

Compromising Priests and Nuns Under State Socialism: Encountering Homosexuality in Hungarian State Security Records

Judit Takács, MSocSc, PhD 

HUN-REN Centre for Social Sciences, Centre of Excellence of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Budapest, Hungary

ABSTRACT

This article is based on the results of archival research in 20th century Hungary concerning the practices and consequences of state policing of homosexuality under state socialism. Two cases will be examined in detail. One is related to the court case of a Catholic priest caught performing homosexual acts, whose testimonies were intended to be used by the secret services to compromise other members of the clergy. The other case is special because it is connected to female homosexuality, which was rarely thematized in this period. Its main characters are a former Dominican nun and a group of young religious women organized by her. The Secret Police tried to dissolve the group by sending anonymous letters to the parents of the young women, accusing the leader of the group of homosexuality. By foregrounding institutionalized homophobia as a strategic tool of governance under Hungarian state socialism, the presented cases demonstrate how sexual deviance was deliberately weaponized to achieve broader political objectives, including the suppression of autonomous religious communities and the manipulation of church-state relations.

KEYWORDS

Archive research; blackmail; compromise; disruption as prevention; homosexuality; state security records as memory sites; state-socialist Hungary

Introduction

This article is about the practices of compromising people based on their (alleged) homosexuality and the strategic use of institutional homophobia by state security organs as mirrored by their operational tools applied in the 1960s in state-socialist Hungary. In this context, institutional homophobia encompasses not only the criminalization of homosexual practices by law, but also the state-sanctioned mechanisms whereby state security organs used homosexuality as a basis of compromising and blackmailing.

In the following, two cases will be examined in detail from the 1960s. One is related to the court case of a Catholic priest caught performing homosexual acts, whose testimonies were intended to be used by the secret services to

CONTACT Judit Takács  takacs.judit@tk.hu  HUN-REN Centre for Social Sciences, Centre of Excellence of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, 1476 Budapest 100, PO Box 340, Budapest, Hungary.

© 2025 The Author(s). Published with license by Taylor & Francis Group, LLC.

This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>), which permits non-commercial re-use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited, and is not altered, transformed, or built upon in any way. The terms on which this article has been published allow the posting of the Accepted Manuscript in a repository by the author(s) or with their consent.

compromise other members of the clergy. Besides the “heavily anonymized” materials—from where all names and references to potentially sensitive details were deleted by attentive archivists—accessible at the Historical Archives of the Hungarian State Security (hereinafter State Security Archives), some of the original court files of this case were also available at the Budapest City Archives, where the documents could be accessed by researchers without any such restrictions. Therefore, the storyline could be reconstructed based on various records found in these two archives.

The other case, which ran under the code name “Operation Apostles” in the state security records, is special because it is connected to female homosexuality, which was rarely thematized in this period (nor in other periods) in Hungary. Its main characters are a former Dominican nun and a group of young religious women organized by her. The Secret Police tried to dissolve the group by sending anonymous letters to the parents of the young women in the name of other outraged parents, accusing the leader of the group of homosexuality.

The article is based on the results of archival research in Hungary concerning the practices and consequences of state policing of homosexuality in the 20th century. The primary sources of this study were criminal and court records, as well as official registers of people, identified by these documents as homosexual. A subgroup of these official registers holds the records on people compromised because of homosexual acts from the period after 1945, some of which are accessible, to a limited extent, in the State Security Archives.

Researchers using archival sources may encounter various barriers while working in archives. This endeavor can become even more problematic for those trying to document certain aspects of the social history of sexuality (Gilfoyle, 1994; Healey, 2002), looking for previously often concealed, ignored, and/or overlooked records, and sometimes being confronted with essentialist views challenging the very point of conducting such research. In addition, doing research on (homo)sexuality-related issues in social environments characterized by “sex negativity” (Rubin, 1984, p. 278) can lead to the development of a specific kind of stigma by association, deriving from the perceived non-normative sexual orientation of the research, that can affect researchers, archivists as well as their interactions.

General difficulties in accessing and processing archive documents include incomplete sources and documents in bad condition, or even completely missing. However, in Hungary, researchers can encounter difficulties even before entering the archives. For example, after one section of the National Archives of Hungary—in the Hess András Square—was closed in the summer of 2016, due to relocation, documents from the state-socialist era, covering the period from 1945 to 1989, were not accessible for several years.

Another characteristic feature is the legislative framework through which the state hinders access to certain collections and types of documents. One

example is *Act III of 2003 on the exposure of secret service operations under state socialism and the creation of the Historical Archives of the Hungarian State Security*, which puts strict limitations on accessing data on health status and sexual life. These are stricter limitations than those on accessing data on ethnic origin or religious affiliation. Non-anonymized access to data is only possible if “the purpose of research is connected to racial, national or ethnic belonging or religious or other belief, and the researcher can prove that knowing such data is indispensable for their ongoing research, supporting this claim with former publications in professional journals” (Act III., 2003, Article 4), while there is no such option for sexuality-related research. This regulation applies only to the State Security Archives, where sensitive data, i.e., those pertaining to a person’s health status, harmful addictions, political preferences, religious affiliation, sexual behaviors, and previous convictions, cannot be accessed until the “protection period” is over, which is 30 years after a person’s death. In contrast, other Hungarian public archives, such as the National Archives of Hungary or the Budapest City Archives—in accordance with the law regulating research in public archives (Act LXVI., 1995, Chapter 4)—can allow scholars with a research permit, issued by a Hungarian academic research institute, to access records containing such personal data before the end of the 30-year protection period, if this is deemed necessary for their research.

Several Hungarian historians have criticized the special situation of the State Security Archives. One scholar, for instance, described the exceptional circumstances of doing research there in the following way: “[you have] to submit your CV and a certification of your academic career, and as a result of political hysteria, a system of pre-readers guard the labyrinth of the archives, at the centre of which, secluded from all, lie the number 6 files¹ like a Minotaur” (Horváth, 2012, p. 142). Others emphasized the importance of considering the rightful demand for information compensation—that would enable access to previously restricted state security records—regarding the “deeply hidden secrets of past dictatorships,” of those who suffered harm at the time: Without such compensation, the past will “stay under the control of those who had once gained full power over us already” (Gyáni, 2014, p. 50).

There are also claims that there might be some political motivation behind the fact that institutions storing state security materials, primarily created for the purpose of “lustration”—i.e., the process of exposing informants and cleansing the public sphere of the perpetrators of the previous political regime (Horváth, 2014; for a detailed interpretation of lustration as a transitional justice procedure see: Nalepa, 2010, pp. 4–5)—do not always facilitate, and indeed, with reference to the right to privacy or data protection, often make it harder to access documents than an average archive (Horváth, 2014; Tabajdi & Ungváry, 2008).

It is important to note that in the present study, the examined secret police files—similar to Verdery's (2014) findings in Romania—are not seen as sources of high "truth value" but rather as a memory site of knowledge production and retention, reflecting how the state security services used to function, and how they manipulated their social environment with the involvement of collaborators as well as unsuspecting people. The examined records can be seen as constituting material repositories of state efforts to categorize, fix, and preserve a certain vision of the social world. In these files, the state produced knowledge about its subjects through different forms of surveillance accounts, reflecting underlying political assumptions and epistemologically charged processes of classification, interpretation, and moral judgment.

