

# Practice of Soviet Censorship in the Press

## *The Case of Estonia*

EPP LAUK

Censorship has rightly been called “the knot that binds power and knowledge” (Jansen 1991). Throughout the history of mankind, powerholders have been keen on having control over the content and distribution of public information in a society. Authoritarian and totalitarian regimes of the 20th century have created the most complicated and all-embracing machineries of manipulation information and public opinion by using the mass media and censorship.

In the former Soviet Union, the mass media constituted a vital element of the Communist Party power mechanism, used as the most efficient means for developing and spreading the Communist ideology. According to Lenin, the most important function of the media in Soviet society was to “serve as an instrument of socialist construction” (*V. Lenin. The Tasks of the Soviet Power Next in Turn*). The media were used for creating an alternative reality, “an ideologically correct symbolic environment, filled with content designed to socialize the audience to the ideas and values of Communism /.../” (Jakubowicz 1995: 23). The media became a standard-setter, telling readers and listeners how to behave “properly” and say the “right” things.

In the hands of the ruling elite (*nomenclatura*) the media were also widely used for supporting its status quo and its activities. “This encompasses winning over people to the hegemonic ideology, mobilizing them in work and politics, and convincing them that the regime has great successes in its endeavors to better the lot of its citizens” (Novosel 1995: 14). Lenin’s doctrine of the party press as “not only a collective propagandist and a collective agitator, but also a collective organizer” served as a

corner stone for the concept of the Communist media in general.

The Soviet media were strictly supervised, regulated and controlled by the Communist Party and its apparatus. The control over the public word included not only the press and electronic media, but also all kinds of printed matter, film production, theatre and cinema performances, exhibitions, advertising etc. Moreover, the system of total control penetrated all spheres of the life in the Soviet Union. Official censorship on various levels became a necessary agent for the maintenance of the Soviet State and the Communist Party.

When discussing Soviet censorship in Estonia, I will focus on three aspects: the situation of the research on Soviet censorship, the structure and functioning of the censorship system and censorship as a means of sovietization of the Estonian press.

### Investigating Censorship

*Censorship* is a word used in two meanings: 1) control over the content and forms of the public information, and 2) the system executing this control.

While being a means of control, censorship is also a means of detailed regulation. For instance, when investigating Soviet censorship system, we find a complicated network of special instructions and institutions that limited access to information on the one hand, and restricted access to the distribution channels on the other. Ordinary people could not publish anything. Only certain institutions under strict control were entitled to publish. Underground publishing and a practice of the “double speak” can be seen as effects or reflections of such regulation (e.g., “samizdat” publications in Soviet Russia, Lithuania etc. See more: Høyer, Lauk, Vihalemm 1993; Sinyavsky 1980).

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*Department of Journalism, University of Tartu,  
Ülikooli 18-131, EE-50090 Tartu, epp\_1@ut.ee*

History knows two main types of censorship: the *preliminary* and *post-publishing censorship*, which are both preventive and restrictive by nature. As a mechanism of control, censorship can also be repressive: it can destroy literature, films, paintings etc. and persecute people who create and/or distribute what is forbidden by authorities.

In addition to having all the above-mentioned characteristics, Soviet censorship was also prescriptive, or “creative”, playing the role of the Orwellian “Ministry of Truth”.

Thus, censorship can be investigated as a repressive system of control and regulation with its specific functions, structure, instructions, methods, etc. On the other hand, the results and effects of the performance of this repressive system in a society should be studied. This path leads a researcher into several disciplines, such as history, social psychology, linguistics.

The study of censorship is an essential part of the project on the history of Estonian journalism, carried out by the Department of Journalism of Tartu University. This study includes four periods: the Tsarist censorship (from the first censorship law in 1804 until 1917), the regulations of the press in the Estonian Republic in the 1920s and 1930s, the Soviet and Nazi occupations in 1940–1944, and the Soviet period from 1944 until 1990.

In Estonia, research on Soviet censorship has become possible only recently, when censorship and Communist Party archives were opened for researchers. The situation, however, is not nearly as favourable as one might think. When the Red Army withdrew and German troops occupied Estonia in summer 1941, Soviet officials destroyed most of the documents dealing with the establishment and operation of the censorship system in Estonia in 1940.

In the post-war decades, censorship officials systematically destroyed documents and materials that bore witness to their everyday work: the exercise-books and work-diaries of censors, reports on the character and amount of “mistakes” made by periodical publications or book publishers, every kind of correspondence, orders and decrees concerning the staff of censors etc. For instance, in 1971, 186 files with documents were taken to the Tallinn paper factory and used as waste paper, in total 150 kilograms (Veskimägi 1996).

The documents (233 files) covering the years 1976 to 1990 were sent to the Chief Censorship Administration of the USSR in Moscow in autumn 1990 by the then head of the Estonian censorship administration. The Estonian State Archive officially requested the return of the files. In his letter

(No 10/1605-P, Jan. 7, 1993), the Head of the State Archive Service of the Russian Federation, R. G. Pihoja explained that in none of Russian state archives documents about receiving these files had been found. He had, however, found a document about the destruction of 101 files with secret documents of Estonian censorship authorities of the years from 1976 to 1990, which had arrived to the Chief Censorship Administration in Moscow by the end of 1990. These files were destroyed because they “did not have scientific or historical value”. Mr. Pihoja supposed also that the rest of the documents was “probably destroyed by the same reason”.

Even if these documents were not destroyed, access to them is more than problematic. In 1992, the Supreme Soviet of the Russian Federation passed a decree that imposed restrictions on the access to the documents of the censorship authorities, and decided that the documents that contained state secrets will never become available.

