

OSA Visegrad Fellowship Report

Circumventing censorship during the Kádár era: a case study of the Demszky circle

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1. Research context and aims

In the 1980s, Hungary's samizdat scene operated as a multifaceted network. Each point in this network was connected by a common *raison d'être*: to circumvent censorship in order to experience the cultural and political benefits of freedom of expression. Or, as Gábor Demszky – one of the major proponents of samizdat during the 1980s – recently put it, ‘the samizdat ambition’ was to ‘step out of the realm of illegality and be samizdat no longer.’¹ My research contributes to scholarship by Péter Bajomi-Lázár (2013), Miklós Haraszti (2020), András Bozóki (2022), and Gábor Danyi (2023) to demonstrate how samizdat operated and why it was necessary.² In so doing, parallels between the censorial context faced by authors and publishers during the 1980s and today become apparent. In addition, research from files relating to samizdat and underground intellectual activity during the late Kádár era held at the Blinken Open Society Archives (OSA) supports my aim to bring some of the background characters of the samizdat scene into focus. Moreover, from my analysis of these materials, I suggest that samizdat is at once a medium, a genre, a corpus of texts, and a textual culture. This definition

¹ Gábor Demszky, ‘Samizdat: Producing Value Through Art.’ Trans. Stephen Humphreys. *Rajk*, 2019, <https://rajk.info/en/gabor-demszky-samizdat.html> [accessed 14 May 2024]

² Péter Bajomi-Lázár, ‘The Party Colonisation of the Media: The Case of Hungary.’ *East European Politics and Societies and Cultures*, 27.1 (2013): 69-89; Miklós Haraszti, ‘Victor Orbán’s Propaganda State.’ In *Brave New Hungary: Mapping the ‘System of National Cooperation’*. Eds. János Mátyás Kovács and Balázs Trencsényi. London: Lexington Books, 2020. 211-225; András Bozóki’s *Rolling Transition and the Role of Intellectuals: The Case of Hungary*. Budapest: CEU Press, 2022; Gábor Danyi, *Az írógép és az utazótáska: Szamizdat irodalom Magyarországon 1956-1989*. Budapest Kronosz, 2023.

of samizdat – which draws on the work of Friederike Kind-Kovács (2014) and Josephine von Zitzewitz (2020) – makes clear that as the lines between creator, copier, courier, and consumer become blurred, samizdat is as much about the modes of reproduction and distribution as it is about the text itself.³ Hence, samizdat is intrinsically connected to the censorial context from which it emerges and to which it poses challenges. Indeed, during the late Kádár era, samizdat culture created an environment that watered the seeds of a sprouting political opposition. Through my research at OSA, therefore, I revisit the production and distribution of samizdat at a time when freedom of expression is once again under threat; a fact substantiated by the February 2024 Human Rights Watch report “‘I can’t do my job as a journalist’: the systematic undermining of media freedom in Hungary” which evidences how, under Viktor Orbán’s Fidesz party, Hungary is in breach of Article 10 of the European Court of Human Rights, Article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 11 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights, and Article 2 of the Treaty on the European Union.⁴

This Visegrad Fellowship is a continuation of research I have been conducting over the past four years. It contributes to my work as co-founder of the ‘Replaying Communism’ project (which received Arts and Humanities Research Council funding in 2023) and as co-editor of an edited collection provisionally entitled ‘Replaying Communism: Trauma and Nostalgia in European Media and Culture’. The research period at OSA has enabled me to gather information on the lives of and socio-political context faced by dissident writers, artists, and revolutionaries who produced and distributed samizdat during the late Kádár era. I apply a comparative analytical approach to my reading of samizdat documents to link Hungary’s contemporary political climate (since the 2011 Hungarian Constitution) with the socio-political circumstances that affected samizdat publishers forty years ago. By learning lessons from the underground democratic opposition that formed around and via samizdat ‘boutiques’ (as they were called) during the 1980s, I suggest that we can better understand and therefore circumvent censorship enforced today. Indeed, at a time when Orbán’s Fidesz party has, according to the 2023 Reporters Sans Frontières report, ‘seized de facto control of 80% of the country’s media’,

³ Friederike Kind-Kovács, *Written Here, Published There: How Underground Literature Crossed the Iron Curtain*. Budapest; New York: CEU Press, 2014; Josephine von Zitzewitz, *The Culture of Samizdat: Literature and Underground networks in the Late Soviet Union*. London: Bloomsbury, 2020.

