

Kjer je zasebno javno: bralne prakse v socialistični Madžarski

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Veseju obravnavam založniške sisteme v socialistični Madžarski pod Kádárjevim režimom in dokazujem, da so uredniški sistemi kot nadomestki cenzorskega urada omogočali delovanje sistema s tem, ko so pred objavo dopuščali recenziranje gradiv na več ravneh..

Ključne besede: sociologija branja / literatura in cenzura / socializem / založništvo / Madžarska

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Eden mojih najbolj živih otroških spominov je, kako se po božičnih počitnicah vrnem v šolo in kako na klopi v šolski jedilnici klepetam z najboljšima prijateljicama o tem, kaj je katera dobila za božič. Sezname so se kajpak razlikovali, toda pri knjigah ne. Presenetljivo – vsaj tako se mi je zdelo takrat – so naši starši za božična darila skoraj vedno izbrali iste knjige. Tako smo se pri dvanajstih letih vse tri iz *Priročnika za najstnike z dvema levima rokama* naučile učinkovite metode, kako se odvadiš gristi nohte, pri trinajstih smo se nameravale zaljubiti v skrivnostnega dvojnega agenta v *Abigélinem* slogu, do konca osnovne šole pa smo iz zbirke *Oni in mi* Brunelle Gasperini že vse izvedele, da moramo družinski avto pobožati za lahko noč.

Morda bi kdo menil, da ni v moji izkušnji ničesar nenavadnega – mirno lahko stavimo, da bo za letošnji božič vsaj en najstnik od petih dobil roman Neila Gaimana ali Stephanie Meyer in da so skoraj vsi odraščali ob Harryju Potterju; skratka, vsaka generacija ima svoje najljubše knjige. Vendar bi mu ugovarjala, da je tu bistvena razlika. Božične izbire mojih staršev ni podpihovala najstniška mrzlica, ki bi jo ustvarjali mediji, ampak je bila posledica gospodarskih in političnih odločitev – ne njihovih, temveč vladnih. Madžarski režim mojega otroštva, t. i. Kádárjev režim (obdobje v madžarski zgodovini med letoma 1956 in 1989, imenovano po partijskem sekretarju Jánosu Kádárju, ki je po revoluciji leta 1956 vodil Madžarsko dobrih trideset let), večine svojih ciljev ni uresničil: ljudstva ni popeljal v obljublje-

ne dežele komunizma, niti ni izkoreninil dekadentnih buržujjskih razvad. Pač pa je dosegel nezaslišan uspeh pri nadzoru knjižnega tiska, prodaje in trženja na vseh ravneh. V prispevku nameravam podrobneje preučiti, kako je bilo zaradi tega vseмогоčnega nadzora branje na Madžarskem v minulem obdobju vedno del javnega diskurza, celo kadar je bilo na videz zasebno, opozoriti pa želim tudi na paradoksalne posledice tega sistema.

Na štirideset let madžarskega državnega socializma, ki se je začel z manipuliranimi volitvami leta 1947 in trajal vse do mirne zamenjave režima v letu 1989, ne smemo gledati kot na enotno obdobje. V prispevku se sicer osredotočam na leta po revoluciji 1956, toda če hočemo razumeti glavne cilje kadaristične kulturne politike, moramo najprej skreniti malce v stran in preleteti tudi leta pred revolucijo, še zlasti zato, ker je predhodno desetletje stalinistične diktature kljub razlikam v sprotni obravnavi književnosti in kulture položilo dobršen del temeljev za prihajajoči Kádárjev režim.

Pred drugo svetovno vojno je bilo na Madžarskem skoraj 200 zasebnih založb, ki jih je podpiral uveljavljen in utečen sistem knjigar, antikvariatov, knjižnic in papirnic z dovoljenjem za prodajo knjig. Vojna jih je zvečine opustošila, svoje pa so prispevale tudi osvobodilne ali, bolje, osvajalske sovjetske čete. Po odloku¹časne vlade iz leta 1945 (Kókay 139) naj bi namreč zasegle in uničile vso fašistično in protisovjetsko književnost, toda ohranjenih je več poročil, kako so zlorabljele svoj položaj – med prodiranjem so uničile številne zasebne in šolske knjižnice, marsikateri dragocen zvezek iz samostanskih knjižnic pa je izginil in pristal v Sovjetski zvezi. Knjižna industrija je potrebovala vsaj dve leti, da si je opomogla, in do leta 1947 je končno spet dosegla predvojni razcvet. Vendar mirna leta niso dolgo trajala. Do leta 1948 je nova socialistična vlada že nacionalizirala vse velike založbe, do leta 1949 pa je vse knjigarne in knjižnice postavila pod neposredni nadzor Ministrstva za notranje zadeve, torej v bistvu pod neposredni politični nadzor. 7. aprila 1952 je Ministrstvo razveljavilo licence sedeminosemdesetih knjigar v Budimpešti in petindevetdesetih na deželi, za povrh pa papirničarjem vzelo dovoljenje za prodajo knjig. Tako je postavilo pod državni nadzor vso knjižno industrijo.

