

OSA Report

Lessons from the Cold War: Dissidents, émigrés and networks of information in *Index on Censorship* (1972-1991)

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Research archive: Index on Censorship Archive (OSA)

Research context and objectives: the discussion of communist or state socialist cultural practices, freedoms and restrictions through the lens of censorship has enjoyed much critical attention since the early 1990, producing important work in Russian/Soviet and Polish studies predominantly, and based on archives made available after the end of the Cold War. Yet scholarly work addressing *Index on Censorship* (1972-), the major contemporary Western periodical documenting and attesting to the process of censorship has been notably absent. My research conducted in the archive set out to close this gap by offering on a reflected and scholarly examination of those homegrown and international networks that enabled the production of the journal. This research plan shifted during the process of research, and I will show how the material exposed new questions.

The archives of *Index on Censorship* are available at two different locations: at OSA in Budapest and at the Bishopsgate Library, London. It is also assumed that some documents are available in the office archives of the journal in London, and also in the personal archives of main actors and agents, e.g. Michael Scammel. For a better understanding of the history of the journal, these archival sources will need to be surveyed and consulted.¹ The pdf version of the journal's articles are available on a subscription basis from Sage. Users of good international research libraries therefore have access to the articles without any difficulty. In the Open Society Archive, the fond *HU OSA 301 Records of Index on Censorship* (339 archival boxes) contains relevant material for the journal.

True to the classic liberal tradition of free speech, *Index on Censorship* set out to monitor the curtailment free speech in any country in the world, including Africa, South America (with many cases to report), and also the core Western European countries. Therefore, the Archive contains many documents documenting bans or limitations on free speech. My research, however, focused on the East European, or, more specifically, on the Hungarian material held in the archive.

Internal editorial documents such as minutes of meetings, agendas, internal correspondence or correspondence with authors or any reference to the journal's financial arrangements (office rental, honoraria, printing costs, subscriber lists) are not held in this archive, and this material will be covered during later research.

¹ It needs noted that the secondary sources on the journal are scarce. The include:
 Scammel, Michael. 'How Index on Censorship started,' in George Thenier, *They shoot writers, don't they?* London: Faber and Faber, 1984.
 Steel, John. 'Making voices heard ...': *Index on Censorship* as advocacy journalism,' *Journalism* 2021, Vol. 22(1) 20–34.
 Webb, W.L. & Rose Bell (eds.), *Index on Censorship 1972-1997: An Embarrassment of Tyrannies. 25 Years of Index on Censorship*. London: Gollancz, 1997 – an anthology of articles e.g. Salman Rushdie 1983, Chomsky 1994, Ugresic 1993 etc.
 Articles in *Index* taking stock on previous years e.g. Ursula Owen.

Research process in the archive

During my work in the archive, I systematically surveyed the holdings expected to be relevant. These holdings are as follows:

HU OSA 301 Records of Index on Censorship

HU OSA 301-0-1 Administrative files. The files here focus on the Middle East and South Africa. This material is irrelevant to my research.

HU OSA 301-0-2: Subject files. Files containing media in general, esp. the UK. This material is irrelevant to my research.

HU OSA 301-0-3: Country files. These were actively used during my research. See below.

HU OSA 301-0-4 :Index index (the digest style reports on incidents of censorship, also available in the online fulltext version of the journal). In this form, it was irrelevant to my research.

HU OSA 301-0-5: Publications. These were actively used during my research. See below.

HU OSA 301-0-6. Photographs. They were consulted during my research.

Detailed reflections

HU OSA 301-0-5: Publications. These were actively used during my research.

This collection contains 22 archival boxes, of printed material generally available in research libraries (an incomplete run of *Index on Censorship*, *Beszélő*, *Cross Currents* etc.), less generally available printed material (*The bloc: Voice of Central and Eastern Europe*, *Hírmondó*); a few newsletters, bulletins and annual reports of human rights organizations and a variety of newspapers and magazines from all over the world. Most of the material is printed material available in good research libraries with particular regard to the fact that legal deposit regulations apply internationally; the small and shortlived, London-based journal *The bloc* is held in all the six legal deposit libraries in the UK. But most of these journals are not available in libraries outside the country of origin and the existing copies, often partial runs, are held in different libraries. OSA therefore offers a unique opportunity.

The journals fall into different categories:

1. Samizdat e.g. *Beszélő* and *Hírmondó*,
2. Mainstream publications published in Western countries, e.g. *Cross Currents*, published by the University of Michigan
3. Small émigré publications, in small print-runs, with very distinct political agendas and often bridging journalism and newsletter formats. E.g. *The bloc: Voice of Central and Eastern Europe*

These publications were produced under significantly different circumstances and adhered to different generic expectations within journalism, yet they all had the dissident movement in Eastern and Central Europe in their focus. They were equally committed to provide short pieces of information about human rights abuses, while analytical articles and publishing banned literature was quite common. Periodicals consulted include *Beszélő*, *Cross Currents*, *The Bloc*, *East European Reporter*, *Hírmondó*. These journals are not directly related to the history of *Index*, but they offer a range of contexts in which news about Hungarian events circulated.

The available printed volumes of *Index on Censorship* were also studied in detail, allowing a comparison between the fully available pay-wall-protected online resource *Index on Censorship* and the printed issues. While the existence of the online issues is welcome it allows the consultation of the texts; preliminary pages, including lists of editors, addresses of offices, advertisements (etc.), also needed for any substantive research about the potential readership and the reach of the periodical. Images of these pages could serve as an important addition for any further resource to be developed in relation to the journal. The images of important preliminary and other complementary material were identified and taken, these images (subject to copyright) can be used for an online resource to be developed.

