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1956 at Ten and Beethoven's Tenth

Edward Alexander and Hungary, 1965-66¹

Abstract

This article looks at Edward Alexander, an American diplomat who served in Hungary between 1965 and 1969, and his various writings. An Armenian-American man of letters, Alexander served in psychological warfare in World War II, then joined cold war radios and later the Foreign Service. Our focus is on the years 1965-67, when he served as Press and Cultural Affairs Officer at the Budapest Legation. Available sources include his official diplomatic reports, his rather large Hungarian state security file, a lifetime interview conducted under the aegis of the State Department in the late 1980s, a book on Armenian history, and a semi-autobiographical intelligence thriller he penned in 2000. These sources allow for a complex evaluation of his performance in Hungary and of his writing skills on account of his attempt to fictionalize his own exploits.

Keywords: Cold War, Edward Alexander, Hungary, United States

American diplomats have been known for sharing their experiences with the general audience in the form of memoirs, and some have also ventured into the realm of fiction and non-fiction alike. From US-Hungarian relations in the Cold War period, two such author diplomats stand out: William Seth Sheppard and Edward Alexander. Sheppard served at the Budapest Embassy during the time of the first phase of the normalization of bilateral relations (1969-73) and then as Hungarian Desk Officer in DC. Since retirement, he has penned a series of exciting and creative crime stories featuring Robbie Cutler, a diplomat-detective. Alexander had an illustrious diplomatic career (1964-80) and then authored three books: a memoir, a thriller, and a history book. As for sources, we also have a lengthy oral history interview, his own diplomatic

reports, and his extensive Hungarian state security file available. Because of the diversity of genres he tried his hand at and the abundance of primary sources, he is the subject of the present paper.

Life²

Edward Alexander was born into an Armenian-American family in New York City in 1920. It transpires from his later writings that he was repeatedly harassed (both as a child and later as a diplomat) on account of his ethnic background and developed a firm double identity of being American first, but Armenian above all. He studied music (B.A.) and journalism (M.A.) at Columbia. In World War II he served in the Psychological Warfare Division of the Allied Forces in Europe and worked on Nazi propaganda. After the war he managed Sir Lawrence Olivier's Shakespeare movies in the New World.

In 1950 he was invited to join the Voice of America (VOA) radio staff to develop its trans-Caucasian broadcasts in Armenian, Azerbaijani, Georgian, Tartar, and Uzbek. Soon afterwards he assumed control of the Armenian division of VOA, which he operated until 1959. He then moved to Berlin to run the cultural programs of the Radios in the American Sector (RIAS). RIAS had its own symphony orchestra conducted by Ferenc Fricsay, who had studied under Bartók, Dohnányi, and Kodály before moving West after the war. Alexander pushed RIAS towards playing more American music, especially jazz. He entered the Foreign Service in 1964 and got appointed to Budapest as of 1965.

In less than a year he learned to speak Hungarian and arrived in Budapest, with his wife, in late July 1965. He served there until 1969 as both Cultural Affairs and Press Secretary. He was recalled to Washington to serve as Deputy Area Director for the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe in the United States Information Agency (USIA). He then worked as Public Affairs Officer in East Berlin between 1976 and 1979 and retired a year later. He was called upon to advise the State Department throughout the 1980s. He launched his writing career after full retirement, during the early 1990s. He lives in Bethesda, MD today and is unavailable for further interviews.

Writings

His first book is an entertaining memoir titled *The Serpent and the Bees: A KGB Memoir* from 1990.³ The Armenian proverb cited on the cover reads, "The serpent draws poison and the bee draws honey from the same flower." The "serpent" represents the KGB, while the "bees" stand for Armenian culture that survived Turkish, Russian, and Soviet rule. (Armenia gained full independence in 1991.) The book also serves as trauma therapy for Alexander: the KGB used an Armenian agent to try to turn him. This story began in his RIAS days and ended only with his retirement in 1980. During his stay in Budapest he was invited to visit Soviet Armenia, although the KGB clearly knew who he was and what he had worked on at VOA. And while the author devotes a whole chapter to his work in Budapest, it is easily the least informative piece among our primary sources.

