

Targetted Persons by the State Security Authorities before and after 1956

In accordance with official wording Operative Registration was a secret tool of law enforcement, preventive, and investigative activities of State Security Authorities. In accordance with the Order of the Minister of the Interior of 27th November 1957 „*A well-organized registration, matching the policy of the Party is paramount in the combat fought by the operative authorities in uncovering the undermining activities of both the external and internal reactionary forces.*”¹ In my study I wish to examine how the leading organs of the Party regulated the circle of persons to be included into the registration system of the State Security Organs, and how the Party resolutions got across – if they got across at all – in the practice of state security organs.

The Political Registration Office of the Political Security Department of the Budapest Headquarters was founded on March 1st 1945. The aim was to keep records of „*hostile*” compromised people. A month later Gábor Péter, Head of the Department, summarized their activity as follows: „*According to the permission of the Chief of Police the Registration Office is a national institution until further measures are taken. The Department prepares a headboard with a photograph about each Hungarian Nazi and other delinquents. The full development of the Department is still in process.*”²

The Registration Office was based upon the Hungarian Allied Control Commission list of those who „*committed war crimes or crimes against the people*”, registration files and enrolment forms left behind by fascist and right-wing parties and organisations, „*lexical data*” referring to the leaders of the state apparatus in the Horthy regime, and on reports of citizens.

From 1945 on the tasks of the State Police³, operating under various names, focused its activities primarily on uncovering violation of the Act on Democratic State, and on investigation of both war crime and anti-people crime. However, from the very beginning of its operation this Agency provided efficient support to the leaders of the Communist Party in their political ambitions through collecting intelligence on leading politicians of coalitions parties, tapping telephones of political opponents of Communists, etc. G. J.

¹ Order 57 of the Minister of the Interior of 27th November 1957 Belügyminisztérium Központi Irattár [BM KI (Central Archives of the Minister of the Interior) Parancsgyűjtemény (Collection of Orders) 29. d.

² Állambiztonsági Szolgálatok Történeti Levéltára [ÁBTL] (Historical Archives of Hungarian State Security) V-150. 342.

³ See Cseh Gergő Bendegúz, A magyarországi állambiztonsági szervek intézménytörténeti vázlat, 1945-1990. In: Trezor 1. A Történeti Hivatal Évkönyve 1999. (Történeti Hivatal, Budapest, 1999. 73-89.)

Korotkevich, from the International Information Department of the Central Committee of the Soviet Communist Party reported in April 1947 that Gábor Péter had told him the following: „*Political Police is a great help for the Party. Before Party meetings we usually manage to find out about the intentions of our political opponents and so we are able to inform the leaders of the Communist Party about everything in time. We have organised phone tapping. Now we are tapping the phones of the Prime Minister and the Party leaders whenever they are having an important conversation and we report the most important ones to Comrade Rákosi*”.⁴

Senior officials of the State Security Authorities in the countryside were instructed to regularly provide information as early as February 1946⁵ So called „headboards” were created about those who committed war crimes or crimes against the people and the leaders of the state apparatus in the Horthy regime and they attached a photo of the person if it was available. Information about „*people suspected of activity against the Hungarian State-Republic or anti-democratic activities*” was placed into grey files.

At that time the two registrations were handled separately – the „headboards” meant „public registration” whereas the „grey files” were only available for the organisations of political investigators.

The establishment of the first unified registration system was ordered only in April 1950 by the Head of State Security Authority.⁶ Soviet Counsellors in Hungary helped to found the Central Registration Office, which meant setting up a Soviet style and system of operative registration, thus creating an atmosphere of total mistrust.

No copy of the first order regulating operative registration can be found today. We allege that the documents gathered during investigations, intelligence and counter-intelligence activities were sorted according to this order.

