

*Katalin Bella*

# Organization of the State and Party Supervision of Book Publishing in Hungary 1948-1956



## *Summary*

After the Second World War, Hungary was forced into the sphere of the Soviet Union, which was accompanied by the introduction of a socialist based planned economy, the merger of state and party control, and the establishment of a one-man leadership. The author interprets the place and role of book publishing in the cultural policy of the period between 1948-1956 (also called the Rákosi era after the all-powerful leader) and aims to present the institutions governing book publishing. Due to the nature of basic research, the work relies primarily on archival research. The archival corpus that can be included in the research is vast and divergent, containing documents on cultural management and literary policy more broadly, from official provisions to more confidential records. The study examines the cultural governance organization of the dictatorship and its practical operation through a specific segment of the system, the operation of censorship of book publishing, and also demonstrates the organization of state and party supervision of publishers was a paramount task between 1948-1956.

**Keywords:** A monopolization of the institutional system of book publishing, literature-based ideological state and party governance, censorship

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## INTRODUCTION

My study summarizes<sup>1</sup> the development of the publishing supervisors and the management through these institutions. The publishers were among the institutions of the ideological sphere, and the organization of their state and party supervision was one of the most important tasks in the period between 1948 and 1956, marked by the name of Mátyás Rákosi<sup>2</sup>. The transformation of the cultural institutional system began in the spring of 1948, and the Hungarian Workers' Party (MDP) brought cultural policy under its control step by step, which naturally was accompanied by the gradual monopolization of the cultural institutional system (Sárközi, 2009: 57). The leadership of the MDP (Hungarian Workers' Party) carried out radical profiling at the highest levels: the Ministry of National Education, informally known as the Ministry of Ideology, was established, and under the supervision of József Révai, the press management, free culture, the film and theatre professions and the book profession were included.

A striking feature of the transformation that began with the year of the turnaround was that intellectual politics gradually narrowed into a cultural and literary-centred ideological control. Simultaneously this meant that literature was described as of being an immeasurable exaggeration and that, in fact, its independence and freedom were greatly reduced.

Changes in the rigor of literary management have also determined the room for manoeuvre of the book profession, as politics, if not chosen to use the most extreme intimidating means, could steer a writer in the direction of expected intellectual behaviour by publishing or banning their works. Book publishing can be considered as an extension of the current literary policy, so its treatment is perfectly summed up in the quote attributed to Béla Köpeczi, according to which "The ÁVÓ (The State Protection Authority) will be given in consignment sooner than book publishing!". The history of the authorities governing book publishing begins in 1948, after a year of change, with the process of nationalizing the book profession. It includes the organization of the National Publications Office, the operation of the Literature Department of the Ministry of National Education, the establishment of the Publishing Council and the organization of the Publishing Directorate-General.

## THE NATIONAL PUBLICATIONS OFFICE

### *Organization of the Publications Office*

Until the summer of 1948, there was no independent supervisory body for book publishing, it was managed by the press department of the Prime Minister's Office. One of the committees of the MDP (Hungarian Workers' Party), the State Propaganda Committee, was the one that formally submitted a proposal that the ideological governance of the book industry should be resolved by setting up a committee modelled on the best practices of radio and film party committees.<sup>3</sup> The proposal became a decision, so the Book Committee was established for the principled management and coordination.<sup>4</sup> In addition, the General Council of Economy has decided that the new state publishing organization should be operated under the name of the National Publications Office, as an unregulated but obvious censorship forum for book publishing. The

head of the publishing house, György Vértes, was asked to organize this (Varga, 1985: 108-109).

The most important of his duties was to control and manage the nationalized printing companies under the supervision of the Party's Book Committee, so that the guidelines of literary policy prevailed in the further operation of publishers and prevented publishing of books.<sup>5</sup>

Thus, with the decision establishing the National Publications Office, the basics were in place, but only the basic, the organization belonging to them, the real structure of the National Publications Office was not yet, however the Book Committee functioned as if the Publications Office made its decisions (Varga, 1985: 110-111). Simultaneously with the establishment of the National Publications Office, the General Council of Economics and the Book Committee decided that in order to further develop Hungarian book publishing, it considered it desirable to maintain the publishing companies with their own profile.<sup>6</sup> This trust-like reorganization, or de facto "separation," was finally ordered in January 1949. This is how the Révai National Publishing Company (NV), Franklin National Publishing Company, Athenaeum National Publishing Company, and the Hungária National Publishing Company (Varga, 1985: 134) were established. The task of the Publications Office was therefore to comprehensively take over, reorganize and manage the publishers who had become publicly owned, and to "break into the state oath". The task was not difficult because "the foals were gentle."<sup>7</sup> It was also a matter regarding authorities. A book could only be published if the licensing stamp was affixed to its manuscript. The licensing stamp was handled by the press department of the Prime Minister's Office which either permitted or prohibited. This power was conferred on the Publications Office in 1948. The implementation became the responsibility of Sándor Lukácsy, the head of the review department of the Publications Office, who eventually performed censorship duties. According to the memory of many: he became the lord of life and death in literature, which only partially corresponds to reality,<sup>8</sup> <sup>9</sup>since it was primarily the politics that decided.

Already in the time of the Publications Office, it can be seen the writers were treated differently throughout the period under discussion: those in power felt insecure, so they wanted confirmation, and they found support in the writers and artists, who were often inclined to the role. Many thought that transformation could only be started from above, at the initiative of the authorities (Standeisky, 1996: 11). At the same time, however, there was a kind of constant a priori suspicion of the creative sphere.

All this, even though the organizational framework began to take shape, meant that there was no, or did not actually put into practice, a document or plan of principle that would have defined what was actually accepted for publication and what was not left in the hands of readers.<sup>10</sup> The objection to the manuscript was not a real problem with publishability, like an aesthetic or efficiency counter-argument, but the problems with the manuscripts were largely voluntarist, determined by those actually in charge of publishing.

#### *Difficulties in the operation of the Publications Office*

Based on what has happened so far, it may seem that the Publications Committee and the Publications Office have taken over and started publishing books at lightning speed, but it was quite difficult. The first problem was caused by sudden, ill-considered measures, making decisions without a real background.<sup>11</sup>

The second is that the real decisions were not made by the Publications Office but by the Publications Committee.<sup>12</sup> However, the real role of the Publications Committee could not have been known to the general public, yet the publishers of the book were aware of it. No statement was made to inform the public that the evaluation of the books to be published did not fall within the competence of the Prime Minister's Press Department or that the evaluation was not actually carried out there. However, due to weaknesses and errors of human nature, the actual role of the Publications Office and the Political Party Publications Committee became public: according to archival sources, the participants in the organization passed on its existence in confidence, and the list of members of the non-existent Book Committee. However, an honorary copy had to be sent to the members, and then one of the publishers, making a protocol error, appeared in solemn form with the committee before the Book Committee, causing a scandal, and so on.