⁴ Human Rights Watch, “‘I can’t do my job as a journalist’: The Systematic Undermining of Media Freedom in Hungary.” *hrw.org*, 24 February 2024, <https://www.hrw.org/report/2024/02/13/i-cant-do-my-job-journalist/systematic-undermining-media-freedom-hungary> [accessed 14 May 2024].

the question of how to circumvent censorship is once again highly relevant as freedom of expression is under threat.⁵

2. Reflection on original research questions

I arrived at OSA asking what lessons can be learned from those who evaded censorship to publish prohibited literature and journalism during the late Kádár era, focusing on the work of Gábor Demszky and Róza Hodosán. By consulting materials from the OSA's samizdat collections, this research also set out to put a spotlight on the lives of those involved in samizdat who have been relegated to the footnotes of history. Guiding my research was, and remains, a belief that materials from the archive can inform and inspire a plurality of views concerning censorship regulation today. As archives (OSA), educational institutions (Central European University), and heritage sites (Memento Park) are (potential) victims of the Fidesz government's censorial culture (as argued by Bálint Magyar and Zsolt Enyedi), it is important to recognise and protect the integrity of such institutions to democracy.⁶ In *Burning the Books: A History of Knowledge Under Attack* (2020), Richard Ovenden, alluding to George Orwell, writes that 'libraries and archives have become central to the support of democracy, the rule of law and open society as they are bodies that exist to "cling to the truth"'.⁷ I shall now exemplify how my consultation of documents held at OSA has enabled me to 'cling to the truth' in order to understand the intentions and impact of censorship during the 1980s.

3. Research process and consulted documents

During the first 3 weeks at OSA (2–22 April), I systematically surveyed the holdings I expected to be relevant. The most useful of these include:

Documents relating to ARP

→ *HU OSA 336-0-5 Collection of Documents Relating to Opposition and Emigration, 1957-1989 from the Personal Papers of General Béla Király, 1956-1996*

- Of particular interest were documents relating to samizdat activity in Hungary, particularly the means by which books were transported into the country from behind the Iron Curtain (especially the role played by Tibor Szokody in transporting books from Vienna into Budapest, discussed in section 4, below):

⁵ 'Hungary', *Reporters sans Frontières*, 13 March 2024, <https://rsf.org/en/country/hungary> [accessed 14 May 2024].

⁶ Bálint Magyar, *Post-Communist Mafia State: The Case of Hungary*. Budapest: CEU Press, 2016; Zsolt Enyedi, 'The Central European University in the Trenches.' In *Brave New Hungary: Mapping the 'System of National Cooperation'*. Eds. János Mátyás Kovács and Balázs Trencsényi. London: Lexington Books, 2020. 243-267.

⁷ Richard Ovenden, *Burning the Books: A History of Knowledge Under Attack*. Hachette: London, 2020, p. 4.

