



online exhibition from February 26, 2021 | recordsuncovered.osaarchivum.org

A JOINT PROJECT OF BLINKEN OSA AND THE HÁTTÉR ARCHIVE AND LIBRARY

Records Uncovered is an online exhibition by Blinken OSA and the Háltér Archive and Library which presents the divergences and commonalities among gay and lesbian movements in Central and Southeastern Europe in the second half of the last century. Through legal documentation, media reports, private and institutional correspondence, art works and ephemera, this exhibition evinces the understanding of homosexuality and the treatment of sexual minorities, in countries which commonly shared two different political goals at two different periods: the establishment of a new communist society between the mid-1940s and the early 1990s and the transition towards a democratic society in the following years.

As such, the exhibition offers insights into the history of the legal, social, cultural and medical “regimes of homosexuality” in Central and Southeastern Europe as being substantively shaped by two political projects: the furthering of the communist revolution and the democratization of the respective societies. Since an important communication axis regarding public policies on homosexuality was established during the communist period between these regions and the USSR and GDR, the exhibition dwells on the specificities of the understanding of homosexuality, the treatment of sexual minorities and gay and lesbian self-organization in these countries as well, although it does not follow them separately after the countries’ dissolutions.

Records Uncovered was created in a year when the decades-long political attacks on LGBTQI+ persons in Central Europe reached their height. For years, populist governments in the region have been constantly re-enforcing the view on LGBTQI+ movements as “rootless” in the “soil” of Central and Southeastern Europe, qualifying them as mere proponents of a supposedly “imported gender ideology”, which endangers the political, social and cultural traditions of the respective countries.

The exhibition we present is a manifesto-in-documents which categorically opposes this view. It helps us reveal that the accusations against a supposed “gender ideology” are nothing but another historical manifestation of a well-known process of misrecognition of non-heterosexual and non-cis persons. Unlike in the past, this misrecognition in today’s Europe is nurtured by political projects driven by a supposedly imperative concern for the protection of the culture, tradition, and ultimately, “the survival”, of an exclusive (national, religious and sexual) majority in which curtailing the rights of sexual and gender minorities and treating them as persons of lesser dignity is being legally and politically justified as a “necessary measure”. As this exhibition shows, similar justifications for curtailing the rights of gays and lesbians had been all too common in these regions and an obstacle that the activism of these groups, vibrant in even more repressive political times, has managed to overcome.

DISCLAIMERS, FEEDBACK AND CONTRIBUTIONS TO *RECORDS UNCOVERED*

Records Uncovered, realized as a common project of Blinken OSA and the Háltér Archive and Library for the purpose of this year's LGBT history month, is in one sense, an "exhibition in progress". During its creation we faced three predicaments. First, the documentation about the lives and activism of gay and lesbian persons and groups has been unsystematically collected and classified in our archives: much content from their "unwritten histories" still requires time-consuming processes of data-mining and research in order to be publicly "uncovered". Another predicament coming from the structure of the documentation was that it has been more extensive on the gay and lesbian activism in some of the countries in Central and Southeastern Europe, rather than others. Ultimately, in cases where this documentation has been systematically collected and preserved, it mainly reports on the life of gay men and gay activism, sidelining the histories of lesbian, bisexual and transgender people. This unjustifiably strengthens the representative position of gay men as most dominant among the LGBTQI+ population.

Motivated by a desire to overcome these difficulties, *Records Uncovered* marks the start of a common project by the Blinken OSA and the Háltér Archive and Library to diversify our sources and provide a more even representation of histories within and between different LGBTQI+ movements. Although within the framework of the present online exhibition – limited to gay and lesbian movements – we tried to tackle some of the difficulties noted above, we are aware that they cannot be overcome solely by relying on our capacities and efforts as archives. They require a collective action in which our archives and the respective LGBTQI+ communities make collaborative efforts towards enriching, critically examining and diversifying our common LGBTQI+ heritage.

For this reason, *Records Uncovered* as an "exhibition in progress" is a collaborative effort in the form a year-long LGBTQI+ history project, in which Blinken OSA and Háltér invite contributions of relevant materials by members of the LGBTQI+ communities in Central and Southeastern Europe. It is the curated inclusion of these contributions that will ultimately bring *Records Uncovered* to its completion, as a comprehensive on-site exhibition about the histories of the LGBTQI+ movements in these regions, planned for February 2022 at the Galleria Centralis in Blinken OSA.

curated by Perica Jovchevski, Central European University/Blinken OSA
Péter Hanzli, Háltér Archive and Library

CONTRIBUTIONS

Your contribution is welcome!

The *Records Uncovered* online exhibit is a work in progress by Blinken OSA and Háltér Archive and Library, which will be turned into a physical exhibition at Blinken OSA's Galleria Centralis in Budapest in February 2022. To include as many different voices from the LGBTQI+ movement as possible, we welcome contributions from our visitors. You may lend or donate text and audiovisual documents and (photos of) personal effects connected to the history of LGBTQI+ persons in Central and Southeastern Europe in the period 1945–1999.

Pending on your decision, your documents will be considered either for the (online or physical) exhibit or the permanent thematic collections of Blinken OSA (or both.) The descriptive environment, as well as the terms and conditions of access to and use of your documents will be mutually agreed upon on a case-by-case basis.

Contact us to contribute at records_uncovered@osaarchivum.org!

Thank you!

Blinken Open Society Archives | Galleria Centralis

Arany János utca 32, 1051 Budapest, Hungary | Tuesday – Sunday: 10:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m.

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