The Unified Operative Registration of Antidemocratic Elements consisted of nearly 1,200,000 data which means some 20-25 percent of adult population was regarded as enemy of the regime. A crucial component of the so called „*new phase*” policy proclaimed by the Imre Nagy Government, set up on 4th July 1953, was the restoration of legitimacy. One of its segments was the demand for the review of Operational Registration and for establishing a new Registration Regulation as well. On 8th September 1953 the Board of the Ministry of the Interior identified the tasks of the Central Operational Registration Office of the MoI, the basic principles of registration, the circle of persons to register, and the methods of Operational Registration. Although the resolution recognized that there were many people registered who did not have

⁴ Reporting to Moscow... Secret documents 1944-1948. Edited by Lajos Izsák and Miklós Kun. Századvég Kiadó, Budapest, 1994. 170.

⁵ See A Belügyminisztérium Kollégiumának ülései 1953–1956. Vol. 1. Compiled by Kajári Erzsébet. ed. Gyarmati György and S. Varga Katalin. (Történeti Hivatal, Budapest, 2001. 175.)

⁶ Order 4 of the Head of the State Security Authority of 11th April 1950. Ibid. 175.

any incriminating intelligence on (e.g. for having been abroad in an official delegation) the main reason for what the minister, Ernő Gerő did not regard Operational Registration appropriate was the depreciation of registration and the negligence it was done with. Guidelines for registration were elaborated later, however, the 30 categories of enemies to register had already been identified. Not only former aristocrats, capitalists, land-owners, both leaders and members of the repressive force of the Horthy era, professional soldiers, members and leaders of Fascist parties, religious leaders, nuns, monks, Party-leaders regarded as rightists after 1945, or persons sentenced for anti-state activities were to be considered as enemies but also right-wing social democrats, Trotskyists, and persons excluded from the Party due to their anti-party activities, relatives to persons sentenced for political crime, Hungarian employees of representations of Capitalist countries, and persons in contact with Western embassies. The widest circle included the last category stating that „*all others are also to register who have confirmed information claiming they are enemies of the current people's democratic state or conducted hostile activities against the Communist Party and working class*”.⁷ The new regulation on Operational Registration by state security agencies came into force only one year later by the Order 10 of the Minister of the Interior dated 13th September 1954.⁸

Although a Board resolution as early as September 1953 ordered the review of the Operational Registration system, that did not take place that time. On 18th October 1954 the Supreme Prosecution proposed Prime Minister Imre Nagy that the leaders of the State Security Agency should order a review of the data of Operational Registration.⁹ That time the work did start. The report on the review of the Operational State Security Registration submitted by Minister of the Interior Laszlo Piros on 13th April 1955 was discussed by the Politburo of the Central Leadership of the Hungarian Workers' Party (HWP) as one of the miscellaneous matters – indicating its „*great significance*”. According to the report since 1st December 1953 the files of 1,129,865 persons had been reviewed out of 1,149,659 which resulted in deleting 666,728 out of them that is even after the revision process nearly 500,000 persons' data were stored in the registry.¹⁰ However, there is no information on the categories affected by the review.

Later the Board of the Ministry of the Interior dealt with the issue at its meeting on 25 July 1956. That might have been the result of the fact that the Politburo of the Central Committee of HWP, supported by Laszlo Piros on 11th May 1956, discussed a report on the activities of State Security Authorities of

⁷ Magyar Országos Levéltár [MOL] (Hungarian National Archives) XIX-B-1-z 2. doboz. See also A Belügyminisztérium Kollégiumának ülései 1953-1956. op. cit. 175-182.

⁸ BM KI Parancsgyűjtemény (Collection of Orders) 29. d.

⁹ See *Iratok az igazságszolgáltatás történetéhez*. Vol. I. ed. dr. Horváth Ibolya, dr. Solt Pál, dr. Szabó Győző, Dr. Zánthy János, dr. Zinner Tibor. Közgazdasági és Jogi Könyvkiadó, Budapest, 1992.

¹⁰ MOL M-KS 276. f. 53/225. ö. e.

the Ministry of the Interior aimed at combatting internal reaction and apart from identifying new tasks instructed the relevant persons to review and reduce the number of registered persons.¹¹ In accordance with the report submitted to the Board the number of registered persons decreased due to the review in 1954 to 420,000 but on the other hand the number of those with no anti-state activities conducted was still very high and the so called antidemocratic elements were registered in an unlawful way as the incriminating or compromising facts recorded in the files were not properly checked and documented.

