

Pavel Janáček:

## Literary censorship in outline.

### Administrative control and regulation of literary communication in 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century Czech culture

The history of modern Czech literature was dogged from the beginning of the so-called “National Revival” in the late 18th century by writers’ complaints that their works and the development of national literature were being restricted by censorship; then in the twentieth century literature faced the rigorous and thorough censorship of totalitarian regimes for many decades. Despite the prominence of the subject, we lack works which systematically map out the role of censorship as one of the factors affecting the production, distribution and reception of texts, as well as the sedimentation of literary memory. It is the aim of a project being carried out by an interdisciplinary team of cultural historians of the Czech Academy of Sciences<sup>1</sup> to fill this gap and provide the specialist public with a general outline of the issue concerned from the time of the Enlightenment reforms, when the performance of censorship was wrested from the church by the state, up until the transformation of the totalitarian system into a liberal post-industrial information

<sup>1</sup> The project makes use of the organizational platform at the Institute of Czech Literature of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic (ASCR) and is currently seeking financial support from the Grant Agency of the Czech Republic for the years 2010–2012. The research team of the Institute’s Department for Research into Literary Culture will be complemented by external researchers specializing in research into 19th century literature and culture. The project team includes the following specialists on individual periods: late 18th century and first half of the 19th century – specialist in the literary context of the Habsburg monarchy M. Wögerbauer and germano-bohemist P. Píša as ancillary research support, literary historian L. Kusáková and cultural historian M. Pokorná; second half of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century – literary historians M. Charypar, T. Pavlíček and B. Hemelíková; First and Second Republics and the Nazi Occupation – T. Pavlíček, P. Janáček and J. Trávníček; the post-1945 period – P. Šámal and J. Trávníček. Individual co-authors will also go beyond their primary specialist interest period in their case studies. The present annotation of the project had been compiled with contributions of all the team’s members and edited by Michael Wögerbauer.

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society system in the 1990s. The output is not to be a synthetic historical textbook<sup>2</sup> or an extended encyclopedia entry<sup>3</sup>, but with a background of general historical information, the project aims to develop an approach towards the issue of censorship, examining its causes, context and consequences for the literary process.

*Theoretical bases for the project*

Research into literary censorship has undergone several changes from a theoretical standpoint over the course of the twentieth century, and schematically we recognize three such paradigms. The first was the traditional concept of censorship as the power of the state or the church encroaching into literary life from outside, restricting the autonomy of literature and suppressing the natural rights of nations, social groups and individuals to freedom of literary expression. Hence censorship appeared as an attack on human liberties by the forces of social regression; progress in literature was associated with emancipation from this interference in literary production. Works that deal with the relationship between censorship and literature have been borne along by the ethos of literature released from the yoke of a foreign power, and they have represented this relationship between literature and censorship with such metaphors as the struggle between “light” and “darkness”. Censorship has been represented as a centralized policing institution and nothing but repressive effects have been ascribed to it. This intellectual background has been reflected in works by historians of culture and literature on censorship up to the 1960s.<sup>4</sup> Even in the 1990s this standpoint was still assumed in the works of Soviet bloc writers, journalists and scholars who criticized the official cultural policy of totalitarian and authoritarian regimes.<sup>5</sup>

2 Such as the one published for the neighbouring German area by Dieter Breuer: *Geschichte der literarischen Zensur in Deutschland*. Heidelberg: Quelle und Meyer, 1982.

3 Such as the one written by J. Čulík: “Czech Republic”. In: *Censorship. A world encyclopedia*. Ed. by Derek Charles Jones. London: Fitzroy Dearborn, 2001, pp. 621–631.

4 E.g. the works of Heinrich Hubert Houben: *Verbotene Literatur von der klassischen Zeit bis zur Gegenwart*, 2 vol., Berlin: Rowohlt, 1924; Bremen: Schönemann, 1928, and Donald Thomas: *A long time burning*. New York: Praeger, 1969.

5 E.g. Herman Ermolaev: *Censorship in Soviet literature 1917–1991*. Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 1997; Jiří Gruša: *Cenzura a literární život mimo masmédiá* [Censorship and literary life apart from mass media]. Praha, ÚSD 1992; Dušan Tomášek: *Pozor cenzurováno! aneb Ze života soudružky cenzury*. [Achtung, zensuriert! Oder Aus dem Leben von Genossin Zensur.] Praha: Vydavatelství a nakladatelství MV ČR, 1994; Dušan Tomášek – Karel Kaplan: *O cenzuře v Československu v letech 1945–1956* [On censorship in Czechoslovakia 1945–1956]. Praha: ÚSD, 1994.

