

FASCIST FEMALE INTELLIGENCE NETWORKS DURING AND AFTER WORLD WAR II IN EUROPE AND LATIN AMERICA

Redes de inteligência feminina fascista durante e após a Segunda Guerra Mundial na Europa e na América Latina

Redes de inteligencia femenina fascista durante y después de la Segunda Guerra Mundial EN Europa y en América Latina

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the largely overlooked operations of fascist female intelligence networks during and after the Second World War, tracing their activities across Europe and Latin America. Drawing on previously undiscovered archival collections in Hungary, Germany, Austria, Great Britain, Chile and Canada, this study reconstructs the careers of four women whose trajectories illuminate the gendered dimensions of transnational fascism. At the centre stands the most successful Hungarian female spy of the period, who established an extensive women-led espionage ring on behalf of German military intelligence operating in the United States, Hungary, Sweden, Portugal and France. Beyond 1945, this analysis uncovers the surprising persistence and adaptation of fascist intelligence infrastructures, including remnants of organizations such as the German Bund, which reconstituted themselves in Italy, the United States and Chile. Moving beyond national frameworks, this study offers a new perspective to transnational fascism studies by showing how female operatives, clandestine mobility and postwar ideological continuities shaped the long afterlife of fascist espionage networks.

KEYWORDS: Transatlantic migration, Ethnic Germans in Latin America, Network of war criminals in Latin America, Chile.

RESUMO

Este estudo examina as operações (em grande parte negligenciadas) das redes de inteligência feminina fascistas durante e após a Segunda Guerra Mundial, rastreando suas atividades pela Europa e América Latina. Baseando-se em coleções de arquivos inéditas na Hungria, Alemanha, Áustria, Grã-Bretanha, Chile e Canadá, este estudo reconstrói as carreiras de quatro mulheres cujas trajetórias iluminam as dimensões de gênero do fascismo transnacional. Destaca-se a espiã húngara de maior sucesso do período, que estabeleceu uma extensa rede de espionagem liderada por mulheres em nome da inteligência militar alemã, operando nos Estados Unidos, Hungria, Suécia, Portugal e França. Após 1945, esta análise revela a surpreendente persistência e adaptação das infraestruturas de inteligência fascistas, incluindo resquícios de organizações como a German Bund, que se reconstituíram na Itália, nos Estados Unidos e no Chile. Ao transcender os limites nacionais, este estudo oferece uma nova perspectiva para os estudos sobre o fascismo transnacional, mostrando como agentes femininas, a mobilidade clandestina e as continuidades ideológicas do pós-guerra moldaram a longa sobrevivência das redes de espionagem fascistas.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Migração transatlântica, Alemães étnicos na América Latina, Rede de criminosos de guerra na América Latina, Chile.

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RESUMEN

Este estudio analiza las operaciones (en gran parte ignoradas) de las redes de inteligencia femenina fascista durante y después de la Segunda Guerra Mundial mediante el rastreo de sus actividades por Europa y por América Latina. Con base en colecciones de archivos inéditos de Hungría, Alemania, Austria, Gran Bretaña, Chile y Canadá, este estudio reconstruye las carreras de cuatro mujeres cuyas trayectorias ponen de relieve las dimensiones de género del fascismo transnacional. Destaca la espía húngara más exitosa de la época, quien estableció una extensa red de espionaje dirigida por mujeres en nombre de la inteligencia militar alemana y que operaba en Estados Unidos, Hungría, Suecia, Portugal y Francia. Después de 1945, este análisis revela la sorprendente persistencia y adaptación de las infraestructuras de inteligencia fascistas, incluidos los vestigios de organizaciones como German Bund, que se reconstituyeron en Italia, Estados Unidos y Chile. Al trascender las fronteras nacionales, este estudio ofrece una nueva perspectiva para los estudios sobre el fascismo transnacional al mostrar cómo las agentes femeninas, la movilidad clandestina y las continuidades ideológicas de la posguerra moldearon la larga supervivencia de las redes de espionaje fascistas.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Migración transatlántica, Alemanes étnicos en América Latina, Red de criminales de guerra en América Latina, Chile.

INTRODUCTION

The burial records of Cementerio General de Santiago de Chile provide a revealing entry into the fragmented historical trace of Carlota Hajek Czeke (1907-1956). Archival evidence indicates that Hajek was interred in what appears to have been a low-cost, reused grave, reflecting common cemetery practices of secondary burial for those who desired a grave but had limited financial means. According to documentation attributed to Carlota Hajek, the tomb corresponds to niche 339 in Pavilion 1, with the recorded date of death given as 13 October 1956. However, a close examination of cemetery records reveals significant inconsistencies. Niche 339 of Pavilion 1 is also associated with the burial of an individual identified as Julius Rozinek. Moreover, the inscription in the niche lists the name as ‘Hajek Sári’ rather than ‘Carlota Hajek’, although retaining the same date of death (13 October 1956). These discrepancies, including an engraving in Hungarian, suggest either errors in recordkeeping, the reuse of burial space, or the coexistence of multiple identities under fluctuating naming conventions—phenomena not uncommon among migrant populations in mid-20th-century Latin America, especially those who escaped Europe because of their dark deeds during the Second World War.