V želji po vseobsegajoči oblasti nad knjižno industrijo se je zrcalil odnos režima do književnosti in branja, ki ga je Kádárjev režim prav tako podedoval od svojega predhodnika. Književnost je veljala za pomemben propagandni forum in za glavno bojišče v »kulturni vojni«² nove vlade, ki naj bi bralcem izbrisala iz misli prvine buržujjske kulturne dediščine. Toda čeprav sta oba režima obravnavala književnost in bralne navade kot nekaj ključnega in obenem podrejenega politiki, sta se razlikovala po *sredstvih*, s katerimi sta jih hotela nadzirati. Skladno s sovjetskimi doktrinami si je stalinistični režim v petdesetih letih 20. stoletja prizadeval vzpostaviti ne-

posredni politični nadzor nad vsemi vidiki branja. Politično je vdrlo v zasebno sfero in centralni nadzor naj bi se izvajal tudi nad tem, *kaj* kdo bere in *kdaj*. To želim pokazati z dvema primeroma: prvi osvetljuje poskus, da bi izkoreninili tvegano gradivo, drugi pa spodbujanje novih bralnih navad.

Leta 1950 je Ministrstvo za kulturo zaporedoma objavilo dva uradna seznama knjig – prvega s 1.848 naslovi, drugega s 6.552 –, ki naj bi jih umaknili iz vaških in delavskih knjižnic, vendar sta, baje zaradi administrativne napake, postala obvezna za vse knjižnice, knjigarne in celo antikvariate (Murányi 256). 9. novembra 1950 so se pred knjigarnami nabrale kolone tovarnjakov, uradniki z Ministrstva pa so zasegli in nato zmleli več kot 120.000 zvezkov. Med naslovi na seznamu sta bila denimo Cervantesov *Don Kihot*, ker je predgovor za predvojno izdajo prispeval tedaj že emigrantski pisatelj Sándor Márai, in *Medvedek Pu*, ker ga je v tridesetih letih izdal buržujski založnik. Operacijo umikanja knjig je razkril radio Svobodna Evropa in sprožil mednarodni škandal. V odgovorih na obtožbe cenzure in na proteste, ki so med drugim prihajali iz Francoske akademije znanosti, so se poskusili uradniki od dogodkov distancirati. József Révai, minister za šolstvo, je izdal razglas, češ da so Cervantesa, Swifta in madžarske ljudske pravljice vtihotapile na seznam reakcionarne sile na Ministrstvu, medtem ko je Tretji kongres Madžarske delavske stranke knjigararjem v »strogo zaupnem« odloku ukazal, naj več zvezkov s seznama razstavijo v izložbah. Toda kot pripominja literarna teoretičarka Zsófia Gombár,

izdajanje novih seznamov prepovedanih knjig med letoma 1952 in 1953 opisane namene očitno postavlja na laž. Novi trije zvezki so obsegali približno 14.000 naslovov. [...] Po trditvah v predgovoru naj bi bile na odpad obsojene knjige neestetske, zastarele in nekakovostne, nevredne pozornosti madžarskega delovnega ljudstva, ki je bilo zdaj na poti h kulturnemu razvoju[.] (272)

Partija pa »zastarelih knjig«, kot jih je označila v naslovu teh zvezkov, ni le zavrgla z arogantno vzvišenostjo, temveč je hotela ljudem tudi neposredno predpisovati, kaj naj berejo. V tovarnah in podjetjih je uvedla t. i. »pol ure za *Szabad Népe*«, ko so se morali zbrati vsi delavci in razpravljati o uvodniku v partijskem dnevniku *Szabad Népe*. Reorganizirala je Društvo pisateljev, tako da je večino buržujskih piscev utišala, odkrito pa podprla kliko dokaj drugorazrednih socrealističnih avtorjev. Režim je zaprl madžarsko tržišče za vso novo zahodnoevropsko književnost in tako prekinil skoraj vse stike z zahodnim svetom. Vendar ta stalinistični model kulturnega nadzora nikoli ni zares obrodil sadov, ki si jih je obetal. Nevzdržnost neposrednega nadzora se je jasno pokazala po letu 1953, ko so se pisatelji med prvimi družbenimi skupinami uprli stalinistični državi in s svojo kritiko utrli pot revoluciji v letu 1956.