The secret police files functioned like a power technology in a Foucauldian sense, not only documenting deviance but also producing it, by forcing subjects into intelligible categories, like the "homosexual."² As will be shown, the mere suspicion of same-sex intimacy could trigger these classificatory processes. In effect, the state created and fixed deviant identity categories by the very act of recording them.

It should be noted that archives also have a temporal function, by creating a durable memory infrastructure that extends beyond individual cases. For example, in the State Security Archives, the surveillance files retained traces of people, communities, and ways of life that might otherwise have escaped the researchers' attention. They served both as tools of repression and as epistemic legacies—sites where competing social realities were documented, even if this happened often in systematically distorted ways. For contemporary scholars, these files can now paradoxically offer insights into precisely those marginalized life-worlds that the state sought to eradicate.

In the rest of the article, I will show that in state-socialist Hungary, sexuality emerged as a crucial site through which political authority was exercised, contested, and reproduced. Especially non-normative forms, such as homosexuality, could become entangled with the apparatuses of state power, functioning as both a target and an instrument of surveillance and control. The politicization of the intimate sphere was central to the state's efforts to secure ideological conformity, disrupt the functioning of autonomous communities—even such small ones that consisted of just a few young women and a former nun—and reinforce state monopoly over public and private life.

Traces of homosexuality in state security records

Previous research has provided historical evidence that in Hungary, from the early 20th century onward, there were state-mandated registers of homosexuals for the purpose of keeping records of those committing homosexual acts (Kurimay, 2020; J. Takács, 2017). It is also important to emphasize that blackmailing people on the grounds of homosexual acts was

not a specificity of state socialism. Male homosexual practices had been banned by Hungarian legislation since 1878 as “*unnatural fornication*,” providing opportunities for blackmailers. In fact, when Act V of 1961 on the Criminal Code ended the general penalization of homosexual practices, in the official reasoning of the bill, it was emphasized that in the course of its legal regulation, the practical point should be considered that criminalization of homosexual behavior could provide a wide scope for blackmail (J. Takács & PTóth, 2021). At the same time, with reference to gender equality, Act V of 1961 began to criminalize female homosexual acts, if they were committed with a partner under the age of 20 and/or in a scandalous manner.

After 1961, people committing “unnatural fornication” with a same-sex partner, even with mutual consent, could still be sentenced to prison until 1978 if the partner was under the age of 20, and between 1978 and 2002 if the partner was younger than 18 years old, while the age of consent for different-sex couples was 14. During state socialism, the surveillance of public spaces and private lives, combined with limited access to private spaces and the legally institutionalized stigmatization of homosexuality, imposed significant constraints on the possibility of living openly as a gay or lesbian. However, the first empirical sexual-sociological study, conducted in the early 1970s, portrayed homosexuality—at least its “privately kept” forms (J. Takács, 2015)—as part of the broader repertoire of sexual practices that were common and widespread in Hungary (Heleszta & Rudas, 1978).

Decades before the Second World War, several Hungarian sources have informed us, the blackmail of homosexuals, especially by prostitutes, was widespread (Pál, 1927; Szántó, 1933; J. Takács, 2023). State observation and the potential for the blackmail of homosexuals was a widely known phenomenon outside Hungary too; this has been confirmed by research results not only for other state-socialist countries such as Croatia (Dota, 2017), East Germany (McLellan, 2011; Sweet, 1995), Poland (Szulc, 2017), and the Soviet Union (Healey, 2001) but also for the United Kingdom (Houlbrook, 2006), Scandinavia (Rydström, 2007), and the United States (Charles, 2012; Lewis, 2001).

Considering the above, we can reasonably expect to find further historical documents in the State Security Archives regarding the use of homosexuality as the basis for blackmail and recruiting state informants. And indeed, one relevant document with relatively easy access (as it does not contain any personal data) that can be found in the State Security Archives is a collection of instructions on how to keep criminal records by the leader of the State Police Headquarters from 1958. This document listed 13 different types of criminal registers, four of which were required to have a form of homosexual registry. For instance, under “Crimes against family, youth, sexual morals and social coexistence,” potential

perpetrators of the following categories were listed: “1. Rapist 2. Homosexual 3. Kept man (pimp) 4. Prostitute 5. Solicitor, brothel operator” (ABTL, 1958).

Another relevant source that can be accessed without too much difficulty in the State Security Archive is a volume published in 1980 under the title *State Security Encyclopaedia*, which was written to publish the knowledge and terminology learned from experiences in state security work in an organized form (AEK, 1980). This book defined homosexuals as persons “unnaturally attracted to people of the same sex,” adding that the “compromising value of data with reference to [homosexuality] is decreasing. If it is not coupled with criminal activity, using solely this information requires careful consideration” (AEK, 1980, p. 85). From all entries in the *State Security Encyclopaedia*, the only other ground besides homosexuality that was specified as a potential basis of recruiting informants was celibacy, which was defined as the “mandatory singlehood of Roman Catholic priests,” adding that in their case “moral derailment may provide compromising data” (AEK, 1980, p. 35). This suggests that these two “grounds for compromising” enjoyed special attention within the practice of state security organs, even if the “compromising value” of homosexuality had, according to this source, decreased by 1980 compared with the previous periods.³

The *State Security Encyclopaedia* distinguished three major grounds for the recruitment of informants, ensuring long-term cooperation of the informant with the state security organs: “patriotic (ideological, political), incriminating or compromising, [and] financial” (AEK, 1980, p. 23). Regarding the motivation of informants, according to this source, ideological or political loyalty would have been the optimal option, but without that, “when recruiting informants, we can motivate the chosen person to cooperate with us with the help of information that would greatly endanger their moral prestige, individual, family or social situation. At the emotional level, this initially creates resentment in the informant towards us, therefore, if possible, we should first try to recruit them based on loyalty, as reprogramming emotions takes more time and much work” (AEK, 1980, p. 109). The same grounds were mentioned in a 1957 study manual for officials of the Ministry of the Interior called *Recruiting informants*, which also pointed out that “recruitment actions without a specific purpose ‘just in case’ are unacceptable, as they would lead to an unnecessary overpopulation of the network with useless agents and informants, and distract the attention of operational officials from truly important and useful work” (Muzslai, 1957, p. 11).

During the present research at the State Security Archives, several operational folders and numerous reports, prepared by network members and people at the secret police, were accessed. However, as texts containing sensitive information were obscured, in most cases, it was very difficult or

impossible to reconstruct from these documents the details of cases when someone was “compromised” based on their homosexuality.

In several instances, only the fact of recruitment was mentioned. One example is a note in a summary report by subdivision II/5-c of the Ministry of the Interior from 1961, which says that “*Informant with pseudonym ‘Házás János [Married John]’ was recruited in 1959 on the basis of morally compromising information/[he was] homosexual/*” (ABTL, 1961).

At other times, the purpose of compromising someone on the basis of their homosexuality was to set an example or access further target persons known by the compromised person. These might have been the considerations in the case of Dr. Emil Hajos,⁴ a compromised priest, whose secret service-related story will be discussed later in more detail. However, some records of his 1960 court case, which were considered restricted sensitive data, have been made inaccessible at the State Security Archives. Fortunately, records of the same court case could be found and accessed without any difficulty at the Budapest City Archives.