- **HU OSA 336-0-5:3/3** ‘ARP: Report on the State of the Democratic Opposition’ dated 27 May 1987 (46 pages)
 - **HU OSA 336-0-5:3/8** ‘Contacts with Hungarian Dissidents: Meeting at Zsolt Csalog’s Apartment in New York’, which includes Zsolt Csalog’s ‘Dialogue Budapest, June 16, 1988’ (20 pages)
 - **HU OSA 336-0-5:4/1-7** Béla Király’s ‘Conversation with the Demszkys at Highland Lakes, NJ on November 23, 1988’ (4 pages); Letters exchanged with Joan Keller about the ‘Tibor Project’; ‘ARP Progress Report: September 1, 1988’ (9 pages); ARP funding support documents for samizdat and democratic opposition (2 pages)
- **HU OSA 435-0-3:1**: *Grant Related Documents from Peter Pastor Collection on Atlantic Research and Publications, Inc. 1986-1990*
- Of particular interest was the correspondence between Béla Király and Géza Szócs about how to communicate the successful delivery of books into Budapest and Romania in letters sent to the US:
 - **HU OSA 435-0-1:3/10** Correspondence Related to Publishing Activities: 1986-1990 (Béla Király writes to Géza Szócs about the covert delivery of books to Hungary and Romania, 3 November 1987)
 - **HU OSA 435-0-3:1/1** Documents Related to the Grant of Gábor Demszky (contains letters between Demszky and Béla Király arranging the Open Society Fund study exchange program to the US)
 - **HU OSA 435-0-3:1/3** Documents Related to the Grant of Viktor Orbán
 - **HU OSA 435-0-3:1/5** Correspondence Related to Grants: 1987-1988

Documents relating to samizdat and the democratic opposition

- **HU OSA 302-1-1** *Writings of Gábor Demszky from the Personal Papers of Gábor Demszky, 1981-1989*
- Of particular interest was Demszky’s essay on censorship (discussed in section 4, below):
 - **HU OSA 302-1-1:1/12** ‘Stability Now or a State of Transition for Some Time’ (7 pages)
 - **HU OSA 302-1-1:2/8** ‘Utóirat’ (pp. 510-515); ‘A Cenzúra Reflexe’ (pp. 127-128) from *Hírmondó* March 1987, issue 25
- **HU OSA 302-1-5** *Samizdat Publications, Manuscripts Gábor Demszky’s Personal Papers, 1981-1989*
- Of particular interest was a samizdat produced at a children’s summer camp – a clear indication of how widespread and popular samizdat had become by the late 1980s:
 - **HU OSA 302-1-5:13/12** ‘Tornyai Time’ – Demszky and Róza Hodosán produced a children’s samizdat using the ramka technique, titled ‘Tornyai Time’ (1987)
- **HU OSA 368-5-1** *Life Interviews, Autobiographies, Bibliographies and Obituaries from the Personal Papers of István Kemény*
- Of particular interest was Kemény’s comment on being censored for producing research about social inequalities in Hungary:
 - **HU OSA 368-5-1:1/1** ‘Beszélgetés Kemény István és Batár Attila között 1990 körül’ (esp. pp. 127-128). In this interview with Batár Attila from 1990, Kemény talks about being arrested by the secret police. Kemény, who worked as Demszky’s chief advisor from 1990, fell victim of state censorship long before his academic career took off,

even before his infamous sociological study of gypsy and poor communities in Hungary in 1971.

→ **HU OSA 397-0-1** *Periodicals from the György Krassó Collection of Hungarian Samizdat, 1958-1989*

