

# Communist Censorship In The 20<sup>th</sup> Century Transylvanian Press and Book Publishing in the Shadow of Censorship

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## I. The Origin of Censorship and its Typology

The control and interdiction of the written word is as old as civilisation itself. Thus the history of printed words is the history of the fight for the freedom of press. The concept of censorship covers the activity of those political, religious or military institutions which hinder the presentation and circulation of concepts, opinions, information and spiritual works, according to their own interests. The ruling class has always persecuted progressive thought and hindered its spread, moreover, they tried to make the concepts supporting their aims common knowledge. The elimination of progressive thought has been the task of censorship and of similar obstructive methods. The ruling classes have been conscious of the power of thought and fought against it, trying to obstruct its propagation by all means. All the severe steps of censorship were led by the fear of the outbreak of revolution or change in general.

The fact that printed matter and ideas have been considered so powerful meant that they have been highly esteemed.

The repression apparatus of the ruling class has always tried to hinder the expression of thought and the free flow of opinion. What is more, they have often made the profession of these ideas impossible.

The appearance of periodicals triggered the restrictive intention of states: in Europe, the second half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century marked the beginning of the fight between press and censorship. In the 1620s publishing houses in England already needed an official licence and severe laws prohibited the conveyance of international news during the 'Thirty Years' War.'<sup>1</sup>

John Milton demanded the cessation of censorship in his call addressed to the Parliament in 1644 entitled *Areopagitica*. Freedom of press was ordered by the Parliament in 1695. Similar results were

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<sup>1</sup> Buzinkai, Géza, *Kis magyar sajtótörténet* (A short history of Hungarian press), Budapest: Haza és Haladás Foundation, 1993, 7.

obtained by the bourgeois revolution in France (1789) and Germany (1848).

The control of the press in Hungary was for a long time in the hands of the Catholic Church. During the reign of Maria Theresa the censorship committee was reorganised without the participation of the church. Later on Joseph II worked out the new principles of censorship. He eliminated the remains of church influence, made censorship a state issue and centralised the censorship of the whole empire. He dismissed the censorship committee of the Court in 1782 and transferred the group of censors with a reduced number of members to the Education Committee. The XVIIIth statute in 1848 was one of the achievements of the bourgeois revolution: its opening lines proclaim the freedom of press.

This law came into force again after the Compromise in 1867 and it was in force until 1914 when the XVIth statute appeared. The new regulations prescribed correction even if the article corresponded to reality but did not match certain criteria of form. They allowed the journalist only a short time to submit the proofs and there was a liability for damages. Soon afterwards this law proved to be too loose and the Prime Minister issued the order number 12.001/1 (1914) which introduced war censorship.<sup>1</sup>

The concept of censorship does not only mean the act of cutting out fragments from a text, but it encompasses all the procedures of obstructing the free flow of concepts and information, beginning with the formation of the legal framework, up to the organisation of various institutions. Historical experience shows that an adequately formed, awe-inspiring network of denouncers and a system of observation is necessary in this process.

There are several types of censorship: 1) censorship on the level of inter-state relations – censorship which hinders the filtering out of state secrets and military data 2) *preliminary censorship* or censorship in advance and *posterior censorship* (chronological point of view) 3) *exterior* and *interior censorship* (from the point of view of its practising). Interior censorship means censorship within the editorial board but also *self-censorship*.<sup>2</sup>

Historically speaking, preliminary censorship appeared earlier than posterior censorship. Its purpose was to remove all those elements the publication of which was against the interests of the power; it was applied before publication, in the manuscript or draft stage when the

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<sup>1</sup> Buzinkai, Géza, op. cit., 91.

<sup>2</sup> Petcu, Marian, *Puterea și cultura* (Power and culture), Iași: Polirom, 1999, 8.

ensor asked for modifications in the content or form of the publication. Posterior censorship means control after publication, it examines the observance of the prescriptions set up by the power as criteria for publication. In many cases the law prescribed that the publishing houses should submit copies of newspapers, periodicals and books. These had to be sent to the central police station or other bodies of control. The sale of a publication was often prohibited after this control on the grounds that it did not conform to certain prescriptions.

These two types of censorship entail the interaction of power and culture. This is not the case with inner censorship. Control is not performed by the power but by one of the members of the group working on the publication (author, editor, owner of the periodical) in this case. However, irrespective of the method of control, fear of punishment paralyses the intention for freedom of expression and creates instinctive self-control the formation of which is deliberately helped by totalitarian systems. This phenomenon is called self-censorship: it is an individual, often instinctive limitation.<sup>1</sup>

The acceptance of the external, supremacy constraint becomes inner inertia, and later on, a moral constraint. A second bar is thus built behind the first one. According to Olivier Burgelin, censorship has fulfilled its function if people do not only speak about something else but also think about something else.<sup>2</sup>

Combined procedures are distinct forms of control mechanisms. This is called economic censorship and it presupposes the government's monopoly on raw material (paper, for example), printing press equipment and the network of circulation. Very often a strict tax system also hinders the publication of certain materials.

Jean-Paul Valabrega says that censorship is unsearchable and this is how it differs from the law which clearly formulates and accounts for interdictions and their punishment. Censorship combines interdiction and punishment. Therefore it resembles threat. It is like a dumb threat, as compared to the professed interdiction set up by law. Law can be interpreted and we can lodge an appeal against a decision but there are only two ways of acting in relation with censorship: we either accept or remove it.

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<sup>1</sup> Petcu, Marian, op. cit., 15.

<sup>2</sup> Karátson, Endre, "Akiról nem beszélünk, avagy az öncenzúra logikája" (About whom we do not speak, or the logic of self-censoring). IN: *Belső tilalomfák* (Inner interdictions), Mikes Kelemen Center in Holland, 1982, 15.

Modern methods of censorship mostly include the old element, albeit in a less evident manner. The method of obstructing information gathering is largely used. This can be done by arbitrarily proclaiming the information secret, but the method of the unfair or preferential circulation of information is also used, a method which includes the hindrance of access to the source of information (refusing to accredit journalists, setting up an information embargo).

Beyond limiting the right to information and the freedom of speech, censorship functions as an effective means of propaganda. It is not accidental that the stringency of censorship is connected to great propaganda campaigns. However, this requires adequate institutions which only allow the circulation of ideas belonging to the official ideology. Romania is a typical case of the intertwining of censorship and propaganda as the ruling party subjected publicity to its own interests, rejecting every manifestation which came in contradiction with its ideology.

Censorship does not yet belong to the realm of the past. In many countries it is still openly in use. According to the 1997 *Report of the International Association of Journalists*, 120 countries apply censorship or other means of press control and 185 journalists from 23 countries have recently been imprisoned for expressing their opinion. In many Asian countries such as Thailand or Singapore there is no independent press; political and religious interdictions are in force. Press in China does still obey the "recipe" prescribed by Hu Yaobang: 70% of the news must be positive and 30% negative, railway or airline catastrophes must not be made public.<sup>1</sup> After the change of regime economic censorship has been used in many cases in Hungary and Romania, especially.