The report by the Central Operational Registration Department self-critically admitted that in spite of the previous instructions the files of persons against whom the confidential investigation was dropped because of the lack of evidence or criminal activities, moreover those registered as their contact persons were not deleted. The same refers to a part of the rehabilitated persons too, similarly to those having been interned or under police surveillance regardless of the fact whether measures taken against them were lawful or not.

A large number of persons remained registered whose further registration under the actual circumstances was against the political course of the Party and the Government (the document mentions among them landowners with plots on both sides of the state border, and Yugoslav citizens registered after the deterioration of the bilateral relations).¹²

In the opinions of the makers of the proposal the above mentioned breaches of law could be eliminated by a revision of the registration system and modification of registration regulations.

They intended to group the registered persons into two categories: those conducting or having conducted active anti-state activities or capable of being activated by the enemy due to their past functions or social positions. Into the second category would have fallen those on who there were no incriminating evidence whatsoever making them subject of any legal handicap but deserving the attention of State Security Authorities. This additional, search file system was to be used for recruitment or operational combinations.

The two Annexes attached to the Board proposals contained those categories out of which persons were to be extracted and recategorised into either additional or search filing systems. The revision of registration files was to be launched on 1st August and was accomplished by 31st December 1956.

At the meeting of the Board there was no decision made upon the proposal by the member of Administrative Department of Central Committee of HWP, present at the session. Minister of the Interior László Piros instructed the members of the Board to further study the registration rules issued in 1954 and requested an independent report on the state of execution of the regulation. Simultaneously, a closer and more exclusive Commission was set up in order to

¹¹ MOL M-KS 276. f. 53/286. ő. e.

¹² MOL XIX-B-1-z 4. d.

elaborate a proposal on identifying the circle of those to register.¹³ It is still unknown whether the implementation of the instruction of the Minister of the Interior was initiated since the Body did not return to the issue before the revolution broke out.

During the Revolution of 1956 a part of operational documents was destroyed.¹⁴ From the end of 1956 the reconstruction of destroyed or disappeared operational materials and the revision of remaining registration took place simultaneously. The need for clearing those still registered without reason came up as early as the summer 1957, however the Head of Registration Department did not consider the full revision possible to execute. In his opinion for the task requiring very thorough and diligent work the necessary pre-conditions had to be established: the reconstruction of registration had to be accomplished (primarily at county level), and registration regulations elaborated by the Operational Registration Department had to be approved by the Minister of the Interior and by the Party so that the revision could be carried out on the basis of those principles.¹⁵

While the circle of those to register had previously been regulated by an Order of the Minister of the Interior without the approval of leading Party bodies, that time the leadership of the Ministry of the Interior requested the leading body of the Party to define the categories regarded as enemies. The issue was first submitted to the Political Committee on 22nd October 1957, which agreed with the re-establishment of Operational Registration of the MoI but returned the proposal of the Ministry for re-evaluation considering the circle of persons to register as too wide.¹⁶ In accordance with the resolution approved a week later the circle of persons to register was limited to persons conducting anti-state activities; belonged to adverse category due to their social position; conducted adverse activities during Horthy regime due to their profession and activities; after 1945 and during the Revolution in 1956 conducted adverse activities; or who were Western citizens important to intelligence and counter-intelligence. At the same time the Resolution emphasized that if somebody was to register because of their activities during the revolution principles of the Government of 4th November 1956 had to be taken into consideration – that is persons who were „*deceived*” were not allowed to be registered. Social class-considerations had to be taken into consideration with regard to registering leaders and members of Parties, organisations, various revolutionary authorities (revolutionary committees, national commissions, national guard, workers councils) too. These persons had to be registered only if they belonged to class-enemy category, a Party

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ See Magdolna Baráth, Az állambiztonsági iratok selejtezése, megsemmisítése. In: Terozor 3. Az átmenet évkönyve 2003. Állambiztonsági Szolgálatok Történeti Levéltára, Budapest, 2004. 257-262.

¹⁵ ÁBTL I.11.10. 10. d.

