

Censorship Measures in Bohemia in the Period 1547–1621

MARIKA STUHLÍKOVÁ

History of printing has always been naturally determined by political and cultural history of the country. A lot of ordinances related to the book printing were issued in the 16th century Bohemia. Regulations from Rome did not reach the Czech environment, although Rome was trying to control the printing press since its invention. Exceptional religious status of the Czech countries caused by the bifurcation of the nation into Catholics and Hussites and by the lack of strong central Church administration gave rise to a censorship measures based on its own needs and considerations. And only later the purposive Catholic reformation integrated the Czech book censorship into a broader political and cultural context.¹

Within the Czech countries the year 1547 may be designated as one of the greatest turning points, another one was the year 1621 (respectively 1624). In both cases the Habsburg dynasty accompanied own political victories by a number of censorship measures and prohibitions which caused stagnation or even termination of the existing printing workshops. However, a reality of life along with the economic interests of printers was often able to weaken or circumvent the official regulations. Nevertheless, the insufficiency of these regulations was reflected in their constant renewal. Even in 1547 the only permitted book printer Bartoloměj Netolický complained to the king that the persecuted printers had kept on printing, only with false or none year of publication. However, under appropriate conditions, the king was then forced to permit again more book printers in Bohemia.² As the printers were after the bans gradually re-authorized, they should be operating under the new conditions and publish approved repertoire. In few cases the companies were passed into hands of new typographical entrepreneurs with the desired ideological profile. In the first half of the 16th century almost the same number of printing companies was operating in Prague as in the rest of the country. Because of the Habsburg punishment of the cities, since the 1560s until 1620, Prague became the

¹ K. MALEC, *Censura tištěných knih v českých zemích v době předbělohorské*, Praha 1951, Ph.D. thesis, Archive of the Charles University 2976, p. 35.

² *Česká kniha v proměnách staletí*, M. BOHATCOVÁ (Ed.), Praha 1990, p. 211.

only major publishing centre in Bohemia. In provincial locations any printing activities continued or were newly created only sporadically.³

There were many particular bans in the 16th century. The first of the crucial ones was the so called St. James mandate issued in 1508 by the king Vladislav Jagellion against the Unity of the Brethren which meant the end of official fraternal book printing. However, as many bans after this, this did not intimidate the Brethren and they continued to print their books unofficially in Germany (Nuremberg) or with none or false invented place of print (Mons Oliveti, Mons Liliorum).⁴ On the 18th July 1526 a mandate was issued that ordered the first pre-censorship of the manuscript at the Catholic Consistory and then the additional censorship of printed book at the Prague mayor and aldermen. Overseeing the printers and booksellers was the task of two commissioners. Booksellers and vendors had to provide a list of books on sale to the Consistory, which reviewed them. Their judgement was passed to the aldermen who gave their permission to print the book.⁵

While interpreting the censorship rules of this period, the existence of two legitimate confessions in the country should always be considered. It would not certainly be accurate to claim that the pre-censorship in predominantly Utraquist Prague was conducted by the Catholic administrator. There is a great confusion caused by an improvisation in the censorship measures of this period. Both sides sought its own tools to reduce that part of the literature, which overthrew its authority, through the censorship. A common feature of these provisions which came from the Utraquist consistory, the City Council and the Utraquist Estates was the fact that they occurred without the express consent of the sovereign. Therefore the king was not committed to them in the future.⁶

³ Ibidem, p. 154.

⁴ F. MENČÍK, *Censura v Čechách a na Moravě*, in: *Věstník královské české společnosti nauk, třída filos.-histor.-jazykozpytná*, Praha 1888, p. 91. It should be mentioned, that the Unity of the Brethren, although illegal, performed the censorship of its own books. In the year 1557 the Assembly of the seniors in Píseň ordered, that no one could print the Brethren books and tracts without the permission of the authorized court. In 1574 the rules for foreign book were established. For details see A. GINDELY, *Dekrety Jednoty bratrské*, Praha 1865, decrets number 183, 202, 242.

⁵ K. BOROŮVÝ, *Jednání a dopisy konsistoře katolické i utrakvistické. Vol. I. Akta konsistoře utrakvistické*, Praha 1868, p. 19; MENČÍK, p. 92. See also *Kronika pražská Bartoše písaře*, in: J. V. ŠIMÁK (Ed.), *Fontes rerum bohemicarum* 6, Praha 1907, p. 73.

⁶ J. PÁNEK, *Cenzura v předbělohorské době*, in: *Studia Comeniana et Historica* 36/XVIII, 1988, p. 101.