## **II. Communist Censorship**

### ***1. The Historical Background***

The institutions of communist censorship came into being and functioned in all countries under Soviet influence, according to local peculiarities. Soon after the victory of the 1917 bolshevik revolution the new power regulated the circulation of printed material by restrictive laws. In January next year all the publications of the czarist system were suppressed to the orders of V.I.Lenin. The socialist press was not spared either. The newly formed Revolutionary Press Jury had to rule against

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<sup>1</sup> Petcu, Marian, op. cit., 20.

press-law offences, that is, to punish the questioning of the achievements of revolution and attacks against communist institutions. On account of its large scope of authority the Jury suppressed several newspapers, managed to arrest journalists and confiscate "capitalist" printing presses. Soviet libraries had an important role in the formation of the socialist society. In the Cold War period after the Second World War culture was directed according to state propaganda which sought to weaken the international leading position of the US. The monthly review of the Ministry of Education, *Bibliotekar* launched heavy attacks against the policy of the US as early as 1948, accusing its leaders with racism against coloured people. In the following decades the two superpowers were not only political rivals but also there was a competition for the spread of their different ideologies. The Soviet Union launched a wide librarian training program for foreign students (from Vietnam, Cuba, Syria, Sudan, Afghanistan, Iraq, Kenya, etc.), hosted by the Krupskaja Institute in Leningrad. They organised several conferences for librarians from the socialist block as well as the African and Asian non-committed countries. The conceptual basis of these activities was the creation of a common socialist culture to counterbalance the spread of Western ideas.

Using American libraries for foreign policy purposes was more difficult in the postwar period because the Congress had limited possibilities of influencing the content of library collections. However, aided by the Customs Office, it succeeded in limiting the inflow of Soviet publications beginning with 1944. Until 1962 these restrictive steps did not spare the Soviet literature either. The circulation of American ideology was undertaken by an international library network founded in 1953 which presented selected publications in different parts of the world.

The history of Romanian communist censorship practically begins in 1945 and lasts until 1989. The starting point is September 1944, the date of signing the Armistice Agreement with the governments of the United Nations which contributed to the organisation of the Romanian political, economic and cultural life according to the Soviet model.

After the signing of the agreement the circulation of printed matter was conditioned by the observation of the prescriptions of censorship whereas foreign publications were controlled by the Soviet and Romanian military censorship functioning within the Press Directorate. Newspapers and periodicals could only be published with the agreement of the Allied Control Commission. Publications which could have been detrimental to the relationship with the United Nations and the

Soviet Union (especially works published before the signing of the armistice agreement) were taken out of circulation. The list of such publications first appeared on 17 December 1944.

The 1946 elections ending with the victory of the communists proved to be a good opportunity for the gradual isolation of the other political parties. Dinu Brătianu, President of the National Liberal Party demanded from Prime Minister Petru Groza the restoring of civil rights and the elimination of censorship in June 1946: "While the governing parties can freely express their opinion in the press [...] and we are exposed to the violent attacks of our enemies, our party does not benefit of the freedom of press."<sup>1</sup>

The Hungarian political situation after the Second World War resembles the Romanian one in many respects. The whole country came under Soviet occupation after the expulsion of Soviet troops in April 1945. In 1946 the Communist Party led by Mátyás Rákosi began to expel the coalition partners (Independent Smallholders' Party, Hungarian Social Democratic Party, National Peasant Party) from power with the help of the Red Army. At the 1947 elections the Hungarian Communist Party won the 22% of votes with fraud and thus became the most powerful parliamentary party. Parties of the opposition were compelled to cease their activity at the turn of 1947-1948. The Stalinist-type Constitution adopted in 1949 proclaimed the country the Hungarian People's Republic and confirmed the leading role of the Communist Party.

The decree number 11.290/1940 was the first regulation of press law after 1945. This decree stated that press materials, including books, periodicals and other papers, could only be published with permission. First the Minister of Information was the permission authority, then the Prime Minister took over this sphere of activity when the Information Ministry was dissolved in 1948. After publication, a permission for the circulation of press materials issued by the Minister of the Interior was also required. The Cabinet-decision imposed a heavy sanction (imprisonment up to two years) on those who published or circulated materials without ministerial permission.<sup>2</sup> The rebirth of political press after the World War was soon followed by its suppression and rearrangement. After the nationalizations between 1948 and 1952, most

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<sup>1</sup> Petcu, Marian, op. cit., 158.

<sup>2</sup> Vásárhelyi, Mária and Halmai, Gábor (eds.), *A nyilvánosság rendszerváltása* (Change of regime in publicity), Budapest: Új Mandátum, 1998, 84.

of the periodicals ceased, and the new ones represented the interests of the central power.

To come back to the Romanian situation, the founding session of the Journalists', Writers' and Artists' Syndicate was held in Bucharest in August 1945 and M. Sadoveanu was elected its first president. In his address Prime Minister Groza called the participants "the proletariat of spiritual activities" while N. Moraru explained that the foremost task of the press is to mobilize the masses and that the arts must serve the people. Pushkin, Tolstoy and Gorky were the examples to be followed because they were "in close relationship with the people". This shows that communist principles started to govern the press and artistic life. In the same year, a new list of prohibited publications was set forth, according to the 16<sup>th</sup> paragraph of the Armistice Agreement. We must mention that 631 books out of the 910 banned books (two thirds) were written by Hungarian authors.

The Ministry of Education started to supervise schoolbooks and strictly ordered school headmasters to use only the approved textbooks.

State censorship became outsized as it had to meet the criteria of the Soviet-dominated Allied Control Commission. The principles of the Soviet doctrine began to be used in the press, as prescribed by M.I. Kalinin: the objective description of a particular case has to influence the reader so that the party spirit is learned; therefore "objective" accounts in the party spirit must be published. The most influential party newspaper, *Scântea* became a model publication edited on the example of the *Pravda* in Moscow.

In the meantime Prime Minister Groza ordered the government to observe the December 1945 decision of the Soviet, British and American Foreign Ministers taken in Moscow according to which the freedom of press, religion and expression must be ensured. This command had no result as a few days later several newspapers were suspended for a month for publishing "anti-democratic" articles. In July 1946, Burton Berry, Romanian deputy of the US protested against the violation of the freedom of press in a letter addressed to Prime Minister Gh. Tătărăscu. The newspaper of the National Liberal Party, *Liberalul* published the text: "Although the permission of the publication of National Peasant Party and National Liberal Party newspapers ensured the freedom of speech to a certain extent, censorship often arbitrarily hindered the publication of announcements and the suspension or banning of publications restricted the expression of political views."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Petcu, Marian, op. cit., 162.

