

# Censorship and Law in Hungary in the Past

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### ABSTRACT

The first decree involving censorship in Hungary is dated 1524 when Louis II wrote a letter to the town of Sibiu, warning against “reading the treacherous writings of” Martin Luther – a crime punishable by forfeiture of property. Although the direct effect of this letter is unclear, by the following year of 1525 there were book burnings in Sopron. In the following two centuries censorship was almost exclusively used to protect religion... Since the revolution of 1848, censorship endured for ‘a mere’ seventy-six years in Hungary. The article gives a brief introduction of Hungary’s path from the stronghanded censorship of the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries to the 21<sup>st</sup> century when political censorship as a concept is no longer comprehensible, giving way to the evolution of new forms of control mechanisms. The disappearance of political censorship can give us cause for optimism in terms of the evolution of the freedom to express opinion, but the end of the fight for complete press freedom is still far ahead.

### KEYWORDS

censorship, freedom of expression, Librorum Prohibitorum, legislation, print press.

## Cenzura și legea în Ungaria în trecut

### REZUMAT

Primul decret având ca obiect cenzura în Ungaria datează din 1524, când Ludovic al II-lea a emis o epistolă către orașul Sibiu avertizând locuitorii împotriva „lecturii primejdiuoaselor scrieri ale lui” Martin Luther – infracțiune pedepsită cu confiscarea averii. Deși efectul nemijlocit al acestei scrisori rămâne neclar, în anul următor, 1525, în Sopron au fost deja arse cărți. În cele două secole care au urmat, cenzura a fost întrebuințată aproape exclusiv pentru ocrotirea religiei... După Revoluția din 1848, cenzura a fost perpetuată încă „numai” șaptezeci și șase de ani în Ungaria. Articolul oferă o scurtă introducere privind calea urmată în Ungaria de la cenzura drastică a secolelor XVII și XVIII până la secolul XXI, când cenzura politică a devenit de neimaginat ca și noțiune, deschizând calea unor noi mecanisme de control. Dispariția cenzurii politice poate fi prilej de optimism în ceea ce privește evoluția libertății de exprimare, dar sfârșitul luptei pentru deplina libertate a presei este încă departe.

### CUVINTE CHEIE

cenzură, libertate de exprimare, Librorum Prohibitorum, legislație, presă scrisă.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Nils Muižnieks, Commissioner for Human Rights at the Council of Europe said in September 2017: “Member states of the Strasbourg-based Council of Europe increasingly censor information found on online forums through arbitrarily blocking certain websites”.<sup>1</sup> It was also some years ago that we received news that the Russian justice ministry banned “images depicting the president wearing makeup”, i.e. the caricatures of a kissable Putin,<sup>2</sup> with offenders potentially facing criminal charges for terrorism (sic!). According to the World Press Freedom Index<sup>3</sup> there is an increasing number of countries in the world where the regulation of freedom of speech and freedom of opinion is increasingly strict. In 2019 Hungary ‘achieved’ the 87<sup>th</sup> place among the 180 countries in the survey.<sup>4</sup> In order to put this into perspective we should take a look at the history of Hungarian censorship and current legislations.

We must establish that centuries of fighting for the most absolute freedom of expression could be in vain<sup>5</sup> if censorship prevents certain opinions from being voiced. Censorship is usually divided into three subtypes: political, economic, and social censorship. We usually associate censorship with the political type – when the state or a representative thereof practices control before the fact (prior restraint), or after. The first case means permission required to publish, the latter means deciding whether the published material can be distributed, thus prior restraint is regarded as the legally stricter form of the two. The history of censorship in Hungary displays each of these censorship types.

## II. HISTORY OF HUNGARIAN CENSORSHIP BEFORE THE ‘APRIL LAWS’ IN 1848

Taboos, suppressed and unspeakable thoughts appeared in societies very early on. Regarding the ancient beginnings of censorship, Andor Maros writes as follows: “*Aelius Saturninus was pushed off the Capitoline Hill for some of his bolder poems, Pacunianus was strangled in prison, and Scaurus was sentenced to death by Emperor Tiberius for one of his tragedies.*”<sup>6</sup> In Europe up to the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the practice of censorship was

1 *Terjed az internetes cenzúra*, <https://piacesprofit.hu/klimablog/terjed-az-internetes-cenzura/> [accessed: January 25, 2020].

