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From the Budapest Dance Palace to the autopsy table: the Lapusnyik case, or the defection and death of a secret agent at the beginning of the Kádár era

In the summer of 1962, the political police of the Hungarian communist regime were involved in a most extraordinary case. On the evening of 8 May 1962, police Sergeant Béla Lapusnyik illegally crossed the Hungarian border and defected to Austria. His defection was considered an act of treason, and triggered a series of investigations at the Interior Ministry, as leadership believed Lapusnyik had access to classified information that could compromise the operations of Hungarian intelligence, counterintelligence, and even military counterintelligence. They were certain the former agent would pass on this information to Austrian government bodies. In reality, Lapusnyik had precious little time to do so. On 5 June 1962, the Austrian press announced that a former employee of the Hungarian Interior Ministry, who had left his country to seek political asylum in Austria, died under mysterious circumstances in a Vienna hospital. At the time he was a prisoner of the political police of the Austrian Interior Ministry (Bundesministerium für Inneres).

The investigation of the Hungarian political police, which was originally launched in May on account of Lapusnyik's defection, discovered and documented a series of violations and other cases that are not only indicative of everyday life among the ranks of the Hungarian political police, but also show how the perks afforded by these government bodies corrupted the personality of a young man, and allowed him to abuse his power as a member of the Interior Ministry.

This paper is based on the case files of the General Department of Political Investigation of the Interior Ministry (Belügyminisztérium Politikai Nyomozó Főosztály; also known as General Department II of the Interior Ministry – a Belügyminisztérium II. Főosztálya). It examines the life, defection, and death of our “protagonist”, Béla Lapusnyik, including his background, his rise and decline at the Interior Ministry, and the signs of his preparation for defection to Austria. It also presents the immediate actions taken by the Hungarian Interior Ministry to salvage the situation and prevent similar events in the future. Finally, it reports on how a strong, healthy young man could have died in a Vienna hospital as a prisoner of the Austrian political police (Der österreichischer Staatspolizeilicher Dienst, StaPo).¹

1 I was the first person who processed the Lapusnyik files, which were handed over to the Historical Office (a predecessor of the Historical Archives of the Hungarian State Security) by the Interior Ministry in the late 1990s and were also made available for research. A shorter version of this topic was published as PALASIK, Mária: A Budapest Táncpalotától a bécsi boncasztalig. A Lapusnyik-ügy – avagy egy titkosszolgálat disszidálása és halála a kádári konszolidáció kezdetén. *Betekintő*, 2015,

The illegal border crossing

At dawn on 9 May 1962, the on-call service of the Interior Ministry in Budapest received an urgent report from the highway border-crossing point in Hegyeshalom, saying that a police sergeant, who had identified himself as a member of the Interior Ministry, had successfully made a forceful border crossing and defected to Austria. The identity of the defecting officer was established a few hours later, but his identification immediately triggered an investigation. The files of the Hungarian political police also revealed that, on 8 May, at around 9 p. m., a man in rain-soaked civilian clothing arrived at the highway border-crossing point in Hegyeshalom on a Jawa motorcycle (license plate number: EG-9996). The border guards vaguely remembered him as an operative of the Interior Ministry, who had visited the border-crossing point several times to wait for the arrival of observation targets coming from Austria. On the evening in question, Border Guard Sublieutenant Béla Virág was in charge. He had also met the young man several times before, and therefore suspected nothing out of the ordinary. The strikingly handsome visitor entered, casually flashed his ministerial identification, congratulated Sublieutenant Virág on his promotion, and told him his reasons for coming to the border-crossing point. According to the man's highly convincing account, he was waiting for a West German citizen, Wolfgang Fischer, to follow the target's grey Volkswagen to Győr. The newcomer also complained about how his boss made him take a motorcycle in such foul weather, when his department had six service cars available. His story seemed to check out, but Virág left his office to inform the two border guards stationed by the booth of the arrival of the young officer, and to tell them to be vigilant (presumably out of habit, as he seemingly had no other reason to do so). During his stay, the visiting police sergeant left the office several times, smoked a cigarette, had a conversation with an on-duty customs officer, and passed the time reading a copy of the newspaper *Népszabadság* (Freedom of the People). He also talked of his work, occasionally mentioned mutual acquaintances, and otherwise acted in a familiar, collegial manner.

Fifteen minutes before midnight, events dramatically escalated when the newcomer asked Virág for a newspaper so he could use the restroom in the other building, only to be told not to worry and to go ahead because the restroom had regular toilet paper. A few minutes after the "guest" left the office, Virág heard gunshots, grabbed his own service weapon, and went to investigate. Upon exiting the building, he saw the flash of three consecutive shots from the Austrian side, followed by the two border guards shouting from a distance that the newcomer had left the building, suddenly jumped over the barrier, and made a break for Austria. He fired his weapon during the escape, wounding one of the border guards in the shoulder. Virág immediately called his on-duty senior officer, First Lieutenant János Ottlecz, who launched an investigation into the defector. By dawn on 9 May, based on the visitor's physical description and the license-plate number of the motorcycle, the defecting officer was

No. 2 – see http://www.betekinto.hu/2015_2_palasik (quoted version dated 22. 11. 2020). This study was translated by Eva Misits.

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identified as police Sergeant Béla Lapusnyik, a member of Department II/9 (Observation and Fieldwork) of the Interior Ministry.

Lapusnyik's rise through the ranks of the political police

The youngest of six children, Béla Lapusnyik was born on 1 January 1938 to a poor peasant family living in Endrőd, in south-eastern Hungary. In 1945, in pursuit of a better life, the family moved to the town of Budakalász near Budapest, where Lapusnyik attended primary school. Between 1953 and 1958, he worked at the Budakalász Textile Factory as an unskilled worker, and later as a trained roller mechanic.² Between 1953 and 1954, he completed a five-month preparatory course for working as a weaving foreman,³ which led to his promotion as assistant foreman.

In 1951, Lapusnyik joined the communist youth organization of the Hungarian Workers' Party (Magyar Dolgozók Pártja, MDP). Six years later, in April 1957, he became a member of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party (Magyar Szocialista Munkáspárt, MSZMP), and even joined the Workers' Guard (Munkásőrség) for a short period, which was a half-military organization of the MSZMP, established after the 1956 Hungarian Revolution. During the days of the 1956 revolution, Lapusnyik and others continued to report to the factory to do maintenance, but the Workers' Council dismissed them on account of a factory strike. When production resumed, Lapusnyik was among the first laborers to return to their workstations.⁴

From the summer of 1958, Lapusnyik became a civil employee of the Defence Ministry's Directorate of Armor and Vehicle Maintenance and Repairs (Honvédelmi Minisztérium Páncélos és Gépjárműtechnikai Csoportfőnökség Parancsnokság), where he was responsible for the registration of trucks. By the autumn of 1958, the Interior Ministry's General Department of Political Investigation began to consider employing him as well due to a background study issued on 18 September 1958 by the employees of Division II/9-f. This background study of Lapusnyik is especially remarkable, because it presented him in a more positive light than any other evaluation that was issued during his employment at the Interior Ministry: *Has no harmful habits, does not drink, does not lead a disorderly or extravagant lifestyle. Lives on a budget, sends his income home to his parents, and only spends the allowance he receives from his father. His clothing is plain. His circle of friends consists of immediate colleagues around his age, and his fellow athletes.*⁵

Lapusnyik was passionate about sports, especially soccer. He started out as a goalkeeper on the soccer team of the Budakalász Textile Factory, and later played for

2 *Historical Archives of the Hungarian State Security (Állambiztonsági Szolgálatok Történeti Levéltára, hereafter ÁBTL)*, 2. 8. 1. 3322, Files of the overt staff of Hungarian State Security Bodies, Béla Lapusnyik, Personnel files, 64-18187/1960, Proposal for finalization, 1. 11. 1960, p. 5.