The Peasant Party paper *Dreptatea* revealed the methods of forcing directives upon the press: “The Groza government uses dictatorial methods in its activity. These methods do not spare the press either, as the present government keeps it under control, just like the other anti-democratic systems of power since 1935. Those almost twenty periodicals which covertly serve the power are directed by the Press Directorate functioning within the Ministry of Information.” The *Dreptatea* named several “recommended subjects” which presented the power in a favourable manner. Editors had to choose from among subjects such as “The democratisation of the country and raising the life-standard of the masses”, “The necessity of the socialisation of the National Bank” or “Financial reform”.<sup>1</sup>

The pressure on the press increased in 1947. The anti-communist press was obstructed first of all, which compelled the liberal leader I.I.C. Brătianu to express his protest in front of American, British and Soviet deputies in Bucharest: “Freedom of press which was always neglected by the present power, does not exist today. Arbitrary and excessive censorship makes criticism of the policy of power impossible.”<sup>2</sup>

The power paid great attention to the censoring of schoolbooks. The main pretext was that they did not give preference to Soviet science and did not stress enough the social role of the working class. Readings in literature textbooks were condemned because they did not propagate the Five-year Plan, the electrification plan of Romania and the fight for peace.<sup>3</sup>

The party gained total control of publishing by the 1948 socialization of publishing houses, printing presses and paper factories. The “purging” of public institutions of people who were against the policy of the Romanian Communist Party or abstained, continued. In the same year the government published a new list of some 8000 banned publications. Interestingly enough the publication forbade private people to own these publications whereas the 1946 list made compulsory their elimination from general circulation only.

These measures were further steps in the organisation of library secret funds which was ideologically and technically institutionalised

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<sup>1</sup> idem, 163.

<sup>2</sup> idem, 164.

<sup>3</sup> Rad, Ilie, “Impactul cenzurii asupra libertății de exprimare” (The impact of censorship over the freedom of expression), in *Stilistică și mass-media* (Stylistics and mass-media), Cluj-Napoca: Excelsior, 1999, 163.



later on. We must also add that decisions concerning censorship were taken under the influence of political circles in Moscow; consequently, Romanian spiritual life bore the marks of a society under foreign rule.

Russian communists following Lenin's ideas considered the press a means of building socialism. Thus the independence of press became impossible, moreover, journalists became party activists. *Pravda* and *Izvestia* which followed Lenin's principles became models for all the countries under Soviet influence. After the end of the Second World War Stalin strengthened press controlling institutions and restricted the freedom of speech even more.

The 1948 Congress of the Romanian Workers' Party was another occasion to expel Western culture from Romania. Gh. Gheorghiu-Dej, leader of the Communist Party underlined in his speech: "Foreign influences find shelter in ideology, literature, arts and science. Therefore one of the most important tasks of our party is to fight against imperialist ideas appearing on an ideological level, against the exaltation of the rotting capitalist culture, the reformist and revisionist ideas in theory and politics."<sup>1</sup> The year 1948 marked the break with Western culture. Consequently, Romanian political and cultural life started to follow the Soviet model.

The endeavour of Romanian communist leaders to enhance the development of proletarian culture, an effort pursued until 1964, asked for many victims among the intellectuals and led to the mutilation of national culture.

*Scânteia*, the party mouthpiece number one, gradually acquired an autocratic position, its directives becoming compulsory for every publication. Its number of copies increased from 60,000 to 770,000 between 1945-1950. This is how the Central Committee of the Romanian Workers' Party evaluated the social role of this newspaper in 1950: "The *Scânteia* nourished in our people the love for the Soviet Union and the great Stalin [...], revealed the activity of the Titoist circles in Belgrade [...] and greatly contributed to the spread of Stahanovist methods in economy and their application by our workers and technicians [...] It is the great success of our Party that we could bring up communist journalists of a new attitude who follow the bright example of the bolshevik newspaper [the *Pravda* in Moscow]." The political leadership of the Central Committee called upon the editors of *Scânteia* to increase its activity of Marxist-Leninist propaganda, to pay greater attention to the reviews of Leninist and Stalinist works in Romanian translation,

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<sup>1</sup> Petcu, Marian, op. cit., 167.

underlining that the propagation of the activity of Soviet communists is the task of the "Party life" column (founded by Silviu Brucan after his training at the editorial board of the *Pravda*).<sup>1</sup>

Censorship became even more effective by making graduation from the A.A. Zhdanov Party School and later on the Ștefan Gheorghiu Party University compulsory for journalists. Those who had an active role in the illegal communist press or Soviet press could also work in Editorial Boards.

## 2. *Totalitarianism and Censorship*

The apparatus of the Romanian communist censorship became so perfect after 1950 that it had eliminated every manifestation which was against the political directives of the party in power. Socialist realism became compulsory as an official *method of creation*. "This is a unique case, says I. Neoițescu, because a literary doctrine has been worked out by politicians, from the outside. According to the concept of the party, a literary work must be planned just like industrial production, to attain the purpose of political power."<sup>2</sup>

The Constitution adopted in 1952 granted freedom of press and freedom of speech "for the protection of the workers' interests and the consolidation of democracy", that is, only to the extent in which it served official ideology. In the meantime the power tried to cleanse written culture of elements offending its interests. Therefore they published the order of dividing library collections into three groups:

The **prohibited (secret) collection** held fascist and anti-communist books, translations of English and American literature between 1920-1945, the statute of political parties, schoolbooks published in 1920-1948 and religious works. (Catholic faith was a taboo after the suppression of the Greek-Catholic religion in 1948.) Works about the life of the royal family and the works of banned writers all belonged to this category, as well as the publications of the Romanian Academy which were mostly written in foreign languages. The prohibited collections could only be read with permission from the authorities.

The **informing collection** held philosophical and scientific works analysed by banned authors, historical and geographic works about Bessarabia, Marxist-Socialist works which were not convenient in the given political situation and works professing cosmopolitan ideas (like

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<sup>1</sup> Petcu, Marian, op. cit., 170.

<sup>2</sup> idem, 171.

Jules Romain's books). This collection could only be used by university professors or students recommended by professors.

The **free collection** contained only the permitted Romanian and foreign classical authors and scientific works.

The elimination of the informing collection in 1958 was in fact a great restructuring: the greatest part of the informing collection became part of the secret collection. There was a decree underlining the task of librarians to register the persons reading secret books. Obviously, the power wanted to track the activity of those who took an interest in "delicate" subjects. It is also clear that the aim of the secret collection was not the safer storage of documents but the restriction of access to them, moreover, the elimination of information in many cases. The prohibited collection survived in its initial form from the 1950s until the fall of the communist regime. Beginning with the 1960s it was called special collection.<sup>1</sup>

After Stalin's death in 1953 the political leadership in Moscow adopted a new direction: they broke with the period of personal cult. This change is not so obvious on the level of censorship. On the one hand, the process of renewal undermined the validity of the traditional Soviet system of value, on the other hand, the power tried to force the changes within certain limits, controlling publications with an increased vigilance. Thus the number of banned books gradually increased, the "special" collections became a separate library system containing works which were openly against the system but also completely harmless books.

Such an impact of censorship was first of all possible on account of the phenomenon of self-censorship in the Soviet society. The directors of publishing houses, authors, librarians and shopkeepers interpreted all the official or unofficial suggestions of the power as interdictions. This is how the parallel forms of cultural life, such as the black market of books gradually appeared in the 1970s.

The change of Soviet ideology made its impact felt in Romania, too; the former Stalinist leaders (Gh. Gheorghiu-Dej, Chivu Stoica) ordered that their own writings and speeches be taken out of circulation.<sup>2</sup> However, this influence did not last long, because the Romanian Communist Party delimited itself of changes in the Soviet Union and followed its own way. Horia Liman's article published in *Contemporanul* (6 May 1955) presents the conception regarding the press: "During its

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<sup>1</sup> Costea, Ionuț, Király, István, and Radosav, Doru: *Fond secret. Fond S special.* (Secret collection. Special S collection). Cluj-Napoca: Dacia, 1995, 46.