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The second paradigm of research into censorship is associated with the development of the communicative standpoint, appropriated by literary studies during the 1960s. The establishment of more or less detailed models of literary communication allowed for the issue of censorship to be rethought and for its various forms of activity and their effects on the literary process to be specified in terms of the protagonists, stages and elements within the communication process affected by censorship at any given time (author, text, distribution, reader, code, channel, medium and the like). Without such research into censorship necessarily abandoning the ethos arising from liberalizing or nationalistic discourse, it showed censorship to be a polymorphous tissue of communication acts (see the model developed by L. Furuland<sup>6</sup>).

The third paradigm is associated with post-structuralism (P. Bourdieu and M. Foucault), the development of cultural anthropology (J. and A. Assmann<sup>7</sup>) and the deconstructivist reevaluation of the traditional interpretative model of censorship in the works of the proponents of “new censorship” during the 1990s (e.g. R. Burt,<sup>8</sup> R. C. Post,<sup>9</sup> J. Šmejkalová<sup>10</sup>). Even though the stances of these authors are not identical, they jointly cast doubt on the external status of censorship with regard to literature (“structural censorship” as one of the organizing principles behind discourse, as a set of preconditions establishing space for an utterance within the literary field), decentralizing the institutional background of censorship and dispersing the performance of censorship among various protagonists who negotiate among themselves. Post-structuralist trends also raised the important question of the relationship between censorship and other forms of social regulation (political or moral censorship – “market censorship”, literary criticism – censorship and canon-forming – censorship), stressing the productive function of censorship, i.e. its formative effects on literary production and reception. Excessive identification of censorship with other forms of social control or confusion of censorship activity with the promotion of a canon in the works of

6 Lars Furuland: *Forskningsfält och metoder inom litteraturvetenskapen*. Stockholm: Wahlström & Widstrand, 1974; and recently L. Furuland: *Litteratursociologi texter om litteratur och samhälle*. Stockholm: Studentlitteratur, 2001.

7 Aleida and Jan Assmann (eds.): *Kanon und Zensur*. München: Fink, 1987.

8 Richard Burt (ed.): *The Administration of Aesthetic. Censorship, Political Criticism, and the Public Sphere*, Minneapolis/London: University of Minnesota Press, 1994.

9 Robert C. Post (ed.): *Censorship and Silencing: Practices of Cultural Regulation*. Toronto: Issues & Debates, 1998.

10 Jiřina Šmejkalová: *Knihy. K teorii a praxi knižní kultury*. Brno: Host, 2000.

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“new censorship” researchers has provoked criticism in recent years, which, however, has not meant a return to the conservative conception of censorship, but has led to a partial narrowing of the boundaries of the concept of “new censorship”. Our working definition of literary censorship and the planning behind this project are based on this revised conception as presented by B. Müller<sup>11</sup> and on the communicative paradigm.

*Research situation in Czech studies*

Increasing specialist interest in the issue of censorship has only previously been reflected to a small extent in domestic Czech literary studies.<sup>12</sup> It is typical that the two most extensive collections dealing with this subject came out recently in German and French and that Czech literary historians only made a minimum contribution to them. Censorship activities in the 18th and the early 19th centuries are mapped out by the contributors to the *Libri prohibiti* collection, compiled by M.-E. Ducreux and M. Svatoš.<sup>13</sup> Of importance with regard to the subjects of the proposed project here are the introductory treatise by the editor on Habsburg censorship, a text by W. Heindl evaluating the literary situation after the promulgation of the 1810 censorship decree and a paper by N. Bachleitner<sup>14</sup> on the 1810–11 Austrian censorship protocols. The second contribution referred to above is a collection entitled *Propaganda, (Selbst-) Zensur, Sensation*.<sup>15</sup> This summarizes

11 Beate Müller (ed.): *Censorship & Cultural Regulation in the Modern Age*. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2004.

12 Although the works of 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century positivist historians may not be methodologically relevant for the present project, it is, of course, not possible to dispense with works by J. Volf, K. Nosovský, F. Menčík, F. Loskot, A. Kraus, J. Marx and others. We will also reflect on important works on earlier periods of censorship or special issues (e.g. by P. Voit, K. Homerová, I. Kollárová, I. Cermanová and J. Marek).

13 Marie-Elizabeth Ducreux and Martin Svatoš: *Libri prohibiti. La censure dans l'espace habsbourgeois 1650–1850*. Leipzig: Leipziger Universitätsverlag, 2005.