Changing methods of secret service operations in the 1960s

Several Hungarian historical works have been published about the anti-church actions during the Kádár⁵ era, such as *Operation Black Ravens*, a series of prosecutions connected to a large-scale anti-church campaign in 1961–1962, which included accusations of homosexuality and pedophilia (Cúthné Gyóni, 2014; Wirthné Diera, 2015). The *Black Ravens* investigation was led by István Berényi, the head of subdepartment II/5c within the Political Investigation Division of the Ministry of the Interior that was responsible for domestic counter-reactionary intelligence between 1957 and 1962. Berényi, based on his earlier experiences, prepared a textbook in 1963 on “*The hostile activities of the clerical reaction against our people’s democracy: Characteristics and duties of operational work in this field,*” which served as a study manual at the Political Investigation Department of the Ministry of the Interior’s Police Academy (Vörös, 2015, p. 8).

Berényi’s starting point was a presumption of an insoluble class difference between state-socialist society and the “clerical reaction,” or simply: between the workers and the reactionary classes. At the same time, he differentiated between the tools to be used against clerical reaction and against a religious worldview:

Clerical reaction attempts to extend its reactionary political influence on believers through their religious worldview. Therefore [...] we use the same methods to fight clerical reaction as against any other political category hostile to the socialist state. While we use the tools of information and education to fight a religious worldview, we apply all the tools of political and administrative struggle against clerical reaction (Berényi, 1963, p. 4).

The textbook outlined a systematic methodology for disrupting the “clerical reaction.” In implementing the disruption method, the secret services were instructed to identify or create disagreements within the target group with the purpose of weakening them and focusing their energies on internal fights (Berényi, 1963, p. 43).

When discussing the fight against clerical reaction, special emphasis was laid on acting against Roman Catholic priests and religious orders—because these had “fully supported the [fascist] Horthy regime”—and on hindering any “activities endangering youth” (Berényi, 1963, p. 12). In the author’s view, the influence of the Catholic Church on young people would not only endanger the development of a people’s democracy but would “prepare the set of cadres necessary for a potential takeover” (Berényi, 1963, p. 15).

Then, among the aims and characteristics of “operational work directed at disrupting the activities of clerical reaction,” he specifically emphasized the importance of “further demolishing the authority of the church, documenting the activity of morally corrupt, especially homosexual priests and if necessary, taking them to court and making their case public” (Berényi, 1963, p. 40). Identifying homosexuality among members of the clergy was shown as a particularly effective means of discrediting religious authority. The primary objective was political neutralization—fostering divisions within the clergy, fabricating internal dissent, and facilitating eventual erosion of church influence, especially among younger people.

Another relevant textbook was on *Disruption, compromising, and isolation as methods of realisation* by István Agócs, a leading figure of the internal counterreaction.⁶ In this context, “realisation” is a technical term, defined as “finishing a confidential investigation by initiating a criminal procedure, taking restrictive measures outside a criminal procedure or by operational use” (AEK, 1980, p.162). The textbook, published in 1963 by the Study and Methodology Department of the Ministry of the Interior, served as a methodological guideline for the secret service’s use of manipulation methods that were more refined than previously (Tabajdi & Ungváry, 2008, p. 168).

In the early 1960s, a central concept in the work of the secret services was disruption, defined as a method for terminating hostile activities outside criminal procedures by “complex countermeasures to disrupt the unity, capacity for action, internal order and discipline as well as internal human relationships of the hostile group” and loosening it up, as well as measures classified under disruption: compromising, influencing, isolation, and separation (AEK, 1980, p. 13). When János Kádár followed Mátyás Rákosi⁷ as head of government after the 1956 Hungarian revolution, there was a political amelioration, leading to a gradual transition from a totalitarian toward an authoritarian regime.

Several historians have called attention to how the operating principles and practices of state security services changed during this period. The basic

functions of the political police remained the same, but its efficiency increased, although fewer people were convicted than before: “both the number of those observed (over one million) and those observing them (a network of 35–40 thousand people) decreased—we can interpret this as a sign of a more efficient and feasible organisation of labour” (Rainer, 2014, p. 57).

The difference between the goals of church policy in the two eras was great: Rákosi considered “the churches—and especially the Roman Catholic Church—as a political party to be destroyed” (Gyarmati, 2010, p. 27) and therefore strove for its complete elimination. Kádár, on the other hand, “aspired to establish a kind of utilitarian *modus vivendi* with the clergy, and within this framework, turned clergy members into tools for operating the system” (Rainer, 2014, p. 27). The failure of Rákosi’s attempt to eliminate the churches could be attributed to the fact that his administration did not have a realistic appraisal of the depth of the social and cultural roots the churches had in Hungarian society and their power to hold communities together. Thus, applying force against them brought no results, and even made those attacked appear heroic. In short, this strategy backfired.

Recognizing this could have been the reason that the leaders of the party-state in the Kádár era sought new, more efficient procedures, with a focus on preventive measures instead of arrests, which was also reflected in a large-scale transformation of the state security services in 1962 (Vörös, 2010, p. 7). From this point on, the secret police were “no longer the fist but the eyes and ears of the party” (Vörös, 2016, p. 17), the main tasks of which included the prevention, obstruction, and/or interception of activities considered to be subversive. Instead of retaliation, the primary task of state-socialist law enforcement became “prevention,” defined by the *State Security Encyclopaedia* as “a complex activity averting the unfolding of criminal activities” (AEK, 1970, p. 63).

Following the failures of Rákosi’s totalitarian campaign against the churches, the Kádár regime transitioned to subtler, more bureaucratic methods of control. The shift was from elimination to co-optation, with the state security services focusing on disruptive prevention measures. Such measures were employed in Operation Apostles with the goal of disrupting the functioning of a small autonomous community for ideological purposes, as will be discussed later. First, the trial of a compromised priest will be presented, exemplifying the refined use of moral scandal to control rather than crush religious institutions.

The compromised priest

A document from the State Security Archives, dated 30 August 1960, contains the proposal of the Inspection Department of the Ministry of the Interior about a specific “operational combination” to be created around the case of Emil Hajos. Operational combinations were

preventive measures used by the State Security Services to “hinder behaviour harmful for society by means of countermeasures” (AEK, 1980, p. 63).

According to the archival record, an investigation was initiated in late June 1960 against 56-year-old Emil Hajos—a former state secretary during the interwar Horthy regime and former member of the fascist Arrow Cross Party, previously convicted of war crimes,⁸ and at the time serving as a Roman Catholic parish priest—on charges of fornication and offenses “against the morality of youth.” The report further notes that the inspection department devised an “operational combination”: the offense itself and the ecclesiastical positions held by those implicated would be instrumentalized to serve specific political objectives (ÁBTL, 1960, pp. 82–83). A few months later, on 7 October 1960, Hajos was found guilty at first instance by the Budapest City Court of multiple instances—of indeterminate number—of “unnatural fornication” (BFL, 1960, p. 3).