This study aims to provide a glimpse into the afterlife of one of the most extraordinary and, in its time, most infamous cases of international espionage and a women-dominated spy ring which operated during the Second World War to advance war efforts of the Axis Powers, which was discovered and dismantled by the FBI in the United States in 1941.

The espionage network was referred to in US newspapers as the 'Woman Spy Ring' (Woman [...], 1944). Their mission was to gather information on American war preparations in the heart of the US war industry, Detroit, and to obstruct them with sabotage and bombings as part of the German-financed bombings in the US (Woman [...], 1944).

Based on extensive archival research, official and private documents and available oral sources, the authors followed the footsteps of the most successful spy from Hungary: Sári Hajek, a former theatrical director who became a member of Gyula Rozinek's spy ring during the Second World War together with Theresa Behrens, a Hungarian-speaking ethnic German from the Kingdom of Hungary who was the local contact in Detroit, and Grace Dineen, a Canadian-born socialite who were recruited and trained by Rozinek and Hajek (Pető; Agárdi, under review).

Unsurprisingly, Hajek and Rozinek, a married couple, fled Hungary after 1945 and sought asylum in Santiago, Chile. Rozinek died of natural causes shortly after they arrived in 1947, and Hajek passed away in 1956, having already largely integrated herself into the local Hungarian and German diaspora.

By following their individual life stories and the process by which they became entangled through mutual interests, aspirations, connections and loyalties, this study will attempt to answer questions that go beyond simply describing their operations. The questions we pose are relevant to how unofficial networks formed after the Great War between Central Europe and Latin America shaped the dynamics of alliance negotiation in international relations and to women (and men) finding unorthodox roles in transitioning societies. Also, their life stories yield insights into the continuity of transnational fascist networks, how they lived on and how they provided a safety net for those who needed it.

Sári Hajek and Gyula Rozinek left Hungary in 1945 and arrived in Chile in 1947, where Gyula passed away shortly after. By that time, the operation in the US had been dismantled in 1941, and the two other female members of the spy network, both connected to Hungary, Behrens and Dineen, were serving their prison sentences¹.

In Chile, Sári tried to mobilize her and Gyula's (mainly German or German sympathizer) connections to survive, find shelter and secure job opportunities on the new continent. Life stories such as those of Hajek and Rozinek offer us ways to understand the different circles shaping the relationship between Germany and Hungary in the 1930s, its shift during the Second World War and the continuities of such transnational networks. We argue that life stories and their embeddedness in transnational networks provide a deeper understanding of the transnational nature of Nazism and its continuities in the Cold War era, in which the Cold

War anticommunism offered new opportunities for their operation. Also, by focusing on the realm of the personal, the informal, i.e., beyond the official structures of power and public administration, we get a chance to write women into such transnational histories.

SOURCES AND METHODOLOGY

Writing the history of operations and people who do not want to be found is challenging, and it is particularly challenging to write about women whose atypical stories often remain under the radar. Our knowledge of the above life stories is based on a wide-ranging, varied source base, including archives of the respective nation-states where the protagonists left traces, online data sources, private documents, family legacies and some oral material². Materials were collected from the Archives of the City of Kőszeg, Hungary; the Budapest City Archives; and the National Archives of Hungary. Research also included Hungarian intelligence holdings at the ÁBTL (Historical Archives of the Security Services), as well as relevant collections at the Military Archive in Vienna and the Military Archives of Germany and the Federal Archives (*Bundesarchiv*) in Berlin; and in the personal immigration files of Hajek and Rozinek in Santiago, Chile.

Finding sources about migrants who tried to stay under the radar with good reason is difficult in archives that keep records of citizens, which is the pillar of archival work. Archival documents regarding their arrival, naturalization and life in Chile are sketchy. Still, they provide some information about important contacts in their network—people who wrote supporting letters, assisted with their self-administration, or provided them with a place to stay or work. We are very fortunate to have been granted access to a collection of private letters between Sári Hajek and her sister, Lujza Hajek, dating from their fleeing from Hungary and being in transit in France (spring 1947) to 1956, the last letter before she died. After that, the correspondence was continued by her second husband, whom she met in Santiago, Sándor Haypál (a.k.a. Alejandro Haypal Dienes, 1956-1963), whom we could also consult. This correspondence, although not entirely complete, has remained a collection of letters from both sides, arranged in the order of their arrival.

Finding sources in unexpected places is one of the pillars of such archival work (Pető; Waaldijk, 2011). Ego documents, such as letter correspondences, carry several challenges, however. Firstly, they were never intended to provide a full account of what actually happened—their main purpose was to inform about the writer's well-being and status. Writing letters to relatives in South America to Hungary, which was under Soviet occupation and later a satellite communist state, implied that the authorities would open the letters. So,

correspondents had to use code words and vague references instead of concrete ones. Names when they appear are mostly surnames or first names (but not both) (e.g.: 'The Brauns', 'Artúr', or 'Zoltán') or even nicknames (e.g.: 'Teri'), or references to persons appear in the form of relations (e.g.: 'Gyula's partner and his wife'). Information about the political views of the sender can be detected only from general stereotypical derogatory comments of the 'locals' and the 'Jews'.