For better control of the printers a new mandate was issued in August/September 1537. The book printing was limited to Prague and Pilsen where no printer was at that time. Prague printers were ordered to ask for permission both the Consistories before printing any book.⁷ Even imported books should not be sold without this permission.⁸ The rector of the Charles University was given the censorship authority two years later.⁹ The censorship in the religious matters therefore belonged to the rector and the Utraquist Consistory. How far the Catholic Consistory performed its authority above the Catholic writings cannot be said because of the lack of the sources. Writings of general content were likely to fall under the royal competences which were in Prague performed by the governor or persons responsible; in Moravia by the royal chamberlain. According to the later provision it is clear, that imported books should be assembled at Prague's Ungelt at the main toll where they were also checked.¹⁰

It is very probable that provincial printers continued to publish new books against this mandate. So in 1541 a regulation was issued according to which all the books should be provided by the place of publication and printers' name. Neither this regulation was often observed. The books were distributed with no or fake imprint ceaselessly. Moreover, as it could be assumed, these rules had no weight in issuing non-Catholic literature and pamphlets against the house of Habsburgs. Secret printers kept on operating and even a stronger trade ties grew with Moravia and Germany.¹¹

Again in March 1547 the king's will to punish the authors of improper literature was read at the Estates Assembly.¹² The importance of events in the Holy Roman Empire, which occurred after the battle of Mühldorf, was realized especially by the St. Vitus Chapter. On the 31st

⁷ Národní archiv v Praze (hereinafter NA), First department, RG. 16, f. 162.

⁸ MALEC, p. 49. The ban was probably observed at least for a while. The only known non-Prague printer was Alexandr Oujezdecký in Litomyšl, who worked also for the Unity of the Brethren. Another printer was detected out of Prague 5 years later in Litoměřice. P. VOIT, *Minulost pražského knihtisku*, Praha 1987, pp. 30–31; P. VOIT, *Moravské prameny z let 1567–1568 k dějinám bibliografie, cenzury, knihtisku a literární historie*, in: *Příspěvky ke Knihopisu 5*, Praha 1986, p. 25.

⁹ "VIII... *Tractatus, cantiones, nut libelli theologici citra consensum rectoris universitatis et consistorii ne aut in publicum edantur aut undecunque allati vendeatur.*" BOROVÝ, *Jednání I.*, p. 133. See also *Sněmy české od léta 1526 až po naši dobu I.*, Praha 1877, p. 467.

¹⁰ MENČÍK, p. 93.

¹¹ VOIT, *Minulost pražského knihtisku*, p. 31.

¹² *Sněmy české od léta 1526 až po naši dobu II.*, Praha 1880, p. 132. For the later provision see also *ibidem*, p. 314.

August the proposal and application how to improve the state of the Catholic Church in Bohemia was presented to the king. Two of the six points related to the censorship of printing and the book trade. The Chapter proposed that book print should be concentrated in Prague and Pilsen and that should be determined overseers without whose knowledge and oversight nothing could be printed. The Chapter also asked the king to ban the print of Czech and German books and tracts, which were made in Nuremberg or elsewhere and imported to Bohemia.¹³

On the 5th October the king restored the St. James mandate against the Czech Brethren.¹⁴ As a part of the punishment of the rebellious towns, on the 9th October King Ferdinand I. issued a patent which prohibited the residence and activity of all book printers in all towns except Prague.¹⁵ The next day the only printing rights in whole Bohemia were given to Bartoloměj Netolický, Prague Lesser Quarters' printer.¹⁶ This measure, unlike the 1528's ban in Austria and 1537's in Bohemia, became a part of the extensive punitive measures against the townsmen as a potential political force. In the autumn 1547 even one of the printers engaged in anti-Habsburg revolt, Jan Olivetský of Olivet, was executed.¹⁷

However even Netolický was constantly subjected to censorship and surveillance of both of Consistories and royal governor. His activities were facilitated by royal privileges for the sole printing of certain publications. These privileges were, however, in practice often violated, which could be supported by Netolický's numerous complaints and denunciations. Particular testimony is brought by Netolický's letter of complaint

¹³ "*Ut facultas et licentia imprimendi ad duo loca, ut pote Pragam et Pilznam ordinentur. Constituantur quoque superintendantes, sine quorum scitu et examine nihil in lucem prodeat, sub poena regiae Majestatis Vestra Camerae solvenda. Simul etiam regia Ms Va clementer conculere dignetur et prohibere, ne (ut frequenter contigit) Norimbergae val aliis in locis aut regionibus in vulgari boemico vel allemanico libelluli famosi et tractatuli imprimantur, vel impressi huc ad Bohemicam inferantur.*" K. BOROVÝ, *Jednání a dopisy konsistoře katolické i utrakvistické. Vol. II. Akta konsistoře katolické*, Praha 1869, p. 64.

¹⁴ Published in: S. z OTTERSODORFU, *O pokoření stavu městského léta 1547*, Praha 1950, pp. 127–129.

¹⁵ NA, RG. 35, f. 158; NA, SM B 56/7. Published by J. VOLF, *Dějiny novin v Čechách*, Praha 1930, pp. 20–22.

¹⁶ NA, RG. 35, f. 158–159, RG. 41, f. 82. For more details about Netolický see P. MAŠEK, *Význam Bartoloměje Netolického pro český knihtisk 16. století*, in: *Příspěvky ke Knihopisu 4*, Praha 1987.

