

LESSONS FROM THE PAST: A HISTORICAL CASE STUDY ON SUCCESSFUL COOPERATION BETWEEN OFFICIAL POLITICS AND MENTAL HEALTH PROFESSIONALS

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The recently recovered documents of the Hungarian Experimental Criminology Department that operated during the brief life of Hungarian Soviet Republic in 1919 attests to a striking example of granting a leading role to psychiatrists and psychologists in reforming law and order. Albeit it only lasted for a brief period but the case of Hungary illustrates how mental health professionals could obtain a considerable influence over official understanding of crime and the treatment of criminals. The aim of the paper is to provide a historical case study of the relationship between the medical community (knowledge creators and practitioners of psychiatry and psychology) and politicians and governmental officials. The paper will demonstrate how due to wide dissemination of medical knowledge among leading governmental personnel Hungarian authorities came to believe that although *queers* (people of non-normative sexual and gender behaviour) might have broken existing laws, with necessary empathy the majority of sexual “abnormals” could and should be rehabilitated into a heteronormative lifestyle. The vanguard official implementation of conceptualizing non-normative gender and sexual behaviour as curable defects of personal and societal psychological health, which was a radical view at this time, offers a historical example of mental health professionals effectively shaping governmental policies.