Secondly, letters are forms of self-representation, and thus, are not to be read as straightforward, value-neutral accounts. Especially, as we know from the literature on migrant letters, such representations are expected to follow a certain epistolary genre in which the present tense predominates over the past, as do complaints about local circumstances over descriptions of positive attributes³. The narrator often constructs subjectivity based on resilience in the face of challenges. Narrative forms of self-positioning and justification and forms of representing others (e.g., the 'Chilean people') sometimes reflect conventions that conform to stereotypes and external expectations. In this sense, letters are neither innocent nor objective but can be read as powerful political tools at the interpersonal level.

Analysing women working in intelligence during the Second World War also requires interrogating the narrative frameworks that construct gendered spaces of narration—frameworks that delimit and enable specific modes of storytelling (Pető, 2020a). This requires resisting the seductive pull of conventional historical narratives that cast individuals as heroic figures struggling against harsh historical conditions. Women's stories are not simply 'absent'; they are sometimes conspicuously present, celebrated or even instrumentalized, interacting with and reframing other narratives rather than existing on the margins. A more reflexive strategy for interpreting these histories invites scholars to seek history in unexpected places, uncovering the complex ways in which women produced knowledge, remembered conflict and shaped the epistemologies of intelligence itself. The information in the letters must be corroborated by other official source material if available, whereas the emotional/semantic content of the letters is best weighed against the social-political context during critical reading.

The fact that this is a piece of transnational network research also drove methodological choices. Recognizing intelligence as a fundamentally transnational enterprise restores the relational texture that national historiographies tend to flatten. Information respects no borders; neither did our methods. This study describes Hungarian second-tier intelligence communities as networked systems whose cases expose the interdependencies, asymmetries and frictions that shaped wartime decision-making and postwar memory.

While we follow partial, distorted traces, we attend to the 'maybe', the manipulated (or strategically tailored) and the misfiled that models a form of scholarly transparency appropriate to a field in which secrecy and silence are intrinsic to the source base. Serial reconstruction, expectation registers and attention to negative evidence make absence analytically legible, whereas contextual knowledge—of social codes, organizational cultures and national gender regimes—anchors interpretation in historically grounded understandings of possibility and constraint. We try to integrate private papers, letters, oral histories and interpersonal networks into this methodological toolkit to disrupt the overreliance on state-produced archives that have long marginalized gendered labour and non-elite actors. These sources, mobilized with care and trust, help to recover the lived experience of intelligence work and illuminate the informal infrastructures on which formal systems relied equally during the Cold War.

HOW DID CARLOTA HAJEK AND JULIUS ROZINEK END UP IN SANTIAGO?

Hungary, as a loyal ally of Nazi Germany, was a part of the German war machine. The Soviet Union defeated it, crossing the Hungarian border in late 1944. The couple, Hajek and Rozinek, left Hungary as the Red Army was approaching. At first sight, the former stage director of the Hungarian National Theatre and a notable engineer and businessman had nothing to fear from the Soviets. The far right in Hungary mobilized women for anti-monarchist emancipation (Pető, 2020b).

The CV Hajek submitted to the Chilean citizenship office contained claims in official records regarding her activities during and after the Second World War. Document No. 28 of Report 4 (paragraph four) includes her assertion that she had worked 'on behalf of British troops', and more specifically, that she had been employed by British occupation forces in Austria, Klagenfurt, following the war. While such statements may have bolstered her application by aligning her with Allied forces, they also raise broader questions about identity construction, self-representation and the vetting processes for migrants in the early Cold War period. This missing vetting led Hajek and Rozinek to end up in Chile.

They were not the only ones at the time, however. In the years following World War II, a new wave of Hungarian emigration appeared in Latin America, particularly in Chile. The formation of this community was closely linked to the political and economic processes of the early Cold War, as well as to experiences of the world 'beyond the Iron Curtain'. After Gabriel Velázquez Videla became president in 1946, official diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union and the states under its influence were gradually frozen. There were

attempts to reestablish ties between Hungary and Chile in 1947. However, due to the Cold War and Truman's anti-communist stance in South American politics, all efforts failed, and practically no diplomatic or economic ties existed between the two countries from 1947 to 1952 (Horváth, 2021, 2026).

WHAT DO THE PERSONAL DOCUMENTS REVEAL?

In the immediate aftermath of the Second World War, European states faced a profound crisis of mobility, identity and documentation. Mass displacement, deportation and the destruction of civil records left millions without verifiable legal identities. This uncertainty was unsurprisingly used by those who do not want to be found.

In response to mass movements, governments and diplomatic missions devised ad hoc systems of emergency or substitute travel documents. France and Sweden played particularly important roles in issuing such papers, facilitating urgent travel, repatriation and the gradual restoration of civil order. However, Hajek's original documentation had expired, and the new communist state refused to issue replacements to those abroad. Her situation illustrates how individuals navigated a fragmented regime of temporary papers often dependent on the discretionary practices of occupying powers and neutral states. These documents—typically time-limited and destination-specific—enabled mobility while underscoring the fragile, transitional nature of legal identity in postwar Europe.

A Swedish passport issued to Hajek in Rome on 30 September 1946, valid for one year, exemplifies this practice. It was granted on the basis that she represented Hungarian interests in Italy. Rather than a standard national passport, it functioned as protective and facilitative documentation, enabling her to cross borders under uncertain Hungarian state representation. Swedish diplomatic missions were crucial in assisting individuals who lacked effective state protection. In the chaotic postwar environment, some people were effectively stateless, unable to rely on their home governments. Drawing on the Swedish humanitarian tradition, consulates occasionally stepped in to represent such individuals, particularly under collapsed state structures. A key instrument in this assistance was the issuance of temporary or substitute travel documents, sometimes informally referred to as 'passports'.

