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## The Protean Nature of Communist Censorship: The Testimony of Collections

### Functions of Censorship under Socialism

Various forms of censorship exist in all authoritarian and totalitarian regimes as a vital element of their power mechanisms. The communist governments of former Eastern Bloc countries (Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, the GDR, Hungary, Poland and Romania) and the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY)—all created and maintained various instruments for restricting press freedom and freedom of expression in general. The constitutions of all these countries declared the freedoms of speech and the press. However, as the Constitution of the Soviet Union (and all of its “Republics”) clearly stated these freedoms could only be used for the consolidation and advancement of the socialist order.<sup>1</sup> The notorious Article 133, section 1 of the Criminal Law of the SFRY (*Službeni list SFRJ*, no. 40/77) made it crystal clear that any criticism that encourages dissatisfaction with the regime would be punished with “a term of imprisonment of one to ten years.”<sup>2</sup> In the Soviet Union, deportation from two to five years could also be added.

The mechanism of control was basically similar in each of these countries. The Communist Party, hand in hand with security services, acted as the brain of the system. The orders and directions for the control of the media came from the Central Committee, and all the components of the censorship machine were subordinated to the Party, directly or indirectly. In Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, Hungary and East Germany control and supervision were exerted indirectly through various ministries, committees and councils. The details of the system, the instruments of executing censorship and the limits of press freedom varied considerably. What was forbidden and what was permitted also varied by time and country. However, questioning the legitimacy of the socialist order and the leading role of the Communist Party in society, as well as publishing anything that could be interpreted as criticism of the Soviet Union was forbidden throughout the Eastern Bloc.

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1 Lauk, “Practice of Soviet Censorship,” 30.

2 Jovičević, “Censorship and ingenious dramatic strategies,” 248.

*Research on Censorship in Central and Eastern European Countries*

Critical research on the ruling political and social order was impossible for the scholars working under communist regimes. They had no access to any information the authorities had not already filtered, and certainly not to numerous secret documents of the Party, the security services or the censorship offices. Censorship was a taboo topic for both researchers and public, unless examined exclusively from the historical perspective. Therefore, only scholars from the West could publish research on communist censorship and media supervision. For example, Dennison Rusinow's book (1977) *The Yugoslav Experiment, 1948–1974* offers a broad historical analysis of the political setting and supervision of Yugoslavian media. Gertrude Joch Robinson's book (1977) *Tito's Maverick Media* gives a somewhat optimistic picture of the framework of Yugoslavian media in the 1960s and 1970s. Referring to Yugoslavia's comparatively broad press freedom, she concludes: "[...] professionalized mass communicators increasingly became the spokesmen for a variety of groups, often introducing conflicting points of view into Yugoslavia's political communication stream."<sup>3</sup> Yet she admits that pluralism of opinion was "more evident in the cultural and economic than the political realms."<sup>4</sup> The archive documents (including the collections of COURAGE) however, reveal a rather tightly controlled cultural sphere throughout the period of communist rule in Yugoslavia. Also, the Press Law of 1973 and the new Constitution of 1974 provided a more restrictive interpretation of press freedom than the previous ones, and they left no doubt that the press had to support the Party line unconditionally.<sup>5</sup>

The problem for Western scholars was the scarcity of sources. Few authentic documents on communist censorship found their way to the West. Original documents were sometimes smuggled to the West by émigrés. A prominent case was the defection of a Polish censor Tomasz Strzyżewski to Sweden in 1977. Strzyżewski took with him classified documents of the state censorship office and a hand written volume of records and recommendations for Polish censors. The original was a book of 700 pages in a black frame. Annex of London, a Polish émigré publisher, immediately published the first edition in two volumes in 1977 (in Polish). Polish television (TVP) presented a documentary about Strzyżewski, called *Great Escape of a Censor* (*Wielka ucieczka censored*) in 1999. Jane Leftwich Curry, a U.S. scholar, did extensive research on the mass media control in Poland, and more broadly, Central and Eastern Europe in the early 1980s.<sup>6</sup> She also translated and edited the notorious *Black Book of Polish Censorship* (1984). A detailed study on the media envi-

3 Robinson, *Tito's Maverick Media*, 224.

4 Ibid., 226.

5 Lendvai, *The Bureaucracy of Truth*, 51.

6 Curry, *The Media and Intra-Elite Communication in Poland*; Curry, *Media Control in Eastern Europe*; Curry, *The Black Book*.

ronment in the Soviet Bloc countries and Yugoslavia is presented in Paul Lendvai's book *The Bureaucracy of Truth* (1981). He uses numerous Soviet and Western newspapers as additional sources, alongside documents and other published material. A rare view of life, corruption, decadence, dissidence, and repression in Communist Bulgaria is presented in Georgi Markov's book *The Truth that Killed* (1984).

Researchers of communist censorship also used interviews with émigrés as sources. When visiting socialist countries, they interviewed prominent literary figures, journalists and even dissidents, as Dennis Deletant describes in his *Ceaușescu and the Securitate* (1995). However, interviews were possible only with the victims of censorship and not with its architects and executors. A valuable contribution to the study of Polish journalism is Jane Curry's book *Poland's Journalists* (1990), which draws on over two hundred interviews with Polish journalists and media specialists, as well as archive research and a variety of published sources.

