



The system and forms of cooperation between the Hungarian and East German state security services in the Carlos case

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Aim: The present study undertakes to briefly present the impact of the appearance of Carlos ‘the Jackal’ in Hungary, and the cooperation of the Hungarian and East German state security services in the field of counter-terrorism. The study presents in detail the history, the system of tasks and the organizational changes of the unit dealing with international affairs of the Hungarian State Security Service.

Methodology: The study used materials available from the Historical Archives of the State Security Services (ÁBTL) and the Federal Archives of the State Security Service of the former German Democratic Republic (Die Bundesbeauftragte für die Unterlagen des Staatsicherheitsdienstes der ehemaligen Deutschen Demokratischen Republik, BStU), item Hungarian and foreign literature is also relevant in this case.

Findings: The study presents in detail the establishment, the system of tasks and the organizational changes of the International Relations Department responsible for the matter. Based on the available and processed archival sources and literature, we can conclude that in counter-terrorism cases, such as in the case of the C-79 file¹ as well, intensive international co-operation took place, especially between the Hungarian and East German state security services.

Value: In the recent period, there was no study that showed the cooperation of the Hungarian and East German secret services in connection with the Carlos case.

Keywords: terrorism, Carlos the Jackal, state security, international cooperation, counterterrorism

1 ‘C-79’ file: opened by the Hungarian State Security Service, about the operative processing of Carlos and his terrorist organization.

Introduction

Illegal migration and terrorism are at the forefront of today's security challenges. Nevertheless, the public opinion in Hungary is that, Hungary is in the heart of Europe and, due to our modest role in world politics and the world economy, we are safe, we do not have or have had terrorists. We can agree with one half of this statement. In my opinion, we do not really have to expect a high volume terrorist attack, but it cannot be completely ruled out. However, think only of december 23, 1991, when a far-left terrorist organization called the German Red Army Faction (RAF) launched a bomb attack on a bus of Jews wishing to emigrate from the Soviet Union to Israel. But I could mention the bombings against the Parliament or the Matthias Church, the perpetrators of which have not yet been identified. Likewise, most of the explosive attacks of the '90s against leading politicians of the era remain unresolved. Finally, we can mention the organization called Arrows of Hungarians ([URL1](#)), which was liquidated a few years ago and also planned and prepared bombings against Hungarian politicians.

If we look further back into our history, we can also see that during the Cold War, several terrorist organizations (Abu Nidal, the Red Army of Japan, the 'Carlos Group') used Hungary as a resting place, a logistics base, and a safe place to prepare for its attacks. The best-known terrorist and terrorist organization, who operated and lived in Budapest for a long time between 1979 and 1986, is Carlos and his organization called 'The Organization of the Arab Armed Struggle - the Arm of the Arab Revolution'. In order to process the organization's operations in Hungary they established in 1979 a counter terrorism group on the III/II Directorate, Department VII. This Counter-Terrorism Group (later an independent Counter-Terrorism Department X.) was headed by Colonel dr. József Varga ([URL2](#)). The task of this unit has been assigned to prevent terrorist threats, to monitor and operatively process terrorists and suspicious items arriving in Hungary, and to inform allied / friendly secret services.

Carlos the 'Jackal'

Carlos was one of the first symbolic embodiments of international terrorism, but due to the peculiarities of the age, he was employed by the secret services of many Middle Eastern and communist states to achieve his own goals. He is a terrorist, a mercenary, an international revolutionary, with whom not only the secret services but also the various terrorist organizations tried to maintain good relations. But who was Ilich Ramirez Sanchez aka Carlos, the Jackal really?

Carlos, the Jackal, was born on 12 October 1949 in Caracas, Venezuela as Ilich Ramirez Sanchez in a wealthy civilian family, the eldest of three sons. His father, who was a reputable lawyer and a staunch communist, and named all three sons after Lenin, the founder of the Soviet Union. Ilich spent his childhood in Venezuela but moved to London with his brothers and mother at the age of 16 as his father could afford to teach his sons in Europe, thanks to the oil revenues. The Sanchez brothers lived a fairly playboy life in London, so their father sent them to Lumumba University in Moscow in 1969, where they were taught by communist cadres from all over the world (Follain, 2001).