- Of particular interest were articles relating to nationalism (March 15) and the fight for democratic rights, as well as illustrations indicating the impending fall of Communism from late 1980s samizdat:
 - **HU OSA 397-0-1:1/2** *Demokrata*: 1-6 [ABC Kiadó]: *Demokrata* 1986 ‘Márciusi Üzenet’ report on the ‘depressing state of affairs in Hungary (15 March 1986)’ (2 pages); *Demokrata* issue 4 1986 ‘Hogyan tároljuk a samizdatkiadványokat?’; ‘A te könyved?’ illustration of police confiscating samizdat
 - **HU OSA 397-0-1:1/5** *Demokrata*: 3-12 [ABC Kiadó]: *Demokrata* issue 12 1987 ‘In-Dependence’ illustration by Ágnes Háy
 - **HU OSA 397-0-1:2/1** *Demokrata*: 1-7 [ABC Kiadó]: *Demokrata* issue 4 1988 ‘Demzky Gábor vagyok, samizdat kiadó’ (Demszky speaks about March 15 and the necessity of upholding democratic rights); *Demokrata* issue 7 1988 (contains two illustrations depicting the fall / weakening of Communism, including one by Inconnu Group)
 - **HU OSA 397-0-1:2/3** *Demokrata*: 1-2 [ABC Kiadó]: *Demokrata* issue 2 March 15 (1989) Jenő Nagy ‘Március 15-e: fuggetlen-szabad sajtót!’; Jenő Nagy ‘Szamizdat’ (essay outlining the purpose of samizdat)
 - **HU OSA 397-0-1:3/2** ‘*Hirmondó*: 4-9’: *Hirmondó* 4 1985 György Konrád ‘A cenzúra reformja?’ (pp. 1-10)
 - **HU OSA 397-0-1:4/4** *Külön Beszélő*: *Beszélő* July 1984 ‘The Case of Gábor Demzky’ by Haraszti, Kis, and Rajk (pp. 14-15)
 - **HU OSA 397-0-1:3/6** *Hirmondó* 1 1988 ‘Március 15’ (pp. 40-41)

→ **HU OSA 426-0-4** *Samizdat Journals and Periodicals, Posters, Artifacts from the Lajos Jakab Samizdat Collection, 1979-2016*

- Of particular interest were documents relating the articulation of the political views of the democratic opposition:
 - **HU OSA 426-0-4:1/2** ‘*Beszélő* 9, 11. sz.’: ‘Javaslat a sajtójog szabályozásának elveire’ / Editorial letter expressing *Beszélő*’s views on press freedoms, signed by Miklós Haraszti, János Kis, Ferenc Kőszeg, Bálint Nagy, and György Petri (14 September 1983) (4 pages)
 - **HU OSA 426-0-4:1/3** ‘*Beszélő* 16, 17. sz.’: ‘Le a cenzúrával’ by Zsolt Krokovay from *Beszélő* 16, January 1986 (7 pages)
 - **HU OSA 426-0-4: 2/12** ‘A monori tanácskozás’ [‘Meeting at Monor’] (14-16 June 1985) (7 pages)

→ **HU OSA 429-3-1** *Samizdat and other Publications of the Hungarian Opposition Movement from the Personal Papers of Mihály Csákó, 1955-2018*

- Of particular interest was Csákó’s collection of work by Miklós Haraszti and István Kemény, and the ‘flying lectures’ of Miklós Szabó:
 - **HU OSA 429-3-1:5/8** Haraszti’s *A cenzúra esztétikája* [*The aesthetics of censorship*] (discussed in section 4, below)
 - **HU OSA 429-3-1:6/3** István Kemény: Poverty in Hungary (report on the class structure and inequalities in Hungary containing data from a survey conducted in 1969)

- **HU OSA 429-3-1:9/5** Miklós Szabó Lectures / Lecture sketches 1980-1991 (lecture notes from Miklós Szabó's 'flying lectures' series, especially 'A modern liberalizmus továbbfejlődése' ['The evolution of modern liberalism'], p. 17)
- **HU OSA 429-3-1:9/7** A 'Szent Tavaszi' [The 'Holy Spring'] 1848 publication of ABC Független Kiadó containing essays by György Krassó and a poem by György Petri entitled 'Petőfi-tér-Melody' about the need for revolutionary spirit on the back page)

Documents relating to Group Inconnu

In addition to the items outlined above, I also explored the Philipp Tibor Collection to ascertain a clear picture of the underground cultural activity during the 1980s. A selective summary of the items relevant to my ongoing research are listed below.