<sup>2</sup> Rad, Ilie, op. cit., 164.

ten-year free functioning our press grew richer in depth and extent, thanks to the wise leadership of our party [...] Our nation likes and appreciates the press. Let us learn the great objectives of our party and fight for the flourishing of our beloved homeland.”<sup>1</sup>

The Hungarian press in the first part of the fifties was completely univocalised. The presentation of political news was identical in all the periodicals (the texts came from the Hungarian News Service, often accompanied by the remark that they must be published unchanged). According to the “choreography” of the period a conceptual article was first published in *Szabad Nép*, the newspaper of the Hungarian Workers’ Party. All the other newspapers then published their articles in line with this “campaign starter” about subjects such as work contest, fight for peace or international conspiracy against socialism.

The first cracks in the system of this controlled press appeared when the dictatorship was shaken. After Stalin’s death, when the power of Mátyás Rákosi shattered and Imre Nagy came to power in June 1953, the attentive newspaper reader could discover the signs of political struggle within the Communist Party.

The possibility of the freedom of press in the first week of the 1956 Revolution created the free press immediately. The papers published in October and November 1956 were real newspapers: they had short articles signalling hopes and fears during those eventful times.

The Soviet invasion on 4 November 1956 killed the freedom of press in its germ. The Revolutionary Worker-Peasant Party led by János Kádár needed some time to gain again control of the press. In December, the temporary Executive Committee of the Hungarian Socialist Workers’ Party (MSzMP) started to eliminate the organisations founded during the revolution and began to control publication in the name of “making order”. The “legally” supported vindictive sanctions followed each other in succession: The Publishing House announced in December that it will no longer support the publication of the Writers’ Association’s periodicals and dismissed the editors. Only the politically “acceptable” editors were offered new contracts. In the period between 1957 and 1963 István Szirmai became the leader of the press; he was appointed in front of the Publicity Office.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Petcu, Marian, op. cit., 175.

<sup>2</sup> Kókay, György, Géza, Buzinkay, and Gábor Murányi (eds.), *A magyar sajtó története* (History of the Hungarian press), a publication of the National Association of Hungarian Journalists and the “György Bálint” Journalism School, Budapest, 1990, 214.

The Publicity Office founded in 1956 had an important role in the handling of propaganda materials designed for abroad but mainly those coming from abroad; it was responsible for publications published in the country and those brought into the country. The confiscation, pulping and sending back of Western newspapers, periodicals, books belonged to the activity of the Press Directorate of the Publicity Office led by the wife of János Kádár. Even in the case of periodicals every issue was examined, some of them retained or returned to the sender, others forwarded to the addressee. The confiscated publications were considered “hostile propaganda”, “excessively praising capitalist lifestyle” or “offending public morals”.

The direction of literature was based on the same principles. The Political Committee of the MSzMP adopted a decision in 1957 according to which “The party wants those writers who offended against popular democracy honestly admit their fault and take stand against the imperialists, delimiting themselves from reactionaries in the country and abroad, mainly those dissident writers who lead an active propaganda against the Hungarian People’s Republic. Those who are unable to do this, exclude themselves of literary life.”<sup>1</sup>

Book publication was directed by the Publishing House Inspectorate founded in 1954, the first leader of which was Gyula Kállai. Thus another “filter” was placed on publishing houses to control future publications from an economic and political point of view. Hungarian literary life was excessively controlled even in the 1960s which allegedly brought consolidation, peace and reform but in fact portioned political softening cautiously. The various de-stalinizations only led to new common-consent forms of the official culture and did not accomplish anything of the expectations concerning the reduction of control.<sup>2</sup>

In 1961 Béla Köpeczi introduces the new working order of the Publishing House Inspectorate according to which the institution has the following tasks: the policy-making of national book-publishing, definition of its thematic proportions, cultural policy issues concerning the export and import of books, supervision of the publishing activity, granting permission for publication and making suggestions for

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<sup>1</sup> Cseh, Gergő Bendegúz, Kalmár, Melinda, and Pór, Edit (eds.), *Újkeletpolitika és cenzúra 1956-1963* (Information-policy and censorship, 1956-1963), Budapest: Osiris, 1999, 367.

<sup>2</sup> Gömöri, György, “Ami a forradalmakból kimaradt” (What was left out from revolutions), in *Belső tilalomfák* (Inner interdictions), op. cit., 70.

publications recommended for abroad (e.g. the suggestion in 1961 for the classical Hungarian short story anthology published in Romania).

Even though the Publishing House Inspectorate served the cultural political objectives to the best of its knowledge, this was not enough for the supreme leaders. In 1955, Ernő Gerő presented a petition to the Political Committee of the Hungarian Democratic Party, entitled *On Hungarian Book-Publishing*, in which he vehemently criticized the allegedly rightist, opportunist book publishing. In 1970, László Orbán criticized the Inspectorate and said it was unable to fulfil its tasks. At that time, the institution was accused of having failed to observe the dangers inherent in the Prague Spring and of lagging behind in accomplishing the objectives of the new economic mechanism in book publishing.

In the meantime, one of the greatest political trials against intellectuals in Romania took place in 1959. Among the defendants were Emil Petraşcu, Constantin Noica, Nicolae Steinhardt, Marius Nasta, Lucia Nasta and Maxim Tudoran. They were accused of forwarding messages abroad, propagating foreign publications, praising the Western lifestyle and positively evaluating the 1956 Hungarian Revolution.

The period between 1965-1971 was relatively milder. The communist system in Romania was most open in these years. The political declaration issued by Gh. Gheorghiu Dej in April 1964 was the first sign of the anti-Soviet attitude. Nicolae Ceauşescu, who was elected leader of the Party followed the same line. During this openness several banned authors were allowed to return to the circulation of Romanian culture (Ionesco, Blaga, Măiorescu). E. Ionesco's play, *The Unicorn* was presented at the Comic Theatre in Bucharest in 1965. The public could gain access to several publications formerly grouped into the special collections.<sup>1</sup> This period of openness ended with the summer of 1971: during his visit to China and North Korea, Nicolae Ceauşescu decided to domesticate the Asian cultural model in Romania.<sup>2</sup>

After the failure of the fight for a *humane socialism* in Czechoslovakia, Hungary, which had hardly begun its economic reforms, also faced a period of ideological and cultural severity. The so-called order-making party decisions were issued in 1973-1974 and those who openly sympathized with the Prague Spring were publicly expelled from the Party. The last press trial was in 1973: Miklós Haraszti was tried for the multiplication and circulation of the manuscript of his work entitled *Darabér*. The press-controlling mechanism had already developed at the

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<sup>1</sup> Petcu, Marian, op. cit., 177.

<sup>2</sup> Rad, Ilie, op. cit., 165.

beginning of the 1970s and remained unchanged though less and less effective in the period preceding the dissolution of the Socialist system. The chief editors of Hungarian dailies were all under central control until the change of regime. The Propaganda Department of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party devised a classification of press products according to types of periodicals and the frequency of their publication. The editors-in-chief of daily newspapers held their compulsory monthly meeting at the Party Centre. Moreover, they had to be present every fortnight at the Information Office to discuss more urgent issues and listen to the orders of the state leadership.

