last Soviet book among the sources examined in this study is a shorter, sixteen-page textbook, titled *Az amerikaiak nemzeti jellege*³⁷ [National characteristics of the Americans] (1973). This is a practical, concise work, which contains information closely related to the task. It focuses on the Americans that could potentially be targeted by the communist agencies during recruitment, including their political views, personal life, mentality and behavioral patterns. It is not by accident that among the Russian books, this textbook contains the most accurate and practical observations, as it was written based on the actual experiences of the KGB, focusing on the operative implications of a specific topic.

In addition to his *Report*, Pozsonyi also wrote a longer textbook, the 114-page long *Hasznos ismeretek az Egyesült Államokról / Segédanyag a külföldi munkához való felkészítéshez*³⁸ [Useful knowledge about the United States (Aid to preparation for working abroad)] (1974). This book is similar to the very first book, *General Description*, in that it gives a broad overview of the United States, discussing a number of topics not necessarily directly related to intelligence activity. *Useful knowledge* includes a brief overview of the American government, the social situation (with a special focus on the racial question), the economy and also

³⁴ *Report*, p. 1.

³⁵ See G.M. Szebeni, “A Radványi-ügy.”

³⁶ I. Pál, “Egy magyar hírszerző Amerikában,” p. 103.

³⁷ ÁBTL-4.1. A-3000/15 *Az amerikaiak nemzeti jellege* [National characteristics of the Americans, hereinafter referred to as *National Characteristics*].

³⁸ ÁBTL-4.1. A-3000/40 István Pozsonyi, *Hasznos ismeretek az Egyesült Államokról / Segédanyag a külföldi munkához való felkészítéshez* [Useful knowledge about the United States – Aid to preparation for working abroad, hereinafter referred to as *Useful Knowledge*].

education, transportation, housing, cultural and social life, services, crime as well as the description of Washington and New York. The spirit of *détente* of the 1970s seems to have affected the training of the Hungarian intelligence officers as well; as compared to the Soviet books, Pozsonyi presents a more balanced view of the United States. The derogatory rhetoric more characteristic of the earlier period of the Cold War is still present, but it is not as harsh as in the previous textbooks. The list of recommended literature includes works by American authors that had been published in Hungarian and works by Hungarian journalists (Pál Ipper, Péter Vajda),³⁹ but lacks books by Hungarian American Studies scholars, such as László Országh's *Bevezetés az amerikanisztikába*.⁴⁰ This indicates that the writer was aware of the first and second level of discourse about the United States, but either was not familiar or did not consider it necessary to consult the third level, the academic.

The last book examined in this study is the 143-page *Az Amerikai Egyesült Államok operatív helyzete* [The operative situation of the United States]⁴¹ (1985) by János Szecsődi. Szecsődi's personal file was not available at the ÁBTL at the time of research, but it is known that he was also an intelligence officer; his rank is indicated on the cover of *Operative Situation* as a police major. By the early 1980s, Hungarian-American relations were "normalized," they were as close as was possible between a Soviet satellite and the United States. While the tension between the Soviet Union and the United States was growing during the Reagan administration period, this did not lead to the reversal of the Hungarian-American rapprochement. As the title of *Operative Situation* points out, the main focus of the book was to present the conditions for intelligence gathering in the USA. This includes the description of the political system, the economy, counterintelligence and law enforcement organizations, public administration, national characteristics and a brief overview of the geographical regions and history. Besides the travel books and other literature available for the general public about America and reports by the Hungarian state security agencies, the list of recommended literature already includes works by Hungarian American Studies scholars such as Julianna Puskás⁴² as well as some foreign language literature on the United States.

³⁹ As already mentioned in the introduction, some of these journalists were also connected to state security agencies. For more, see Z. Borvendég, *Újságírásnak álcázva* [Disguised as journalism], Budapest: Nemzeti Emlékezet Bizottsága, 2015.

⁴⁰ L. Országh. *Bevezetés az amerikanisztikába*, Budapest: Tankönyvkiadó, Egyetemi Nyomda, 1972.

⁴¹ ÁBTL-4.1. A-3006/33 János Szecsődi, *Az Amerikai Egyesült Államok Operatív helyzete* [The operative situation of the United States, hereinafter referred to as *Operative Situation*].

⁴² Julianna Puskás (1929–2005) was the first historian in Hungary to study emigration from Hungary to the United States and the history of the Hungarian-American community. See J. Puskás, *From Hungary to the United States (1880–1914)*, Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1982.

