

# Censorship in Slovenia after World War II: From the Communist *Index Librorum Prohibitorum* to Abolition of the “Verbal Offence”

Aleš Gabrič

Institute of Contemporary History, Ljubljana  
ales.gabric@inz.si

*The author presents the most common means of censorship in Slovenia under communism. Immediately after 1945, the new regime composed a list of prohibited works that were removed from libraries and bookstores. The introduction of “social management” in cultural institutions in the mid-1950s changed the censorship procedure: the (editorial) boards gained a censorship role and performed preliminary (or preventive) censorship. Retroactive censorship was especially applied to imported books that were held separately in the “D-Reserves”.*

Keywords: literature and censorship / Slovene literature / communism / cultural politics / index librorum prohibitorum

UDK 821.163.6 (497.12)«1945/1990»:351.751.5

Although the subject of censorship under the communist regime in Slovenia could be analysed in a wider context, this paper mainly focuses on the censorship of literary works, to which censorship was most commonly applied in the period discussed. However, there were also cases of the political regime intervening in other areas of the arts, such as film, theatre, and fine arts. The regime had the final word on which books would be available in Slovenia – not only through censorship, which removed individual works, but also by controlling the book market itself. This was to ensure that only those printed and publicly available works that complied with its criteria, or had been previously purged of harmful ideological and political views, were marketed.

## **List of banned works from 1945 and censorship in the first post-war years**

In Yugoslavia, unlike most countries east of the Iron Curtain, the communists had already seized absolute power by 1945 and started radically changing the country's social system, modelled after its communist big brother, the Soviet Union. Among other things, this implied a new understanding of artistic creativity that was expected to follow the dictates of the new regime. Art was evaluated according to ideological and political – rather than aesthetic – criteria and its practical application for propaganda purposes. The new era was also supposed to be evident on bookstore and library shelves.

The first plans for a post-war purge in Slovenian libraries were made by bodies of the National Liberation Movement on liberated territory even before the end of the Second World War. The plan of April 1945 states that, after the war, restricted access should be applied to “some Slovenian books that were published after the occupation and also before, but especially to all foreign literature that was sold in Slovenian territory and stored in the warehouses of various publishers.” For the period immediately after the liberation, the plan envisaged a temporary ban on the sale of all books, magazines, and other publications in Slovenian bookshops. It also foresaw the appointment of a special censorship commission that was to examine the existing stocks of books as quickly as possible and determine which ones could be freely circulated and which were to be subject to restricted access or withdrawn from the market (AS 1643, box 83, I/2). The original plan for purging libraries and bookshops primarily targeted the propaganda literature of the defeated wartime adversaries. In many ways, such a selective purge resembled the activities underway in other previously occupied European countries – which, however, returned to the values of parliamentary democracy and restored freedom of the press and free speech.

In Slovenia, where the Communist Party seized power immediately after the war, the purging of libraries and bookshops had a considerably wider scope. Ferdo Kozak, the Minister of Education in the National Government of Slovenia at that time, appointed the Commission for the Examination of Libraries to carry out this task. On 20 May 1945 the Commission notified publishers and booksellers of new restrictions on the sale of books, which were to be observed until further notice. It then started compiling a list of books and magazines that were to be withdrawn from the market. By the end of July, the Ministry of Education had forwarded “the first list of books to be permanently or temporarily removed from circulation” to subordinate institutions as well as all Slovenian pub-

lishers and booksellers. In a cover letter that accompanied the extensive, eight-page list, the commission explained that “some works have been removed because of the pro-fascist mentality of the author, even if this had not yet been detectable in his previous work (Knut Hamsun and others), and others because of content that is contrary to our views on the fundamental issues of life. It is understood that booksellers and librarians will also remove any propaganda material not specifically covered by this list, the contents of which oppose the national-liberation war, a priori reject the new social order, or spread religious intolerance.” The ministry stipulated that the libraries keep the withdrawn works separate from other material because a special lending regime applied to them:

They may only be loaned out for research purposes; for this, interested persons must present a permit from the authorities. These permits are issued exclusively by the school or educational authorities and their officials. The removal does not apply to teachers’ libraries because, as a rule, books are only removed from those libraries where books are accessible to a wider circle. (AS 231, box 37, 3159/2–45)

The ministry did not prescribe what the bookshops and publishing houses that stocked large quantities of such literature were supposed to do with the blacklisted books. Witnesses spoke of numerous trucks that, at a time when paper was in short supply, transported books to the paper factory in Vevče for recycling.