For the scholars in the former socialist countries, censorship became a research field only after 1989–90, when their countries restored independence and abolished censorship. Restoration of the true history of the liberated nations, and revealing the crimes of the communist authorities became important elements of the democratization of political and cultural spheres. Access was provided to the forbidden books and periodicals in special storages, and archives opened their files to researchers. On several occasions, officials of the Communist Party and censorship apparatus, security services and other repressive institutions succeeded in destroying secret documents before they left office.<sup>7</sup>

Access to archives enables more detailed research and brings to light new facts, corroborating reliability of the analyses. For example, a detailed analysis of the Romanian censorship system and its activities in controlling the publishing of literature is given in Liliana Corobca's book *Controlul cenzurii. Cenzura literaturii în regimul comunist din România* (Book Control. Censorship of Literature in the Communist Regime in Romania) (2014). The first large study on censorship in Serbia was Želimir Kešetović's book *Cenzura u Srbiji* (Censorship in Serbia) published in 1998. A comprehensive picture of censorship and resistance in Czechoslovakia is Jan Čulík's contribution to *Censorship. A World Encyclopedia* (2001). Another encyclopedic publication dealing with censorship of Czech literature and the press is *V obecném zájmu. Literární cenzura v moderní české kultuře. 1749–2014*. (In the general interest. Literary censorship in modern Czech culture. 1749–2014).<sup>8</sup> Examples of the history and practices of censorship in Poland, Czechoslovakia, Serbia, Hungary, Latvia, Estonia, Lithuania, Slovakia have been collected in the volume 3 of *History of Literary Cultures of East-Central Europe* (2004). As the COURAGE project's

<sup>7</sup> Lauk, "Practice of Soviet Censorship."

<sup>8</sup> Wögerbauer, Piša, Šamal, and Janáček, *V obecném zájmu*.

collections show, there is still a lot to discover in the archives. They offer valuable material for history, literature, film, theatre and media researchers for revealing the truth about how the Communist Parties and their myrmidons stifled the freedom of speech and the press in Central and Eastern Europe.

*Mechanisms, Instruments and Practices of Control over Public Information and Cultural Production*

Censorship has many faces. History knows two main types of censorship: pre-publication and post-publication censorship, which are both preventive and restrictive. Censorship is also repressive: it can destroy literature, films, pieces of art, and persecute people who create and/or distribute what is forbidden by the authorities.<sup>9</sup> All these aspects were simultaneously present in the countries under communist regimes in one form or another.

A common feature of the power mechanism that bolstered the authority of the ruling communist elite was a tight symbiosis of the Communist Party and the state, the state and society, politics, economics and culture. As a result, these realms lost their distinctive features as autonomous and distinguishable spheres.<sup>10</sup> The fact that the Party embodied the state and owned all the media was a prerequisite for asserting its control over all the spheres of society. Private ownership of the media was forbidden, except for a few small publications of churches and other organizations, in some countries of the region. Integration of the media with the other instruments of power enabled the political elite to manipulate information and buttress the communist ideology.

Censorship was stricter inside the borders of the Soviet Union than elsewhere in the other countries of the Soviet Bloc. The period of the harshest repressions against culture and the cultural intelligentsia in Central and Eastern Europe lasted from immediately after the communist seizure of power until after Stalin's death, when the Soviet leadership changed its course.

Destroying books was one of the means the Communist Parties used to destroy the collective historical and cultural memories of oppressed nations. In Serbia, extensive purges of libraries and bookshops took place. The communist government of Romania announced lists of forbidden volumes and writers between 1944 and 1948.<sup>11</sup> Iljko Karaman's archive in the COURAGE collection gives evidence of extensive book purges in Croatia in 1945–1946. The barbaric battle against books continued throughout the post-WWII decade in all the countries under Soviet control, and until 1966 in the Baltic countries.<sup>12</sup>

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9 Lauk, "Practice of Soviet Censorship," 28.

10 Hardt and Kaufman, *East-Central European Economies in Transition*.

11 Deletant, *Ceaușescu and the Securitate*, 24.

12 Lauk, "Practice of Soviet Censorship."

Formal pre-publication censorship was instituted in Yugoslavia in 1946 and lasted throughout the initial years of communist rule.<sup>13</sup> In Czechoslovakia, the Communist Party had its own censorship office from 1948 to 1953. In 1953, the government secretly created its Office for the Supervision of the Press.<sup>14</sup> Institutionalized censorship mechanisms in Poland, Romania and Czechoslovakia had similar structures and working methods as the Soviet Glavlit (the chief censorship administration). At the top of the hierarchy, stood the Central Committee of the Communist Party with its Department of Agitation and Propaganda, which had different names in different times and countries. The “agitprop” department directed and oversaw the publishing process, and provided detailed instructions concerning what should be covered and how, whose names could not appear in public etc. In cooperation with the security services, the departments also compiled lists of publicly forbidden data. Appointments to the leading and managerial positions in the media, and publishing and printing industries were made in the Central Committee, or in other cases, with the acceptance of a Party bureaucrat.