A researcher who studies Soviet censorship also meets another big problem: documents show only part of the activities of censors, and of the whole system. Censors, publishers, editors, journalists received a large number of orders, bans and instructions orally, usually by telephone, and these cases are not documented at all. Some rare facts of this kind can be found only in the memoirs of editors, journalists and authors (e.g., Hiedel 1995). The former high party and censorship officials are not willing to give interviews or to answer researchers’ questions. Many of them have signed the *commitment of keeping silence* which was obligatory to the censorship officials, but also to many high party and state officials.

Although the activities of censorship are only partly documented, and only a part of these documents is available today, it is still possible to reconstruct the mechanism of the Soviet censorship in Estonia and the principles of its operation. Some studies have been published about censorship on literature and in public libraries, and also about the destruction of banned books (Liivaku 1989, 1995; Lotman 1991, 1995; Veskimägi 1996). Peeter Maimik (1994, 1996) has published two articles about the censorship on the Estonian press. Within the framework of Estonian journalism history project, a publication of censorship documents found in the Estonian State Archive and its branch – the Estonian Communist Party Archive – is in preparation. These documents give a general picture of how the system of Soviet censorship was established in Estonia, how it operated and how it helped to destroy the independent Estonian press in 1940.

The materials also contain documents about the structure and staff of the censorship administration and changes in it, secret instructions to censors, annual reports to the Central Committee of the Communist Party, etc. Even some documents telling about the destruction of censorship materials have been found. Documents alone cannot entirely describe the functioning of the total machinery of Soviet censorship, which like cancer spread its metastases in the cultural and educational institutions, enterprises, organisations and even postal services. Study of the censorship system, combined with analysis of the texts published and broadcasts aired under the Communist regime, would more broadly disclose the nature of this political and social cancer.

### Historical Background

Estonia has enjoyed the freedoms of speech and the press for very short periods in her history. The first periodical publication in Estonian, *Lühhike õppetus/ Short Instruction* (1766) was not censored, but all later newspapers and magazines from the early 19th century onwards appeared under strict censorship and control of the state authorities. Only in 1918, for the first time in Estonian history, the Manifesto of Estonian Independence of February 24 declared the democratic freedoms, including the freedoms of speech and the press. In reality, however, the Estonian press could use these freedoms only after the abolition of the military censorship in spring 1920 until the constitutional crisis in 1933. The following decades brought changing political regimes with more or less strict censorship. The Soviet one was probably the most concealed, the most hypocritical and the most efficient in oppressing the public word.

Soviet censorship was first established in Estonia on Soviet occupation in 1940, was replaced by Nazi-German occupation during WW II, and was reinstated from 1944. Forcible sovietization of Estonian society began immediately after the Soviet take-over and was carried out with extreme brutality, especially during the Stalinist era from the end of WW II until 1956. Communist ideology and Soviet practice were in a sharp contradiction with Estonian history, cultural traditions and mentality. Construction of the positive paradigm of the Soviet reality was therefore largely accompanied with destruction of the 'enemy'. The most dangerous enemies of the new regime and its ideology appeared to be the collective historical memory of the nation

and nationalism. Soviet censorship in Estonia clearly served the objective of Russification and destruction of Estonian national culture. Among the mental and physical repressions carried out by the censorship authorities, the largest was the action of 'cleaning up' libraries and destroying millions of copies of printed matter. This started in the summer of 1940, and continued with changing intensity after the WW II, up till the early 1960s. All libraries (including private ones) and bookstores were emptied of so-called harmful literature, i.e. books and periodicals published in the independent Republic of Estonia (1918–1940). By the 1960s, more than 86 per cent of the books, and all the periodicals, issued in independent Estonia were included in the lists of prohibited literature. (Veskimägi 1996:309)

Annual reports of the censorship authorities show that in the first year of Soviet rule (1940–1941), over 200 000 copies of Estonian books had been destroyed. During the four years after the war (1944–1948), almost half a million copies of books and periodicals were burned, among them literature, published under the German occupation.

In 1947, special commissions of three persons (representatives of the censorship, CPE and the Communist youth organization) were formed for "cleaning up" school-libraries. Every second week they reported on the results of their "work" to the censorship administration. According to these reports, for five years they destroyed 25 000 books annually.

After the war and in the 1950s even lists of forbidden Soviet books appeared! These books were also destroyed. Again, a parallel with Orwellian Ministry of Truth can be drawn: when changes occurred in the Communist Party ideology, the lists of banned books and banned data were complemented with new names, historical events, topics and items that had been 're-evaluated' and declared dangerous and anti-soviet. Thus, it sometimes happened that 'heroes' became 'villains' and vice versa. For example, in a secret letter to the Secretary of the CPE Lentsman on Feb. 5, 1953, the Chief of the Censorship Office I. Kübar reported on the results of the control of 47 libraries of local Communist Party organisations. In these libraries, a number of banned books was found, most of them published after the WW II in Tallinn, Moscow or Leningrad, like A. Gratsheva. Soviet Woman Is a Full and Equal Citizen of the Soviet Union. (Tallinn 1946) N. Jakovlev. October Revolution and Its Place in the History of Our Homeland. (In Russian, Moscow 1947) N. Karotamm. Speech on the Occasion of the

30th Anniversary of the Great Socialist October Revolution. (Tallinn 1947)

Nobody knows exactly how many books were destroyed under Soviet rule. Estimated numbers range from ten million to twenty million. (Veskimägi 1996:307) Some copies of each printed item, however, were preserved in the special departments of certain libraries, and access to them was strictly restricted.

Institutionalized censorship always tries to hide itself: the words *censorship* and *censor* belong to the lists of prohibited data, and the freedoms of speech and the press are usually publicly declared.

Officially there was no censorship in the Soviet Union and its republics. The Constitution of the Estonian Soviet Socialist Republic guaranteed the freedoms of speech and the press to the citizens of Soviet Estonia, but only on the condition that these freedoms be used for “the consolidation and development of the socialist order” (Põhiseadus 1988: 15). If these freedoms were used in a way that might have been interpreted by authorities as harmful for the Soviet system agitation and propaganda, the penalty for the ‘crime’ was imprisonment from six months to seven years with or without deportation for a period of two to five years, or the deportation alone (Kriminaalkoodeks 1990: 77).