Letnica 1956 zaznamuje konec nekega obdobja in preobrat v več kot štiridesetih letih madžarskega državnega socializma, kajti po neuspehu revolucije sta se vsiljevali dve ugotovitvi: prvič, da se režim ne more vrniti k stalinističnim doktrinom iz petdesetih let, če noče tvegati nove vstaje, in drugič, da v bližnji prihodnosti zaradi »začasne« prisotnosti sovjetskih sil na Madžarskem ni nikakršne možnosti za demokratične spremembe. Tako so se ljudje sprijaznili z življenjem *znotraj* meja socialistične države, to pa jim je olajšal János Kádár, novi partijski voditelj, ki so mu ruski tanki na Madžarskem zagotavljali oblast. Učil se je iz padca svojih stalinističnih predhodnikov, zato je vsakdanje življenje Madžarov poudarjeno depolitiziral in s pomočjo milijardnih evropskih posojil ustvaril v državi lažni občutek blaginje, ki ga je po prestani lakoti in stiskah petdesetih let večina toplo pozdravila. V zameno za nove, višje življenjske standarde – ki so bili v primerjavi z zahodnimi zgledi še vedno smešno nizki – pa je Kádárjev režim od državljanov pričakoval, da bodo sprejeli umetno okrnjeno in strogo nadzorovano javno sfero, v kateri bo izrecna kritika prepovedana, morebitne politične pripombe pa bo dovoljeno izraziti zgolj v centralno predpisanih obrazcih. Če hočejo Madžari živeti v razmeroma spodobnih razmerah, morajo postati politično nedejavni – takšno faustovsko pogodbo je ponudil svojemu narodu Kádárjev režim.

Politična kritika se je izmikala vsem javnim forumom. Nihče ni odkrito spregovoril o aretacijah in usmrčitvah po letu 1956, o stalni prisotnosti Rdeče armade na Madžarskem ali o rastočih gospodarskih problemih v sedemdesetih letih. Stabilnost javnega življenja je temeljila na dvojnosti prenapihnenih vprašanj, o katerih se je govorilo javno, in problemov, ki so bili deležni zgolj meglenih namigov. To je bilo poroštvo, ki je podpiralo status quo in omogočalo režimu, da je vztrajal v sedlu.

Opisana dvoličnost je prežemala kulturno politiko na vseh ravneh in knjižno založništvo ni bilo nikakršna izjema. Zlasti in predvsem je pomenila to, da Madžarska v nasprotju z večino srednjeevropskih držav ni imela centralnega cenzorskega urada. Namesto neposredne cenzure je Kádárjev režim razvil večnivojski sistem, v katerem naj bi se njegovi pripadniki na vseh ravneh cenzurirali sami. Zaradi mnogoplastnega nadzornega sistema in zaradi pričakovanja, da bo vsak državljan sodeloval s samocenzuro, oblastem zlepa ni bilo treba poseči po neposrednem nadzoru. Tu želim pokazati, da je ureditev v bistvu temeljila na večstopenjskem recenziranju knjig pred objavo, zaradi katerega so bile ob prihodu med bralce v glavnem že očiščene nevarnega gradiva. Zdaj pa se posvetimo nadrobnostim in si oglejmo, kako je sistem deloval v vsakdanjem življenju.

V nasprotju s stalinističnim binarnim sistemom, ki je knjigo bodisi prepovedal bodisi podprl, so novi predpisi temeljili na tridelni vrednostni

lestvici prepovedanih, toleriranih in podpiranih knjig. Srednja izmed teh kategorij ni bila niti predpisana niti točno opredeljena, vanjo pa so sodila umetniška dela, ki sicer niso bila odkrito socialistična, vendar so bila za režim vsaj delno sprejemljiva. Ta skupina se je nenehno spreminjala: kar je bilo danes prepovedano, je naslednjega dne zlahka izšlo. Uradnih smernic, kaj je še moč tolerirati, ni bilo, ker je režim hotel vsakogar držati v stalni pripravljenosti in negotovosti. Izogibati se je bilo treba nekaterim splošnim tabujem (vsemu, kar bi žalilo Sovjetsko zvezo ali kako prijateljsko socialistično državo, sleherni kritiki partijskega vodstva, obscenosti, vulgarnosti ali odkritim opisom spolnosti), vse drugo pa je bilo prepuščeno trenutni presoji uradnikov. Tak sistem je seveda lahko deloval le pod pogojem, da je imel na vseh ravneh zaupanja vredne uslužbence.²