¹⁷ B. NAVRÁTIL, *Glossy k dějinám moravského knihtisku*, in: *Časopis Matice moravské*, Vol. 26, 1902, pp. 55–56; M. BOHATCOVÁ, *Knihotiskařská linie Olivetských*, in: *Časopis Národního muzea*, Vol. 151, 1982, pp. 143–146.

written in the year 1551.¹⁸ Even though the writer was obviously biased, the atmosphere depicted to the King Ferdinand beared no sign of consolidation. Netolický complained about a boycott of his products, strong competition, false imprints and illegality, in which the book trade had been since 1547. He also pointed out the strong inflow of the protestant tracts. And he did not forget to complaint about the poor sales of “*Akta všech těch věcí...*”, a propagandist pro-Habsburg description of the events of the year 1547 he printed at the king’s order. The situation was like that because the king banned to print books, not to sell them. Almost all the printers became booksellers overnight and they continued to print the books secretly with false imprints.

To avoid breaking the regulations and the inappropriate effect on people of illegal prints, new king’s command was issued at the end of the year 1549. He commanded to both administrators and the governor of Prague Castle to inspect the libraries and similar places. In case they had found any books beeing sold without royal permission, they should have been confiscated and delivered to the royal chamber. Illegal printers and booksellers should have been deported from cities.¹⁹ The same year a ban of spreading “treacherous signs” was inscribed under the strict penalties into the constitution.²⁰ However, all the bans remained fruitless. Even though Netolický himself contributed to fulfilment of the royal commands and eagerly reported where and whom he caught with illegal books, it brought him only scorn and boycott. It was said in his complaint to the Emperor that bookbinders and booksellers did not want to sell his books, that a lot of foreign book could be bought in Prague and that even the women were involved in the book trade and that there was no journeyman, who wanted to work with him. When Netolický wanted to convict the illegal printers and sent inspection into their business, they did not allow them

¹⁸ NA, SM 56/4. For details see J. VOLF, *Knihtiskař Bartoloměj Netolický o tiskařských a knihkupeckých poměrech r. 1550*, in: *Naše kniha* 3/1922, p. 2. The wrong date was corrected in VOIT, *Moravské prameny*, p. 43; J. VOLF, *Bartoš (Bartoloměj) malíř-Bartoloměj písař radní-Bartoloměj Netolický, knihtiskař*, in: *Český časopis historický*, Vol. 41, No. 1, 1935, pp. 118–126.

¹⁹ NA, RG. 35, f. 240–241. See also Z. WINTER, *Život a učení na partikulárních školách v Čechách v XV. a XVI. století*, Praha 1901, p. 595; Z. WINTER, *Život církevní v Čechách*, Praha 1895–96, p. 117.

²⁰ J. JIREČEK, H. JIREČEK, *Codex juris Bohemici*, T. IV., Pars I., Sectio I., Praha 1882, pp. 390–391.

in.²¹ His situation was objectively even worsened by the fact that the royal chamber owed him salary for books they ordered.²²

When Ferdinand learned the bleakness of his regulation, he began to give (on request) the permission to print to the particular printers. Initially, the privileges were limited and enabled to print one particular book or a type of book. Later they became a permission to print in general. At the same time, it was also determined, how and when this particular book should be submitted to censorship. That apparently meant that censorship obligations had not been properly implemented and had to be constantly reminded of. Often a special censorship committee was established for a particular book.²³ Of the first ones were the privileges received in 1549 by Moravian printer Jan Gunther and Jan Kantor from Prague's Old Town.²⁴

The censorship of the Hebrew books, which probably had not been subjected to any censorship measures so far, was assigned to the newcomer Jesuit Order. At least the printing privileges granted in 1527 to Heřman the Jew and in 1545 to his son Moses had no censorship clauses.²⁵ The first known intervention was however in 1559.²⁶ Allocation of the censorship authority to the specific order was caused probably due a lack of Catholic priest who knew Hebrew. Hebrew was taught at the University, but it was most likely Ferdinand's wish to keep the censorship in the hands of the Catholics. Since then the censorship of the Hebrew books remained exclusively in the authority of the Jesuit Order and they lately performed it also with the consent of Archbishop of Prague. We have no remarks about the regular Jesuit's censorship of other books (except their own).²⁷

Not only the state interest in book printing led to issuing the printing privileges. Book printing was a free art. That is why there was no town or provincial guild statutes that would prevent the competition. In order

²¹ For more details see note 18.

²² NA, SM 56/2.

²³ K. KADLEC, *Počátky práva autorského*, in: *Časopis Musea království českého*, Vol. 67, 1893, pp. 112–113, 572–573.

²⁴ NA, RG. 35, f. 39. See also K. BERÁNEK, *Tiskařská privilegia České dvorské kanceláře ve Státním ústředním archivu v Praze*, in: *Strahovská knihovna, sborník Památníku národního písemnictví* 12/13, 1977/1978, pp. 75–76; NAVRÁTIL, p. 131.

²⁵ J. VOLF, *Z dějin židovských tiskáren v 17. století*, in: *Věstník královské české společnosti nauk* 1923, pp. 2–3.