The proposal submitted on 30 August by the inspection department further reveals the secret service’s involvement in orchestrating the prosecution: They had several consultations with the Head of the Political Department of the Prosecution Service, the relevant party bodies, and operational units in preparation for the court proceedings. It was agreed that Hajos would be formally charged only with offenses committed against minors, while regarding acts of fornication involving members of the clergy, appropriate measures “*will be carried out by our operational units [. . .] and the State Office for Church Affairs*” (ABTL, 1960, p. 84).

The document attests that both the timing of the court hearing and the composition of its audience were deliberately planned. The hearing was scheduled to coincide with the trial of another clergyman similarly accused of fornication. In addition to inviting the parents of the minors who had testified, the organizers ensured the attendance of several “politically trained comrades” (ABTL, 1960, p. 84) who were expected to act as “state-socialist influencers” by disseminating information about the trial within their own social networks in a politically desirable manner.

Additionally, a note addressed to the Budapest Prosecution Service by Dr. Gönczi, prosecutor, on 3 September 1960, preserved in the Budapest City Archives, clearly highlights that the case of Emil Hajos was intended to serve as a means of compromising the Catholic Church and specific leading members of the clergy: “*the facts unveiled in this crime are suitable for morally and politically compromising [the Bishop of Székesfehérvár] and his environs, as well as enabling the State Office for Church Affairs to demand the removal of certain reactionary clergymen*” (BFL, 1960, p. 6).⁹ The available court documents include the records of Hajos’s hearings from the summer of 1960, during which, among other things, he had to give a detailed list of “the clergymen he had had homosexual relationships with” (BFL, 1960, pp. 95–96).

These documents also show how the State Office for Church Affairs, founded in 1951, representing a Stalinist church administration model with a focus on total supervision and surveillance of religious organizations, collaborated closely with the secret services. In the ideological war against the churches, the authorities often used undercover agents, tasked with dismantling and manipulating ecclesiastical structures through “a network of collaborators inside the churches, who were enrolled mostly through the use of extortion” (Köbel, 2022, p. 83). Institutions such as the churches posed a structural challenge to the party-state’s totalizing aspirations. The contest between the state and the churches in Hungary was not only theological or cultural in nature but also a struggle for authority over people’s lives, loyalties, and everyday practices. By uncovering and publicizing instances of sexual deviance within the clergy, the state sought to discredit religious authority, a tactic systematically employed to undermine the church as a potential site of resistance and counter-hegemony.

In accordance with prior agreements, the verdict, announced on 7 October 1960, convicted Emil Hajos of the crimes he had committed against minors. The court’s reasoning explicitly attributed responsibility to the Roman Catholic Church for having accepted a “fascist war criminal” into its ranks and thus providing an opportunity for committing these crimes, but it remained silent about the cases of fornication involving members of the clergy:

After serving his sentence as a fascist war criminal, the accused was allowed by the Catholic Church to enter the priesthood and thereby gaining the opportunity of infecting not only the soul but also the body of young people. [...] His cynicism is demonstrated that his being a priest did not deter him from daily committing a crime that even the church regards with abomination. Nor did his legal training serve as a sufficient warning, although he knew that he was breaking the law.

The verdict emphasized not only the perceived social threat posed by the defendant and his actions, but also heavily condemned the Catholic Church “which vindicates the right to educate our youth and yet accepts fascist war criminals among its members to fulfil its educational goals” (BFL, 1960, p. 6).

According to a report on the trial prepared by First Lieutenant József Nagy for the Ministry of the Interior, Hajos first withdrew his testimony against his fellow clergymen, but eventually returned to the original testimony after a recording of his prior statements was played back to him: “*The tape combination broke his denial, and after that he kept to the incriminating testimony that he had given during the investigation. Based on this, the council has ordered a further investigation in the case of [Bishop L. S.]*” (ABTL, 1960, p. 86). This document also reveals the extent to which the secret services managed the media representation of the case. The report says that journalists from various media outlets, including the communist *Munkásőr* [Worker’s Militiaman] and the Roman Catholic *Új Ember* [New Man], were present at the trial. The

officer who compiled the report noted that he had spoken with these journalists “*regarding the proper phrasing of the article*” and had provided guidance “*to help evaluate the political and factual issues of the case correctly*” (ABTL, 1960, p. 86).

The presented files document a premeditated secret police operation to prosecute and publicly shame Emil Hajos, a Catholic priest and former fascist official, on charges of homosexual acts, particularly with minors. The operation was used not simply to punish an individual but also to delegitimize the Catholic Church. Hajos was more than a moral deviant in the eyes of the state—he was an ideological weak point to be exploited, a node through which networks of resistance and/or nonconformity might be exposed and dismantled.

Prevention put into practice: The disruptive operation “Apostles”

The Political Department of Csongrád County Police Headquarters opened its group folder on Operation Apostles at the beginning of 1966. It included records on six women as well as on a former Dominican nun, M.M. They were described as members of an “*illegal group of a clerical nature and of political values fanatically opposed to the system*” (ABTL, 1970, p. 192), which the secret police later tried to disrupt in the way described below. One of the preparations for the disruptive operation was a proposal of 30 May 1966 to introduce “regulation 3/e,” a code name for the wiretapping of private homes. The proposal summarized those details of the case that warranted the use of this method. This was necessary because the method of wiretapping of private homes, similar to the checking of phone calls, could only be used if the operational departments already had seriously compromising data suggesting hostile activities (Bikki, 2010).

The document stated that the group was made up of young women between 20 and 25 years of age, and it was held together by [M.M.], a former Dominican nun, resident of Hódmezővásárhely, a town in southeast Hungary. It was emphasized that all the women had taken “*an oath of chastity*,” and they held regular group meetings in private homes, where “*they encourage each other to hold on, exchange experiences and discuss their further goals*” (ABTL, 1970, p. 192). The secret services considered the group dangerous because their alleged aim was “*to raise a ‘clerical elite,’ connect other young people with religious ideas, and through an ‘oath of chastity,’ to provide a supply of nuns*” (ABTL, 1970, p. 192).

The wiretapping was to be performed in the apartment of one of the most active members of the group who was chosen because she often received members of the clergy at her home in Szeged, a city in southeast Hungary. The installation work enabling the wiretapping was completed within two

months. The relatively quick implementation was aided by the fact that the employees of the state security services could obtain the daytime use of the apartment above the “*target premises*” from its tenants, a party member university professor and his wife, considered “*official connections*,”¹⁰ with the claim that from there, they wished “*to monitor the movements of ‘certain foreigners’*” (ABTL, 1970, p. 193).

The Apostles folder contains data showing that interactions with the secret services could follow a friendly path or, on the contrary, yield the risk of serious countermeasures. For example, after setting up the wiretapping, the secret police were kind enough to return the favor granted by the university professor and his wife with complimentary tickets to the Szeged Cultural Festival. Another friendly gesture was performed toward the informant under the cover name “Aranyosi,” who kept reporting on the group for years and happened to be M.M.’s cousin (ABTL, 1970, p. 305); a report from 22 April 1966 mentions that after Aranyosi received a butane gas cooker as a name day gift, the “*informant was very happy with the present and praised us for buying her such a practical device*” (ABTL, 1970, p. 176).