Zato je jeseni 1957 partijski komite Madžarske socialistične delavske stranke izdal odločbo o založništvu, v kateri je določal, da morajo biti vse odločitve razen administrativnih in materialnih politične. V njej je predpisal smernice v skladu z načeli in predlagal, naj se usposobi nova generacija urednikov, »ki bodo dosledno cenzurirali protimarksistične težnje«. Za cilj je imel ureditev, ki bi gradila od spodaj navzgor. Ti uredniki na založbah (vse so bile v državni lasti in vsaka je imela poseben profil: Európa je izdajala svetovno književnost, Magvető in Szépirodalmi madžarsko, Móra otroško itn.) so morali prebrati vse rokopise in izdati recenzentsko poročilo, ki so ga nato predložili na tedenskem sestanku založnikov. Poročila so obsegala tako kratek povzetek kot oceno avtorjevega pomena in razvidne politične držbe, vsebovati pa so morala tudi končno sodbo recenzenta-urednika, ali si rokopis zasluži objavo ali ne. Ob branju nam postane jasno, da se je na tej točki vmešala v recenzentski postopek samocenzurna politična kritika. Pripombe navadno vsebujejo fraze v slogu »niti ideološko niti umetniško sprejemljivo« ali »ni brez literarne vrednosti, toda politična stališča so nesprejemljiva«, iz katerih se jasno vidi, da sta šli estetsko in politično vrednotenje z roko v roki. Vendar je vprašanje urednikov prezaleteno, da bi jih kratkomalo popredalčkali kot cenzorje.

Mnogi med njimi so bili utišani intelektualci, marsikateri pa je bil tudi sam pisatelj, čigar uredniško delo je veljalo za dokaz njegove lojalnosti. Že res, da so se največkrat ubogljivo uklonili dodeljeni vlogi, toda kakor hitro so se uveljavili kot zaupanja vredni svetovalci, so marsikdaj poskušali razrahljati režimske omejitve, zlasti pri umetniških delih, ki so jih imeli za pomembna in kakovostna. Zato lahko zatrdimo, da brez teh vnaprejšnjih recenzentov prenekateri madžarska in evropska klasika nikoli ne bi dosegla bralcev. Naj utemeljim svojo trditev s primerom in navedem usodo pesniške zbirke *Tretjega dne*, prve objavljene knjige Jánoša Pilinszkyja, ki so ga po letu 1947 iz političnih razlogov utišali. Kot član skupine buržujskih

pisatelj, ki so jih povezovali s prepovedano literarno revijo *Újhold*, si je Pilinszky prizadeval za objavo, vendar je bil nekajkrat zavržen, ker se je zdelo oblastem njegova poezija preveč črnogleda za socialističnega pesnika. Vendar je imel Pilinszky, dandanes trdno zasidran v madžarskem kanonu kot eden največjih povojnih pesniških inovatorjev, med uredniki več simpatizerjev, ki so prepoznali njegovo nadarjenost in poskušali obrniti razpoloženje oblasti v njegov prid. Prav oni so mu predlagali, naj prvotni naslov knjige (*Nikogaršnja zemlja*) spremeni v nekaj manj črnogledega; prav oni so pisali ognjevitno navdušene ocene, češ da bo njegova knjiga pripomogla k protifašističnemu slovesu Madžarske, ker v več pesmih n drobno opisuje grozote koncentracijskih taborišč. Oblasti pa je naposled omehčal kompromis, ki je ravno tako pognal na uredniškem zeljniku: pesnik je bil primoran napisati še nekaj novih del, to pot v optimističnem tonu. Nato so uredniki razvrstili pesmi po kronološkem zaporedju, pod vsako pripisali datum in prepričali oblasti, da bo spodbudni ton zadnjih pesmi ustvaril vtis, koliko bolje se živi v novem Kádárjevem režimu. Tako je knjiga leta 1959 le izšla, četudi zgolj v tisoč izvodih in ob izrecni zahtevi oblasti, da mora imeti grdo naslovnico, ki bo ljudi odvrčala od nakupa. Toda ta strategija ni imela zelenega učinka – vsi izvodi so bili razprodani v enem samem dnevu, nekateri za kar tisoč forintov namesto desetih, kolikor je znašala knjigarniška cena. (Domokos 85–96) Usoda Pilinszkyjeve zbirke je le eden od številnih primerov, ko so uredniki s svojim vmešavanjem omogočili izid knjige, ki je pozneje postala temeljno delo v madžarski literarni zgodovini.