Censorship also had a political justification: as Socialism was the best social order in the history of mankind, it had numerous ‘enemies’ in- and outside the borders of the Socialist camp. These enemies were only waiting for a chance to attack and destroy Socialism and therefore, the Soviet people had to be watchful, and mistrust everything that was not officially approved.

The first time during the Soviet rule in Estonia that the word *censorship* was published in a newspaper was as late as in 1987.

In the course of the *perestroika* and *glasnost*, the Soviet censorship restrictions eased in the late 1980s, and finally, in October 1990, censorship in Estonia was officially abolished.

### Structure of the Soviet Censorship System

The Soviet censorship system included, in general, two big sectors: the Communist Party authorities and KGB, which constituted the “brain” of the system, and the state censorship administration, operating as an “executive hand”.

This structure can be outlined as follows:

1. The highest decision-making level:

- a) Secretary general of the Communist Party of the USSR, Politbureau of the CP of the USSR, the Agitation and Propaganda Department of the Central Committee of the CP in Moscow.

Respective local models were built up in a similar way, in Estonia as follows: Secretary general of the Communist Party of the Estonian SSR (CPE), the Politbureau of the Central Committee of the CPE, the Agitation and Propaganda Department of the Central Committee of the CPE;

- b) the KGB structures and its Fifth Department (until the late 1960s the Second Department). This department determined most of the topics and issues that were to be banned in publications, and the lists of names, roads, factories, educational establishments etc. that were not to be publicly mentioned. It also checked the manuscripts of scientists in research institutions (Veskimägi 1996: 329).

2. The executive, administrative level headed by the Chief Administration for the Protection of State Secrets in Print (from 1990 – in Press and in the Other Media) of the USSR. The institution was generally known by the abbreviation of its name in Russian – GLAVLIT.

Similar administrations existed in all Soviet Republics (like the Estonian Glavlit) and they were subordinated to the Chief Administration in Moscow. Glavlit had censors in all bigger centres of the country (in Estonia in all district towns), special officers in broadcasting and publishing organizations and in the postal services.

The censorship administration as a whole was subordinated to the Central Committee of the Communist Party and to the KGB at the all-Soviet level and at local levels. Organizationally Glavlit belonged to the system of the Council of Ministers, but it was only an economic relationship; Glavlit addressed its reports, letters and complaints to the Central Committee.

In addition, the responsibility for the practical censorship was also put on the State Publishing, Printing and Booktrade Committee and the State Television and Broadcasting Committee, which in turn were subordinated to the Central Committee of the CP.

The editors-in-chief of periodical publications and all publishers were accountable to and control-

led by the Propaganda Department, the local (city or district) party committee and Glavlit.

In practice, censorship was also exercised by other state institutions (ministries and their departments, local administrations, legal, cultural and educational institutions etc.).

I give here some examples picked up from the censorship archives to demonstrate how far total control went.

In a secret letter (9/2/1953) to the President of the Academy of Sciences of the Estonian SSR the chief of the Glavlit complained that control over storage and use of the foreign literature in the library of the AS was not strict enough. The library reports did not show who had borrowed foreign publications and how many times. The chief censor demanded introduction of proper control. In addition, books published in Chinese, Japanese and some other languages could not be controlled because controllers did not know these languages. Glavlit therefore ordered these uncontrolled foreign publications to be destroyed by the 1st of May 1953 as there could have been forbidden ones among them.<sup>1</sup>

In spring 1966, controllers from Glavlit found a “politically incorrect” text in the visitors’ book of the State Art Museum. The chief of the Glavlit included the entire text in his letter to the propaganda secretary of the CC of the CPE and underlined the following: “It is the time to drive the censors off from behind the windows of the artists’ studios and to admit that a piece of art is an individual creation and not a political poster made according to state standards”. The chief censor also reported that this page had been removed from the Art Museum’s visitors’ book.<sup>2</sup>

### **What to Allow and What to Forbid?**

Within the institutional setting, censorship had two functions. The first was to block the access to alternative information and eliminate from the public information everything that Soviet citizens were not allowed to know. As Van Dijk has demonstrated (Van Dijk 1993 and 1996), lack of alternative discourses contributes to adoption by the audience of models persuasively presented by the authorities through the mass media.

The other function was to control and ‘correct’ the content of public information in a way that would create the ‘right’ model of thinking and contribute to adoption of preferred constructions of reality.

A general principle of the Soviet censorship practice (as well as widely also of the everyday reality!) was: *what was not explicitly allowed was certainly forbidden*. However, only a limited circle of people were in the know of what exactly was allowed and what was forbidden. Concealment was largely used as an efficient means of intimidation in order to make people obedient to the regime.

Two big groups of secret censorship documents existed which determined what was allowed and what was not. A central document guiding the work of censors was the list of banned data (the latest issue of which *List of Data Banned in Publications, Radio and Television Programmes* was published in 1987 and consisted of 183 pages). It contained data which were considered to be military and state secrets and were available to a limited circle of accountable persons only for official use.

Certain topics and facts could never be mentioned publicly, such as big disasters with human losses, everything that concerned the armed forces, criminality and jails, and, of course, censorship itself. Forbidden topics and facts included the presence of the Soviet Army in Estonia, everything that could remind people of Estonian independence in the 1920s and 1930s, and the Soviet annexation in 1940. Ideological bans were not included in this list; they were determined by Party authorities depending on the political situation.

The *List* was regularly updated according to changes in official policy and ideology (e.g., the same facts, names, data etc. could be forbidden at one time and allowed at another time). Every time that a new edition of the *List* was brought into use, all copies of the old one were destroyed. That is why copies of the *List* are very rare today.