Ilich studied chemistry, which he enjoyed, but he did not like the strict order at the university. He began politicking as a boredom, but it soon became his passion. He especially liked the reports of his Palestinian fellow students about their fight against Israel. According to the customs of the age, the Soviet state security organization, the KGB², probably tried to recruit him, but unfortunately we have no information that this was a success (Liszakai, 2017).

Disliked by the boring life in Moscow and expelled from Lumumba for his regular outbursts, he traveled to Beirut in 1971 to join the far-left terrorist organization for the People's Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) in Israel, and as a volunteer, a *'freedom fighter'* against world Jewry and the systems that support them (Schröm, 2002).

The young Carlos has attended several training camps in the Middle East and North Africa, where he was taught how to handle weapons, hijacking techniques, reconnaissance and intelligence skills. As he spoke excellent Spanish, English and French and lived in London for many years and had a good local knowledge, the PFLP has sent him back to the British capital as a sleeping cell, where he worked as a Spanish teacher based on his cover history. His job was to select and monitor potential terrorist targets and build a network of conspiracy houses. It was then that he met Magdalena Kopp, a German national, and Johannes Weinrich, who later became his innermost associates.

Carlos' first real mission was in 1973, when he had to kill Joseph Sieff, the Jewish-born owner of the Mark and Spencer chain in London. Although Sieff survived the assassination, Carlos has enjoyed the full confidence of the PFLP staff since this action and has been assigned additional responsibilities. Thus began the career of one of the most dreaded terrorists of the 1970s and '80s (Follain, 2001).

He carried out his first real terrorist attack in Paris on 15 September 1975, when he committed a hand grenade attack on a caféhouse called Drugstore.

2 KGB - Komitet Goszudarsztennoj Bezopasznoszti - State Security Committee – secret service of the Soviet Union performing state security tasks.

Two people died and 34 were injured in the explosion. After this, long and meticulous investigation revealed his identity, the British Secret Service MI5 and Scotland Yard conducted a house search at Carlos's flat in London. In addition to a suitcase full of guns, they also found a book of Frederick Forsyth: *The Jackal*. This is how the Jackal name was additionally given by which he is known to this day (Schröm, 2002).

It is, of course, an inability to list all the terrorist acts that Carlos planned or committed. However, it is necessary to mention his most well-known terrorist attack, which brought him real fame, as it points the whole being of Carlos: on 21 December 1975, Carlos broke into the OPEC headquarters in Vienna with his six-member commando, took the negotiating ministers hostage there, then to Algeria, where he finally released everyone. Because Carlos did not follow the instructions of the PFLP staff during the operation, he was banished from the movement. It was then that he founded his own organization, which is called the '*Organization of the Arab Armed Struggle - The Arm of the Arab Revolution*'.

Carlos broke up with Arab nationalist movements and became more closely associated with Marxist terrorist organizations in Western Europe, so he soon moved to East Berlin, where he received luxurious hospitality while attacking, among other things, West Berlin targets and the Superphénix nuclear power plant in France, and he blew up TGV trains. However, the arrest of his wife, Magdalena Kopp, in February 1982 by the French authorities also played a significant role in his actions in France (Kopp, 2007). He continued to carry out the terrorist attacks largely to free his wife.

The 'Jackal' in Hungary

Carlos found a safe hiding place in the Middle East, but soon got tired of the carefree comfort. In addition, he needed a lot of money to hide, and he could never fully trust his hosts, as he could not know when he would be extradited to the French or West Germans in the hope of material or political gain. So he needed the right amount of money, commissions, to maintain his standard of living and, more importantly, his reputation. One of its most important base was in southern Yemen, from where he received a wealth of financial and logistical support. He traveled with fake Yemeni passports and used the Yemeni diplomatic courier service mostly to smuggle weapons and explosives (BStU 1).