In his second book, Alexander ventured into the field of history writing to tell the story of a young Armenian trying to take revenge for the Armenian genocide committed by the Turks in 1915. Published in 2000, *A Crime of Vengeance: An Armenian Struggle for Justice* is a well-documented account of one of the most popular crime and conspiracy theory stories of the 1920s.⁴ On March 15, 1921, in Berlin, a young Armenian by the name of Soghomon Tehlirian assassinated Talaat Pasha, the mastermind behind the 1915 pogrom. There is some evidence to suggest that, besides the Armenian Revolutionary Federation, both the British and Soviet secret services were involved, of course for very different reasons. Eventually, Tehlirian was acquitted on the grounds of temporary insanity and became a national hero for Armenians around the world. Incidentally, the last pogrom against Armenians took place in the Azeri capital of Baku in January 1990.

Alexander's Armenian identity transpires even more clearly in his third and so far latest book, *Opus*, which was also published in late 2000.⁵ It is a semi-autographical intelligence thriller about an Armenian-American soldier-turned-diplomat searching for the lost manuscript of Beethoven's Tenth symphony from the final days of World War II to his tour in Budapest in the late 1960s. The story opens with our hero, Phil Faljian, serving as an MFAA officer in Berlin after the war and being told about the manuscript (which, of course does not exist). The story then continues in Hungary, East and West Berlin, Soviet Armenia, and Moscow. The verifiable incidents recited in the book loosely correspond to Alexander's

reports from Budapest with a one-year delay. This book also serves as trauma therapy for the author: unlike in real life, here the Soviet-Armenian officer is more Armenian than Soviet and we are treated to fantastic trips and meetings all along. Faljian-Alexander sneaks into East Germany just to be able to see a surviving Vermeer in Dresden and meets KGB Director Yuri Andropov in Budapest and even in his office in Moscow. And although Alexander writes quite well, this book is difficult to enjoy without in-depth understanding of his life and service in Budapest. When read in that context, however, it is one the most entertaining books ever written by a former American diplomat.

Washington and Budapest in the 1960s

As has been mentioned, Alexander served in Budapest between 1965 and 1969. The first 18 months (July 1965 to December 1966) stand out as the most eventful, and exciting, period in his tour. Therefore, in the second part of this article we are taking a closer look at the various projects the Armenian-American diplomat was involved in at this time. To understand that, we need some background.

US-Hungarian relations hit rock bottom as a result of the 1956 Hungarian Revolution and War of Independence. The underlying reason for this was that the Soviet-supported Kádár regime blamed “American imperialism” in general and the CIA in particular for the “unfortunate October events” of 1956 and was afraid of any American cultural influence in the country. Accordingly, public discourse on American issues was centrally controlled, American Studies were suppressed, and people in touch with American diplomats were monitored and harassed.⁶ Heavily censored travel writing served as the only public source of information on the New World, while diplomats and intelligence agents were trained secretly, using translations of Soviet materials well into the 1970s.⁷ American diplomats found this suppression of information disturbingly successful: Borhi cites a 1961 legation report noting that prominent writer Ágnes Nemes Nagy had no idea that T. S. Eliot and Ezra Pound were Americans and she had never heard of four-time Pulitzer Prize winning poet laureate Robert Frost.⁸ Thus, a paranoid Hungarian Communist Party leadership viewed all American attempts at cultural diplomacy as subversive action (in their language, “penetration”), while anything American was welcomed by the general Hungarian public.

Bilateral relations suffered a dramatic setback on February 13, 1965, when supposedly "Asian" student rioters at a "spontaneous" demonstration against America's conduct in the Vietnam War broke into the US legation and caused considerable physical damage to the building. It was in late July 1965, less than six months after the attack, that Edward Alexander arrived in Budapest to serve as the First Secretary for Press and Cultural Affairs of the Legation. His primary commission was to build cultural ties with a Hungarian government that cited American conduct in Vietnam as the main reason for rejecting such advances. His was an uphill task: although the Soviets and Americans signed a formal, bilateral cultural exchange agreement in 1958, Hungary would refuse to take a similar step until as late as 1977.⁹