2 Máté Nyusztay (2017): *Betiltották a csókos szájú Putyint* [http://hvg.hu/vilag/20170405\\_Betiltottak\\_a\\_csokos\\_szaju\\_Putyint](http://hvg.hu/vilag/20170405_Betiltottak_a_csokos_szaju_Putyint) [accessed: January 25, 2020].

3 *World Press Freedom Index (2019)*, <https://rsf.org/en/ranking> [accessed: January 25, 2020].

4 *World Press Freedom Index (2019) – Hungary*, <https://rsf.org/en/hungary> [accessed: January 25, 2020].

5 For more detailed information on the subject see: Gábor Halmai (2002): *Kommunikációs jogok, Új Mandátum Könyvkiadó, Budapest*; András Koltay (2009): *A szólásszabadság alapvonalai – magyar, angol, amerikai és európai összehasonlításban*, Századvég Kiadó, Budapest; Péter Molnár (2002): *Gondolatbátorság – Szólásszabadság és közbeszélgetés az Egyesült Államokban és Magyarországon*, Új Mandátum Könyvkiadó, Budapest.

6 Andor Maros (1947): *A cenzúra*, Népszava Könyvkiadó, Budapest, p. 12.

characterised by phenomena such as the inquisition, burning at the stake, placing works on an ‘Index’,<sup>7</sup> a list of forbidden literature. The Declaration of the Rights of the Man and of the Citizen of 1789 was the first legal document that explicitly established that “*The free communication of ideas and opinions is one of the most precious of the rights of man. Every citizen may, accordingly, speak, write, and print with freedom, but shall be responsible for such abuses of this freedom as shall be defined by law.*”<sup>8</sup> This does not mean that others fighting for the freedom of expression (Tindall, Burke, Milton etc.) had not previously written similar ideas, but the public did not begin to accept the concept until the late 18<sup>th</sup> century.

The first decree involving censorship in Hungary is dated 1524 when King Louis II wrote a letter to the town of Sibiu [*Nagyszeben*], warning against “reading the treacherous writings of” Martin Luther – punishable by forfeiture of property.<sup>9</sup> Although the direct effect of this letter is unclear, by the following year of 1525 there were book burnings in Sopron. In the following two centuries censorship was almost exclusively used to protect religion, the key figure was first the bishop of Vienna, followed by the university of Vienna, followed by the predecessor of today’s Eötvös Loránd University. From 1572 on, all books published in Hungary had to be sent to the bishop of Vienna for censorship. In 1623 the university of Vienna took over this censorship authority, in 1688 this seat went to Márton Szentiványi, the Jesuit theology teacher of the Trnava [*Nagyszombat*] university.<sup>10</sup> He was then replaced by the chancellor of the university in 1726, who also played an important role in publishing the Hungarian Index (officially: *Catalogus Librorum Prohibitorum*, The Catalogue of Banned Books). In a noteworthy turn of events, the Index itself was placed on the Index “*to prevent malicious and clever people from knowing the clever books*”.<sup>11</sup>

During the reign of King Joseph II, censorship eased up significantly because it was taken from the Catholic Church and placed under secular control – which prompted the Pope himself to urge the king to revoke the ruling –, but these concessions were short-lived. “*The decree of Leopold II issued on 13 September 1790 (...) once again emphasized prohibition in the press.*”<sup>12</sup> The palatine often participated personally at the meetings of the censorship department, demonstrating the issue’s significance, and censorship was extended to every book found in the possession of travellers arriving to the country. This paved the way to the lowest point

7 The list of prohibited books entered history with the title *Index Librorum Prohibitorum*. The expression “to place something on the index” made its way to everyday language meaning to ban or to censor something. The last, 32<sup>nd</sup> list was published in 1948 (!).