In addition to the list of banned data, lists of prohibited literature and authors existed (the latest was issued in Estonia in 1966). Circulars prohibiting certain single topics, names or data not included in the lists were issued by the higher authorities of the Communist Party, KGB and censorship, and these complete this documentation.

It was not, however, only state and military secrets or ideological and political taboos that were kept inaccessible to most of society. Every state institution, from ministries and governmental bodies to local municipalities, had secrets of its own, which were closed to the public. As Androunas points out, in most cases, information was classified to conceal inefficiency and misdeeds. All those secrets were designed to guarantee that in the mass media, the Soviet Union would appear to be a prosperous soci-

ety with popular leadership, an efficient economy, a high level of life, a low level of crime, flourishing culture, interethnic harmony, and so on. (Androunas 1993: 50)

The other group consisted of regulations and instructions of what the people were allowed to know and how it should have been publicly presented. The basic document of this kind was the *Regulations of Printing of Non-Secret Publications* (the latest issue in Estonian was in 1989). As it was defined in the *Regulations*, non-secret were considered “the publications which were not labelled as secret” (!). *Regulations* determined publishing and printing of all publicly accessible printed matter (including even timetables of public transport, confectionary wrapping, all kinds of tickets, post-cards, personal visiting cards etc.). All printing plants and other printing or multiplying or copying enterprises had to operate in accordance with the *Regulations*.

The rhetoric used in these *Regulations* and other instructions is a typical language of “anonymous, but ever-present authority” like Galasinski and Jaworski (1997) point out in their study of the language of the Polish censorship instructions. As they prove, impersonal forms and ‘we’ were used in the regulations to create a collegial body of ‘no face’, but having power. One of the consequences of that was “the assumption of a voice proclaiming the regulations as if they were natural law. In this sense, the censors in the Central Office appear as mouthpieces for some higher-order power, deity-like authority of an unspecified source” (Galasinski & Jaworski 1997:347).

A short description of the procedure of publishing and printing should serve as an example of how these regulations and control functioned in practice.

As the first step the manuscript had to be presented to Glavlit for censorship. Printing plants were not allowed to admit a manuscript for printing without censor’s imprint *Permitted for type-setting* and signature with the date and the conventional sign of the censor. This sign for Estonia was MB, followed by the personal number of censor.

In order to get *printing permission*, printing plants had to present the galley proofs to the censor once again after setting and proof-reading the text. The censor had to confirm that the galley proof was identical to the approved manuscript. To check this, another censor compared the galley proofs with the manuscript.

When the first copies of the publication were printed, it had to get the *permission for appearance*.

After that the whole edition could be printed. But before distribution the publications had also to pass post-publishing censorship.

When the printing was complete, advance copies were made and sent to the authorities (the Central Committee of the CP. of the republic (5 copies), the KGB, Glavlit, the Council of Ministers, the Central Committee of the Young Communists’ League, the Ministry of Defence etc.). The advance copies of all Estonian publications were sent also to the Central Committee of the CP of the USSR and the Glavlit office in Moscow. If within two or three days no objections arrived, *permission for distribution* was given (Veskimägi 1996).

Newspapers were not submitted to the same procedure. Manuscripts of the newspaper texts were censored by the editors-in-chief (in local papers since 1955) and by the head of the ‘party-life’ section in the national daily newspapers. Censors controlled the proofs and first printed copies of the newspapers, and gave permission for distribution. Newspapers were also censored after publication. According to the *Regulations* of 1987 the printing plants in Estonia had to send three copies of all magazines in Russian, five copies of the biggest Russian daily in Estonia (*Sovetskaja Estonija*), one copy of each Russian newspaper and magazine, three copies of each Estonian newspaper and one copy of Estonian magazines to different controlling institutions in Moscow. In total, the number of such institutions extended to over 20.

All material intended for publication abroad was controlled according to special instructions of Glavlit. Among the documents that the author had to sign to get permission for publication was a statement that the text did not contain any valuable or new data that could be used elsewhere. Such a paper even accompanied scientific articles to be published in international journals!

## Words and Meanings

Linguists and psychologists have proved how language, used in certain ways, contributes to the changes in people’s attitudes and to a deliberate adoption of preferred models of behaviour (e.g., Harré 1985, Van Dijk 1993, 1996). In her detailed analysis of the formation of totalitarian discourse in the speeches of Nicolae Ceausescu in Communist Romania, Ilie demonstrates how “the distorted image of social reality, which is encoded in recurring institutional linguistic structures produces deliber-

ate meaning violations which in turn contribute to gradually reshaping social reality through social norm violations". (Ilie 1998: 57)

Even before the Soviet occupation of Estonia in summer 1940, the authoritarian regime of the second half of the 1930s had started to restrict the freedoms of speech and the press. *The Press Law*, adopted in 1938, contained some regulations concerning the treatment of certain political topics, and of the President and Government. Little attempt was made, however, to control and change the use of language and journalistic traditions.

Establishment of Soviet power brought a very steep break in Estonian journalistic discourse. Newspapers were transmuted into the 'ideological weapons of the Communist Party' and their content and language usage had been changed accordingly. A new political vocabulary was introduced to create a picture of happy and beautiful Soviet society in the content of public texts, especially news media. The skilful ways of using linguistic means to picture an 'enemy of Socialist society', and to create hate towards this imaginary enemy, deserve special analysis.

In the following, I will give some examples of how the rhetoric of Soviet totalitarian discourse was built up in Estonian, and how censorship contributed to this process.

Creation of the Soviet political vocabulary goes back to the period of the October Revolution. Susiluoto (1990) describes creation of a glossary for the 'New Society' as a ritualization of the political language in the Soviet Union and draws parallels with religion. "By waging active war against religion Soviet ideology absorbed a number of qualities and characteristics of the opponent, Russian Orthodox Church. /-/ Communism, Plan, and the laws of history were among the sacred code words /-/" (Susiluoto 1990:73).