¹⁶ MOL M-KS 288. f. 5/47. ő. e.

resolution forbade the registration of workers having taken positions in revolutionary organisations. Nevertheless a large number of workers and former members of Workers' Councils were also registered, moreover, a part of them fell victim of repression.

A registration category was formed by ones having actively participated in the ideological or organisational preparation of the Revolution and those who participated in abducting or murdering Communists, organising strikes and demonstrations, destroying monuments, statues (if they were of class-enemy descent).

The Political Committee Resolution also had reference to an additional, a so called Search Registration containing the data of those persons on whom the State Security Authorities had no incriminating intelligence relating to their post-1945 activities but their previous behaviour justified their permanent observation. This registration differed from the previous one since it was only for the internal information of State Security Authorities, which were not allowed provide information to other authorities. However, it should be noted here that in reality the majority of those registered here belonged to those who – according to the contemporary wording – left the country illegally but returned to Hungary after the publication of a Government Amnesty. This procedure was widely practiced in spite of the fact that Order 57 of 1957 of the Minister of the Interior also forbade the registration of these persons. Nevertheless, Jenő Hazai proposed the registration of these persons referring to operational interests in the note of 29 January 1958 produced by Sub-division II/2 of the Ministry of the Interior (then a subunit of counterintelligence department). In his opinion those who left the country either before, or during or after the Revolution committed a criminal act through crossing the state border. Another argument of his was that the espaces could always be used by imperialist intelligence agencies even if they did not immediately return to Hungary. Moreover, when a person returned home illegally, in the case of their screening it took a long series of operational measures to uncover their illegal „*homecoming*”.

Jenő Hazai proposed an amendment to the related point of Registration Regulation, allowing the registration of every person over 18 years of age who left the country after 1945 and also those who returned after the Government Amnesty. The MoI Order was not ammended. On the memorandum Head of Operational Registration Department Ferenc Ács wrote in handwriting: „*I agreed with Comrade Hazai that Department II. will register those who left Hungary illegally for itself only. On form 3. Only for counterintelligence use in Department II.*”¹⁷ (In connection with new registrations a report of 4th July 1961, however, mentions that the majority of persons registered in search registration make up those who illegally left the country during the Revolution and persons having returned to country after the

¹⁷ ÁBTL 1.11.10. 10. d.

Amnesty or on the basis of individual considerations.¹⁸ A revision process launched in 1964 reveals that even 8-10-year old girls were registered who were abroad for a short time and then returned.¹⁹)

Party Resolution of October 1957 – as if defining framework figures for the national economy – prescribed even the number of persons to register which could not exceed 200,000 - 300,000. Within this number a special category had to be set up for those 6,000-7,000 persons (later estimated at 10,000-15,000) regarded as especially dangerous for the regime. (In the latter case, however, the plan was not fulfilled: according to an MoI report of 1960 only some 50% of the planned number was taken under „operational processing” that is was included in so called observation files.²⁰)

Just after the signing of the Political Committee Resolution an amendment proposal arrived from the Operational Registration Department of the Ministry of the Interior. The reason behind was that there is no synergy between the registration categories identified by the Political Committee Resolution and those identified by Government Resolution 1093/57 of 28th December 1957, which set up a category for persons excluded from important and confidential positions. In their opinion the Government Resolution lacked categories which, in accordance with the PC Resolution, were considered as registration categories while there were groups excluded from important and confidential positions which were not to register on the basis of the Party Resolution. Ferenc Ács compiled even a detailed statement on the discrepancies and suggested that those should be eliminated. However, Minister of the Interior Béla Biszku’s note on his memorandum, stating that there was no need to amend the Resolution, dropped the matter.²¹

The first partial report on the status of the revision launched on the basis of the instructions from the Political Committee was made by the Operational Registration Department in early May 1958. By that time a mere 80,000 persons’ records were reviewed. On this delay was a remark was made by an associate of the Administrative Department of the Central Committee of the Hungarian Socialist Workers’ Party (CC HSWP). However, the biggest problem was that MoI authorities launched their revision of Registration with records on persons falling within Party cognizance. In accordance with the report the records on 351 persons in Party, Government, or economic positions were reviewed out of whom 24 were left in Basic and another 46 in Search Registration. However, the associate of the Administrative Department of the CC HSWP considered that the revision of persons falling within Party cognizance did not comprise any task for the political investigation organs since that job was to be done by a Special Committee set up by the Secretariat of the CC.