8 Declaration of the Rights of Man (1789), [https://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th\\_century/rightsof.asp](https://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/rightsof.asp), [accessed: January 25, 2020].

9 Maros (1947): p. 35.

10 Szentiványi was also involved in publishing Hungarian laws and decrees in 1696 under the title *Corpus Iuris Hungarici*.

11 Géza Ballagi (1888): *A politikai irodalom Magyarországon 1825-ig*, Franklin-Társulat, Budapest, p. 60. The original – due to an obvious typo – writes “to prevent malicious people from knowing the malicious books and clever people from knowing the clever books”.

12 András Döbör (2014): Sajtó és cenzúra a 18. és a 19. század fordulóján Magyarországon, *Médiakutató*, 2014 summer, p. 21.

of Hungarian censorship in the era of the Habsburgs' absolutistic experiments, when archduke and palatine Alexander Leopold penned the following: "*In rural taverns people read the newspapers aloud for peasants, which is unacceptable, therefore in my opinion Hungarian newspapers should not be published at all.*"<sup>13</sup> The continuously changing (worsening) censorship situation, the ever-increasing number of banned works and the blind eagerness of censors inevitably led to movements fighting for civil change putting the abolition of all kinds of censorship on top of their list of demands.

### III. "HAVING ABOLISHED THE PREVIOUS INSPECTION FOREVER"

In 1844 Mihály Táncsics published a booklet under a pseudonym titled 'The views of a prisoner about the freedom of the press', in which he characterised censorship as follows:

Censorship is an utmost sin. Whether it is the practice of certain men or it is maintained by those with power, its result does not matter. There is no other action that would be in such opposition with both nature and the Christian religion as censorship, as shown above, thus there is no crime that could compete with it in magnitude.<sup>14</sup>

He declares that human freedom can only be achieved with a perfectly free press, and he urges his countrymen to pass a law about the freedom of press and thus the abolition of censorship.

He did not have to wait very long for his wish to be fulfilled as the so-called 'April Laws' of 1848 include the Press Act (Act 1848:18) that states in its preamble: "*Having abolished the previous inspection forever, having reinstated the freedom of press (...) Everyone is free to publish, and free to distribute their thoughts by way of the press.*"<sup>15</sup>

After the defeat of the revolution censorship was promptly restored, leading to a bureaucratic organisation that Sándor Pruzsinszky likened to a "*multi-armed giant octopus*".<sup>16</sup> The 1848 legislation was only reinstated at the time of the Austro-Hungarian Compromise of 1867<sup>17</sup> when, leaving the years of neo-absolutism, the government headed by Gyula Andrassy reconstituted Act 1848:18 on 25 February 1867, merely five days after acceding ("*The ministry regards it its duty to restore the Act*

13 Elemér Mályusz (ed.) (1926): *Sándor Lipót főherceg nádor iratai 1790–1795*, Kir. Magyar Egyetemi Nyomda, Budapest.

14 Mihály Táncsics (nn.): *Sajtószabadságról nézetei egy rabnak*, Amyot, Paris, p. 13.

15 Article 1.

16 Sándor Pruzsinszky (2014): *Halhatatlan cenzúra*, Médiatudományi Intézet, Budapest, p. 135.

17 For more detailed information on the debate surrounding the entry into force of the Press Act of 1848 see: Mihály T. Révész (2017): A sajtószabadság „örömünnepe” 1867 Magyarországnán, *In Medias Res* 1/2017, p. 92-104.