Alexander's stay in Budapest was quite eventful: attacks on the Legation building continued, his chief of mission died in office, he welcomed the first ever US Ambassador to Hungary, hosted Isaac Stern and Kirk Douglas, reported on the first ever lecture on abstract expressionist painting in Hungary, supervised American reporting on the 10th anniversary of 1956 inside Hungary, opened up the USIA Library, started showing American films at the Legation, and attended to Cardinal Mindszenty. All this took place while the US fought her "uncivil wars" at home and Vietnam abroad, and while the Six-Day War, the joint Warsaw Pact intervention against the Prague Spring, and the defection of ambassador-designate János Radványi almost ruined East-West relations yet again. He left Budapest just as the actual normalization of US-Hungarian relations was getting underway.¹⁰

Diplomat in Budapest, 1965-66

Arbitrary though this time frame may seem, it was Alexander himself who created it. Between October 1965 and December 1966, he prepared "Monthly Cultural Reports" for the State Department. By the latter date, however, he had come to the conclusion that the "preparation of the report was extremely time-consuming, demanding careful perusal of countless newspapers, magazines, books, film and theater schedules, radio listening, television watching and every kind of activity which contributed to the sum total of its monthly content." Indicative of the difficulties an undermanned legation in a hostile political environment was facing is the following remark, "Increased contacts and activities, as well as detailed

reporting on political-cultural events has pre-empted the time and effort devoted earlier to the cultural report.”¹¹

The American diplomat was hardly exaggerating when he also noted in the same report,

even without formal or informal agreements, and even in Eastern Europe, American culture cannot be ignored or excluded. The films attracting the most crowds are American. The books that are snapped up on the first day of publication are translations of American novels and short stories. The plays that pack them in night after night are American. The concert artists that are cheered and never allowed to leave the stage are American, and the disc jockeys of Radio Budapest play the same records as their American counterparts.

So what were these “increased contacts and activities” that Alexander was involved in, and how could he reconcile his two, fundamentally different positions at the Legation?

Alexander’s two commissions pushed him into two different directions. As Cultural Affairs Officer, he had to work on spreading American culture in a communist country that approached the matter with paranoid fear. At the same time, as Press Secretary, he had to soothe Hungarian fears of possible American abuse of the tenth anniversary of 1956. And just as the anniversary approached, his chief of mission died in office. By the end of the year, bilateral relations had been raised from the lowest level of temporary *Charges d’Affaires* to that of the highest, the Ambassadorial. To borrow a term from modern internet usage, during his stay in Budapest, Alexander repeatedly “trolled” the Kádár regime and was occasionally “trolled” back.

In a separate article I have already introduced and evaluated his performance as Press Secretary in 1966. He relentlessly fought, and sometimes successfully cut, communist red tape in support of American journalists. Arguably the most telling incident was retold in one of his May 1966 reports as follows: Kitty Havas of the Foreign Ministry asked Alexander over and over again to convince American journalists not to “dramatize” the anniversary “anymore than necessary.” The American diplomat responded, “[E]very medium kept a morgue of background material for just such occasions, but... for the tenth anniversary of the Revolt, some would obtain new material which should allay the MFA’s [Ministry of Foreign Affairs] fears because if Hungary had really

achieved the aims of 1956, as is often heard in Budapest, all stories would reflect such progress."¹²

As could be expected, the fall of 1966 brought tension and relief alike for the Hungarian Foreign Ministry. Tensions escalated as the anniversary approached, and insecurity peaked when the head of the American diplomatic mission, Elim O'Shaughnessy, suddenly passed away in September. An early October UN meeting between Secretary of State Dean Rusk and Hungarian Foreign Minister János Péter yielded much needed relief when the American diplomat suggested to his counterpart that ambassadors should be exchanged. Alexander later claimed that Hungary and Bulgaria were the last two European countries without ambassadorial representation in the US, which explains the move. Eventually, the anniversary passed without incident. Alexander's position at the (now) Embassy also changed with Martin Hillenbrand being appointed as the first ever American ambassador to Budapest in 1967.¹³

The 1988 oral history interview, his reports, *Opus*, and the Hungarian state security files shed light on his work as Cultural Affairs Officer in Budapest. In the interview, he identified three major issues: the possible return of the Holy Crown of Hungary (which at that time was not on the table), violent protests against American conduct in Vietnam, and Cardinal Mindszenty. Still, what he claimed to be most proud of was the opening of the USIA library in the Legation building, on March 21, 1966. He had asked for Hungarian space in vain, so he decided to use the building of the diplomatic mission to house the library.¹⁴ He was "trolled back" when Hungarian state security agents spread sneezing powder during a film showing held in the Library.¹⁵