The third pitfall was that the competences of the Publications Office overlapped with those of bodies whose work it was already formally supposed to do, but whose status meant that the formal transfer had not taken place: with the press department of the Prime Minister's Office.<sup>13</sup> Even without full authority, the office maintained constant contact with the publishing departments of the nationalised printing houses, summoned their managers to meetings, gave advice and instructions on the choice of publications, made the publication of a particular publication subject to its approval, examined the publishers' stock of youth books and, on the basis of the lists received, stopped the sale of certain youth publications,<sup>14</sup> also those that have just been approved by the Prime Minister's Press Department.<sup>15</sup> The persistence of overlapping responsibilities between the Press Department of the Prime Minister's Office and the Publications Office shows that the Publications Office was not even able to perform its most basic function, even though it was set up precisely to manage the book publishing of nationalized publishers.<sup>16</sup>

The fourth difficulty was that the Publications Office was unable to plan ahead due to illegality.<sup>17</sup> This was a problem in very sensitive areas, as during the three-month organization period, the Publications Office would have been primarily responsible for market organization, in addition to intellectual management, which it could not do without a formal mandate. A poorly organised managed book market<sup>18</sup>, where "patronage" should have been provided by the General Economic Council, were blamed solely on the failure of the Publications Office, saying that since the Council of Ministers had still not legalised its operations, it could not inform the book market operators of the plans it had in place, should the Council of Ministers legalise its operations, to balance the slowdown in book buying with the organisation of the market in other directions.<sup>19</sup>

Lastly, the deterrent effect of personal problems should be detailed. György Vértés, who received the high dignity of the management of the Publications Office, but soon became "undesirable", according to the official version, because instead of carrying out his work according to the decision of the Publications Committee, he started to build an independent apparatus (Varga, 1985: 111). In hindsight, it is difficult to decipher how much the dislike of Vértés exacerbated the actual organisational problems, and whether this or the earlier difficulty was more real. The problems relating to György Vértés himself can be summarised

as follows: one of them may have been that he belonged to György Lukács's circle (we are already well after the Lukács controversy<sup>20</sup>): Lukács got him an editorial chair, they maintained friendship, went to meetings.<sup>21</sup> The other one was that he really wasn't really fit for a leadership position: he was considered an incapacitated leader.<sup>22</sup> The third problem may have been a series of personal conflicts.<sup>23</sup>

As a result, at the end of 1948, the party's Agitation and Propaganda Committee (APB) decided to investigate the affairs of the Publications Office and ruled on the matter. At its meeting on 14 December 1948, it noted that the organization, financial and economic conditions of the Publications Office were in the greatest state of turmoil. The days of the National Publications Office were already numbered, it could not become the real governing body of the book industry.<sup>24</sup> Although it did not last very long, the National Publications Office left quite vivid memories in the memory of the writers. Sometimes it really helped a young author get started.<sup>25</sup> However, the authors mostly emphasize their<sup>26</sup> censorship, <sup>27</sup>but it is striking that they have no knowledge of the real power and background work of the Publications Committee.<sup>28</sup> The competence of the disbanded National Publications Office and a part of its staff were taken over by the Ministry of National Culture established at that time.

#### THE MINISTRY OF NATIONAL EDUCATION

The peculiarity of József Révai's leadership style was that he wanted to act as a reform dictator until 1953, using a conciliatory and aesthetic method (Kalmár, 1993: 715). His logic of power was not only governed by directives and administrative methods, but also acknowledged the interplay between the legitimization processes (Kalmár, 1993: 725-726).

Révai used three methods of exercising power:

- revelations made or published at national forums or other important occasions;
- his positions on specific issues, which have become the limits and reference points for dialogue between the political leadership and the intelligentsia; the three most important debates he created and directed were the Lukács debate, the architectural debate and the Reply debate;
- the literal 'hand-waving', namely, personal manipulation, i.e., the need to seek advice and opinions on everything, and when this is not done for whatever reason, decisions are delayed by uncertainty (Bolvári-Takács, 2002:16).

To create a legitimizing ideology, Révai used the first two methods, and manual control prevailed on two "levels": on the one hand, he manipulated writers differently, and on the other, he intervened personally in book publishing, operating with whip and honeycomb tactics (Standeisky, 1996: 26).<sup>29</sup> In the meantime, the "regular" channel of service, the Ministry of Popular Education, functioned as the "official" contact with the Minister of Culture. Of course, Révai also "used" this in addition to direct control, mostly employing the ministerial apparatus in the preparation of plans and bureaucratic approvals, i.e., manual control was also exercised through the state administration factor.

The Ministry was created on 11 June 1949, taking over the supervision of cultural affairs from the Ministry of Religion and Education. The Minister of Popular Education was res-

possible for matters transferred from the competence of the Minister of Information to the President of the Council of Ministers; the Hungarian Central News Agency Ltd. (Magyar Központi Híradó Rt.) of the Ministry of Information; the affairs of the state theatres and the artistic entertainment establishments of the regional municipalities (public authorities); the affairs assigned to the National Film Office; the affairs of general arts policy; and the supervision of the Liszt Ferenc Academy of Music, the National Hungarian College of Drama and Film, the College of Fine Arts, the College of Applied Arts, the music conservatories and music schools; the supervision of the cultural affairs of social organisations; the supervision of the affairs assigned to the National Library Board; the supervision of the public libraries. Révai maintained the supervision of the presidential, audit, personnel, literature and film departments (Bolvári-Takács, 2011: 16-19).

In the case of the Ministry of Culture, I will not discuss anything other than the ideological regulation that the plans were intended to implement, because this was the main task of the Ministry, although the inextricably close interconnection of the period inevitably brings up the specifics of Révai's other cultural management procedures.

The power mechanism of the 1950s had as much of an impact on the natural evolution of the publishing process as possible. The superiors intervened at the very beginning, trying to determine what works the authors would offer for publication, and which of these publishers to accept and reject, so the publisher was not independent from the beginning. In order to sign the contract, a ministerial permit had to be requested, and a plan sheet with a short summary had to be submitted, even if it was a first-volume "schematic" young man, and even if it was about Illyés. If a position was taken in favor of the release, the contract was approved two to three weeks later.