V politično dvomljivih primerih je bil zaukazano še drugi ali »notranji« krog branja, dokler ni letnega seznama založbenih publikacij naposled potrdil Založniški direktorat. Ta je bil splošno znan kot cenzorski urad, toda po zaslugi recenzentskega sistema mu zlepa ni bilo treba uveljavljati svoje pravice do preprečitve objav, še zlasti zato ne, ker je prav tako nadziral gospodarske plate založništva in je lahko uporabil kot sredstvo nadzora tudi te. Ker so bili vsi uredniški resorji pod državno kontrolo, je bilo namreč založništvo popolnoma ločeno od delovanja trga. Tako je Direktorat lahko sprejel pravila, s katerimi je umetno vplival na trg: cene knjig (nenaravno nizke, da bi spodbujale branje) so se določale na osnovi cenika za polo, po katerem sta se morali sovjetska in socialistična književnost prodajati po najnižjih cenah, sledila so jima nesocialistična, vendar neoporečniška dela, medtem ko naj bi bili šund, detektivke in podobno »lahko čtivo«, ki je bilo ideološko v navzkrižju s socialističnimi ideali, naprodaj po skoraj dvakratni ceni; nanje so za nameček nabili še dodatni »davek na kič«.

Naposled se posvetimo še bralcem in vprašanju, kako je nadzor na vseh ravneh vplival na njihove bralne izkušnje. Kot prvo so pravila vpli-

vala na strukturo knjig. Ker je vsa književnost veljala za politično gradivo, niti tolerirana dela niso bila tolerirana sama po sebi. Bralci so navadno prejelii »smernice« v obliki predgovorov ali opomb pod črto, kako razumeti njihovo vsebino. Po drugi strani pa je ob teh varnostnih ukrepih več mojstrov in svetovne književnosti doživelo ponovne izdaje, ker si je socializem hotel klasike prilastiti. Zato je bila pod Kádárjevim režimom, še zlasti v sedemdesetih letih, paleta dostopnih klasik širša kot kdaj koli prej. In ker je veliko utišanih pisateljev iskalo in našlo zaposlitev v založniški industriji ali prevajanju, je bila na neobičajni višini tudi literarna kakovost novih izdaj. Za nameček so bile cene knjig nenaravno nizke, medtem ko so se literarne teme centralno ohranjale kot del javnega diskurza. Po zaslugi vseh naštetih teženj, pospremljenih z na videz liberalnimi režimskimi metodami palice in korenčka, so madžarski razgovori o branju pod Kádárjevim režimom obarvani z rahlo nostalgijo.

S pobilskom v zakulisne mehanizme založniške industrije sem želela v svojem eseju dokazati, da je ta nostalgija neutemeljena. Nadzorovana cenzura uredniških sistemov pod Kádárjevim režimom razkriva, da pri branju ni bilo nikakršne svobode. Zato se moramo zdaj potruditi in raziskati tako uredniška poročila kot arhiv tajne policije, da bomo dobili jasnejšo predstavo, kako je v bralnih praksah socialistične Madžarske zasebno postalo javno.

OPOMBI

¹ Številka: 530/1945 ME.

² Opis uredniškega sistema temelji na: Bart 2000.

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Where Private is Public. Reading Practices in Socialist Hungary

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The essay concerns itself with the publishing systems of Kádár-regime Socialist Hungary, and argues that the editorial systems which were the substitutes for a censorship office enabled the system to work because they allowed the pre-reading of the publishable materials on several levels.

Keywords: sociology of reading / literature and censorship / socialism / publishing industry / Hungary

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One of my most vivid childhood memories is going back to school after the Christmas break, sitting on the cafeteria bench with my two best friends and discussing what we got for Christmas. The lists varied of course, but not when it came to books. Surprisingly – or at least so I thought then – our parents almost always chose the same books as Christmas presents. So, when we were 12 all three of us learnt an effective method about how to stop chewing our fingernails from *The Handbook of Teenagers with Two Left Hands*, at 13 we planned to fall in love with a mysterious double agent *Abigél* style, and by the time we left primary school, from Brunella Gasperini's *Them and Us* series we all knew that we had to pat-pat our family cars good night.