3 *ÁBTL*, 3. 1. 7. T-9281, Secret personal files of "Lantos", Attendance card of Béla Lapusnyik, 1953–1954, undated, p. 339/5.

4 *ÁBTL*, 2. 8. 1. 3322, Files of the overt staff of Hungarian State Security bodies, Béla Lapusnyik, Personnel Files. 69/58, Background study, 18. 9. 1958, p. 6.

5 *Ibid.*, p. 7.

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the soccer teams of Autótaxi and the Red Meteor Sports Association (Vörös Meteor Sportegyesület) in Budapest. In April 1959, at the request of the Minister of Defence and the leaders of the Budapest Defence Force Sports Association (Budapesti Honvéd Sportegyesület, BHSE), Lapusnyik was transferred to the BHSE, which cemented his position at the Defence Ministry. The ministry also exempted him from compulsory military service.

Lapusnyik was eventually recommended to the Interior Ministry by a distant relative, police Lieutenant Colonel József Jamrich, who exerted his influence at the General Department of Political Investigation.⁶

Lapusnyik as a member of the political police

On 27 August 1959, for a trial period of one year, Lapusnyik was employed by Division II/9-b of the Interior Ministry as an operative with the rank of police sergeant, despite the fact that a report of his transfer to the BHSE concluded that *he must also cease his current, immoral behaviour*.⁷ This is especially interesting, because Lapusnyik's line of work was strictly confidential as an operative whose task was to observe tourists, merchants, and the members of various delegations coming to Hungary from "imperialist" countries. Members of Division II/9-b were required to be well-dressed and discreet in order to blend in with their surroundings and observe Western targets without arousing suspicion.

Based on Lapusnyik's files, it would appear that his lifestyle changed drastically within an incredibly short period of time. Following his mother's death, he left his parents' house and managed his income by himself. In April 1960, he was granted permission to move into a State Security apartment (safe house), which was used by the Department of Intelligence to arrange meetings with various agents. The apartment in question was maintained by Division II/3-a at Budapest, Egressy út 46. under the codename "Bakonyi". Visiting various entertainment venues in Budapest constituted part of Lapusnyik's operative work, but he soon started frequenting these venues off duty as well and lived above his income by amassing an expensive designer wardrobe. For instance, at the time of his illegal border crossing, Lapusnyik was reportedly wearing a dark grey overcoat, a dove-grey suit jacket, dark grey tapered trousers, light brown coloured low shoes, a white shirt with the neck unbuttoned, and a crimson silk scarf.⁸

On 15 November 1960, Lapusnyik was granted permanent employment at the Interior Ministry, despite the fact that he had received several warnings for his conduct from both professional overseers and Communist Party leadership. For example, his

6 At the end of 1957, József Jamrich was employed by Department II/3 (Intelligence) as a member of the covert staff. First, he became an operative of Division II/3-g, but at the beginning of 1959, he joined Division II/3-c, which dealt with hostile intelligence bodies.

7 *ABTL*, 3. 1. 7. T-9281, Secret personal files of "Lantos", Document of the National Commission on Physical Education and Sports about the transfer of the player Lapusnyik, 18. 3. 1959, p. 339/6.

8 *Ibid.*, Report by Border Guard Sublieutenant Béla Virág, Hegyeshalom, 9. 5. 1962, p. 36.

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evaluation slip from 21 October 1960 reads as follows: *As an independent young man, Comrade Lapusnyik was morally lacking, because he became involved with a variety of women who were unsuitable for him on account of their age and other factors.*⁹ His evaluation slip also shows that his initial enthusiasm for his work and education quickly faded. Despite multiple warnings, he neglected his theoretical training and barely passed his examinations. He also enrolled in the first grade of high school, for which he was granted leave from work, but never attended a single class. His superiors found his general knowledge lacking, and considered his grammar and writing skills atrocious. On the other hand, Lapusnyik was hailed for his excellent facial memory and ingenuity, and his colleagues believed he could identify anyone from any photograph.

We may conclude from the above that Lapusnyik's superiors were dissatisfied with the young man, who was disciplined four times during the 28 months he had spent in the service of the Interior Ministry. On 20 September 1960, Lapusnyik was disciplined by the head of Department II/9 for *carrying out his work in an improper manner*; he was also reprimanded twice, once for refusing an order, and another time for lack of discipline. Finally, on 28 October 1961, he was sentenced to five days in detention for disorderly conduct.¹⁰ Additionally, in February 1962, he received a *severe reprimand* from the Communist Party for his disrespectful behaviour towards his superiors.¹¹

The General Department of Political Investigation carefully omitted any details of the nature of Lapusnyik's conflicts, but we do know that, from 5 December 1961, he was no longer called in for duty on account of his general conduct. On 4 January 1962, professional superiors and Party leadership unanimously proposed Lapusnyik's dismissal from the Interior Ministry. Although Lapusnyik's employment was suspended and his service weapon was confiscated, he continued to receive a salary, and was allowed to keep his ministerial and operative IDs. In April 1962, Lapusnyik was officially informed of his dismissal, while the Personnel Department of the Interior Ministry was charged with the task of reintegrating him into civil society.¹² However, the process was delayed on account of the authorities' inability to prove Lapusnyik's *disorderly conduct, or any actions that were in violation of communist morals*. A few months later, during the investigation launched after Lapusnyik's defection to Austria, his superiors claimed that earlier investigations had failed because Lapusnyik's immediate colleagues "covered" for him, and often became accomplices themselves during his various transgressions.¹³

9 *ÁBTL*, 2. 8. 1. 3322, Files of the overt staff of Hungarian State Security bodies, Béla Lapusnyik, Evaluation sheet of Béla Lapusnyik, 21. 10. 1960, p. 3.

10 *Ibid.*, Service data sheet of Béla Lapusnyik, it was opened on 22. 6. 1959, p. 15.

11 *ÁBTL*, 3. 1. 7. T-9281, Secret personal files of "Lantos", Note written by the deputy minister of the interior, József Galambos, on the treason of former police Sergeant Béla Lapusnyik, undated, p. 114.

12 *Ibid.*, Report by Police Lieutenant-Colonel József Jámbor and Police Colonel Jenő Hazai, 11. 5. 1962, pp. 108–112.

13 *Ibid.*, T-9281, Secret personal files of "Lantos", 62-3058/62, Report by the police colonel and head of Department II/2, Jenő Hazai, 24. 5. 1962, pp. 125–126.

