

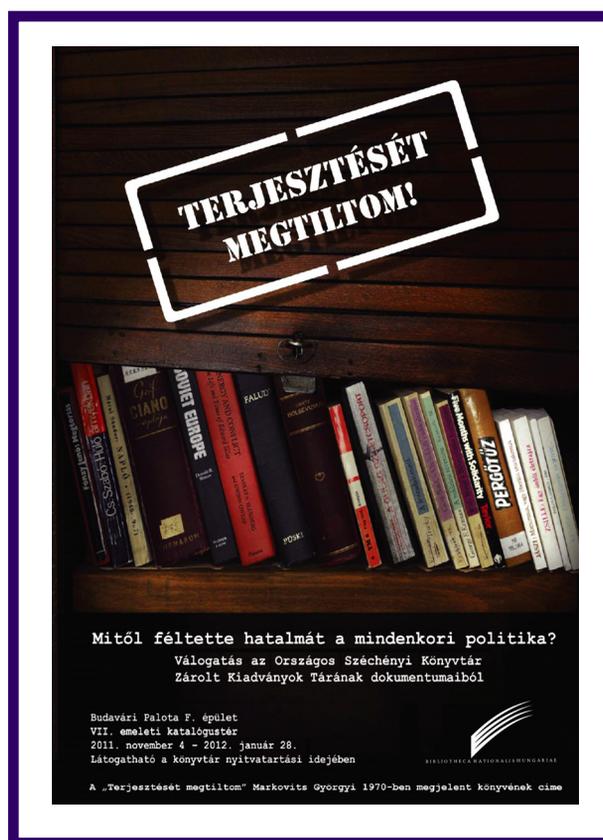
“CIRCULATION FORBIDDEN”

WHAT WAS POLITICAL POWER SCARED OF?



Every society in history has had thinkers and opinion-formers with ideas different from the official ideology not tolerated by the ruling power. Therefore their works are censored, banned, confiscated or destroyed.

The items in nine display cases originating from the Collection of Blocked Publications bring back to memory the history of banned documents, which fortunately stopped to exist over twenty years ago. This Collection was set up in 1946 and worked up to the regime change, dispersed altogether in the autumn of 1989. The section of banned documents that were distributed in a strictly limited circle had existed before and was called Reserved Books Section. Besides erotica, this collection stored literary works that the Bolsheviks or the White Terror regarded as dangerous. The restricted stocks of the NSZL Collection of Small Prints included a large number of pamphlets, posters and other small documents. The forbidden items received the *Proletarian collection* stamp, while the deposit copies of political and legal publications arrived in the library after going through the prosecutor's censorship. The periodicals giving the lists of documents to be withdrawn from circulation were as follows: *The list of newspapers and pamphlets not to be*



Exhibition poster



Samizdats

delivered by post; The list of press items banned from postal delivery or seized by judiciary authorities; Key to investigations by the Hungarian Royal Gendarmerie. These lists helped decide what to withdraw from general circulation, as it happened during the war years. The names of Jewish authors whose works were not to be read or possessed were made public in the April 1944 issue of the *Budapesti*



Forbidden material in cases

Közlöny (Budapest Bulletin) and in the infamous index compiled by Mihály Kolosváry-Borcsa. According to decree 530/1945.M.E. in June 1945 this move was followed by the *Magyar Közlöny's* (Hungarian Bulletin) list of films, and in August, by the *List of fascist, anti-soviet and anti-democratic press publications*. The implementation of these orders was accompanied by strict police raids searching for illegal books and heavy sanctions. The main consideration was always whether the books were anti-soviet in character.

The events of the 1956 Revolution and War of Liberty were treated as taboo. The regime criminalised the uprising, and only outside Hungary, especially in the western world, was any objective information and writing provided about the Revolution. Hungarian emigré writers composed a large number of documents and memoirs, which came into the country in illegal ways or as Hungary-related documents directly to the restricted collection of the Széchényi Library. An interesting example of Cold War publications, or rather non-publications, is the Kossuth Publishing Company's confidential political series put out in very small circulations and numbered copies. It was translated and printed exclusively for supplying information to members of the Central Committee of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party. The individual volumes did not indicate any publication data or translator. Following the 1956 Revolution,

all material celebrating Rákosi or Stalin went to the restricted collection, which also stored writings about the Katyn massacre, the 1968 Prague Spring and the struggles of the Polish Solidarnosc movement.

A separate case contained a selection of publications that were printed in Hungary using the official procedure, but were not released into commercial circulation and had to be placed into restricted collections of libraries. For example, Gyula Illyés's volume of

studies entitled *Morals and Aggression* was banned for ten years, or the document *Drumfire*, commemorating the catastrophe of the Second Hungarian Army at the Don River was pulped. Politics did not spare sports either: in the same way as the volume of the 1936 Berlin Olympics was withdrawn after 1945, the album of the 1984 Los Angeles Olympic Games was also withdrawn from circulation.

Sensing the imminent failure of democracy, in 1947 many leading intellectuals and artists left Hungary, with Sándor Márai, László Cs. Szabó and Lajos Zilahy among them, and after the defeat of 1956 Győző Határ, György Faludy and many others were compelled to emigrate. The works of authors settling abroad could only be published by western companies, like the *Püski* Company in New York, *Griff* and *Aurora* in Germany or the *Fehér Holló* (White Raven) company in London. Encouraged by Polish contacts, the first samizdat came out in Hungary in the early 1970s. Some of them featured in our exhibition, including the first illegal issue of the *Beszélő* (*Talker*) samizdat periodical.

Local colour is added to our exhibition by the 1945–1947 correspondence between NSZL directors József Fitz and József Györke and representatives of the ministry of religion and public education in two display cases, as well as some documents about the 1988–1989 dispersal of the Collection of Blocked Publications.

Etelka Somogyi

somogyi.etelka.at.oszk.hu