One might say that there is nothing unusual in this experience – we can safely bet that at least one in five teenagers this Christmas will get a Neil Gaiman or Stephanie Meyer novel, and that they almost all grew up on Harry Potter, that is we all have our generational book favourites. I would argue, however, that there is a significant difference there. My parents' Christmas choices were not fuelled by a media generated teenage frenzy, but were the results of economic and political decisions, not on their part, but on the part of our government. The Hungarian regime of my childhood, the so-called Kádár-regime, the period in Hungarian history between 1956 and 1989, named after Party secretary János Kádár, who governed Hungary for more than thirty years after the 1956 revolu-

tion, did not accomplish most of its goals: it did not lead the people to the promised lands of Communism and did not wipe out decadent bourgeois living habits, but it succeeded on an unprecedented scale in controlling all levels of book printing, selling and marketing. In this paper I wish to take a closer look at how, as a result of this all-powerful control, reading in Hungary in the previous era, even when seemingly private, was always part of a public discourse, and I also wish to point out the paradoxical results of this system.

The forty years of Hungarian state Socialism, starting with the manipulated elections of 1947, and lasting until 1989, the peaceful change of the regime, should not be viewed as a homogeneous period. My main focus here is the years after the 1956 revolution, but to be able to understand the main objectives of Kádárist cultural politics, we should first digress a little and take a fleeting look at the pre-revolution years as well, especially because, albeit different in its day-to-day handling of literature and culture, this previous decade of Stalinist dictatorship had laid down many of the foundations of the upcoming Kádár-regime.

Before the Second World War there had been almost 200 private publishing houses in Hungary, supported by an established and well-running system of bookshops, second hand bookshops, libraries and stationeries with book selling licences. The war left most of them devastated, and the liberating or rather conquering Soviet troops also added insult to injury. The interim government of 1945 issued a decree¹ (Kókay 139) which ordered all fascist and anti-Soviet literature to be confiscated and destroyed. Several reports have survived about the Soviet troops' repeated abuse of power – numerous private and school libraries were destroyed by the advancing army, while various more precious volumes from monastery libraries disappeared and ended up in the Soviet Union. It took at least two years for the book industry to recover, and by 1947 it finally reached its pre-war flourish. However, the years of peace did not last long. By 1948 the new Socialist government nationalised all the big publishing houses and by 1949 it placed all bookshops and libraries under the direct control of the Ministry of Interior Affairs, which basically meant placing them under direct political control. On 7 April 1952, the Ministry withdrew the licences of 87 bookshops in Budapest, and 95 bookshops in the countryside, in addition to abolishing the bookselling permit of stationers, thus placing the whole of the book industry under state control.

The wish to have all-encompassing rule over the book industry showed the regime's attitude towards literature and reading, something the Kádár-regime also inherited from its predecessor. Literature was seen as an important forum for propaganda, and the foremost field for the new

government's 'cultural war', the aim of which was to erase the elements of bourgeois cultural heritage from the reading public's mind. While both regimes handled literature and reading habits as vital and subordinate to politics, where they differed was *the means* they wished to control it by. In harmony with Soviet doctrines the Stalinist regime of 1950s' aimed at applying direct political control over all aspects of reading. The political entered the private sphere and central control was to be exercised also over *what* people read and *when*. I would like to demonstrate this through two examples, the first illustrating the attempt to eradicate hazardous material, the second: an effort to promote new reading habits.

In 1950 the Ministry of Culture issued two consecutive official book withdrawal lists for village and work-trade libraries. The first one contained 1,848, the second 6,552 titles, all of which were to be removed from these libraries. Allegedly as a result of an administrative mistake, however, the withdrawal lists were made compulsory for all libraries, bookshops and second hand bookshops as well (Murányi 256). On 9 November 1950, trucks lined up before bookshops and the officials of the Ministry confiscated and then pulped more than 120,000 volumes. Titles on the list included Cervantes's *Don Quijote* because its pre-war edition featured a preface by the then émigré author Sándor Márai, or *Winnie-the-Pooh*, which was published in the 1930s by a bourgeois publisher. Radio Free Europe leaked the withdrawal campaign, causing an international scandal. Answering censorship allegations and protests, among others from the French Academy of Sciences, officials tried to distance themselves from the events. József Révai, Minister of Education, issued a proclamation in which he accused certain reactionary forces in the Ministry of having placed Cervantes, Swift and Hungarian folktales on the withdrawal lists, while the 3rd Congress of the Hungarian Party of Workers in a 'top secret' decree ordered booksellers to place several volumes from the list on display in their shop windows. Nonetheless, as literary scholar Zsófia Gombár remarks,

the publication of further withdrawal lists between 1952 and 1953 seems to flatly contradict the above-mentioned intentions. The three further volumes contained approximately 14,000 titles. [...] According to the preface, the books destined to be discarded were aesthetically worthless, obsolete and of inferior quality, underserving of being read by the Hungarian working people, who were now on the road to cultural development[.] (272)