14 This researcher is the author of a number of other important studies on Austrian censorship in the 18<sup>th</sup> and the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century published also in this journal. See e.g. the sketch of the project on censorship of Norbert Bachleitner and Günter Mühlberger: Die österreichischen Verbotslisten und ihre Bedeutung für die Zensurgeschichtsforschung. In: *Mitteilungen der Gesellschaft für Buchforschung in Österreich* 1999-1, pp. 10f., or Norbert Bachleitner: Wie begründet man ein Verbot? Österreichische Zensurprotokolle aus den Jahren 1810/11. In: *Mitteilungen der Gesellschaft für Buchforschung in Österreich* 2001-2, pp. 2–11.

15 Michal Anděl: *Propaganda, (Selbst-)Zensur, Sensation: Grenzen von Presse- und Wissenschaftsfreiheit in Deutschland und Tschechien seit 1871*. Essen: Klartext, 2005.

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various papers, including those on censorship practice in the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, and the issues surrounding freedom of the press after the Second World War, press law and censorship at research libraries.

Literary censorship in the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century has not in general been given any systematic attention, but we can at least recall passages on censorship in the recent synthesis by Z. Šimeček on the book market in Bohemia and Slovakia.<sup>16</sup> Besides, individual articles have been published, such as M. Wögerbauer's study on the role of liberal josephinian censors during the shift of censorship from the educational system of Joseph II. to the state police of Francis II.<sup>17</sup>

The most systematic research in recent years has been on its relationship to 20<sup>th</sup> century Czech literature. One of the sources for the proposed project is the applicant's monograph on *Trash Literature*,<sup>18</sup> which deals with censorship (in particular) of popular literature from 1938 to 1951. Literary censorship during the Second Republic is dealt with by T. Pavlíček,<sup>19</sup> while a study by J. Doležal<sup>20</sup> and an edition of minutes made by A. Finger at Protectorate press conferences from 1939 to 1941<sup>21</sup> were of pioneering importance with regard to censorship during the Protectorate period 1939–1945. Postwar censorship was dealt with in the 1990s first by K. Kaplan and D. Tomášek, who described in detail the creation of the censorship system on the Soviet model.<sup>22</sup> J. Knapík set censorship in the broader context of the cultural policy of the Stalinist period.<sup>23</sup> M. Bauer repeatedly spotlighted censorship of literature and literary periodicals during the 1950s,<sup>24</sup> while P. Šámal

16 Zdeněk Šimeček: *Geschichte des Buchhandels in Tschechien und in der Slowakei*. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2002.

17 Michael Wögerbauer: „Die Zensur ist keine Wissenschaft, sondern eine bloße Polizeianstalt“. Zum Verhältnis von Sozialsystem Literatur und staatlicher Intervention 1780–1820 am Beispiel Prag. In: Alexander Ritter (ed.): *Charles Sealsfield. Lehrjahre eines Romanciers 1808–1829. Vom spätjosephinischen Prag ins demokratische Amerika*. Wien: Edition Praesens, 2007. (SealsfieldBibliothek 5), pp. 105–124.

18 Pavel Janáček: *Literární brak. Operace vyloučení – operace nabrzení, 1938–1951*. Brno: Host, 2004.

19 Tomáš Pavlíček: Cenzurní systém, cenzurní zásah a literatura za druhé republiky. In: *Literární archiv* 38 (2006), pp. 259–290.

20 Jiří Doležal: *Česká kultura za protektorátu*. Praha: Národní filmový archiv, 1996.

21 Barbora Köpplová and co. (ed.): *Český tisk pod vládou Wolfganga Wolframa von Wolmara* [The Czech Press under the rule of Wolfgang Wolfram von Wolmar]. Praha: Karolinum, 2003.

22 Dušan Tomášek and Karel Kaplan: *O cenzuře v Československu v letech 1945–1956* [On censorship in Czechoslovakia 1945–1956]. Praha: ÚSD, 1994.

23 Jiří Knapík: *V zajetí moci: Kulturní politika, její systém a aktéři 1948–1956* [In the realm of power. Cultural politics, its system and its agents]. Praha: Libri, 2006.

24 Michal Bauer: *Ideologie a paměť* [Ideology and memory]. Praha: H+H, 2003.

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portrayed censorship of public libraries during the same period in *Soustružníci lidských duší* (Machinists of Human Souls – forthcoming, summer 2009).