The Ministry of Education and its Commission for the Examination of Libraries promised amendments and additions to the blacklist, which in fact followed in the subsequent months. The first amendment, at the end of August 1945, lifted the ban on the dissemination of fiction by certain living Slovenian authors that had been placed on the first list (AS 231, box 37, 3159/4–45). A third list, considered the definitive one, was circulated on 6 November 1945, imposing a ban on several new titles and lifting it from some others that could therefore again be freely sold and loaned out (AS 231, box 37, 3159/5–45).

An analysis of the final “list of books withdrawn from circulation” (i.e., the Slovenian communist *Index Librorum Prohibitorum*) shows the prevalence of propaganda and political works, although it also contained a significant number of literary works. The titles of works are listed separately by language, with books in Slovenian followed by those in Serbo-Croatian, Italian, French, and German. It goes without saying that all works by Fascist and Nazi ideologists, as well as those based on their ideology, were automatically removed. Added to the blacklist, among the political and propaganda works in Slovenian, were also those by opponents of the new regime, as well as technical and scholarly works based on

Catholic viewpoints. Works by Slovenian poets and writers (e.g., Vinko Beličič, Tine Debeljak, Mirko Javornik, Stanko Kociper, Jože Krivec, and Zorko Simčič) that had opposed the National Liberation Movement during the war and fled abroad from the communist regime after it were also blacklisted. So were those whose authors were killed as members of collaborationist military units during the war (France Balantič) or executed immediately after it, as part of the regime's retribution against its political adversaries (Narte Velikonja). Except in rare cases, the names and works of such authors were not mentioned in Slovenia until the downfall of the communist regime in the early 1990s and were only published in the circles of the Slovenian political emigration. The main criterion for blacklisting such works was, therefore, not their literary or ideological value, but rather the "wrong" political orientation of their authors. These works were automatically banned, even if they were devoid of any reference to the recent political events in Slovenia and despite the fact that, at the time, stylistically similar works of other Slovenian authors were sold or loaned out without any restrictions.

In Slovenia, the list of works subject to restricted access was compiled very differently from those in western parliamentary democracies which, in simultaneous purges, mainly targeted Nazi and Fascist propaganda works. The purges in the Slovenian/Yugoslav libraries and bookshops went much further, removing the entire opus of unwanted authors. Because the new regime in Slovenia (and Croatia) considered the Roman Catholic Church to be its main ideological adversary, many religious and devotional books were also blacklisted. The fact that the Communist Party had already assumed absolute political power in Yugoslavia by 1945 (at a time when the communists in other Eastern European countries had only just begun their ascent to power) was also reflected in bans on authors and works that criticized the situation in the Soviet Union. The Slovenian list of banned books about the Soviet Union, both originals and translations, included authors such as Panait Istrati, André Gide, and Liam O'Flaherty.

Most questionable, even from the viewpoint of the new regime after 1945, was the ban on circulating Slovenian literary works blacklisted solely because they had been printed in occupied territory between 1941 and 1945. For some of these, the ban was soon lifted and they were put back into circulation. Provincial libraries that only had a limited number of books at their disposal were particularly reluctant to relinquish certain collections printed during the war because they were relatively inexpensive and contained many important works of Slovenian and world literature. Such libraries were asked to send a list of all their books to the authorities for examination. The lists were subsequently returned to them, together

with observations on “which books were especially recommended, which were good, and which were of no use for public libraries” (M.K. 176).

Whereas the banned literature from the unsold stocks in publishing houses and bookshops was removed within a few months, the examination of holdings in libraries dragged on and took several years to complete. It was only in May 1948 that the Slovenian Ministry of Education was able to report to the federal government that “over the past year, all ideologically bad and artistically inferior books have been removed, so that the total number of books corresponds to the number of ideologically positive and artistically valuable books” (AS 631, fasc. 1, m. 6, Podatki o ljudsko-prosvetnem delu 5).