While discarding these 'outdated books' – as the title of the volumes called them – in an act of arrogant superiority, the Party also wished to directly dictate what people should read. The so-called *Szabad Nép* half-hour

was introduced in factories and firms, where all workers had to gather and discuss the editorial of the Party daily, *Szabad Nép*. The Writers' League was reorganised, most bourgeois writers silenced and a clique of rather second-rate Socialist Realist authors openly supported. The regime severed almost all contact with the Western world, banning all new Western-European literature from the Hungarian market. This Stalinist model of cultural control, however, never really brought about the results it was hoping to get. What clearly showed the unsustainability of this direct control was that the writers were among the first social groups to rebel against the Stalinist state after 1953, their criticism preparing the way for the revolution of 1956.

The year 1956 marks the end of an era and a turning point in the more than forty years of Hungarian state Socialism, since after the failure of the revolution, two conclusions had to be drawn: first, that the regime could not return to the Stalinist doctrines of the 1950s, if it did not want to risk another uprising, and second, that with the Soviet forces 'temporarily' located in Hungary, no democratic changes were possible in the foreseeable future. Thus people were resigned to live *within* the boundaries of the Socialist state, and János Kádár, the new party leader whose rule was ensured by the Russian tanks stationed in Hungary, made it easier for them. Drawing a lesson from the downfall of his Stalinist predecessors, Kádár pointedly depoliticised the everyday life of Hungarians, and created, with the help of billions of European loans, a false sense of well-being in the country, which, after the starvation and hardships of the 1950s, was warmly embraced by most. In exchange for these new, higher standards of living – which were still ridiculously low compared to Western examples – the Kádár-regime expected its citizens to accept an artificially reduced and strongly controlled public sphere where explicit criticism was forbidden and potential political comments could only be sounded in centrally prescribed forms. If Hungarians wanted to live in relatively decent conditions they had to become politically inert – this was the Faustian deal the Kádár-regime offered its people.

Political criticism eluded all public forums. No one talked openly about the imprisonments and executions after 1956, the permanent presence of the Red Army in Hungary, or the growing economic problems of the 1970s. The stability of public life relied on the double nature of pseudo-important issues pronounced openly and of problems only vaguely hinted at. This was the guarantee that held up the status quo and made the regime able to sustain itself.

This duplicity saturated all levels of cultural politics, and book publishing was no exception. What it first and foremost meant was that uniquely

among most Central-European countries, Hungary did not have a central censorship office. Instead of direct censorship the Kádár-regime developed a multi-level system, in which it expected the members on all levels to self-censor themselves. Through this regulatory system of many layers, and anticipating the self-censoring cooperation of its citizen, the authorities very rarely had to resort to the means of direct control. What I would like to argue here is that this arrangement basically relied on pre-reading the books in several degrees, ensuring that by the time they reached the reading public, they had been weeded of most dangerous material. Let us now turn to the details and see how the system worked on an everyday basis.

Contrary to the binary system of banned or supported of the Stalinist regime, the new regulations relied on the tri-partite value scale of banned, tolerated and supported, the middle being a non-prescribed, only vaguely defined category of works of art, which, although not openly Socialist were at least partly acceptable for the regime. This group changed incessantly, what was banned one day, could easily be published the next. No official guidelines were put down for what passed as tolerable, since the regime wished to keep everyone on their toes, guessing. There were certain general taboos that had to be avoided (anything that would offend the Soviet Union or any friendly Socialist countries, any criticism of the Party leadership, obscenity or vulgarity, or open description of sexual acts), but everything beyond these was up to the temporary judgment of the officials. Of course, to make a system like this work, one needed trustworthy employees on all levels.²

That is why in the autumn of 1957 the Party Committee of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party issued a ruling about book publishing, establishing that besides administrative and material decisions all other resolutions had to be political. The decree prescribed a guidance based on principles, suggesting that a new generation of editors should be trained, 'who will consistently censure anti-Marxist tendencies'. The aim was to create an arrangement which was building from the bottom upwards. These editors in the publishing houses (all of which were state owned, and had a specific profile: Európa was publishing world literature, Magvető and Szépirodalmi Hungarian literature, Móra children's literature, etc.) had to read all manuscripts and issue a reader's report, which in turn was submitted to the weekly publishers' meetings. The reports contained a brief summary, as well as an assessment of the author's importance and known political stance. Furthermore, they also needed to include a final judgment on the reader-editor's part, whether the manuscript was worthy for publishing, or not. Reading these reports it becomes obvious that this

is where self-censoring political criticism entered the reviewing process. Remarks usually include phrases like: neither ideologically, not artistically acceptable, or: does carry a literary value, but its political stance is unacceptable – clearly signifying that aesthetic and political evaluation went hand in hand. However, the question of editors is more complicated than to simply categorize them as censors.