There was a press project for every important political event. A project prescribed how newspapers should prepare for the five-year Party Congresses. The type and length of articles addressing the issue of famous people's funerals (Gyula Illyés or Zoltán Kodály, for example) was also prescribed.

The essay written by György Száraz in *Valóság* (entitled *Discussing a Prejudice*) was dissolving a taboo in the 1970s. The author broke a long silence when writing about the Jewish question. He triggered the first spontaneous debate, a debate which was not organised "from above". At the end of 1977 another article discussing a taboo appeared: *Answer to Herder and Ady* by Gyula Illyés. The article was published in two parts in the Christmas and New Year issue of *Magyar Nemzet* and should be considered a turn in the history of the press because the cause of Hungarians living outside Hungary was discussed in the daily press.<sup>1</sup>

While publicity gradually became a characteristic of Hungarian press at the end of the 1970s, the totalitarian system in Romania kept the press under control and censorship was even more severe. The law number 3/1974 said: "The function of the press is to fight for the lofty principles of the politics of the Romanian Communist Party, socialist ethics and righteousness." This law delineated the tasks related to publishing, editing and the circulation of periodicals, summing up banned topics in ten paragraphs and stating that the chief editor was responsible for abiding these laws. "The Press and Publication Bureau supervises conformity to these orders to prevent the circulation of materials that come in opposition with these orders and informs the Chief Editor who must take the necessary steps." The increase of editorial self-censorship was the immediate consequence of this law.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Kókay-Buzinkay-Murányi, op. cit., 222.

<sup>2</sup> Kuszálík, Péter, *Erdélyi hírlapok és folyóiratok, 1940-1989* (Transylvanian

In 1975 the authorities forced the officials dealing with public information, librarians included, to give a profession of allegiance to the Romanian Communist Party: "I will arduously serve the Romanian Socialist Republic, the Romanian people (...), respect the Constitution and the laws of the country, keep the state secret and protect the socialist property and follow the principles of socialist democracy in my activity."<sup>1</sup> As the Party held cultural life under total control by the legal and working conditions created, the signing of the above declaration could only have an awe-inspiring purpose.

Most of the books bought from abroad and the donations became part of the special collections in this period. Only the Central University Library in Bucharest had the right to buy foreign publications. It was also here that decisions were taken about where to send the books and which collection should include them. Problematic books already in circulation were purchased by libraries from antique bookshops and sent to the secret collections.

In 1977 the power officially eliminated censorship. Romanian propaganda wanted to prove that freedom and democracy reigned in the country. This meant in fact that state censorship was replaced by political censorship: the censors of periodicals worked as members of the editorial boards. The over-zealous "literature oriented" party activists could always find objectionable parts in the publications.

In the 1980s further restrictions were introduced. Economic statistics had to show the prosperity of Romanian economy. Words referring to the actual state of the country (darkness, cold, hunger) could not be used, just like the words "death", "cross" and "priest". During N. Ceaușescu's personal dictatorship his name and his wife's name had to be written within the same line, without division and in the articles dealing with his activity no other person's name could be used lest it cast a shadow on the person of Nicolae and Elena Ceaușescu.

On 30 March 1983 the *Monitorul Oficial* published the law decree of the Council of State about the use of "duplicating machines, typewriters and materials needed for the reproduction of writing." The owners of typewriters had to possess the permit of the Home Ministry and present a writing sample for the yearly renewal of the permit.

The censorship policy of the Romanian state became more and more drastic before the 1989 collapse of the communist system. The

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newspapers and journals, 1940-1989), Budapest: Library of the László Teleki Foundation, 1996, 31.

<sup>1</sup> Petcu, Marian, op. cit., 179.



party which was the sole owner of truth made impossible the proclamation of any critical stand. Those who expressed their protest against the system in any way were persecuted.

The degree of publicity and information was undoubtedly greater in Hungary than the other socialist countries in this period. The beginning of the 1980s marks the development of the second publicity. Samizdat periodicals existed in the 1970s too (*Eszmélet* in 1968 and the avantgarde *Szerteszét*), but the political samizdat was the characteristic form of expression of the 1980s. At the end of 1981, the illegally circulated periodical, *Beszélő* appeared as a reaction to the military coup in Poland which signalled anew the crisis of the socialist system. The editors of this periodical were Miklós Haraszti, János Kis, Ferenc Kőszeg, Bálint Nagy and György Petri, prominent representatives of the democratic opposition in Hungary. The great public had hardly any knowledge about the fight against the second publicity which was more and more hopeless for the power.

The mechanism of party control lost much of its effectiveness at the beginning of the 1980s. The increasing number of various periodicals and the weakening of the power itself both had a role in this process. The new press law issued in April 1986 was the first of its type since 1945: it introduced again the concept of security offence in the context of “legally” acting against samizdat periodicals: “Those who illegally produce or publicly present publications the presentation of which requires permission (...) will be fined.” The existence of this legal background gave an impetus to ban the periodical *Tiszatáj* published in Szeged because of the publication of a poem about Imre Nagy written by Gáspár Nagy. The Deputy Minister of Culture announced in an interview given to the *Magyar Nemzet* that the writer István Csurka was silenced because he “empowered Radio Free Europe to broadcast one of his lectures and published a volume of essays at a New York publishing house, ignoring legal prescriptions.” The announcement triggered another action of protest: the speeches given at the public meeting of the Writers’ Association in November 1986 were openly against the power.<sup>1</sup>

### ***3. Transylvanian Hungarian Culture in the Shadow of Censorship***

Transylvanian Hungarian culture during the dictatorship did not only suffer of the restrictions characteristic to communist systems in

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<sup>1</sup> Kókay-Buzinkay-Murányi, op. cit., 227.

general, but it was also exposed to the special steps taken by the power against minorities.

The paradoxical developments of 1948 had a deep impact on it and determined it in the long run. The special feature of nationality culture disappeared after the dissolution of the kingdom and the passing of schools and cultural institutions under state ownership. The directing and supervising function of the party state increased and became all-powerful. The Transylvanian Museum Society was dissolved, its collections parted among various state institutions. The Batthyaneum in Gyulafehérvár (Alba Iulia), the Teleki Téka in Marosvásárhely (Târgu Mureș), the Székely Nemzeti Múzeum in Sepsiszentgyörgy (Sfântu Gheorghe) and the Archive of the Transylvanian Museum Society came to be handled by the state. The archive then went under the supervision of the Ministry of Interior.<sup>1</sup>

At the beginning of the 1950s socialist realism dominated Hungarian literature. It was characteristic of the direction of literature in that period that the way in which the basic party organisation of the Writers' Association in Cluj analysed on 18 December 1952, how many Hungarian poets participated in the "building of socialism". The number of 69 poems written in that year seemed too small as compared to the number of 16 poets. Those who wrote the report forgave László Szabédi, taking into account his other activities, but they found the silence of the young Sándor Kányádi and Lajos Létay unreasonable.<sup>2</sup>

The summer of 1956 proved to be hot in Romania too, for the spirit of the 20th Congress of the Soviet Communist Party could not be kept away from the country, despite the powerful attempts of the Romanian party leadership. The representatives of the Central Bureau led by Miron Constantinescu and János Fazakas unexpectedly arrived to Cluj in order to analyse the reasons of restlessness and calm the situation. Hungarian intellectuals brought up several issues during the discussions. They spoke about the need for increasing the import of books and periodicals from Hungary, the need for a children's periodical and a monthly cultural review. The writers strongly protested against the banning of certain authors and their works. They considered the persecution of the literary politician Gábor Gaál a serious injury and urged his political rehabilitation.

