

**THE „BABEȘ-BOLYAI” UNIVERSITY OF CLUJ-NAPOCA  
THE FACULTY OF HISTORY AND FILOSOPHY  
THE DOCTORAL SCHOOL ON HISTORY, CIVILIZATION, CULTURE**

**CENSORSHIP IN UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES IN ROMANIA DURING  
COMMUNISM**

**ABSTRACT**

**PHD SUPERVISOR:  
PROF. UNIV. DR. DORU RADOSAV**

**PHD STUDENT:  
BĂLĂUCĂ ROXANA**

**2013**

Introduction .....	4
Historiography .....	12
The Emergence and Evolution of the Concept of Censorship .....	29
Genesis and Evolution of Communist Censorship.....	41
The historical context.....	41
The establishment and evolution of the Glavlit's censorship system in Russia .....	44
Censorship and libraries in the USSR .....	48
The spread the Soviet model of censorship.....	58
Conclusions .....	61
The Establishment of Censorship in Romania .....	63
Chronology.....	63
The Establishment of the General Directorate for Press and Printing and the Application of the Soviet Model of Censorship in Romania .....	71
DGPT's role in the purge of libraries.....	92
Conclusions .....	97
The Mechanisms of Censorship in Libraries.....	99
Secret funds of publications: formation and evolution .....	113
Security and control of the funds of secret publications .....	127
The access to documents.....	138
The dynamics and the structure of collections .....	154
The purchase of the book as a form of censorship .....	168
The librarian as censor.....	180
Conclusions .....	191
ANNEX I: [Communication and lists of publications withdrawn from circulation no. 1-4 issued by the Romanian Comision for the application of the Armistice].....	204
ANNEX II: [List no. 5 of publications withdrawn from circulation ] .....	213
ANNEX III: [List no. 6 of publications withdrawn from circulation].....	216
ANNEX IV: [List no. 7 of publications withdrawn from circulation].....	218
ANNEX V: [List no. 8 of publications withdrawn from circulation ].....	226
ANNEX VI: [Lists no. 9 and 10 of publications withdrawn from circulation].....	233
ANNEX VII: [Model of Minutes after verifying libraries compiled by DGPT].....	243
ANNEX VIII: [Exemple of text censorship].....	244
ANNEX IX: [Report written by Unit 29 of the DGPT regarding the need to eliminate the old publications from libraries].....	245

ANNEX X: [Report written by Unit 58 of the DGPT regarding the drafting of catalogues of publications withdrawn from publication].....	246
ANNEX XI: [Information on the meeting with higher education librarians].....	247
ANNEX XII: [Note regarding the withdrawal from circulation of works related to Petre Dumitriu].....	248
ANNEX XIII: [Note regarding the problem of binding books from restricted collections].....	249
ANNEX XIV: [Notes on control by the Central University Library of Iași].....	250
ANNEX XV: [Note on the structure of the Alphabetic Catalogue no. 8].....	251
ANNEX XVI: [Report drawn up following a verifying of CUL of Cluj and faculty libraries of the BBU].....	253
ANNEX XVII: Lists of books withdrawn from public circulation.....	264
ANNEX XVIII: Lists of books withdrawn from public circulation.....	265
ANNEX XIX: [Minutes regarding the withdrawal from public circulation of some books].....	267
ANNEX XX: [Request regarding the withdrawal from public circulation of some books].....	268
ANNEX XXI: [Minutes from the emerging moment of Restricted Circulations Collection Analyses Commission].....	269
ANNEX XXII: [Model of the note on the access to foreign readers in the library].....	270
ANNEX XXIII: [Model of access evidence of foreign people in university and library].....	271
Bibliography.....	272



**Key words:** censorship, Communism, libraries, Romania

Censorship is defined as representing any intervention of an institution or person with the purpose of controlling the propagation of information owing to religious, political, cultural or moral reasons. Censorship has its origins in Antiquity, but its significance has evolved with time. Initially, the Roman censor's task was to keep a record of the population. Later on, his attributions changed and the censor had the duty of supervising people from a moral viewpoint. Censorship aims to control the individuals' manner of thinking in order to protect them from the ideas considered dangerous or in order to spread a person's, a political regime's or an institution's own conceptions.

Acts of censorships existed in all epochs, beginning with Antiquity, which witnessed the burning of the Library of Alexandria, continuing with the Middle Ages, marked by the Catholic Church's indexes, and reaching a new peak represented by the destructions orchestrated by the totalitarian regimes during the contemporary period.