The resulting uniformity in the range of books was not merely due to the removal of unwanted books, but also of an extremely biased production that, like all other cultural activities, was controlled by the Agitation and Propaganda Department of the Communist Party, better known by its syllabic abbreviation “Agitprop”. Although devoid of all official powers, it proved to be one of the most effective censorship services of its time. Its ability to control book production was partly due to the fact that, after the war, all but one publishing house had been closed and all book marketing capacities were nationalized. On these foundations, new publishing houses were established, all of which were in the hands of the government and political bodies with precisely defined areas of operation. The only exception was the Saint Hermagoras Society (*Družba svetega Mohorja*), the oldest publishing house in Slovenia, which was founded as an ecclesiastic fraternity in the mid-nineteenth century with a programme based on Catholic spiritual horizons. Publishing houses had to submit their publishing programmes to Agitprop for examination. Afterwards, the programmes were returned to them, together with instructions on which works had to be removed and which modified before being given a green light for printing.

A typical example of such censorship is the conclusions of the Agitprop of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia regarding the Slovenian publishing programmes for 1948. Apart from general observations that the programmes were too comprehensive, undeveloped, and uncoordinated, which led to the duplication of works, and that the “Yugoslav line” and “progressive literature” were insufficiently emphasized in them, one can also find specific instructions as to which works had to be removed from the programmes – that is, which books were not to be published by Slovenian publishing houses. While some of these works may have been removed due to excessive and unrealistic programmes, this was certainly not the case with authors whose works were accompanied

by negative ideological and political remarks. For Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men* and Tolstoy's *Polikushka*, for example, Agitprop bluntly prescribed that they be "thrown out" of the programme (the first book saw its first publication in Slovenian in the 1950s and the second only a decade later), while Bratko Krefc's study *Pushkin and Shakespeare* was to be "forwarded to comrade Boris Zihelr for examination before printing". The book finally saw the light of day four years later. Regarding the book *Silent Barricade* by the Czech writer Jan Drda, Agitprop announced that "it was given to comrade Veljko Vlahovič for reading and we will subsequently notify you whether or not it is eligible for publication." Given that the book was actually published a year later, it is obvious that the censor found nothing ideologically or politically objectionable in it. It seems that a reissue of Josip Vidmar's book about Oton Župančič was also planned for 1949. The book was first published in 1935 under the title *Oton Župančič: Kritična portretna študija* (Oton Župančič: A Critical Portrait). However, Agitprop blocked the initiative with the simple remark, "If this is the one from before the war, it should not be published." For the Croatian poet Ivan Goran Kovačić, Agitprop ordained that only his poem *Jama* (The Cave) could be considered for publication, "given that all his pre-war poems are bad and full of formalism". A more complete retrospective on this author was not published in Slovenian until 1966 (AS 1589, box III/10, archive unit 275, Okrožnica agitpropa CK KPJ, 11 Feb. 1948).

The "agitprop cultural policy" was therefore a typical example of the strictest and widest censorship. This censorship was both post-publishing, whereby books already printed were removed from bookshops and libraries, and preliminary, whereby anything that displeased the authorities simply could not be printed. Yugoslavia (and Slovenia) was also ahead of other Eastern European countries, where the communist parties were still struggling for power, in censorship, which was implemented in its strictest forms. After the war, the range of books available in Slovenia was limited due to extremely one-sided domestic production and numerous restrictions on the importation of foreign literature. Within a few years, books had become ideologically so uniform that the list of banned books was practically made redundant because no further additions were necessary. However, following the rift with the Cominform and the Soviet Union in 1948, Yugoslavia became the first communist country to abandon the most flagrant patterns of political interference with artistic creativity. This change of policy was symbolically expressed with the abolition of the agitprop apparatus after the congress of the ruling party in 1952 (Gabrič, *Slovenska agitpropovska kulturna politika*).

## Disguised preliminary censorship after the 1950s

This, of course, does not mean that the (renamed) League of Communists relinquished its control over culture. While refraining from direct intervention within the cultural scene, it still sought to exercise influence through seemingly more democratic means. Legislation passed in the mid-1950s saw the introduction of the “social management” of cultural institutions. Within these, administrative committees were established that were composed of a minority of employee representatives and a majority of the founder’s representatives. In publishing houses, such committees were known as publishing councils. Having founded most cultural institutions, the state also appointed most of their managerial personnel. The selection of candidates was carried out and controlled by commissions from the ruling political parties – specifically, the League of Communists and the Socialist Alliance of Working People. At a press conference on 6 April 1954, while explaining the principles of social management in cultural institutions, Boris Zihel, one of the leading Slovenian ideologists, said that, apart from supervising the operation of its institution – a function that is common to all similar committees worldwide – the administrative committee would also have “the last word in endorsing a repertoire and could, in the interest of improvement, critically intervene with individual phenomena that appeared detrimental in the said institutions” (AS 1589, box III/30, archive unit 792, Boris Zihel: Tiskovna konferenca 7). When the new legislation, which introduced social management into publishing houses, was passed, the authorities increased their pressure on the only publisher not controlled by them, the Saint Hermagoras Society (*Družba svetega Mohorja*). At the end of 1955, the society’s leadership, composed of reputable Catholic intellectuals, strove to preserve its status. The regime, however, insisted that the society comply with the new legislation, strengthening its demands with concrete measures. The printing of all the society’s publications was put on hold pending its full compliance with the new legislation and, indirectly, the regime’s demands (Gabrič, *Socialistična kulturna revolucija* 82–85).