These documents were not equivalent to full Swedish passports. Instead, they operated as identity papers and mobility tools: they enabled individuals to establish a recognized identity in transit and to cross borders, emigrate or reach destinations where they could obtain more permanent documentation. This flexible approach combined humanitarian concerns with practical necessity. By issuing such documents, Swedish consulates helped to restore

mobility and legal identity to individuals otherwise trapped in administrative limbo. At the same time, the existence of a female spy network with an outpost in neutral Sweden during the Second World War raises the possibility—though not the certainty—that informal or undocumented channels, including Swedish-German connections, may have facilitated access to information and navigation within this system.

Hajek's case further illustrates the layered nature of postwar documentation regimes. After her Swedish passport expired, she obtained an exceptional French passport in Paris on 6 March 1947, valid until 5 March 1948. French authorities had also introduced such temporary travel documents to address situations in which standard passports could not be issued. These documents served several functions: they enabled urgent travel under unacceptable bureaucratic delays; provided provisional identification for individuals lacking full civil documentation and enabled re-entry into legal and administrative systems despite incomplete records. Hajek's passport, notably, included visas for Paraguay, Chile, Argentina and Venezuela.

French emergency documents were deliberately temporary and tightly controlled. Often valid for a single journey or short duration, and sometimes restricted to specific destinations, they balanced mobility with administrative oversight. Their issuance procedures were rapid and simplified, relying on testimony or partial records rather than comprehensive verification. Physically, they were more modest than standard passports. They were frequently single-sheet or folded documents—reflecting their provisional status and the material constraints of the immediate postwar period.

Hajek's documentation evolved further: she received a one-entry visa from the British Embassy in Paris on 24 March 1947 (valid for four months), and later a French provisional passport issued on 6 November 1947 (valid until 5 March 1948). This document again included visas for Paraguay, Chile and Argentina, as well as transit authorization via Venezuela. The multiplicity of issuing authorities—Swedish, French and British—highlights the pragmatic, overlapping character of postwar identification systems and the extent to which individual mobility depended on navigating this complex documentary landscape.

The couple, Hajek and Rozinek, was stranded in France while waiting for their visas, where American friends hosted them in Suresnes, a suburb of Paris. Sári wrote short postcards to her sister about her whereabouts and their plans of taking the ship 'Desirada' on 24 June, from Marseilles—via Dakar, Rio de Janeiro, Montevideo and Buenos Aires—to their 'new home' in Santiago de Chile. A month later in July, they were visiting Hungarian friends (Lajos Fürst and his wife 'Piri'—whose identities we can no longer verify. They might very well be code names) in Buenos Aires, 'reminiscing and making future plans', and in early September

she writes the first letter as a new *emigré* from Santiago summarising the hardships of the trip and expressing alienation in the new country.

WHAT DID THE COUPLE DO IN SANTIAGO?

Further insight into Hajek's life trajectory is provided by her application for permanence and naturalization in Chile in 1952, preserved in Archivo Nacional and referenced in the file of Alejandro Haypal Dienes. These documents reconstruct a narrative of forced migration and subsequent professional integration. Hajek arrived in Chile under a visa issued in Paris on 20 March 1947, within the framework of a 'free immigration' decree. Her professional profile is consistently described as that of a *professor*, specifically an English instructor.

In the documents submitted for neutralization, which were processed within two months (from September to October 1952), Sári was employed at a prestigious Catholic institution—Colegio San Ignacio in Santiago—while simultaneously providing private English instruction. Evidence of her professional activities is corroborated by several letters of recommendation that situate her within elite social networks. One such testimonial confirms her engagement as a private tutor for the family of Ernesto Zacharias de Rogausch, whose name, however, remains completely unmentioned in the family letters sent to Hungary behind the Iron Curtain.

Additional documentation further substantiates her teaching career and social positioning. Hajek worked as an English tutor after graduating from the university in Budapest, and she could continue tutoring in the new world as well. A letter from Semiramis Humeres Erazo, proprietor of the residence in which Hajek lived from her arrival in Chile until her husband's death, notes that she subsequently took up a teaching post at the hospital farm belonging to the family of Jorge Sánchez Cerda, an '*agricultor*' of Chilean nationality (b. 1906)⁴. Ester Alessandri de Matte, Sári's most influential connection in Santiago⁵, likewise attests to her acquaintance with Hajek and confirms her employment as an English teacher at Colegio San Ignacio, a primary and secondary school founded in 1856. Named after Ignatius of Loyola, the school was run by Jesuit nuns.

Institutional recognition of Hajek's work is reinforced by a letter from Óscar Contreras, Director and Minister of Colegio San Ignacio, who affirms her position at the school and her satisfactory performance, which states that Hajek served there as an English teacher, carried out her duties competently and maintained harmonious relations with the nuns. Her professional credentials and linguistic competencies seem to have been regarded favourably by Chilean authorities. In this context, jurist Fernando Zañartu Lazcano (1907–1977) explicitly described

the naturalization of 'persons of this quality' as a matter of national interest, underscoring the perceived value of skilled European migrants within the Chilean mid-century modernization project. The fact that the well-known Fernando Zañartu Lazcano submitted an affidavit in support of Hajek's citizenship application and served as a lawyer shows that the couple quickly integrated into the highest, pro-German echelons of Chilean society.