1848:18 on press grievances post haste”).<sup>18</sup> Even then some voices suggested that the temporary press act should be replaced a more modern, more thought-through, more mature law that could serve the development of the Hungarian press in the long run. László Rábel, editor at Soproni Napló [*Sopron Diarium*] explained: “*The pages of this law are akin to a flag surviving the war of independence, which has been torn and discoloured by the battles, but remains an ever so dear relic of national reverence.*”<sup>19</sup> This supports the ambiguous situation where the majority was aware of the faults in the press act of 1848 in effect then, and yet, emotions overpowered rational, legal arguments.<sup>20</sup>

In 1898, Géza Kenedi’s draft press act also failed, foreshadowing the wave of political protest that preceded the birth of the second Hungarian press act (Act 1914:14).<sup>21</sup> Despite large-scale and unanimous protests from the press – based on the new regulation of rectification trials and non-material compensation –, the draft submitted by the second Tisza cabinet entered into force on the “anniversary” of the 1848 press act, on April 11, 1914. The first article carried forward the provisions of the earlier legislation in slightly modified wording: “*By way of the press, everyone is free to publish and distribute their thoughts.*” At this point, the Hungarian press sector was still unhindered by any type of political censorship.

However, we will never know how this law would have performed in practice. History intervened, World War I began, in response to which the government – using especially the powers provisioned in Act 1912:63 Article 1<sup>22</sup> – brought military cen-

18 Ministerial submission from February 25, 1867, on the press, on the entry into force of Act 1848:18, on establishing juries in Pest, Debrecen, Prešov [*Eperjes*], Trnava [*Nagyszombat*] and Kőszeg, and on the jurisdiction of royal and district courts in cases related to the press. – The submission was approved on March 9, 1867 by the House of Representatives, and on March 12, 1867 by the Upper House.

19 Quoted by: Géza Buzinkay (2016): *A magyar sajtó és újságírás története a kezdetektől a rendszerváltásig*, Médiatudományi Intézet, Budapest, p. 310.

20 To confirm this: “Due to the awe surrounding the 1848 Act, representatives and governments preferred passing supplementary laws, decrees (on juries and press distribution, on the treatment of press offenders etc.). Then the great codes of the modern civil state (Criminal Code, Civil Code), the criminal and civil procedure codes. By 1900, 23 of the 45 articles of Act 1848:18 were no longer in effect.” Géza Buzinkay (2013): *Sajtóreform 1914-ben*, *In Medias Res*, 1/2013, p. 2. Concerning the above, Kenedi lamented: “The press act was not only ravaged by time, but whole periods used it to hone their law-destructive skills.” Géza Kenedi (1906): *A sajtójog reformja*, *Jogtudományi Közlöny*, 52(1906), p. 448.

21 For more detailed information on the debates see: Buzinkay (2016): pp. 1-21.

22 Act 1912:63 on Exceptional Measures for the Event of War.

“Article 11. The ministry may order that the compulsory press regulatory issues of periodical newspapers and other press products be submitted to the press prosecutor, and must be delivered to the closest royal prosecutor’s office or police authority before distribution, and that, unless the royal prosecutor’s office or police authority allows immediate distribution, that distribution may only begin three hours after delivery of the compulsory press regulatory issues for periodical newspapers, and after one week from delivery for other press products. In the event that the delegated royal prosecutor’s office or police authority finds that a press product embodies a criminal offense that affects the interests of warfare, it may prohibit the distribution of said press product.”

sorship into effect. We must also mention the collection of legislative acts titled “Information on exceptional measures for the event of war. For the territory of the countries of the Hungarian holy crown, J-25, b”, which was passed on July 23, 1914 and “*delivered to all lord-lieutenants, first officers of law enforcement (vice-ispáns, mayors) as well as to the chief constable of the capital and the heads of the border police forces with the transcript of the minister of interior dated 26 July*”.<sup>23</sup> This package included scopes of authority related to the press, sorted into three types by Roland Kelemen: “(1) *the authority to perform prior control of periodicals and to sanction them in the event of a criminal offence; (2) a government ban of domestic newspapers in the event that they jeopardize the interests of warfare; (3) a prior control and ban of foreign newspapers in the event that they jeopardize military interests.*”<sup>24</sup>

In addition, an indirect form of censorship was used during the war: the paper limit managed by the Paper Centre for Newspapers [*Újságpapír Központ*] established within the Prime Minister’s Office in 1916 through Decree number 734/1916. M. E. The next day the newspaper *Népszava* reported on this situation as follows:

For 6-fillér newspapers the text can extend to 49 pages a week, for 12-fillér newspapers it can be 98 pages per week. The decree also regulates the volume of advert pages and declares that the smallest daily full-page volume, smaller than which cannot be ordered by the centre, is 8 pages for 12-fillér newspapers, 6 pages for 8-fillér newspapers, 4 pages for 6-fillér newspapers and 2 pages for newspapers sold for 4 fillérs or less. Publishers who violate the decree commit a misdemeanour, the criminal proceedings may include confiscation. The decree is already in effect.<sup>25</sup>

#### IV. HUNGARIAN CENSORSHIP AFTER WORLD WAR I AND IN THE HORTHY ERA

Historic pressure did not ease on Hungary after the great war, the next turn of events was the success of the Aster Revolution (or Chrysanthemum Revolution), and the First Hungarian (People’s) Republic, declared on November 16, 1918. People’s Act II of 1918, based on article IV of People’s Ordinance I of 1918, involves the freedom of press. The people’s act consists of only four articles and was published in the National Compendium of Laws [*Országos Törvénytár*] on December 7, 1918. Article 1 differs from the preamble of Act 1848:18 only in a comma when it states: “*Everyone is free to publish and free to distribute their thoughts by way of the press.*” Regarding censorship, article 2 orders the abolition of “*the previous inspection*”.

23 Árpád Tóth (1996): A kivételes hatalom jogi szabályozása Magyarországon az első világháború előestéjén, *Acta Universitatis Szegediensis: acta juridica et politica*, 50/13, p. 51.

24 Roland Kelemen (2014): Sajtószabadság vagy hadiérdek? – Az első világháború dilemmája, *Katonai Jogi és Hadijogi Szemle* No. 2/2014, p. 92.

25 *Népszava*, March 3, 1916, p. 8.

After the fall of the Károlyi-regime and the Hungarian Soviet Republic (referred to as Republic of Councils in Hungary)<sup>26</sup> came the Horthy era that can be divided in terms of censorship into three periods with different durations: the wartime practice of prior restraint was maintained in 1920–1921, it was abolished in the 1921–1938 period, and a strict wartime regulation came into effect from 1938–1939.<sup>27</sup> Following the overthrow of the Hungarian Soviet Republic in 1919 – based in part on the military situation – for a good while it was unclear what political direction Hungary will take, thus the temporarily acceding Friedrich government reintroduced prior restraint via Decree 5499/1919 M. E. titled “On the press”. The Simonyi-Semadam government was in office for a few months in 1920 and was not idle: by the Prime Minister’s Decree 4578/1920 the establishment of any new periodical newspaper became conditional on permission from the Prime Minister himself, whereas the Prime Minister’s Decree 6357/1920 gave authority to the minister for the interior from August 3, 1920 to “*ban the publication and distribution of domestic periodical newspapers whose publications jeopardize the order and safety of the country and the interests of its foreign policies.*”<sup>28</sup>

We should note here that both decrees remained in effect throughout the entire period. The softening of regulations in the Bethlen era should be viewed in light of this information. On December 10, 1921, the Prime Minister’s Decree 10501/1921 abolished the extraordinary press control, or censorship. This abolition was strengthened multiple times, including by Act 1922:17,<sup>29</sup> which among other things stated in article 6 that: “*The extraordinary press control (prior restraint) that can be ordered based on paragraphs 1, 2 and 3 of article 11 of Act 1912:63, which was abolished by Prime Minister’s Decree 10501/1921, cannot be reinstated by the government on basis of this article.*”

The period was thus not characterised by political censorship but by the methodical distribution of subventions and subsidies to support pro-government opinions, therefore press outlets preferred by the government received significantly more financial resources than those expressing opposition views. Meanwhile the desire to compile press regulations into a unified legislation was always on the agenda to provide a better alternative than the constant modification of Act 1914:14 through

26 The dictatorship of the Republic of Councils did not pull any punches in its constitution of June 23, 1919 as Article 8 clearly announces the path of destroying press freedom and the introduction of a new, Soviet-type control: “In the Republic of Councils, workers may freely express their opinion in writing and in spoken word, but capital’s power, which degraded the press to an instrument of disseminating capitalist thinking and obscured proletarian pride, exists no more. The press is no longer dependent on capital. The right of every publication is with the working class, and the Republic of Councils ensures that the Socialist ideology shall freely spread all over the country.”