¹⁸ Report on the new registrations 4th July 1961 ÁBTL 1.11.10. 14. d.

¹⁹ Report on the execution of the Order 0033/1963 of the Minister of the Interior 7th July 1966 MOL XIX-B-1-z 28. d.

²⁰ ÁBTL 1.11.10. 6. d.

²¹ ÁBTL 1.11.10. 10. d.

The Administrative Department of the CC HSWP was repeatedly forced to reject an attempt by the registration authorities aimed at widening their scope of registration onto a wider circle than the one identified by Party Resolution. Ferenc Ács proposed another modification of the PC Resolution in a way that allowed „*not only the registration of persons without definition, who are allowed to register but also others belonging to a wider circle, with an incriminating evidence, in case of their documentation and thorough check that should be clearly separated from lethal – active – enemies, and dangerous categories.*” (Highlight in the original. M. B.)

The associate of the Administrative Department refused the proposal not only because it was conflicting the PC Resolution on the reduction of registration but also because if the PC had lifted the restrictions on registration, the reasoning for including other „*operationally*” important persons in the sphere of registration would have resulted in the fact that „*anyone could be included among those under surveillance*”.²²

After several delaying requests the final report on revision was submitted to the Secretariat of CC HSWP, which discussed the matter at its meeting on 8th September 1959. As a result of the revision 49% of the records were deleted while 18% was transferred into the so-called Search Registration. (The deletion was above the country average in the case of County Departments of the Ministry of the Interior: 62%.) The deletion affected mostly workers, servants, peasants, who were members of various right-wing or Fascist parties but were not involved actively in any activities. According to the report on the revision the circle of those taken off from the records included: persons unjustly involved in concept-trials, who were cleared or rehabilitated by the court of justice due to the lack of crime, others registered as contact persons to others involved in investigations, and the so called rightist Social Democrats whose internment was totally undue. According to Minister of the Interior Béla Biszku there could still be a 10-15% margin of error.²³ However, on the basis of later reports and documents in the Historical Archives of State Security it can be stated that the report distorted the situation of execution of the revision process.

In the Operational Department of the Ministry of the Interior „*fine-tuning*” of the revision and registration was a permanent activity and annual reports were issued on the matter. A part of these reports self-critically acknowledges that there were mistakes made both during the previous revisions and making new records. For example, according to a report of 1959 the Party class-policy did not prevail and it was the deceived workers exploited by „*class-enemy elements in the background*” who were held responsible for the events in 1956 instead of the class-enemy elements themselves. In many cases the data serving as a basis for being registered were inaccurate and unreliable (in the case of the events in 1956 some 40% of the records had such deficiencies), persons with

²² Report on the revision of the Operative Registration 8th May 1958 ÁBTL 1.11.10. 10. d.

²³ MOL M-KS 288. f. 7/58. ő. e.

similar names were often mistaken for one another and not the right person was registered (for example a former riot police officer was registered for counter-revolutionary activities, who had even been decorated on *For Worker-Peasant Power* for his deeds in suppressing the „*counter revolution*”²⁴).

Since the first wave of revision did not resolve all problems the deletion of records of the still unduly registered or the obtaining of checked documentation of being compromised had to be accomplished in the second stage. However, the work of operational authorities suffered from most deficiencies in this field. A report by the Operational Registration Department dated 6th April 1960 also admitted that there was no improvement in documenting activities of persons to register and 18% of the requested registration was rejected because of insufficient intelligence.²⁵

On the basis of memoranda of the Operational Registration Department there seems to be a tendency: the majority of persons selected for new registration belonged to those who were picked because of their behaviour during and after the revolution of 23rd October 1956 while the number falling into other categories significantly dropped. It is extremely thought-provoking that 51% of persons selected for registration was of worker or peasant descent which indicated a complete negligence to the Party policy even though the memorandum by Ferenc Ács stresses: „*Although the number of persons of worker or peasant descent is higher than that of the class enemies, however, their registration was based on well-founded materials.*”²⁶