When the work was finished, several people read it, reporting back in a detailed editorial report. On the basis of these, a very detailed editor's report had to be written, signed by the editor, the supervising editor, the workshop's literary manager or head of proofreading, the authorisation form by the director, and then the whole package was sent to the ministry. If there were no objections, the authorisation form was returned with the stamp, without which the printing house in Hungary could not accept manuscripts.<sup>30</sup>

In addition to / over there was the general regulation of the whole book publishing process: planning. The general, forward-looking and continuous preparation and control of the annual plans was intended to ensure the ideological foundation of book publishing and the creation of an ideological framework. In these plans, the prevailing view of the socialist realist worldview was centrally prescribed, but without any attempt being made to describe precisely in appendices and background documents how this would be feasible. Instead, the list of works to be published was adapted to current party politics and cultural policy ideas by prescribing thematic proportions.<sup>31</sup> These strict thematic proportions had to be observed in the following topics: the classics of Marxism and Leninism, political literature, Hungarian literature, Soviet literature, literature of the People's Republics. In contemporary Hungarian literature, the most important sub-themes were, for example, "the struggle for peace against imperialism and its agents", "our people's army is the guardian of peace", "our revolutionary traditions", "the struggle of the working class for socialism", "the building of socialism in the countryside", "criticism of the past".<sup>32</sup>

Publishers were also required to prepare their own plans during the year: as required, semi-annually, on a quarterly basis. Here, the works that had already been submitted for approval were presented by the publisher with a detailed description, and then these plans also had to be sent to the party headquarters with the intervention of the ministry for approval. Here, the authorities compiled the annual plans for publishing the books by summarizing these publishing plans and tailoring them to ideological ideas. The plan for the following year was often preceded by a document summarizing the situation for that year, against which new rates were set. Managers of book publishing expected that publishers achieve significant results in terms of both numbers and content, and work in this area was a key issue for the entire company.

Although for ideological supremacy, design itself was more important than product. The plans were debated at the party headquarters, positions were held, planning meetings were held in the ministry and elsewhere, where the simple editors were not official, only the directorate. The Plans were constantly being refined, fine-tuned, these imaginary ratios were created, but never was the annual book output compared with the preliminary plan. They didn't care, the reality was obviously a handicap, but ideologically everything seemed to be in order, except for the scandals, which were unpredictable.<sup>33</sup>

There was some improvement between 1953-56,<sup>34</sup> but then a new tool emerged as a covert mode of control: paper frame allocation. In the following years, the paper framework, which is a more indirect management tool, played an increasingly important role in the regulatory mechanism of expenditure policy in the following years. Paper shortages were a constant problem in the 1950s. The amount of paper was set by the National Planning Office for publishers. The superior bodies of book publishing also tried to determine the desired level of publicity for each work or category by controlling and restricting the supply of paper, i.e. the number of copies of books was not an economic issue but a matter of political consideration. The definition of the paper quota is already included in the implementation of the plan for 1953, but from 1954, 1955, and 1956, it had really become an indirect governing tool of publishing planning, the covert implementation of cultural policy intentions.<sup>35</sup> All this took place under the heading of economy, which at first was rather demanded from publishers only verbally, but later became a real compulsion for them. Obtaining the right amount of paper was a fierce battle for publishers, as the lack of paper remained the only manipulative barrier to increasing book production, an insurmountable obstacle (Bart, 2000: 19-21).

In summary, publishers simultaneously tried to adapt to pre-determined thematic proportions and which author knew what they were willing to do during the year and whether this was approved on the other "licensing front," when works were licensed individually. Planning and individual licensing took place in parallel. The basic administrative need for all this was the ministry seal, but this still did not mean the end of the licensing process: once the seal was in place and the printing press could accept the manuscript, it made two proofs, which were also requested by the ministry. Then a copy of the finished book (technical copy) also had to be sent to the Ministry, and this granted the marketing authorization. So when the ministry gave permission to print a manuscript, it was authorising a manuscript that was first authorised when the contract was signed, secondly authorised in the plans, and thirdly de facto when



it went to press. We can see, therefore, that manuscripts were subjected to four or five filters. In addition, the higher authorities had the right to consult the manuscript if they had any suspicions or reservations, which happened quite frequently in the fifties.<sup>36</sup>

## THE PUBLICATIONS BOARD AND THE PUBLICATIONS DIRECTORATE GENERAL

By 1950, the era of nationalisation was essentially over. Between 1950 and 1954 we can speak of the “era of reorganisations”. How were nationalised publishing houses, publishing and book distribution managed? - Before nationalisation, the larger publishers had their own printing presses and employed book distributors. Now, publishing was taken over by the Ministry of Culture, printing presses by the Ministry of Light Industry, and distribution by the Ministry of Trade (and then there was the question of the party’s publisher, Szikra, which was not affected by nationalisation and remained with its printing press and distributors). Unlike in other socialist countries, Hungary did not set up a central censorship office, and books were authorised for publication by the ministries, often after reading the manuscript. There was some discussion of changing this procedure and introducing central licensing and registration. This was not done. The cumbersome and often bureaucratic procedure provoked widespread dissatisfaction, and the College of the Ministry of Popular Education, already in the new situation, criticised the secretariat in March 1954 and proposed simplification.<sup>37</sup> It had been suggested a year earlier that a unified system for the production and distribution of books and periodicals should be established: the proposal was that by 1 October 1953 the publishers should be merged and their direct supervision taken over by the Publishing Council.

### *Establishment and tasks of the Publishing Council*

The founding of the Publishing Council took place in February 1953, during the last phase of Révai’s reign. Its creation already shows that total autocracy is ultimately unsuitable for the effective management of culture, as ad hoc decisions and the many personal interests involved make the process of management stagnant and completely opaque. Even the official explanatory memorandum acknowledges the anomalies, that the creation was necessary because there was no national plan, so there was frequent duplication and therefore serious disproportionality.<sup>38</sup>

The idea of establishing a Publishing Council had been raised as early as 1952 (Varga, 1985:266), but the decision was finally taken only in early 1953. This was the decision of the Council of Ministers of the Hungarian People’s Republic No. 2005/2/1953 on the establishment of the Publishing Council. In order to carry out the ‘operational tasks’ (i.e. the actual management) of the Publishing Council, the Publishing Council Secretariat had to be organised, the head of which, who was also the Secretary of the Publishing Council, was appointed by the Council of Ministers.<sup>39</sup> The chairman of the Publishing Council was Gábor Kerek (formerly the head of the literature department of the Ministry of National Education (without author, 1952: 5)), and his deputies were Béla Köpeczi and Tibor Fajth (from 1945 he worked for the General Economic Council and later for the National Economic Council).



One of the most important proposals in the short life of the Publishing Council was the proposal for a uniform system of production and distribution of books and periodicals, as it contains the seeds of many measures that were later implemented. The essence of the proposal, dated 24 April 1953, was that publishers should be merged by 1 October 1953, their direct supervision being taken over by the Publishing Council, and that the Publishing Council should also take over supervision of book distribution from 1 January 1954. Taking over the supervision of the printing industry was postponed to a later date.

The plan to merge the publishers was as follows. The most important element of the plan is that literature would be retained, but alongside it would be created the Publishing House of Foreign Works, from the New Hungarian Book Publishing House and the corresponding division of literature. In addition, the Youth Publishing House, the Heavy Industry Publishing House, the Light Industry and Domestic Trade, Agriculture, Planning and Economics, the Scientific Publishing House (which would also publish legal, health and sports publications), the Akadémia Publishing House and the Music and Arts Publishing House would be retained. We can see that the book publisher *Művelt Nép* was not envisaged, but, as in the previous draft, the initial idea of the later *Magvető* emerges, here we can discover the birth of the idea of the later *Verlag Europa*.