27 For more detailed information on the era’s regulations see: Vince Paál (2013): Sajtószabályozás és sajtószabadság a Horthy-korszakban, in: Vince Paál (Ed.) (2013): *Magyar sajtószabadság és -szabályozás, 1914–1989: előadások a magyar sajtószabadság történetéhez*, Médiatudományi Intézet, Budapest, p. 7-19.

28 Article 1.

29 Act 1922:17 on the Taxation and State Expenditures of the First Six Months of the Financial Year 1922-23.

decrees. The draft laws (1921, 1922, 1924, 1928) all aimed to introduce a more transparent but stricter liability system for publishers and journalists, but the reinstatement of censorship was part of these plans.<sup>30</sup>

This changed significantly with the increase in German influence and the worsening situation of Hungarian citizens of Jewish descent. Act 1938:15., known as the first anti-Jewish law – titled euphemistically “on ensuring the balance of social and economic life” – founded the Press Chamber [*Sajtókamara*], and provided that:

Persons falling under the first paragraph of article 4<sup>31</sup> shall be employed at periodical or non-periodical news outlets in full-time employment only in a proportion such as that their number does not exceed twenty percent of long-term employees; any annual remuneration paid to them shall not exceed the annual remuneration of twenty percent of all employees in such contracts.<sup>32</sup>

The above regulations were precursory to the approval of Act 1938:18 soon after, ordering news outlets to send so-called press regulatory issues to the relevant royal prosecutor’s office after reproduction to allow the newspaper’s distribution. All this meant the restoration of censorship after the fact in Hungary, punishable by imprisonment for up to one year, including the loss of one’s journalist licence and a ban from practicing journalism for one to five years for reoffenders.

From 1938 on censorship legislation was increasingly strict, peaking when the so-called National Defence – or Second Authorisation – Act<sup>33</sup> was passed. Article 151 of this act involved the issue of press control: “*In accordance with the provisions of this Article, the ministry may take all measures deemed necessary for periodical newspapers and other press outlets to be under control in order to protect the interests of warfare or other important state interests.*” The regulations gave authority to the ministry to ensure the protection of the above interests by introducing prior restraint or censorship after the fact. It was not long before total censorship was reintroduced: Prime Minister’s Decree 1840/1939 put the provisions of Article 151 into practice, strengthened by Prime Minister’s Decree 10800/1939. The apex of the implementation of this procedure, when these rules were applied to all press products was Prime Minister’s Decree 5555/1940 that was not described as temporary, once again permanently institutionalizing censorship in Hungary. It is worth noting that since it was possible for censors to receive orders from multiple ministries at the same time, the rapidly changing political situation made censorship rules quite unclear in practice, thus the press kept evading censors in this era.

30 An issue related to press censorship is that of movie censorship. For more information on this see: Márk Záhonyi-Ábel (2012): Filmcenzúra Magyarországon a Horthy-korszak első évtizedében, *Médiakutató* 2012 summer, p. 91-101.

31 I.e. Jewish people.

32 Article 5.

33 Act 1939:2 on National Defence.



## V. PRECEDENTS AND PRESS REGULATIONS OF THE SOVIET ERA

World War II and the ongoing regulation of the press had a drastic effect: “*The number of newspapers published until December 10, 1944 did not reach ten.*”<sup>34</sup> The three-year period of the Second Hungarian Republic could not significantly change all this as this short timeframe was not enough for a pluralistic press to regain its strength. In addition, various administrative methods were used to try and silence powers outside of the governing coalition in the press. Therefore, the creation of the so-called ‘Stalinist’ Constitution and the introduction of the Soviet-type dictatorship actually perpetuated the censorship issues prevalent in Hungary from 1938–1939.