²⁶ Q. KISCH, *Die Zensur jüdischer Bücher in Böhmen 1528–1848*, in: *Ročenka společnosti pro dějiny Židů v ČSR* 2/1930, p. 450.

²⁷ MENČÍK, pp. 97–98.

for better defence in existing competition, printers themselves requested from the sovereign the confirmation of either printing monopoly in the town or – and in that they were preceded by writers and publishers – to give them the exclusive right of publishing and printing of some books or newspapers, fearing that a popular book could be reprinted by anyone else.²⁸ Bohemian Court Chancellery therefore issued three types of *privilegia impressoria*:

1) The privilege to print a certain type of book, sometimes more accurately determined (generally the permission to print).

2) The privilege guaranteeing the printing monopoly to a printer, often in the form of reverse confirmation issued by the city council.

3) The privilege guaranteeing the applicant exclusive right to print certain publications for some time (usually 5–10 years) and for a specific country, with or without time and location constraints.²⁹

Printers rarely tried to achieve a privilege directly at the king himself. Before the year 1620 their requests attached with copies of older privileges and other documents were sent to Bohemian Court Chancellery or lately to Bohemian governor in Prague, in Moravia to the Moravian Tribunal and in Silesia to the High Authority Office. The authorized office proceeded the request with appropriate testimonial to the Bohemian Court Chancellery in Vienna.³⁰

Another variant of the state control over printers was setting up of already established censorship boards.³¹ The mentioned privileges, however, theoretically conducting to the state supervision over the book production and to protect printers against competition, failed to direct the printing properly. Less than ten years later after the Schmalkaldic war in Germany (1546–1547) King Ferdinand was obviously tired about the chaotic conditions in the home printing press; especially when the Chapter demanded again and again power interventions in this matter, in which they apparently had not got any practice yet.³²

After the re-establishment of Prague Archbishopate in 1561 the censorship powers were entrusted to the Archbishop of Prague in the fall

²⁸ BERÁNEK, p. 70.

²⁹ Ibidem, p. 70.

³⁰ Ibidem, p. 71.

³¹ VOIT, *Moravské prameny*, p. 29.

³² NA, RG. 150, f. 160. See also A. PODLAHA, *Nařízení a poručení daná kléru českému metropolitní kapitulou Pražskou r. 1555*, in: *Časopis katolického duchovenstva*, Vol. 46, 1905, pp. 717–721.

1562. In Moravia, all printed books were subjected to the governor of the Moravian Margrave and the Bishop of Olmutz.³³ In a letter from Trent addressed to the Emperor the Archbishop Brus asked to issue an edict to printers and booksellers not to print or sell anything without permission of the episcopal ordinary or in his absence of the Chapter.³⁴ The public was informed about that by the king's letter from September 1562.³⁵ Even previously the Archbishop asked the king for right to censorship. In reaction to this, in October 1562 a report on existing arrangements in this matter was written.³⁶ The censorship power was taken away from the governor of Prague Castle and administrator of the Utraquist Consistory and was given solely to the Catholic Church. However, it should be pointed out at this place that Archbishop Brus wanted to assign the censorship of the Utraquist literature to the Utraquist clergy.³⁷

In October 1562 Prague printers had already made a request to the Emperor to protect their privileges, since apparently wretched bookselling had been happening of which many of them were unjustly accused.³⁸ Their complaint about an illicit book trade was not an excuse. A year before this lively book import caused a new ban of book printing of Czech books in Nuremberg.³⁹ The bookbinders also asked for the confirmation of their guild rights and on the 4th October 1562 the Archbishop was asked for an advice. The same day, the Emperor issued the first printing privilege after the systemic change. Jan Jičínský was allowed to print anything what was approved by the Archbishop or a person determined by him.⁴⁰ According to this, he had a free hand in choosing his representatives.

Meanwhile, Antonín Brus was a member of a committee at the Council of Trent, which task was to create a list of *libri prohibiti*. The last committee meeting was held in December 1563 and its proposals were forwarded to the Pope, who then issued a list of approved books in March 1563 named *Dominici gregis custodiae*. Since then it is known as *Index*

³³ MAŠEK, pp. 15–18.

³⁴ S. STEINHERZ, *Briefe des Prager Erzbischofs Anton Brussa von Müglitz 1562–1563*, Praha 1907, p. 33.

³⁵ NA, RG. 65, f. 154, SÚA, SM B 56/3. Published by F. TISCHER, *Příspěvek k dějinám censure za arcibiskupa Antonína Brusa*, in: *Listy filologické* 32/1905, p. 261.

³⁶ NA, RG. 65, f. 164.

³⁷ BOROŮVÝ, *Jednání II*, pp. 384, 386.

³⁸ TISCHER, *Příspěvek*, pp. 261–262; VOLF, *Dějiny novin v Čechách*, pp. 24–27.

³⁹ NA, SM B 56/3.