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The road leading to Lapusnyik's illegal border crossing

Based on the documents of the General Department of Political Investigation, it would appear that Lapusnyik began to consciously prepare for his escape on 2 May 1962, when he learned officially about his dismissal from the Interior Ministry. However, there were earlier signs of him entertaining the idea of illegally leaving Hungary. The first instance is from early December 1961, when he asked police First Lieutenant Ottó Marczinkech, a colleague familiar with the Austrian side of the border, to draw him a sketch of the position of the gendarmerie on the Austrian border, and the location of the toll barrier.¹⁴ Five months later, in early May, a police major called Szabó (his first name is unknown), the personnel transfer officer of the Personnel Department, informed Lapusnyik that he would be reintegrated into civil society as a trained factory worker, not as a courier for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Külgügyminisztérium) as he had hoped. At this point, Lapusnyik paid a series of visits to his siblings and father asking for money, which he received. On Saturday, 5 May, he was supposed to meet Major Szabó to return his police badge and receive instructions on his new place of employment, but he did not make the meeting. From the investigation documents, it would appear that his nonattendance had no legal consequences.¹⁵

On 8 May 1962, before 8 a. m., Lapusnyik visited his former soccer coach, Sándor Bíró, to borrow the man's motorcycle, claiming he had to go to Székesfehérvár on official business. He promised to transfer to Bíró's soccer team in exchange for the favour. Then he went to his brother's apartment, where he told his sister-in-law that he was looking for tools to fix his motorcycle. However, his real intention was to take his brother's 6.35 calibre Zbrojovka pistol, which he later used during his illegal border crossing. Lapusnyik's hesitation to leave the country is clear from the fact that he ended up making a phone call from his brother's apartment to talk to Major Szabó. He informed Lapusnyik that he had found a new place of employment for him, and requested a meeting at 2.30 p. m. on the same day (8 May 1962). It is probable that this phone call was the turning point that irreversibly sealed Lapusnyik's fate, as Major Szabó told him that he could not secure a position at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. (The truth was that, knowing Lapusnyik's history, the officer did not even attempt to inquire at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Instead, he arranged to relocate Lapusnyik as a security guard at the Central Physics Research Institute, but failed to mention this during their phone call. Unfortunately, we shall never know if this information might have caused Lapusnyik to change his mind about defection.)¹⁶ Although Lapusnyik had no driving licence, at noon he started his journey towards the western border. He only stopped around 1 p. m. in Pilisvörösvár to have lunch at the Tárna Restaurant, and have a local mechanic repair the dynamo of his borrowed motorcycle.

14 *ÁBTL*, 3. 1. 7. T-9281, Secret personal files of "Lantos", Interrogation minutes issued by police Major István Király, disciplinary rapporteur-general, at the interrogation of Police Lieutenant Jenő Gálik, 5. 9. 1962, pp. 105-106.

15 *Ibid.*, Report by the police colonel and head of Department II/2 Jenő Hazai, 24. 5. 1962, pp. 126, 130.

16 *Ibid.*, pp. 131-132.

Reactions from the Interior Ministry

On 9 May, the day Lapusnyik defected to Austria, the Hungarian Interior Ministry launched a series of investigations as Lapusnyik had access to classified information on the activities of not only his own department, but other operative departments as well. On the same day, the head of the Hungarian Border Guard of the Interior Ministry (Belügyminisztérium Határórség), Major-General Mihály Korom, reported to László Földes, the deputy minister of the interior, that he primarily held Sublieutenant Béla Virág responsible for Lapusnyik's defection for two reasons. First, Virág failed to ID Lapusnyik because of their previous acquaintance; and second, he did not observe Order No. 3 of the head of General Department II and the head of the Hungarian Border Guard, according to which *members of the reconnaissance and operative staff require an operative service ticket or military passport to enter the 50-meter border zone*.¹⁷ On the same day, the head of Department II/9 (Observation and Fieldwork), police Lieutenant-Colonel József Jámbor, wrote a report to the police major-general and deputy minister of the interior József Galambos and a "Comrade Advisor" named Turko – which shows how quickly the Soviets¹⁸ joined the investigation – to the effect that Jámbor's department had immediately changed all phone numbers, codenames, cipher systems, vehicle license-plate numbers, and initiated the rearrangement of all signalling and observation locations.¹⁹ Department II/3 (Intelligence) also made all the necessary defensive measures as the entire General Department II launched into a desperate investigation to find out how much Lapusnyik knew. It started with the interrogation of Lapusnyik's immediate colleagues.

On 11 May 1962, the Interior Ministry established a commission to investigate Lapusnyik's act of treason, headed by police Major Andor Igaz, the head of Division II/2-i of the Department of Counterintelligence. Other members included police Major Dr. Ignác Gonda, the disciplinary rapporteur-general of the Personnel Department of General Department II, and two employees of Department II/9, police Major Béla Syrinek, and police Captain Mihály Kovács.²⁰ The tasks of the commission included establishing the antecedents of Lapusnyik's defection, the extent of his knowledge about the Interior Ministry, and making recommendations on how Hungarian State Security might more effectively prevent detections and provocations to reduce the efficiency of hostile intelligence in general as well as in concrete cases. Lastly, the commission was to determine responsibility in the Lapusnyik case.²¹

17 *ÁBTL*, 3. 1. 7. T-9281, Secret personal files of "Lantos", 01337/1962, Report of Major-General Mihály Korom, 9. 5. 1962, p. 35.

18 Soviet advisors were installed in almost all the satellite intelligence services of Eastern European countries, but we have little information about how they worked.

19 *ÁBTL*, 3. 1. 7. T-9281, Secret personal files of "Lantos", Report by the police lieutenant colonel and head of Department II/9 József Jámbor, 9. 5. 1962, pp. 47–48.

20 *Ibid.*, Reports by police Lieutenant-Colonel József Jámbor and Police Colonel Jenő Hazai, 11. 5. 1962, p. 110.

21 *Ibid.*, Report by police Major Andor Igaz, 11. 5. 1962, pp. 39–42.

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On 24 May 1962, János Pap, the interior minister, issued Order No. 0017, which informed the entire staff of the Lapusnyik case, and introduced seven steps to improve the observation of confidential and operative discipline. Measures included the conduct of ministerial employees in the border zones, and holding Lapusnyik's conspiring colleagues accountable for their actions.²² All sections of General Department II were required to discuss the ministerial order, which led to the realization that there had been severe violations of confidentiality between the various departments. Among other things, they discovered that employees often engaged in work-related talk during phone calls, in the presence of the employees of related divisions, and even in the presence of strangers in public places, such as coffee bars or taxis. The investigations also established that partner bodies often asked unwarranted questions during screenings,²³ made redundant copies of various documents, mishandled telegraphs, and instead of using notepads, they drafted their reports on individual pieces of paper, which were easily lost or misplaced. Discussions also revealed that the staff had access to a large number of unauthorized weapons, which were to be returned by 20 June 1962.²⁴

On 29 June 1962, police Major Andor Igaz, the head of the commission investigating the Lapusnyik case, requested permission from the head of Department II/2 (counterintelligence), Jenő Hazai, to open a personnel file under the codename "Lantos" to store and organize material related to the Lapusnyik case,²⁵ which was granted on 7 July.

Lapusnyik as an outside observer of the Interior Ministry

Lapusnyik belonged to the Department of Observation and Fieldwork, which at the time was an assistant operative unit consisting of five divisions and one team, all of which were being commissioned by the operative divisions of the General Department of Political Investigation. As its designation suggests, Department II/9 was charged with two major tasks: first, preparing background studies by secretly collecting information and second, outside surveillance of a certain person or persons. Lapusnyik was an outside observer of Division II/9-b, which screened and observed people travelling to Hungary from the West. In his study of the organization of Department II/9, based on a contemporary State Security textbook, historian István Papp defined the outsider observer's tasks as follows: *The term outside surveillance means the secret observation of persons who are being processed by our agents and can be suspected of hostile activities. The objective of outside surveillance is to prevent the hostile activities of*

22 *ÁBTL*, 4. 2. Order No. 0017/1962 of the minister of the interior, 24. 5. 1962.

23 A request made by partner State Security bodies for information contained in the operative registry of Hungarian State Security for the purpose of screening certain persons.

24 *ÁBTL*, 6. 1. Department II/3 of the Interior Ministry, Box No. 7, 63/A-856/62, Minute about a meeting of Division II/3-a, 6. 6. 1962, and 63/B-2599/1962, Minute about a meeting of Division II/3-b, 15. 6. 1962 (without page numbering).

25 *ÁBTL*, 3. 1. T-9281, Secret personal files of "Lantos", 62-200-524, Decision about opening a personnel file under the codename "Lantos" connected to the Lapusnyik case, 29. 6. 1962, p. 33.