The execution of the control of all publications, films, radio and TV broadcasts, exhibitions etc., was the task of a censorship body, which never was named “censorship.” In Romania the censorship office was called General Directorate of Press and Prints. In Poland the Central Office for Press, Publication and Entertainment Control was established in 1946, and renamed the Central Office for the Control of Publications and Performances in 1981. In Czechoslovakia, the Press Law of 1966 gave censorship a formal legal status. The Central Office for the Supervision of the Press was renamed the Central Publication Office, which became a civilian institution subordinated to a government minister,<sup>15</sup> and it functioned until 1989.<sup>16</sup> Within the system, a manuscript had to pass through several filters, each of which could stop the process. Since each step of the publishing process was thoroughly documented, a valuable collection of evidence of the suppression of literary culture in Czechoslovakia is now available for researchers. In addition to the official censorship, mass media was also supervised in other ways, such as “instructional conferences,” which were regular information sessions for leading journalists and editors held by Communist Party functionaries.<sup>17</sup> Editorial offices often received instructions and reprimands by telephone from the top officials of the system. After a short break during the “Prague Spring” in 1968, censorship in Czechoslovakia continued during “normalization,” and an additional censorship office was created specifically for Slovak literature and mass me-

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13 Curry, *Media control in Eastern Europe*, 17.

14 Čulík “Czech Republic,” 626.

15 *Ibid.*, 627.

16 For more details see section on literary censorship in this chapter.

17 See Lendvai, *The Bureaucracy of Truth*, 46–52.

dia. Another purge of books from libraries was carried out in 1972–73, and all “anti-state and ideologically unsound publications” were removed.<sup>18</sup>

Overt censorship creates self-censorship among writers and journalists and they begin deliberately avoiding sensitive issues. As the lists of forbidden information were secret and available only for censors and officials with special authorization, it was not always clear what was allowed and what was forbidden. Journalists and literary people learned, where the limits were set, by experience. Many of them deliberately tested these limits, sometimes successfully, sometimes not.<sup>19</sup> Under the strictest censorship systems, resistance took the form of underground publishing—*samizdat*, which was especially widespread in Poland, but also in Czechoslovakia, and in several nations within the Soviet Union. Also, émigré publishing (*tamizdat*) was an option.<sup>20</sup>

Yugoslavia had the mildest regime, which was the “most daring internally and the most truly independent externally of all communist governments.”<sup>21</sup> While in Poland, Gierek enlarged the ‘agitprop’ department of the Central Committee up to 60 “instructors,”<sup>22</sup> Tito dismantled its counterpart in Yugoslavia in 1972. The state-owned mass media were run by workers’ councils and management boards as autonomous enterprises<sup>23</sup> and a part of the “self-government” system. The directives and guidelines of the Party were given explicitly through various press committees and agencies to journalists, editors and publishers, or implicitly through general Party statements.<sup>24</sup> The lack of overt censorship in combination with “self-governing” principles created an atmosphere of a certain collective consensus to follow the “correct” ideological path. This made editors and publishers personally responsible for the decisions concerning what could or could not be published, and developed self-censorship that worked as efficiently as any formal censorship. As long as the media supported the party line, critical voices were tolerated, which gave an impression of relatively free media. However, as soon as the criticism appeared subversive, action was taken to suppress the voices, as the collections of Public Prosecutor Ijko Karaman, film director Lazar Stojanovič, novelist Ivan Aralica and historian Aleksandar Stipčević vividly demonstrate.

Indirect, dispersed and personalized censorship did not have common standards, but relied mostly on self-censoring practices. In Yugoslavia, the frequent changes of the political climate in combination with contradictory instructions from the Party authorities sometimes led to oddities. It could happen that “a publication banned in one republic could be published in an-

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18 Čulík, “Czech Republic,” 628.

19 Lauk and Kreegipuu, “Was It All Pure Propaganda?”

20 Bolecki, “Getting around Polish Censorship,” 135.

21 Lendvai, *The Bureaucracy of Truth*, 51.

22 Curry, *Media Control in Eastern Europe*, 11.

23 *Ibid.*, 24.

24 *Ibid.*, 3.

other; a banned production could be transferred to one of the other republics and could even win a prize at a festival there."<sup>25</sup>

Under indirect censorship, press freedom is comparatively broader than under institutionalized censorship. As Yugoslavia's Communist Party was not monolithic and therefore did not have an overwhelming grip on society, the media policy was not very consistent and uniform. This allowed various conflicting opinions to reach the public, and to present different political, economic and cultural views. Violent repressions against the cultural elite were uncommon, but "many pacifist activists, intellectuals, and artists were ignored, isolated, or stigmatized as traitors."<sup>26</sup>

Journalists and authors learned to use various ways of expressing their critical opinions. They skillfully applied "Aesopian language," subtexts and intertextuality, and used historical displacements of events to create parallels with the present.<sup>27</sup> Where relatively less strict control allowed a "silent" opposition discourse to develop in the official media and in literature, the need for underground publishing was not as urgent as in strictly controlled environments.