To our knowledge, Carlos and his companions arrived in Hungary for the first time on 13 January 1979, with the aim of building a base and resting place in Hungary. In the spring and summer of 1979, Carlos visited Hungary on several

occasions, using the Yemeni passport issued to Ahmed Adil Fawaz in each case. The Hungarian State Security Service was able to reconstruct these earlier entries well afterwards. Although for the Department for controlling foreigners and hotels he appeared a man professing to be an Arab but using a Spanish accent his exact identity could not yet be established. The General Director of the III. Directorate General Lajos Karasz ([URL3](#)), instructed Colonel Dr. József Varga to contact Carlos and find out from him why they were staying in Hungary, how long they wanted to stay and what their intentions were. Colonel Varga, in accordance with the instructions, visited Carlos at the Intercontinental Hotel in Budapest as a representative of the Hungarian state security authorities. This meeting has been followed by about 25 others over the years.³

Carlos stated during these conversations that he had travelled to Hungary because our country provided him with pleasant and comfortable opportunities to relax and he felt safe with us. He rented a house in Vend Street in Budapest to spend longer or shorter time with his colleagues. He also said that he wanted to meet immediately with the heads of the Hungarian state security organizations, the leader of the Hungarian political elite, and even János Kádár himself. He wanted to offer his services to the Hungarian government. In return for adequate compensation and security, he would have liked to undertake actions abroad in the interests of Hungary. ([URL4](#))

The Hungarian state security authorities were largely able to keep Carlos and his group under control in Budapest, as the apartment on Vend Street was fully equipped by the owner through a secret co-operation. This made it possible to fully observe the occupants of the apartment and to record what happened and was said there. Secret searches were carried out in the apartment on a regular basis, so the Hungarian state security services could have up-to-date information on the group's plans, equipment and false documents: *'[...] anti-terrorist literature was found. In a four-digit metal-lined suitcase in the apartment, 2 American and FRG-ready handguns, a large-scale map, 20,000 dollars in hundreds of denominations and fake IDs for members of the group, a list of foreign nationals with only the first name associated with the group, telephone numbers, a note of a meeting with the representative of the various terrorist organizations and notes on the activities required for a specific terrorist act [...].'* (ÁBTL 1).

As a result of the operational observations, the Hungarian state security authorities had relatively accurate and thorough information about Carlos Group's plans. In fact, they had to watch them prepare for a foreign action in Budapest, and after they were done, they returned to their base on Vend Street. For example,

3 Interview with ret. Colonel Dr. József Varga in Budapest on March 1, 2013 and October 9, 2013.

terrorists wanted to blow up the Romanian transmitter of Radio Free Europe in Munich on behalf of the Romanian secret service, Securitate, or the French Institute in West Berlin in retaliation for the capture of Magdalena Kopp in Paris. However, the Hungarian authorities did not have accurate information on the timing of the planned actions.

'Between August 1979 and April 1982, members of a terrorist organization under the guise of Carlos under a pseudonym were regularly staying in Budapest, renting apartments here. The organization maintains active contact with the secret services of Romania, Libya, Syria, Israel and southern Yemen, and maintains intermittent, superficial contact with Cuban and GDR state security agencies. Special services from these Middle Eastern countries and Romania support the group with money, weapons and passports. The main principal of the group is Libya, but they have also been given liquidation and other similar tasks from Romania. Carlos and his group work closely with a number of well-known terrorist organizations, but the agency has no information that the group is planning an action towards socialist countries [...].' (ÁBTL 2).

The III. Directorate presumably shared information thus obtained with Hungarian politicians as well. As data was obtained on international targets, mainly in Western Europe, it was necessary to make a political decision as to with whom and to what extent the data would be shared. The investigation did not reveal any documents or other information that would allow the Hungarian State Security Service to transmit data indicating attacks to Western European secret services. However, several sources have suggested that carefully selected and filtered information is shared with the communist security services of the Socialist Bloc, primarily to Poland and the German Democratic Republic. A liaison officer of the KGB who stationed in Budapest had a continuous view of the work of Hungarian intelligence and response, so the political and state security leaders of the Soviet Union did not have to be informed directly. As Carlos preferred to stay in the East German country next to Hungary, it was quite obvious that the Hungarian secret services established the closest relationship with STASI.