Content Analysis and Comparison

The four longer textbooks can be divided into two groups based on the topics covered. Two of them, *General Description* (1965) and *Useful Knowledge* (1974) contain general information, basic knowledge about the United States as they present the politics, economy and society of the country. The other two books, *Agent-Operative Situation* (1967) and *Operative Situation* (1985) look at the United States from an operational perspective, focusing on the aspects that are more directly related to the activities of the intelligence officers. This suggests that the training had two distinct purposes: to provide a general overview of the country and more specific training for operational activities in America.

Given the importance of politics for intelligence gathering, it is hardly surprising that this topic was featured prominently in the training materials. In the older, Soviet-written textbooks, the American political scene is described in a harsh tone as being characterized by “intensifying internal reaction, raging racial discrimination, an increased activity of the extreme right and unrestricted anti-communist propaganda,”⁴³ all of which could cause issues for Soviet intelligence. Anti-communism, anti-Soviet propaganda would make contacting American citizens especially difficult. The US government was described as having become “an administrative committee of the monopolistic bourgeoisie.”⁴⁴ Both the Democrats and the Republicans were presented as exclusively serving the interests of big business. On the surface they were supported by various capitalist groups, but in reality the policies they were advocating were essentially not that different from one another.

While Pozsonyi's presentation of the American constitutional system is brief and relatively objective, further and similarly to the Soviet books, American political life and the two political parties were described in a negative light. The electoral system therefore was described as being designed in a way that only the “two parties of the ruling classes have a realistic chance to gain power in the elections.”⁴⁵ The seemingly fierce struggle between these parties would be for appearances, in reality there was little difference between them. While there is some truth in the claims made by Pozsonyi, overall, his description of the American political system is overly simplistic. In the last textbook, Szecsódi gave a surprisingly positive evaluation of the American constitution: “After the struggle for independence, the United States of America was the most democratic political system of the world at the time.”⁴⁶ He was a lot less approving of more recent developments, claiming that the current American political parties can hardly be called political parties and that “both parties

⁴³ *General Description*, p. 7.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 28.

⁴⁵ *Useful Knowledge*, p. 6.

⁴⁶ *Operative Situation*, p. 4.

represent the same ruling class, at best, its different wings.”⁴⁷ At the same time, he acknowledged the differences between various groups in the American elite, especially concerning domestic policy.

Another issue widely discussed in the textbooks was the American economy. The competition between a centrally planned socialist economy and (mostly) free market capitalism was an important aspect of the Cold War – as the shortcomings of the economic systems of the Soviet Union and the Eastern European communist regimes eventually led to the collapse of the Soviet Bloc. As time passed, the gap between the economic performance of the East and the West was constantly growing and becoming more apparent, in spite of Nikita Khrushchev’s famous prediction that the Soviet Union would “catch up and overtake” America. The author of *General Description* acknowledged the difference between the living standards of the Soviet and the American populations but provided a handy explanation: “If we leave out of the comparison (luxury items [added later in longhand]) the data about the goods that only serve the idleness and debauchery of the bourgeoisie,”⁴⁸ the difference suddenly diminishes. The author attempted to convince the reader that at least one of the reasons, if not the main reason, why living standards in the US appeared to be higher than in the Soviet Union, would be the lifestyle of the bourgeoisie. Even in the 1980s, Szecsődi still claimed that “American Cold War policy, economic warfare, has failed. The Soviet Union has gradually closed the historic gap in comparison with the United States in all fields of the economy.”⁴⁹ The rest of his description of the American economy also mirrored the official interpretation. This was, of course, far from reality. According to the estimates of the CIA, even in 1983, the per capita consumption in the Soviet Union was still only slightly more than one-third of that of the United States.⁵⁰

As has already been demonstrated by the quotes cited above to illustrate the language used in the materials, here it is possible to discern a certain degree of difference between the older Soviet and the later Hungarian-written books when it comes to the tone of the text. The language of the Soviet books is more belligerent, combative and ideologically charged. In these books, the United States was presented as an existential threat, the “main bastion of imperialism.”⁵¹ The Soviet textbooks are also burdened by the poor quality of translation from Russian to Hungarian; they are riddled with frequent spelling mistakes and factual errors, some of which can be attributed to the incompetence of the translator. The Hungarian books, written

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 14.

⁴⁸ *General Description*, p. 72.

⁴⁹ *Operative Situation*, p. 22.