The everyday reality of the Hungarian émigré community in Chile is well illustrated by the story of Sári's first husband, remembered as 'poor dear Gyula'. Gyula maintained connections with members of the local German community; his friends included Norbert Braun, a Polish *émigré*, and Walter Baumgarten, a German national from Guatemala. His health problems were treated by German and Hungarian doctors. As the 'skilled Europeans' often thought that employment in Chile was neither secure nor sufficiently lucrative and beneath their standards, Gyula also embarked on setting up his own business, a repair shop, with another fellow engineer. Before they could have started operating, he passed away on 20 November 1947.

When Gyula died, Péter Ambrus, a Hungarian-origin priest, administered the last rites. He was buried in Cementerio General de Santiago de Chile in a small niche, which his wife found to be a strange and unfamiliar way of burial. *'His grave is rather ugly, unfortunately, that is the best I can afford for now. Here they put the dead into a wall, so high, like military barracks, and from the outside they look like chicken coops.'* (Sári to Lujza, 23 Nov. 1947⁶) Later, when another niche opened up, she had the remains transferred to Niche 339 in Pavilion 1, where they can currently be found. *'In December, I had to run around a lot. First, I tidied up Gyula's grave. I had it placed over in Pavilion no. 1, which is very nice and pretty. It didn't cost me too much, as a cab was freed up by accident in a spot that is good and lovely. Besides that, I had a marble plaque made...'* (Sári to Lujza, Hacienda "Águila Sur" Estación Hospital/Chile, C/o Jorge Sánchez Cerda, 13 January 1948)

The life of his wife, Sári (Carlota), was burdened by severe hardships: she lived in poverty and worked on a Polish typewriter, the faulty diacritics of which testify to material limitations. For her, for whom writing was a part of her intellectual existence, this might have been particularly difficult. In her own words, *'I cannot afford more'*. She was repairing clothes and tutored for a living. After Gyula's passing, she inherited his connections; for example, the Baumgartens and the Brauns became lifelong friends who assisted her and provided whatever help she needed. The Baumgartens, for instance, hosted the wedding lunch when Sári got married for the second time to Sándor Haypál (Alejandro Haypal Dienes)—another member of the local Hungarian diaspora living in exile.

Both documentation and letters suggest that the newly widowed Sári Hajek may have temporarily resided on a rural property associated with the Jorge Sánchez's Cerda family in 1947–1948, underscoring the role of landed families in facilitating early migrant settlement. She writes to her sister about her experiences on this farm, which had been rather tumultuous and conflict-ridden. She was a private tutor to two nine- and 11-year-old boys, sons of a rich farmer originally from Prussia, Germany. She writes that they were a rather affluent family owning several properties in Santiago, an estate 50 kilometres away from the city and several cars and that they employed maids, but, in contrast, '*they eat on raggedy old tablecloths, and they don't have nice bedsheets... or books*'. (Sári to Lujza 13 January 1948) A few months later, she left the farm and the 'Prussian scoundrel', of whom she suspects to have been a '*minor Nazi führer*' who '*saw it best to get away with the slush-fund*' (Sári to Lujza 15 August 1948).

WHAT SPURRED THEIR EXILE: THE 'BLUE-BLOODED MATA HARI' CASE

The story so far is not specific; it could be that of any migrant to Latin America after 1945. This non-specificity is what makes the story remarkable, as the case concerns the intertwined stories of Canada-born Grace Buchanan Dineen, Hungarian Sári Hajek, Gyula Rozinek, and German-Hungarian Teresa Behrens, which revealed a highly adaptive, transnational espionage network stretching across Europe and North America in the late 1930s and early 1940s. The case culminated in the trial of Grace Buchanan, which received big publicity as a 'Woman Spy Ring' in 1942 (Woman [...], 1944). What bound them together was not only the strategic aims of German military intelligence but also the fluid social worlds, gendered roles, and border-crossing experiences each carried. Their collaboration was shaped less by institutional hierarchies than by the movement of people—across theatres, universities, cocktail parties, immigrant aid offices, hairdressers, salons, and industrial cities where intelligence could be gathered under the cover of everyday life and cultural exchange.

JULIUS ROZINEK AND CARLOTA HAJEK CZEKE

Gyula Rozinek and Sári Hajek got married on 3 October 1936. The event was a highlight in the social circles of the Budapest cultural elite. It was reported in *Színházi Élet* [Life in Theatre]—the celebrity magazine of the time (Esküvői [...], 1937). Rozinek, a trained engineer and decorated military officer, was much older than his wife and had been married before. Both belonged to the elite of the Western Part of Hungary, where German was spoken as a

sign of cultural and later political orientation. Rozinek, from the Sopron elite, and Sári, from Kőszeg, the two key cities of the region, are likely to have met through their families.