Publicly, the most resounding move was the censorship of the society’s *Almanac for the leap year 1956*. Although this was not planned by the highest political hierarchy, it was used to apply pressure to the society’s Catholic leadership. The almanac was to publish twelve poems by the poet, writer, and politician Edvard Kocbek. As the last of the Christian Socialists in the Slovenian political leadership, Kocbek was forcibly retired and isolated in 1952 by the communist regime, which also banned the publication of his literary works. Had Kocbek’s poems been published in the almanac, it

would have been the first publication of any of his works since 1952, when he was forced into silence (Gabrič, “Edvard Kocbek” 194–197). Because the almanac was ready for printing and the proofs of the pages with Kocbek’s poems had already been prepared, Riko Presinger, the manager of state-owned Celje Printers (*Celjska tiskarna*), halted the procedure. In a letter to the society’s administration, he wrote that Kocbek’s poems were “unsuitable for publication” because in them the author insulted leading Slovenian politicians “treating our gains in a manner that should be alien to any objective citizen of our homeland”. The letter ends quite categorically, “I, therefore, demand that you remove all of Kocbek’s poems from the almanac and replace them with more sensible matters that will be of benefit to your subscribers. Until you have done so, we will not proceed with printing these sheets of the almanac” (AS 1211, box 124, transcript of a letter by Riko Presinger, director of Celje Printers, to the St. Hermagoras Society, 2 Dec. 1955).

The society’s secretary, Stanko Cajnkar, informed the central Slovenian authorities of Presinger’s uncivilized move. At a meeting on 3 December 1955, Boris Kocijančič, the head of the government’s Commission for Religious Affairs, made it clear to Cajnkar that the authorities had no intention of yielding and that “the printing of the almanac has been halted and will not proceed until the publishing council has reviewed the almanac and guaranteed its contents.” Afterwards, Kocijančič reported to the president of the Slovenian government that Cajnkar “understood that I was conveying definitive views to him” (AS 223, box 632, 301/55).

The society’s management was thus compelled, if it was to continue operating, to submit to the demands of the communist authorities and accept the appointment of a publishing council in which the government’s representatives would be in the majority. This naturally meant that Kocbek’s poems had to be removed if they wished to proceed with printing the almanac. At a session of the Slovenian political leadership, Boris Kraigher, the president of the Slovenian government, said that Kocbek’s work stressed that Christian Socialists had “joined the national liberation war for the defence of God”, while his deputy, Stane Kavčič, claimed that Kocbek’s poetry left readers with an impression that “this is a dirge for all White Guard members that fell in the Suha Krajina region” (AS 537, box 27, Minutes of the Session of the Presidency of the SAWPS, 12 Jan. 1956, 40).

The political appraisals of Kocbek’s literary work were in total contrast with his poetic expressiveness. In his letter, which in no way prejudiced the course of the scandal, Kocbek argued that his work had been wrongly, untruthfully, and unacceptably interpreted, describing the memo that had banned the publication of his poems as an “unprecedented and sad docu-



ment for our history of culture” (AS 1211, box 124, Letter from Edvard Kocbek to the secretary of the St. Hermagoras Society Publishing House, Stanko Cajnkar). One of the consequences of this censorship was the unusual order of the contents between the covers. In the poems section, instead of being arranged in the order of publication, the poems were mixed up at the end, as though the editorial board wanted to indicate which sheets had been printed later.