⁵⁰ “A Comparison of Soviet and US Gross National Products, 1960-83.” *Central Intelligence Agency – Freedom of Information Act Reading Room*. General CIA Records, <https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/document/cia-rdp85t00313r000200060004-2>, (accessed 6 November 2023).

⁵¹ ÁBTL-4.1. A-3005/6 *Az Amerikai Egyesült Államok ügynöki-operatív helyzetének elemzése és az amerikaiak közötti beszervező munka néhány sajátossága*, p. 3.

later, during a more advanced stage of *détente*, contain a considerably less hostile vocabulary. At the same time, their basic evaluation of American society, politics, and economy is not that different from that of the Soviet books. It can be seen the ideological foundation and the basic assumptions remained essentially the same, even if the presentation was somewhat more nuanced.

Considering the sources used in the Soviet textbooks, one can see many quotations of the literature from the canon of contemporary communism such as Marx, Lenin, minutes of the Congresses of the CPSU and quotes from Russian or Soviet writers. In order to characterize America and the Americans, they often quoted passages from literary works by Russian writers.⁵² The fact that there were also quotes from American writers that underline some points, shows a certain degree of familiarity with American culture.⁵³ Sometimes out-of-context quotes from American politicians and intellectuals were used to illustrate a point and to lend credibility to the Soviet claims.⁵⁴ While it is not stated explicitly, it can be deduced from the text that the Hungarian authors, Pozsonyi and Szecsődi, were following daily events in the American media. The Hungarian textbooks use a number of English-language sources, but even these books do not go beyond the level of a relatively well-informed newspaper reader, neither do the authors use the information about America that was already available in Hungary at the time.⁵⁵

Case Study: Comparison to Contemporary Intelligence Reports

Measuring the effectiveness and relevance of any educational material is a challenging task and this is especially true in the case of the preparatory textbooks discussed in this study. One possible way would have been to interview a former intelligence officer who worked in the United States in the period, but in eight years of research it has not been possible to conduct such an interview. The approach chosen by default therefore is to analyze the contents of intelligence reports that were presumably written by officers who had been trained with the use of these textbooks. The aim of this chapter thus is to identify the topics that were covered in the reports made by the intelligence stations in the United States and compare them to the contents of the textbooks. This is by no means a comprehensive analysis of the activities of the Hungarian state security, only a case study that uses the documents produced in the 1980s, but even this relatively limited research can give an insight into the activities of the intelligence station ('rezidentura') of the period and allow to form some conclusions.

⁵² For example, Lermontov in *General Description*, pp. 147–148.

⁵³ For example, Theodore Dreiser in *General Description*, p. 155.

⁵⁴ For example, President Eisenhower's farewell address in *Agent-Operative Situation*, p. 22.

⁵⁵ For example, in the Library of the Parliament, the National Széchenyi Library, or the libraries of the English departments of the universities.

Today, the operative files of the Main Directorate III/I of the Ministry of the Interior are kept in the ÁBTL, within collection “Section 3 – Network, operative and investigation files,” under “3.2.5 – Operative files (O-8-Files).”⁵⁶ Given that the operative files about the United States contain thousands of pages of documents, the limitations of this study render it impossible to offer a detailed and thorough overview of all the source materials. At the same time, the finding aid containing the description of 911 files stored in 512 boxes, already reveals a lot about the operations of Hungarian state security.⁵⁷ Beside the filing number, the finding aid provides the opening and closing date of each file, the name and date of the topic and the country of interest. Only a fraction of these files is relevant for a comparison of the description of the USA in the intelligence textbooks and reports. The United States of America is indicated as the country of interest for files kept in 137 out of the 512 boxes. The titles suggest that a large part of the contents of those boxes (61 out of 137) concern the activity of Hungarian *émigrés* in the United States or the West in general. In the case of another 48 boxes, the United States is not the only country listed as a country of interest – the files kept there concern American activity in third countries, or international organizations. Thus, the remaining 28 boxes contain information about actual intelligence activities in the United States and about the United States; research which would have required professional training about the country.