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the aforementioned persons and to establish their criminal contacts.²⁶ In other words, the task of the division was to observe people who were classified as enemies of the political system by Hungarian State Security bodies. Outside observation involved observing people the target came into contact with, whether the target had any hiding places, and the general conduct of the target.

In his study, Papp established four categories of State Security work involving outside observation. The first category included cases where outside observation was merely meant to supplement an agent's activities with additional information. Another category included cases where a person was observed prior to their arrest, in order to map their relations and extend the investigation to the target's friends and acquaintances. The third category included the observation of foreign missions, and foreign commercial and cultural institutes, which were considered hostile objects and placed under surveillance. Last but not least, outside observation also targeted people who were suspected of being involved in the intelligence work of Western secret services.

In most cases, the "observation brigade" received a briefing of the entire case, and was allowed to make notes, which they could freely dispose of or even keep without having to account for them. According to his colleagues, Lapusnyik also made notes during briefings, but no notes were found in his apartment, which led the political police to believe that Lapusnyik either destroyed his notes, or took them with him to Austria.²⁷

The operative members of observation divisions led extremely complicated lives, as they were given codenames and cover occupations to conceal their operative status. For example, according to Lapusnyik's operative ID, his codename was "László Horváth", and he was an employee of the National Factory Management Inspectorate (Országos Üzemgazdálkodási Felügyelőség). Operative employees were only allowed access to their own offices, and were barred from visiting other buildings, events, or holiday resorts of the Interior Ministry. They were also barred from entering the Officers' Club, which would have afforded them meals and entertainment at a cheaper rate compared to regular civilian facilities. They had to wear civilian clothing in all weathers, which took a toll on their clothes and shoes, but they still received the same clothing money allowance as other ministerial employees working inside.²⁸ At the same time, as mentioned earlier, certain employees of Department II/9 were allowed to legally rent State Security apartments of related divisions, which meant that their accommodation expenses were minimal.

26 PAPP, István: A BM II/9. (Környezettanulmányozó és Figyelő) Osztály (Department II/9 /Observation and Fieldwork/ of the Interior Ministry). In: BENDEGŰZ CSEH, Gergő - OKVÁTH, Imre (eds.): *A megortlás szervezete. A politikai rendőrség újraszervezése és működése, 1956–1962* (The Organization of Reprisal. The Reorganization and Operation of the Political Police, 1956–1962). Állambiztonsági Szolgálatok Történeti Levéltára - L'Harmattan Kiadó, Budapest 2013, p. 242. Series: *Közelmúltunk hagyatéka* (Legacy of Our Recent Past).

27 ÁBTL, 3. 1. 7. T-9281, Secret personal files of "Lantos", Background materials for State Security work, Report by police Lieutenant-Colonel and Authorized Head of Department II/9 Árpád Jámbor, 13. 6. 1962, p. 99.

28 ÁBTL, 4. 1. A-3049, BUDAI, József: *A külső figyelés módszerei* (Methods of Outside Observation). BM Tanulmányi és Módszertani Osztály (Department of Studies and Methodology, Interior Ministry), Budapest, undated, p. 24.

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During the investigation of the Interior Ministry, the authorities established that Lopusnyik never worked alone, and had general knowledge of the entire structure, secret places, and management personnel of the Interior Ministry. He also possessed accurate information on staff activities, confidential methods, tools, secret buildings, and the observation targets of his division, which was in charge of the outside observation of foreign visitors. According to documents, Lopusnyik was involved in the outside observation of no less than 127 people, and even knew operative officers and agents working abroad. For instance, based on his connections, State Security was able to track an agent of Soviet State Security bodies stationed in England. Lopusnyik also had access to certain information about “operations against” Western embassies in Budapest, and knew the addresses of nine State Security apartments owned by the Interior Ministry.²⁹

During the investigation, the political police interrogated over fifty people related to him, including acquaintances and family members, but only found two instances of Lopusnyik talking about his work to outsiders. In one instance, Lopusnyik told one of his brothers about the detention of a foreign spy at Lake Balaton, and the methods Hungarian State Security bodies used to blackmail and recruit foreign diplomats serving in Hungary. According to Lopusnyik, one method involved sending a woman as an undercover agent of the Interior Ministry to get acquainted with the target. While they were together, other operatives would take photographs of the woman and the target in front of any building. This was followed by the appearance of another operative in uniform, who claimed to be the woman’s acquaintance. The three of them would also be photographed by the other operatives, who then placed the sign of the Interior Ministry on the façade of the building, so that, when the targeted diplomat left the building, they could take another photograph of the target that included the sign of the ministry. The target was then blackmailed with this photographic evidence until they agreed to cooperate with Hungarian State Security.³⁰ The other instance involved one of Lopusnyik’s intimate relationships with a woman, where Lopusnyik told her about the capture of a spy at the Hungarian border, who had shot and killed a rookie border guard doing military service.³¹

In the course of the investigation of the Lopusnyik case, the political police discovered that Lopusnyik committed several irregularities, and even crimes in the course of his career. For instance, during his time as a member of the Autótaxi Sports Club soccer team, he made a deal with his own centre back to throw soccer matches for money.³² As for his private life, Lopusnyik was known for rapidly changing his female

29 *ÁBTL*, 3. 1. 7. T-9281, Secret personal files of “Lantos”, Note written by the deputy minister of the interior, József Galambos, on the treason of former police Sergeant Béla Lopusnyik, undated, pp. 115–116; *Ibid.*, Report by the police colonel and head of Department II/2, Jenő Hazai, 24. 5. 1962, p. 133.

30 *ÁBTL*, 3. 1. 7. T-9281, Secret personal files of “Lantos”, Report by police First Lieutenant Mihály Nagy, 14. 5. 1962, p. 155.

31 *Ibid.*, Self-confession of Anna V. written by police First Lieutenant Lajos Ferenci, 6. 6. 1962, p. 259. (If the document contains sensitive data, I mark the surname of the person in question with an initial only – author’s note).

32 *Ibid.*, Note written by the deputy minister of the interior, József Galambos, on the treason of former police Sergeant Béla Lopusnyik, undated, p. 114; *Ibid.*, Report by police Captain Imre Peregi, 14. 5. 1962, p. 148.

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partners; investigations revealed he had brought approximately fifty different women to his State Security apartment, which he also readily lent to his friends at the General Department of Political Investigation for the same reason. Lopusnyik evidently treated these women as trophies: as soon as he took advantage of them, he quickly discarded them. Within a few years, he had relations with a wide variety of women of all ages and walks of life, including schoolgirls, divorced and married women, female athletes, and his female colleagues from Department II/9. He also had an affair with a language teacher from the Foreign Language College of the Interior Ministry (BM Idegen Nyelvi Főiskola) – who happened to be the wife of a police major), a Finnish dancer with the Paris Ice Capades on tour at the Budapest Dance Palace (Budapest Táncpalota, formerly and later known as the Moulin Rouge), and the Hungarian leading lady of the Dance Palace. He became legendary at his division when a story started spreading among his colleagues that one time, while Lopusnyik was at a salon, he arranged a date with the manicurist by the time she finished manicuring one of his hands. Her shift ended right after, and when another manicurist switched in to manicure Lopusnyik's other hand, he arranged a date with her as well!³³

Investigations revealed that, in the final year of Lopusnyik's service at the Interior Ministry, he and some of his colleagues became regular guests of the late-night entertainment venues of Budapest. Of course, being an outside observer, it was part of Lopusnyik's job to observe and follow Western visitors frequenting such venues, which entailed dressing elegantly in order to blend in with the crowd. However, he had no excuse for frequenting these same late-night entertainment venues off duty. It would appear that Lopusnyik had been blinded by the seemingly easy life of his targets surrounded by good food, drinks, and women, because he spent all he could afford and more to enjoy the pleasures of a life that had been hitherto unknown to him.