Cooperation between the Hungarian and East German state security services

After the defeat of the 1956 revolution and the war of independence, hundreds of thousands of Hungarians fled Hungary to escape the communist regime and retaliation. Some of them found a new home in West Germany. Some of them

also continued their political struggle against the communist regime in their new homeland, e.g. as a staff member of Radio Free Europe. The monitoring of these persons and the monitoring of their activities became one of a priority task of the Hungarian state security services. To this end, Hungarian state security wanted to work more closely with partner services in friendly countries. It was common knowledge at the time that the East German secret service had excellent operational positions in West Germany. The East German state security body needed the cooperation of the Hungarian counterpart because it was a basic operational procedure for them to monitor their citizens abroad, even in socialist countries. And this was only possible with the knowledge, consent and assistance of the secret service of the host country. Aware of all this, it is not surprising that the representatives of the two secret services signed cooperation agreements in several areas. These were:

- Exchange of information in the field of political intelligence (NATO, ecclesiastical organizations, etc.).
- Provide information on the situation of agents, in particular for West Germany and Austria.
- Cooperation in the field of scientific and technical intelligence.
- Fight against ideological diversification.
- Measures in the operational processing of refugees of Hungarian nationality or Hungarian citizenship.
- Joint operational processing of NATO training sites to prepare armed diversion teams against socialist countries (Jobst, 2015).

Legal and institutional framework and forms of cooperation

The legal framework for co-operation was provided by Decree-Law No. 20 of 1958 on the promulgation of the Treaty between the Hungarian People's Republic and the German Democratic Republic on Legal Aid in Civil, Family and Criminal Matters, signed in Berlin on 30 October 1957. The Decree-Law basically contains the procedural rules of the matters between the two countries in the titles of the legislation. The most important procedural rule for the study is Article 3 (1), which states that *'the authorities referred to in Article 2 (1) shall be in direct contact with each other'* (LEG 1).

By 1963, the leadership of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party (MSZMP) had decided to transform the state security system. The reason for this, in my opinion, may have been that the Kádár regime became so strong after the defeat of the 1956 revolution and the war of independence. The Western states

began to accept János Kádár as the main political leader of Hungary, who perhaps wanted to get rid of the sins of the past, the defeat of the revolution and the State Defense Authority (ÁVH). This is supported by the fact that in the new organization, due to the change in international conditions, there has been a much greater emphasis on counter-espionage and intelligence than on the fight against '*internal reaction forces*'. Another significant part of the transformation was the first time they got rid of the old cadres. In recognition of their merits, the heads of the departments were retired and, almost without exception, a new set of young people was appointed to replace them. The name of the new organization is the III. Directorate, which remained almost unchanged until the change of regime, with major or minor transformations.

Within the new organization, Order No. 009 of the Minister of the Interior of the Hungarian People's Republic of 5 December 1963 established the Department of International Relations. According to the ministerial justification of the order, Hungary's dynamically developing economic and cultural relations with the capitalist countries, the control of the growing number of tourists entering Hungary from such countries, and the effective support of anti-espionage tasks. In other words, the task of the new department was not primarily to liaise with the partner services (although this was also done), but rather to increase the control of official and private arrivals and departures (LEG 2).

In 1965, the department was abolished by another order of the Minister of the Interior, and the International Relations and Information Department was established in its place. The order justified the creation of the new organization on the grounds that it was developing more and more between the state security services of the socialist countries and that their cooperation would cover all fields. The tasks facing the socialist countries and the flow of information (not detailed in the order) will necessitate the transformation of the area and the establishment of a new department. The structure and specific tasks of the new unit were approved by the Minister of the Interior on 10-2307/1965 of 29 December 1965, governed by its Rules of Procedure. The most important tasks of the department, named in the rules of procedure:

- Prepare programs and agreements for ministerial delegations.
- Monitor existing bilateral agreements and propose amendments in the light of the operational situation.
- Personal contact with the liaison officers deployed in Hungary.
- Reception of foreign professional delegations, organization of programs and meetings.
- Evaluates and analyzes the relevance of data and information to be sent to or received from friendly countries.