The publishing houses not under the supervision of the Publishing Council remained *Szikra* Publishing House and the National Council of Trade Unions (*SZOT*) Publishing House (*Népszava*). A separate problem was the issue of publishing periodicals, where the establishment of a separate Journal Publishing House was considered, alongside which the professional publishers would publish the journals and official periodicals of the various ministries. As far as we know, the separate Journal Publishing House did not materialise (there was already an earlier body, the Journal Publishing Company)<sup>40</sup>.

On the issue of book distribution, the problem for publishers was the extent to which the monopoly on book distribution should be maintained, and whether publishers should be allowed to distribute certain of their own; and how to make publishers interested in selling works. Disputes over the price of books and the number of copies were also within the competence of the Publishing Council.<sup>41</sup> This consideration already indicates that the easing after Stalin's death allowed for some shift in the direction of capitalist relations. The result of the easing was also the rational change in the "principled management" of publishers. On the basis of the analysis preserved as of 23 June 1953, the nature of the changes can be perfectly summarized.<sup>42</sup> The need for a general correction after Imre Nagy's new government program can be clearly traced, even as the report takes stock of what needs to be changed. Publishers are planning to be the first, but the method of authorizing manuscripts is also ripe for change. Révai's dual control has now changed: hair-splitting and linear bureaucracy through the ministry, as well as manual control based on individual "whims." By blaming the lack of "open debates of principle," that is, somewhat freer, non-offensive-toned exchanges in literary life, they also signalled an end to accountability in unpredictable public debates.

It was acknowledged that the excessive centralization that characterized the entire state apparatus also left its mark on the relationship between the Literary Department and publishers. Publishers were forced to turn to the Literary Department with every little problem, and after a while the literary department was seen as a purely administrative body - meaning the analysis suggests that content censorship did not take place here, apparently by Révai himself or in the form of self-cen-

sorship by publishers, if they did not want to be as articulated as in the Lukács debate or the Déry debate. In other words, it was stated that after the decisions of the party's Central Leadership in June and the new government program, it became clear that in the work of the Literary Department, as in the work of publishers, the perception of literature as a direct instrument of agitation and the excessive use of administrative means prevailed, it should be noted that it is not stated in the text that this was due to coercion!

After taking over the management of the publishers in popular education, the Publishing Council drew up a draft for regulating relations and sought to strengthen the autonomy of the publishers and decentralise work to a certain extent. It was therefore clear that in many respects the content of the work of the ministry needed to be improved in order to give publishers greater autonomy and thus greater responsibility. Accordingly, the Literature Department sought to introduce new methods, such as information reports prepared by the rapporteurs and quarterly assessments of publishers' work based on published works. There was even a moment when it was suggested that in future manuscripts should be licensed by the directors and that the department itself should not be responsible for licensing. In terms of 'management in principle', the emphasis was on the preparation and approval of drafts. He obliged the rapporteurs to become familiar with problems that arose in connection with the manuscripts as they went along.

It is important to emphasise that the aim was to reduce bureaucracy, bureaucratise, unpredictability and individual influence, but not censorship or the oppressive and unrealistic expectations placed on proof-readers, e.g., that their task was still to force from the writers a socialist realist masterpiece, capable of legitimisation, reflecting reality, but at the same time showing the budding communism of the future, instead of a schematic propaganda literature. To this end, the role of the editor was left unchanged, with the Publishing Council approving the manuscripts, and this approval was based, for the majority of manuscripts, on the editorial reports, which still had to take account of both the aesthetic quality and the ideological conformity of the manuscript.<sup>43</sup>

Thus, it was also considered necessary to create an appropriate forum for discussion of the above issues. For this purpose, it was also considered that an editorial board should be set up, which should include an official representative of the Writers' Association and the Publishing Council. If the contentious issues cannot be resolved in a reassuring manner, the manuscript should be submitted to the management of the ministry. The management of the ministry communicates the decision on important matters in the presence of the head of the department and the editor of the book in question, and even, if necessary, in the presence of the writer. It was stipulated that in addition to the speakers, one of the heads of the Publishing Council should take part in the discussions at the lectureship meetings. The publishers 'councils should discuss the issues with the publishers' leaders in the form of personal discussions.

So instead of the administrative, bureaucratic way of sending all manuscripts to the Literary Department, the idea of censorship, which can be more flexibly implemented, is introduced: if someone from the controlling body is already present at the manuscript meeting, it is easier to make the work "publishable", but the unrealistic editorial liability of the past can be avoided. The end of the Publishing Council's operation comes in 1954, the 1954 Plan stipulating that the Publishing Council Secretariat should be transformed into the Publishing Directorate General, which is it should change from a coordinating body to a managing body.

*Establishment of the Directorate General for Publishing*

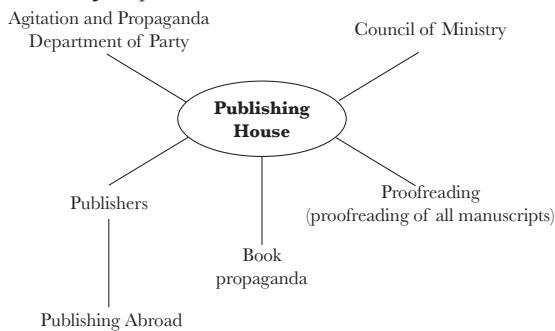
Previously, the purpose of subordinating publishers to ministries was to give ministries more control over the publication of professional books. However, with the merging of publishers, not all ministries can have publishers, and one publisher serves the needs of several ministries, so it is more appropriate for a neutral body, the Directorate General for Publishing, to take control. This will make governance more professional and also more impartial, argues the argument for placing publishers under the Directorate General.<sup>44</sup>

After several attempts at coordination, when the unified system of book and newspaper publishing, distribution and printing was being established, at the end of 1953, several important proposals for changes were submitted to the Council of Ministers for the reorganisation of state publishing. It was concluded that the organisation of state publishing was too decentralised and that it was therefore necessary to create the General Directorate of State Publishing, together with the merging of publishers, and that there could be no delay in halving the number of publishing companies. Twenty-four publishers have been merged into ten plus six publishing companies. In addition, the Writers' Union publishing house should be set up.