*Working definition of censorship*

The project is based on the following working definitions: literary censorship is understood as a set of processes of administrative control and regulation of literary communication realized through the printed media under the sway of a certain social authority (the state or one of its components such as the army, the education system, the church, a municipal authority, a political party or a social movement). There may be several such authorities acting in the context of a single culture at a given historical moment, either mutually complementing and reinforcing their effect on literary communication, or coming into conflict with each other – and participants in literary communication may take advantage of such regional (and other) contradictions to disrupt the censorship process. Every social authority focuses its control processes both within its own power domain and on the interface between the internal environment and its environs (e.g. preventive censorship at state level – censorship of imported printed matter). Administrative control processes for literary communication are governed by written and unwritten standards of a legal, ideological, moral and aesthetic nature, and borne along by the ideal of cultural order and social welfare held by the cultural elite in association with the social authority in question. Control is initiated by bureaucratic institutions that are internally organized to attain this ideal. The performance of censorship is dispersed throughout the literary space (via self-censorship) through the delegation of control functions to external bodies and through anticipation of censorship. In the bureaucratic institutions practising censorship, control of literary communication (i.e. output of works of fiction and literary journals) and non-fiction (e.g. the political press) may (but need not) be separate in organizational or staffing terms. In any case, we understand literary censorship to be those censorship processes affecting texts considered for that particular period to be literary. Censorship works through a graded scale of intervention into various phases of the communication process targeting the author, the publisher, the text or its paratexts (reviews, advertisements and the like), the printer, the distributor, institutions archiving and providing access to the text her-

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itage (libraries) or the reader. Censorship activities lead to the withdrawal of text from the sphere of public communication, the exclusion of text from the cultural archive, its alteration and limitation and selective organization of access to text for various groups of addressees (intellectuals versus the people, adults versus children), as well as changes in the habits of authors and readers. Attempts to control the interpretation of the texts, to mould the meaning and sense derived of the texts by the readers are also involved in the censorship processes. Intervention may be preventive, successive, selective or across the board, but it is always temporary and subject to review upon the next change in censorship regulations. Texts, meanings, styles, strategies on the part of authors and readers and aesthetic and other cultural values conflicting with the prescriptive censorship system are replaced during the censorship process by other texts, meanings, styles, strategies and values which conform to the standards prescribed. Literary censorship itself has the character of a communication process with feedback leading to ongoing negotiation between the positions of the protagonists involved and to a more permanent change in their strategies within this process (the development of the author's, reader's, publisher's and censor's practice). The activity of literary censorship is borne in mind by all participants in literary communication, which raises interest in censored texts and content, leading to the creation of non-public communication channels and the foreign exile of some literary communication. Literary censorship is accompanied by both a legitimizing and a delegitimizing discourse, with the latter itself a prominent target for censorship activity (criticism of censorship is censored). Literary censorship works within the context of other institutions controlling and regulating literary communication, including in particular literary criticism, the literary market and institutions reproducing the literary canon (schools and libraries). The activities of these institutions may in certain cases have the same effects as censorship itself, but they are not to be equated with it.

*Intended output of the project*

The main output of the project will be the manuscript of a book-sized collection presenting censorship of Czech literature from the end of the 18th century to the end of the 20th century in two separate sections. *The first text section* will metho-

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dologically aim at a narrower conception of censorship, It will provide a summary description of censorship in the bureaucratic sense: censorship regulations, i.e. the legal, cultural and aesthetic standards of those administering censorship, an outline of the system of institutions performing censorship and the extent and course of censorship work. *The second, more extensive section* of the book will embrace phenomena examined in the context of “new censorship”. It will comprise case studies that will a) analyse in detail model cases of censorship intervention, documenting their effects on the creative activities of authors and on the perception of texts by readers; b) provide examples of various types of censorship intervention and the differing effects of censorship on original and translated literary output; c) portray the typical reactions of parties to the censorship process, censorship communication strategies and avoidance of censorship; d) narrate borderline cases involving the protagonists in censorship processes (the censor who censors himself); e) portray manifestations of self-censorship; f) focus on cases on the interface of censorship and other forms of the social regulation of literature (the effects of patriotic ideology, market censorship, literary criticism and canon promotion). Case studies will also enhance and bring to life our image of individual periods in the development of literary censorship sketched out in the initial summarizing section. Within the overall framework of the book, these studies will be selected to illustrate various aspects (cutting across individual periods) of the chosen definition of censorship, as well as the place and role of censorship in the process of the circulation of forms, values and meanings.

As a whole the book will be divided up timewise in line with changes in censorship regulations. The following time divisions will reflect the change in the legal basis of censorship and will themselves be subject to detailed research: late 1760s–1810, 1810–1848, 1848–1862, 1862–1918, 1918–1939, 1939–1948, 1948–1969, 1969–1990, 1990 – circa 2000. From the 1860s the main focus of attention will be on the control and regulation of Czech-language literary production (including translations), also taking into account how foreign-language texts created on, disseminated in or imported into the territory of Bohemia and Moravia were dealt with at any particular stage in censorship practice. Until the mid-19th century, this primary focus on Czech-language literature will run in parallel with systematic interest in the control and regulation of German-language texts. The language criterion itself will be subject to analysis here as one of the standpoints differentiating censorship practice.