In the course of the investigation of Lopusnyik's life off duty, the political police pieced together a rather exciting nightlife. According to their information, based on the frequency of visits, Lopusnyik's favourite places were the Budapest Dance Palace, and other well-known restaurants, bars, pubs, cafes and patisseries in the centre of Budapest.³⁴ Interestingly, Lopusnyik was never seen intoxicated, which suggests that he only consumed alcohol in moderation.

As Lopusnyik could not afford an expensive lifestyle on his salary, he soon started borrowing money from close and distant acquaintances, and finally resorted to seeking out and blackmailing homosexual men for money. According to Act V of 1878 or the *Csemegi-kódex* (Csemegi Code), which remained in effect until the end of June 1962, "perversion against nature" was punishable with a fine or several months of

33 *ÁBTL*, 3. 1. 7. T-9281, Secret personal files of "Lantos", the police captain and deputy head of Division II/9-b Zoltán Fejér's confession about Béla Lopusnyik, undated, p. 286.

34 For more about the entertainment venues in Budapest at this time, see HAVADI, Gergő: Az új "népi szórakozóhely". A "hosszú" ötvenes évek Budapestjének életvilága a szocialista vendéglátásban (The new "folk entertainment places". The world of life in Budapest in the "long" 1950s in socialist hospitality). *Fons*, 2006, No. 3 – see http://real.mtak.hu/101967/1/EPA03304_fons_2006_03_315-354.pdf (quoted version dated 22. 11. 2020).

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detention. People found guilty of this charge were also publicly exposed and tracked by the political police, which meant that homosexuals were highly vulnerable.³⁵ Lapusnyik took advantage of this by seeking out gay men, waiting until they made an offer to him, and then flaunting his rank as a police officer to extort money from his targets in exchange for his silence. In the majority of cases, his blackmail attempts were successful, with some men making regular monthly payments to Lapusnyik. As there was no rule of law under the Hungarian communist dictatorship, Lapusnyik's victims had no means of taking action against him, but under the circumstances described above, it is probable that they would have been too afraid to seek help. Only one person "rebelled" against Lapusnyik's scam, but as we shall see, the one victim who ended up filing a complaint with the police was himself a State Security agent.

It is important to note that Lapusnyik's scope of duties did not include taking action on the grounds of moral policy, which means that by presenting himself as an investigator to gay men, he vastly exceeded his sphere of competence and abused his power. Knowing this, and not wanting to be discovered by the authorities, Lapusnyik used different aliases instead of his real name during blackmail attempts and made up cover occupations to complete his disguise. He most often introduced himself as László Horváth, László Kovács, László Orbán, or László Gerencsér, and claimed to be the foreman of the Ganz-MÁVAG Factory (producing tramways, and electric railway locomotives), or a clerk from the Ministry of Central Engineering (Középgépipari Minisztérium), but most often presented himself as a soccer player from the Salgótarján Soccer Team.³⁶

Investigations of Lapusnyik's blackmail attempts revealed dramatic details. At the beginning of February 1962, Lapusnyik made the acquaintance of Ferenc T., a masseur working at a famous bathhouse in Budapest, who invited Lapusnyik to his apartment. During his interrogation, Ferenc T. made the following confession: *I felt that if Lapusnyik came up to my apartment, then maybe he too had a tendency for perversion, so first I stroked his legs, then his hands and his hair, and then, when I tried to stroke his penis, he spread his hands and told me he had enough. He jumped out of his seat and, from the pocket of his coat, he produced an ID, which he showed to me by opening it, but obscuring part of it with his hand, and he claimed he was an officer from the Interior Ministry. [...] He informed me that I was in for three months of rehabilitation* (He likely meant reeducation at a detention facility – author's note), *because this is what Comrade Kádár ordered. Lapusnyik threatened to take his victim to the police because it was his duty, claiming that, if he failed to do so, he would be dismissed from his job when he needed the money to take care of his sick elderly father. Lapusnyik asked his victim how much he earned in a month, at which point Ferenc T. claimed that I had the sudden idea to offer a monthly sum of two hundred forints for taking care of his sick father. Lapusnyik said this counted as bribery, but he would*

35 TAKÁCS, Judit: *Meleg század – Adalékok a homoszexualitás 20. századi magyarországi társadalomtörténetéhez* (Gay Century: Contributions to Twentieth-Century Hungarian Social History of Homosexuality). Pesti Kalligram Kft., Budapest 2018.

36 ÁBTL, 3. 1. 7. T-9281, Secret personal files of "Lantos", Report by the police colonel and head of Department II/2, Jenő Hazai, 24. 5. 1962, pp. 126–127, 128.

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*accept...*³⁷ Following these events, Ferenc T. fell completely under Lapusnyik's spell and did everything in his power to please and support him. If we were unaware of Lapusnyik's selfish nature, we might even think they had become friends, as Ferenc T. often paid for Lapusnyik's taxi fares and entertainment, cooked for him and washed his clothes, made Lapusnyik a flower container for his balcony and filled it with flowers, and was generally happy to spend time with Lapusnyik.

In March 1961, Lapusnyik was in a public restroom at the corner of Cúria Street in Budapest when a gay man made an offer to him, only to become the victim of a rather unsuccessful blackmail attempt. Upon receiving the offer, Lapusnyik introduced himself as "Police Captain Szabó", whose duty was to report homosexuals to the police, and he told the man how he usually received a bounty of 1,800 forints per person arrested. Lapusnyik then offered to drop all charges in exchange for 300 or 400 forints; however, his chosen victim only had twenty forints on his person, at which point Lapusnyik contented himself with letting the man buy him an espresso at the Városház Coffee Bar.³⁸

Five months later, on 16 August 1961, Lapusnyik blackmailed another gay man working as a private men's tailor. He arrived at the victim's shop as a prospective client, introduced himself as László Orbán, and attempted to convince the tailor to make him a suit for free. When the tailor refused, Lapusnyik threatened to take him to the police on account of his homosexuality, and have him barred from his trade, not knowing that his victim was a counterintelligence agent (codename "István Lovas"), who reported Lapusnyik the very next day to a competent member of Division II/2-i. He gave a detailed description of his blackmailer, but no investigation was launched. The case did not end there, however. On 10 May 1962, the tailor arrived in Vienna purely by circumstance, where his acquaintances greeted him with the news of a former Hungarian State Security officer's defection to Austria. When they showed him the newspapers, which contained the man's photograph, the tailor was surprised to recognize his blackmailer, and upon his return to Hungary, he immediately reported Lapusnyik to his liaison officer, police First Lieutenant Dezső Császár.³⁹

Let us look at one more blackmail attempt, where the victim was a man Lapusnyik had met on 7 November (today Oktogon) Square. The victim, N. G., took an interest in Lapusnyik, and was invited by him for a cup of coffee. They ended up at the Búsuló Juhász Restaurant,⁴⁰ where they dined and drank at N. G.'s expense, then left the restaurant. During their walk, N. G. made an offer to Lapusnyik, who refused him, at which point they hailed a taxi to take them back to 7 November Square. There

37 Ibid., Notes on the interrogation of Ferenc T., 17. 5. 1962, pp. 172–173; Ibid., Report by the police colonel and head of Department II/2, Jenő Hazai, 24. 5. 1962, p. 127. The average monthly earnings of workers and employees amounted to 1600 forints in 1961; the cost of a litre of milk was 3 forints, and 1 kilogram of bread was 3.6 forints – author's note.