The General Directorate of Publishing should operate under the supervision of the Minister of Popular Education, who should be placed above the other ministries as far as publishing is concerned, provided that they make proposals to the Council of Ministers for the whole publishing sector. Some publishers should be directly subordinated to the General Directorate, others only indirectly for the time being.<sup>45</sup>

This transformation had antecedents. The clearest pattern is the Soviet body: the Glavpoligrafizdat (Levitsky, 1964: 63-64). It was at this time, when the Directorate General was established, that the Political Committee authorized a delegation to study the organization of Soviet publishing (Varga, 1985: 306). However, based on our research, we can conclude that a similar body in the German Democratic Republic (GDR) may have been a role model. During their visit to Hungary<sup>46</sup>, Irene Gysi, the head of the Berlin publishing house Rütten und Loening,<sup>47</sup> reported on the reorganization of the Literary Office in the GDR (see Figure 1), where we can also see the efforts to centralize.<sup>48</sup>

*Figure 1: Structure of the Literary Department<sup>49</sup>*



*Source: Author's own edition*

On April 1, 1954, a government decree announced the establishment of a Directorate General for Publishing.<sup>50</sup> The first president was Gyula Kállai, who was soon followed by Béla Köpeczi. The new institution came under the supervision of the Minister of Folk Culture and functioned as a department of the ministry. Due to its prerogatives, it soon exceeded these limits and functioned as a real ministry of the press. The responsibilities included preparing and submitting an annual plan for book publishing to the government; the distribution of the ever-scarce paper quota among publishers; regulation of the operation of publishing companies; proofreading and material standards; professional training of employees; establishing rules on expenditure; the distribution and control of the use of state subsidies, as well as the development of the book system, the elaboration of the remuneration principles of the publishing and distribution staff, and the management of the international relations of book publishing.

Four publishers joined the Directorate General, the Literature, the Új Magyar Könyvkiadó (New Hungarian Publishing House), the Ifjúsági Könyvkiadó (Youth Publishing House) and the Művelt Nép (Cultured People). In 1954, the Magvető Publishing House, which specializes in publishing today's Hungarian literature, joined them. The Director General took care of the profile and rights of the publishers and managed the struggles around the paper quota. Eventually, their competence extended to the printing organization and book distribution.<sup>51</sup> Given the proportions, the tasks and the small size of the Directorate-General (about sixty people), we can rule out the possibility that it was specifically a censorship office. In this it was also similar to the ALV in the GDR, whose activities were also diversified (Barck et al., 1998:22). Of course, it also had censorship-related tasks: the decision made it responsible, for example, for authorising the marketing and withdrawal of books.

The final approval of the plans was awaited by the Council of Ministers, but only well-combed drafts were allowed. The actual "screening" (sometimes censorship) was decided through discussions and discussions between the publishers and the board. This was also where the circulation was approved, and the necessary public subsidy was immediately allocated. Any surplus was deducted and paid into the so-called Cultural Fund, almost as a punishment, so that the money could be used for further subsidies. This system penalised and homogenised the profit-making of publishers. Since publishers were breaking even, there was no obstacle to publishing more and more books if the customer, the buyer (the state), added the subsidy. Until the 1970s, the sky seemed to be the limit for book publishing - limited only by the purchase of imported paper.

The quantity prescribed by the National Planning Office - first 5000 and then 8000 tons - was distributed among the publishers by the General Directorate of Publishing, regardless of the thickness and quality of the paper. Publishers could be adept at paper types, but they weren't capable of miracles. Successful, high-volume works were printed on thin paper and sold at a higher price. Substantial amounts of foreign currency had to be sacrificed for works flowing in from the West, including writers' fees and translation costs. This framework was by no means unlimited, it was about "regulating" the influx of Western literature.<sup>52</sup>

*The Publishers Conference*

Mátyás Rákosi, the party's general secretary, opposed the reforms and accused Imre Nagy, the chairman of the government, of endangering socialism. The apparatus followed Rákosi, the intelligentsia within the party followed Nagy. All this happened before the 20<sup>th</sup> Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, which meant that the power struggle was not decided there either, and Rákosi could count on the support of the conservative part of the Soviet leadership. The debate between the two tendencies in Hungary began already after the announcement of the new government programme, and was mainly manifested in ideologically sensitive areas. Literature had the greatest room for manoeuvre, since it could play a political role by means of a lever. In March 1955, the Central Executive condemned Imre Nagy's 'revisionism', mainly because of his agricultural policies and 'nationalism'. The resolution also criticised the "revisionist" phenomena in publishing and the press, warning that publishing had become the focus of political struggles "against our will". This decision was followed by a note of 28 March from Ernő Gerő to the members of the Political Committee, which was not discussed by the committee but which influenced the official assessment of the situation of publishing.<sup>53</sup>

The Rákosi leadership was dissatisfied with publishing, and thus with the work of the Publishing Directorate. As a first step, the Scientific and Cultural Department of the Party Centre ordered the withdrawal of the books mentioned by Gerő (ironically, after March 1956, Gerő's books had to be withdrawn from circulation), and then requested manuscripts for inspection.

In response to this his July 1955 issue of *Csillag*, Köpeczi reviewed the development of Hungarian book publishing after 1945 and highlighted the favourable change that had taken place since 1954, especially in the proportions. He emphasized the increase in the number of copies of the publisher. In 1953, 231 literary titles were published, and in 1955, 456, so they were more relaxed on the reins.<sup>54</sup> The dogmatic secretary-general, Ernő Gerő, who wrote a letter to the Political Committee - did not like all this - criticizing the publishing principles (there is little Hungarian literature, etc.). The letter was not discussed on the merits by a party body, but his suggestion to have a publishing conference to discuss the issues raised was embraced. In the momentum of the preparations, Sándor Lukácsy called for the dissolution of the Directorate General in the press. His proposal was rejected, but he has faced the biggest ordeal since the short existence of the Directorate General Publishing (KF): he had to convene a publishing conference. The organization of the Publishing Conference has begun. However, the drafts prepared in advance had to be modified, due to the 20<sup>th</sup> Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (February 1956), the replacement of Rákosi with Gerő (July 1956), and as a result a completely new situation arose.

The well-prepared three-day meeting, which was attended by a total of 170 staff members from the publishers, the Directorate General, the Ministries, the press and, of course, the party headquarters, was successfully concluded. The main report was given by Béla Köpeczi. Fifty people spoke in the heated debate of the first day. Of course, the abolition of the Directorate General was not seriously considered.<sup>55</sup> Most of the criticism went to the State Book

Distribution Company, which had a monopoly position.<sup>56</sup> They called for the emergence of new distribution organizations, possibly tailored to publishers, and the need for healthy and normal competition, so that either new publishers or rural publishers become nationally important.<sup>57</sup> Politically, the publishing congress had decided to phase out personal cult materials. As a result of the rapid political changes, entire groups of pamphlets and books were sent to the warehouse and then to shreds - there were the successive works on the unveiling Soviet and Hungarian party congresses, or the slandering literature of the “Tito gang”, all of which became redundant.<sup>58</sup> The reduction of the stock of warehouses had accelerated, and economy had become an increasingly important aspect in the operation of publishers.<sup>59</sup>

In order to improve the distribution of books in the towns, new shops, but at least consignments, were called for. It had been suggested that they may even sell books in the town’s grocery stores. The Director General’s Publishing’s attention was also drawn to the shortcomings of foreign book distribution.<sup>60</sup> High quality books (both in terms of content and appearance) were intended here. The second generation of the West has still not been accepted, and authors and works have not fallen out of the public consciousness due to unfair stigma.<sup>61</sup> The 1956 revolution did not cause a major break in the enforcement of the resolutions.