Alexander was taken aback by the Hungarian regime's treatment of Zoltán Kodály, whose American trips in 1965 and 1966 were largely ignored by the press. So the American diplomat used Sir Isaac Stern's much awaited Hungarian performance to send a message by involving Kodály and his wife. The ageing Hungarian composer even challenged the violinist to play a new piece of his that was just being published, which Stern did after the intermission of a successful concert at the Music Academy on November 3, 1965.¹⁶

Alexander also cultivated pop and rock musicians, much to the dismay of state security. In addition, in 1965-66 he supervised the copyright agreement between Artisjus of Hungary and CBS for the production of *My Fair Lady* in Budapest. On February 16, 1966, Alexander reported on the opening night of the musical, which took place five days before in the

Budapest Operetta Theater. There was “considerable build-up in the daily and theatrical press,” the performance sold out, and “the highly responsive audience missed none of the humor, enjoying itself tremendously.” The short theatrical review, which also pointed to “minor mishaps” and “opening night jitters,” was followed by an in-depth report on post-performance conversations at *Fészek* (Nest, the Hungarian Artists’ Club). Alexander was invited by Tamás Ungvári, who translated the musical into Hungarian, and had “the most substantive conversations” with his host.

They happened to have seen the same West Berlin production of the musical in German, and discussed the difficulties of translating it into Hungarian: “Ungvári explained that whereas Berlin has a rich slang vocabulary, Budapest has little, not having been the major urban center for several centuries.” He criticized his own work, “pointing out that there were at least five sentences of pure gibberish because he could find no good Hungarian equivalents.” Ungvári also openly voiced his admiration for American culture on account of an essay he wrote on playwright Arthur Miller: “You must realize that the United States is the only country in the world for us. It is the object of our dreams, and when President Kennedy was killed, it was no less shattering for us than for you.” The Hungarian translator inquired about the possibility of extending the two-year contract for the play, and when he was told that it was the job of the Hungarian cultural attaché in the US capital, he burst out, “Idiots, all idiots. Our Foreign Ministry always appoints fools to those jobs. No, our hopes lie with the American Cultural Attaches here. We can never expect our own people to lift a finger for us.” The American diplomat summed up various rumors about Ungvári, too, concluding that if he is the “scoundrel” his critics claim him to be, “he is a knowledgeable and influential scoundrel.”¹⁷

The American diplomat loved painting and was disturbed by the propagandistic nature of socialist realism. So he decided to “troll” Hungarian authorities on three separate occasions. In August 1965, he sponsored and reported on the first ever public lecture in Hungary on contemporary nonfigurative, pop and abstract art in America. It was delivered by Paul Mocsanyi, director of the Arts Center of the New School for Social Research in New York. Alexander’s report reads, in part, as follows: By the time he started to lecture, “the small auditorium was packed with many standing in the rear.” He opened by remarking that the last time he had been in that very room, then the seat of the Hungarian Supreme Court, was the trial of Mátyás Rákosi in 1936, which he covered

for the Havas News Agency. As for the lecture, Alexander notes that he “never shied away from the unpleasant [sic] aspects of his theme, explaining, for instance, the relation between some paintings and the depression.” The official host of the event tried to cut off questions afterwards, but Mocsanyi declared that he “would answer questions on art, politics, current events or anything else having to do with the United States.” After a few minutes of awkward silence the event was terminated but the audience showered the lecturer with handshakes, congratulations, and questions.¹⁸ This was a classic case of communist red tape. The lecture was neither banned nor publicized. It was scheduled for early August, a time when nobody is in Budapest. It was moved around and rescheduled on zero notice (from August 2 to 4, then to a different time and venue on the latter date), and no questions were to be asked by the audience. Still, the full house attendance marked another victory for the American diplomat.