Control over public information was a vital condition for maintaining and strengthening the power of the ruling Communist Parties in the Soviet Union and other communist regimes in Central and Eastern Europe. Inside the borders of the Soviet Union, censorship was the most advanced, calling to mind Orwell's Ministry of Truth. Several satellite countries established similar institutionalized systems, while others practiced indirect censorship. The case studies in this chapter represent both types of censorship. Common to any kind of censorship is the striving to keep all public information under control to avoid dissent and unrest. Simultaneously, the task of censorship was to guarantee the "correct" ideological line, the Communist Party's, in the mass media. The concrete practices and strictness of censorship changed over time and in different countries, but the basic nature and aims remained the same everywhere.

### The Books that didn't Make It. Two Collections on the History of Literary Censorship. The Dispersed Censorship System

In Soviet-style dictatorships, there were several places and times in which space opened up for censorship interventions with a diverse array of motivations affecting the publication of literary works. These interventions at times affected the authors themselves or the texts, or they restricted the circulation

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25 Jovičević, "Censorship and Ingenious Dramatic Strategies," 240.

26 *Ibid.*, 248.

27 For more see: Kelertas, "Strategies against Censorship in Soviet Lithuania"; Lauk and Kreegi-puu, "Was it all pure propaganda?"



of a book that had already been published (e.g. library censorship). Censorship intervention had varying effects on a work, from spelling alterations or the change of a single word or verse to the deletion of several poems from a collection, the basic transformation of a work's entire structure, or its complete prohibition. Given the high number of places for potential intervention, we speak of the existence of a dispersed censorship system in Czechoslovakia between 1949 and 1989.<sup>28</sup> A basic feature of this dispersed censorship system was its multilevel nature and the constant interconnection of its planning, management, and control processes, while several primary censorship nodes that made up the backbone of this supervision over literature can be distinguished. The entire system comprised approval at party, governmental, and local state enterprise levels, while the Czechoslovak Communist Party Central Committee remained the supreme ideological authority. The Ministry of Culture was in charge of the management and planning of publishing activity, while the third mainstay of supervision over books was the approval procedure at individual publishing houses.<sup>29</sup> Moreover, between 1953 and 1968 there was a specialist preliminary censorship office, the so-called Central Press Supervision Authority (which bore the name Central Publication Authority from 1967 to 1968).

*The Collection of Censorship Reports in the Central Press Supervision Authority Fonds*

The preliminary censorship office was not an essential part of the literary censorship system. The idea that this authority was optional is proven by the fact that it only functioned in Czechoslovakia between 1953 and 1968, whereas under normalization (in the 1970s and 1980s), there was no preliminary censorship office. The contradictory nature of preliminary censorship activities has been pointed out by literary historian Josef Čermák, who as editor-in-chief at a publishing house specializing in bringing out literature in translation. Čermák believed that the situation in which a censorship office existed was “paradoxically more beneficial to a publishing house than if it [the censorship office] were abolished and ‘self-censorship’ took over. While the Central Press Supervision Authority was in existence [...] and putting its stamp on the definitive versions of corrected texts, the publisher was off the hook as the responsibility lay with the authority [i.e. the censor – PŠ]. But when self-censorship started to be imposed, things got worse. The responsibility was now on the authors and subsequently on the publishers, so the apprehension started to be more diffuse.”<sup>30</sup>

28 Šámal, “V zájmu pracujícího lidu,” 1102–104.

29 Bock, “‘Unser ganzes System’,” 31–207.

30 Čermák, “Být šéfredaktorem tak velkého nakladatelství nebyla sinekura,” 36.

The dispensability of the preliminary censorship office is also demonstrated by the fact that in all only about eighty books were actually prohibited at its instigation. As Czechoslovak publishers were bringing out some 4,000 new titles every year at that time, the primary tools of censorship were clearly to be found elsewhere within the network of literary communication.

When the Central Press Supervision Authority came under the Ministry of Interior after the abolition of censorship in June 1968, this material was administered first by the Central State Archive, to which it was transferred on July 9, 1969.<sup>31</sup> However, the extensive Central Press Supervision Authority fonds were transferred in 1970 to the Czechoslovak Federal Interior Ministry, and they were organized and systematized very quickly (as early as 1970–71), as the Ministry of Interior staff wished to utilize censored material from the 1960s in order to gather information on the activities of intellectuals during the Prague Spring. The Central Press Supervision Authority fonds subsequently made up part of what was known as the Ministry of Interior Study Institute, where particularly important information and material on State Security activities was being gathered.<sup>32</sup> The original Central Press Supervision Authority fonds inventory from 1971 is currently available online.<sup>33</sup> When Act No. 181/2007 was passed on to the Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes and the Security Services Archive and these institutes were subsequently established, the entire Central Press Supervision Authority fonds became a part of the Security Services Archive.

Once some of the archives containing material that originated at the Ministry of Interior had been opened up to the specialist public, the first history books were written to describe the emergence and operation of the censorship authority and in particular its influence on the press and film industry.<sup>34</sup> In recent years, more analytical works have been written examining the role of the Central Press Supervision Authority within the context of the overall literary supervision system and showing that the censorship authority was playing the role of inspector (the Polish communication theoretician Andrzej Urbański pithily characterized censorship as “the inspection of inspection”)<sup>35</sup> to ensure that the written and unwritten rules were being correctly upheld and that the individual elements in the censorship system were playing their roles appropriately.

