



EMBASSY OF THE REPUBLIC OF HUNGARY
AMBASSADE DE LA RÉPUBLIQUE DE HONGRIE

Loryl MacDonald
President
Association of Canadian Archivists
O T T A W A

Ottawa, March 7, 2011

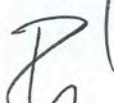
Dear Ms President,

Thank you for your letter of February 24, sent on behalf of the Association of Canadian Archivists, concerning the future of documents in the Archives of State Security in Budapest, Hungary. I appreciate your „deep concern” with Hungary’s planned legislation on secret police files. Nonetheless, please take note of the following.

- 1) At the moment, there is a plan to introduce a new bill on state security files to be first discussed, then worded, then discussed again, and finally passed, approximately a year from now.
- 2) The process of this planned legislation is in its initial phase now. Several experts, as well as non-experts have voiced their opinions; further opinions and suggestions are likely to follow before the official version (the bill to be presented in Parliament) is agreed on and is finally worded.
- 3) Consequently, we know, as you write in your letter, that there is a „decision to introduce legislation” on certain files, but we do not know, although you also write, whether this legislation „would permit the removal and destruction offiles...” Personally, I believe and predict that it will not.
- 4) Of the many recommendations, suggestions, instances of advice, etc.. by experts, there is one single statement by a single individual you seem to base your deep concern on. And this person, like others in the government is assuredly open, if not necessarily to aggressive petitioning, but to well intentioned suggestions and/or consultations.
- 5) I am convinced that the actual law will not contain anything hindering or obstructing, let alone making impossible any scholarly research. If you discover anything even remotely resembling such purpose in the text, you (and anyone else) will be absolutely welcome to express criticism or protest even before, or after the bill is passed. (Again, preferably not in widely circulated and popularized petitions, but through responsible consultation, to which the government is always receptive (see e.g. the recent media issue).

- 6) Although I feel it is slightly exaggerated that „archives are the foundation of democracy „ (your words), but as a layman in this matter, I am willing to accept it. However, communism, under which I grew up, also teaches us that archives can also be (used/abused as) means or a base of tremendous human sufferings, torture and deaths (see e.g. the thousands of the trumped up charges of the 1950s, based on „well-founded documents.”) One of the aims of the law in preparation is, besides revealing the crimes, to put an irreversible end to continuous humiliation, and suspicion, a decisive end that has been delayed for over 20 years.
- 7) Therefore, it seems not only totally acceptable, but in fact a mandatory requirement that the planned law give a priority to individual human rights, possibly placing them in at least a few well-defined cases above everything else. (Provided that this will actually happen, as I hope it will.)
- 8) Incidentally, in 1988-89, the communists in Hungary burned and shredded tons of documents of heinous crimes before they were ousted, and nobody raised a voice. (This also means that today's petitioning is in large part long after the event, unfortunately.)
- 9) It is very likely and I strongly believe that what remains of the documents, and promises to shed light on these crimes without infringing on the rights of the victims, will be kept and protected for future research with meticulous care.

Sincerely yours,



László Pordány
Ambassador