## SUMMARY

The cultural control of the Rákosi dictatorship, initially completely, then after 1953 somewhat more permissive, but clearly placed the path of works from writer to reader under its control. This required restrictive, in the euphemism of the time, ‘administrative’ measures, and covered everything that could regulate the development of the writer-reader relationship, including every aspect of the production of the book as a ‘product’, as a ‘commodity’, from the monopoly on the allocation of the necessary paper to the control of distribution, the book distribution network and libraries (Czigány, 1990:29). We are now considering a section of this, namely the control exercised via state institutions.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> In other words, it does not cover the equally important but “outside” institutional methods, ie the diversified activities of the manual control of József Révai, including the discussion of the role of lecturers. For this, that is, for the forced careers of the reviewers as covert censors and as the auditors of the aesthetic standard according to Révai, see. (Bella, 2019).

<sup>2</sup> Communist leader in Hungary between 1945 and 1956.

<sup>3</sup> Its members are Erzsébet Andics as the head of the committee, György Lukács, László Bóka (Kultusz), Szilárd Ujhelyi (Intellectuals Department), István Kondor (Propaganda Department), Dezső Nemes (Trade Union Council), Tibor Barabás (Writers’ Association), Imre Keszi (Free People) and George Vértes as Secretary of the Commission. The committee was supplemented by Zoltán Horváth (Népszava) and Hedvig Kürti.

<sup>4</sup> Hungarian National Archives (hereinafter MNL) M-KS 276. fond. 86. cs. Note from Károly 9. Tóth.

<sup>5</sup> MNL 276th Fund. 86. cs. 9. hr Note from Károly Tóth.

<sup>6</sup> MNL 276th Fund. 86. cs. Note from Károly 9. Tóth.

<sup>7</sup> The words of the literary historian Sándor Lukácsy above. Sándor Lukácsy was the head of the lectureship of the National Book Office in 1948, then he was employed by the Ministry of National Education until 1949-51. His

- recollections are particularly important, as he was a high-ranking functionary in the above-mentioned party state bodies, a devout communist who, after his disappointment, explained in detail the anomalies of the offices and the shortcomings of his own task. intellectuals. Several recollections have survived, two of which we cite at length.
- <sup>8</sup> „Ágnes Nemes Nagy [...] Good, unpublished. [...] I didn't forbid them either, because they wouldn't go to the publisher, and if they had taken it, it would have been kicked out by Endre Elijah, who is beating his chest today to see how resilient he was. [...] Everyone knew, themselves, that this was not going to happen now.” See, Oral History Archive (OHA) 19 Recollection of Sándor Lukácsy. Author: Rainer M. János 1986 pp. 108-112.
- <sup>9</sup> “The book committee didn't give detailed guidelines; they were more in the air. There was no question of an emigrant author's work [...] the silence of the New Moon magazine was caused by a non-personal ban; even without a blacklist, the nationalized publishers did not dare to ask for a manuscript, or, with respectable moral courage, they did not give in, and did not want to be in the service of official literary politics.” See, (Lukácsy, 1985: 12).
- <sup>10</sup> PIM Media Library K00886 Mátyás Domokos and Pál Réz talk - Ágnes Kelevéz asks: About Szépirodalmi Kiadó. 10/02/1990.
- <sup>11</sup> “The comrade will go into the National Book Office tomorrow and take over the leadership of the Literature Department. I didn't even know there was a National Book Office. It wasn't, it was just organized. [...] That's how I got into a national function. Twenty-five years old.” See, (Lukácsy, 1985: 11). „The work of the Book Office is completely imaginative, they throw up their work and try to make Vértes decisions based on theoretical issues instead of doing their daily work based on theoretical considerations.” See, MNL M-KS Fund 276. 86. cs. 9. hr. István Kende: Note on the report of the Book Office. December 7, 1948
- <sup>12</sup> “In addition to the Central Management of the MDP, a so-called A book committee, which was in fact the governing body, or the governing body. , See, OHA 19 Lukácsy uo. 106. p. Furthermore, “The party did not have much confidence in its own state bodies at the time. A committee has been set up at the party headquarters to oversee and manage the Book Office. I was not a member of the committee, but I attended its meetings as a rapporteur. There was a meeting every week, and the committee had a say in the smallest matters, in fact, it made all the decisions itself, the office just implemented and wore its ode because there was no talk of the committee's existence. Every Tuesday (or Thursday?) The session began at five o'clock and often lasted until midnight. My job was to make a detailed oral report on each manuscript, whether submitted to the office by a public or private publisher or other organization, or a private individual, and to propose permission or prohibition. I was a master of life and death without being able to breathe without the approval of the committee. In fact, it was up to me to decide, because my report was always the last item on the agenda, even at night, and the tired committee usually nodded at everything. My decision, however, depended largely on the reviewers. I didn't manage to read all the manuscripts, I relied on the report of the publishers many times, sometimes I asked for the opinion of outside reviewers, mostly writers. They cross-censored each other.” See, (Lukácsy, 1985: 11).
- <sup>13</sup> MNL M-KS Fund 276. 86. cs. 9. hr. December 6-10, 1948. Reports by Ferenc Gál, Sándor Lukácsy, Nemesné, Júlia Poll, Károly Tóth, György Vértes.
- <sup>14</sup> MNL 276th Fund. 86. cs. 9. hr. Note from Károly Tóth.
- <sup>15</sup> „Some publications have been banned by the Book Office, which in my opinion is certainly not a mistake, but the fact that there was a dichotomy after the Prime Minister's Press Department allowed certain books and the Book Office banned books after the books came out caused serious damage.”,The press department of the ME (Prime Minister's) press department is not ideologically or culturally sufficiently informed about the guidelines to be followed. [...] The consequence of ambiguous, reciprocal and illegal measures is that the Book Office prohibits the distribution of a book, but as it does not notify the press department of the Prime Minister of its decision, the book will be published freely.” See, MNL M-KS Fund 276. 86. cs. 9. hr. December 6-10, 1948. Reports by Ferenc Gál, Sándor Lukácsy, Nemesné, Júlia Poll, Károly Tóth, György Vértes
- <sup>16</sup> György Vértes: “One of the reasons for the perception among stakeholders that two authorities - the Press Department of the Prime Minister's Office and the Book Office - are reviewing press releases is indiscretion, which I assume is the members of the Party Book Committee. Indeed, it happened that the party's Book Committee made a decision in the afternoon, and I heard that from others without mentioning it to anyone. An example of the indiscretion of the press department of the Prime Minister's Office: it has happened that - I do not remember what kind of manuscript anymore - a question asked by a party in the press department of the Prime Minister's