The Central Press Supervision Authority fonds contain comprehensive documentation on the ways in which censorship staff examined the press and the ways publishers dealt with them with regards to newly published books.

31 Security Services Archive, Akta fondu 318 – Hlavní správa tiskového dohledu.

32 Frolík, “Osud fondů Studijního ústavu MV,” 4–17.

33 “Prozatímní inventář k archivnímu fondu 318. Hlavní správa tiskového dohledu.” Accessed October 28, 2017. <https://www.abscr.cz/data/pdf/abs/inventar-318.pdf>.

34 Tomášek and Kaplan, *O cenzuře v Československu*; Tomášek, *Pozor cenzurováno!*; Bárta, “Nelze zveřejnit v tisku, rozhlasu a televizi,” 6–58.

35 See Urbański, “Cenzura – kontrola kontroly,” 200–16.

Acts of censorship often entailed extensive transcriptions of “defective” literary works, which the censors usually commented on in detail, explaining why they considered the passage in question or the work as a whole unacceptable. These reports are of great value to literary historians, as they include unknown information on the ways in which authors and editors negotiated with the censors. They also shed light on the origins of works and provide information on the alterations that were imposed and the existence of text variants, and they even cover prominent authors’ previously unknown works.<sup>36</sup>

### *Collection of Readers’ Reports in the Československý spisovatel Fonds*

While the state’s publication monopoly was in place, the primary tools for the supervision of literature moved inside the publishing houses. Under normalization, when the preliminary censorship authority no longer existed, this element of literary supervision can be studied on the basis of sources documenting the reading procedures.

Between 1949 and 1989, a system known as publishing coordination was in operation, whereby every publishing house was meant to specialize in a certain area of book output (e.g. publishing textbooks, healthcare literature, literature in translation, literature for children, and the like). Original Czech fiction was meant to be published (albeit not exclusively) by the *Československý spisovatel* publishers, whose director commented on the publishing plans of other publishers, and if interested he could claim original Czech fiction titles for his own publishing house (this situation arose, for example, in the case of the memoirs of the subsequent Nobel Prize-winner Jaroslav Seifert, the publication of which was delayed by several years due to its transfer from one publisher to another).

The author of a literary work who decided to publish e.g. a novel was supposed to approach the publisher that specialized in bringing out fiction. Once the manuscript was accepted, the first round of the internal approval procedure took place, in which the work could be rejected. An important element in the dispersed censorship system was the bureaucratization of the approval procedure. In other words, the decision to publish a book was never left to a single person, but was repeated at several levels within the publishing house, each verdict being set down in writing and archived. Supervision could then be retroactive, and the “culprit” could be called to account.

If the editor was of the opinion that the manuscript on offer did not meet the criteria of 1) social need; 2) ideological and political correctness; 3) professional and literary merit; and 4) the publishers’ specialization, he could reject it at the very first reading (and this particularly happened in the case of neophyte authors). If a title made it through this first filter or the report was not entirely clear, the publishing editor nominated two external readers, who

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<sup>36</sup> See Mináč, *Zakázané prózy*.

were as a rule literary critics, publishing editors, or writers and who had to produce a written report. Only if the positive opinions predominated was a proposal put forward to publish the book, or conditions (e.g. required alterations) were set out for the text to be published. A proposal to publish a book still had to be approved by the editor-in-chief and the publishing director, i.e. by vetted individuals whose appointment was subject to the approval of the highest party bodies.

These documents on the reading procedures, which document the objections to manuscripts and their possible rejection, make up another exceptionally important resource on the history of literary censorship. One of the most complete collections of readers' reports can be found in the *Československý spisovatel* (ČS) publisher's fonds housed in the Literary Archive in the Museum of Czech Literature.

One of the most prominent post-war Czech publishing houses, the *Československý spisovatel* was established in the spring of 1949 through the merger of several private companies and cooperatives, and it operated until as late as 1997.<sup>37</sup> From its establishment until 1970 it was subordinate to the Union of Czechoslovak Writers, a professional organization that brought together Czech and Slovak writers and which had a relatively strong economic base thanks to its income. When the Union of Czechoslovak Writers was closed down at the turn of the 1970s because it had been one of the intellectual centers of the Prague Spring, it was subordinated to the Czech Literary Fund. After the fall of the Communist regime, ČS only managed with difficulty to cope with the market economy and soon got into financial difficulties, which resulted in its liquidation in 1997.

The extensive *Československý spisovatel* collection currently finds itself under state ownership. On February 2, 1993, Zdeněk Pochop, the ČS publishing director at the time, entered into an agreement with the director of the Museum of Czech Literature for her to take over the archive, on the basis of which the entire corporate archive at the publisher's was transferred into the ownership of the Museum of Czech Literature, a memory institute answerable to the Czech Ministry of Culture.

The collection is made up of corporate documentation (contracts with authors, artists, printers, and the like), as well as a large number of published and unpublished manuscripts (totaling 76 boxes), a clippings archive, and an extensive library with a total of 17,312 published books. The most valuable material with regard to literary history and the history of censorship is the 230 boxes containing readers' reports on published and unpublished books. These can be utilized to reconstruct negotiations between authors, editors, and publishing managers, and they frequently provide the only evidence of literary works that were never published. As a whole, this exceptionally large fonds

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37 Příbáň, "Československý spisovatel," 69–70.

has not yet been inventoried, though the part that includes the readers' reports is arranged alphabetically and available to specialists.