The political glossary was developed further during the 70 years of the existence of the Soviet Union and used for canonizing the public texts. Numerous dogmas and myths were created to consolidate the 'right' discourse. For example, the October Revolution as a beginning of a new era in the history of mankind, the working class as the most progressive class in a society, the Soviet Union as a stronghold of peace, etc. (see more: Päril-Lõhmus 1997). In addition, a network of pure historical fabrications and biased interpretations of historical facts were used for the same purpose. The interpretation of the World War II as the heroic Great Patriotic War serves as an example. Speaking about Estonia, the Soviet military take-over in summer 1940

was officially always treated as the Socialist Revolution of the Estonian working class.

This model of ideological guidance also contributed to the principle that "the mass media should be managed" and that "they should serve as a means of social management themselves" (Manaeu 1995:68).

Introduction of the Soviet ritualized political vocabulary into Estonian raised its own problems. Estonian civil society, with its long traditions of civil law, variety of associations, private initiative, and individualistic values, was and is very different from the Russian one "with its long history of village communities, authoritarian home rule (*domostroi*) and correspondent governmental structure emphasizing orders". (Susiluoto 1990:76). A number of new words describing Soviet society were simply transferred from Russian to Estonian: *kolhoos* (collective farm), *sovhoos* (state farm), *kosmonaut* (space-man), *partorg* (party secretary), etc. Problems sometimes arose with translation of words from Russian into Estonian. A very important word in the Soviet political vocabulary was *tovarishch* (comrade), which was translated as *seltsimees*, but in Estonian language this can mostly be applied to a man. An attempt to find a feminine equivalent led to creation of the word *seltsinaine*, which in turn, has a connotation of prostitute. Thus, *seltsimees* was taken into use for both, men and women.

The political glossary also contained its code of conduct of whom to speak to, and with which words and expressions (Susiluoto 1990:74). It often determined how to interpret words, and in what context or connection they should be used. Certain words and expressions were given either positive or negative connotation and had to be used only in the way prescribed. For example, *proletariat*, *revolution*, *communism*, *socialism*, *party* were only used in the positive meaning, the words like *nationalistic*, *nation*, *bourgeois*, *capitalist* always had negative connotation. In connection with the secret decree of Russification, issued by the Council of Ministers of the USSR on Oct. 13, 1978, all words with a national connotation had to be removed from use. Thus, the word Estonia could not be used to mean the country or nation without adding the *Soviet Socialist*. Finally, the word *Estonia* in the meaning of the country was replaced with the *Republic* (written with a capital R). It was also impossible to mention together the three colours: blue, black and white, because these were the colours of the flag of independent Estonia.

The word *kodumaa* (homeland) did not mean in official language Estonia, but the Soviet Union as a whole. This shift of the meaning was deliberately

introduced after the end of WW II. Sometimes this kind of violation of meanings and connotations led to quite strange results, as the following example from a local newspaper demonstrates. “During the fourth Five-Year Plan period, our homeland goes towards a happy future”. (‘Our homeland’ here means Estonia within the Soviet Union as the Five-Year Plan was enacted in the Soviet Union as a whole. However, in the following description ‘our home country’ cannot be interpreted in the same way, but ‘our farmers’ in the last sentence refers again to Estonian farmers).

In our home country, which extends from the cold North to the warm and beautiful South, every kind of crop can be cultivated. In the Northern areas barley, oats and rye grow, in the Southern areas one can see the fields of wheat, and in the sub-tropical Caucasus, gardens of citrus and vineyards. /–/ Today, it has become possible for our farmers to grow and sell their crop, and this inspires our farmers to work better than before. (Varblane 1946).

Throughout the Soviet period, Estonian schoolchildren began their first lesson of Estonian history with reading in their text-book: “Our homeland is the Soviet Union and her capital is Moscow”.

Since *kodumaa* (homeland) lost its nationalist shade of meaning, Estonians used *isamaa* (fatherland) instead, but this was, of course, ideologically incorrect and not approved in official usage.

Even the nationalist connotation of the words was often skilfully turned into an appropriate meaning. For example, *Estonian intelligentsia* was used only for speaking about the Soviet-time ‘progressive’ intelligentsia. The equivalent in the pre-war independent Estonia was labelled as *petty-bourgeois intellectuals*.

Linguistic manipulation was also skilfully exercised by using ‘our’ – ‘the others’ confrontation. The diversity of ways how this was done, deserves a special research. Hereby, I would claim that this confrontation was used not only for formation negative attitudes towards ‘them’, ‘the strangers’. Quite frequently, the ‘our – they’ contrast was used as a comparison in order to emphasize how good ‘our’ life is and how bad ‘theirs’ is. When this was made, usually ‘they’, the ‘others’, were even not mentioned, but the context clearly indicated who they were: the working people in the capitalist countries. For example: “Our scientists, artists and other creative people have the best working conditions”. (Rahva Hääl: 1945) “Our Soviet people are happy that they live in a country without capitalists, landlords, exploiters. They do not experience unemploy-

ment or social crises. Our people are sure of their happy future”. (Nugis 1946)

A format of unquestionable manifestations was also continually used for persuasion, especially in the 1950s. Statements like “intellectual giants Marx and Lenin”, “Communism, the only progressive world-view”, “the friendship of the Russian and Estonian nations as the safest guarantee for our (Estonians’ – E.L.) development” were used like axioms that never needed proof.

In the development and use of the Soviet ideological discourse in Estonian language and media, three general stages can be distinguished.

1. Adaptation and introduction of the new political vocabulary and rhetoric in 1940 and from 1944 to the late 1950s.
2. Emergence and development of an alternative, formally apolitical discourse, used alongside the ideological one. In the 1960s, a new generation of journalists, publicists and authors challenged the constraints of the official ideology, and started to use metaphorical language, allegories and allusions.