At the same time, the Operation Apostles records also provide evidence of the ruthless determination of the state security organs. As part of an operational action plan, in 1967, consideration was given to recruiting two former members of the Apostles group, who were at that time university students in the capital, Budapest. The authorities, however, also made explicit the consequences of non-cooperation: in the event that the interviews with the targeted persons would yield no result, “we shall take the necessary measures to remove them from the university” (ABTL, 1970, p. 249).

A doctoral study on the history of small Catholic communities and religious education groups in Csongrád County also discusses Operation Apostles in detail (Mezey, 2013). The presented data show that among the small Catholic groups and basic communities, the young women’s groups of Hódmezővásárhely led by M.M. “operated for the longest time, from the early 1950s until the end of the 1960s, even surviving the lawsuits connected to ‘Operation Black Ravens’” (Mezey, 2013, p. 96). The author was clearly impressed by the former nun’s achievement: “she could and dared to accompany most members of the group from school age into adulthood, in spite of being closely and perceptibly watched by the political police from 1955 onwards” (Mezey, 2013, p. 96). However, the price of this dedication was that the state authorities kept “pestering” her (Mezey, 2013, p. 109), observing her and the members of her group with different methods. She was practically surrounded by informants, including her own cousin, and she was “K-checked,” referring to the secret checking of the contents of letters and packages, in a way hidden from both the sender and the recipient (Bikki, 2010). Secret house searches and interceptions were conducted around her, and several members of the group were given verbal warnings and were

threatened with prison sentences; nevertheless, none of the group members were ever prosecuted (Mezey, 2013, pp. 102–105).

The rationale behind this approach was outlined in a classified document dated 12 August 1969, which proposed initiating a smear campaign against M.M. While Operation Apostles had succeeded in uncovering “illegal group activity of a clerical nature,” starting a prosecution procedure was found inadvisable, as there was no viable means of transforming the available operational evidence into legally admissible proof (ABTL, 1970, p. 313). At the same time, as a result of operational measures applied more intensively by state security organs since 1965, the members of the group started to meet less frequently:

for fear of retribution, as well as for conspiratorial reasons, they avoided meeting regularly, and reduced their personal contacts to a minimum in comparison with their previous practices, they have given up their religious self-education and attempts at involving new persons and thus expanding their illegal group (ABTL, 1970, p. 314).

This decline in group activity, accompanied by the “*loosening of internal discipline*” and the “*reduction of the personal suggestive power of the group’s leader*,” was said to have “*definitely increased the will in certain members to develop a lifestyle independent of others*” (ABTL, 1970, p. 314). The report appears to present this shift, toward a more autonomous lifestyle among young women, as a desirable outcome in contrast to their dedication to the church. However, there was no mention of any potential ways to achieve this independence; within the biopolitical framework of the Kádár-era (E. Takács, 2023, the only desirable option for those leaving the group was to get married and become mothers.

The document of 12 August 1969 contained a comprehensive smear campaign proposal, setting out a detailed plan for compromising and isolating, instead of starting an actual police procedure. The main aim of the first stage of the three-step plan was to compromise the nun in front of the young women’s parents and the people in her environment:

we will make it appear that M.M.’s interest [...] results not from her religious beliefs but her sick homosexual instinct. This will be supported by the fact that her contacts—the members of the group—are “old maids,” who squarely reject the advances of men (ABTL, 1970, p. 316).

After this, the parents’ reactions and the “*likely aloofness [of M.M.] will guarantee the disruption of the group. Also, if necessary, we will exert influence and change their present living conditions in an operational way, involving the official bodies employing them*,” thus threatening their livelihood (ABTL, 1970, p. 316). They also planned to ensure that M.M. would “*no longer have credence and thus have no possibility to create new groups or exert further organising*

activities in favour of the Church. For this purpose, we must compromise her in the eyes of the Church as well" (ABTL, 1970, p. 316).

In the process of isolating the group members, an active role was assigned to informant Aranyosi as well, whose tasks included convincing group members that the best way to dispel suspicions in the given situation was to temporarily break all contact with the group leader. Then they had to be gradually convinced that M.M. *"though well-willing, was wrong to try to turn them into nuns. This had no realistic possibility, and ultimately, with this behaviour they would not be supporting the Church but would actually be acting against it. The Church needs them, first and foremost, as religious mothers raising their own children"* (ABTL, 1970, p. 317).

To realize the planned strategy, state security organs sent anonymous letters to the parents of the young women, pretending to be other outraged parents, which accused the leader of the group of homosexuality. Three fragments from these letters are given below:

Unfortunately, I have become certain that she exercises her sick instincts on our daughters, she makes love to them, or rather, queering¹¹ them. I think this is what it's called. It's totally crazy. (ABTL, 1970, p. 319)

I have personally made sure of the fact that this . . . I don't even know what to call her . . . is a pervert. I think queer is what they call women who don't live out their sexual desires with men but with women. [. . .] I wonder if they have completely become like that, or if they can still be cured. (ABTL, 1970, p. 320)

The precious nun is a homosexual and uses our daughters to satisfy her sick desires [. . .] I wonder how far our daughters have sunk into this cesspit. Can they still be helped? (ABTL, 1970, p. 323)

A report dated 13 December 1969 on the implementation of the planned measures described the "realization" of the operation in detail. The anonymous letters, which made M.M. appear as a homosexual, were sent to the parents in September 1969: "This is her motivation to keep a close relationship with young women. The only reason this has not come to light so far is that most of the girls she had contact with have also turned homosexual, and that they have disguised their sick emotional lives with deep religiosity" (ABTL, 1970, p. 321). A denunciation was also sent, in the name of outraged parents, to the Archdeacon of Szentes, demanding that an investigation be started into the case. This letter described the situation in the following way: "It has just come to light that she is perverted, and she lets out her sick desires on our daughters" (ABTL, 1970, p. 326).

A resolution passed on 23 September 1970 to close the group file Operation Apostles claimed that the operative measures had "caused the complete dissolution of the group" (ABTL, 1970, p. 357). The closing report attached to the resolution summarized the procedure in the following way: The homosexual compromising of M.M. was successful, because even if the parents might not

have believed the accusations in the anonymous letters to be well-founded, they still banned their daughters from meeting her in order to protect their daughters' reputation. Therefore, the moral compromising campaign had achieved the desired results that formal police prosecution, which would even have strengthened the group cohesion, would not have been able to achieve.

Based on the available documents we can almost certainly exclude the possibility that the accusations of homosexuality against M.M. had any foundation at all. It is also important to emphasize that the details of M. M.'s "homosexual scandal" would not have been accessible for research purposes with all the personal details included if previously the staff of the State Security Archives, in accordance with their strict privacy regulations on sensitive data, had not made sure that the accusations had been unfounded.

The use of sexuality in state surveillance practices illustrates how deeply political control extended into people's private life. Operations such as the "Apostles," where a group of celibate Catholic women was targeted through insinuations of lesbianism, though the term *lesbian* did not appear at all in the examined records, reveal how the state used accusations of sexual deviance to destabilize and delegitimize non-state forms of association. These women were not political actors, nor did they have political agency: The "threat" they represented derived from their autonomy and the ties that connected them with a religious tradition, operating outside the purview of the state.