However, Kocbek’s case was not a typical example of censorship as envisaged by the system of social management in that the initiative for it came directly from the manager of the printing house, and not from bodies of social management (with the society as yet having no publishing council) or commissions of the ruling political organizations. At the Society of Hermagoras (*Mohorjeva družba*), as the society was renamed after its registration as demanded by the authorities, the supervision was only realized through the appointment of a new publishing council. Although it was a Catholic publishing society, its publishing council was structured in such a way that the government representatives (who were by and large communists) constituted a majority and the society’s representatives a minority. The representatives that were appointed by the government followed its instructions and reported back to it. The communists in the administration of what was essentially a Catholic firm wanted to revolutionize its publishing policy and prevent the publication of what they called excessively “clericalist” works; the majority of publications were, as a matter of fact, based on Christian spiritual tradition.

In October 1959, the president of the society’s publishing council reported that the first crisis between their Catholic and the communist factions was triggered by Anton Trstenjak’s

... work of popular psychology, *Človek v ravnotežju* (Man in the Balance), when we wanted to prevent the publication of the book but we only delayed it by one year. At that time the writer Finžgar was sulking because we turned down his manuscript *Starčevo premišljevanje* (An Old Man’s Pondering) and his plan to write a natural science book on “how the Earth evolved and developed” – naturally, from the Catholic viewpoint. We pacified the acclaimed writer by publishing his memoirs *Leta mojega popotovanja* (The Years of My Travels), which exerted great influence while provoking indignation among priests that sympathized with the White Guard. (AS 537, fasc. 111, Mohorjeva družba, 9 Oct. 1959).

The authorities demanded that the society’s annual almanacs treat religious and state holidays equally, as well as publish articles on those currently in power. Miroslav Ravbar, the president of the publishing council, reporting on its censorship activity to the Slovenian political leadership,

boasted, “We prevented all panegyric writing about the previous and current pope” (AS 537, fasc. 111, Mohorjeva družba, 9 Oct. 1959).

Through the establishment of “social management in cultural institutions”, a well-thought-out system of preliminary censorship was set in place. Any work that had been assessed as controversial or in any way unsuitable by the “omnipotent” regime was never published. In the case of a work that was entirely unacceptable and touched upon taboo subjects, the majority faction in the publishing council (so advised by the regime) “democratically” decided in advance to remove it from the next year’s programme. When only certain aspects of a work were problematic, the author was asked to either modify or remove them. In both cases, the general public remained largely oblivious to the behind-the-scenes games and therefore never responded to or begrudged the censoring.

The controversy surrounding the publication of a collection of novels by Alojz Rebula, entitled *Snegovi Edena* (The Snows of Eden), was a typical case of “mending” a literary work before it reached readers. The writer handed over the manuscript to the Lipa publishing house of Koper in 1974. Its publishing council, headed by Ciril Zlobec, added the work to the company’s programme, at the same time informing the authorities about it, in case it contained anything ideologically or politically contestable. The suitability of Rebula’s work was then discussed within local political circles in Koper, the Commission for Ideological and Political Issues of the League of Communists of Slovenia, headed by Franc Šali, and the Council for Culture of the Socialist Alliance of Working People of Slovenia (SAWPS). The political structures decided to “advise the author, for the sake of a more uniform artistic image of the book, to remove the farce for voices entitled *Kralj Matjaž* (King Matthias), with which the value of the published text would only increase while slightly reducing the book’s volume.” They indicated four passages in the book that the author needed to “mend”. After the political bodies had marked the sections that were not to be printed, a working group from the League of Communists of Lipa’s publishing council convened. The representative of the local communist organization from Koper and Mitja Rotovnik, the head of the Council for Culture of the Socialist Alliance, also participated in it. The leading body in Lipa was thus minutely informed of its expected task in a possible printing of the work. The director and the chief editor of the publishing house then summoned Alojz Rebula and presented him with the remarks and conditions of the authorities, all of which the writer accepted, rendering any further political intervention unnecessary. Those concerned were pleased to write in their report that “The problem has therefore been resolved within the publishing house” (Oblak 15–17).

Despite some further complications, the leading political structures preferred to see the “purified” version of the book published by Lipa in Koper instead of just across the border, in Trieste, where it could be advertised as banned by communist Slovenia. On 9 March 1977, after years of procrastination, the Council of Culture of the SAWPS finally deliberated that “there are no reservations against the Lipa Publishing House of Koper publishing the book *Snegovi Edena* by Alojz Rebula” (AS 537, box 805, m. 1881, Positions and decisions from the Session of the Secretariat for Culture of the SAWPS, 9 Mar. 1977).