→ **HU OSA 362-0-1** *Artworks and Preparatory Materials by Group Inconnu* / **HU OSA 362-0-2** *Samizdat Materials and Other Alternative Publications* / **HU OSA 362-0-3** *Posters, Leaflets and Ephemera from the Philipp Tibor Collection, 1967-1989*

- Of particular interest were miscellaneous items that evidenced the underground culture during the 1980s, such as a reading of Ezra Pound's *Cantos* at Arteria Galéria (29 March 1985) and cinema tickets to see *Brazil* via the Alternative Cultural Centre (21 June 1987) (**HU OSA 362-0-3:1/2**), Samizdat forums at Jurta Színház (**HU OSA 362-0-3:2/8**), as well as pamphlets by the Duna Kör [Danube Circle] protesting against the Nagymaros Dam (**HU OSA 362-0-3:2/18**) and early newsletters for both SZDSZ (**HU OSA 362-0-3:2/32**) and FIDESZ (**HU OSA 362-0-3:1/12**).

When analysing these documents, I compared my findings with my original research questions, and adjusted these questions to read as follows:

1. How did the censorial environment of the 1980s affect the production and dissemination of literature?
2. What does documenting the lives of forgotten individuals contribute to our understanding of the samizdat scene?
3. What do samizdat essays reveal about the nature of censorship and how do the approaches to combat restrictions on freedom of expression differ?
4. How do archives like OSA contribute to our understanding of censorship during the late Kádár era and today?⁸

⁸ Original research questions: (1) what are the similarities and differences between the conditions for publishers during the Kádár era and those working today? (2) how important were homegrown dissident groups and networks of émigré cultural figures that/who produced samizdat publications such as *Beszélő* when Hungary was a Soviet satellite state? (3) why is there a resurgence of underground and/or émigré 'dissident' publishers and authors in Hungary today? (4) what lessons can we learn from the Demszkys as we face increasing censorship in Hungary under Fidesz? (5) is Fidesz-affiliated ownership of educational centres, publishers, media outlets, and cultural

On 10 May, I met and interviewed Gábor Demszky, described in the 1986 Helsinki Report as ‘[t]he major force behind the samizdat press in Hungary’.⁹ Our conversation covered topics ranging from shifting definitions of censorship to the future of Hungary’s democracy. We also discussed the reasons behind the divide between Eastern and Western Europe in terms of the history of democracy and the democratic integrity of government institutions today. This interview, as well as the documents I consulted in the archive, formed part of my presentation on 14 May 2024 in which I demonstrated how Hungary’s samizdat scene operated and raised questions concerning the purpose of samizdat. In so doing, I drew on documents relating to samizdat activity and the democratic opposition (listed above) to discuss the relevance of, for example, László Rajk’s well-known samizdat ‘boutique’ on Galamb Street and Demszky’s publishing house AB Független Kiadó (which published philosophical and political essays concerned with freedom of speech, the press, and assembly, as well as censored works by George Orwell and Timothy Garton-Ash) to the meaning and development of samizdat. I then referred to the Personal Papers of Hungarian émigré, Béla Király, who headed Atlantic Research and Publications (ARP) in New York, to document the role of book smugglers like Tibor Szokody who, under Király’s guidance, played an essential role in maintaining the flow of information and ideas from both West to East and East to West (HU OSA 336-0-5:4/1-7). Finding documents pertaining to Szokody’s role in samizdat was particularly exciting as there remains no English language publication about his life and he is not mentioned in any Hungarian language scholarship that I can find.

4. Detailed reflections

My research enabled me to categorise Hungarian samizdat of the 1980s into three stages. Broadly speaking, these stages can be outlined as follows:

Stage 1 (early ’80s): samizdat was largely self-reflexive. Journals like *Beszélő* (edited by János Kis) often contained essays on samizdat itself (its origins and purpose) and the meaning and nature of censorship. It was initially aimed at intellectual circles.

houses impacting freedom of expression in ways that are similar to the impact of Kádár era censorship? (6) in what ways can archives, like the OSA, be protected from censorship and alienation?