In the specialised literature, two terms are used for defining the destruction of written culture. The first amongst these is that of *biblioclasm*, used by Fernando Báez for referring to any attempt of a power to destroy the traces of memory in its desire to control the individual or the society. Thus, the differences of opinion that are not accepted by the totalitarian regimes are eliminated, the latter's purpose being that of intimidating, demoralising and diminishing the population's resistance.<sup>1</sup>

The second term used to designate the destruction of books and libraries is that of *libricide*, coined by Rebecca Knut. The author affirms that libraries and books represent the nucleus of a people's identity that protects it from the extremist regimes' homogenisation tendencies. As a result, when the former are destroyed, an environment favourable to the propagation of ideology is created. By using the notion of *libricide*, Rebecca Knut places the destruction of written culture alongside killing people, defined by the words genocide and ethnocide.<sup>2</sup>

In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, destroying books and the institutions that preserved them has represented a weapon in the total war, having as a purpose the enemies' cultural annihilation. The first to use this practice were the Germans, who have burnt in public spaces the books from the territories they conquered. Unlike the Germans, whose practices were public, the Communists eliminated from the reading circuit the publications that were inappropriate from their viewpoint in a discrete manner, through acts which had a secret character.

---

<sup>1</sup> Fernando Báez, *op. cit.*, pp. 12-13.

<sup>2</sup> Rebecca Knut, *op. cit.*, p. 56.

In Russia, the first manifestations of the Communist censorship made themselves felt in 1917, immediately after the Tsarist system of control was removed. This initiative belonged to Lenin, who saw freedom of speech as an enemy of the Communist order. In this sense, he authorised the functioning of military censorship, making mention of the fact that it would be suppressed after the war ended. Nevertheless, the *Main Administration for Safeguarding State Secrets in the Press* (Glavlit) was founded in 1922 and it was coordinated by the State Committee for the Press of the USSR's Council of Ministers. The purpose of this institution was to unify USSR's censorship system, which was difficult to control due to the multitude of institutions involved in this process.

As for the libraries from the USSR, they were seen by the Communists as a means to politically educate the masses. Their role was to participate in the country's socio-economic development, in the improvement of the citizens' cultural level and in the propagation of the Communist ideology. Libraries thus started being purged of politically undesirable works, in order to better disseminate the Communist doctrine. The books that were withdrawn from circulation were transferred to special collections, known under the name of *spetskhran*.

The Soviet model of censorship was characterised by the existence of a national network which had the task of stopping the spreading of those ideas that came into contradiction with the Communist ideology. This model was applied in all the countries from the Communist bloc, except East Germany, Hungary and Yugoslavia. In their case censorship was not put into practice by a state institution specially created to this end, but manifested itself in more discrete forms as the task of censorship was generally incumbent upon the editors.

The Communist practices, applied by the institution specially created for this purpose – Glavlit, were adopted by all the states that found themselves under Soviet influence. In the Baltic countries and Finland, under the Russians' close supervision, the “unacceptable” texts were eliminated from libraries and bookshops as part of the process of implementing the Communist doctrine. Lists of publications that had to be withdrawn from circulation were drawn up and the books were destroyed.

In Poland, after the country was occupied by the Russian troops, a system of control similar to that from the USSR was established. As a result, an organ of control was created, an organ which, on the one hand, examined the editorial production and, on the other hand, selected the publications that were already printed. Beginning with the year 1945, lists of banned publications that had to be withdrawn from libraries and bookshops were introduced.

An institution responsible for ensuring censorship, which bore the same name as the one from the USSR, was created in Bulgaria as well. Although it was abolished in 1966, at the same

time with the fall from power of the one who founded it, control did not disappear, as censorship practices continued to be applied until the end of the '80s.

The situation was different in Hungary and East Germany, where no institutions responsible for putting such a control into practice existed. However, censorship existed here as well and it manifested itself through various mechanisms. The task of controlling the publications was fulfilled especially by the editors, closely supervised by the state.

In Romania, the implementation of the Soviet practices began with the signing of the Armistice Convention, which had as a result the creation of a commission charged with the application of the Convention's provisions. The model that lay at the foundation of the instauration of censorship in Romania was that of the USSR and the General Directorate for Press and Prints (*Direcția Generală a Presei și Tipăriturilor* – DGPT) was created. This institution was similar to that from the USSR and had the role of bringing censorship into practice in Romania. Its attributions included the control of texts submitted for publication, the DGPT granting the ratings *ready for press* (*bun de imprimat*) and *ready for broadcasting* (*bun the difuzare*), the control and purging of bookshops, second-hand bookshops and libraries and the control of the imported materials and of those destined for export, both for institutions and individuals.