The content of the boxes indicated in the finding aid suggests that Hungarian state security tended to focus on the Americans of Hungarian origin and played but a limited part in Soviet Bloc military and industrial espionage against the leader of the Free World. Thus, Hungarian operatives did not necessarily need to obtain a deep knowledge of American politics, society and culture, which explains why their preparation about the country was relatively shallow and superficial. At the same time, we know that there was serious operative activity on the part of Hungarians in the US, especially when it came to industrial espionage, where the priority was acquiring technologies from the COCOM list. In the eighties, at least one of the agents of the Hungarian state security, Ottó Gyepes-Gilbert, was actually caught red-handed.⁵⁸ A possible explanation is that the Main Directorate III/I was active in the United States, but the records of those activities are completely missing from the archives. Another possibility is that due to the division of labor between the agencies of the Eastern Bloc, the information needed came from fellow intelligence organizations of other communist countries and from the Hungarian military intelligence, MNVK-2. This is also supported by Borvendég’s findings about the significance of the activity

⁵⁶ FOND- ÉS ÁLLAGJEGYZÉK, RAKTÁRI JEGYZÉKEK,” ÁBTL, https://www.abtl.hu/iratok/segedletek/fond_allagjegyzek, (accessed 29 July 2022).

⁵⁷ 3.2.5. O-8 dossziék,” [3.2.5 O-8 Files] ÁBTL, https://www.abtl.hu/sites/default/files/raktari_jegyzek/3_2_5.pdf), (accessed 29 July 2022).

⁵⁸ For more on the Gilbert case, see ÁBTL-1.11.4. II. sorozat A-V/1/82 “Amerikai-magyar kapcsolatok” [Hungarian-American relations], p. 22.

of MNVK-2 and the “*impexes*,” i.e. foreign trade (“import-export”) agencies, in the operations of Hungarian intelligence in the West.⁵⁹

The abovementioned 28 boxes kept in the ÁBTL, containing the reports of the Hungarian intelligence concerning the United States, are about a relatively limited number of topics. Five files of some larger volume take up twenty-one out of these boxes: O-8-055 – “Atlanta” about the US intelligence and counterintelligence organizations (3 boxes),⁶⁰ O-8-087 about the documents of the embassy in Washington, D.C. until the eighties (6 boxes),⁶¹ O-8-088 “Generál” about miscellaneous issues related to the US (3 boxes),⁶² O-8-389 – “Periszkóp” [“Periscope”] contains documents produced by the counterintelligence unit acting in Hungarian embassy in Washington, D.C. from the 1980s (6 boxes)⁶³ and O-8-414 – “Atlantik” [“Atlantic”] about the operation of the CIA (in Europe) from the 1980s onwards (3 boxes).⁶⁴ The remaining seven files are relatively short; none takes up more than a box and their themes cover the matters of the State Department,⁶⁵ economists,⁶⁶ politicians,⁶⁷ the President and Congress,⁶⁸ think tanks⁶⁹ and the overview of the operative,⁷⁰ and state of research⁷¹ in the US from 1989, just before the end of the Cold War.

Of this voluminous material, this study shall focus on case-files “Periszkóp” and “Atlantik,” given that these two files specifically concern the United States, namely they contain reports from the intelligence station at the Hungarian embassy in Washington and about American counterintelligence services. As mentioned above, monitoring the Hungarian-American communities was the main task of Hungarian intelligence in the United States, which is also reflected in the records kept in the ÁBTL. There is of course a separate folder concerning the 1956 emigration, which takes up 38 out of the 512 boxes of operative case-files of the Main Directorate III/I,⁷² but Hungarian-Americans and their organizations also often appear in “Atlantik”

⁵⁹ Z. Borvendég, *Az impexek kora*.

⁶⁰ ÁBTL-3.2.5. O-8-055 “Atlanta – USA hírszerző és elhárító szervek” [Atlanta – USA intelligence and counterintelligence organizations].

⁶¹ ÁBTL-3.2.5. O-8-087 “Washingtoni magyar követség” [The Hungarian Embassy in Washington].

⁶² ÁBTL-3.2.5. O-8-088 “Generál – USA vegyes anyagok” [General – Miscellaneous USA material].

⁶³ ÁBTL-3.2.5. O-8-389 “Periszkóp – Washingtoni követség elhárítása” [Periscope – Counterintelligence of the embassy in Washington].

⁶⁴ ÁBTL-3.2.5. O-8-414 “Atlantik” [Atlantic].

⁶⁵ ÁBTL-3.2.5. O-8-029 “Volga – Amerikai Egyesült Államok Külügyminisztériuma [Volga-State Department of the United States of America].

⁶⁶ ÁBTL-3.2.5. O-8-033 “Közgazdászok” [Economists].

⁶⁷ ÁBTL-3.2.5. O-8-034 “Politikusok” [Politicians].