HU OSA 301-0-3: Country files.

These boxes contain clippings, reports and media monitoring materials organised on the basis of countries listed in an alphabetical order. My consultation focused on the boxes containing general material contained in boxes 165-168 and to boxes 222-223, which contained Hungarian material. For a better understanding of a broader understanding of the context, material pertaining East Germany was also consulted, as I can easily read original material. I also consulted the Czech material in boxes 168-169 to get a better understanding of the extent of the journal's Czech dimension and *Uncensored Czechoslovakia*.

Box 165 contains press cuttings in relation to 1956, collected from newspapers in 1986, reporting on the Hungarian literary scandals including the periodical *Tiszatáj* and the banning of István Csurka's work. Boxes 166-167 contained detailed information about Swiss émigré organisations, calling attention to the need to understand the depth and coverage of Hungarian émigré publications outside the UK, as well as information about art dissidence (Inconnu Group). Box 168 contained focused information about the cases of the Transylvanian poet Géza Szőcs and the conscientious objector Zsolt Keszthelyi. The contents of these boxes will allow to survey the press coverage of these events, and allow me to contextualise the coverage of the same cases in *Index*.

Further Hungarian material is contained in boxes 222-223, focusing on censorship in the 1970s, including the cases around the exile of philosophers in the late 1970s, the detention of Konrád and Szelényi in 1974, the publication of Lengyel's anti-Stalinist *Confrontation* and the major legal case and trial of Miklós Haraszti working class sociology for *Piecework Rate*, which was the basis for the last writer's trial in Hungary. An important set of documents shows the fortunes of Pál Salamon, a writer unduly unknown in Hungary, who pursued the staging of his play *The Circus Ring* in Britain, but, according to the correspondence with the Royal Shakespeare Company, it was 'too political.' (Box 222). These boxes also contain material concerning the 1986 publishing crackdown (*Tiszatáj* and Csurka). Material relevant to *Index* includes typescripts of articles published and scrap papers about exhibition opening and calls for subscription. These scrap papers were used for mounting journal article clippings, but they can be used to illustrate editorial documents consulted elsewhere.

Reflecting on the original research questions

Consulting material in the archive inevitably led to self-reflection and a reflection on my original research questions. My original questions focused primarily on the editorial operations of the journal (see Appendix), including funding, marketing and the politically rather sensitive information circulation about events behind the Iron Curtain. The OSA archival collection does not hold a significant amount of editorial information, therefore the original questions were temporarily put aside and the emphasis shifted to new questions, including the a/mapping out émigré political

journals and pamphlet publications currently un(der)researched; b/ identifying those case studies that can be productively researched with the help of archival references found in the OSA archive.

Immediate output expected after the Fellowship's completion

1. Collaboration with the Bishopsgate Library, London, with the potential of building an online resource that allow the display and use of archival holdings held by the two libraries. I will visit the Library in September-October, identify the material on the basis of their archival descriptions, and start discussions with Bishopsgate Library about a possible collaboration. The progress of these discussions will be reported to OSA Archive, and all parties will be involved in the decision-making process.
2. Developing a reference resource for the first 19 years of *Index on Censorship* (1972-1991). This resource is an index ('repertórium') for the Cold War period of the journal, enabling researchers to identify patterns of publication within the journal in terms of the geographical relevance of the subject, the nationality of the contributor, local vs. émigré status etc. These patterns will enable a better understanding of information circulation between the London editorial office and Eastern Europe.
Discussions and preparatory work have already started with the IT department of OSA Archive. The work will continue until the end of 2023.
The resulting database will be deposited in the Research Room of OSA Archive, offering access to visiting scholars.
3. Research material for case studies. Case studies of important 'censorships scandals' in Hungary can be successfully researched with the help of the focused and themed collections of clippings, Radio Free Europe reports and other materials collected as research material for further articles. I have selected three case studies to illustrate the three decades of slightly different political practices and censorship in Hungary. These case studies can include the case of Miklos Haraszi's *Piecework Rate* [Darabbér] which represented the last writer's trial in Kadar's Hungary in 1973, and which was widely reported in the Western media. Another case study can be represented by the literary-political scandal at the 30th anniversary of the 1956 revolution in 1986, concerning the banning of *Tiszatáj* journal for publishing a poem with concealed references to Imre Nagy. Finally, the case of Zsolt Keszthelyi, the last conscientious objector imprisoned for his beliefs, represents the mechanisms of political oppression and censorship in late Kádárist Hungary.
The case studies will serve as test cases for modelling information transmission processes between the different presses internationally and also within the Eastern bloc. OSA archival holdings have brought these cases to the fore and have also shown how information about these scandalous cases was circulated. Part of the research will offer a mapping out of Hungarian émigré periodicals.

Long-term output after the Fellowship

The original six research questions will be revisited after the completion of further archival research in the Bishopsgate Library and in other personal collections.

Appendix

The list of original research questions

1. How was the journal administered and funded?
2. How did the journal engage in campaigns and other activities in the 1970s and 1980s?
3. By what methods and techniques was politically dangerous or subversive information articulated in the journal?
4. How were networks of information built and maintained under the circumstances of softer or harder political dictatorships?
5. How did international networks of émigré scholars and cultural agents feed into chains of information transmission?
6. How was the Hungarian network of dissidents and émigrés instrumental in sourcing material for the journal? From what contexts did knowledge emerge?