⁴⁰ NA, RG. 65, f. 160.

libri prohibiti.⁴¹ In Bohemia, however, these new censorship measures were not introduced immediately, a fact that discontented the Pope and significantly complicated the efforts of the Catholic Church for centralization of the local censorship.⁴²

The situation remained the same. Even the current censorship laws were neglected. On the 17th June 1564 the Archduke Ferdinand considered it necessary to notify all three cities of Prague about the valid censorship responsibilities.⁴³ The same notification was previously included in the privilege granted in February 1564 to Jiří Melantrich to print the Bible.⁴⁴ The Archbishop himself emphasized his own rights, because he was told that books were sold without his permission, even the once that should be corrected.⁴⁵ Printing without permit and the import of books, particularly the Czech Bible printed in Nuremberg, did not cease even under the new regulation.

The Archbishop found out that consolidation might be made only in a patient and persuasive way. He was realizing the pressure of the Pope and the Roman Curia following the intention to introduce the Tridentine Index in Bohemia as soon as possible, so he was concerned at least about the issuance of such regulations that should apply in the whole country. All previous regulations created during the reign of Ferdinand I. were circumvented from the beginning and after years they lost their force entirely.⁴⁶ In situation in which there was no promulgation of the Tridentine decrees, at least the current censorship tactics should have been approved and their centralization in the hands of Catholic Church confirmed. So on the 13th March 1567 the Archbishop turned on the Emperor Maximilian II. to restore the censorship decree.⁴⁷ Maximilian complied the Archbishop's request and in April he re-issued the command not to print any Czech books, especially the Bibles, in Nuremberg.⁴⁸ It was explicitly expressed

⁴¹ *De libris prohibitis regulae decem*, Canones et decreta sacrosancti oecumeni concilii tridentini, Regensburg 1869, pp. 234–238.

⁴² K. BOROŮÝ, *Antonín Brus z Mohelnice*, Praha 1873, pp. 260–261.

⁴³ TISCHER, *Přispěvek*, pp. 263–264; BOROŮÝ, *Jednání II.*, p. 384.

⁴⁴ TISCHER, *Přispěvek*, pp. 262–263. Mind the wrong date on the page 252.

⁴⁵ TISCHER, *Přispěvek*, pp. 264–265; BOROŮÝ, *Jednání II.*, 385–386.

⁴⁶ NA, RG. 67, f. 38; TISCHER, pp. 264–265.

⁴⁷ NA, B 56/3; TISCHER, *Přispěvek*, p. 269.

⁴⁸ Previous ban of the book trade with Nuremberg was issued in 1561. NA, SM 56/3.

that this illicit book print had been breaking the freedom and privileges of the Czech Crown.⁴⁹

This command was followed by a list to Prague printers. All power of censorship should have been concentrated in the hands of the Archbishop of Prague since then.⁵⁰ Archbishop's request was finally settled by issuing an entirely new mandate which was adjusting not only the censorship order in Bohemia, but also the requirements of the book trade and the book press in general. This mandate, it has been a third similar mandate during the reign of Habsburgs, was issued on the 21st May 1567.⁵¹ Also in Moravia the censorship sharpened. During the year 1567 the mandate was issued there, which forbade printing and selling Czech books printed abroad. That was the evident analogue of the ban of the Czech books printed in Nuremberg. It was allowed to import books only in Latin and German and they should have been approved by the Bishop of Olmutz, who together with the governor of the Moravian Margrave also had to approve the books printed in Moravia.⁵²

Archival documents preserve especially the rare examples of the censorship violations. However, it is certain that there were many more. In this period, it is possible to draw attention to the affair of Prague *briefmahler* Michael Peterle. He printed the painted leaflets, predecessors of newspaper; each was describing different contemporary events. One of them depicted the execution of the Dutch count Egmond and evoked the response of non-Catholic public, who sympathized with the resistance of the Dutch estates against the Habsburg rule. An investigation of the guilty printer was ordered in August 1568.⁵³ The governor intervened and closed his printing office. However, in October Peterle received the permission to print again. The governor at the same time urged the Emperor to highlight that all printers should henceforth cease to print, paint or sell leaflets, which might affect the Habsburg dynasty or the electors, if it was not ex-

⁴⁹ The ties of the Czech book printing to Nuremberg and the other German towns are often underestimated. They were established by the Unity of the Brethren, illegal in the Kingdom of Bohemia. The Czech illegal book print abroad meant a serious danger for the king and Catholic Church. Many of the bans considered especially the Czech Bibles and tracts. VOIT, *Moravské prameny*, pp. 48–49.

⁵⁰ NA, SM B 56/3; TISCHER, *Příspěvek*, pp. 268–269.

⁵¹ NA, SM B 56/3; TISCHER, *Příspěvek*, pp. 266–267.

⁵² NAVRÁTIL, pp. 141–142.