⁶⁸ ÁBTL-3.2.5. O-8-041 “AEÁ Elnöki hivatal (Kongresszus), Képviselőház” [USA Presidential office (Congress), House of Representatives].

⁶⁹ ÁBTL-3.2.5. O-8-470 “START Kelet-nyugati biztonsági tanulmányok intézete” [START Institute of East-West security studies].

⁷⁰ ÁBTL-3.2.5. O-8-557 “New York-i ügynökhelyzet” [Operative situation in New York].

⁷¹ ÁBTL-3.2.5. O-8-837 “Niagara – USA általános tudományos helyzete” [Niagara – General scientific situation of the USA].

⁷² ÁBTL-3.2.5. O-8-2001 “Szabadságharcosok” [Freedom Fighters].

and “Periszkóp” case-files. Examples include the celebration of the Hungarian national holiday on March 15, 1983,⁷³ or demonstrations related to the destruction of Hungarian villages in Romania and the Transylvanian question.⁷⁴ Another recurring topic is the activity of prominent Hungarian-Americans, including academics, such as the matter of the courses taught by former *chargés d'affaires* János Radványi,⁷⁵ or a conference about Hungary organized by István Deák at the Columbia University.⁷⁶ A considerable portion of the reports filed by the intelligence officers is related to immigration and emigration: Hungarians travelling to the United States⁷⁷ or wanting to return⁷⁸ as well as Americans interested in visiting Hungary.⁷⁹ These documents usually concern people for some reason viewed by the Hungarian state as persons of interest: for example, Hungarians suspected of plans to defect to the United States, or American citizens who used to work in the military or law enforcement agencies, or in some cases, intelligence services.⁸⁰

Another portion of the documents is about the operative situation and security questions of the Embassy of the Hungarian People's Republic in Washington, D.C., the diplomatic mission to the United Nations in New York and the people who worked there. In a number of reports there was mention about increased surveillance and even harassment by the American counterintelligence organizations and other authorities in the early 1980s, especially from New York. This is not surprising, given that beside the embassy there was another state security intelligence station in New York, focusing on the United Nations. The Hungarian embassy even contacted Mark Palmer and called his attention to the harassment by the American authorities.⁸¹ At the time, Palmer was Deputy Assistant Secretary for Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union in the US State Department and later he became US ambassador to Hungary in the crucial period between 1986 and 1990.

Meanwhile in Washington, the security report of the embassy from 1983/84 acknowledges that in spite of deteriorating East-West relations, but thanks to the American policy of (positive) differentiation towards Hungary, the members of the Hungarian community and the Hungarian citizens in the United States “compared to the other socialist countries and the previous years, have experienced less provocation.”⁸² At the same time, during the reconstruction works in the Embassy's

⁷³ ÁBTL-O-8-414/2 “Atlantik,” p. 491.

⁷⁴ See, for example, ÁBTL-3.2.5. O-8-414/2 “Atlantik,” 210, ÁBTL-3.2.5. O-8-414/4 “Atlantik,” p. 461.

⁷⁵ ÁBTL-3.2.5. O-8-414/4 “Atlantik,” p. 627. About the defection of Radványi, see footnote 11.

⁷⁶ Ibid., pp. 649–672. István Deák is a prominent Hungarian-American historian who left Hungary in 1948, moved to the US in 1956 and was the Director of Columbia University Institute on East Central Europe between 1968 and 1979.

⁷⁷ ÁBTL-3.2.5. O-8-414/2 “Atlantik,” p. 498.

⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 499.

⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 500.

⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 502.

⁸¹ ÁBTL-3.2.5. O-8-414/2 “Atlantik,” pp. 399, 414.

⁸² ÁBTL-3.2.5. O-8-389/4 “Periszkóp,” [Periscope] p. 86.

building it was discovered that the Americans had access to the security camera system in the venue.⁸³ Apparently, beside the more obvious and direct methods, the American counterintelligence organizations were also using more subtle means to keep the Hungarians under surveillance. In addition, this incident revealed the shocking incompetence of the Hungarian state security officers in allowing access to the camera system of the Embassy – a major security flaw that should have been detected long before.

