

**Theses of the University Doctoral (PhD) Dissertation**

**THE REGULATION OF THE PARTY DIRECTION  
OF THE SECRET POLICE  
1956–1962**

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## **Objective of the dissertation, definition of the topic**

In my thesis I intended to investigate the direction and the formal regulation of the direction of the secret police in the early phase of the Kádár regime in Hungary. I analyzed the means and methods used by the state party to manage and influence the operation of the state security agencies. I tried to investigate the nature of the changes that occurred during the retaliation and consolidation of the Kádár regime in terms of the relationship between the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party (*MSZMP*) and the secret police.

Since neither the Workers' Militia (*Munkásőrség*) nor the Frontier Guard (*Határőrség*) and the Internal security Troops (*Belső Karhatalom*) makes part of the state police in the strict sense, I did not consider the analysis of the control of these three parts as necessary, even though these units also had state security related tasks (especially after the suppression of the revolution). Moreover, while investigating certain aspects of the general subject it was inevitable to refer to some other organs of the Ministry for Home Affairs (*BM*), to the methods of operation applied in another armed bodies or in the army itself in order to be able to demonstrate the common or different characteristics of these methods.

How can be the controlling and directing function of the party interpreted? Did not the organs of the party have anything to do „but” to make sure whether the state security organs followed the strategy of the party during the procedures, paying attention to not becoming more important than the party itself, or they also had to control and direct all state security related works? Did the regional *MSZMP* organs or the leading bodies of the party have a stronger directing and controlling power? Did the leading bodies really use the possibilities of the formal regulation, or did the local conditions override the central prescriptions? Besides of answering these questions I tried to determine the possible forms of the party control and to demonstrate the possibilities of influencing the processes besides the means defined in the party resolutions.

From the point of view of my topic it was indispensable to demonstrate the organizational transformation of the Party and the Hungarian state security/protection organs, to analyze the operational and decision making mechanism of the state party, and to investigate the role of the leading bodies and departments in the elaboration of the main strategy of the Party, paying a special attention to the making of the decisions that concerned the operation of the secret police. Finally, I tried to demonstrate how the party determined the possibilities and the operational framework of the state security, and what kind of answers and

reactions were given to certain decisions that concerned the personnel and the operation of the secret police.

The present dissertation does not include every aspect of the operation of the state police since my topic is the description of a phenomenon, the nature of the relationship between the Party and the secret police. Furthermore, in the framework of this thesis I did not have the possibility to investigate in a greater depth the role of the state security organs in the retaliation. For the same reason I did not analyze the legal regulation of the operation of the secret police in a detailed way, but in the meantime, I referred to the most important resolutions and laws concerning this issue.

### **Methods applied**

In my thesis I tried to define the concept of Party direction throughout the examination of the norm texts of the Party and the comparison of the self-definition arguments of MSZMP. While investigating the mechanisms of the power exercise of the Party and typing the decision making mechanisms I applied an interdisciplinary method. I compared some works of economics and political sciences to historical researches focusing on the operation of the bodies of MSZMP.

After the examination of the theoretical constructions I focused on the institutional changes of the Party and the secret police from the point of view of the effectiveness of the leading role of the Party. The analysis of the institutional changes and the history of the regulation starts with 1954. The reason of that choice is that it seems to be impossible to start the investigation from 1956 since it was mostly the changes starting in 1953 and 1954 that established the nature of the relationship between the Party and the secret police. Therefore I had to interpret not only the (changing) specificities of the relationship between the state security agencies and the Party but also the nature of the relationship of the secret police to the Hungarian Workers' Party (*MDP*) and the Rákosi regime. I've chosen 1962 as the closing date of my thesis since one of the most important institutional changes of the secret police overlapped with the beginning of a new era generally recognized by the experts of the field.

After an overview on the institutional changes I examined through a source criticism and a comparative analysis the quarrels of the officers and organs of MSZMP and MDP on the decision made by the Political Committee (*PB*), the different aspects of the overall regulation and the participation of the (party) institutions in the various processes.

I tried to present the anomalies of the implementation of the Party direction in two different ways. On the one hand, I examined the relationship between the secret police and its party organizations, paying a special attention to the state security activities and party discipline power of these organizations, and to the implementation of the party resolutions. On the other hand, I examined the practice of the party control in the field the foreign trips.

Most of the sources used in my dissertation were made by different organs of the Party. Since my main goal was to present the formal structure of the Party direction, I put less emphasis on the (obviously) non-documented methods of the informal mechanisms. Therefore, my method consisted of the comparative analysis of the historical literature and the archival sources.