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<sup>1</sup> Gáll, Ernő, *Számvetés* (Account), Kolozsvár (Cluj-Napoca): Komp-Press, 1995, 14.

<sup>2</sup> Cseke, Péter, *A metaforától az élet felé* (From metaphor to life), Bucharest-Kolozsvár (Cluj-Napoca): Kriterion, 1997, 203.

The intellectuals in Cluj finally obtained permission for the publication of *Napsugár* (a periodical for children) and the re-launching of *Korunk*. The euphoria of planning of the initial period was soon replaced by a state of bitterness. The party leaders interfered in the structure of the editorial board and supervised the edition of the issues. After four decades Ernő Gáll looks back on the atmosphere of that time: “I remember how we persuaded ourselves to accept the unacceptable, how we suppressed doubts and the arguments of pure reason. In our schizophrenia we did not say and write what we have thought and felt deep inside. We gave way to group hallucinations for quite a long time: we sensed and acknowledged something that did not exist in reality. We became masters of self-suggestion: we were manipulated and we manipulated others and ourselves too. We have not read Orwell’s book at that time which he completed in 1947. Forty years later we were dumbfounded when we recognized ourselves in his description of ‘double thinking’. In the 1940s and 1950s we had been caught in the ‘doublethink’. ‘To know and not to know, to be conscious of complete truthfulness while telling carefully constructed lies, to hold simultaneously two opinions which cancelled out, knowing them to be contradictory and believing in both of them, to use logic against logic, to repudiate morality while laying claim to it, to believe that democracy was impossible and that the Party was the guardian of democracy; to forget whatever it was necessary to forget, then to draw it back to memory again at the moment when it was needed, and then promptly to forget it again: and above all, to apply the same process to the process itself. That was the ultimate subtlety: consciously to induce unconsciousness, and then, once again, to become unconscious of the act of hypnosis you had just performed’, says Orwell”.<sup>1</sup>

Materials concerning daily politics had to be included in every issue, that is, materials centred around the unmasking of the Hungarian “counter-revolution”.<sup>2</sup> The punishments for 1956 had already begun at that time. On the pretext of participating in “nationalist, counter-revolutionary organisation” university professors (Gyula Dávid, Elemér Lakó, János Varró, András Bereczki) and students (István Várhegyi, Lajos Páll, Imre Balázs) were carried off to prison or labour camps.<sup>3</sup> In his lecture delivered in 1991 in Budapest (*The 1956 Revolution and*

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<sup>1</sup> Gáll, Ernő, op. cit., 21.

<sup>2</sup> Tóth, Sándor, *Dicsőséges kudarcaink a diktatúra korszakából* (Our glorious failures in the time of dictatorship), Budapest: Balassi, 1997, 73.

<sup>3</sup> Gáll, Ernő, op. cit., 33.

*Hungarians in Romania*) Gyula Dávid, who spent seven years in prison, drew attention to the fact that Romanian retribution primarily affected Hungarian intellectuals.

In October 1956 István Tompa was named Ideology Secretary of the Cluj county Party Bureau. He and his subjects read the galley-proofs of papers in parallel with the state censorship called Press Directorate and allowed or forbid the publication of the articles. He was responsible for performing the public “eliminations”. Immediately after his establishment in position he had to replace Pál Sőni, Editor-in-Chief of the *Utunk* and László Földes as well, two years later. Andor Bajor had to repent publicly because of his satire entitled *Comrade Mosquito and the Angry Party Workers* while László Szabédi was expelled from the party for his consistently oppositional attitude.<sup>1</sup>

The party leadership in Bucharest was highly suspicious of *Korunk*. This was the only periodical which had to be sent to Bucharest for censorship after its re-launching (all the other periodicals were controlled by the local censorship offices.) It had to undergo a double central control: first in the Hungarian Section (later directed by Sándor Pezderka) of the National Centre of the Press Control Office, then the supervising Press Department of the Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party (this department was led by Sándor Koppándi for the longest period).<sup>2</sup> The issues of the re-started *Korunk* bore the marks of the opposition and compromises between the ideas of the editors and the actions of the power apparatus.

The Bolyai University was dissolved in 1959 in the spirit of forming a unified educational system. The power called the founding of the Babeş-Bolyai University a “new step in the solution of the national question”. The dissolution of the Bolyai University led to personal tragedies (László Szabédi, Zoltán Csendes, Miklós Molnár and Sándor Tóth committed suicide) and it was a serious stroke on Hungarian culture in Romania and the formation of the future generations of intellectuals supporting this culture.

The mildness of the second half of the 1960s could more easily be taken advantage of in the field of the politics of science than literature. This was also due to the fact that the consequences of the conflict arising from the relationship between minority culture and the culture of the mother nation could less be felt.

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<sup>1</sup> Cseke, Péter, op. cit., 204.

<sup>2</sup> Tóth, Sándor, op. cit., 75.

The leaders of the Hungarian Writers' Association declared in 1968 that they could not remain indifferent towards the literatures outside the country, moreover, they felt responsible for them. This declaration met the radical opposition of the Romanian party leadership which launched a protest campaign. Hungarian men of letters from Romania had to join the choir directed "from above". Articles published in *Előre*, *Utunk* and *Igaz Szó* vehemently rejected the "rebellious conception". In the March 1991 issue of the *Látó* Géza Domokos says about his article published in *Előre*: "I knew it in the summer of 1968 that my article written under pressure, against my political and moral convictions, will not bring me glory (...) I took on the cross of shame consciously. It was my conviction that we were in a situation in which I had to take on this odious act." Domokos accepted to write the article under pressure and felt shame for it. He knew that the text will undergo the "metamorphoses" dictated by the supreme party ideologist. Finally the manuscript prepared by the ideologist had to be retranslated into Hungarian.

Sándor Huszár, author of the "rejection" article published in *Előre* on 3 August 1968 included two variants of this text in his book entitled *Sorsom emlékezete (The Memory of My Fate)* and added: "The article has further variants. One of them was even published. A few of my sentences were preserved in it."<sup>1</sup>

Our hopes in connection with 1968 proved to be illusory, however, the opening led to the loosening of press censorship and the restructuring of territorial administration enriched us with some periodicals: *Hargita* in Csíkszereda (Miercurea Ciuc), *Megyei Tükör* in Sepsiszentgyörgy (Sfântu Gheorghe), and *Szatmári Hírlap* in Szatmárnémeti (Satu Mare). The *Kriterion* Publishing House and the Hungarian studio of the TV began their activity. The appearance of the *Hét* in Bucharest (1970) marks the end of this brief period of construction. There were signs in 1971 and then in 1974 that made clear the aim of restricting the use of Hungarian language in education and culture. According to the survey compiled by Lajos Jordáky there were 42 Hungarian periodicals in Romania in 1971. 29 of them outlived the dictatorship. In the interwar period 69 localities had their own periodical, while in 1971, the year when our network of press was broadest in the period between 1949 -1989, there were only 11 places where Hungarian papers were published.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Cséke, Péter, op. cit., 206.