⁹ Janet Fleischman, *Violations of the Helsinki Accords, Hungary: A Report Prepared for the Helsinki Review Conference, Vienna, November 1985*. New York: Human Rights Watch, 1986, p. 11.

Stage 2 (mid '80s): samizdat became more creative, and the number of journals in circulation increased. Some journals, such as *Demokrata* (which was established in 1986) contained easy-to-understand and shorter articles that appealed to a broader readership.

Stage 3 (late '80s): samizdat journals like *Hírmondó* recognised their role in shaping public opinion and became motivated by the opportunity to form a democratic opposition that resulted in the foundation of SZDSZ on 13 November 1988. Samizdat also began to reflect on changes within the censorial culture of the late Kádár era.

In 'A Cenzúra Reflexe' (1987) ['Reflexes of Censorship'], published in *Hírmondó*, Demszky describes the conditions of censorship as follows:

Kelet-Európában a gyanú árnyéka mindig rávetül a papírra nyomott szóra. A cenzúra mindennapi rutin és beidegződés. Talán az a legjellemzőbb rá, hogy felső utasítás nélkül is működik, az állami akarat tovább él benne, sőt a rutinszerű cenzúra a központi akarat nélkül is él. [‘In Eastern Europe, the shadow of suspicion always hangs over the printed word. Censorship is a daily routine and conditioning. Perhaps its greatest characteristic is that it operates even without orders from above, the state’s will lives on through it, indeed, routine censorship lives on even without central will.’] (HU OSA 302-1-1:2/8)¹⁰

This definition of censorship during the late Kádár era as a subliminal force in society chimes with both Haraszti's and Garton-Ash's understanding of censorship, as documented in texts written only a couple of years earlier. In *A cenzúra esztétikája*, first published by AB Független Kiadó in 1986, Haraszti distinguishes between censorship under Stalinism and under Kádár's 'soft dictatorship' as follows: 'Under Stalinism, our plight was like that of the fish whose owner foolishly locked the aquarium in fear of its escape. Since Stalinism, the owner has become wiser and the fish happier. The aquarium remains the same.'¹¹ Similarly, writing in the December 1985 issue of *The New York Review*, Garton-Ash depicts Hungary as a police state that has developed into a self-policing state, which creates an environment of what Haraszti calls 'repressive tolerance'. Garton-Ash sees Hungary in terms of a garden maze that betrays the hypocrisy of a censorial culture that self-perpetuates in the face of its own decline:

Imagine a garden maze, a maze in which mirrors conceal the hedges, giving the illusion of open space and free movement, but also distorting wildly, as in a fairground hall of mirrors. At one corner you look impossibly tall, thin, and pale, like the poet Petőfi

¹⁰ Gábor Demszky, 'A Cenzúra Reflexe.' *Hírmondó*, 25, March 1987.

¹¹ Miklós Haraszti, *The Velvet Prison: Artists Under State Socialism*. Trans. Katalin and Stephen Landesmann with Steve Wasserman. New York: Basic Books, 1987, p. 101.

[sic.]; at the next, absurdly squat. First you confidently step forward—and hit a mirror. Then you nervously edge round an open space. But sometimes you can walk straight through a mirror (or hedge), only, of course, to find yourself in another alley. Here you meet the administrator of the maze, himself lost in it. This is Hungary.¹²

In our interview on 10 May, Demszky referred to this period as being filled with increasing inspiration, hopefulness, and forward momentum, adding that samizdat proliferated to such an extent that it became a ‘not so small enterprise’ operating under the radar of the secret police.

With a nuanced understanding of the censorial culture during the 1980s, I can more accurately contextualise the reasons behind the increase in censorship today in order to understand why the promise of the democratic opposition was not entirely fulfilled in Hungary. Iván Szelényi, influenced by Francis Fukuyama’s notion that history is evolutionary, argues that this is because ‘[p]ost-communist capitalism is pregnant with forces that point to a drift from the liberal model.’¹³ Hence, research that seeks to understand the founding of democratic organisations centred on the principle of freedom of expression is more relevant than ever as this ‘drift’ takes Hungary further away from the democratic ideologies debated in samizdat journals like *Beszélő*, *Demokrata*, and *Hírmondó* and at underground gatherings such as the 1984 Monor meeting (HU OSA 426-0-4: 2/12).