- Office was answered by urging the Book Office. I have also notified the cheese department of the Prime Minister's Office. „ See, MNL M-KS Fund 276. 86. cs. 9. hr. December 6-10, 1948. Reports by Ferenc Gál, Sándor Lukácsy, Nemesné, Júlia Poll, Károly Tóth, György Vértes.
- <sup>17</sup> Comrade Vértes told us that the Book Office would manage the Hungarian book publishing [...]. He contradicted the argument that it was not possible to work as planned until the operation of the Book Office was established by law.” See, MNL M-KS Fund 276. 86. cs. 9. hr. December 6-10, 1948. Reports by Ferenc Gál, Sándor Lukácsy, Nemesné, Júlia Poll, Károly Tóth, György Vértes.
- <sup>18</sup> Károly Tóth: “In my opinion, the Book Office acted incorrectly in this matter, because it should have been settled first. the the issue and price of books that can be distributed. The Book Office regulated prices and book dealer discounts. Although this discount eliminated the big deal after receiving the same discount for buying 1 or 100 books, it did not ensure that private wholesale and retail trade could be replaced by a public distributor. „ See, MNL M-KS Fund 276. 86. cs. 9. hr. December 6-10, 1948. Reports by Ferenc Gál, Sándor Lukácsy, Nemesné, Júlia Poll, Károly Tóth, György Vértes.
- <sup>19</sup> MNL 276. fond.86. cs. 9. his. Note from Károly Tóth.
- <sup>20</sup> The Luke debate began in 1950: Révai attacked Luke as a „deviant”, „bourgeois” man who disrespected Soviet „socialist realism” and sentenced him to silence.
- <sup>21</sup> “I was with György Lukács very often then, because we met in a committee every week, but anyway, through Vértes, whom György Lukács put in the editorial office of the Forum, and Vértes continued to edit the Forum during the Book Office era, Lukács liked him very much and thus, through Vértes, I was sometimes there [...] at the gatherings held at the old owner of the old Bródy, Hungária Nyomda, with whom György Lukács was very good, because the Bródy company, the Hungária company, published the his books, and there were such snacks.” See, OHA 19 Lukácsy uo. p 106.
- <sup>22</sup> “He hasn't [suffered so much] in the Library Office, it's more the stupidity of the Vértes. We were very good friends, but when I saw that he was an ineffective leader, it upset me, because I wanted to act.” See, OHA 19 Lukácsy uo. pp. 108-112. István Kende: “Vértes is in no way qualified to run the Library Office. What is needed for this function is first and foremost a good organisational and cohesive force capable of managing this area in a planned and organised way. [...] Vértes strangely tries to maintain a dichotomy between ‚George Vértes’ and ‚Head of the Library Office’. He appears in one capacity and in another at various Party and official bodies. „Rosta was the head of the Press Department of the Hungarian Communist Party (MKP) in June 1948, and then held a similar position in the Prime Minister's Office: Caesarean.” See, MNL M-KS Fund 276. 86. cs. 9. hr. István Kende: Note on the operation of the Book Office. November 27, 1948.
- <sup>23</sup> “The president of the Book Office was György Vértes. He is an old communist and educated man, with many good intentions and little skill. He left the substantive work pretty much to me; he was mainly concerned with being afraid. There was a reason for it: at that time, he had a conflict with Rákosi in the Szeged prison. Poor Vértes!! Not only was he tormented by fear, but also by an army of troubles. The Book Office was drilled. Interests and jealousies clashed, for publishers, printers, the book trade; the tasks and powers were unclear. The president of the Book Office was barely visible at his workplace, mostly sitting in the meeting rooms or halls of other offices. He tried to work out the inexplicable, to strengthen his position. He didn't go. He was best drilled by his own boss: the head of the supervisory body of the Book Office, Sándor Nógrádi, Secretary of State for the Prime Minister's Office.” See, (Lukácsy, 1985: 11).
- <sup>24</sup> “I can't remember who was sitting at the long table with the cigarette ash; Márton Horváth was the chairman. It soon became clear that Vértes' case was in bad shape. Every speaker was bemoaning his inefficiency and his mistakes. The coup de grace was given by Nógrádi. Comrade Vértes proved himself totally unfit to lead such an important institution. In six months, he had not even managed to get the Library's operating rules approved. Vértes was finished. And he did it with a dog's breakfast. Because Nógrádi forgot to note that the operating rules should have been approved by him, the Secretary of State for the Prime Minister's Office. „ (Lukácsy, 1985: 13).
- <sup>25</sup> “By the book day of 1949, five poets could only be in the tents. [...] The then book office [...] decided that these five poets would be taken over by five major book publishers as a kind of social burden. [...] The three first-volume poets [...] László Nagy (then also László F. Nagy) at Hungária, Péter Kuczka at Révai, I - as the youngest - at Dante.” See, (Lakatos, 1993)

- <sup>26</sup> László Cs. Szabó in 1949: „The State Book Office, established in 1948, banned the publication of three of my finished or future books at the same time.” (Varga, 2013: 80)
- <sup>27</sup> The ban on László Lator’s ready-to-publish volume, *The Ancient Forest*, is officially justified because it is irrational and pessimistic, in fact there are some poems in the volume that contain very strong political overtones. See, (Szlukovényi, 2012: 435).
- <sup>28</sup> Border Winning Life Path c. In his autobiography he also remembers for a long time the Secular Intellectual Inquisition called the Book Office, but he attributes all the measures of the Book Committee to the Office. See, (Border, 1995).
- <sup>29</sup> Mátyás Domokos, Pál Réz, interview by Ágnes Kelevéz, February 25, 1992, About the History of the Literary Fiction Publishers’, Part 1, recording, Media Library, K01158, Petőfi Literary Museum.
- <sup>30</sup> Some of the main issues in the work of the Fiction Publishing House, Series 89, file 415, M-KS 276 fonds, National Archives of Hungary, Budapest.
- <sup>31</sup> Szig. biz. Proposal for the 1951 book publishing plan of the Hungarian book publishing house, November 27, 1950, Series 89, file 375, M-KS 276 fonds, National Archives of Hungary, Budapest.
- <sup>32</sup> Mátyás Domokos, Pál Réz, interview by Ágnes Kelevéz, October 2, 1990, About the Literary Fiction Publishers’, recording, Media Library, K00886, Petőfi Literary Museum.
- <sup>33</sup> Proposed 1954 Program Plan for Public Publishing. Plan for the 1954 Paper Framework for Book Publishing, Series 89, file 375, M-KS 276 fonds, National Archives of Hungary, Budapest.
- <sup>34</sup> Item 0019/11/1953 Thematic Plan of the Publishers of Fiction, New Hungarian, Youth and Educated People 1954, Box 2, Folder Top Secret-1953 Filed 001-0075, Fonds XIX-I-21-b, National Archives of Hungary, Budapest.
- <sup>35</sup> Mátyás Domokos, Pál Réz, interview by Ágnes Kelevéz, February 25, 1992, About the History of the Literary Fiction Publishers’, Part 1, recording, Media Library, K01158, Petőfi Literary Museum.
- <sup>36</sup> Béla Köpeczi: The truth of the facts. Chapters from the history of cultural policy. 1953 - 1988. Unpublished memoir. We are grateful to Dr. László Solymosi for making the manuscript available to us. 17. p.
- <sup>37</sup> MNL XIX-I-3-u 2. dob.2776. lot 1953. The plan for the publication of state books in 1954.
- <sup>38</sup> MNL XIX-I-21-a 1st drum. 1953-55. Miscellaneous cases without registration number. 2/19/2005 Decision No
- <sup>39</sup> MNL XIX-I-3-j-1952. documents of the year (XXII.) Newspaper Publishing Company.
- <sup>40</sup> MNL XIX-I-21-a 1st drum. 1953-55. Miscellaneous cases without registration number. Unified system. Outline and Problems April 24, 1953.
- <sup>41</sup> MNL XXIX-I-34 Publishing House of Fiction. Unordered material. Issues of principled governance of publishers.
- <sup>42</sup> A good example of all this is that when Tibor Déry’s travelogue (*About Hungary, People*), published in 1954, recorded his experiences in 1952, the proofreaders were recruited for finding out that Déry, as Miklós Szabolcsi writes in the history of literature in 1978, „With a careful but overemphasized objectivity it gave a picture of the social, political, public supply and cultural conditions of the various regions of the country”. See, MNL XXIX-I-34 Publishing House of Fiction. Unordered material. Issues of the principled management of publishers., And (Szabolcsi, 1978: 1034-1036).
- <sup>43</sup> MNL XIX-I-21-a 2nd drum. 1953-1956. annual documents. 875/1954 Rationalization of publishing companies and subordination to the Directorate-General for Publishing.
- <sup>44</sup> MNL XIX-I-21-b 2nd drum. TÜK documents. Strictly confidential. Filed under documents 001-0075 Submission to the unified system. 1953.
- <sup>45</sup> The exact name of the office is Amt für Literatur und Verlagswesen (AVL).
- <sup>46</sup> Her husband, Klaus Gysi, is a prominent cultural politician. (O’Doherty, 1992: 308)
- <sup>47</sup> Irene Gysi was well informed in other cases as well. (Barck et al., 1998: 47).
- <sup>48</sup> MNL XIX-I-3-u 14. dob. 3423. The report of Ferenc Rákos. December 3, 1953.
- <sup>49</sup> 1043/1954. (VI. 17.) of the Council of Ministers.
- <sup>50</sup> MNL XIX-I-21-a 1st drum. 1953-55. Miscellaneous cases without registration number. Establishment of the Directorate - General for Publishing.
- <sup>51</sup> An interesting addition to the creation of the Publishing DG is Miklós Radnóti’s „vision”. We quote the following