⁵³ NA, SM B 56/3. See also J. VOLF, *Malované listy /rytiny/ o válce v Nizozemí*, in: *Zvon* 25/1925, p. 644.

pressly authorized by the Emperor.⁵⁴ Probably similar offences led to a renewal of the mandate from 1567, which occurred in May 1570.⁵⁵

Since even the renewed mandates were not observed and the books continued to be imported without permission and sold secretly,⁵⁶ the printing offices started to be searched and the books to be seized. Probably by the Catholic side it was reported that the book binder Tomáš Mitis had a large number of non-Catholic books in his shop in Carolinum. The Archbishop's agents searched the shop and a list of illegal books was created.⁵⁷ The founded books truly witnessed the flourishing trade with non-Catholic books. On 7th of February there was an order to carry out similar controls in the other bookstores and confiscated books should be handed to the Archbishop. Three volumes had been found at the bookbinder Mathias of St. Havel and twelve volumes at Jan Bogner's.⁵⁸ This obvious breaking of commands caused the immediate issuing of the new mandate designed to the Old Town burgomaster and the town concillors, in which they highlighted again the ban to import and sale Zwingli's and Calvin's books. Even the same day this decree was read in public to summoned printers at the Old Town's Hall.⁵⁹

Among the printers, there were also common conflicts over the piracy, which was rising more and more. So in 1581 Kristián Koldín z Koldína asked the Emperor for the privilege for the print of *City rules of the Kingdom of Bohemia*. The Emperor at the same time ordered the boards of Old and New Towns to inform all the printers of Prague about this privilege.⁶⁰ The existing censorship laws did not say who should submit the book to the censor, whether the author or the printer. However, the existing repressive procedures were clearly directed only against the printers.

⁵⁴ J. VOLF, *Die Beschlagnahme des Stiches „Enhauptung der Grafen Egmond und Horn“ in Prag in Jahre 1569*, Prager Presse 4/1924, N°18, p. 4.

⁵⁵ TISCHER, *Příspěvek*, pp. 270–271.

⁵⁶ J. PAŽOUT, *Jednání a dopisy konzistoře podobojí způsobou přijímajících...z let 1562–1570*, Praha 1906, p. 437.

⁵⁷ *AKTA léta 1571 v Praze v příčině zapovězených knih u knihkupců*, in: Časopis českého Musea, Vol. 7, 1833, p. 375.

⁵⁸ *AKTA léta*, pp. 378–379; WINTER, *Život církevní*, p. 153.

⁵⁹ *AKTA léta*, p. 380.

⁶⁰ NA, SM B 56/18.

The provision of the Czech Confession in 1575⁶¹ and the change in the person of sovereign, which occurred in October 1576, perhaps caused some doubts in the current censorship practice. So in January 1577 the king restored a decree, which renewed these regulations.⁶² He let know the Archbishop about this and ordered him to make controls in the Prague printer offices and the book stores.⁶³ The censorship measures were basically stabilized at this point and they worked with occasional marginal clashes (for example the deletion of the Hussite holidays of Jan Hus and Jerome from Prague from the calendars) despite changing the persons of nuncio or Archbishop basically the same way.

That the censorship still failed to control the letterpress as a whole was proved by the re-publication of current censorship measures in January 1594.⁶⁴ This decree also led to the reorganization of the newspaper production. The realization of the censorship was significantly hindered by a newly appearing large amount of the newspaper production. It was ordered that the newspapers should not be issued separately, but always as a summary once a month. Only four printers received the privilege to print the newspaper. First such monthly summary was published by Daniel Sedlčanský in September 1597.⁶⁵ However, even this regulation was violated. The new order did not last long and ceased to exist after four years when it returned into the state before the year 1596.

Archbishop's complaints to the Emperor about the Prague printers were abundant, but without much effect. He complained also about expenses, which the realization of censorship measures caused him and there was no convenient compensation for this situation. He suggested restoring the prohibition of printing the prohibited books and the violation should be punished by a penalty of 100 Hungarian Ducats in gold, a third of which an Archbishop would receive.⁶⁶

⁶¹ As a part of the Czech Confession, a new church order was created. It included also the censorship rules. For detail see F. HREJSA, *Dějiny křesťanství v Československu VI. Za krále Maxmiliána II. 1564–1576, (Česká konfese)*, Praha 1950.

⁶² NA, RG. 94, f. 101; TISCHER, *Příspěvek*, p. 376.

⁶³ NA, RG. 94, f. 115; TISCHER, *Příspěvek*, p. 377.

⁶⁴ NA, SM B 56/1; VOLF, *Dějiny novin v Čechách*, pp. 29–30.

⁶⁵ VOLF, *Dějiny novin v Čechách*, p. 30.

⁶⁶ F. TISCHER, *Bartoloměj Paprocký*, in: *Časopis musea království Českého*, Vol. 79, 1905, pp. 299–300.