By the end of 1960 the mass registration of persons with „*counter-revolutionary activities*” had been accomplished. This is indicated by the fact that in the first six months of 1961 the number of registered persons dropped by 50% compared to the same period in 1960. However, there were certain inefficiencies in registration especially when it comes to documenting adverse activities but a mere 3% had to be returned to the proposing agency in the first half of 1961.²⁷

Until 1963 both the registration procedure and preserving criminal records of enemies was based on the HSWP Political Committee Resolution of October 1957. However, HSWP Political Committee Resolution of 5th March 1963 on the abandonment of categorisation of the basis of descent created a new situation. As early as the meeting of the Operational Registration Department on 9th March 1963 there was a reference to the fact that a proposal was being elaborated on the modification of registration categories and upon the Party Resolution the new methodology of organising and fine-tuning registration system.²⁸

The joint information report by the Administrative Department of Central Committee and the Party Committee of the Ministry of the Interior stated that

²⁴ ÁBTL 1.11.10. 12. d.

²⁵ Report on the new registration in the first quarter of 1960. ÁBTL 1.11.10. 6. d.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Report on the new registration 4th July 1961. ÁBTL 1. 1.10. 14. d.

²⁸ ÁBTL 1.11.10. 31. d.

as a result of the revision and continuous control following Party Resolution of 1957 the registration became better-established but in their opinions the Ministry of the Interior was unable to keep up with the change in the political and social life of the country. Consequently, there were many persons in the registration who grew integrated into the social system or whose behaviour and activities became socially less dangerous. Taken all this into consideration the modification of a part of principles approved in October 1957 and a general revision of Operational Registration was ordered. The success of consolidation of Kadar-regime in this field was emphasized by the fact that the intention was not a „total encirclement” of the suspected enemy with the use of operational means but to register those who pose a direct or potential threat to the regime. In accordance with the Resolution the records had to be destroyed of those whose behaviour was blameless for a longer period of time, from the members and descendants of former exploiting class who were registered merely because of their class they used to belong to, and did a successful job in building Socialism. People with gravely compromising past but with great deeds in building Socialism were also exempted.²⁹

In early 1964, at the beginning of the revision some 240,000 persons were registered (135,676 in Basic and 103,610 in Search Registration). The Operational Registration Department expected this number to decrease by 35%. The report on the progress in this work was discussed by the Board of the Ministry of the Interior at its meeting on 10th August 1965. By that time only 39% of the material in the registration had been reviewed – beginning the work with the material of persons who were not the object of registration. This can be the reason for such a surprisingly high deletion rate. In the Operational Registration Department 78.5% of the records was deleted, and the great majority from Search Registration. This affected more than 40 thousand persons having been recorded as members of Fascist, right-wing parties or Volksbund but there were ones without any registered activity.

The deletion rate differed from county to county: in Zala and Veszprém counties it was over the national average (79.3 and 58% respectively). In these counties a special investigation was also conducted which came to the conclusion that the higher deletion rate is acceptable as in the registration there was a large number of former land-owners, Kulaks, members of the Hungarian Fascist Party, and those of Volksbund.³⁰

According to the report, while perviously the main problem was the undue registration, that time it was unjustified deletions that made briefings of staff dealing with Operational Registration necessary.

One year later the Board of the Ministry of the Interior at its meeting on 7th July 1966 returned to the issue of the progress of revision. By that time, however, the „operational situation” had changed. According to the analysis of the

²⁹ MOL M-KS 288. f. 5/312. ő. e.

³⁰ MOL XIX-B-1-z 25. d.