- Prepares informative reports for the Central Committee of the Hungarian Socialist People's Party and a member of the government on the activities of the intelligence and response services of the capitalist countries in relation to Hungary, as well as on domestic events (crimes, accidents, disasters, etc.).
- Compiles monthly orientation reports from daily reports (including foreign press releases) (LEG 3).

The department was composed of two subdivisions (International Relations Subdivision and Information Subdivision) and a secretariat. In 1970, the rules of procedure of the department were amended. In view of the increased delegation tasks, a Protocol Subdivision has been set up. And with the 1972 amendment, the unit was renamed the International Relations Division and the Information Division was abolished, part of which was transferred to the Operational Co-ordination, Monitoring and Secretariat Division.

The practical side of cooperation

On 27 July 1979, the State Security Service of the German Democratic Republic informed its Hungarian counterpart service that a Yemeni passport number 001-278, issued to Fawaz Ahmed, had arrived in Budapest via the 805 MALÉV flight from Berlin, an international terrorist known as Carlos. The Hungarian services have verified the information provided and found that it is true. This marked the beginning of the unprecedented operational processing in Hungary, which soon led to the opening of the file under the pseudonym C-79 and thus to the development of institutionalized counter-terrorism. Under the pseudonyms of Fawaz and others, Carlos travelled to Hungary about thirty times between 1979 and 1986. A department was entrusted with the task, which included the control of inter alia, incoming foreign nationals. The operational officers assigned to the task immediately began a full mapping of Carlos and his network of contacts, as well as monitoring their movements and activities. Some of the data collected during processing and surveillance was, of course, filtered and shared with friendly, socialist state security services, including the East Germans. At STASI, Department X has been responsible for international relations since 1956, and Department XXII since 1975 was responsible for the area for counter-terrorism (Blum et al., 2012). In addition to passing on the information, at regular intervals, mostly once a year, the Hungarian and East German counter-terrorists also met in person to discuss matters. One such meeting or delegation was planned for 3-4 days. Its participants were operational officers

from both sides who were active in counter-terrorism matters, so they had good insight and professional experience in this area. The Hungarian delegation was almost always led by the already mentioned Colonel dr. József Varga. We have searchable data related to the meetings in Hungary, given that the C-79 file is currently classified and cannot be researched. However, in Berlin, the Federal Archives of the State Security Service of the former German Democratic Republic made a part of the file under the pseudonym ‘SEPARAT’⁴ searchable (approximately 2,500 pages) and related documents (20,000 pages). In these files we can only find written accounts of the Berlin negotiations. The talks not only included discussions and transfers of information about Carlos and his terrorist organization, but also mentioned all organizations whose members turned up in the two countries and came to the attention of the response services. Such terrorist organizations were, for example, Abu Nidal, the Red Army of Japan, the IRA, ETA, the Secret Armenian Army for the Liberation of Armenia (ASALA), and so on. The exchange of information covered the operation of terrorist organizations, data on their planned actions, the contact system of their members and supporters, the type and number of travel documents they used, etc. (BStU 2). Undoubtedly, the most interesting and valuable information was data on actions planned by terrorist organizations. On 29 April 1981, for example, a report was issued mentioning that during the last Hungarian-East German state security meeting, Colonel dr. Varga had handed over a document to his East German colleague, Colonel Dahl, which had been mentioned earlier. It contained complete plans for the terrorist attack carried out by Carlos on the Romanian transmitter of the Radio Free Europe Radio in Munich. The report states that as early as September 1980, thanks to the operational measures put in place, the Hungarian State Security Service had obtained information that Carlos had been commissioned by the Romanian secret service to rob and blow up the Romanian transmitter of Radio Free Europe. The action was originally scheduled for 12 February 1981. Although the action did not go as planned in the end, Carlos was nevertheless received and rewarded by the highest-ranking intelligence leaders in Romania (ÁBTL 2). The Hungarian service also shared the information with the Soviet and Czechoslovak partner services. The co-operation between Carlos and his organization went smoothly until 1986, when the Jackal left Hungary permanently and the C-79 file was closed.