An analysis of this collection of readers' reports indicates that literary censorship under normalization can be characterized as the suppression of literary procedures and motifs typical of 1960s literature (literary experimentation, motifs of alienation, absurdity, emptiness, and decay). The records also indicate that various depictions of human sexuality were often met with disapproval or outright rejection by the readers. Not all erotic motifs were suppressed, for the most part just extreme descriptions, references to unusual sexual practices, and homosexual or lesbian relationships between the characters. Vulgarisms were also very often rejected.

For the sake of clarity, the importance of these reading procedures can be established on the basis of the example of Bohumil Hrabal, one of the most prominent Czech writers in the latter half of the twentieth century. Several works have been written in recent years on the reading procedures used in the case of Hrabal's books,<sup>38</sup> and selected material has been digitized and even presented at exhibitions.<sup>39</sup> Some researchers believe that Hrabal's willingness to be accommodating towards these readers played a substantial role in making his works exceptionally popular at the price of some concessions.<sup>40</sup>

Collections of censorship and readers' reports provide a picture of two different types of censorship. Both involve several previously unused resources, and it is only by utilizing them that it is possible to reconstruct the ways in which literature was crafted under a Soviet-style Communist dictatorship.

### The Invisible Hand of Yugoslav Censorship. A Tale of Four Collections

#### *Pluralism of Censorship Practices in Yugoslavia*

The COURAGE Registry contains several collections, which testify to the complexity of the mechanisms and secret paths of Yugoslav censorship.<sup>41</sup> The Yugoslav constitutions (1946, 1963, 1974) do not recognize censorship as an institutional instrument of cultural policy, that is, there was never a separate state body that systematically supervised different fields of cultural produc-

38 Kotyk, Kotyková, and Pavlíček, *Hlučná samota*.

39 Exhibition "Kdo jsem. Bohumil Hrabal: spisovatel – Čech – Středoevropan," curator Tomáš Pavlíček, Museum of Czech Literature (PNP) (April 2. 2014–August 31. 2014).

40 Češka, "K variantnosti Hlučné samoty," 696–730.

41 I use Sylvia Klötzer's and Siegfried Lokatis' definition of the term "censorship" in their case study of GDR: "A way of describing the pervasive system of information control that encompassed archives, films, newspapers, ministries, and Z[entral]K[omitee] offices as well as cabaret and literature." Klötzer and Lokatis, "Criticism and Censorship," 241.

tion (art, literature, music, media, the press), except for the film arts.<sup>42</sup> However, this does not suggest that the Yugoslav party state renounced its authority and control over the cultural spheres. Despite the official policy statements, censorship was implemented indirectly, especially after the dismantling of the Soviet-type Agitation and Propaganda Commission of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia in 1952 (AGITPROP, founded in 1945), when the censoring competences were distributed among different agencies, such as ideological commissions appointed by the central committees of the communist parties,<sup>43</sup> artistic and editorial councils, and the public prosecutor's office.<sup>44</sup>

Taking into account this dispersal of competences, most researchers agree that the main characteristic of Yugoslav cultural policy was in fact a sort of "non-policy,"<sup>45</sup> which left a lot of space for different interpretations when it comes to practical application. This lack of system was also a kind of system because concessions could be made or things prevented, depending on the given situation.<sup>46</sup> Prohibitions were not sought from a single side or from some central instance (such as the central committee), but rather the main starting point for censorship was the so-called "social atmosphere," which was created through the "collective transmission of affects,"<sup>47</sup> which would bring about the tacit consensus that active participants (cultural institutions, publishing houses, TV and radio editors, artists and authors) themselves implement censorship.<sup>48</sup> This procedure gave birth to the so-called "self-managed" censorship, which made editors and even workers in printing houses responsible for censorship decisions. Since it was personalized, it was much more efficient than institutionalized and bureaucratic censorship because loyalty had to be proved if one sought to keep one's position.<sup>49</sup> Beyond doubt,

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42 The films were subject to preventive censorship, that is, the supervision of screenplays and suspensive censorship, after the film was made, for which commissions for the review of films on the republic and federal level were in charge. A special, very subtle sort of censoring was the so-called practice of "putting in the vault" (*bunkeriranje*), whereby films were just prevented from public release without official prohibition.

43 In Yugoslavia, eight separate regional branches of the communist party existed in each republic and autonomous province. On the federal level, there was the Communist Party of Yugoslavia (from 1952 the League of Communists of Yugoslavia).

44 Vučetić, *Monopol*, 41. However, the reading of Croatian and other émigré publications was strictly and formally prohibited, and their possession was regarded as a criminal offence against the state order. Such publications, when confiscated, were stored in the so-called D-lockers (meaning the Director's lockers) in libraries. In the COURAGE Registry, such materials are presented in the Foreign Croatica Collection in the National and University Library in Zagreb and in the Secret Holdings (D-fond) in the National and University Library in Ljubljana.