<sup>2</sup> idem, 180.

Ernő Gáll writes about his experiences at the *Korunk*: “Our situation and conscience was determined by the fact that we worked for an ethnic minority cultural institution in a totalitarian party system which gradually became nationalist. Our being was ensured by a state fund but we had to conform to centrally or locally devised requirements. Censorship, the various party and state organs and the awe-inspiring Securitate (Secret Service) controlled our every action. Our restarting was considered a “great accomplishment” in ethnic policy, but our activity depended on the development of various power structures, occasional concessions and compromises.”<sup>1</sup>

According to the confessions of Lajos Kántor, the *Korunk* had been in the centre of attention after 1959 and it was considered the enemy number one of the power. It was censored by two instances, then by four. There was the institution called Press Directorate, functioning in the building of the central Post. The central organ of this was the Bucharest centre of the Press Directorate. Two other forums supervised the periodical: the Press Department of the Romanian Communist Party and the Cultural Department of the Cluj county Party Committee. The remarks of the party forums were usually forwarded to the Press Directorate in question. Often there was no consensus between the local censorship and that in Bucharest because this latter was more ideological, representing the leading line, while the local one just observed certain prescriptions. There was a time when it was not enough to send the actual issue of the periodical to Bucharest but the project had to be sent before the material was arranged.

In the 1980s all historical materials had to be sent to the Party History Institution in Bucharest. It was almost impossible to publish any historical material at that time because permission was issued only after months.

There had been an attempt to control completely the *Korunk*, prescribing the material to be published and banishing every text related to Hungarian culture. The aim was to create the Hungarian equivalent of *Era Socialistă* (*The Socialist Era*). Posterior censorship also functioned. The periodical was re-read in case of denunciations. This is what happened during the 1980 Writers' Meeting at Gyergyószárhegy (Lazarea). Lajos Kántor's introduction, *The Spirit of Szárhegy* originally passed censorship, but the author was denounced because of the title, and an inquisitorial case followed.

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<sup>1</sup> Gáll, Ernő, op. cit., 75.

Lajos Kántor says that censorship restricted the use of personal names. It was forbidden to write down the names of those who had left the country or became undesirable for the power. The strictness of censorship changed in function of the internal and external political atmosphere. It was most severe after the Revolution in Hungary (1956-1959). The events of the Prague Spring brought softening. After his 1971 visit to China Ceaușescu wanted to introduce the cultural revolution in Romania. Although not immediately, his plan materialised in 1973. At the beginning of the 1980s many things could be told, but a few years later the press was considered dangerous and censorship became ruthless.

On 7 May 1974 the central newspapers published the decision of the Central Bureau of the Romanian Communist Party about the “improvement of the activity of the press and the rationalisation of paper usage” which resulted in the reduction of the size and print run of periodicals. Several Hungarian dailies became weeklies in the period between May 1974 and the summer of 1976 (*Vörös Lobogó*, *Szatmári Hírlap*, *Hargita*). The other dailies appeared with reduced number of pages.

After the official announcement of the banishment of censorship in 1977 Ernő Gáll wrote in his notes about his experience with the *Korunk*: “We were announced that there will be no more Press Directorate control. The former ‘bureaucratic form’ of censorship has allegedly ceased. But what will this new ‘ideological-political’ censorship be like? Will we long for our good old ‘counsellors’ who, although committed mistakes sometimes, were useful after all?” (2 July 1977) “Our happiness came too early. On the 30th an activist called Pezderka called us and said that Sándor Kacsó’s poem *Hargita* as well as Vilma Kósa-Szánthó’s *Életpályák* (*Lifelines*) should be taken out. What’s this? Is it some kind of ‘shadow-censorship’ or just individual quibbling?” (31 August 1977).<sup>1</sup>

Gyula Keszthelyi, Editor of *Igazság* in Cluj between 1974-1983 said about the state of the press in the Ceaușescu era in 1992: “Thanks to self-censorship the proof-reader and the censor hardly had any work. Every manuscript had been read by one of the leaders of the editorial board. Until 1978, the typographical manuscript went through two filters before being sent to the printing press. First it was controlled at the Propaganda Section of the County Party Committee, then sent to the printing press. The censorship office in Romania was called the Press and

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<sup>1</sup> Gáll, Ernő, op. cit., 195.

Printing Committee. After dissolving the Committee in 1978, censorship was performed by the activists of the County Party Committee.”<sup>1</sup>

In the name of national uniformisation and the melting-in policy the power took certain steps which restricted the language use and the preservation of traditions of Transylvanian Hungarians. The aim of these restrictions was to prevent them from feeling to be part of the Hungarian nation. They banished words referring to the Hungarian past and national belonging. During the dictatorship, concepts such as *Csango*, *Sekler* and words denoting religious concepts (*mass*, *baptism*, *Holy Trinity*) were sometimes allowed to be used, then banned. The Romanianisation of the names of historical persons aimed at stressing ‘the fraternity of peoples’ in the conception of the power (e.g. Dózsa - Doja). It was a practice to write ‘Romanian-Hungarian relations’ instead of ‘Hungarian-Romanian relations’. Linguists were not allowed to deal with the impact of the Hungarian language on Romanian. The “incoming (loan) words” expression had to be replaced by “borrowings” (on the grounds that a Romanian word can by no means be an “incomer”...) Censorship ruthlessly eliminated every expression, sentence or chapter from Transylvanian writers’ works which portrayed the Romanians in an unfavourable manner. Lexicons dealing with Hungarian and Romanian personalities alike had to emphasize the presence of Romanian culture. It was forbidden to talk about Hungarian culture in those periods in which the Romanian nation did not have similar achievements.

The appearance of the Transylvanian samizdat periodical *Ellenpontok* (*Counterpoints*) in December 1981 was sensational. Besides revealing the grievances of minority being and the process of assimilation, it pointed to the anti-humanist and destructive nature of communist ideology. It was the only representative of the second publicity in Romania. Besides the articles dealing with actual events and facts there was a collage of documents about the most important achievements of Eastern-European movements of opposition. Beginning with November 1982, the state security organs held examinations in connection with the periodical. Attila Ara-Kovács, Géza Szöcs and Károly Tóth admitted that they participated in editing the periodical.<sup>2</sup> Another Transylvanian samizdat periodical in 1988-1989, *Kiáltó Szó* had eight edited issues, two of which appeared. This is how the issue number

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<sup>1</sup> Kuszálik, Péter, op. cit., 6.

<sup>2</sup> Molnár, János, *Az egyetlen* (*Az Ellenpontok és az ellenpontosok története*) (The only one (The history of the Counterpoints and those who made it), Szeged, 1993, 25.