Security Authorities as a result of relaxation policy of the imperialist states aimed at the socialist countries, among them Hungary; internal problems of socialist countries; economic hardships the „*internal reactionary forces were growing*” therefore it was proposed that certain categories (monks, illegal border crossers) that had been deleted from Search Registration had to be re-established and a statement was requested from the meeting of Deputy Ministers.³¹

The re-establishment of the above categories was approved and when the matter was discussed at the meeting of Deputy Ministers on 3rd October 1966 several other groups were added to this category – former aristocrats, factory owners, merchants, former members of SS and Volksbund, former police inspectors, and foreigners expelled from Hungary. The proposal admitted that „*Although the addition of new groups to the categories to register increases the number of persons registered, it is not a breach of socialist legitimacy since only persons with checked and proved incriminating evidence were registered.*”³²

The modification of the ministerial order and ministerial instruction of 1963 was approved by the meeting of Deputy Ministers. It was Deputy Minister Sándor Rác’s responsibility to prepare a report on the modifications of categories and volumes apart from the PC Resolution of 10th September 1963 and to have it approved by the Political Committee.³³ There is no information on the implementation of this Resolution and neither was it mentioned at Political Committee meetings until late 1966.

As early as summer 1965 the Operational Registration Department signalled that revision work progressed slowly and the deadline, 31st December 1966, could not be met. This was confirmed at the Board meeting on 7th July 1966. That time the panel agreed on the accomplishment of revision activities by 31st December 1967. The accomplished report was discussed at the MoI Board meeting of 20th April 1968.

The report states that for „*political and operational reasons*” the records of 15,940 persons were re-established in the registration and during the revision period (1st January 1964 and 31st December 1967) 28,894 new records were entered into the registration. In spite of the growth the number of persons registered decreased by more than 60,000 and in early 1968 it was 198,145 persons. As a result of the revision not only the number of registered persons decreased but the proportion of basic and search records also changed: the number of the first dropped from 56.6% to 36.6%, and 33.3% of the arranged materials was deleted.³⁴

According to the document the rearrangement further improved the standard of registration making the incriminating evidence on the registered persons better checked and better founded therefore there was no need for further revision

³¹ MOL XIX-B-1-z 28. d.

³² BM KI Miniszterhelyettesi általános iratok 1966/647.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ MOL XIX-B-1-z 33. d.

campaigns in the field of Operational Registration and only the continuous „*fine-tuning*” was to be conducted in accordance with the actual guidelines.³⁵

However, there seems to be a slight discrepancy between the above quoted statements and an enquiry ordered by the leadership of the Ministry of the Interior for a review of the situation of antidemocratic elements in the spring of 1970. That time there were 83,000 persons registered under this label, out of whom 66,000 resided in Hungary. The findings were more than surprising. It turned out that roughly 80% of the registered had their records only in the archives and no State Security investigation was conducted on them. 25% of those labeled as antidemocratic did not conduct any adverse activities after 1945 and they were registered merely on the basis of their former roles or social background. An overwhelming majority of the registered persons (some 39,000) worked in the area of industry or agriculture, and around 10,000 did white collar work. More than 70% was over 50 years of age and nearly 5,000 of the were over 70 years old.³⁶

Almost simultaneously with the above described enquiry the registry of the III. General Directorate of the Ministry of the Interior was also reviewed. On the basis of the enquiry the leadership of the Ministry of the Interior came to the conclusion that the complexity of registration systems and demand for further development of registry work requires the establishment of a unified Registration Centre at the Ministry of the Interior and the restructuring of the various registrations in accordance with standardized principles.³⁷

The matter of issuing a new Operational Registration also came up but the Head of the Registration Centre, established in 1971, was instructed to do this job only in 1973. A draft had been made by November 1973 which suggested basically a similar regulation for the circle of persons to register either in Basic or Search Registration and the cases serving as a basis for registration. However, there was a significant difference with regard to the previous system. In accordance with the new Draft Regulation persons under confidential investigation could not be included in either Basic or Search Registration since not until the investigation was over could the suspect be accused or cleared of any charge. Parallel with the warrant ordering confidential investigation targeted persons could only be registered as „*under confidential investigation*”.³⁸

On 4th December 1973 a memorandum was made which, taking into consideration the registration principles of the new draft-regulation, concluded that due to the envisaged change the number of persons in basic registration would decrease by 13,361 while the number of those in Search Registration would increase by 3860 and another 10,500 would get out of registration completely. A new category was also created for persons expatriated by the Presidential Council of

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Report on the checking of the antidemocratical elements 7th May 1970. ÁBTL 1.11.10. 28. d.