The hostile activity towards the Hungarian diplomatic posts and its surveillance referred above was not the only aspect of American intelligence that drew the interest of Hungarian state security. Various American intelligence and counter-intelligence organizations, especially the FBI and the CIA, are featured prominently in the documents kept in the ÁBTL, as gathering information about those services was among the main objectives of the Hungarian agencies. This included American intelligence operations in third countries, as evidenced for example by the operative document ÁBTL-3.2.5 O-8-185., which concerns the cover organizations used by the American intelligence agencies in Austria (four boxes).⁸⁴ “Periszkóp” and “Atlantik” also contain information about American intelligence, added to the information on their activities against the Hungarian diplomats. These records mostly concern the CIA and to a lesser extent the FBI, covering a wide range of issues that include mostly information found in the press, such as a public job advertisement,⁸⁵ the medical service of the CIA, how modern medicine was used for intelligence purposes,⁸⁶ a report about the presence of the CIA officers in Budapest⁸⁷ as well as the training of the FBI officers. Knowing the methods and activities of their American competitors was especially important during the operative activities of the Hungarian intelligence and the reports clearly reflect this assumption.

The folders kept in the ÁBTL also contain reports about American politics, including contemporary developments. As one would expect, a lot of attention was placed on information related to Hungary and Hungarian-American relations, such as the visit by Mátyás Szűrös,⁸⁸ a visit to Hungary of the group of IMF experts,⁸⁹

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ ÁBTL-3.2.5 O-8-185 “Amerikai hírszerző szervek fedőszervei Ausztriában” [Cover organizations of the American intelligence organizations in Austria].

⁸⁵ ÁBTL-3.2.5. O-8-414/2 “Atlantik,” p. 409.

⁸⁶ ÁBTL-3.2.5. O-8-414/ 5 “Atlantik,” pp. 127–132.

⁸⁷ ÁBTL-3.2.5. O-8-389/4 “Periszkóp,” p. 418.

⁸⁸ ÁBTL-3.2.5. O-8-414/ 5 “Atlantik,” p. 263. At the time of the visit (1987), Mátyás Szűrös was a MSZMP member, and head of the Foreign Relations Committee of the Hungarian Parliament. He visited the United States in the spring of 1987. Later, on October 23, 1989, it was he who officially proclaimed the end of the Hungarian People's Republic and the establishment of the Republic of Hungary, and became the provisional president until May 1990.

⁸⁹ ÁBTL-3.2.5. O-8-414/2 “Atlantik,” pp. 636–637. A group of IMF experts visited Hungary in early 1984 (probably in preparation of the IMF loan that Hungary would take later that year), and state security suspected that some of the experts had connections to American intelligence organizations. Hungary eventually took a loan

or the issue of Radio Free Europe.⁹⁰ Some of the documents addressed political changes and events that could be relevant for the operative situation⁹¹ or could affect East-West relations.⁹² We know that economic and technological intelligence was a priority for the Eastern Bloc – the communist countries were even warned against such an activity by the US State Department. Surprisingly, in 1985 Mark Palmer claimed that he had no knowledge of this type of activity by the Hungarians, only other Eastern Bloc countries.⁹³ There are a few reports in “Periszkóp” and “Atlantik” that could be regarded as economic or technological, for example about the military applications of the use of an IBM computer.⁹⁴ This, however, does not reflect what we know about the relevance of the economy and technology for the Hungarian state security. This either means that these reports are in different (not yet available) files or that this aspect of intelligence activity was handled by other organizations, such as MNVK-2.

“Periszkóp,” the intelligence file of the embassy in Washington, D.C., contains a list of operatives’ contacts of the intelligence station from 1984.⁹⁵ This document reveals a lot about the activity of the Hungarian state security in Washington, about who the intelligence officers were in contact with, who could have been the source of their information in the United States and potential members of their network. The records show that the database of “the contact list of the intelligence officers and colleagues of the intelligence station” was compiled at the request of Budapest, and submitted on May 10, 1984. This list includes members of the Hungarian-American community, people that the officials of the intelligence station could have met during their diplomatic work (such as journalists, US government officials and other diplomats), or in their personal life. As can be expected based on the reports, the covert operatives of the Washington intelligence station did not appear to have had clandestine contacts, or an extended network of regularly reporting agents. The list of contacts is similar to what one would expect from a regular diplomat. Even under normal circumstances, however, there is but a thin line between intelligence gather-

of 297,500,000 USD – “Hungary: Transactions with the Fund from May 01, 1984 to September 30, 2021,” IMF website, <https://www.imf.org/external/np/fin/tad/extrans1.aspx?memberKey1=415&endDate=2099-12-31>, (accessed 23 October 2021).