In 1602, the St. James mandate against the Unity of the Brethren was renewed.⁶⁷ Surprisingly, the mandate did not include the prohibition of the book printing, although the same year the investigation of the print of postil from Martin Philadelfus Zámorský was launched. Although this postil was already on the list of prohibited books, it was printed in Leipzig and Dresden on the expenses of printers Jiří Jakubův Dačický and Daniel Otmar Sedlčanský. The printers were punished by imprisonment.⁶⁸ In 1602 the printer Sixt Palma Močidlanský was also particularly exemplary punished. He was once imprisoned in 1598. In 1602 he printed a song about John Hus, a song about the ignominious defeat of the imperial troops at the fort Kanyža (Kanizsa) and the parody against the Emperor's mandate, the Mandate of Jesus Christ. These prints could not be accepted by the official powers for the political and religious purposes. Močidlanský was arrested in August 1602 together with his colleague Oldřich Valda. Valda was released in December 1602, Močidlanský in March 1603 and they immediately had to leave Prague and within two weeks the kingdom.⁶⁹ The situation of Močidlanský had a deterrent effect on the other printers and no new printer was established in Prague in next two years.⁷⁰

The convenient situation was used by the Archbishop Berka of Dubá to declare on the synod, which was convened for the first time since the Hussite wars, the Tridentine resolutions. At the synod, there was also a debate about the censorship measures, because Roman *Index librorum prohibitorum* had not been declared yet in the kingdom, although it was certainly taken into consideration in practice.⁷¹ The Tridentine censorship rules were announced at the synod. A particular item had to be approved before printing by the Archbishop or his clerk. An approved copy, signed by the author, had to be sent to the Archbishop's archive. The vendors had to submit the books, or at least a list of them, to the Archbishop or his representative and the approval had to be proved by the signature on the list.

⁶⁷ *Sněmy české od léta 1526 až po naši dobu X.*, Praha 1900, pp. 335–337.

⁶⁸ A. ŠKARKA, *Ze zápasu nekatolického tisku s protireformací*, in: *Český časopis historický*, Vol. 42, 1936, pp. 318–319. The concepts of the decisions to release the printers can be found in NA, SM B 56/3. See also J. VOLF, *Kde a kým byla vytištěna Postilla Mat. Filadelfa Zámorského r. 1592*, in: *Časopis vlastenecké společnosti musea v Olomouci*, Vol. 35, 1924, pp. 86–87.

⁶⁹ For more details see ŠKARKA, pp. 1–55, 286–322, 484–520.

⁷⁰ Z. WINTER, *Řemeslnictvo a živnosti XVI. věku v Čechách: (1526–1620)*, Praha 1909, p. 304.

⁷¹ Even though the Index was published in Prague in 1596 and 1603, it had no legal force.

Unapproved books could not be sold or donated. The vendors, who could not show approved lists during the control, had to close their shops immediately.⁷² However, the implementation of rules in the full extension never happened.

On the 15th May 1608 all Prague printers were summoned, and they were told by the supreme chancellor that they were ordered under the threat of torture to present the permit to print from the Archbishop at the Bohemian Court Chancellery and only then they were allowed to print the books.⁷³ The Archbishop's censorship probably was not able enough to deduce all possible consequences of a number of prints with the political theme. Therefore the upper approvals seized the imperial authorities. These, standing in the middle of action, could evaluate the submitted manuscripts from the political point of view much better. Neither this command was apparently minded, because in the year 1608 we can find two other Emperor's decrees, which emphasized the current censorship measures and procedures and also named possible punishments for the rule breakers.⁷⁴

In 1609 at the Estates council a completely new type of censorship organization was adopted as a reaction to the new arrangements in the kingdom. Both sides, Catholics and Utraquist, could use their own or chosen printers freely, only without violating the other side, the Emperor or the Mandate of religion and the Comparison between both sides. The Catholic side should submit everything before printing to the king and the Archbishop, the Utraquist side to the defensors of the University. The vague formulation of the statement allowed possible interpretation as if only the religious books were subjected to the censorship. The Utraquist consistory along with the University professors should oversee the University publications. The autonomy of the University was under the supervision of defensors actually just on the paper. Soon, however, the censor-

⁷² *Decreta et constitutiones synodales circa libros prohibitaee lectionis extractae ex notis Synodi provincialis celebratae...anno 1605* are a part of the list of the prohibited books of the Archbishop Přichovský from a year 1772 – *Index Bohemicorum librorum prohibitorum et corrigendorum...S.R.I. Principis D.D. Antonii Petri archi-episcopi Pragensis jussu collectus, atque editus.*

⁷³ K. STLOUKAL, *Česká kancelář dvorská 1599–1608: Pokus z moderní diplomatiky*, Praha 1931, p. 39.

⁷⁴ J. VOLF, *Mandát císaře Rudolfa o paškviliích z r. 1608*, in: *Památky archeologické a místopisné*, Vol. 23, 1908–1909, pp. 361–362.

ship of the University press weakened and in 1612 professors agreed that since then each of them should be censor to himself.⁷⁵

On the 11th December 1617 it was forbidden to print books, songs and newspaper, which had not been previously submitted to the Town Hall and then to the Emperor or his governor and approved by them. It was also forbidden to sing songs and tell the news in the streets, as it was habitual practice.⁷⁶ That meant that all provisions of the year 1609 were already disregarded and the censorship was strengthened by the double state control. It is interesting, that in the regulation there was no mention about the religious censorship. With the growing opposition of the Protestant Estates, the censorship measures were likely to move rather on to the political field. Mainly Utraquist printers were subjected to the hard censorship supervision. So the protestant Estates, referring to the rights of 1609, complained that their printers were prevented to press, while Catholic printers always received the permission.⁷⁷