### **Post-publishing censorship and restricted import of books from abroad**

The well-concealed and disguised system of preliminary censorship within the social management of cultural institutions rendered retroactive or post-publishing censorship practically redundant. On the domestic book market it was almost unheard of for a work to be banned after it had been printed. The most significant exception to this rule was the attempt to print a collection of poems by France Balantič, a poet that had been killed during the Second World War as a soldier in the collaborationist Home Guard. His name had been blacklisted since 1945. The first attempt to publish his poetry was made during the politically more relaxed 1960s, in 1966. His collection, entitled *Muževna steblika* (The Sap-Filled Stem), was prepared for printing by the Slovenian State Press (*Državna založba Slovenije*). After the book had been actually printed and deposit copies sent to the main Slovenian libraries, political intervention halted its further publication and sale. The measure was originally supposed to be only temporary. In the political arena, discussions began on whether or not it was appropriate to publish a book written by someone that had been a political adversary during the war (Pibernik 237–242).

The political commissions and the National Secretariat for Internal Affairs that carried out the investigation were not interested so much in the poet’s artistic value as in his pre-war political orientation and attitude towards the National Liberation Movement during the war. In 1967, after a several months of controversies and enquiries, and before ever being put on sale, the entire stock of the book was destroyed in the warehouses. Only several deposit copies that had already been sent to main Slovenian libraries have been preserved. On the basis of the documentation examined, it is not possible to determine who issued the order to destroy the collection. On the other hand, the documents leave no doubt that the

responsibility for this uncivilized act of censorship should be sought in the political commissions appointed by the ruling parties.

It is therefore a fact that, apart from the prevailing preliminary censorship, the authorities also resorted to retroactive post-publishing censorship, although as little as possible, so as to avoid public reactions. In the 1970s, for works printed in Slovenia, post-publishing censorship was mainly exercised against authors whose writing exposed the dark sides of the communist elite and their ascent to power. In most cases, however, post-publishing censorship was applied against works printed abroad, especially those published in Slovenian by anti-communist emigrants from Slovenia. Since the 1960s, banned imported books were listed in the official gazettes. Most of these were political works whose authors criticized the communist regime in Yugoslavia. The first Slovenian book with an import ban was officially announced in 1967: Ciril Žebot's *Slovenia včeraj, danes, jutri* (Slovenia Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow). In the following decade, three other Slovenian books were officially banned, all of which were printed on Slovenian ethnic territory just across the Yugoslav border (Horvat 135–136).

The banned works were kept in the major Slovenian libraries in special reserves, separated from other material. In the National and University Library in Ljubljana, a “Director’s Reserve” was established, known to the public as the “D-Reserve”. In it were kept all Slovenian books and printed materials that had arrived from abroad, regardless of whether or not they had been officially banned in the Official Gazette. As a result, the D-Reserve contained many more titles than were listed in the official gazettes and there was a considerable difference between the number of “officially” and “unofficially” banned works. As a matter of fact, only eleven such titles (and many more foreign journals) were published in the official gazettes, whereas some seven hundred titles had collected in the D-Reserve by the end of the 1980s. The material from the D-Reserve was not available to the general public and was kept separately, as were its index cards, which were not included in the public catalogue. Anyone wishing to see a book from the D-Reserve first needed to sign a statement that it was needed for research purposes. Such permits were issued by the director of the library. Users were not allowed to take the banned books home, but had to read them in the library’s reading room (Švent 137–141; Kodrič 19–23). For Slovenians that wanted to borrow any of the banned Slovenian books, it was often easier to drive across the border to one of larger Slovenian libraries in Italy and Austria.

The National and University Library and other central Slovenian libraries themselves had to secure an import permit from the federal govern-

ment in Belgrade for books that would otherwise remain locked in a special reserve. In 1973, the University and Research Library of Maribor (the precursor of the current University Library) received several parcels of Slovenian books that had been sent from New York by Studia Slovenica. Not having secured a special permit from the federal authorities, the books were confiscated. “The printed matter is confiscated without compensation,” was written in dry legal language on the order issued by the Ministry of the Interior, explaining that any import of foreign printed material required “a permit from the Federal Secretariat for the Internal Affairs in Belgrade.” Because the library had not secured one, “the foreign printed matter that entered the country without permission is confiscated without compensation” (Dolenc, Godeša, Gabrič 153).