Sári was raised with an older brother, Zoltán (1892-1952), and a younger sister, Lujza (1909-1998). The children were native speakers of Hungarian and German and received piano and tennis lessons, as was expected in the better circles of the time. Sári received an exceptional education involving time spent abroad as well. Tall, androgynous, athletic, and famously undisciplined, she combined elite upbringing with a persona that defied convention. In her FBI file, Sári is described as having a 'boyish appearance, extreme boyish bob, no makeup worn, vivacious personality'⁷. Having finished two years at the University of Budapest, majoring in English and German, she spent a few months in Great Britain in 1926 studying and giving lectures at several British universities. From 1927 to 1929, she studied dramatic arts and experimental theatre at Vassar, the most prestigious girls' school in the US, building a network of influential women. It was through her family network, perseverance and talent that she became the first female stage director at the National Theatre in Budapest from 1933 to 1935, a career cut short by changes in cultural politics affecting the management of the theatre. Interestingly, we know less about Rozinek: after being a decorated soldier during the First World War, he remained under the radar as a successful businessman, making many business trips, but he also won several figure skating competitions, and FBI reports indicate he loved cooking and played the piano well.

Hajek and Rozinek were an unorthodox couple whose partnership proved to be other than a romantic bond: they spearheaded one of the most infamous spy rings in the US. In the German Military Intelligence (Abwehr) records, Rozinek is listed as an asset operated directly from Berlin⁸.

HAJEK, ROZINEK AND DINEEN

The story of the spy network during the war is also difficult to track due to source scarcity. From a collection of privately preserved documents, we do know, however, that from 1938 to 1939, Sári undertook two extended trips to the United States. During the second trip, she was accompanied by Gyula. The plan was to build in the US a network of well-placed women she had established at Vassar, ostensibly for cultural purposes but serving as reconnaissance tours for German military intelligence⁹. Hajek cultivated an image of cosmopolitan expertise in her following during her lecture tour in the US—claiming to be a sociologist after 'living among Hungarian peasants', delivering lectures on folk dance despite having learned the material only days earlier, wearing so-called 'authentic Hungarian costumes', actually

designed for men or giving talks about driving across America despite herself being unable to drive. During the tours, she cultivated contacts—especially women—who later became the backbone of her intelligence network (given to Grace Dineen). She meticulously kept an address book, which she later gave to Grace when Hajek was not allowed to return to the US. On the second tour, she and her husband made a detour to oil-rich Mexico, possibly to bring cash to the German agents there (Farago, 1971). During their common trip, they also photographed military strategic objects¹⁰.

When Grace Buchanan Dineen encountered Hajek and the engineer-turned-spy Gyula Rozinek in Budapest in 1941, where she had her father cured of heart problems, she entered a system already shaped by Sári's charisma and Rozinek's logistical discipline, complete with a crash course of intelligence training in Berlin. Dineen, a glamorous French-Canadian socialite in her early thirties, was financially strained but socially adept—precisely the kind of intermediary intelligence services prized. Hajek's intuition and Rozinek's experience (including work in the US chemical industry in the 1920s) converged in Dineen: they believed she could infiltrate the industrial and ethnic German immigrant circles in Detroit and deliver valuable information on American wartime production. Under their guidance, she was recruited and trained to operate in the United States, with the expectation that her charm, transnational mobility and charming British accent would make her a successful agent.

In Detroit, one of the industrial powerhouses of the US war effort, the network expanded to Teresa Behrens, an ethnic German who spoke Hungarian, and, by the 1940s, worked at the Detroit Young Women's Christian Association helping recent immigrants¹¹. Detroit, as an industrial centre, also attracted skilled migrants from Germany, and it had a vibrant German cultural life, with cinemas showing only German films and German cafes and restaurants. Ideologically committed to Nazism, after the search of Behrens's apartment, the FBI found *Mein Kampf* and other Nazi literature in her home and aggressively focused on her mission. Behrens functioned as Dineen's operational anchor—introducing her to local contacts, facilitating information flows about the booming military production and the US Navy's movements and nervously monitoring the possibility of FBI scrutiny. Even as she flirted with a double game of her own by hinting at cooperation with British intelligence, her role remained closely tied to the emotional labour of maintaining trust¹². Unbeknownst to her, however, Dineen had already shifted allegiances to avoid being extradited to Canada: shortly after arriving in the United States, she became a double agent for the FBI, feeding information that enabled a false-flag operation meant to mislead German intelligence about Ford's wartime capabilities¹³.

The collapse of the network came gradually when Gyula Rozinek was reported to have purchased explosives and was extradited from the United States. His dubious activities were connected to Dineen's, including their shared stay at the same New York hotel¹⁴. Dineen's covert cooperation with the FBI due to her fear of being extradited to Canada exposed the vulnerabilities of a system built on personal bonds, performance, gendered expectations and a short training in Berlin¹⁵. Dineen's reassurances kept Behrens calm for months, even as she reported their activities to federal authorities. For Hajek and Rozinek in Europe, the operation seemed to be progressing toward the expected results: gathering more information on US industrial production and organizing sabotage; for the FBI, Grace, as an informant, became a window into German intelligence ambitions. Ultimately, despite her collaboration, Dineen was prosecuted and sentenced to 12 years in prison, of which she served seven. Her example underscored how women in espionage, confined to low-level, risky information-gathering, were both essential and expendable.