The effectiveness of the presented policing methods lay in their ability to operate in the shadows: through insinuation, threat, and internalized fear. Sexuality, because of its personal nature and the social stigmatization attached to its non-normative forms, provided fertile ground for state control without public spectacle. In fact, the mechanisms initiated by state security organs derived their exclusionary power from socially institutionalized homophobia. From the examined documents it can be clearly seen that, just like "anti-Semitism without Jews,"¹² homophobic exclusion does not necessarily need homosexuals: in the given social environment, unfounded slander was enough to set it in motion.

Finally, it is important to note that a previous historical study (Mezey 2013), which discusses Operation Apostles in depth and whose author contacted the main character of the case during his research, makes no reference to any aspect of the homosexual smear campaign. This apparent omission may itself reflect the enduring power of stigma, suggesting that institutionalized homophobia produced not only short-term political outcomes but also enduring cultural silences.

Conclusions

Since the partial opening of state security records and secret police files to researchers following the collapse of state socialism in Hungary, considerable scholarly debate has emerged about their truth value. While historians and other scholars examining secret police files tended to interpret these documents as if there was a referential relationship between their contents and historical facts, and often focused their research on checking whether the informants and agents accurately documented the events or if and to what extent the reports might have been fabricated (Hesz, 2022, pp. 214–215), the research presented in this article adopts a different interpretive approach.

Rather than treating the archival records as sources of factual evidence, this analysis considers them memory sites that expose the operational logic of authoritarian knowledge production, manipulation, and social control. The cases examined here offer valuable insights into broader socio-historical dynamics, including the strategic deployment of institutionalized homophobia as a means of managing the party-state's relationships with the churches under state socialism.

The documentation itself, such as court records, secret police reports, and internal manuals, are not just records of repression but part of the machinery of legitimation and historical control. The police files thus performed a dual role: enforcing discipline in the present and storing political memory for the future. They formed part of what Assmann calls “mnemonic institutions” (Assmann, 2008, p. 111), organizations that both shape and preserve collective memory. Even as the files sought to erase or delegitimize non-conforming lives, they unintentionally ensured their preservation.

The detailed choreography of the compromised priest's trial from 1960 highlighted the tactics applied by the secret police to achieve further political goals, such as condemning the whole Catholic Church that allowed a “fascist war criminal” to become a priest, “infecting the body and the soul of young people” with his homosexuality. The careful arrangement of details ranging from the timing of and the attendance at the court hearings to the selection of the media coverage and the “proper phrasing” of its political message served these goals, with the cooperation of the secret services' own operational units and the State Office for Church Affairs as well as the state-controlled justice system and media producers. A central feature of the compromised priest's case was the opportunity provided by his confessions about having homosexual relations with higher-ranking ecclesiastical staff to compromise them too.

Operation Apostles is a unique case, showing the use value of female homosexuality as a rarely applied compromising tactic in the secret police arsenal, with its focus on disrupting the functioning of small autonomous religious communities for ideological purposes. Operation Apostles also had

its well-prepared choreography, starting with heavy surveillance, including secret house searches and wiretapping, leading to anonymous letters being sent by state security organs to the parents of the young women as well as to a local diocesan clerk in the Catholic Church, pretending to be other outraged parents, accusing the leader of the group of homosexuality.

It is a good example of the secret services' efforts to prevent the reproduction of the "clerical elite" and their "reactionary political influence." In this case, prevention was put into practice by applying complex countermeasures of disruption, reflecting the state security paradigm shift, moving from reactive punishment toward active prevention during the 1960s. (The notion of a "paradigm shift" in the secret police can also invite further theoretical reflection: Rather than indicating a softening of state tactics, prevention appears here as a more insidious form of control, one that preemptively isolates, delegitimises, and disempowers without the visibility of formal prosecution.)

By foregrounding institutionalized homophobia as a strategic tool of governance under Hungarian state socialism, the presented cases demonstrate how sexual deviance was deliberately weaponized to achieve broader political objectives, including the suppression of autonomous communities and the manipulation of church–state relations. The use of homosexuality not only as a compromising tool but also as a structuring element of recruitment, disruption, and isolation tactics signals a regime logic in which sexuality was positioned as both a vulnerability and a weapon. The analysis reveals that such mechanisms of coercion and exclusion did not necessarily require actual homosexual acts—mere insinuation sufficed to dismantle personal networks and stigmatize individuals, as could be seen in the Operation Apostles case.

In 1980, in the *State Security Encyclopaedia*, the term *informant* appeared as a dated relic of times past; it was defined as a secret helper of state security organs at a time when the state security network was mostly based on compromising and incriminating data, adding that "social development has made this interpretation out of date" (AEK, 1980, p. 95). However, it should be noted that the only two categories listed as providing potential moral basis of recruiting informants were homosexuality and celibacy, suggesting that these two "grounds for compromising" enjoyed special attention within the secret police practices. The state security paradigm shift, moving toward preventive measures, may, in theory, have contributed to a decrease in the recruitment of informants based on blackmail, as applying disruption could also lead to a reduction of grounds for compromising. When, as a result of the application of secret operational measures, the target persons had been successfully isolated from their social environment, their social interactions may have been reduced to such an extent that blackmail was no longer possible or worthwhile.

This study has several limitations, primarily linked to the fragmented empirical evidence available in the archives in general, and the special

restrictions applied in Hungary, especially in the State Security Archives. In addition, the presented findings can illustrate the “archival asymmetry” embedded in the examined sources: What survives are the orchestrated observations and strategic designs of the surveilling authorities, while the voices of those subjected to surveillance often remain inaccessible or silenced. This absence draws attention to the inherent constraints of reconstructing the past from partial and ideologically laden sources.

Despite these limitations, the findings can contribute to a better understanding of how to approach secret police files as a memory site of knowledge production that can provide valuable insights into broader social and historical issues. A major contribution to the relevant scientific literature is highlighting previously lesser-known historical examples of how effectively homophobia could be used to achieve specific political goals in “sex negative” social environments, characterized by state-controlled media and justice systems.

Future research could extend these insights by exploring how sexuality-related content in historical archives influences contemporary academic and institutional behaviors. At the same time, attention must be paid to the socio-epistemic risks of reinforcing the very stigmas these documents deploy, particularly when reconstructing narratives around sexualities that were, and often still are, highly politicized.

Notes

1. Number 6 files were files on Secret Police informants, containing details about their recruitment. Source: State security terms and concepts – <https://www.abtl.hu/allambiztonsagi-szakszavak-fogalmak/>.
2. It is worth noting that the terms *lesbian* and *lesbianism* have not emerged in the examined files, suggesting the limited intelligibility of female homosexuality at the time.
3. The 1961 decriminalization could certainly contribute to the diminished strategic value of homosexuality as a compromising condition. In addition, the emergence of limited public discourse around sexuality in education, media, and academic research from the mid-1970s onwards helped soften the taboo status of homosexuality (for more details see: J. Takács, 2015, pp. 165–171).
4. This is a pseudonym. The full name of the observed will not be provided; the real name of the representatives of authorities and other official persons, where possible, will be provided.
5. Between 1956 and 1989 János Kádár was the chairman and then the first secretary of the Central Committee of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party, formed from the communist Hungarian Working People's Party during the 1956 Hungarian revolution.
6. Agócs was head of Subdepartment II/5a, investigating the pre-1945 right-wing parties and organizations, within the Political Investigation Division of the Ministry of the Interior between 1957 and 1962.
7. Rákosi was the all-powerful leader of Hungary, the General Secretary of the Hungarian Working People's Party between 1948 and 1956.