Furthermore, an intentionally cultivated stylized language became a definite way of expressing resistance to the ideological oppression (see more: Høyer, Lauk and Vihalemm 1993). After the 1950s, fewer standards were imposed by authorities concerning form of texts. An elaborate system of legal device was developed and used when writing or speaking about ‘sensitive’ or forbidden issues. Especially in cultural publications, parody and other literary forms of multiple meaning were used, where it was next to impossible to put one’s finger on anything that could be interpreted as impermissible. The message, however, could easily be ‘picked up’ between the lines. The period was also characterized by an inner development of broadcast forms, as Päril-Lõhmus (1997) points out. The more complicated radio genres became, the more difficult it became for controllers to catch the ‘violations’ of written and unwritten prescriptions.

Organizationally, the function of acting as censors was put on the editors of publications and broadcasts. They were provided with lists of prohibited data and other instructions, and had to keep an eye on the ‘right’ ideological line of their publications. Censors of Glavlit, in fact, controlled the work of editors and made final decisions on permitting publication. They communicated with authors only through the editors.

Numerous complaints from Glavlit to the Central Committee of CPE during 1960s and 1970s demonstrate that the editors often used this position for passing texts that contained forbidden items. Sometimes they succeeded, sometimes not, and got punished.

3. In the late 1980s, when the control and ideological oppression eased, it became unnecessary to hide the message between lines. In the course of deritualization of political language (Susiluoto 1990), words gradually recovered their original meanings.

### 'Ministry of Truth' in Action

As said above, Glavlit acted as practical censor mostly during the period of introduction of Soviet discourse into Estonian political language. This was the time of strict regulation of both content and form of texts. Later on, especially since the late 1960s, censorship concentrated more attention to the content, trying to disclose ideological 'mistakes'.

Corrections made by censors in the manuscripts fall in general into two:

- 1) those based on the censorship instructions and regulations, and
- 2) so-called political corrections based on the ideological line of the Communist Party.

In the reports of Glavlit to the Central Committee of the CP, following classification of the first type is presented: corrections dealing with a) military secrets, b) state secrets and c) economic secrets. In 1948, Glavlit reported about 282 corrections during three months (Sept.-Nov.), 31 of them concerning military secrets, 115 state and economic secrets. For example, a censor was punished for passing an economic secret – permitting publication of a news item about building the Tallinn-Leningrad road.<sup>3</sup> In January 1949, 66 corrections were made, which included 11 military secrets. For example, censor removed from *Õhtuleht* (Evening Paper) an item about a performance of Leningrad Opera Theatre in Tartu, in the Officers' Club. The Officers' Club in Tartu indicated the presence of the Soviet Army in Estonia which was a military secret.<sup>4</sup>

The following is an example of a state secret. In his circular (19/5/1951) to the local censors the chief of the Estonian Glavlit called their attention to insufficient control over newsletters of machine and tractor hiring stations. The newsletters had pub-

lished entire lists of names of tractor drivers who participated in the 'socialist labour competition'. The circular explained that as there were two drivers for every tractor, these lists made it possible to find out the number of tractors in Estonia in general, which was a state secret.<sup>5</sup>

The number of corrections of this type gradually decreased after editors themselves were made responsible for removing these mistakes. The amount of complaints over ideological mistakes, in turn, increased.

Ideological-political corrections demonstrate the best the ways of safeguarding the 'best Soviet reality' and concern of the system for the 'right' thinking of citizens. On the other hand, they give evidence of the editors' attempts to step over the permitted limits.

Everything that could undermine the picture of happy and safe Soviet society or the belief in superiority of the Soviet system over capitalism was considered absolutely inadmissible. Therefore, all facts of lack of goods or services were to be removed from the public texts. Watchfulness of controllers often went to extremities and acquired even comic features.

In a secret complaint (13/5/1968) to the propaganda secretary of the Central Committee of the CPE about shortages in the ideological line of the youth magazine *Noorus* (The Youth) the chief of Glavlit gave some examples of the mistakes made by *Noorus*.

It was mentioned in a short story, prepared for publishing in *Noorus*: "The church was crammed with people /-/. They were dressed in Italian, Belgian, Dutch and nylon coats and jackets." As the chief censor explained, the text indicated that the interest of the people in services was so big that churches in Estonia were overcrowded. In addition, it led to the conclusion that the Soviet Union did not produce coats and jackets, or that the Soviet ones were not good enough to use. As the letter also says, after having been called to the 'consultation' to the Central Committee, the editor corrected these mistakes.<sup>6</sup>

This example also indicates that it was not possible to criticize the key- institutions of the system or the system as a whole. Nevertheless, disclosure of the cases of bad work of single people or lower rank institutions was allowed and even recommended. Such criticism was "pointed at particular or concrete "deviations" in the system /-/ with the intent to improve the functioning of the system as a whole". (Novosel 1995:14). For example, in autumn 1973, two articles were removed from the satirical

journal *Pikker* (Lightning) because they criticized the planned economy as such, but not single shortages or bad discipline of workers, which hindered fulfilling the state economic plans.<sup>7</sup> As Novosel also points out, “under certain conditions, the usual factor – in concreto criticism – characterized by being oriented toward the individual “deviant” cases /–/ transforms itself into general criticism of the ideology and the system”. (Novosel 1995:15) This phenomenon can be detected in the media of the most of former Communist countries during the last decade of the regime.

A case from 1946, concerning a local newspaper of Valga county, deserves special attention. This is an excellent example of hidden opposition and writing between lines, which was extremely rare in the period of Stalinism, but later gradually spread quite largely in Estonian journalism, especially in cultural publications.

In connection with the announcement in the Soviet Union of the fourth Five-Year Plan period in 1946, newspaper *Valgamaalane* (The Native of Valga) published an article with a future vision about Valga city in five years time, in 1950.