³⁷ MOL XIX-B-1-z 38. d.

³⁸ ÁBTL 1.11.10. 75. d.

the Hungarian People's Republic and for citizens of Capitalist countries stripped of their residence permit in Hungary. Persons in contact with representations of Western countries and foreign citizens expelled from Hungary were repeatedly recategorized from Search Registration to Basic one.

Simultaneously, several persons registered for pre-1945 activities and also 5,500 persons with roles in the 1956 Revolution were recategorized from basic registration into search one. The majority of those cleared were former Volksbund members and persons registered after 1956 who were not proceeded against for their revolutionary activities later.³⁹

The new registration regulation came into force by Order 002 of the Minister of the Interior and was in force for a decade. There has not been any information of the fact how the number of registered persons changed after the new registration regulation had come into force.⁴⁰

From the late 1970s and early 1980s there were two fundamental requirements the Operational Registration had to meet. On the one hand it had to fulfill the demand of the so called socialist legitimacy that is it was allowed to contain only material defined by legal acts, MoI statutes, and guidelines. On the other hand by registering enemy it had to continuously follow changes in society and registry materials.

The new registration regulation coming into force in April 1984 was an attempt to meet these expectations. In accordance with the latter requirement – among other things – a registration of organizers of opposition movements, groups, active participants of opposition actions was ordered that time although it is almost sure that certain opposition persons were targeted persons as easily as the 1970s with their activities under surveillance. There was a special category of registration the so called „*F-file*”. This file contained data about particularly dangerous elements; that is people convicted of crime against the State or crime against mankind, people who started or lead plots and revolts, those who committed the following crimes: sabotage, vandalism, murderous attempt, treason, disloyalty, spying, violating State secrets or service secrets. Data about clergymen who carried out hostile activity or were in touch with hostile people abroad or organized or backed illegal religious groups could also be found in the „*F-file*”. People who played a role in preparing, starting and fighting in the 1956 revolution or those who remained active after November 4th 1956 (leaders of revolutionary and national committees, workers' councils and the home guard) remained in basic registration. Among those who left the country illegally those people were registered who during „*the time of committing the crime*” were professional members of the armed forces, worked

³⁹ ÁBTL 1.11.10. 79. d.

⁴⁰ Unfortunately at the moment there is no data on the evolution of numbers of persons recorded in Basic and Search Registration after the new registration regulation was issued. In 1977 the Operative Registration contained 195,407 records – 67,673 in Basic and 127,734 in Search Registration. ÁBTL 1.11.10. 80. d.

for diplomacy or were possessors of State or service secrets. The leaders and members of hostile emigrant organisations were still considered as enemy and so were people deprived of their Hungarian citizenship. Data about leaders and members of terrorist organizations, their representatives in Hungary, people who were planning or threatening with terrorist activities and those who could be suspected of such crime and their Hungarian relations were also put to the basic registration.

Unfortunately to date there is no data on the evolution of numbers of persons recorded in Basic and Search Registration or that of new entries after the new registration regulation was issued. At the moment such statements are not available on later years either.

Democratization of society and the elaboration of new legal acts aimed at the modernization of political institutions generated a need for a revision of State Security registration and archives in the spring of 1989. However, this was mainly focused on the legal basis of registration and the objectives and methods of the use of registration. Only after the amendment of the Constitution and Penal Code in late 1989 was a resolution made on a full-fledged revision of Operational Registration. With regard to the fact that the new Penal Code re-regulated the category of anti-state crime, as a first step a proposal was made on the destruction of operational materials related to cases that were not considered as crime any more. During the file-destruction in 1989-1990 an inestimable quantity of operational documents was sent to the pulping machines, most of them relating to the activities of the so called democratic opposition in the 1980s.

In early 1990 the new, temporary regulation for the Operational Registration of then National Security Service was elaborated which took into consideration the new political situation in Hungary.⁴¹ However, it was obsolete even at the time of its creation.

⁴¹ ÁBTL 1.11.1. 134. d.