45 Hofman, "Tko se boji šunda," 288.

46 Latinka Perović, interview by Radina Vučetić, June 19, 2010. Quoted in Vučetić, "Između avangarde," 698.

47 Brennan, *Transmission*, 1 et seq.

48 Hofman, "Tko se boji šunda," 288.

49 Golubović, "O samoupravnoj cenzuri," 24. See also Stipčević, "Tiskari."

self-censorship was regarded as the most efficient but also the most elusive mechanism of censorship, embodied in Czesław Miłosz's "Ketman," which existed in Yugoslav society as well.

This pluralism of censorship practices might be a reflection of the pluralistic aspect of Yugoslav state ideology itself, which was fostered after 1950, that is, after Tito's split with Stalin, when Tito was searching for an alternative to state socialism. According to the self-management theory, the state and its organs gave way to self-administration, and the competences of the League of Communists converted from "controlling" into "guiding,"<sup>50</sup> i.e. providing only recommendations without direct interference in the administrative processes (at least in principle).<sup>51</sup> Indeed, the period between 1963 and 1971 was characterized by the existence of various and nationally often different visions of the one and only socialist ideological spectrum, which could not be questioned as such.<sup>52</sup>

Due to the manifold manifestations of censorship practices, it is not easy to construct any kind of accurate typology. However, there have been justified attempts to classify it in the institutional or formal sense as political, that is, party-like, judicial, and self-managed censorship, and the informal practices, which included "threats and blackmailing, invitations to talks in the committees, media campaigns, abolishment of state funding, firing from one's job."<sup>53</sup> In order to make Yugoslav censorship less elusive and more palpable and appropriate for study and research, it is essential to observe separate cases of collected material in their social and political context. Material culture preserved in the scattered public and private collections can thus demonstrate the complexities and pluralism of Yugoslav censorship practices.

### *Deputy Public Prosecutor Iljko Karaman as the Collector of Censored Material*

Iljko Karaman (1922–2010) was a state official who collected documents and publications from the archive of the Zagreb District Public Prosecutor's Office in his home. In 1992, he decided to deposit these documents and publications at the Croatian State Archives at disposal of the public. This collection, officially called the Iljko Karaman Collection of Court Records on Censorship, is the only Croatian collection explicitly related to the issue of censorship. Karaman was Deputy Public Prosecutor, working in the Press Department, and his collecting motivations are all the more interesting, since he was a member of the establishment, in charge of preparing trials/cases against alleged perpetrators of criminal offences in the cultural field (the Public Prosecutor's office had

50 Ionescu and de Madariaga, *Opposition*, 148–49.

51 For the work of Ideological Commission see Šarić, "To be or not to be in culture."

52 This is called "pluralist socialism." Mišina, *Shake, Rattle and Roll*, 23.

53 Kešetović, *Cenzura u Srbiji*, 55.

to keep records and supervise all publishing activities on the local and republic levels).<sup>54</sup> Karaman used his status to gain possession of classified documents and blacklisted publications. In a way, he collected evidence on the real nature of the communist government, but unfortunately he did not explain what motivated him to create this collection or what purpose he intended it to serve. Further investigation into Karaman's social and cultural profile leads to his intimate friendship with the lawyer Lav Znidarčić (1918–2001), who knew and wrote a book about the martyred Cardinal Aloysius Stepinac (1898–1960). Thus, Karaman was connected to the conservative Catholic circle, which was ideologically opposed to the communist order.

The collection contains material related to state censorship practices in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, the Independent State of Croatia, and socialist Croatia until the 1980s. It includes judiciary documents, confiscated books, leaflets, and newspapers. Among these materials, the most interesting are the lists of banned books and magazines and "books that need to be urgently prohibited and their further circulation prevented" in the immediate post-war period (1945–46), which offer evidence of extensive purges of libraries and bookshops after the fall of the Independent State of Croatia and the communist seizure of power. This was a necessary step in breaking with the detested past and creating a new socialist cultural framework for the future Yugoslav state. The second interesting bundle contains publications printed in Zagreb in 1970 and 1971, which document the events of the Croatian Spring, including the poster for the students' general strike at the University of Zagreb or the Croatian University. The collection's content is important for research on the mechanisms of suspensive censorship, as it shows how the Yugoslav regime dealt with cultural opposition embodied in writers, journalists, public intellectuals, students, and other opposition actors.<sup>55</sup>

### *The Raided Collection of a Banned Film Director Lazar Stojanović*

The Lazar Stojanović Collection testifies to the cultural and political profile of the Serbian film director Lazar Stojanović (1944–2017), who was imprisoned as a cultural dissident for three years on charges of subversion in his "Black Wave" film *Plastic Jesus* (1971). The collection material is related to his artistic and activist work. Stojanović began collecting items such as books and magazines in the early 1960s, when he became politically active, and he supplemented them with press clippings about himself, confiscated student magazines (*Student*, *Vidici*), various posters and screenplays, etc. The private collec-

<sup>54</sup> Mihaljević, *Komunizam*, 470–71.