The food coupons and shortage of goods will be forgotten. There will be an abundance of all kinds of goods in the shops. The rows of the ‘trade-women’, trying to sell second-hand stuff on the market-places, will have vanished. The quality of bread will have improved, and the people will speak jokingly about the year 1946, when one could often find pieces of straw, rats and rat-tails in the bread. /–/ The brewery in Valga will have enough bottles and every consumer will be able to get refreshments at any time. /–/ Local industry will produce several kinds of furniture, there will be no lack of raw materials anymore. /–/ The fourth Five-Year Plan will lead us closer to our happy future, to Communism. (Tamm 1946)

The article was passed by pre-publishing censorship. The case, however, was mentioned as a big political mistake afterwards, in the report of the controllers from Moscow, and was one of the reasons of dismissing the then chief of the Estonian Glavlit.<sup>8</sup>

Furthermore, some months later the same paper published an article about the miserable life of the working people in the capitalist countries after the WW II. Describing the situation in Greece, it was said:

Although the shops are full of goods, the working people in Greece live in need. Many of the workers and farmers are starving. The quality of bread is decreasing. The people must eat the bread which contains maize and soya. (Nugis 1946)

Censors always interfered when the ‘holiness’ of the ‘great leaders’ Lenin and Stalin was in danger. In a special secret report of Glavlit to the Central Committee of CPE, a very ‘serious’ political mistake, passed by pre-censorship, was described.

During the People’s Court election campaign in February 1949, a censor did not notice that there was a misprint in Stalin’s name in one of the leaflets. After printing, the entire issue of 500 copies was confiscated from the printing plant and destroyed.<sup>9</sup>

A serious error was made by censorship in 1973, where Lenin’s portrait was printed on the back cover of the youth magazine *Noorus*.<sup>10</sup>

All facts and interpretations that could be labelled anti-Soviet were also carefully removed.

Everything connected with Estonian émigrés and their activities was considered especially dangerous to the Soviet regime. It was allowed to speak about them only negatively or not at all.

In a secret letter to the propaganda secretary of CPE in 1973, the chief of Glavlit complained of cases where editors of publications had passed texts with references to the émigrés’ works, even citing them as objective sources! In the *Transactions of the Academy of Sciences* a study on handicraftsmen in Tallinn in the 17th century was published. The author mentioned in his article, and evaluated highly, an analogous study of an Estonian historian in Sweden. The high censorship officer blamed the editor for political short-sightedness.<sup>11</sup>

In the reports about confiscation of printed matter, sent to Estonia by mail, the most frequently mentioned reason of confiscation was the anti-Soviet nature of foreign publications. Especially keen eye was kept on Estonian émigré publications that were rightly considered the most anti-Soviet. In the 1970s, when the ‘iron curtain’ gradually became more transparent, the flow of this kind of printed matter grew remarkably. In a secret letter from Glavlit to the Central Committee in 1972, some data about the confiscated literature were presented. For example, in 1970, 4 196 copies of various émigrés’ publications were sent to Estonia. 743 of them were confiscated as anti-Communist and anti-Soviet. By 1971, the total number had been increased to 6 163, and 1 261 copies had been confiscated. “These are mainly materials that propagate hostile bourgeois-nationalist and anti-Soviet ideology. It is therefore, necessary to strengthen the control over incoming printed matter”, the letter says.<sup>12</sup>

Positive mention of the Estonian independent republic could also be treated as anti-Soviet attitude. According to the official interpretation, the years of

independence – the 1920s and 1930s – were a time of ‘bourgeois-fascist order’. Independent Estonia’s Government was named a ‘gang of reactionary powerholders’. An explanation to a correction mentioned in a circular of Glavlit in 1948, was: “There was no alternative for the workers in bourgeois Estonia than forced work in the interests of capitalists”.<sup>13</sup>

German occupation during the WW II was also a dangerous topic. In 1947, 10 200 copies of the calendar for the year 1948 were printed in a Tallinn printing plant. After-publishing control discovered that the publishers had used the format of a calendar issued during German occupation in 1944. “In the calendar the weeks begin with Sunday and not with Monday as it is in the Soviet calendars. The Soviet holidays are absent. /–/ Investigation has started to find the guilty persons”, says an ‘entirely secret’ letter in Russian from the Minister of Security to the Central Committee of CPE.<sup>14</sup> A number of complaints throughout the period of Soviet censorship concern the references to the literature published under German occupation.

The examples of documents and corrections, given above, by no means cover all ideological taboos, dos and don’ts that were used to strengthen the power of the Communist Party. Nevertheless, they demonstrate clearly how closely the censorship and Party authorities co-operated. Further study of these documents should give a more detailed picture of the changing censorship practice throughout the different periods of the Soviet rule in Estonia.

## Conclusions

Censorship was used as a means of strengthening of Soviet power in Estonia for almost half a century. The institution of censorship was strictly concealed, but the results of its activities largely influenced the form and content of the public word. It is only since

1990, when censorship was abolished, that researchers got free access to state and Party archives where most of the censorship documents are stored.

Although not all the documents of the Estonian censorship authorities are available in Estonia today, it has been possible to get a picture of the structure of the system and of basic documents that guided the censors’ work. Archives also disclose the total and repressive nature of Soviet censorship, and changes in the means of control in different years.

The documents also reflect to some extent how Soviet ideological discourse was adapted to and developed in the Estonian language and media. Censors were keen to find ideological ‘mistakes’, and to make sure that the ‘right’ facts and interpretations would be published. In the initial period of the Soviet censorship the censors themselves were busy with correcting texts, but from 1955 onwards the task of practising pre-censorship was laid on editors. Many of them, however, contributed to creation of an alternative, seemingly apolitical discourse, which used ideologically ‘right’ phraseology for conveying a different meaning between the lines.

Documents in archives, however, cannot give the complete picture of how the Soviet power discourse was created, developed and perpetuated in the Estonian public word. A large number of orders and instructions were given to editors and censors personally, often by telephone, and these cases have never been fixed in documents.