The purging of libraries began in the year 1945 and its main purpose was that of eliminating the works with a Fascist character from the libraries. To this end, lists of banned works were edited and published in the Official Gazette. A special attention was given to publications that had appeared until the date of 23 August 1944.

Starting with the year 1949, due to the political changes which occurred internally, in the purging activity the emphasis was no longer placed on eliminating the Fascist works and those that could be detrimental to Romania's relations with its allies, as was stipulated in the Peace Treaty, especially as most of these books had already been eliminated from the public circuit. Instead, the Party tried to erase all traces of the works written by compromised authors or by those who did not agree with the ruling party's doctrine.

The legal framework for these actions was initially ensured by Decree 364/1945 for putting the Peace Treaty into practice, which was later on supplemented by the provisions of the Decision of the Council of Ministers (*Hotărârea Consiliului de Miniștri* – HCM) 1,542/1951 and HCM 198/1957, further supplemented by Instructions 3,406/1960 and 1,003/1968 and by the Norms no. 85/1981. To these, a series of verbal instructions and telephonic notes, transmitted directly to the institutions had in view in the purging actions, were added.

The institution that coordinated the purging activities was the Directorate for the Press and Prints, transformed later on in the DGPT, which, through its services, controlled the entire

circulation of the written word in Romania. Created in accordance with the Soviet model, it functioned until 1977, when it was abolished. However, the control over society continued to exist after the DGPT's abolishment, as its attributions were taken over by other institutions of the state apparatus. The DGPT's tasks consisted in both creating the working instruments and examining the manner in which the instructions were followed.

The criteria for the selection of the publications varied with time, starting with eliminating the publications with a Fascist, chauvinistic character or which could affect Romania's relations with the United Nations and reaching the elimination from the reading circuit of all the materials that could be prejudicial to the Communist regime.

The main working instruments that lay at the foundation of these actions were represented by the lists of publications that appeared in the Official Gazette and by the 8 catalogues edited by the DGPT, supplemented by telephonic notes or addresses sent to the libraries in which the removal of certain authors or volumes was explicitly requested. The first lists of banned publications were published in the Official Gazette starting with the month of March of the year 1945 and until August of the same year 10 such lists were edited. Later on, these were incorporated into the cumulative catalogues of 1946 and 1948. Another list of indexes then followed and the last of these volumes, the eight, appeared in 1966. After this date, the selection of the material from libraries can be considered complete and the authorities' attention now turned especially to imported publications. From now on, the modifications regarding the composition of the libraries' funds ensuing the internal or external changes in the country's politics were communicated to the institutions through informative notes. In those notes, it was requested that certain titles, authors or publications that tackled subjects unsanctioned by the regime be removed from the free circulation and included in the secret fund. This practice was preserved until the fall of the Communist regime.

The DGPT's employees tried to control all the institutions responsible for the written word's circulation throughout the country. Censorship manifested itself in a preventive manner, through the control and adjustment of the texts destined for publication, or punitively, through the gradual elimination of the printed publications that did not correspond to the regime's requirements. Books, as well as the other categories of undesirable documents, were removed from the reading circuit and the authorities requested that they be stored and inventoried separately from the rest of the libraries' collections. In some cases the purged material was even destroyed. Due to this reason, different funds of publications appeared in the libraries, organised in categories such as the free fund, the documentary fund, the secret fund.

Since the creation of the Directorate for the Press and Prints in 1949 and until the DGPT was abolished in 1977, this institution's attributions evolved and censorship eventually came to

control the mass-media and all the cultural and scientific domains. The abolishment of the DGPT, which, in the meantime, had changed its name to the Committee for Press and Prints, did not lead to the disappearance of censorship in Romania. Liliana Corobca emphasises the fact that the Communist censorship must not be confounded with the institution of censorship and that the DGPT represented merely a stage of the Communist censorship, which continued to make itself felt even after the DGPT's abolishment.<sup>3</sup>

In the Central University Libraries (*Biblioteci Centrale Universitare* – BCUs) from Cluj, Jassy and Bucharest censorship manifested itself through the establishment of the funds with a restricted circulation, through the policy of increasing the libraries' collections, which was oriented towards purchasing the publications that were “correct” from an ideological viewpoint, but also in the relations with the readers through the surveillance of their reading, through the refusal to make certain publications available and through the complicated mechanism of consulting the materials withdrawn from circulation.