Alexander also made friends with Imre Bak, a graduate of the Hungarian Academy of Fine Arts and regular visitor to the new USIA Library, who tried to organize an exhibit of contemporary Hungarian abstract art at Ferihegy Airport, and prepared a prospectus titled “New Strivings – 1966: Introducing Young Painters” (*Új Törekvések* in Hungarian). They took their home-made catalogue to the Ministry of Culture for approval, where an official “took one look at the prospectus and was appalled. He was invited to see the paintings themselves, and when he did, he reportedly staggered out of the studio muttering about the insanity of modern art.” The exhibit was, of course, banned before opening night. Meanwhile, the Guggenheim in New York City asked for a sample of their work. Seeing their low quality prints, Alexander offered to take Kodachrome pictures of their paintings, invited them to his own home to study the USIA slide collection on contemporary American painting, and asked State for even more up-to-date materials.¹⁹ The group of artists in question was the *Zuglói Kör* (Zugló Circle). Bak went on to earn international fame by 1971. This was another hard-earned success on the American diplomat's part: without the Library and his language skill he never would have been able to help the group as Bak, his contact, did not speak English. And Hungarian art history might have taken quite a different turn without him.

Finally, Alexander offered his take on “official” Hungarian art. In October 1966 Műcsarnok hosted an exhibition of 244 pictures from nine of Hungary's most prominent contemporary artists working at home. Alexander reported on the heated debate in the print press on the merits of

abstract art, with conservatives opposing it as “malfunctions of culture” and a “degeneration of the creative spirit.” The exhibit, he was told, reflected a compromise between the conservatives and liberals sitting on the Ministry of Culture’s jury. What he saw was one-sided: “One of the most striking things in the entire exhibit was an immediate sense of familiarity with the pictures surrounding the viewer... On closer examination it became evident why: Szabo’s still lifes [sic] were drawn from Cezanne, Konfar’s heavily brush-drawn heads were inspired by Rouault, Reich’s simple lines and satyrs with pipes of pan were a combination of Chagall and Picasso.” Most of the paintings exhibited reminded him of “some painter of the French school from the early part of our century.” Among the odd exceptions he mentions József Vati, who “was represented by an immense fresco, measuring 15 by 30 feet, depicting students, workers and collective farm workers in a style of socialist realism that would have had Andrei Zhdanov rubbing his hands with glee.” He found two of László Ridovics’s paintings “show-stoppers for different reasons,” one (*Vietnamese Mother* – holding a dead child) for artistic value, the other (1956 – depicting a freedom fighter between two AVOs hanged) for subject. Still, “nowhere was there evidence of the many western schools of painting that have arisen since before World War II.” His conclusion rings true of any totalitarian regime: “The controversy will certainly not abate but neither will the plight of the Hungarian artist improve so long as the regime retards his development to the degree that cultural freedom fighters are compelled to defend a position today which was not only defended but won by western counterparts almost four decades ago.”²⁰

Alexander met László Országh, the founder of American Studies in Hungary, when the Debrecen professor was conducting research for his survey of American literary history as a Ford Foundation grantee in the US capital. In the summer of 1965 they compiled a list of some 100 volumes for a reference library for Lajos Kossuth University, Debrecen, to promote Országh’s broader project. The books were withheld for five months by the authorities, who at one time cited “wrapping problems” (or, packaging difficulties) as the excuse not to deliver the books. The packages were eventually delivered in mid-November 1965, but Alexander was not granted permission to visit Debrecen or put USIA stamps into the volumes. Országh, however, was allowed to thank him, and the book came out in 1967.²¹

Alexander’s greatest claim to fame as a diplomat in Hungary came during Hollywood film star Kirk Douglas’s April 1966 visit to Hungary.

Douglas was a household name in Hungary, too, on account of *Spartacus* (1960), which he himself had produced and starred in. The *Spartacus* story was a classic class struggle epic that communists championed, but there was a lot more to this Kubrick classic. As producer, Douglas insisted that screenwriter Dalton Trumbo (one of the famous Hollywood Ten) be fully credited in the movie, thus breaking down the blacklist that had been in effect for much of the 1950s. Therefore, he was twice the hero when he came to Budapest during a tour of the Soviet Bloc. His three demands in each country were to learn a local folk song, lecture a large student body, and meet the local Communist Party boss. Alexander described him as “a real difficult person. Edgy, prickly. But cooperative, too.” Douglas’ first request was easy to meet, the second one unlikely, the third one well-nigh impossible. And yet, in the end it was only Douglas’ third request that ended up being met in Budapest. There was no official protocol for presenting an American movie star to a communist dictator, so this time Alexander had to improvise. He took Douglas to *Mátyás Pince*, since he knew that Kádár would have dinner there on occasion. He struck gold as the Hungarian communist dictator was indeed there that night with his wife. The American diplomat walked up to him, introduced himself in Hungarian, and asked the party boss if he wanted to meet Douglas. When they clarified that it was indeed the Kirk Douglas of *Spartacus* fame, Kádár agreed. The three-day visit also featured a lecture to some sixty guests from the world of Hungarian film and television, instead of a presentation in front of a large student body. Douglas was so happy with the meeting with Kádár that he chose not to learn a folk song. Alexander’s ingenuity became a legend in American diplomatic circles since none of his fellow diplomats could arrange for a meeting between their local party bosses and the American actor.²²