Censorship archives contain neither manuscripts nor proofs with censors’ corrections. Since the texts were censored and edited before they were presented for control to Glavlit, the manuscripts stayed on the tables of editors and were usually thrown away. It is our good fortune that the archives of Estonian Radio have preserved the original texts of the broadcasts with corrections of editors-censors; study of them has started.

## Notes

1. Nikolai Karotamm (1901-1960) was the First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Estonia from 1944 to 1950.
2. Glavliti ülema I. Kübara salajane venekeelne kiri EKP KK sekretärile sm. Lentsmanile 5. veebr. 1953. ERA Filiaal, f. 1, nim. 126, sü. 22, l. 18-19. (Secret letter of the Chief of the Glavlit I. Kübar to the secretary of the CC CPE Lentsman, Feb. 5, 1953. (In

Russian). Branch of the Estonian State Archive (ERA), F. 1, file 126, 22, pp. 18-19.)

3. Glavliti ülema I. Kübara salajane kiri Teaduste Akadeemia presidendile Eichfeldile 9. veebr. 1953. ERA Filiaal, f. 1, nim. 126, sü. 22, l. 24-26. (Secret letter of the Chief of the Glavlit I. Kübar to the President of the Academy of Sciences J. Eichfeld on Feb. 9, 1953. Branch of the Estonian State Archive (ERA), F. 1, file 126, 22, pp. 24-26.)

4. Glavliti ülema A. Adamsi salajane kiri EKP KK (ideoloogia)sekretärile L. Lentsmanile 23. maist 1966. ERA, Fond R-17, nim. 3, sü 62, l. 3. (Secret letter of the chief of the Glavlit A. Adams to the ideology secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Estonian SSR (CPE) L. Lentsman on May 23, 1966. ERA, F. R-17, file 3, 62, p. 3.)
5. ENSV Kirjandus- ja Kirjastusajade Peavalitsuse salajane informatsioonikiri nr. 3, 30. 12. 1948; ERA filiaal, R-17, nim. 3, sü 17, l. 32-35. (Secret circular of the Chief Office of Literature and Publishing Affairs of the Estonian SSR (Glavlit). No 3, Dec. 30, 1948. Branch of ERA, F. R-17, file 3, 17, pp. 32-35.)
6. ENSV Kirjandus- ja Kirjastusajade Peavalitsuse informatsioon EK(b)P KK Propaganda- ja agitatsiooniosakonnale 8. veebr. 1949. ERA Filiaal, R-17, nim. 3, sü 11, l. 1-4. (Information of the Glavlit of the Estonian SSR to the Department of Propaganda and Agitation of the Central Committee of the CPE on Feb. 8, 1949. Branch of ERA, F.R-17, file 3, 11, pp. 1-4.)
7. ENSV Kirjandus- ja Kirjastusajade Peavalitsuse ülema I. Kübara salajane ringkiri nr. 3 'Kõigile Eesti NSV Kirjandus- ja Kirjastusajade Peavalitsuse rajoonide volinikele'. ERA Filiaal, F. R-17, nim. 3, sü 11, l. 13. (Secret circular of the Chief of the Glavlit of the Estonian SSR I. Kübar No 3 'To all the regional representatives of the Glavlit of the Estonian SSR'. Branch of ERA, F. R-17, file 3, 11, p. 13.)
8. Eesti NSV Ministrite Nõukogu juures asuva Trükistes Riiklike Saladuste Kaitse Peavalitsuse juhataja A. Adamsi salajane kiri EKP KK propaganda ja agitatsiooni osakonna juhatajale V. Rannele 13. mail 1968. ERA Filiaal, f. R-17, nim. 13, sü 62, l. 60-63. (Secret letter of the Chief of the Glavlit of the Estonian SSR A. Adams to the Head of the Department of Propaganda and Agitation of the CC of the CPE V. Ranne on May 13, 1968. Branch of ERA, F. R-17, file 13, 62, pp. 60-63.)
9. Peavalitsuse juhataja A. Adamsi salajane kiri EKP KK sekretärile V. Väljasele 15. oktoobrist 1973. ERA f. R-17, nim. 3, sü. 90, l. 8. (Secret letter of the Chief of the Glavlit A. Adams to the secretary of the CC of the CPE V. Väljas on Oct. 15, 1973. ERA, F. R-17, file 3, 90, p. 8.)
10. ERA Filiaal, f. 1, nim. 4, sü 38, l. 27. (Branch of ERA, F. 1, file 4, 38, p. 27).
11. ENSV Kirjandus- ja Kirjastusajade Peavalitsuse informatsioon EK(b)p KK Propaganda- ja agitatsiooniosakonnale 8. veebr. 1949. ERA Filiaal, R-17, nim. 3, sü 11, l. 1-4. (Information of the Glavlit of the Estonian SSR to the Department of Propaganda and Agitation of the Central Committee of the CPE on Feb. 8, 1949. Branch of ERA, F.R-17, file 3, 11, pp. 1-4.)
12. Peavalitsuse juhataja A. Adamsi salajane kiri EKP KK sekretärile V. Väljasele 15. oktoobrist 1973. ERA f. R-17, nim. 3, sü. 90, l. 9. (Secret letter of the Chief of the Glavlit A. Adams to the secretary of the CC of the CPE V. Väljas on Oct. 15, 1973. ERA, F.R-17, file 3, 90, p. 9.)
13. See footnote No 9.
14. 1972. a. 21. juunil EKP KK sekretärile V. Väljasele saadetud salajane venekeelne kiri Glavliti ülem A. Adams. ERA filiaal, R-17, nim. 3, sü 78, l. 37-39. (Secret letter in Russian, sent from the Chief of the Glavlit A. Adams to the secretary of the CC of the CPE V. Väljas on June 21, 1972. Branch of ERA, F. R-17, file 3, 78, pp. 37-39.)

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