THE AFTERMATH

The rise and fall of international spy networks reveal how intelligence in this period operated by a fusion of gendered performance, transnational mobility and the improvisational capacities of individuals navigating overlapping loyalties. The case known as the 'blue-blooded Mata Hari' in the US can be interpreted in the context of the recognition of Nazi Germany as the primary enemy. At that time, the FBI was still learning the craft of counterintelligence: previously, it had mainly pursued bootleggers and murderers, lacking sufficient experience in espionage matters. The investigation followed no established norms, and during the retrial held in the US on October 29, 1948, the defendants were represented by attorney Wilbur Keegan, who had earlier defended Fritz Kuhn (1896-1951), known as a pro-Nazi leader of the German American Bund. Keegan's legal career deserves special attention: although he was investigated after the war, following a two-week hearing in 1945, he was allowed to resume practicing law in New Jersey¹⁶. Keegan was also in touch with Hajek, trying to clear her name.

The collapse of the 'blue-blooded Mata Hari' case during the Cold War—something the FBI sought to prevent by any means—was due to several factors. According to the defence, the conditions for a fair trial were not met, procedural errors occurred, and the evidence was insufficient. Another problem was that the defendants, such as Hajek or Rozinek, were not officially arrested as foreign nationals, and therefore, their rights were not properly upheld. The conduct of the trial itself conformed to no procedural norms. In the case documentation, individuals such as Hajek and Rozinek also appeared; the latter, however, as mentioned above, died rather

early, soon after arriving in Chile. Moreover, Hajek was living in Chile with no intention of being dragged into this high-profile case in the US.

The case vividly illustrates the ambiguities of political justice in that period. By the time of the new trial of the spy ring in the US in 1951, the political context had changed significantly. As the Cold War deepened, anti-communism took a key role, shaping legal proceedings. One of the main arguments of the defence was that the defendants had fought against the Soviet Union, which, within the political logic of the time, was seen as a mitigating circumstance.

In Sári's letters to her sister, the mention of the 'Teri affair' (the nickname for Behrens) suggests that personal conflicts and emotional strains also contributed to the tragic course of her life. On 23 November 23, 1947, she wrote the following in connection with the retrial taking place in the United States: '*The case is much more serious than I had thought, but in this, as in everything, I will persevere honestly, regardless of the consequences*' (Sári to Lujza, 23 November 1947). The letters are not informative as to the outcome of Sári's retrial. On 3 June 1951, in her letter to her sister, Sári mentions that the case reached the US Supreme Court but was 'dragging'. Sári grew distrustful of her lawyer, Dr. Wilbur Keegan, working on the case, about whom she wrote: '*he must have now been working for the enemy*'. He was trying to convince Sári to relocate to the US, but she thought this was done with ulterior motives as it would then enable Sári to be taken to court and expected to testify.

After 1951, the letters grew silent about the case, and no resolution is known. Eventually, her priorities might have changed, especially after she married her second husband in 1953. They were exploring the possibility of migrating further, either to Venezuela, Australia or South Africa—none such aspirations materialized. They both received their citizenship and stayed in Chile, which they had grown to accept.

The Hungarian *émigré* community in Chile was active not only in economic and political spheres but also in cultural life. Despite their small number (a few hundred *émigrés*), they had high status before emigrating to Hungary, and they, as Hajek and Rozinek, found connections to the right circles in Chile as well. As all diasporas, the Hungarian community also organized itself and became somewhat influential in Chilean cultural life. (For instance, in 1945, Lola Botka and her husband, Ernst Uthoff, established the National Ballet of Chile.) Some *émigrés*—such as Sári—lived with Professor Neuschloss for a while, who translated the 19th-century Hungarian classic, Imre Madách's drama *The Tragedy of Man*, into Spanish, which Sári later directed for the Hungarian community in Santiago (Chilei Magyar Mozaik, 1952).

TRANSNATIONAL NETWORKS NEVER DIE

Notably, no documentation linking Hajek to surveillance or investigation by Chilean intelligence services—such as ‘Department 50’, a specialized police unit tasked with monitoring espionage networks, including Nazi, fascist and Japanese agents—has been identified. The absence of such records is itself significant given the heightened scrutiny of European arrivals in Chile during the 1940s and 1950s. It suggests either that Hajek was not considered a suspect or that relevant documentation has not survived.

In the early years of the Cold War, however, maintaining ties with the homeland was especially important for Hungarians living outside the Iron Curtain. As no trading connections existed, one of the most characteristic practices was the sending of what are known as IKA packages (which contained food, clothing and other essential goods) from Chile to the socialist bloc. These packages provided economic assistance and held symbolic significance, serving to maintain family and social bonds and reminding them of the ‘good old times’ they had spent together before the war and of the standard of living outside the Communist bloc. As part of these connections, it was common to support Sári’s ‘godchild’ and to send small gifts—such as a bicycle. However, letters attest to Sári supporting her family and acquaintances by sending other everyday goods, such as medicine, vitamins, or clothes.

LESSONS LEARNED

Writing the transnational history of fascism and Nazi networks after 1945 is full of challenges. Not only does it uncover novel forms of espionage, such as involving more women, but it also requires new methods. As these were submerged networks, their activities must be traced by indirect sources (documents) and personal correspondences containing vague names and references. But as Gyula and Sári’s case underlines, the supportive networks that helped them to relocate across France, Dakar in Senegal and from Argentina to Chile were the networks they kept and the ‘nodes’ of which they moved. Sources attest to the durability of these connections, which have translated into legal matters, social positions, economic opportunities, and cultural ties.