Thus, with the American Library opened, the tenth anniversary in the books without a major incident, and an agreement in place to elevate bilateral relations from the lowest to the highest level, the first eighteen months of Ed Alexander’s tour of duty in Hungary had come to an end. In 1967 he was finally granted a Soviet visa to visit his parents’ homeland, Armenia, and the first US Ambassador arrived in Hungary just as Cardinal Mindszenty threatened to walk out of his safe haven in protest. Edward Alexander was an enigma for Hungarian state security who simply could not decide whether he was CIA or not. His file is thrice the size of those of his two mission chiefs (O’Shaughnessy and Hillenbrand)

combined. When it was closed in 1969, upon his departure from Budapest, the final verdict read: “not a spy”.²³

So Why Should We Read Him?

First of all, as a trained journalist and a cultured individual, Alexander writes very well. He is also a natural born storyteller, and, as evidenced by his books introduced above, he can do so in at least three different styles. As for his exploits in Hungary, he was a unique witness to cultural changes in Hungary in the mid-1960s, just as the new “culture czar” György Aczél was taking over. His reports on Kodály, Bak and the Zugló Circle, Országh, and Mocsanyi have contributed hitherto unknown information on the age and open up a new area of cultural diplomatic studies for future generations. And you should also read him if you like puzzles: the narratives above have been pieced together from press, intelligence and diplomatic reports, a thriller, a memoir, and an oral history project.

Notes

- ¹ This essay is an expanded version of a lecture with the same title delivered at the “Diplomat Writers, Author Diplomats” conference held at the University of Debrecen on October 20, 2107.
- ² Biographical information presented here is based on Alexander Interview (see Bibliography for details) and the bio on the Authors’ Guild website: <http://members.authorsguild.net/ealexander/> (accessed July 13, 2018).
- ³ Alexander, *The Serpent*.
- ⁴ Alexander, *A Crime of Vengeance*.
- ⁵ Alexander, *Opus*.
- ⁶ Abádi Nagy, ‘Anglisztika-amerikanisztika a mai Magyarországon’, 15-16.
- ⁷ On travel writing see my article: ‘Travel Writing as a Substitute for American Studies’. The statement about the training of diplomats and spies is based on Balogh, ‘From ‘the Bastion of Imperialism’ to ‘the Greatest Capitalist Economy’: How Détente Changed the Hungarian State Security’s Perception of the United States’.
- ⁸ For background see: Borhi, *Dealing with Dictators*, the reference to Nemes Nagy is from pp. 167-8. See also: Kovrig, *Of Walls and Bridges*, and Magyarics, ‘Az Egyesült Államok és Magyarország: 1957-1967’.
- ⁹ Borhi, *Dealing with Dictators*, 203, and 281-284; and Medalis, *American Cultural Diplomacy*, esp. 155-156, and 194-196.

