



AMIA

Association of Moving
Image Archivists

March 21, 2011

H.E. Mr György Szapáry
Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary
Embassy of the Republic of Hungary
3910 Shoemaker Street, NW
Washington, DC 20008

Your Excellency,

The Association of Moving Image Archivists (AMIA) has learned with some alarm of the Hungarian Government's intention to legislate for the removal and destruction of the records of the communist secret police, interior ministry and state security files held in the Historical Archives of the Hungarian State Security in Budapest.

AMIA is the largest international professional association in the field of film and television archiving. It supports the integrity of the historical record, especially in instances where material is endangered or faces destruction due to changes in legal standing, and regardless of whether the material in question comprises moving images or other media.

The proposition that a democratic state cannot "preserve the immoral documents of an immoral regime" is spurious, and the very antithesis of archival principles. Such logic could equally lead – for example - to the destruction of the records of Nazi Germany, the genocide of the Cambodian Khmer Rouge, the 18th century slave trade, and several 20th century dictatorships. It is no accident that the preservation of such records has been secured by their listing on UNESCO's *Memory of the World* register.

These records, however painful, are part of Hungary's memory. Their loss would undermine accountability, inhibit historical research, and promote national amnesia. None of these things are in the interests of either the Hungarian people or the international community. Preserving evidence of past injustice is an essential guarantor of a healthy democratic society. We must be mindful of future generations and calculate the cost: if they are deprived of the opportunity to learn from this era of Hungarian history, they will be placed at the risk of being condemned to repeat it.

AMIA urges the Government of Hungary to observe and support archival standards by ensuring the preservation of these records.

Sincerely,

Wendy Shay
President

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