## **Listing of the results**

### 1. The regulation structure of the formal party direction of the secret police

The determination of the formal methods of the party direction outlined a regulation structure that consisted of several elements. This structure had various effects but always the same goal. The ultimate task of the regulation was to assure that the state security organs function according to the main strategy of the Party.

The elements of the system were the following: the resolutions of the leading organs of the Party. We can distinguish two types of these resolutions: the first type defined the framework of the Party direction; the second type consisted of the decisions on the operation of certain professional fields of state security.

Some other methods belonging to the competency of the secret police and the regional organs of MSZMP were also the means of the operation and control, e.g. required reports from the officers, the (party) discipline power, the mandatory report to the top direction of the Party, or the system of personal affairs (lists of power, the professional and ideological education of the staff). The establishment of the elements of guarantee that restricted the power of the secret police while acting against party officials also strengthened the control by the Party. In certain cases the so-called direct intervention was also part of the party direction, but unfortunately this phenomenon was documented in very rare cases.

## 1.1 Decisions made by the leading bodies of the Party

The leading bodies of the Party determined the rights and duties of the regional party organizations and the organizations belonging to the Ministry of Home Affairs, as well as the tasks of the secretaries and party committees of these organizations. In the examined period three party decisions have been made on the party direction and control of the Ministry of Home Affairs and its organs. From these three resolutions it seems to be evident that no fundamental change had occurred between 1954 and 1958. The structure was established by the resolution of 1954 as a result of the process of de-Stalinization. This resolution was completed in 1956 by the controlling function of the Central Leadership Committee (*KV*), and the modification made in 1957 “just” repeated the previous resolution. As it can be seen, the “mature” version of the resolution was completed by the missing parts of the previous resolution proposition, which means that the later structure was already done in 1954 in proposal form. It seems that both the “experiences” of the 20<sup>th</sup> Congress of the Communist Party and the changes in Moscow justified the engagement of the Central Leadership Committee (*KV*) in the party control of the Ministry of Home Affairs (*BM*). Even though from the very beginning existed the “agents” (local party organs, organs of the Ministry of Home Affairs, administrative department(s), the secretariat of the Central Committee and the Central Leadership Committee etc.) that later became the organs of the party control, the informal control over the Secret police led by Gábor Péter was largely different from the later developed and mostly formal system. The justification of the resolution put an emphasis on the distancing from the Rákosi regime, on the prevention of the earlier illegitimacies and on the compliance with the laws and regulations. The resolution of 1957 already put an emphasis on the taking steps against the “counter-revolution”. Moreover, this resolution came into being “thanks” to the revolution itself. We can definitely find a common element in these resolutions: they all wanted to give a guarantee that the traumas of the previous periods would never happen again. The resolution of the Political Committee (*PB*) in April 1958 concerning the rights and duties of the party organs of the Ministry of Home Affairs (*BM*) was a “continuation” of the previous resolutions. Through this resolution the top leaders of the Party intended to assure the importance of their own role in the direction of the party organs of the Ministry of Home Affairs (*BM*). In the investigated period there was no similar party resolution, the next resolution was issued in 1967 by Political Committee (*PB*) to take control over the Ministry for Home Affairs.

## 1.2 Personal Affairs, Cadre-powers

In general, we can say that personal relationships between the leadership of the secret police and the party organs basically determined the relationship between the Party and the state security agencies. Moreover, the personnel policy of the Party was one of the most crucial elements of the party direction. The party control was supposed to be exercised through the members of the state security organs since the party organs theoretically did not have the right to give (direct or indirect) orders to the state security organs. According to the widespread and idealized view in the examined period, party resolutions only concerned the members of the Party, which means that it only depended on the persuasive power and ability of the members whether a resolution came into effect or not. At the beginning of the 1950's, the new nomenclature established after the Soviet pattern and according to the Soviet experiences put the party apparatus and the cadre-work into the service of the party direction and control of the state administration. The exercise of the party power and the influence of the Party were assured by the special control over the personal affairs. One of the most effective elements of this strategy was the list(s) of power. The nomenclature system consisted of the lists of cadre-power and the lists of the opinion right of the various party organs and organizations, and these lists also determined the nominations to the different positions, as well as the rights over the various acquittals. The party organs of the MSZMP BM had important rights in the system of the personal cases. On the one hand, they could control the movement of the cadres through the party discipline power and through "commanding" the party cadres to the service of the Ministry of Home Affairs. On the other hand, they could have an important role in removing the failed leaders of the state security. The party organs did not cease to organize party schools and courses in order to develop the "socialist creature" and to maintain the socialist education. These schools and courses were adjusted to the fields of certain departments of the secret police and they gave a political/ideological qualification. The participation of the members was controlled by the party functionaries as part of the party direction.