<sup>55</sup> COURAGE Registry, s.v. "Ijko Karaman Collection of Court Records on Censorship", by Teodora Shek Brnardić, 2017. Accessed: October 01, 2018.



tion was searched three times by the police, and many items were confiscated, which is why it is incomplete.<sup>56</sup>

The notorious dissenter, who although being a member of the Party, felt self-confident enough to criticize the communist regime and President Josip Broz Tito himself in the form of a satire, by comparing, in *Plastic Jesus*, the communist government's handling of the contemporary 1968 social and political turmoil with the Nazi, Chetnik, and Ustashe regimes, thus commenting on individual freedom of expression. Especially valuable featured items are Stojanović's scanned prison records (1972–75), which comprised the verdicts, complaints, personal notes, and a psychological report. It is a gold mine for the lists of "criminal offences" of which the author of *Plastic Jesus* was considered guilty. Although produced by the state-owned company as a thesis film at the Belgrade Academy of Dramatic Arts and already prepared for cinema and festival screenings, the release of *Plastic Jesus* was prevented by censors/film reviewers, and the film was put in the vault (*bunkeriran*), that is, banned until 1990, although it was never officially prohibited by the court.

### *Censorship Through Public Opinion: the Ivan Aralica Collection*

The private collection of press clippings compiled and organized by the Croatian novelist Ivan Aralica (1930–) documents the public polemics which took place in the Yugoslav press in 1985 and 1987 and which developed around two "cases." First, the members of the Association of National Liberation War Veterans (SUBNOR) in Croatia wanted to contest the granting of the literary award "Ivan Goran Kovačić" to Ivan Aralica for his novel *The souls of Slaves* because the writer had been politically active in the nationally-oriented Croatian Spring (1971). Second, the veterans wanted to prevent the film director Krsto Papić (1933–2013) from making the movie *My Uncle's Legacy* (1988), the screenplay for which was based on Aralica's novel *A Framework for Hatred*, due to the alleged negative representation of the post-war Communist Party of Croatia.

Both cases show that, through the media, veterans wanted to create a "social atmosphere" in the public sphere and put pressure on the jury of the news agency *Vjesnik* and the members of the film council of the production company *Jadran film* to withdraw their decisions and unofficially implement censorship. In this way, veterans as members of the socio-political organization gave incentive to censorship, that is, prohibition, and acted as "spokesmen of the Party" without the Party itself.<sup>57</sup> In their pursuit, they used the powerful weapon of public opinion, on which they exerted an extensive influence that is documented by the collection. The well-organized writer, who

56 COURAGE Registry, s.v. "Lazar Stojanović Collection", by Jacqueline Nießer, 2018. Accessed: October 01, 2018.

57 Vučetić, *Monopol*, 58–59.

wrote historical novels with a “key”<sup>58</sup> and thus escaped direct censorship, collected the press clippings with news about himself on purpose in order to save them as historical sources for a future biography.

*Being Censored and Studying Censorship – Aleksandar Stipčević’s Personal Papers*

The period after the dissolution of socialist Yugoslavia saw the rise of censorship studies in the former republics, which was prompted by the fall of the communist regime. The social historian of books Aleksandar Stipčević (1930–2015) was among very few Croatian scholars who approached the topic of censorship from the scientific side. He wrote several books about it, both theoretical-historical as well as biographical, in which he wrote about his own experiences of censorship during the Yugoslav socialist period (e.g. *On the perfect Censor, Censorship in Libraries, A story about Biographical Lexicon*). His personal papers, handed over by his widow to the Croatian State Archives in 2015 and containing 66 archival boxes, reflects this interest because material in 17 boxes is devoted to the topic of the “general history of censorship.” As a librarian, Stipčević was especially interested in different forms of censorship, and as a hobby he cut clippings from different kinds of journals and press materials, both national and international. Eventually, this passion of collecting information enabled him to write several books on the topic of censorship.

Stipčević was interested in censorship as a means of repression because he experienced its violence on several occasions. In 1944, when partisan troops liberated Zadar, they purged libraries of “fascist” books, which were burnt simply because they had been written in Italian. In 1955, libraries had to be purged of books by the party dissident Milovan Đilas (1911–95). At that time, Stipčević served in the Yugoslav National Army, and he was ordered to remove Đilas’ books (if he was the author) from the military library and to cut his pictures out of books by other authors. Finally, he experienced the power of censorship when he became editor-in-chief of the second volume of the Croatian Biographical Lexicon in 1983. The previous first volume was withdrawn from bookshops at the request of some Party members and SUBNOR veterans because of alleged nationalism and non-Marxist approach. This is why a great deal of material in his folders is dedicated to the topic of “purges” in libraries, which he metaphorically calls “the castration of books.”

As previously noted, censorship as a means of cultural policy was not official in the Yugoslav state in the administrative sense, except for in the case of films, but the examples of collections and their owners show the complexities of censoring practices and experiences. Iljko Karaman was a member of

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58 This means that main characters were modelled on real figures in Croatian political life in the 1990s. The reader needed to know who they were (or to have a “key”) in order to understand the novel.

the establishment who collected evidence against it. Aleksandar Stipčević, although a member of the academia, never agreed to be a member of the communist party, unlike Ivan Aralica and Lazar Stojanović, who thought that party membership might help them in their careers and socio-political engagement. They were trying out how far dissent might go in order to bring about social change, but these endeavors were soon stopped by the invisible hand of Yugoslav censorship, which was relentlessly targeting and revealing members of the cultural opposition.

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