Many of them were silenced intellectuals, several among them writers in their own right, whose work as an editor was seen as a proof of their loyalty. While it is very often the case that they dutifully obliged to the role they were given, once established as trustworthy consultants, they were frequently trying to push the boundaries offered by the regime, especially in the case of works of art they deemed important and of merit. We can therefore claim that had it not been for these pre-readers, several Hungarian and European classics would have never reached the reading public. To justify this with an example, let me quote here the fate of János Pilinszky's volume of poetry *On the Third Day* which was the first book to appear by the poet, who was silenced after 1947 for political reasons. Belonging to the group of bourgeois writers who came to be associated with the banned literary journal, *Újbold*, Pilinszky had been trying to get published, but was denied the opportunity several times, since the authorities deemed his poetry too pessimistic for a Socialist poet. Pilinszky, who is now firmly established in the Hungarian canon as one of the greatest poetic innovators of the post-war era, had several supporters among the editors, who, realising his talent, tried to tilt the authorities' favours towards him. It was them who suggested that he should change the original title of the book (*No Man's Land*) to something less pessimistic, as well as them who wrote flamingly enthusiastic reviews about how the volume would help Hungary's reputation as anti-fascist country, since it contained several poems detailing the horrors of the concentration camps. What finally turned the authorities around was the compromise, also suggested by the editors, which compelled the poet to write a few new works, which were optimistic in tone. The editors then arranged the poems in chronological order, with dates underneath each poem, and convinced the authorities that the upbeat tone of the last poems would suggest that the new Kádár-regime was a better place to live. Thus the volume was published in 1959, albeit in only 1,000 copies and with a special remark from the authorities requesting an ugly cover to dissuade people from buying it. This strategy, however, failed to produce the required effect – all copies were sold in a day, some going at 1,000 forints, instead of the store price of 10. (Domokos 85–96) The fate of Pilinszky's volume is just one from the many examples where the intervening of the editors was instrumental

in ensuring the publication of a book which later became fundamental in Hungarian literary history.

In politically dubious cases a second or 'inner' cycle of reading was ordered, until the Publishers' Directorate finally authorised the publishers' annual list of publications. The Directorate was generally known as the censor's office, but thanks to the reader system it rarely had to exercise its power to stop publications, especially since it also controlled the economic aspects of book publishing, which it could also use as a means of regulation. Since all echelons of editing were under state control, book publishing was absolutely detached from the workings of the market. The Directorate could thus enact certain rules through which it could artificially modify the movements of the market – book price (which were kept unnaturally low to encourage reading) were determined on the basis of a sheet-price system which prescribed that Soviet and Socialist literature was to be sold at the lowest prices, followed by friendly non-Socialist works, while pulp fiction, detective writing as other such 'easy readings' – which clashed ideologically with Socialist ideals were to be sold at almost double the price; furthermore, these works had an additional 'kitsch tax' imposed on them.

Finally, let us turn to the reading public, and to how the control on all levels affected their reading experiences. The rules first of all affected the structure of the books. Since all literature was considered to be political material, even tolerated works were not tolerated in their own right. In the form of prefaces or footnotes readers usually received 'guidelines' as to how to understand the contents of these books. With these precautions, however, several works from world literature got republished, since Socialism wanted to reclaim the classics as their own. Therefore, under the Kádár-regime, and especially in the 1970s the range of available classics was wider than ever before. Furthermore, since many of the silenced writers sought and found work in the publishing industry or as translators, the literary merit of these new editions was also unusually high. Adding to this was the fact that book prices were kept unnaturally low, while literary matters were centrally kept as part of the public discourse. These tendencies, coupled with the seeming liberalism of the carrot and stick methods of the regime all result in that there is a faint sense of nostalgia in Hungarian discussions about reading in the Kádár-regime.

Looking at the behind-the-scene mechanisms of the publishing industry, I wished to argue in this essay that the nostalgia is unjustified. The controlled censorship of the Kádár-regime's editorial systems reveals that there was no freedom when it came to reading. Therefore a special effort is needed now to research the editors' reports as well as the secret police's

archives, in order to obtain a clearer picture of how the private became public in Socialist Hungarian reading practices.

NOTES

¹ Number: 530/1945 ME.

² The description of the editorial system is based on: Bart 2000.

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