Archbishop Antonín Brus of Mohelnice was an appointed chairman of the Tridentine Church Assembly to draft a list of books banned in the Catholic countries. Neither he nor his successors succeeded to carry out this work successfully in Bohemia and Moravia, where only a partial restoration of the censorship measures took place. All the censorship measures issued for the Czech lands during the whole 16th century were based on the assumption that Catholic as well as the Utraquist literature had the legal position in the country. The final decision, however, always remained in the hands of the king and the proactive role was held in the later opinions also by the Jesuit Order. Only in the final years of the pre-White Mountain state, sharp reversal of the situation occurred as a result of anti-Habsburg uprising and for a short time publishing activities developed uncontrolled and unrestrained.⁷⁸ For this period, although we have not many messages, we can assume that the rules of 1609 were restored for the Utraquist printing press. That meant the subjection to the Utraquist Consistory and the University.

⁷⁵ Archives of the Charles University A 13b, f. 132. Z. WINTER, *Děje vysokých škol pražských od secessí cizích národů po dobu bitvy bělohorské (1409–1622)*, Praha 1897, pp. 94–98.

⁷⁶ NA, SM B 56/3.

⁷⁷ MENČÍK, p. 107.

⁷⁸ A significant difference and increase in the quantity of Czech book production can serve as a proof. For details see P. VOIT, *Encyklopedie knihy*, Praha 2008, p. 183; *Česká kniha*, p. 212.

Even from a brief view on the literary production of that time, it is clear, that the prevailing theme was the political situation. The political character of contemporary literature was probably also the reason that in January 1619, after the Estates upheaval, the censorship was removed from the relative political retreat at the Utraquist Consistory and it was subjected directly to the Estates directorium, the rebel's government.⁷⁹ The situation remained the same until the end of the rebellion. Frederick V. (in Bohemia Frederic I., Fridrich Falcký) Elector Palatine brought to Prague several new printers mainly of the German origin, but their work was essentially episodic. After the defeat of the revolt in 1621, those printers, who were actively involved in it, left into exile and their property was confiscated. Others had to choose between the voluntarily exile and conversion to Catholicism. Continuity with the previous period was maintained only by a small number of Catholic printers. This status was finally confirmed by the definite prohibition of non-Catholic printing in the year 1624.⁸⁰

The religious structuring of the society and the deep ideological differences between the sovereign and the Estates opposition created from the censorship measures a tool of the confessional struggles, in which the specific role was played by the preferred Church. However, the conflicts between the king and the Estates as well as the relations between followers of the different faiths were subjected to the considerable developmental transformations, which were necessarily reflected in the functional transformation of the censorship. The censorship measures therefore cannot be regarded as stable or continuously growing institutions, but as a dynamic phenomenon, the nature of which continuously varied between the ideal aims and the real possibilities. The second half of the 16th century also brought a beginning of the new political and economic rise of the Catholic Church, which could become one of the holders of the censorship. In the Habsburg monarchy, however, the Church was not an independent institution, but had grown into one of the pillars of the state power. Under such circumstances, the Church could not control the censorship entirely; it only controlled it on behalf of the sovereign. The Church as well as the sovereign enforced their ideas about censorship within the reasonable lim-

⁷⁹ J. PROKEŠ, *Protokol vyšlé korespondence kanceláře českých direktorů z let 1618 a 1619*, in: *Sborník archivu ministerstva vnitra*, Vol. 7, 1934, p. 84.

⁸⁰ VOIT, *Encyklopedie*, p. 155.

its and therefore their actions had the nature of compromise and improvisation and worked only transiently.⁸¹

In general, it is necessary to admit a relatively small range of the censorship measures in practice. Neither the sovereign nor the Church had executive body powerful enough to prevent effectively the illegal distribution of the books. If we try to follow the tools of censorship during this whole period, we can record the trend that corresponds to the involvement of the Catholic Church in the service of the Habsburg centralization and unification policy. While the religious institutions controlled primarily the content of publications, the secular authorities secured the executive powers in realizing the censorship measures. In the whole long 16th century, however, it was rather a short-term intervention that responded to the immediate situation and had not lasting effect.

Abstract

The article tries to record all important censorship measures issued in Bohemia before the battle at the White Mountain and to trace up the principles of current functioning of the censorship in practice. The censorship measures were mainly used as a tool in the struggle between the king and the Estates and rather responded to the immediate situation. Despite a large number of individual commands, the effect of them was more short-term and unproductive. The king's constant attempt of full control of the situation via the representative bodies represents the main line of the state censorship policy, which was at the end of the period supported by the Catholic Church. The conditions in the country were even more complicated by the fact of two legally existing religions and by the quickly spreading reformation.

Keywords

Czech Lands, Bohemia, Book Printing, Censorship, 16th and 17th Century, Mandate, Privilege, Religion

⁸¹ PÁNEK, *Cenzura*, pp. 98–100.