⁹⁰ ÁBTL-3.2.5. O-8-414/2 “Atlantik,” p. 59. The 1983 report contains speculations about possible changes to the programming of Radio Free Europe due to changes in its leadership, in order to make it more compatible with the harsher rhetoric of the Reagan administration.

⁹¹ ÁBTL-3.2.5. O-8-414/5 “Atlantik,” pp. 388–391. This is a report from April 1987 about the impact of deteriorating Soviet-American relationship on the operative situation.

⁹² Ibid., pp. 199–200. This is a report about a study by the Congressional Research Service from 1986 that speculates about the future social and political situation in the Eastern European socialist countries after 1990 and how it could impact the East-West relationship. While it did prognosticate conflicts between the Soviets and their allies in the near future, the report did not predict the fall of the Soviet Union and the collapse of the Eastern bloc.

⁹³ ÁBTL-3.2.5. O-8-414/2 “Atlantik,” p. 392.

⁹⁴ Ibid., p. 547.

⁹⁵ ÁBTL-3.2.5. O-8-389/4 “Periszkóp.”

ing and diplomacy. In *Silent Warfare*, Shulsky and Schmitt describe how information collected by diplomats can also be regarded as a form of intelligence.⁹⁶ Even in normal circumstances, diplomats and attachés report to their home countries about the host country and due to their unique perspectives and access, they can provide valuable insights. To a large extent, this is what we see in the case of the Hungarian state security in the period, based on these documents; the diplomatic cover provided access for the operatives, who tried to gather information from the sources they had access to as diplomats, which meant mostly human and open-source intelligence.

Conclusion

Based on the documents available at the ÁBTL, we can draw an outline of the activity of the intelligence station in Washington in the period. The objectives of Hungarian state security in the United States seem to have been limited; the operatives were primarily focusing on the Hungarian community in the country. In addition, they also reported about the security situation of the Hungarian diplomats and the embassy, the activity of American intelligence agencies and the political situation in the United States, especially if it was relevant to Hungarian-American relations. Considering that apparently the Hungarian-Americans were the focus of the intelligence activity in the United States, they are barely mentioned in the training materials, not even in the textbooks written by the Hungarians, Pozsonyi and Szecsődi. This suggests that something else was used to train the intelligence officers to work with the Hungarian-American community; possibly this was conducted personally, on a case-by-case basis.

Based on the reports analyzed in the previous chapter it appears logical that the training of the Hungarian intelligence officers did not offer more than often inaccurate, surface-level knowledge about the United States. Based on the records currently available at the ÁBTL presented in this case study, the Main Directorate III/I of the Ministry of the Interior did not seem to have conducted serious espionage activities in the USA towards its government. The primary responsibility of Hungarian intelligence in the United States was to monitor the activities of Hungarian-American communities and to establish contact with intellectuals, possibly with government officials. Officers of the Hungarian intelligence were mostly involved in collecting publicly available information, open-source intelligence. At the same time, the Hungarian operatives also reported if they came during their diplomatic work across any information that had relevance for intelligence purposes. This theory is also supported by the findings of István Pál, who came to a similar conclusion considering the activity of István Pozsonyi, but noted that this officer could have had

⁹⁶ A.N. Shulsky, and G.J. Schmitt, *Silent Warfare: Understanding the World of Intelligence*, Washington, D.C.: Potomac Books, 2002, p. 39.

some access to somewhat useful material by managing, or controlling people from Hungary who were in the United States due to the various academic scholarships.⁹⁷

As a result, the operative manuals that were presented in this study do not contain a deep, detailed analysis of American society, political life, or economy. A possible explanation is that the officers who were trained with the use of these textbooks did not need this type of information for their work, which is a theory that the case study about the activity of the intelligence station in Washington and the findings of István Pál also seem to support. The textbooks do not represent a genuine attempt at understanding the politics, culture and society of the United States – this might be one of the reasons why these handbooks ignored the Hungarian academic discourse concerning America. The training aim based on such materials was to provide a cursory background knowledge about the United States that would enable the officers to get established in their new position quickly and blend in if needed. An additional aim of the textbooks was ideological education; the ideological message remained constant, even if the tone of the subsequent books was less confrontational.