8. He was a “Ministerial Commissioner responsible for book publishing, book trade, paper and stationery trade, film trade, film rental, stamp trade, art and antique trade from 12 June 1944. Head of Department at the Ministry of Trade and Transport during Arrow Cross rule, state secretary from February 1945. Tried at the People’s Court and convicted to 8 years of hard labour on 11 February. The State Council of People’s Courts reduced the sentence to 4 years in penitentiary on 30th March. Released on 11 November 1949” (Karsai & Karsai, 2014, p. 1092).
9. As a result of Hajos’s trial, a Cistercian monk was also temporarily detained (Cúthné Gyóni, 2014).
10. “Official connections” were persons who, by virtue of their managerial position in an organization, assisted the work of the state security bodies. Source: State security terms and concepts – <https://www.abtl.hu/allambiztonsagi-szakszavak-fogalmak/>
11. The original Hungarian term “buziskodik” implies acting as a homosexual.
12. The operation of such mechanisms of social exclusion was excellently illustrated by a Hungarian research study measuring the social rejection of the “Piréz people,” a non-existent ethnic group (Sik & Dencső, 2007).

Acknowledgments

The analysis of the results presented in this article was facilitated by the Emma Goldman Award, Flax Foundation.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

Funding

The original archive research has received funding from the Hungarian Scientific Research Fund under grant agreement no. 105414.

ORCID

Judit Takács  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-7509-0739>

References

- ABTL (Állambiztonsági Szolgálatok Történeti Levéltára [Historical Archives of the Hungarian State Security]). (1958). *Bűnügyi nyilvántartási utasítás* [Instruction on criminal records] ABTL 50-6/5-1958.
- Act III. (2003). *On the exposure of secret service operations under state socialism and the creation of the historical archives of the Hungarian state security*. <https://net.jogtar.hu/jogszabaly?docid=A0300003.TV>
- Act LXVI. (1995). *On public documents, public Archives and the protection of private archive material*. <https://net.jogtar.hu/jogszabaly?docid=99500066.TV>

- Assmann, J. (2008). Communicative and cultural memory. In A. Erll & A. Nünning (Eds.), *Cultural Memory Studies: An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook* (pp. 109-118). De Gruyter.
- Bikki, I. (2010). A titkos operatív technikai rendszabályok és módszerek, valamint a K-ellenőrzés alkalmazására vonatkozó szabályok 1945-1990 között [Secret operational technical rules and methods and rules for the use of K-control between 1945 and 1990]. *Betekintő*, 2010(1), 1-16.
- Charles, D. M. (2012). Communist and homosexual: The FBI, Harry Hay, and the secret side of the lavender Scare, 1943-1961. *American Communist History*, 11(1), 101-124. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14743892.2012.666097>
- Cúthné Gyóni, E. (2014). *A ciszterci rend története Magyarországon 1945 után* [The history of the Cistercian order in Hungary after 1945] [PhD dissertation]. Eötvös Loránd University, Faculty of Humanities, Doctoral School of Historical Sciences.
- Dota, F. (2017). *Javna i politička povijest muške homoseksualnosti u socijalističkoj Hrvatskoj* [Public and political history of male homosexuality in socialist Croatia] (1945-1989). [PhD dissertation]. Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Department of History.
- Gilfoyle, T. (1994). Prostitutes in the archives: Problems and possibilities in documenting the history of sexuality. *The American Archivist*, 57(3), 514-527. <https://doi.org/10.17723/aarc.57.3.p74tr646p6r530lv>
- Gyáni, G. (2014). Kollaboráció és a hatalom titka [Collaboration and the secret of power]. In S. Horváth (Ed.), *Az ügynök arcai. Mindennapi kollaboráció és ügynökkérdés* [The faces of the agent. Everyday collaboration and the agent issue] (pp. 41-52). Libri.
- Gyarmati, G. (2010). Egyház, sok rendszer és történelmi idő [Church, many systems and historical times]. In G. G. Bánkuti & G. Gyarmati (Eds.), *Csapdában. Tanulmányok a katolikus egyház történetéből* [Trapped. Studies from the history of the Catholic Church] (pp. 13-30). ÁBTL - L'Harmattan.
- Healey, D. (2001). *Homosexual desire in revolutionary Russia: The regulation of sexual and gender dissent*. University of Chicago Press.
- Healey, D. (2002). Homosexual existence and existing socialism: New light on the repression of male homosexuality in stalinist Russia. *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian & Gay Studies*, 8(3), 349-378. <https://doi.org/10.1215/10642684-8-3-349>
- Heleszta, S., & Rudas, J. (1978). *Munkásfiatalok és egyetemisták szexualitása* [Sexuality of young workers and university students]. MTA Szociológiai Kutató Intézet.
- Hesz, Á. (2022). Secret police informer files as sources for the study of vernacular religion under communism. In J. A. Kapáló & K. Povedák (Eds.), *The secret police and the religious underground in communist and post-communist Eastern Europe* (pp. 213-233). Routledge.
- Horváth, S. (2012). Az Ügynök meg a Lista. A kollaboráció mint emlékezhely [The Agent and the List. Collaboration as a site of memory]. In T. Dunai, S. Oláh, & A. Sebestyén (Eds.), *Emlékezhelyek a magyar populáris kultúrában* [Sites of memory in Hungarian popular culture] (pp. 139-152). Debreceni Egyetemi Kiadó.
- Horváth, S. (2014). "Apa nem volt komcsi" - A mindennapi kollaboráció és ügynökkérdés határai ["Father wasn't a communist" - The limits of everyday collaboration and the agent issue]. In S. Horváth (Ed.), *Az ügynök arcai. Mindennapi kollaboráció és ügynökkérdés* [The faces of the agent. Everyday collaboration and the agent issue] (pp. 7-37). Libri.
- Houlbrook, M. (2006). *Queer London: Perils and pleasures in the sexual metropolis, 1918-1957*. University of Chicago Press.
- Karsai, E., & Karsai, L. (Eds.). (2014). *Vádirat a nácizmus ellen. Dokumentumok a magyarországi zsidóüldözés történetéhez 4. 1944. október 15.-1945. január 18* [An indictment against Nazism. Documents for the history of the persecution of Jews in Hungary 4. October 15, 1944—1945. January 18]. Balassi Kiadó.