In this context, the archive itself holds a vital place in the process of memory and the construction of knowledge. For Laura Millar, archives ‘contribute to the construction of collective knowledge, identity, and, perhaps, wisdom’.¹⁴ Millar adds that ‘[i]t is by preserving and fostering our memories that we can build the foundation we need to look to the future and see our connections with the larger world’. My Fellowship at OSA is now enabling me to identify connections between the Kádár era and today in terms of the censorial culture experienced by writers and publishers (see section 5, below). In comparing the political, social, and legal context of the 1980s with that of today, I believe that we can gain a deeper understanding of the potential trajectory of censorship and its impact on Hungary’s cultural and political groups.

5. Impact of research conducted at OSA

¹² Timothy Garton-Ash, ‘A Hungarian Lesson.’ *The New York Review*, 5 December 1986, <https://www.nybooks.com/articles/1985/12/05/the-hungarian-lesson/> [accessed 14 May 2024].

¹³ Iván Szelényi. ‘Capitalism After Communism.’ In *Twenty-Five Sides of a Post-Communist Mafia State*. Eds. Bálint Magyar and Julia Vasarhelyi. Budapest: CEU Press, 2017. 637-649, p. 648.

¹⁴ Laura Millar, ‘Touchstones: Considering the Relationship between Memory and Archives.’ *Archivaria*, 61 (2006): 105-126, pp. 125; 126.

This research will directly shape two impact case studies. It will lead to the publication of an article provisionally entitled ‘Circumventing Censorship During the Kádár and Orbán Eras’ and to the Introduction of a co-edited volume provisionally entitled ‘Replaying Communism: Trauma and Nostalgia in European Media and Culture’ which emerged from a conference that took place on 1 December 2023 as part of the ‘Replaying Communism’ project (see section 1, above).¹⁵

The article draws on materials held at OSA, an original interview with one of the main proponents of the underground ‘samizdat scene’ during the 1980s, Gábor Demszky, and recent legal developments in Hungary to demonstrate how the essence of censorship itself bares similarities and differences to the censorial environment of the late Kádár era. I demonstrate how censorship has changed from being passively prohibitive during the 1980s to actively inhibitive over the past decade. During the late Kádár era the sentiment was relatively taciturn and followed Kádár’s self-styled mantra of ‘those who are not with us are against us’ (a claim corroborated by Demszky during our interview on 10 May 2024). This political climate enabled underground samizdat activity to proliferate. Since the 2011 Hungarian Constitution, however, censorship has become deliberately inhibitive as removal of financial support from any publisher or media outlet that does not reinforce set values of Christianity, nationalism, and so-called traditional family values leads to homogenisation of ideas and the restraint of plural and independent culture. In addition, the passing of laws such as the Sovereignty Protection Act (2023) or the Child Protection Act (2021), often termed the Homosexual Propaganda Law, that limits and restricts the sale of books with LGBTQ+ content under the auspices of religious and family values has led to the self-exile of writers and publishers like Gergely Péterfy and Éva Novák-Péterfy. Hence, in this article I suggest that censorship has changed being a form of ‘repressive tolerance’ (as defined by Haraszti in 1986) to one of *suppressive intolerance*.

For both the aforementioned article and the edited collection, I draw on materials from OSA and am in the process of working with the documents outlined in section 3, above. I am therefore grateful to all who have supported my research period as a Visegrad Fellow and take this opportunity to thank the Visegrad Fund.

¹⁵ Lucy Jeffery and Anna Váradi, ‘Replaying Communism Project.’
<https://sites.google.com/view/replayingcommunism/home?authuser=0> [accessed 14 May 2024]