4 ‘SEPARAT’ file (MFS/XV/2833/81): opened by the East German State Security Service, about the operative processing of Carlos and his terrorist organization.

Conclusion

The appearance of Carlos and his organization in Hungary also resulted in a fundamentally new situation in the life of the Hungarian state security service. As the information obtained with the operational tools and methods clearly indicated that the Jackal intends to establish itself in Budapest for a longer period of time, the Hungarian secret service and the political leadership also had to decide how to handle the situation at their own level. To our knowledge, the political decision was rigid aloofness. No political leader met with Carlos or any of his men, although there was a constant demand for this from the Jackal's side. The aim of the political leadership was to prevent Carlos from carrying out a terrorist attack on Hungarian or foreign Hungarian interests. The task of the secret service was to assess, control and record Carlos' relationship system, movement and activities as fully as possible. On the other hand, he had to leave Hungary permanently on his own. To achieve these two goals, Hungarian state security used the full range of operational tools at its disposal. Including, of course, the possibility of international cooperation with the socialist state security services. The study presents in detail the establishment, system of tasks and organizational changes of the International Relations Department responsible for the matter. Based on the available and processed archival sources and literature, we can conclude that in counter-terrorism cases, such as in the case of the C-79 file as well, intensive international co-operation took place, especially between the Hungarian and East German state security services. The members of the professional delegations were operational officers from both sides who were active in counter-terrorism matters, so they had a good overview and professional experience in this area or in the given cases. In counter-terrorism cases, professional consultations were ongoing for both parties until the change of regime.

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Archives

- BStU 1: MfS+HA_XXII+19990_A, p. 000001
- BStU 2: MFS HA XII 19664, p. 19.
- ÁBTL 1: Daily operational report no.: 45-78/10/201/1979.
- ÁBTL 2: Daily operational report no.: 45-78/10/69/1983.

Online links in this article

- URL1: *Vádat emeltek Budaházy és a Magyarok Nyilai ellen.* https://mandiner.hu/cikk/20100927_vadat_emeltek_budahazy_es_a_magyarok_nyilai_ellen
- URL2: *Personal data record of Dr. József Varga.* https://www.abtl.hu/ords/archontologia/f?p=108:13:::NO:13:P13_OBJECT_ID,P13_OBJECT_TYPE:956813,ELETRAJZ
- URL3: *Personal data record of Lajos Karasz.* https://www.abtl.hu/ords/archontologia/f?p=108:13:::NO:13:P13_OBJECT_ID,P13_OBJECT_TYPE:24459,ELETRAJZ
- URL4: *Beke József – dr. Hegyes Gabriella: A terrorelhárítás kezdetei Magyarországon - A C-79-es dosszié.* https://epa.oszk.hu/02900/02932/00007/pdf/EPA02932_terror_elharias_2015_1_01.pdf

Legislations

- LEG1: Legislative Decree 20 of 1958 on the promulgation of the treaty between the Hungarian People's Republic and the German Democratic Republic on civil, family law and criminal legal aid signed in Berlin on October 30, 1957, Article 3, Paragraph 1.
- LEG2: Order No. 009 of the Minister of the Interior of the Hungarian People's Republic (ÁBTL -4.2.-10-23/8/1963.)
- LEG3: International Relations and Information Department dated december 29, 1965. order of business no. 10-2307/1965 (ÁBTL -4.2.-10-2307/1965/3.)

Interview

Interview with ret. Colonel Dr. József Varga in Budapest on 1 March 2013 and 9 October 2013.

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