from István Vas: “On the occasion of such a social planning, Miklós said that he wanted to be the coordinator of the socialist book publishing. He also talked about the details, but I didn’t quite understand what he was thinking. A decade later, it occurred to me that, in essence, the authority of the publishing director was hovering before him — of course, he imagined it quite differently. At the time, I replied to him, I would be fine if I could be a reviewer at a publishing house, if they would pay me to read and comment on what I read.” (Vas, 2003).

<sup>52</sup> Kőpeczi: im pp. 19-21.

<sup>53</sup> Kőpeczi: im 23. p.

<sup>54</sup> Comment by Géza Hegedüs, Director of Magvető Publishing House: “Is KF needed? [...] We are doing socialist book publishing, [...] that is, the publishing house is not a separate body in society, [...] even if we abolish KF, ... in time we will figure out something [...] about which it will turn out that the KF. [...] They come with the manuscript as if the publisher had a Public Account that sells oranges or lemons for cheap money. (Serenity.) [...] No KF required? No way, just get some paper! (Serenity.)” MNL XIX-I-3-u 41st drum. 3 / d. item: Material of the first Hungarian publishing conference; pp. 5-7.

<sup>55</sup> In defense, Imre Zala, the director of ÁKV, said: “So how does ÁKV sell? [...] Writes the reviewer of *Népszava*: [...] Lakatos: The story of table tennis [about:] “The special value of the work is that it clearly shows [...] the role of table tennis in different social systems. The Book Distributor publishes an advertisement inviting readers to purchase the said book, which describes, among other things, the Neanderthal man’s table tennis training method.” MNL XIX-I-3-u 41. dob. 3 / d. item *ibid.* pp. 68-75.

<sup>56</sup> “If that poet came to us and we told him that he is a very respected comrade, we don’t like his poems, he went to the comrades in Jászberény and he was rejected there, he is still convinced that there is a click system. But if both the third and fourth publishers refuse, you might still get the idea that it’s not the click system that is at fault, but that you wrote the wrong thing. „ XIX-I-3-u 41. dob. 3 / d. item *ibid.* 13. p.

<sup>57</sup> Béla Abody in relation to “Mus-literature”: “Publishers could believe that their “state conscience” could be reassured that, based on the protocolists, they also published a large amount of secondary literature. Or for the sake of good literature, they started an exchange business: a gypsy for a king. There was only one argument for this pseudo-literature: a political argument.”

<sup>58</sup> “Every eighth Hungarian citizen receives a book by Béla Illés, including infants. (Serenity.)” XIX-I-3-u 41. drums. 3/d. item *ibid.* pp. 51-54. Béla Abody: “Then there are also muse publications that appear primarily for psychological reasons. The proofreader is in a very difficult position when the author beats his bloody heart on the table, threatens, spends the night in the proofreader’s stairwell, wakes him up by phone at 6 a.m., refers to his starving children, his sad-eyed mother, and the opinion of the Writers Association. [...] It is necessary to eliminate from the work of the reviewer the psychological wolf piles into which the publishers’ money and paper ultimately fall. [...] I suggest that we make a decision that states unequivocally: there is only one argument in favor of the publication: the quality of the book in question.” XIX-I-3-u 41. dob. 3 / d. item *ibid.* 56. p. Tibor Fajth, Deputy Head of KF: “The number of copies can be determined by the publisher in the final degree, [but thus] it is impossible to refrain from making the publisher responsible if these copies do not run out. ÁKV will only take for granted what it finds for sale, and we want to ensure that it takes over everything that it finds for sale with common sense and the rest with the right of return. [...] Our publishers have taken on this responsibility because they have had to realize that they are either taking the step to make the publisher’s own plan, responsible for the works and copies published, and KF will not have a say in this., neither the ÁKV, nor waive their independence. „ XIX-I-3-u 41. dob. 3 / d. item *ibid.* pp. 154-156.

<sup>59</sup> György Bárány, Editor-in-Chief of *Magyar Szemle*: „The distribution of Hungarian books and periodicals abroad takes place abroad through a conspiratorial, unknown network of agents treated as strictly secret.” XIX-I-3-u 41. dob. 3 / d. item *ibid.* 125. p.

<sup>60</sup> Péter Veres: “I don’t know what happens to Kassák. Between the two world wars there was Kassák, there was a Genius of Varna and I could even list the not too much but existing labor movement literature. I have not heard the truth in the paper and it is specifically included in the spending program. [...] Old Cholnoky may have been reactionary in his social views, but what he says about the deserts is not reactionary, and then we have to find (applause) a way to extract such values from Hungarian literature.” XIX-I-3-u 41. dob. 3 / d. item *ibid.* pp. 123-134.

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