The strong connections between Hungarians and ethnic Germans in this Chilean context is a recurrent motif: Sári’s lawyer, Father Ambrus, the Catholic priest, Professor Neuschloss with whom she stayed temporarily, the Cerda family, whose farm she stayed tutoring children, Keegan, the lawyer in the US representing her case at the courts, even possibly Alejandro

Haypál, her second husband, represented a tightly-woven 'thick' network that was working on co-dependency and the economy of exchanging favours, information and loyalties.

The documents related to Sári/Carlota Hajek and her letter correspondence with her sister behind the Iron Curtain, the state socialist Hungary, read critically side-by-side, suggest a rich, decade-long storytelling about Nazi collaborators in exile in the aftermath of the Second World War. The few, relatively scattered sources indicate that these ethnic diasporic networks persisted as personal, informal (and at times official) connections that were highly transactional. There was always somebody's immigration or relocation to aid (Sári's nephew), distant relatives to inform and help with capitalist products (Sári's sister Lujzi and her family), children to teach, or exchange favours for the sake of a business (to aid Alejandro's restaurant) or a high-ranking politician to tutor (in exchange for future opportunities).

These connections not only connected Europe and the Americas but also spanned Africa and Australia. We are incredibly fortunate to have letters and documents to corroborate findings in the case of Sári Hajek and her 'blue-blooded Mata Hari case'. Such private sources are often missing, and there are now fewer living relatives who could provide more information. One lesson, however, is starkly obvious: sometimes we find information where we least expect it as even a marble gravestone might open hitherto invisible and forgotten stories of such networks.

NOTES

1 Press coverage of the incident was nation-wide in the United States. See for example "Detroit Spy Ring... And Bay Area Espionage. Four are Charged with Procuring Vital Information for Germany. Hungarian Pair Linked by FBI to Nazi Ring Smashed in Detroit" (Detroit [...], 1943); "Tutor of Spy Ring Woman Lectured Here", (Tutor [...], 1943); "FBI Traps German Spy Ring. 6 Held" (FBI [...], 1943).

2 On the methodological difficulties of researching transnational intelligence networks, see Pető and Agárdi (under review).

3 Several publications in migration studies analyze migrant letters as following specific conventions. See, for example, the articles of the Special Issue "Migrant Letters" in *The History of the Family*, v. 21, n. 3, 2016. For instance, Borges and Cancian (2016), Boter and Sinke (2016) and Stanley (2016).

4 On Geni we can find his ID and picture from 1946. https://www.geni.com/photo/view/6000000003355097714?album_type=photos_of_me&end=&photo_id=6000000217703786824&project_id=&start=&tagged_profiles= (URL: 8.5.2026).

5 Ester Alessandri de Matte was the daughter of Arturo Alessandri, the 1920-25 and 1932-38 Chilean President, wife of Arturo Matte Larraín, Minister of Finance 1943-44, later Senator

and Presidential Candidate (1952). Also, she was the sister of Jorge Alessandri, Chile's Minister of Finance from 1947 to 1950 and later President from 1958 to 1964.

6 From here on, all letter excerpts are taken from 'Letters between Sára Hajek and Lujza Hajek, 1947-1956', a privately owned document.

7 FBI file 54-22-6/3/40-6/29/40.

8 File RZ 211_101997, Bundesarchiv.

9 About this new type of spies (female professionals), see "Diáklányok, sportrénekek és régészek a nemzetközi kémszervezetek munkájában" (Diáklányok [...], 1936).

10 Sári Hajek, "Scrapbook," *Documents of director Sári Hajek*, XIV. 97. Kőszeg City Archives.

11 Behrens was born on the territory that belonged to the Kingdom of Hungary, and, after the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, belonged to Yugoslavia.

12 "W. Ladd on 6 March 1942" is about sending Grace to Canada. See file 65-41157-28, Federal Bureau of Investigation. "Memo to Ladd, 1942, 9 March" is about using Grace as a double agent. See file 65-40157, Federal Bureau of Investigation.

13 FBI File 65-41157-28 W. Ladd on 6 March 1942 about sending Grace to Canada and 65-40157 Memo to Ladd, 1942, 9 March, about using Grace as a double agent.

14 FBI File 65-40157-X6. Hoover closed the investigation on Gyula Rozinek on 8 May 1940.

15 Federal Bureau of Investigation, File no. 62-115687-1.

16 "Keegan v. United States", argued on November 9, 10, 1944 and decided on June 11, 1945: <https://tile.loc.gov/storage-services/service/ll/usrep/usrep325/usrep325478/usrep325478.pdf>. The process of his accusations of conspiracy being dismissed. It seems that the evidence in the case was insufficient to sustain the petitioners' convictions (all of whom were members of the German American Bund).

1. Data Availability Statement

The data supporting the results of this study are available in the body of the article.

2. Conflict of Interest

Not applicable.

3. Funding Agency

Not applicable.

4. Author Contributions

Not applicable.

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FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION. Pittsburg Office report file, 1 August 1940, File 54-22-6/3/40-6/29/40.

FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION. W. Ladd on 6 March 1942. File 65-41157-28.

FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION. Memo to Ladd, 1942, 9 March. File 65-40157.

LETTERS between Sára Hajek and Lujza Hajek, 1947-1956. Privately owned document. With permission from the family.