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/// A new beginning

Even though more than 15 years have passed since the fall of the communist regimes in 2007, examining our recent past still faces serious obstacles. Apart from various scientific and memory policy debates, Hungarian historiography also had to overcome important practical problems. A considerable part of the remaining documents was still being sorted or was accessible only to a few colleagues. Not to mention the fact that the system of online databases and search interfaces that revolutionise today's research was barely functioning at that time. Since then, the situation has changed considerably. Researchers of the Hungarian communist era have a significantly easier task today, and it is safe to say that the Historical Archives of the Hungarian State Security played an important role in this. Our archivists brought order to chaos, restoration colleagues tidied up disintegrated files, and associates have been preparing documents on request. And let us not forget the IT staff, as well as the research and customer service frontliners, who helpfully (and above all: patiently) record the incoming requests.

It is no exaggeration to say that the official journal of the archive, *Betekintő*, which was launched in 2007, also made a lasting contribution to better understanding the functioning of the communist services. Hundreds of studies, source publications and reviews published in the columns of *Betekintő*, seek to specify, clarify and supplement the scientific knowledge on Hungarian state security. The fact that now we know the difference between an agent and an informant, and how often the omnipotence of state security was drowned in banal scenes, is due to the long and persistent work of the colleagues publishing in *Betekintő*. Of course, some certain topics led to intense professional debates, but all of this just increased the journal's prestige. The same can be said about our thematic issues, which we have been publishing since 2018, interest in which has increased year by year – from researchers and laymen alike. However, the knowledge we have acquired about the era and communist state security increasingly calls for comparative analyses. The editors have been keenly aware of this, and in addition to our main themes, we have sought to provide space for studies aimed at describing systems

that existed before communism or functioned as rivals to it. This also gave our readers the chance to better understand communism in power not only in Hungary, but also in the neighbouring countries. Consequently, *Betekintő* went on to become one of the main analytical workshops of Soviet-type systems in Hungary.

However, all this is worth little if no one else knows about it. For this reason, we decided to turn the fourth issue each year into an English-language one. We are confident that our call for articles will attract more and more authors in the future, and we live in the hope that one day *Betekintő* will be available only in English. The background of this decision is not scientific arrogance. We still have a lot to do regarding the history of Hungarian communism. Consider the fact that we still do not have a modern perspective biography of Mátyás Rákosi or János Kádár. We can rightly assume therefore that a Hungarian *Betekintő* will be definitely needed for a while. Nevertheless, we would also like to help Hungarian historical studies to be better known internationally. It also should be considered that historians researching the former communist countries should be able to publish their studies in a thematic journal, in the columns of *Betekintő*. Written by the director of our archive, the following cooperation report explains why this ambition just might not be a pipe dream.

Such collaboration is justified by several factors. It seems that, despite the optimism at the end of the Cold War, history (whatever we mean by that) has not “ended” at all. The shadows of the past still lurk among us, just consider the war Russia launched against Ukraine. This extremely bloody conflict – among other things – can be traced back to the disintegration of the Soviet Union. In order to understand the most pressing problems of recent decades, we must also go back to the period of communism. Firstly, our generation and the next will have to face the environmental legacy of the modernisation and industrialisation of former regimes. Secondly, the development of Eastern-type consumer societies have become a source of political problems that affect us to this day, which we, the inhabitants of this strange, intermediate region, certainly understand well. The legacy of the Central and Eastern European communist regimes therefore requires joint action.

All in all, we encourage our future authors to follow our call for articles and to honour our small but diligent editorial team with their trust. Until then, we hope that our readers – both Hungarians and non-Hungarians – will benefit from the English issues of *Betekintő*.

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