38 *ÁBTL*, 3. 1. 7. T-9281, Secret personal files of "Lantos", Statement of Ernő P., 12. 7. 1962, p. 305.

39 Ibid., Report of "István Lovas", 9. 7. 1962, pp. 296–297; Ibid., Report of "Lovas", 14. 6. 1962, pp. 298–300.

40 It was an old restaurant on Gellert hill opened in 1937 as a rest house. In 1992 the ancient building was demolished and from its ruins a new building has been raised.

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N. G. left the vehicle, but gave Lapusnyik fifty forints to pay for the taxi. Later, police Lieutenant Jenő Gálik – an observer of Division II/9-b, who often joined Lapusnyik during his late-night escapades, knew of his illicit activities, and occasionally assisted him in blackmailing gay men⁴¹ – asked Lapusnyik: *Why do you do such disgusting things?*, to which Lapusnyik allegedly replied: *Why shouldn't I get dinner for free? I don't have money anyway.*⁴²

The commission examining Lapusnyik's case clearly established that he was not homosexual, which raises the question of why he chose to get involved with gay men, and why he decided to illegally cross the border. Even today, it is difficult to imagine why Lapusnyik chose to leave his family and his country. From his private life, it would appear that his only passions were money and soccer. Was he yearning for adventure or an easier life? Was he hoping that the Western secret services might pay handsomely for his information, or that he might make a fresh start abroad as a soccer player? Or was he afraid, perhaps, that his dismissal might be followed by a disciplinary investigation, which would bring his various crimes and frequent abuse of power to light? Unfortunately, the investigation could only establish three facts: Lapusnyik had not been recruited by any foreign secret service; he did not elope with the dancer of the Paris Ice Capades; and he did not defect because he had a change of heart and wished to put a drastic end to his immoral involvement with the Hungarian political police.

In July 1962, following the investigation of Lapusnyik's late night escapades, two of his immediate colleagues and partners in crime, Jenő Gálik,⁴³ and police Lieutenant Ottó Marczinkech, were dismissed from the Interior Ministry. The reasons for their dismissal were not stated in their case documents, save for a single sentence in Marczinkech's personnel file, which reads as follows: *He was dismissed from the Interior Ministry due to moral deficiencies. Despite being a married man, he had relations with several women.*⁴⁴

It is interesting to note that, by the end of 1961, Lapusnyik's division was facing a series of dismissals and disciplinary actions regardless of his criminal activities; indeed the general moral state of the department is best illustrated by the fact that all items confiscated or stolen from outside observation targets were either passed

41 *ÁBTL*, 3. 1. 7. T-9281, Secret personal files of "Lantos", Report by "István Lovas", 9. 7. 1962, pp. 296–297. Lapusnyik conspired with Gálik to blackmail József B., the owner of a private eatery. First, Lapusnyik made out a typewritten denunciation to blackmail the target on account of his homosexuality and received 300 forints from him. A few days later, Gálik visited József B. and claimed to be a police officer, who offered to drop the case for 1,500 forints. *Ibid.*, Report by police First Lieutenant Lajos Ferenci, 7. 6. 1962, pp. 275–277. On 25 May 1962 Gálik was arrested for the joint blackmail attempt. *Ibid.*, Note written by the deputy minister of the interior, József Galambos, on the treason of former police Sergeant Béla Lapusnyik, undated, p. 115.

42 *ÁBTL*, 3. 1. 7. T-9281, Secret personal files of "Lantos", Self-confession of Jenő Gálik, 8. 6. 1962, p. 311.

43 *ÁBTL*, 2. 8. 1. 1596, Personnel file of Jenő Gálik. The reason for his dismissal is not included in his personnel file. Instead, the documents state that he was forced to leave Department II/9 of the Interior Ministry based on a disciplinary procedure, but we believe that the main reason was his joint blackmail attempt with Béla Lapusnyik.

44 *ÁBTL*, 2. 8. 1. 3554, Personnel file of Ottó Marczinkech.

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around or sold between the operatives for money.⁴⁵ Two of Lapusnyik's immediate superiors, police Captain Zoltán Fejér,⁴⁶ the deputy head of Division II/9-b, and police First Lieutenant Imre Gacsályi were dismissed, and even arrested by the military prosecutor. Additionally, two of Lapusnyik's colleagues, police Sublieutenant György Gergely, and police Lieutenant László Lökös were also dismissed.⁴⁷ In case No. 008/1962 of the Military Court of Budapest, Zoltán Fejér was sentenced to one year of imprisonment for two counts of incitement to theft, and nine counts of illicit trafficking.⁴⁸ One of the charges brought up against police Captain Fejér was that *he was aware that certain employees of the division carried out similar criminal activities in the course of fulfilling their regular duties. Although it was his responsibility to hold his subordinates accountable for their criminal activities, and to prevent further criminal activity, he failed to do so, and in certain cases, he was also complicit in the criminal activities of his subordinates.*⁴⁹ On 18 November 1961, police First Lieutenant Imre Gacsályi was arrested by the military prosecutor, and, on 1 December, he was dismissed from the Interior Ministry on disciplinary grounds, though the actual reasons were not stated in his records.⁵⁰ In December 1961, police Sublieutenant György Gergely was dismissed from the Interior Ministry because he had removed certain car accessories – such as fog lamps, reversing lamps, hubcaps, or decorative flags – from the vehicles of his outside observation targets, and sold these stolen items for money.⁵¹ On 1 December 1961, László Lökös was also dismissed for unstated reasons, although his name did appear in the Fejér case as a wheeler-dealer.⁵²

What happened to Lapusnyik in Austria?

On 10 May 1962, the Austrian press⁵³ announced to the world that Béla Lapusnyik had defected to Austria, where he applied for political asylum. It also informed the public of the details of Lapusnyik's stay in Austria, from the day of his illegal border crossing until his death. Upon his defection, Lapusnyik appeared at the gendarmerie in Nickelsdorf, where he identified himself using his ministerial ID. That very afternoon, he was escorted from the gendarmerie to the Burgenland Security Directorate in Eisenstadt, and afterwards to Vienna, where he was placed under protective custody at the police detention centre (Rossauer Lände), in a wing called the “transit station”, which was reserved for people who had been detained in areas under the ju-

45 Ibid., Report, 22. 12. 1961.

46 ÁBTL, 2. 8. 2.5, Financial file of “5202” Zoltán Fejér; ÁBTL, 2. 8. 1. 1361, Personnel file of Zoltán Fejér.

47 ÁBTL, 3. 1. 7. T-9281, Secret personal files of “Lantos”, Report by the police colonel and the head of Department II/2, Jenő Hazai, 24. 5. 1962, p. 140.

48 ÁBTL, 2. 8. 1. 1361, Personnel file of Zoltán Fejér.

49 Ibid., Report, 22. 12. 1961.

50 ÁBTL, 2. 8. 2.5, Financial file of “5212” Imre Gacsályi.

51 ÁBTL, 2. 8. 1. 1634, Personnel file of György Gergely, Report, 14. 11. 1961.

52 ÁBTL, 2. 8. 2.5, Financial file of “5054” László Lökös.

53 *Kurier*, 10. 5. 1962; *Express*, 10. 5. 1962; *Arbeiter Zeitung*, 10. 5. 1962; *Die Presse*, 10. 5. 1962. The Austrian press reacted the same way to the news of Lapusnyik's death: *Kurier*, 5., and 6. 6. 1962; *Express*, 6, and 14. 6. 1962; *Volksstimme*, 6. 6. 1962; *Die Presse*, 5., 6., and 7. 6. 1962.