Paragraph (1) of article 55 of Act XX of 1949 declared “The Hungarian People’s Republic ensures freedom of speech, freedom of press and freedom of assembly in accordance with the interests of the workers.” Of course, this was not a statement for diversity, on the contrary, the state wanted to maintain institutional control over the press. The press legislation of 1914 remained in effect. Surprisingly, in 1957 the government wanted to amend it, so the Ministry of Justice prepared a draft law<sup>35</sup> which, however, was not submitted to the National Assembly. Instead, this issue involving civil rights was still handled via decrees as opposed to laws: item a) of paragraph (2) of Article 26 of the Government Decree 26/1959. (V. 1.) eventually put the Press Act of 1914 out of effect. Although no censorship agency was officially operating in this era, the Agitation and Propaganda Committee [*Agitációs és Propaganda Bizottság*] adjacent to the Political Committee [*Politikai Bizottság*] became an umbrella organisation whose authority extended to managing all county newspapers, supervising newspapers not overseen by the Hungarian Working People’s Party, the article service of rural press and even the radio sub-department. Several of its workers were tasked with “reading papers”, which effectively meant inspection with the aim of censorship.<sup>36</sup>

During the continuous consolidation of the Kádár regime these previous regulations remained in effect, and the press returned to legislative control only in 1986 through Act II of 1986. The law stated that “*Everyone has the right to produce newspapers and publish them. This right may be restricted by the law at the absolutely necessary and proportionate level – in order to satisfy some other basic constitutional rights.*”<sup>37</sup> Thus in the few years left until the regime change there was still a sort of hidden censorship in

34 Henrik Vass, K. László Zalai (1992): A tájékoztatás intézményrendszere 1944–1948, *Múltunk*, No. 1/1992, p. 76., quoted by: Mihály T. Révész (2013): Sajtószabályozás Magyarországon (1945–1960), in Vince Paál (ed.) (2013): *Magyar sajtószabadság és -szabályozás, 1914–1989: előadások a magyar sajtószabadság történetéhez*, Médiatudományi Intézet, Budapest, p. 56.

35 National Archives of Hungary (MOL) (24. lj.) 38-43. 529/1957. I.M. II/1.

36 For practical examples of censorship see: Attila Horváth (2013): A cenzúra működési mechanizmusa Magyarországon a szovjet típusú diktatúra időszakában, in Vince Paál (ed.) (2013): *Magyar sajtószabadság és -szabályozás, 1914–1989: előadások a magyar sajtószabadság történetéhez*, Médiatudományi Intézet, Budapest, p. 93-95.

37 Paragraph (1) of article 12.

Hungary, although it was common knowledge that its power and attention was wilting away from year to year.

## VI. CONCLUSION

After the fall of the Iron Curtain in 1989, the Third Hungarian Republic guarantees press freedom in its constitution, making its protection an obligation of the state. In the three decades since, three laws were passed concerning the press and the media in a very broad sense. Act I of 1996 on Radio and Television Broadcasting as well as the legislation currently in effect (Act CIV of 2010 on the Freedom of the Press and the Fundamental Rules of Media Content and Act CLXXXV of 2010 on Media Services and Mass-Media) advocate press freedom and press independence. We should note, however, that while the classic, so-called political censorship is not present in the Third Hungarian Republic, the form scholars call “economic censorship” has been observable in many instances since 2014. We can often see the subvention policies familiar from previous historic eras that cannot be defined as political censorship but is very suitable for influencing and controlling the press and media markets.<sup>38</sup> The disappearance of political censorship can give us cause for optimism in terms of the evolution of the freedom to express opinion, but the end of the fight for complete press freedom is still far ahead.

38 Gábor Polyák (ed.) (2016): *Bevált módszerek, új haverok. Lány cenzúra a magyar médiában – 2015, Mérték Füzetek* No. 8/2016, p. 9-11.