From the list of 223 titles of banned literature from the University Library of Maribor, published in 1990 in the booklet entitled *The Banned – Outlawed Literature in the ULM* (Nidorfer), it is evident that the authorities made no distinction between political and literary works. Everything that had been written in Slovenian and printed abroad ended up in the “bunker”. On the list of works that were withdrawn from the eyes of ordinary library patrons – apart from the writers that criticized the Yugoslav (or Slovenian) political system from the sociological and philosophical viewpoint and those belonging to the political emigration (whose names had been blacklisted since 1945) – one can also find Slovenian translations of Franz Werfl’s novel *The Song of Bernardette* and Dante Alighieri’s *Divine Comedy*.

Some translations of literary works into Slovenian that had been printed in Slovenia also underwent certain interventions and “touch-ups”. It is, however, hard to conclude whether these were cases of preliminary or post-publishing censorship because no evidence was found about this in the archive material examined. One could even speculate that it was all a case of self-censorship, whereby the translator was aware of the problems the book might encounter in a tense political situation, without “adjusting” some details that would otherwise be unacceptable to communist cultural ideologists. Some translations of foreign works were thus purged of “harmful” influences and adapted to the ideological patterns of the communist powers that be. In the first translation of Astrid Lindgren’s *Pippi Longstocking* from 1955, for example, Pippi did not celebrate Christmas Eve but New Year’s Eve, and the Christmas tree and Christmas gifts were replaced by a New Year’s tree and New Year’s gifts (Marinšek). A similar “de-Christianization” (the term used by Marijan Smolik in his comparison of various translations) was also committed in the Slovenian translation of the novel *In Desert and Wilderness* by Henryk Sienkiewicz, the popular

children's book *Bambi* by Felix Salten, and Karl May's adventure stories (Smolik).

### **The 1980s bring loud demands for press freedom**

The ruling structure became increasingly uncomfortable with literary works dealing with the recent Slovenian past and criticizing the manner in which the communists came to power. This was a taboo topic not to be discussed in public. The memoirs of the living Slovenian intellectuals that had been published before the 1970s usually did not go beyond May 1945. The post-war executions of more than ten thousand White Guard members and civilians, the blood-stained ascent of the communists to power, the politically motivated judicial processes, and the concentration camps set up by the communist regime were taboo topics, carefully concealed and barred from public discussion. In the 1970s, intellectuals started exploring and writing about issues that the authorities felt should have remained hidden from the public eye. The authorities countered these tendencies with charges of hostile propaganda, mudslinging, dissemination of false information, and distortion of the country's social situation. The authors of such works were brought to court and tried under various articles of the existing penal code. After the death of the state leader Josip Broz "Tito" in 1980, the intelligentsia committed themselves to the abolition of Article 133, which sanctioned so-called verbal offence (*verbalni delikt*).

Courts in Slovenia hardly ever sanctioned anyone on the basis of Article 133. Nevertheless, for a nascent civil society, an article that envisaged prison sentences for written or uttered words symbolized an unfree and undemocratic system and a violation of the fundamental human rights of freedom of speech and a free press. Although the Slovenian authorities no longer insisted on sanctioning verbal offence, the demands to abolish Article 133 in Slovenia were no quieter than in other parts of Yugoslavia, where people were often sentenced on its basis (Kos 305–310). During these discussions, intellectuals pointed to specific cases of censorship that had been applied as recently as the 1980s. With the authorities choosing not to implement certain articles of the penal code, the likelihood of disguised preliminary censorship being used against literary works became minimal. In addition, they were aware that censorship would provide the best possible advertisement for a book, which might thus become a best-seller and soon be reprinted.

For example, this was the case with Igor Torkar's novel *Umiranje na obroke* (Dying by Degrees), which was completed in 1982. In it the author

depicted the fate of a person convicted at the “Dachau” political trials in Ljubljana. Because the writer was himself sentenced at the trial, the book possesses strong autobiographic elements. At the end of the book, which was supposed to see the light of day in 1983, the author added a survey in which thirteen renowned Slovenian intellectuals affirmatively answered the question “Were our Dachau trials Stalinist?” It was this survey that proved to be the greatest stumbling block for the authorities. One decade later, Igor Torkar explained, “When the first edition of the novel with this survey was already at the bindery, an employee of UDBA (the State Security Administration, or Yugoslav secret police) appeared with an order to have the last half of the sheet that contained the survey removed.” In spite of everything, this book that had broken a taboo by openly speaking of what were typical Stalinist trials in Slovenia and had, on top of this, been censored, sold in huge numbers and was reprinted several times in the following years. Its third reissue, published in 1988, also included the aforementioned banned survey (Torkar 438).