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risdiction of the Federal Police Directorate of Vienna, but their fate was still pending. There, Lapusnyik was repeatedly interrogated by Austrian state security authorities, who believed his information was valuable and significant. Each morning, Lapusnyik was escorted from the police detention centre through the Park Ring to the Police Directorate, interrogated by the authorities, and in the evening escorted back to the detention centre. He received special meals at the Police Directorate, and if he had any requests, such as dessert from the nearby patisserie, his wish was usually granted. According to the Austrian press, Lapusnyik was exceptionally talkative, and almost the entire staff of the Austrian political police was involved in verifying his confession.

On Saturday, 2 June 1962, Lapusnyik complained of a general feeling of sickness and a sore throat. He was soon transferred from the police detention centre to the isolated surgical ward of the Vienna General Hospital (Wiener Allgemeines Krankenhaus), where he was placed in a room with a common criminal, and two police officers standing guard. Lapusnyik was examined by several laryngologists and a host of other specialists, but they did not detect any life-threatening symptoms. Lapusnyik himself claimed that the vegetable chowder he received at the detention centre had been poisoned, but the doctors found no signs of poisoning. In spite of their efforts, Lapusnyik's condition rapidly deteriorated. On Sunday evening, he asked for an interpreter, but by dawn the next day, his skin suddenly became discoloured, and by the time the interpreter arrived, he was dead. Lapusnyik died after leaving behind a single written note, in which he instructed the doctors to perform gastric lavage.

On Monday, 4 June 1962, the day Lapusnyik died, an autopsy was performed on his body, but there were no traces of poison or any evidence that he had died due to outside interference. The morticians examined the contents of his stomach and other internal organs for signs of poisoning, but found nothing beyond lesions on the heart, the lungs, the liver, and the tonsils. They concluded that Lapusnyik's death was caused by a seizure, and added that despite his excellent physical condition, his tragic death might have been caused by stress on account of his defection, detention, and constant interrogation by the Austrian state security authorities. The Austrian press was not convinced by these statements, however, and openly discussed the possibility of murder. Among other things, they speculated that a gas pistol or some other secret bacteriological weapon had killed the young Hungarian agent. They even linked Lapusnyik's death with the rumour that the US secret services were planning to transfer Lapusnyik to the United States for interrogation by the CIA on the very week he died.⁵⁴ Allen W. Dulles, the first civilian director of the CIA mentioned the Lapusnyik case and confirmed this information: *The Hungarian secret police officer, Bela Lapusnyik, made a daring escape to freedom over the Austro-Hungarian border in May, 1962, and reached Vienna in safety, only to die of poisoning, apparently at the hands of Soviet or Hungarian agents, before he could tell his full story to Western authorities.*⁵⁵

54 The Americans also confirmed this. See VOLODARSKY, Boris: *The KGB's Poison Factory. From Lenin to Litvinenko*. Zenith Press, Minneapolis 2010, p. 118.

55 DULLES, Allen W.: *The Craft of Intelligence, America's Legendary Spy Masters on the Fundamentals of Intelligence Gathering for a Free World*. Harper and Row, New York 1963, p. 134.

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The Lapusnyik case was discussed at a session of the Austrian Parliament on 14 June 1962, when MP Dr. Emil van Tongel from the Freedom Party of Austria (Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs, FPÖ) addressed several questions to the minister of the interior, Josef Afritsch, regarding Lapusnyik's death during his detention in Austria. Among other things, Dr. van Tongel raised the issue of responsibility, because within three days of Lapusnyik's arrival in Austria, rumours began to circulate that Lapusnyik had brought a list of Kádár's secret agents, and had information about the internal organization of the Eastern European secret services. This served as a warning to everyone involved who might have left Austria.⁵⁶

The Lapusnyik case soon made headlines in the Austrian, German, British, and American press,⁵⁷ where nearly all articles ruled out the possibility of a naturally occurring death. Lapusnyik's murder was only confirmed in 1966 by László Szabó, a former employee of Directorate III/I (Intelligence, the successor of Department II/3). Szabó was a former intelligence agent, who "worked" as a second secretary at the Hungarian embassy in London. On 16 October 1965, Szabó suddenly vanished from his place of duty, but it was soon discovered that he had travelled to the United States to seek political asylum. On 2 March 1966, Szabó was granted a hearing by the CIA Subcommittee of the Committee on Armed Services of the House of Representatives, during which Szabó mentioned that, in October 1964, his superior charged him with the task of reexamining the dossier of the State Security apartment formerly rented by Lapusnyik. This was how he had learned of the details of the Lapusnyik case, but Szabó added that he was not allowed access to the entirety of the investigation material,⁵⁸ as the case was strictly secret on account of the fact that Lapusnyik *was poisoned at the Austrian prison by the Czech[oslovak] intelligence agency*.⁵⁹ This was also

56 Josef Afritsch, the Austrian minister of the interior, cited freedom of speech in opposing the restriction of the press on the grounds of security policy issues, even if the press was spreading false rumours. *Stenographisches Protokoll 100. Sitzung des Nationalrates der Republik Österreich. IX. Gesetzgebungsperiode* (Stenographic Protocol 100. Meeting of the National Council of the Republic of Austria. IX. Legislative Period), 13. 6. 1962, pp. 4327–4328. *Volksstimme*, 14. 6. 1962. For an English version of a related article in *Volksstimme*, see From *Volksstimme*, 14 June 1962, Collapse of the Lapusnyik story. In: *Hearings Before and Special Reports. Made by Committee on Armed Services of House of Representatives on Subjects Affecting Naval and Military Establishments 1966*. Eighty-ninth Congress, Second session. US Government Printing Office, Washington 1966, p. 5373.

57 *Reuters News Services*, 5., and 13. 6. 1962; *The New York Times*, 5., 8., 10., and 14. 6. 1962; *The Washington Post*, 14. 6. 1962. The Hungarian public was first informed of the events in the 17 June 1962 edition of the newspaper *Népszabadság*.

58 *ÁBTL*, 3. 2. 9 R-8- 015/4, Files of extraordinary events, Correspondence of Szabó regarding permission to view the Lapusnyik files can be found in the dossier under the codename "Oxford". See also PALASIK, Mária: A szolgálati helyéről eltűnt hírszerző. Az USA-ban politikai menedékjogért folyamodó Szabó László esete. (An intelligence officer who disappeared from his duty station. The case of László Szabó who applied for political asylum in the USA). *Betekintő*, 2016, No. 1 – see http://www.betekinto.hu/2016_1_palasik (quoted version dated 22. 11. 2020).

59 Szabó's statements were published in a separate booklet dated 17 March 1966. A few days later, on 23 March 1966, it was made public at the session of the House of Representatives, when the president of the Committee on Armed Services, L. Mendel Rivers, gave an unscheduled speech to inform the House of Representatives of the hearing, and recommended that his fellow representatives read the published booklet containing Szabó's statement. *Statement of Laszlo Szabo in Hearing before the CIA*

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confirmed in a note attached to a Daily Operative Information Report published on 6 May 1981 by the Operative Coordination, Screening, and Secretariat Department of Directorate III of the Hungarian Interior Ministry: *Lapusnyik was murdered by Agent "Sedmička" ("No. 7") of the Czechoslovak secret services* (Státní bezpečnost, StB).⁶⁰

To this day, the mysterious death of Béla Lapusnyik continues to fascinate the press, general public, and researchers alike. According to a book published in 2010 by former KGB officer Boris Volodarsky, Lapusnyik was murdered using a liquid poison created in a special Soviet laboratory.⁶¹ This particular poison, called DMS (dimethyl sulphate), was designed to evaporate from the body's system by the time of death, which would explain why the Austrian autopsy experts were unable to establish poisoning as the cause of death. Unfortunately, Volodarsky's claim cannot be confirmed, as Lapusnyik's remains have not yet been reexamined.