## 1.3 Role of the regional organs of Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party (*MSZMP*)

Although in the party control over the police the regional party committees and their secretaries had a certain role, their controlling activities were a lot weaker than the control activities of the central organs or the party organs of the secret police. The first resolution of

the Political Committee (*PB*) in 1957 gave the possibility to the secretaries of the regional party committees to control some parts of the state security related work. In 1958, this right was expanded to the higher party organs as well (e.g. Central Leadership Committee – *KV*). However, the corporate (party committee) control was only exercised over the party organs of the Ministry of Home Affairs. The administrative departments exercised the control over the political departments and the implementation of the party resolutions, while the administrative department of the Central Leadership Committee (*KV*) had to control the party organs of the regional organs and the organs of the Ministry of Home Affairs.

It seems to be obvious that the controlling function of the central party organs was stronger and more effective than the mandatory report activity of the local and regional party organs, party committees and their secretaries. In the meantime, in my opinion the role of the personal relationships and the lobbying abilities of the members in formal positions (e.g. a secretary of a regional party committee) were at least as important concerning the control of some fields as the regulated party control mechanisms.

#### 1.4 Party information

Providing the party organs with information was a crucial element of the party direction. In order to maintain the initiative role, to determine the persons and social groups to observe and to keep the party control over all implementations the leading organs of the Party constantly needed accurate and updated information. This information was mostly provided by various organs of the Ministry for Home Affairs (*BM*). The decision making mechanism of the Party direction and the leading organs of MSZMP would have been unimaginable without this information. Moreover, the information provided enabled the party organs to interfere in the operative work.

#### 1.5 Checks in the procedures of the secret police

The party controlled jurisdiction of the Kádár regime made the difference clear between the procedures concerning regular citizens and party officers. The “administrative procedures” (which meant the incorporation of some elements in the procedures of the police that guaranteed the party control over the actions of the state security agencies against the officers of the Party) had the aim of defending the most important functionaries of the Party from the possible harassment of the secret police and of preventing that some members, following the

methods of the Rákosi regime, use the secret police in order to liquidate their political opponents.

## 2. Phases of the party direction of the secret Police

It became clear at the beginning of my investigation that the traditional period changes did not overlap with the structural and operational changes in question, but they more or less overlapped with the major changes of phases of the Party direction. Institutional changes were much more frequent than minor or major political changes that were not functionally related to the organizational changes. Therefore, I tried to establish the major phases of the political events and the direction of the Party together, but I had to realize that although it is possible to set up some shorter periods between 1954 and 1962, it seemed to be more fruitful to perceive the changes of the investigated period as a process. This process started with the arrest of Gábor Péter at the beginning of 1953 and it lasted until the fall of the party-state system in 1989. The process was constantly transformed by the ideas of the party leadership that increasingly preferred the methods of the formal direction besides the already (mostly invisibly) existing informal channels of direction.

The first regulation of the party direction of the secret police and the Ministry for Home Affairs by the top party leadership happened in 1954, the year the changes in the political processes in Hungary made the (partial) revision of the previous period necessary. In the short period between the repression of the revolution and June of 1957 the Hungarian party leaders just assisted the Soviet leadership, the direct control was exercised by Moscow.

The first phase of the political retaliation ended at the beginning of the 1960's, the possibility of the stabilization of the system became a reality, therefore the Ministry for Home Affairs was looking for new methods in the political inquiry that had a considerable effect on the party direction as well. The rights and duties of the party organizations were outlined in 1958, which meant the beginning of a new and more consolidated era.

From 1959, the debates on the interpretation of the competency and power of the state security organs and the party organizations became stronger. The organs of the secret police that were related to MSZMP were not only the means of political education but – in a certain way – they also influenced the professional and state security activities. It became more and more obvious that the new tasks and the new attitude required a new approach from the employees of the state security organs, but some people of the “old board” could not and did not want to fulfill this requirement. This tension finally turned to a scandal in 1962, during the

detailed investigation of the “violation of law committed against the members of the labor movement during the personality cult”. During this investigation Kádár finally found a way to destroy the “political deviationists” in the Ministry for Home Affairs (*BM*).

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