Such moves by the regime further strengthened the ranks of those that demanded the abolition of Article 133. The first critics were joined by various civil society organizations, including several prominent Slovenian lawyers. In 1987, their claim was considered and upheld by the Slovenian political leadership, a move that was met with condemnation by their colleagues in other Yugoslav republics.

With the eventual downfall of communism and the disintegration of Yugoslavia, the legislation that had so long restricted free speech and press, including through censorship, finally vanished. Unfortunately, the same cannot be said of more or less fanatical politicians and ideologists that still believe in banning books that, in their opinion, spread “untruth” and negatively influence readers. Such people will never be in short supply.

#### ARCHIVE RECORDS

- AS – Arhiv Republike Slovenije (Archives of the Republic of Slovenia)
- AS 223 – Vlada republike Slovenije (Government of the Republic of Slovenia)
- AS 231 – Ministrstvo za prosveto Ljudske republike Slovenije (Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of Slovenia)
- AS 537 – Republiška konferenca Socialistične zveze delovnega ljudstva Slovenije (Republic Conference of the Socialist Alliance of Working People of Slovenia)
- AS 631 – Zveza kulturnih organizacij Slovenije (Slovenian Association of Cultural Organizations)
- AS 1211 – Komisija Republike Slovenije za odnose z verskimi skupnostmi (Committee of the Republic of Slovenia for Relations with Religious Communities)

- AS 1589 – Centralni komite Zveze komunistov Slovenije (Central Committee of the League of Communists of Slovenia)  
AS 1643 – Predsedstvo Slovenskega narodnoosvobodilnega sveta (Presidency of the Slovenian National Liberation Council)

#### WORKS CITED

- Dolenc, Ervin, Bojan Godeša, and Aleš Gabrič. *Slovenska kultura in politika v Jugoslaviji*. Ljubljana: Modrijan, 1999.
- Gabrič, Aleš. »Edvard Kocbek od prisilnega umika v zasebnost do vrnitve v javno življenje.« *Nova revija* 14.159–160 (1995): 193–203.
- Gabrič, Aleš. *Slovenska agitpropovska kulturna politika 1945–1952*. Ljubljana: Mladika, 1991. [= *Borec*, 43.7–9 (1991): 469–656.]
- Gabrič, Aleš. *Socialistična kulturna revolucija: slovenska kulturna politika 1953–1962*. Ljubljana: Cankarjeva založba, 1995.
- Horvat, Marjan. »Prepovedi in zaplembe tiskane besede v Sloveniji 1945–1980.« *Temna stran meseca: kratka zgodovina totalitarizma v Sloveniji 1945–1990*. Ed. Drago Jančar. Ljubljana: Nova revija, 1998. 126–139.
- Kodrič, Eva. *Jaž, Cerberus ali cenzura v knjižnicah*. Ljubljana: Narodna in univerzitetna knjižnica, 1996.
- Kos, Jerneja. »Verbalni delikt v Sloveniji v osemdesetih letih.« *Nova revija*, 23.271–272 (2004): 298–338.
- M.K. Navodila ljudskim knjižničarjem. *Obzornik*. 1.3–4 (1946): 176–178.
- Marinšek, Marjan. »Nova knjiga – nove napake.« *Delo* 5 Dec. 1996: 15.
- Oblak, Teja. *Politična cenzura knjig v Sloveniji od 1945 do 1991*. Undergraduate thesis. University of Ljubljana, 2000.
- Nidorfer, Mirko, ed. *Prepovedana – izobčena literatura v UKM*. Maribor: Univerzitetna knjižnica, 1990.
- Pibernik, France. *Temni življi Franceta Balantiča*. Ljubljana: Cankarjeva založba, 1989.
- Smolik, Marijan. »'Razkristjanjeni' Karl May.« *Družina* 44.29–42 (1998), (feature section).
- Švent, Rozina. »Prepovedani tiski v Narodni in univerzitetni knjižnici.« *Knjižnica*, 41.1 (1997): 137–141.
- Torkar, Igor. *Umiranje na obroke*. Ljubljana: Littera picta, 1996.