

“Britain’s Shop Window”: The British Council and Hungarian Anglophilia, 1939–90

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Abstract

This seminar paper examines the attempts of the British government to counteract German and Soviet political influence by fostering Anglophilia in Hungary between 1939 and 1990. The history of the British Council in Hungary was punctuated by the Second World War and the trial of British businessman Edgar Sanders in 1950, which resulted in the expulsion of the organization from Hungary, and the closure of cultural institutes in London and Budapest. From the 1960s, however, the Council gradually regained its influence by facilitating Anglo-Hungarian academic and scientific exchanges, and by running semi-official educational activities in the British Embassy. The Council proved to be an effective weapon in the cultural Cold War, despite the Kádár regime’s determined efforts to prevent its return to Hungary.