However, this particular operation was not the result of a negotiation between the Czechoslovak and Hungarian secret services, as contact between these state security bodies was too bureaucratic to orchestrate an "untraceable" murder within a relatively short time. On the other hand, it appears that the Soviet secret services were informed of Lapusnyik's defection the very day it happened. As mentioned earlier, the report made by the police lieutenant colonel and the head of Department II/9, József Jámbor, on 9 May 1962 was issued not only to the police major general and deputy minister of the interior, József Galambos, but also to a Soviet "Comrade Advisor" Turko. This suggests that the decision to eliminate Lapusnyik might have been made at the highest level of the KGB, which presumably opted to bypass the StB and have one of the undercover operatives at the Soviet embassy in Vienna personally give the order and the poisonous substance to the killer.

In retrospect, we may conclude that the KGB probably overestimated the significance of the Lapusnyik case. Lapusnyik himself was one of the lowest-ranking officers in the hierarchy of the Hungarian political police and worked as a member of the assistant operative staff, which means he was unlikely to have any information about the Hungarian secret services that might have interested well-informed Western intelligence agencies. It is also important to remember that these events happened a few years after the Hungarian Revolution of 1956, when the majority of information acquired from Hungarian refugees (including former State Security Authority employees, and even covert operatives of Directorate 2 of the General Staff of the Hungarian People's Army) was still relevant. In other words, in the case of Béla Lapusnyik, the KGB used a steam hammer to crack a nut.⁶²

Subcommittee of the Committee on Armed Services of the House of Representatives Eighty-ninth Congress Second Session, March 17, 1966. US Government Printing Office, Washington 1966, p. 5349–5351.

60 *ÁBTL*, 2. 7. 1, Daily Operative Information Reports of the Interior Ministry 1979–1990, III/1-86-95/5, Daily Operative Information Report, 6. 5. 1981. Operative Coordination, Screening, and Secretariat Department of Directorate III of the Interior Ministry. This statement requires further research in contemporary sources of the former Czechoslovak State Security services and the KGB.

61 VOLODARSKY, Boris: *The KGB's Poison Factory*, p. 122.

62 If we compare the Lapusnyik case with the case of Clyde Lee Conrad (1948–1998), there is a decided difference in terms of the value of the information at stake. The protagonist of the Conrad case

At the 19 June 1962 session of the Political Committee of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party, the Political Committee accepted a verbal proposal from its member Béla Biszku, who suggested that a member of a competent department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs should contact Lapusnyik's family, and assist them in arranging for his funeral.⁶³ On 27 June 1962 the Austrian newspaper *Kurier* reported that the family could not afford to transport Lapusnyik's remains to Hungary, so he was ultimately buried in Austria in a closed ceremony by order of the Austrian Interior Ministry. Hours before the funeral, five members of the Federal Police Directorate arrived at the Central Cemetery in Vienna, one standing guard by the grave, and the other four standing guard by Chapel III. It was a very plain, fourth-rate burial. The funeral march consisted of a man carrying the cross, followed by a Hungarian priest, four men carrying the coffin, and finally, four members of the Federal Police Directorate dressed in civilian clothing, whose task was to prevent any disruptions. After a short service held in German by the priest, Lapusnyik was buried in an ordinary coffin, without mourners, flowers, or floral tributes. On 13 September 1963, the employees of Department III/V-1 of the Directorate of Operative Technology of the Hungarian Interior Ministry transferred all clothes and personal items found in Lapusnyik's apartment in Budapest to one of his brothers, including ten dress shirts, ten ties, and thirteen handkerchiefs.⁶⁴

More than two years after the August 1962 reorganization of the Interior Ministry, a transcript was issued on 16 December 1964 by Directorate III/II (Counterintelligence) of the Interior Ministry for Directorate III/I (Intelligence), according to which the investigation could not determine what information Lapusnyik had revealed to the Austrian authorities about the personnel of the Interior Ministry. According to the estimations of the political police, Lapusnyik might have divulged information about certain cases handled by the Department of Intelligence formerly known as Department II/3.⁶⁵ However, whether he had lists of names or not, and what he had confessed to the Austrian authorities shall remain a mystery until the relevant documents are transferred to the Austrian archives and become available as research material.

was also a sergeant, but he was an American officer stationed in Europe, who worked for the Main Intelligence Directorate of the Soviet Union (Glavnoye razvedyvatel'noye upravleniye, GRU) between 1974 and 1988, although he reported directly to the Hungarian People's Army. During his operative years, Conrad worked at an office handling confidential documents, and attempted to deliver strictly confidential documents – including NATO documents – in exchange for money. See BELOVAI, István: *Fedőneve: Scorpion* (Codename: Scorpion). Published privately by the author, Budapest 1998, pp. 214–333; *Clyde Lee Conrad* – see <https://peoplepill.com/people/clyde-lee-conrad/> (quoted version dated 22. 11. 2020).

63 *National Archives of Hungary* (Magyar Nemzeti Levéltár Országos Levéltára, MNL OL), M-KS 288. f. 5/268. ő. e.

64 *ÁBTL*, 3. 1. 7. T-9281, Secret personal files of “Lantos”, Minutes on the transfer of Béla Lapusnyik's clothing to his family, 12. 9. 1963, p. 343.

65 *Ibid.*, Letter of Head of Directorate III/II Lajos Kárász, 16. 12. 1964, p. 408–414.

From the Budapest Dance Palace to the autopsy table

Following Lopusnyik's defection, several high-ranking officers of the Hungarian Interior Ministry were forced to either leave their respective departments or relocate elsewhere as a direct or indirect consequence of the Lopusnyik case. Police Lieutenant-Colonel János Dobróka, who became the head of the Department of Observation and Fieldwork in May 1957 and held his position for four years, worked first in the field of intelligence, and then in counterintelligence until his retirement in 1984. He was succeeded at Department II/9 by police Lieutenant Colonel Károly Beszédes, who only remained as head of the Department for a few months. He was discharged on 1 June 1962, and upon his return a few years later, he was made the head of Department III/II-12 of the Interior Ministry until his retirement in 1986. Police Lieutenant Colonel József Jámbor, who was appointed as the head of Department II/9 in October 1961, was discharged on 15 August 1962, and reintegrated into civilian life.⁶⁶ On 15 April 1963, police Major István Fejes, who was the head of Division II/9-b between June 1957 and February 1961, was promoted to the rank of police lieutenant colonel by the minister of the interior, and relocated to the covert staff of Department III/V-1.⁶⁷ On 15 August 1962, Police Lieutenant-Colonel Miklós Jávör, who had been serving in the political police since 1946, and was the head of Division II/9-b between February 1961 and August 1962, was discharged from the Interior Ministry. Lastly, police Lieutenant Colonel József Jamrich, who had originally recommended Lopusnyik to the Interior Ministry, was allowed to continue in the field of intelligence, but was relocated to Division III/I-2-e.⁶⁸

On 21 April 1972, Lopusnyik's personnel file, which was opened after his death on 17 July 1962, was closed by Division III/II-8-a of the Interior Ministry.⁶⁹

66 *ÁBTL*, 2. 8. 2. 6., Order No. 00184/1962 of the Minister of the Interior, 17. 8. 1962.

67 In other words, he remained in the field of observation and fieldwork. *Ibid.*, Order No. 0052/1963 of the minister of the interior, 22. 3. 1963.

68 *ÁBTL*, 2. 8. 2. 1., Documents of the confidential and strictly confidential staff of Directorate III/I of the Interior Ministry, p. 66.

69 *ÁBTL*, 3. 1. 7. T-9281, Secret personal files of "Lantos", p. 413.