- Köbel, S. (2022). The legal context of religious activities in Hungary between 1945 and 1989/90. In J. A. Kapaló & K. Povedák (Eds.), *The secret police and the religious underground in communist and post-communist Eastern Europe* (pp. 83–96). Routledge.
- Kurimay, A. (2020). *Queer Budapest 1873–1961*. The University of Chicago Press.
- Lewis, G. B. (2001). Barriers to security clearances for gay men and lesbians: Fear of blackmail or fear of homosexuals? *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, 11(4), 539–558. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordjournals.jpart.a003514>
- McLellan, J. (2011). *Love in the time of communism: Intimacy and sexuality in the GDR*. Cambridge University Press.
- Mezey, A. (2013). Katolikus kisközösségek és bázisközösségek Csongrád megyében 1946 és 1980 közt, a pártállam és a hivatalos egyház vonatkozási keretében (Catholic small communities and base communities in Csongrád county between 1946 and 1980, in the context of the party state and the official church). PhD Dissertation. Pázmány Péter Catholic University, Doctoral School of Historical Sciences.
- Nalepa, M. (2010). *Skeletons in the closet. Transitional justice in Post-Communist Europe*. Cambridge University Press.
- Pál, G. (1927). *A homoszexuális probléma modern megvilágításban* [The homosexual problem in a modern light]. Mai Henrik és Fia Orvosi Könyvkiadó.
- Rainer, M. J. (2014). Vajon az ügynök a Kádár-kor szimbóluma - és ha nem, mié? [Is the agent a symbol of the Kádár era - and if not, of what?] In S. Horváth (Ed.), *Az ügynök arcai. Mindennapi kollaboráció és ügynökkérdés* [The faces of the agent. Everyday collaboration and the agent issue] (pp. 53–63). Libri.
- Rubin, G. S. (1984). Thinking sex: Notes for a radical theory of the politics of sexuality. In C. S. Vance (Ed.), *Pleasure and danger: Exploring female sexuality* (pp. 267–319). Routledge.
- Rydström, J. (2007). Same-sex sexuality and the Law in Scandinavia 1842–1999. In J. Rydström & K. Mustola (Eds.), *Criminally queer: Homosexuality and criminal law in scandinavia, 1842–1999* (pp. 13–40). Amsterdam.
- Sik, E., & Dencső, B. (2007). Adalékok az előítéletesség mértékének és okainak megismeréséhez a mai Magyarországon [Notes on learning about the extent and causes of prejudice in present-day Hungary]. *Educatio*, 16(1), 50–66.
- Sweet, D. M. (1995). The church, the Stasi, and socialist integration. *Journal of Homosexuality*, 29(4), 351–368. https://doi.org/10.1300/J082v29n04_04
- Szántó, J. (1933). A homoszexualitásról, különös tekintettel a budapesti viszonyokra II [About homosexuality, with special regard to the conditions in Budapest]. *Bőrgyógyászati, Urológiai és Venerológiai Szemle*, 11(3), 40–44.
- Szulc, Ł. (2017). *Transnational homosexuals in communist Poland: Cross-border flows in gay and lesbian magazines*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Tabajdi, G., & Ungváry, K. (2008). *Elhallgatott múlt. A pártállam és a belügy. A politikai rendőrség működése Magyarországon 1956–1990* [A silent past. The party state and the interior ministry. The operation of the political police in Hungary 1956–1990]. 1956-os Intézet - Corvina.
- Takács, E. (2023). Natalism as a nationalist biopolitical response from socialism till Today in Hungary. *Acta Universitatis Sapientiae Social Analysis*, 13(1), 114–136. <https://doi.org/10.2478/aussoc-2023-0008>
- Takács, J. (2015). Disciplining gender and (homo)sexuality in state socialist Hungary in the 1970s. *European Review of History: Revue européenne d'histoire*, 22(1), 161–175. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13507486.2014.983426>
- Takács, J. (2017). Listing homosexuals since the 1920s, and under state socialism in Hungary. In C. Baker (Ed.), *Gender in 20th-Century Eastern Europe and the USSR* (pp. 157–170). Palgrave.

- Takács, J. (2023). Homosexual male prostitution in early 20th century Hungary. In S. Dolinsek & M. Saryusz-Wolska (Eds.), *Histories of prostitution in central, East central and South Eastern Europe* (pp. 125–143). Brill - Schöningh.
- Takács, J., & PTóth, T. (2021). Liberating pathologization? The historical background of the 1961 decriminalization of homosexuality in Hungary. *Hungarian Historical Review*, 10(2), 267–300. <https://doi.org/10.38145/2021.2.267>
- Verdery, K. (2014). *Secrets and truths. Ethnography in the archive of Romania's secret police*. CEU Press.
- Vörös, G. (2010). Az egyházakban foglalkoztatott ügynökhálózat újjáépítése 1956-tól a hatvanas évek közepéig [Reconstruction of the network of agents employed in churches from 1956 to the mid-sixties]. *Betekintő*, 2010(2), 1–10.
- Vörös, G. (2015). Egyházüldözők arcképcsarnoka. Az egyházakkal szembeni elhárítás vezetői, 1945-1956. II. rész [Portrait hall of church persecutors. Leaders of the resistance against the churches, 1945-1956. Part II.]. *Betekintő*, 2015(2), 1–24.
- Vörös, G. (2016). *Fejezetek a kommunista politikai rendőrség egyházi elhárításának történetéből* [Chapters from the history of the Church's resistance to the Communist political police] [PhD dissertation]. Jyväskylä University, Faculty of Humanities, Doctoral School of the Hungarian Studies Department.
- Wirthné Diera, B. (2015). *Katolikus hitoktatás és elitképzés a Kádár-korszakban - Az 1961-es „Fekete Hollók” fedőnevű ügy elemzése* [Catholic religious education and elite training in the Kádár era – Analysis of the 1961 “Black Ravens” case] [PhD dissertation]. Eötvös Loránd University, Faculty of Humanities, Doctoral School of Historical Sciences.

Archive sources

- ABTL. [Állambiztonsági Szolgálatok Történeti Levéltára (Historical Archives of the Hungarian State Security)]. (1958). *Bűnügyi nyilvántartási utasítás* (Instruction on criminal records) ABTL 50–6/5–1958.
- ABTL. (1961). Belügyminisztérium II/5-c alosztály összefoglaló jelentés; 3.1.5 –O-14963/1 Operatív dossziéból [Ministry of the Interior II/5-c subdepartment summary report; from the operative folder 3.1.5 –O-14963/1].
- ABTL. (1960). *Monográfiák 12/A kötet* [1.6.-II/8. Monographies 12/A volume]. 1.6.-II/8.
- ABTL. (1970). “Apostolok” csoportdosszié [Apostles group folder] I-II. 3.1.5, O-13848/1–2.
- AEK. (1980). *Állambiztonsági értelmező kéziszótár* [State Security Encyclopaedia]. BM Könyvkiadó. ABTL A-3036.
- Berényi, I. (1963). *A klerikális reakció ellenséges tevékenysége népi demokratikus rendünk ellen. Az operatív munka sajátosságai és feladataink ezen a területen* [The hostile activity of the clerical reaction against our people's democratic order. The specifics of operative work and our tasks in this field]. BM Könyvkiadó. ABTL A-3794.
- BFL [Budapest Főváros Levéltára (Budapest City Archives)]. (1960). *XXV.4.a - Büntetőperes iratok* [Criminal court case documents].
- Muzslai, J. (1957). *Az operatív munka feladatai, szervezési elvei és operatív eszközei. Ideiglenes tananyag* [Tasks, organizational principles and operative tools of operative work. Temporary curriculum]. BM Dzerzsinszkij Tisztképző Iskola. ABTL A-3706.