- ¹⁰ Borhi, *Dealing with Dictators*, 194-218; and Kovrig, *Walls and Bridges*, 103-116.
- ¹¹ "Cessation of Monthly Cultural Report," Budapest Embassy to State, December 22, 1966, 1 page, RG 59 General Records of the Department of State, Central Foreign Policy Files, 1964-66, Box 340, Folder: CUL – CULTURE HUNG 1/1/64, Archives II, Maryland. This folder has all the monthly reports, too.
- ¹² "NBC Team Completes Filming Documentary on Hungary," Budapest Legation to State, May 5, 1966, 2 pages, NARA, RG 59 General Records of the Department of State, Central Foreign Policy Files, 1964–66, Box 340, Folder: CUL 6 HUNG 1/1/64.
- ¹³ Borhi, *Dealing with Dictators*, 206-209; Alexander Interview, 15.
- ¹⁴ Alexander Interview, 16-19 and 24-25.
- ¹⁵ Pál Iglói's report dated January 19, 1968, 2 pages: ÁBTL 3.1.5. O-13448/2, 176-7. The incident took place two days before, and the typed evaluation states, "in terms of disruption, the operation was successful, although it was not appreciated by the audience at all. The applause at the end of the screening proves that most of the people attending these events are pro-American."
- ¹⁶ Alexander Interview, 19-20; "Media Coverage of Composer Kodaly's American Visit," Budapest Legation to the State Department, September 26, 1965, 2 pages, RG 59 General Records of the Department of State, Central Foreign Policy Files, 1964-66, Box 340, Folder: CUL 6 HUNG 1/1/64. Also: author's interview with Kodály's widow, February 10, 2017; and Bónis, *Élet-pálya: Kodály Zoltán*, 51-52.
- ¹⁷ "Premier of 'My Fair Lady'," Budapest Legation to State, February 16, 1966, 3 pages, RG 59 General Records of the Department of State, Central Foreign Policy Files, 1964-66, Box 340, Folder: CUL 10-5 Hung 1/1/64. Underline in the original.
- ¹⁸ "Visit of New York Art Director, Paul Mocsanyi," Budapest Legation to State, August 17, 1965, 3 pages, RG 59 General Records of the Department of State, Central Foreign Policy Files, 1964-66, Box 340, Folder: CUL 10-5 Hung 1/1/64. On Mocsányi's life see: <http://newschoolhistories.org/people/paul-mocsanyi/> (accessed July 13, 2018).
- ¹⁹ "Information Material for Young Artists' Group," Budapest Legation to State, August 1, 1966, 2 pages, RG 59 General Records of the Department of State, Central Foreign Policy Files, 1964-66, Box 340, Folder: CUL 10-5 Hung 1/1/64. On the group, only in Hungarian, see: András, "A Zuglói Kör (1958-1968)". Alexander consistently misspelled Bak's name with a double "K."
- ²⁰ "Painting Exhibit Reveals Condition of Hungarian Art," Budapest Legation to State, November 14, 1966, 3 pages, RG 59 General Records of the Department of State, Central Foreign Policy Files, 1964-66, Box 340, Folder: CUL 10-5 Hung 1/1/64. For the record, the nine artists were: Kálmán Csohány, Gyula Konfár, Károly Raszler, Károly Reich, László Ridovics, Simon Sarkantyú, Béla Stettner, Zoltán Szabó, and József Vati. The debate, which coincided with the 10th anniversary of the 1956 revolution, was conducted in *Kortárs* ("conservatives" a.k.a. hard liner communists) and *Élet és Irodalom* ("liberals" a.k.a. reform communists).
- ²¹ For details see Alexander's reports: "USIA/IAS: Books for Professor Laszlo Orszagh," Budapest Legation to the Secretary of State, July 10, 1965, 1 page, and "Books for Professor Orszagh," State to Budapest Legation, August 3, 1965, 1 page,

RG 59 General Records of the Department of State, Central Foreign Policy Files, 1964-66, Box 340, Folder: CUL 10-5 Hung 1/1/64; "Books Bound by Red Tape," Budapest Legation to State, August 7, 1965, 2 pages, RG 59 General Records of the Department of State, Central Foreign Policy Files, 1964-66, Box 340, Folder: CUL 9 HUNG 1/1/64; "Institute Approves Book Presentation to Debrecen," Budapest Legation to State, September 21, 1965, 3 pages, RG 59 General Records of the Department of State, Central Foreign Policy Files, 1964-66, Box 340, Folder: CUL 9 HUNG 1/1/64; "Book Presentation Made to Debrecen," including a copy of Országh's letter of thanks to Alexander, Budapest Legation to State, November 16, 1965, 2 pages and "Film and Photo Materials for Professor Orszagh," Budapest Legation to State, December 14, 1965, 2 pages, RG 59 General Records of the Department of State, Central Foreign Policy Files, 1964-66, Box 340, Folder: CUL 9 HUNG 1/1/64. The finished product was Országh's iconic literary history of the US, *Az amerikai irodalom története* (Budapest: Gondolat, 1967), which was printed in 7,700 copies.

²² Alexander Interview, 20-3.

²³ ÁBTL 3.1.5. O-13448/3, last page.

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