1/1988 presented the situation of Hungarians in Romania: "There is not only nationalist state policy but also nationalist atmosphere in Romania today. The propagation of a state of imminent danger - 'Hungarians claim Transylvania' - resulted in a general suspicion towards us."<sup>1</sup>

As a consequence of the 1969 restructuring of book publishing a decision of the Council of Ministry prescribed the publication of Hungarian books not only by the *Kriterion* but also other publishing houses. However, the *Eminescu*, *Facla* and *Albatros* Publishing Houses ceased to publish Hungarian books altogether at the end of the 1980s. The output of the *Kriterion* was severely restricted in that period. In an interview given to György Beke in January 1988, Géza Domokos enumerated thirty-nine manuscripts waiting for publication. These could have had long been published had their subject or author not been "undesirable" for the authorities. For example, András Sütő, *Három Vigjáték (Three Comedies)*, Károly Kós, *Vallomások (Confessions)*, Elek Csetri, *Bethlen György fejedelem élete (The Life of Count György Bethlen)*, Attila Szabó T., *Erdélyi Magyar Szótörténeti Tár V. (Transylvanian Hungarian Etymological Dictionary V.)*, Attila Mózes, *Árvízkor a folyók megkeresik régi medrüket (The Tide Finds the Old Riverbed)*. Géza Domokos raised the question: why had the technical lexicons, papers in sociology, psychology and philosophy, art albums of the *Kriterion Gallery* and the *Forrás* volumes been considered undesirable? A possible explanation was that the power considered national amnesia an adequate tool for the radical solution of the nationality question. The more the national identity and self-respect based on the cultural heritage of the past weakens, the greater the uncertainty which leads to self-denial.<sup>2</sup>

Gyula Dávid, who was the Director of the Cluj branch of *Kriterion* pointed out that censorship worked along two lines. First on the level of the Press Directorate, one of the departments of the Central Party Committee in Bucharest and a local institution functioning within the County Party Committees.

Texts had to be presented in the form of manuscripts. Printing presses were not allowed to accept texts without permission. The censors did not alter the texts, this was the task of the editors. In the case of the *Literary Lexicon of Hungarians in Romania* there had been so many objections that the editors had to discuss with the Head of Department of

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<sup>1</sup> Cseke, Péter, op. cit., 101.

<sup>2</sup> Dálnoki Szabó, Dénes (ed.), *A Kriterion műhelyében* (In the *Kriterion* workshop), Budapest: Kossuth, 1988, 205.

the Publishing House Directorate about the modification of the text for days.

The strictness of censorship in case of Hungarian book publishing varied in function of the political situation. The requirements have changed. Following the official elimination of censorship in 1977, a so-called Editorial Council was founded to supervise editorial activity. The person who used to censor the books on the part of the Press Directorate became member of this board. At the end of the 1970s the Council lost its importance, a single person remained who acted on behalf of the party organs.

Requirements were stricter in the 1980s, conceptional matters were also interfered with. The so-called Synthesis Department was also part of the editorial process. Its task was to check annual editorial plans. There had been various requirements, for example, an author could not publish more than one work per year. Those who were undesirable for the authorities could not be published at all.

The Hungarian section of the *Political Publishing House* was dissolved and propaganda materials were sent to the *Kriterion*. In 1986 the Publishing House Directorate did not only eliminate works from the annual plan but prescribed the publication of short stories by István Nagy, István Asztalos and György Kovács.

According to Gyula Dávid, taboos were not clearly defined but experience showed which were the topics that the power did not tolerate. The *Literary Lexicon of Hungarians in Romania* is a good example in this respect. As the first volume included less known authors as well, the Publishing House Directorate draw the conclusion that the editors try to prove the superiority of Hungarian culture, its richness as compared to Romanian culture. Authors who had a religious activity and those who left the country had to be eliminated from the lexicon. The second volume which was planned to be published in 1983, only appeared in 1991, in its original (uncensored) form.

The spirituality of the lexicons published in the *Kriterion Handbooks* series was largely restricted. One of the criteria of censorship was that Romanian culture must be in the forefront in lexicons presenting Hungarian and Romanian personalities alike. When the *Music Lexicon* was ready for publication the order came to eliminate the “Hungarian Music in Romania” entry because music is international.

The authorities also banned already published works. A book by György Beke (*Boltívek teherbírása*) published in 1983 was taken out of circulation in 1985. The accusation brought against it was that it is too

historical and constant references to national self-knowledge “impoverish the work aesthetically”. This is how the author remembers the day of banning his book: “I received an anonymous phonecall: my book will be withdrawn from the bookshops. I smiled: ‘It can no longer be found in circulation, although it was published in twenty-five thousand copies. Its value is now ten times as much as the original. Whenever books were withdrawn from bookshops or libraries, the shopkeeper or the librarian ‘saved’ every existing copy and secretly sold it for ten times more than its original price. This was also a method of protest against the devastating cultural policy of the dictatorship.”<sup>1</sup>

Péter Cseke’s work written in 1986, *Erdélyi fiatalok - Dokumentumok, viták (Young Transylvanians - Documents, Debates)* did not receive permission for publication, due to the “effectiveness” of posterior censorship. Géza Domokos says, “It was at that time that Mihai Dulea, the notorious Vice-President of the Ministry of Culture, famous for his dogmatism and hatred towards me and our publishing house, initiated the re-censoring of publications. Our new book (...) was sent to Dezső Szilágyi, Editor-in-Chief of *Előre*, Győző Hajdú and Sándor Koppándi who controlled Hungarian press at the Central Party Committee. Their opinion was the same: ‘The introduction as well as the collection of documents contains serious political mistakes. They exaggerate the importance of the movement of the Young Transylvanians, avoid its rightist nature, being uncritical about it. Essentially, this is a nationalist book’. (...) Finally comrade Dulea ordered the book to be eliminated. Despite the pulping records of the printing press and the bill attesting the receipt of paper strips this had never happened. It transpired three years later that the printers in Oradea hid all the copies of the banned book, with the knowledge of the chief engineer, Vladimir Kagan. In January 1990 a band with the inscription *Index - Banned Books in Free Circulation* was placed on the book covers and the publication was sold in bookshops. (...) I have never heard that anybody ever expected recognition for such a ‘cultural bravery’.”<sup>2</sup>

On 3 April 1988 a party decision prohibited the use of “foreign” place names. In publications they could be used in Romanian only. Thus, *Nagyvárad* appeared in newspapers as *Oradea*, *Gyulafehérvár* as *Alba Iulia*, *Csíksereda* as *Miercurea Ciuc*, *Kolozsvár* as *Cluj-Napoca*. The

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<sup>1</sup> Beke, György, *A lándzsa hegye (The spearhead)*, Budapest-Ungvár: Intermix, 1993, 42.

<sup>2</sup> Domokos, Géza, *Esély I (Chance I)*, Csíksereda (Miercurea Ciuc): Pallas-Akadémia, 1996, 57.

century-old, traditional Hungarian names of towns and villages have been replaced in Hungarian texts by Romanian placenames invented a few decades ago. Moreover, *Budapest* was called *Budapesta*, *Szeged* (*Seghedin*) and *Debrecen* (*Debrejin*), in the spirit of the Romanian language. This was the final stage in a long process, the attempt to destroy Hungarian national consciousness. It was long evident that the power tried to annihilate all documents of the Transylvanian Hungarian past, tombstones in cemeteries and archives. In the period in question this action became programmatic, its accomplishment being supported and directed by state institutions.