The main means of constituting the funds with a restricted circulation of the BCUs was represented by the withdrawal of publications from the reading circuit on the basis of the lists, and later on of the notes, emitted by the institutions charged with putting censorship into operation. Gradually, other publications were also added, especially those imported from the Occidental countries, but also the works identified by the librarians as fulfilling the censorship criteria determined legislatively and the books pointed out by the readers.

The preservation of the materials from the funds with a restricted circulation differed, depending upon the category in which they were included. Thus, the documentary fund, for as long as it existed, could be deposited in the same room with the free fund, on condition that the storing area would not represent the reading hall. However, for the materials placed in the secret fund special conditions of security had to be ensured. They had to be preserved in special stacks, separately from the rest of the libraries' collections, and access to these rooms was allowed only for the persons in charge with their handling.

The circulation of the publications from the secret funds was regulated through legislation. The readers' access depended upon the category in which they were included and upon how the materials were classified. As a result, the documentary fund could be consulted by the field's specialists on the basis of an approval from the institution's director. On the other hand, the publications from the special fund could be consulted only in rooms specially intended for this activity and after receiving an approbation given by the library's management. Unlike the members of the professoriate, who did not need the university's approval, students had to obtain such an accord on the part of the faculty's dean in order to consult the funds with a restricted

---

<sup>3</sup> Liliana Corobca, *Desființarea cenzurii comuniste românești...*, pp. 228-229.



circulation and they received the approval of the library's director only after they had obtained the former document. Other categories of readers needed an act issued by the institution in which they worked attesting to the necessity to consult the publications with a restricted circulation.

The security of the funds with a restricted circulation was ensured by storing them in special deposits, separated from the rest of the libraries' funds, and by designating a limited number of persons that could enter the deposits. These measures were supplemented by the obligation to serve the publications from these funds in specially arranged spaces, which fulfilled the safety measures stipulated by the legislation.

In order to keep track of the manner in which libraries respected and applied the instructions, the DGPT's employees organised periodic controls. A commission visited the BCUs from Cluj, Jassy and Bucharest and checked the book stacks and the records. The verification of the libraries' funds represented an ongoing action, being mentioned in the activity plans of the DGPT's employees.

The conditions for accessing the materials included in the funds with a restricted circulation varied with time. If initially they stipulated only the compulsoriness of an authorisation from the director of the institution which held these materials, later on the conditions for access became harsher and more diversified and even went as far as to differ depending upon the category in which the readers were included. Thus, in order to consult the publications from the funds with a restricted circulation of the BCUs, the members of the professoriate needed an approval from the libraries' directors, while, in addition to this, students also needed such an approbation from the faculties' deans. For other categories of readers, a recommendation on the part of the institution where they worked was necessary, as well as the accord of the library's management. Towards the end of the Communist regime another rule was introduced, namely that of justifying the necessity of consulting the purged materials. The consultation of these materials was allowed only within the library, in the reading halls specially intended for this purpose.

As for the readers from abroad, the relations with them were considered state secrets. Their access to the BCUs was possible only if they were given permission from the Ministry of Education (*Ministerul Educației și Învățământului*) and the latter communicated its approval to the institutions had in view through a telephonic note or a written document. The librarians' interaction with the foreign readers was possible only through the intermediation of the Protocol Bureau existent in every library and the foreigners' activity was closely supervised. In the documents it issued in order to approve the access of foreign persons in libraries, the Ministry emphasised the librarians' obligation to follow the "known instructions", namely the regulations in force referring to the relations with foreigners. Later on, those who came into contact with the

latter had the responsibility of writing up reports regarding the materials consulted by the readers and the manner in which they had done their research in the library. In the relations with the foreign readers, censorship manifested itself also through the complicated mechanism of granting them access to the libraries and through the close surveillance of their work, including the control of the requested publications and the librarians' refusal to serve them materials that did not correspond to the research topics that they had declared.

The role held by librarians in the censorship process was very important: librarians were considered workers of the intellectual domain, the part assigned to them being that of increasing the political, ideological and cultural level of the working class. The librarians' activity in the censorship process also manifested itself in other forms: they withdrew certain publications from the reading circuit, both those pointed out in indexes and those that they identified themselves, they disseminated ideological books and they simultaneously guided and controlled the readers' options. In order to efficiently fulfil this tasks, training courses for librarians were organised, in which the emphasis was placed upon ideologically relevant information. Alongside their participation in these courses, librarians also had to obey the state's recommendations, which mainly demanded them that they keep abreast of the Party's politics, of the new publications appearing in the country and in the USSR and of the preoccupations and cultural level of the libraries' users.