At the same time, there is evidence that shows that some Hungarian intelligence officers were actively involved in espionage against the US. This suggests that they could have been working for military intelligence and to a certain extent, the reports of the Main Directorate III/I also support this assumption. In this respect, some of the information that MNVK-2 shared with their civilian counterpart indicates a higher level of involvement in clandestine activity on the part of the Hungarian military intelligence than we can see from the operatives of the Main Directorate III/I. Once the materials of MNVK-2 become available for research, it may be possible to draw a more complete picture of the activity of the intelligence agencies of the Hungarian People's Republic in the United States.

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Abstract: This study examines the operative textbooks used for the training of the intelligence officers of the state security of the Hungarian People's Republic for work in the United States from the second half of the 1960s to the 1980s. It compares the image of the United States in these textbooks to the reports produced by the Hungarian state security in the period, to see whether those textbooks might have been used for effective training. The main primary sources are two large and two shorter textbooks that can be found in the Állambiztonsági Szolgálatok Történeti Levéltára (Historical Archives of the Hungarian State Security, ÁBTL) in Budapest. Two of these books were originally written by Soviet authors, and the other two by Hungarian intelligence officers.

This study contains a brief overview of the current knowledge about foreign intelligence in communist Hungary and the training of the intelligence officers. The article then presents the textbooks and the main topics discussed there as well as the state security's perception of the United States. Finally, in order to evaluate the relevance of textbooks, the training materials are compared to the contents of the actual reports written by Hungarian intelligence officers.

Overall, these educational materials do not contain a deep, detailed presentation of American society, political life, or the economy; for the operatives did not need this type of information for their work. The aim was to provide cursory background knowledge about the United States that would enable the officers to be quickly established in their new position and blend in, if need be. Another aim of the textbooks was ideological education. Even though the tone of the later Hungarian books is less belligerent and hostile than that of the Soviet ones, with minor differences, they still convey the same ideological message.

Keywords: US-Hungarian relations, state security, Cold War, training, foreign intelligence

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Przygotowanie i praktyka – obraz Stanów Zjednoczonych w materiałach szkoleniowych węgierskich służb bezpieczeństwa państwowego w latach 1970–1989

Streszczenie: Niniejsze studium analizuje podręczniki operacyjne wykorzystywane do szkolenia oficerów wywiadu bezpieczeństwa państwowego Węgierskiej Republiki Ludowej i przygotowania ich do pracy w Stanach Zjednoczonych w okresie od drugiej połowy lat sześćdziesiątych do lat osiemdziesiątych. W celu weryfikacji przydatności tych podręczników do skutecznego szkolenia artykuł porównuje obraz USA w nich przedstawiany z raportami sporządzonymi w tym okresie przez służby węgierskiego bezpieczeństwa państwowego. Podstawowy materiał źródłowy stanowią dwa obszerne i dwa krótsze podręczniki, które można znaleźć w Állambiztonsági Szolgálatok Történeti Levéltára (Archiwa Historyczne Służb Bezpieczeństwa Państwowego, ÁBTL) w Budapeszcie. Dwa z nich zostały napisane przez autorów sowieckich, dwa pozostałe przez węgierskich oficerów wywiadu.

Opracowanie zawiera krótki przegląd stanu aktualnej wiedzy na temat wywiadu zagranicznego komunistycznych Węgier oraz szkolenia oficerów wywiadu. Następnie w artykule przedstawiono podręczniki i główne tematy w nich omawiane, a także to, jak służby bezpieczeństwa państwa postrzegały Stany Zjednoczone. Wreszcie, w celu oceny przydatności podręczników, materiały szkoleniowe porównano z treścią rzeczywistych raportów napisanych przez węgierskich oficerów wywiadu.

Ogólnie biorąc, omawiane materiały edukacyjne nie zawierają dogłębnej analizy i szczegółowej prezentacji amerykańskiego społeczeństwa, życia politycznego ani gospodarki, ponieważ agenci wywiadu w swojej pracy nie potrzebowali tego typu informacji. Miały one dostarczyć jedynie powierzchownej wiedzy ogólnej o Stanach Zjednoczonych, która umożliwiłaby oficerom szybkie odnalezienie się na nowym stanowisku i wtopienie się w tłum, jeśli zajdzie taka potrzeba. Kolejnym celem napisania tych podręczników była edukacja ideologiczna. Choć ton książek węgierskich, które powstały później niż sowieckie, jest mniej wojowniczy i wrogi, nadal przekazują one – z niewielkimi jedynie różnicami – to samo przesłanie ideologiczne.

Słowa kluczowe: relacje USA–Węgry, bezpieczeństwo państwowe, zimna wojna, szkolenia, wywiad zagraniczny

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